The Long Way Home

Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at http://archiveofourown.org/works/6171803.

The Long Way Home

by fictionfrek101

Summary

Before vanishing, Luke Skywalker decided to make a detour to Jakku and collect the body of his reportedly dead daughter, Rey, only to find her alive. With hope renewed, Luke stayed on Jakku to raise and protect her from the First Order, while hiding their past from Rey. But while he waits for the day the Force awakens, he begins a chain of events that changes the story entirely.

Notes
Warning: If you're here for just Luke being in The Force Awakens, that's not going to start for a very long time. This is the story of a father and daughter fighting to stay together after being torn apart.
A Peaceful Night

Chapter Summary

While Luke is away on Jedi business, a peaceful night at the Skywalker residence turns into a nightmare.

Chapter Notes

Before I start, I’d like to explain that for Luke’s wife and Rey’s mother, I’m operating under the theory that she will be the main character of Rogue One. Since her name has yet to be revealed, I’m using the name of Felicity Rhiaon after the actress who will play her (Felicity Jones). Felicity is the subject of some photosets and oneshots I’ve written so I will refer to those from time to time (including ones I haven’t written yet) so you might want to check them out.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The Long Way Home

Chapter One

A Peaceful Night

We like to think that major turning points are always foretold by some dramatic sign. A birth is announced with the break of dawn, healing with a flower’s bloom, and a tragedy with a thunderstorm. Perhaps that is why the metaphor of weather reflecting a situation is called a pathetic fallacy. Because frankly, it’s pathetic to think the weather cares about someone’s insignificant life.

The day Luke Skywalker came into possession of R2-D2 and C-3PO started with Uncle Owen yelling at him to get up. The day Han Solo met Ben Kenobi started with yet another piece of the Falcon breaking. And Leia Organa… Well, she had always had a rather exciting life, so the fact the day she received the plans to the Death Star started by getting shot at by Imperial Forces wasn’t out of the ordinary.

By all rights of literature, the massacre of the Jedi should have been marked by a hurricane, but was not. The weather had been perfect, and day free of anything but the most minor of transgressions.

The Jedi lived in a community called Temple Village on the planet of Rornian. Temple Village was not an academy but rather a place to live and learn. The Jedi shared their knowledge in the Temple, which was located in the center of the village. In addition to the resident Jedi who trained there, all were welcome to come and learn about the Force regardless of their Force Sensitivity. Lor San Tekka, a friend of Luke’s and religious leader of the Church of the Force, had established a branch of the Church on Rornian specifically to encourage non-Force Sensitives to visit.

Temple Village and the New Jedi Order had been a labour of love that took sixteen years for Luke
Skywalker to build. Though both the village and the Order had had its ups and downs, there were few things Luke was prouder of. It was especially evident in the placement of his home.

On the north edge of the village, set a few yards away from the beginning of the forest’s treeline resided the Skywalker home. It sat on a slope that overlooked Temple Village with pride. Some might have thought the placement sent the message that Luke thought himself above his students, but a well groomed path led straight from the Temple to Luke’s front door. A gate sat at the edge of the house’s front lawn, but it was ornamental, always remaining open as a symbol that no matter the hour, Luke would always welcome his students inside.

Though more opulent a residence than that of the Jedi Knights of the past, the small house was relatively modest, reflecting the family who lived there. Two floors, two bedrooms for the family, and one for guests, a refresher on each level, a combination kitchen and dining room, a small living room, an office for Luke’s wife, a front and back lawn, various charge ports for Artoo, toys scattered every which way by Luke’s daughter, and a garage that usually housed Luke’s X-Wing, but that night sat empty.

“When’s Daddy coming home?” Rey Skywalker – the youngest resident of the home – asked as her mother tucked her into bed.

“Twenty-two days,” Felicity Rhiaon Skywalker shook her head with an amused smirk. “One less from the amount I told you when you asked last night.”

Rey adored her father, and hated whenever Luke had to leave her behind. Felicity always insisted to Rey that neither of her parents would ever abandon her, but Rey was five and not quite mature enough yet to understand. Luke would always laugh whenever his wife told him of Rey’s uncertainty and say that there was nothing more they could do at that time, and that it did only made the reunions all that much better.

“When did he go away?” Rey asked.

“For reasons that would only bore you,” Felicity answered.

“Aunt Leia Senate stuff?”

“Aunt Leia Senate stuff,” Felicity nodded. “Now enough questions. It’s time to go to sleep.”

“But you and Daddy say to never be afraid to ask questions.”

“Yes, but Daddy and I also know when you’re only using questions to delay going to sleep.”

“I’m not doing that,” Rey tried to look as innocent as possible.

“Sweetheart, I gave you that false innocence look. Don’t you dare try using it against me.”

Rey pouted, “How come it works when Daddy looks at you like that?”

“Uh… I’ll tell you when you’re older,” Felicity hastily answered. “Now go to sleep.”

“But I’m not tired!” Rey’s declaration might have been convincing had it not been concluded with an enormous yawn.

“Sure you aren’t,” Felicity dryly replied.

“Okay, I might be a little sleepy,” Rey confessed. “But I would be even sleepier if I heard a story.”
Felicity shook her head and smiled, “Fine, one story but then you sleep. It’ll be short, and I pick the story to ensure it is. We’re not having another ‘Mommy, tell me the entire story of Anakin Skywalker’ incident.”

“Deal,” Rey settled into her bed.

“Alright,” Felicity tucked Rey in, “how about I tell you about the time I led the team that stole the plans to the first Death Star?”

Seven hooded figures stood on the edge of the forest surrounding Temple Village.

Their focus was directed on the dormitory and handful of houses where the other Jedi lived. But one of those hooded figures – a mere sixteen-year-old boy – had his eyes locked upon the Skywalker residence.

It was a place he once called home – or at least the place he lived. The house was also the dwelling of the two people he hated most in the universe: Rey and Felicity Rhiaon Skywalker.

“You’re certain they’re alone?” one of the hooded figures asked the boy.

“Positive,” the boy nodded. “Uncle Luke’s- I mean, Skywalker’s presence in the Force is too great for me to miss. The girls are alone.”

“This is your chance to prove yourself to us, Kylo,” another hooded figure said. “If this information is wrong-”

“It’s not wrong!” Kylo snapped. “I’ve upheld my end of the bargain, and I expect that you’ll keep up your end.”

“We have an understanding then,” the first hooded figure said. He looked behind himself at the others and declared, “Knights of Ren! Tonight we cleanse the universe of this hypocritical, archaic teaching of the Force. If Kylo’s information proves to be correct, we will accept him into our ranks as our most junior Knight, Kylo Ren. Knights of Ren, do whatever you wish to the other Jedi, but remember that the daughter of Luke Skywalker must die! As for his wife, Rhiaon, our newest member has claimed the right to end her life. Do not fail me, Knights!”

Had this moment been from a story, the battle cry would have been accented with a thunderclap.

“After nearly a month of hiding out on Jakku and working for that terrible Unkar Plutt, Diego and I were finally able to contact the Alliance and transmitted the battle plans to your Aunt Leia,” Felicity concluded her story.

“Then what happened?” Rey asked as if she had not heard the story a thousand times before.

“Well, the Alliance sent a pilot called Shara Bey to come pick us up. Diego and I were taken to a medic ship where we recovered from the mission and mourned the deaths of our other team members. Diego finally admitted that he had respect for me, and we became the best of friends.”

“And what happened to the Death Star plans?”

Felicity shot her daughter a look, “You know very well what happened to the plans. They went to Daddy, who, with Uncle Han’s help, rescued Aunt Leia and brought the plans to the Alliance. But that’s another story for another night. Now, enough, Rey. It’s bed time. No more stories, no more
questions, just close your eyes and go to sleep.”

“Fine,” Rey crossed her arms and slumped back against her pillow with an adorably pouty look.

“Goodnight, Sweetheart,” Felicity laughed and kissed Rey’s forehead. Rey reluctantly kissed her mother’s cheek as Felicity gave the covers a once over, pulling and smoothing the sheets to ensure Rey would be warm and comfortable. “I’ll see you in the morning.”

“Night, Mommy.”

Felicity made her way to the door and was about to push the button to turn off the lights when suddenly Rey spoke.

“Mommy?” Rey’s voice was different from a moment before. It was small and sad, as if she was afraid to pose the question that had been gnawing away at her mind for weeks, “Why did Ben leave?”

Felicity’s mouth went dry. How could she possibly explain to Rey what had happened to their family?

“Ben…” Felicity began reluctantly. “Ben decided he had to go away for a while. He was having some trouble with accepting Daddy’s teachings of the Force.”

“Like you?”

“No,” Felicity shook her head. “Not like me.”

Felicity’s doubts about the extent of the Force’s reach had become something almost legendary after her marriage to Luke. The Jedi Grandmaster’s wife rejecting the destiny aspect of the Force yet still having a healthy marriage with said Grandmaster was almost too hard to believe. But Luke and Felicity had long ago discussed her reasons for her beliefs and learned how to live with opposing views.

Ben Solo’s views on the other hand, were a little too hard to swallow.

Felicity sighed, “Rey, what happened with Ben is too complicated for you to understand right now.”

Rey scowled, “You and Daddy say that all the time. I’m not stupid!”

“No one said you were but there are some things about the past that you might not be able to grasp just yet. It’s why the night I told you about Grandfather Skywalker that story took so long.” Felicity muttered to herself, “Maybe if Luke hadn’t insisted on me editing out so much. Whatever happened to let’s never lie to Rey, Felicity? Or was him saying a certain point of view nearly destroyed me just a load of-”

Felicity suddenly remembered Rey was staring at her.

“What I’m trying to say is that we will explain everything when you get to be a little older. Kind of how Daddy won’t let you learn lightsaber until you’re older. We know nothing bad is going to intentionally happen, but you haven’t grown enough to know how to handle things properly and you might accidentally get hurt. But I promise you, Rey, neither Daddy or I will ever hold back information from you because we want you to get hurt. Do you understand?”

Rey gave a small nod, “Yes, Mommy.”
Felicity sighed, weighing her next course of action, “Maybe… maybe when Daddy gets home, you, me, and him can sit down and have a talk about Ben. Think you can wait that long?”

“Twenty-two days?”

“Twenty-two days.” Felicity pressed the button to turn off the lights and whispered, “Goodnight, Sweetheart. I love you.”

“I love you too, Mommy,” a voice in the darkness called back.

Felicity smiled, comforted by the thought that her daughter was nestled safe and sound under the protective covers of her bed.

Felicity never dreamed that hours later she would be woken by Rey’s shriek as she was forcibly dragged kicking and screaming from the safety of those covers.

“Come on, come on!” Luke banged his mechanical hand against the computer of his X-Wing. The words Transmission Failed blinked mockingly at him from the screen.

Luke was not at home the night the Knights of Ren attacked. The Knights of Ren had timed it perfectly; they had waited for Luke to leave the small Jedi settlement without his protection. It happened the midnight of the eighth day of a month long meeting between Luke and the Senate determining the extent of Jedi authority as a governmental agent. Luke had been preparing for the meeting for over a year, and thus his focus was not on protecting his students and family.

What they didn’t plan on was Luke coming home early.

Luke had been woken at the crack of dawn by a Force Vision of the Temple of Rornian burning, and the residents of Temple Village slaughtered on a rainy battlefield. Immediately Luke had tried to contact Felicity, but found communications had been blocked to their home. He had spent the next hour trying every possible means of communication to Temple Village, but nothing could get through.

With some profuse apologies to the Senate, Luke had immediately jumped into his X-Wing with Artoo and set a course for home.

“Artoo, try the transmission again!” Luke ordered sharply, his voice getting more desperate.

He waited nervously as Artoo attempted to make communication with any device on Rornian, but once again was met with failure. Despite the consistent results, Luke had been trying non-stop his whole journey home to find some way to communicate with Rornian.

“Someone must have hacked into the communication center blocked the channels,” Luke muttered to himself as the words Transmission Failed refused to leave his screen. “Artoo keep trying, but connect me back with Leia in the meanwhile.”

Artoo gave a few beeps, and after a minute of crackling over the radio, a familiar voice was transmitted into Luke’s headset.

“Luke, this is Leia,” his sister’s voice was perfectly political – worried enough to show she cared, but strong enough to broadcast that she wasn’t shaken into a helpless wreck. “Have you had any luck?”

“Negative,” Luke replied. “I’m still being blocked. Have you gotten a hold of anyone to check things out?”
Unfortunately, Luke had no one he could ask to go check on Temple Village while he raced to get back. Temple Village was the only place on the planet Rornian inhabited with sentient creatures, and the only other body in the Rornian Star System was a small uninhabited moon orbiting Rornian. The surrounding systems had no one friendly to the Jedi Order, as since the opening of the Rornian Jedi Temple, the First Order had been overtaking the surrounding systems, getting uncomfortably close to Luke and his students. It was an action Leia heavily warned Luke about, but only once it had become a problem did Luke regret not doing anything about it.

“None that can reach them yet,” Leia answered. “I’ve got both Wedge Antilles and Diego Nalto en route, and Han and I will set off in about an hour – I’ve just finished cleaning up the political mess you left behind and the *Falcon* is… well, being the *Falcon*.”

“Sorry about leaving you with such a hassle regarding the Senate,” Luke apologized. “It’s just the vision-”


“Thirty minutes.”

“Alright, keep me updated on the situation.”

“I will,” Luke promised. “And if you don’t hear from me in an hour-”

“I’ve already got Republic troops on standby,” Leia cut in knowingly. “But I do hope this is only a false alarm.”

Luke sighed, “Me too.”

“Good luck, Luke. May the Force be with you.”

“And with you,” Luke ended the transmission as he pulled out of hyperspace and Rornian came into view. “Artoo begin the landing cycle. Cut off any unnecessary processes, and get us home is quickly as possible.”

The attack on Temple Village was so horrifying, Rey would block out most of her memories of that night. Even years later, when she began to uncover the truth of her past and the things her father had hidden from her, there were still parts of that night she could never recall.

Rey didn’t know how she went from being dragged out of bed in the dead of night to laying on the training field. Rain pelted her as she looked around in shock and horror. The bodies of her friends and Daddy’s students laid unmoving around her with horrible bloody injuries.

Frantically she crawled over to the nearest person, a Zygerrrian named Zena Halcorr. Zena was one of Daddy’s best fighters and had helped him recruit nearly half the Order.

Rey turned Zena over. Zena felt cold and had a large slash across her chest. Rey was young enough to understand injury, but as Zena’s eyes stared unseeing at the stars above, Rey didn’t understand the signs of death.

To her, death was a foreign concept. She knew of death: both Daddy and Mommy’s parents were dead, and so was Mommy’s brother, a man Rey was supposed to call Uncle Brendan. Daddy’s teachers Masters Yoda and Kenobi were dead. The Evil Emperor Palpatine was dead. Mommy’s friends, Ji-Dan, Riz, and Gunner from her team to steal the Death Star plans were dead. Uncle Han often said if they hadn’t heard from Uncle Lando in several months, that probably meant he was
dead (or at least in trouble.) But Rey had never encountered real death before. To her, death was simply a person going away, never to be found again.

But in that moment, as she held the shoulders of Zena Halcorr, Rey was forced to face the reality of death. Death was not someone disappearing – unless you were like Grandpa Anakin, or Master Kenobi – death was an ending. A shell left behind, and an entire life coming to an abrupt halt. It was undignified, it was never by choice, and it could never be reverse.

Zena Halcorr was just gone.

“No!” Rey being so young couldn’t accept it. She shook Zena’s still body hard, “Wake up! Wake up, Master Halcorr!”

Zena would never wake.

But there was another thing that Rey failed to understand; her screaming for Zena to wake up had attracted attention.

“Get down!” someone screamed at her.

Rey spun around to just in time to see a red lightsaber drive through the back of a Jedi Padawan named Genko.

“NO!” Rey screamed in terror as Genko fell to the ground, unmoving like Zena.

Lost and disoriented, Rey rose to her feet and looked to see Genko’s source of death. Seven black clad figures stood before her in the rain, slaughtering every man, woman, and child they could find.

A loud clap of thunder rang out as the rain fell upon the training field, washing away the stains of blood. In the distance, Rey saw the Jedi Temple burning, as well as her home on the slope.

Looking around wildly, Rey could not see her mother anywhere. In fact, the only people in sight were the seven black figures. Of course, taking another look around at the bodies, Rey knew that there weren’t enough for everyone in Temple Village to be dead… but the number of missing people was very small.

Rey was at the complete mercy of the seven figures.

“MOMMY! WHERE ARE YOU?” Rey screamed for her mother, too young to understand the danger of her actions.

The figure whose red lightsaber had ended the life of Genko looked to her. Rey took a few steps back in fear. For some reason, the figure seemed familiar.

He started forward at her, and Rey could sense his intentions were of the Dark Side.

Pathetically raised her arms to shield her face from the figure, meekly withdrawing. She barely registered that between her tears she was softly begging the boy to spare her life.

“Please, no!”

The figure backed her away from the battlefield until she was pinned against a trunk at the edge of the treeline. A path to her left led deep into the dark forest. It was a path she knew Mommy and Daddy had forbidden her from going down alone, but in that moment it was her only escape. If only she could get around the dark figure.
“Rey,” the monster said in a mechanical voice that Rey couldn’t recognize, yet still felt familiar something, “I’m sorry. This isn’t personal.”

“NO!” Rey screamed as the monster raised his lightsaber.

The monster was suddenly ripped backwards, crashing back to the ground.

Rey frowned, looking around in confusion before setting her eyes on a glorious sight. Daddy’s second-in-command, Jedi Master, Reine Agim had Force Pushed the monster away from Rey.

“Rey! Run!” Reine yelled as she rushed towards the monster in black.

Rey glanced at the monster. His helmet had been knocked slightly askew, and he was gently stirring. Black curls spilled out of the helmet, but as Reine screamed again for Rey to run, Rey took her chance. Rey dashed down the forbidden path as fast as her little legs could carry her.

The monster who called himself Kylo Ren pushed himself off the ground. He fiercely swung his saber at Reine as she advanced on him, trying to drive him away from Rey.

Kylo’s cousin had disappeared into the dark forest, and unfortunately his helmet made it difficult to see through the moonlit branches. With a growl, he pushed Reine back and ripped off his helmet. Tossing it to the ground, he decided it would be better if her just came and collected it again later.

“LOOK!” one of the Knights of Ren shouted.

Everyone looked up. A familiar X-Wing had appeared in the sky, and was preparing to land.


Kylo frowned, “How did he know to come back?”

Reine and Kylo looked at each other. The same thought went through their minds.

Kylo was quicker, slashing Reine across the abdomen before she could defend herself. She stumbled back, clutching at her wound. It was not fatal… but it was only a matter of time before it would be.

Smirking at her, Kylo told Reine, “Tell my Uncle I said hello.”

Then dashed down the path after Rey.

Reine looked helplessly after the boy she used to call Ben. She didn’t have much time; the wound was already getting to her. There was no way she could both save Rey, and find Luke in time to help him. Weighing her options frantically, blood seeped her tunic and began staining her arm as if to say make your choice NOW.

So she did. She knew that the forest had enough twists and turns for Rey to be able to shake off Ben for a while. Luke was the priority; he needed help. He needed to know what had happened, and where the survivors were.

Reine turned in the direction of Luke’s X-Wing, and made a run for it.

She only prayed that Luke would be able to find Rey before Ben did.

Chapter End Notes
Ok, I know what you’re all thinking. Isn’t this supposed to be Luke in the Force Awakens? Why aren’t we in the events of the Force Awakens? I will admit that the Force Awakens material doesn’t actually start up until roughly chapter eight as there’s a lot of backstory to set up. I really feel like I need to show how Luke got separated from Rey, how she ended up on Jakku, why Kylo freaks out at hearing about a girl on Jakku, why Luke wouldn’t go looking for Rey, and how Rey could be left behind for so long. So, I’m sorry if you have to wait a while for the actual Force Awakens material, but I’m aiming for shorter chapter for this fic that I hope it doesn’t end up taking too long to get there.
Lost to Flame

Chapter Summary

Luke returns to find his life's work has literally gone up in flame. The only question left is where are Rey and Felicity?

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

The Long Way Home

Chapter Two

Lost to Flame

Luke could see the flames from the Temple the second he broke atmosphere. His stomach lurched at the sight. Sixteen years of hard work had literally gone up in flame.

How could he have been so stupid? Why would he leave when he knew Ben was out there plotting revenge? Luke had brushed aside the thought of exactly how angry Ben could have been. Ben hadn’t left over much, but it was the culmination of the Dark that had been building in him over the years.

As Luke stared at the Temple, another flame flickered in the distance. The Skywalker Residence too was burning. For the second time in his life, Luke had returned to find his home burnt down. He prayed that he would not find his wife and daughter in the same condition he found his aunt and uncle.

The scene before him became clearer as his ship came ever closer to the ground. Had he not have been locked in the cockpit of an X-Wing, Luke would have vomited. Flames, blood, and bodies littered the village. Everything Luke had worked for was gone in the most violent way possible. Even worse, it was clear that the attack was targeted to Luke specifically. Only his temple and home had been set on fire; the rest of the buildings looked fine on the outside. Luke feared what he would find on the inside: especially in the dormitory and residences.

Luke felt like he had been stabbed. No, not stabbed. Something much different.

It felt like his hand had been cut off.

Yes, an important part of him had been violently removed, and there was no way to return it. Sure, he could start anew and replace it, as he had replaced the hand he had really lost, but it would never be the same as before. A part of him was gone forever.

“Artoo, contact Leia!” Luke ordered. “Tell her to send the troops immediately.”

But Artoo beeped back that he couldn’t get out a signal. Luke’s communications were being blocked.

“Alright, when we land I want you to get to the Communication Center and stop whatever’s
blocking signals to and from the planet.”


“No, Artoo, you can’t come with me!” Luke snapped. “I need you at the Communication Center.”


“Leave the attackers to me, and do what I tell you to!” Luke sighed, taking a minute to calm himself, “I’m sorry, I shouldn’t take this out on you, but I need you to listen to me. Please, Artoo.”

Artoo bleeped again.

“I’ll be fine. Please, go.”

Artoo let out a mechanical noise that sounded very much like a sigh, and then sounded his agreement.

“Alright, prepare for touch down.”

Rey ran as fast as she could, darting and weaving through the dark branches. She had no idea where she was going. The monster was long gone, and she could barely see a thing, but still, she ran.

A Knight of Ren was waiting for Luke. Luke had barely unbuckled his seatbelt when Zhan Ren fired a blast at the ship.

Luke pulled his saber from his belt, and ignited the brilliant emerald blade as he jumped from the cockpit. A crimson blade locked with his before Luke’s feet had even touched the ground.

“Jedi scum!” Zhan spat, pressing forward his advance.


Artoo beeped at Luke as he was lowered from the ship. He rolled straight up to Zhan and zapped him in the leg.

“Stupid, Astro Droid!” Zhan clutched his tingling leg.

He moved to strike at Artoo, but Luke swung at him, causing Zhan to leap back. Artoo let out a raspberry at the Knight Ren before rolling away at top speed.

Zhan was a strong fighter, sparring and clashing fiercely with the Jedi, but he was no match for Luke Skywalker. Every attack was met with a solid defense. Every swing was met with a carefully timed dodge. Though Zhan’s saber moves swung forward wildly, Luke’s footwork was stronger. Zhan hadn’t realised that Luke was forcing him backward until Zhan was pinned against a tree with Luke’s blade an inch from his throat.

“Kylo wasn’t joking about you,” Zhan growled. “You are a skilled warrior.”

“I have no intention of killing you,” Luke calmly stated. “I don’t kill unless it’s in defense. Instead you’re going to answer a few questions. Who are you, and why are you here?”

Zhan smirked, “You’re an honourable man. Too bad honour wasn’t enough to save your family.”


Pain shot through Luke’s wrist as something stabbed him. Luke looked down; Zhan had thrust a small viroblade into the circuitry of Luke’s false hand. He tried to move his artificial limb, but it would not respond.

“Think I might take the other one off,” Zhan smirked as he pinned Luke’s left hand against the tree. “Take a little trophy.”

Luke tried to fight back. He used the Force to push at Zhan with his left hand, but Zhan pinning it rendered the attack mostly useless. Luke tried to shove at him, but Zhan was a man made broad by muscle, and Luke could not get the advantage. He considered kicking at Zhan, but if he lost his balance, Luke has good as dead.

Screams filled the air as the viroblade bit into Luke’s flesh.

Luke heard a familiar snap-hiss and an arc of yellow-green light swung across, cleaving Zhan’s head from his neck.

Zhan’s body dropped to the ground, and Luke saw Reine standing before him. She held her ignited lightsaber in her right hand, as her left arm tightly gripped her torso. Reine smiled at Luke, but there was a pain in her eyes and her stature looked weak.


Luke rushed forward and caught her a second before she hit the ground.


“I-” Reine couldn’t find the words. So she winced, and moved her left arm away from her body.

Luke’s eyes went wide as they set on the large, bloody lightsaber gash.

“It’s the Knights of Ren,” Reine said, struggling to hold on to life for a few more minutes. “I’m sorry, Luke. I’ve failed you, Master Skywalker.”

“No!” Luke cried out. “No, Reine! You’ll be fine!”

Of all the Jedi that could have come stumbling into his arms that night, why did it have to be Reine?

Reine had been the first Jedi Luke ever recruited. A willowy brunette with light eyes, Reine too had fought in the Rebellion. Like with Felicity, Luke didn’t meet Reine until after the Empire had fallen. About a month after the Battle of Endor, Reine had awkwardly approached Luke, having been introduced through a friend of a friend.

“It’s an honour to meet you, Master Skywalker,” Reine had said as she and Luke shook hands.
“I’ve heard a deal about you.”

“Thank you, Miss Agim,” Luke had nodded at her. “What can I do for you today?”

“Well, this is sort of awkward, but... I think I might be Force Sensitive.”

Force Sensitive she was indeed. Reine had had her suspicions for years, and after hearing of Luke’s exploits had debated whether or not to approach him for training. She eventually settled to wait until the Empire was defeated when it would be safe for her to train as a Jedi.

Reine became Luke’s best friend among the Jedi, and served as his faithful second-in-command. Often she found herself in charge of Temple Village while Luke was away, and in fact had been the first person to move into residence.

She had been very much a guinea pig for Luke as he learned how to pass on what he had learned about the Jedi and the Force. It had been a lot of trial and error, but Reine had been patient and a quick learner, eventually being the first permitted to take on a padawan. Luke had rewarded her by constructing the very first house of Temple Village specifically for Reine, and it had gone up before even the dorms.

Of all the Jedi, Reine was the last person Luke wanted to see dying in his arms from a lightsaber wound.

“It’s alright, Luke,” Reine smiled gently at him. “I’ll be alright. I’m going to be one with the Force.”

“No, there has to be something I can do to save you!” Luke urged.

Reine shook her head, “Luke, please listen to me. You cannot save me, but there are others you might yet. Not everyone has died tonight. Your family might be safe.”

“My family?”

“Zhan was taunting you,” Reine explained. “Rey isn’t dead, and I don’t think Felicity is either. Some survivors have gathered in the training gym. I think I saw Felicity among them.”

“They’re not at home?” Luke felt a small weight taken off his shoulders. “Reine, what happened tonight? How do you know Rey isn’t... one with the Force?”

Luke couldn’t bring him to utter the horrid word “dead” in relation to his daughter.

“I saw her,” Reine replied. “She’s here, in the woods. The Knights of Ren attacked her. I tried to save Rey from them, and she ran off into these woods. You have to find her! She’s in danger! I couldn’t stop him from going after her.”

“Who?”

“Ben.”

With one word, Luke felt his world come crashing down.

“Ben?” Luke whispered. “No, he couldn’t have-”

“He did,” Reine cut Luke off. “And he went after Rey.”

Reine had started to gasp for air.

Luke felt Reine shift in his arms as her drooped shut.

“What? What, Reine?” Luke shook the woman in his arms forcefully, trying to keep her alive. “What do you want me to know?”

Reine gave Luke a soft smile, “It has been an absolute honour serving with you.”

And with that, Reine was gone.

Tears blurred Luke’s vision as he held the still body of his very first student. He felt like he was twenty-three again, and standing at the pyre of his father. Luke mourned Reine’s passing, but felt joy that she had become one with the Force.

“Rest in peace, my friend,” Luke whispered, drawing the lids over her eyes.

Gently Luke laid her body next to tree, making a mental note to come back for her and give Reine a proper burial. He gave himself a minute to collect himself and process all that had just happen, and then went straight into action.

Luke opened the cargo hold of his X-Wing and retrieved a large grey bag. After far too many instances of kidnapping, crash landings, and other ridiculous adventures that came with being a Skywalker, Luke and Felicity had taken to stashing bags of emergency supplies all over Temple Village. Luke carried on such bag in his X-Wing at all times.

It contained everything a person needed to survive, as well as various Luke, Felicity, and Rey specific items. One of Luke’s items was an emergency hand repair kit. Somehow the idea of stab Luke Skywalker in the artificial hand had become very popular over the past decade.

After a quick fix of his hand, Luke threw the kit back in the bag. He summoned Reine and Zhan’s lightsabers to him. He couldn’t allow the Knights of Ren to use them against his students, and surely more Knights would come to the area when Zhan didn’t return. He put the sabers in the bag and tossed it into the cockpit.

Luke quickly checked over the ship to see if anything could prevent a quick getaway. He tried not to think about the limited seating.

When Rey had been born, Felicity insisted that Luke modify his X-Wing to include a second seat facing backwards. It had taken a ridiculous amount of money and work, and if the X-Wing didn’t hold such sentimental value to Luke, he might have just bought a new ship. But it all paid off and now two people could fit and make a quick getaway if needed. There had never been a question that Rey would automatically get the back facing seat, but Luke and Felicity tended to avoid discussing which one of them wouldn’t get a seat at all. They hoped never to be forced to decide, but as they were Skywalkers and Fate seemed to hate them, Luke found himself potentially having to answer that question.

It was then Luke remembered what Reine had told him.

Rey was in danger.

Luke summoned his lightsaber from where it laid on the rain sodden ground. His eyes darkened as they set on the pitch black woods before him. Gripping his lightsaber, finger hovering over the button to ignite it, Luke dashed into the forest.
He prayed he’d find Rey before it was too late.

Rey couldn’t run any further. Her legs were on fire, and she wanted to throw up.

Certain that the monster was gone, she came to a halt and took in her surroundings. She had absolutely no idea where she was. Rain continued to pour down hard. All around her were tall tree and sounds of unknown forest creatures. She was deep in the forest.

And she was completely lost.

She stood, shivering. How would Mommy ever find her now? There she recalled Master Zena Halcorr and felt her stomach drop. Was Mommy even alive?

Deep in the forest she heard the sounds of war. The ping of blasters. The sizzle of lightsabers. The cries of the wounded. Death.

Rey burst into tears. She couldn’t help it; the image of Mommy laying still and unseeing on the ground, skewered by a red lightsaber haunted her.

She couldn’t understand. How could this happen? Mommy tucked her into bed and told her to sleep. Mommy and Daddy always promised that they’d keep her safe in her bed.

Then the monsters had dragged her out of that bed. Why hadn’t Mommy saved her? Had they killed Mommy in her own bed? Mommy and Daddy had never promised they’d be safe in their own beds.

Rey dropped to the ground, and hugged her knees to her chest as she cried. She wanted Daddy. Why wasn’t he here? He would tell her if Mommy was okay. He would hug her and kiss her and make the monsters go away. He would make sure she could be safe in her own bed.

She didn’t hear the footsteps running towards her.

Then behind her, a voice.

That voice.

“REY!”

Rey’s head jerked up. Someone spoke behind her. Calm, kind, and eerily familiar.

It was Daddy.

The intense joy Luke experienced when he set eyes on Rey made him feel as if he could burst.

“REY!” Luke couldn’t help but cry out. He regretted it in an instant. Someone could have heard him.

Rey’s head jerked up, and she wildly looked around, glazed eyes desperately scanning the dark gaps between the slender trees, trying to penetrate the darkness.

Luke wanted to run to her; sweep her up into his arms, carry her away from there, and never let her go again. But the clashing of weapons in the distance kept him in reality. Ben was nowhere to be found, and frankly Rey was so deep into the forest it would be almost impossible to find her. Luke was even surprised he found her in the first place.

Luke knew what he had to do; even if it would be one of the hardest things he ever did in his life.

It was a stupid plan to leave her behind, but what other choice did he have?

Stay behind with her? He had to help his students and find Felicity.

Take her with him? Oh, yeah, take her to the scene of fire and death. That’ll end well.

Take her to his X-Wing? Everyone had seen his arrival. They would find her far too easily.

Leaving her behind was best of a group of terrible options.

His little Rey whipped around to face him. Luke’s heart broke as he saw Rey’s sadness and fear shining through her mother’s eyes. It was night and too dark for Rey to see him, but she was strong with the Force, and Luke knew she could feel his presence.

“Where are you?” Rey started running towards him.

Luke wanted nothing more than to pick her up in his arms and whisk her away to safety. But the others needed him and Luke needed to know she was safe. He knew that if he allowed himself to hold her, he would never let her go.

“I’ll come back, sweetheart,” Luke tried to keep his voice calm and level. Rey was far too young to understand. “I promise.”

Rey did not want Daddy to come back. She wanted Daddy to stay.

“I’m here! Right here! Where are you?” Rey yelled, trying to find him.

Unwilling to taunt Rey any further, Luke rushed towards the battle. But he could not avoid the desperate pleading screams that followed him.

“I’M HERE, DADDY! I’M HERE! COME BACK! PLEASE, DADDY! COME BACK!”

It haunted Luke to think those could have been the last words she ever said to him.

“I love you too, Mommy.”

If Felicity had to chose the last words her daughter ever said to her, those words would have been perfect.

But not when her daughter was only five years old.

“Any sight?” Felicity’s military training had kicked in, and she requested the information as if on a battlefield… which, she sort was.

“Negative,” Gavyn Kene shook his head as ghosts shone behind his eyes. “No sign of anyone but you and I.”

Hauled up in the nearly empty cemetery that sat on the southern edge of town, Gavyn and Felicity held onto the hope that they weren’t the final survivors. They prayed that their families would be safe, and held onto the hope the bloomed when they had set eyes on a familiar X-Wing landing in the forest.

“Felicity, you know that Master Luke is the best bet to find Rey,” Gavyn said softly.
Tears shone in Felicity’s eyes as she gave a small nod, “I know.”

Crouching next to Gavyn, Felicity felt selfish at being so terrified for Luke and Rey. She still had hope that her family was alive, but Gavyn… They had already discovered the bodies of Gavyn’s family. Zena Halcorr, his wife, had died on the training field. Alyla Kene, his sister, was slaughtered in the Meditation Gardens. Worst of all, his thirteen-year-old daughter, Miri, laid dead on the floors of the Healing Quarters.

Felicity could see the fight had gone out of Gavyn. He clutched his lightsaber as if it were the last thing holding him to the world. His shoulders were dropped and he looked tired.

It was a striking image. Gavyn had been one of the first Jedi Felicity had met. It was a long and complicated story, but Gavyn, Zena, and several others had been slaves that Felicity and Luke helped free and escape Zygerria. Gavyn had always been a fighter. Even during the direst of circumstances, he would often laugh at the others and urge them to push just a little more.

To see Gavyn looking so broken made Felicity struggle to find any hope in their situation. She had no doubt that if she asked him, he would allow himself to be killed so she may escape.

“Look at me, Gavyn,” Felicity ordered. In that moment she was not Felicity Rhiaon Skywalker, mother, wife, architect, and emissary. She was Rogue One, and she would always get at least one person out alive. “When I say ‘now’ we’re going to make a break for the forest. We’re going to fight with every last drop of energy we have, and we’re going to find Luke.”

“There’s only two of us, Felicity,” Gavyn replied. “Seven already overwhelmed more than twenty Jedi. What chance do we have?”

Felicity grabbed his shoulder, “I’ll tell you the same thing I told Diego Nalto when we had to escape the Death Star. If we can’t get out of this alive, then damn it, they’ll remember that we went down fighting! Are you with me, Kene?”

Gavyn pulled out a blaster from his belt holster, “Let’s do this, Rhiaon!”

They came out firing. Gavyn deflected shots with his lightsaber in his right hand, while firing at the Knights of Ren with a blaster in his left.

Felicity had blasters in both hands. She had learned from one of her Death Star teammates – appropriately nicknamed Gunner – to load herself with as many weapons she could. When either the gas cartridge or power cell died on her blaster, Felicity tossed it aside and pulled out another.

Though neither said it, both Felicity and Gavyn knew they had no hope of making it to the forest. It was a glorious death they sought, and sure enough, a glorious death is what Gavyn got. For twenty minutes, Gavyn duelled two Knights of Ren with his lightsaber.

Felicity had her own Knights to deal with – three to be exact – so she couldn’t help Gavyn. When he was finally run through, Felicity screamed in anger, but secretly she smiled on the inside. Gavyn died with a grin on his face.

Without even thinking, Felicity drew a blaster and shot dead Gavyn’s murderer.

Victory was sweet, but fleeting. Suddenly she realised she was alone with four Knights of Ren.

“What do we do?” Iago Ren asked their leader. “Kylo Ren has already claimed her life.”

“Kylo Ren has had every chance to kill her tonight,” Cade Ren, the leader, replied. “He has earned
his place as one of us but he has failed to collect his bounty. He forfeits the right to take her life.”

“Cade’s right,” Baku Ren agreed. “She killed Forr Ren. She must die.”

“No!” Jaek Ren objected. “We gave him the right to end her life! We must honour that.”

As the Knights bickered among themselves, none noticed Felicity pulling out her blaster. They surrounded her in a circle so she couldn’t make a break for it. She knew they were about to kill her no matter how strongly Jaek was objecting. But damn it, she sure as hell would go down fighting.

In a flash she had her blaster pointed at the leader. Felicity fired at Cade.

The blast hung still in the air.

Felicity’s eyes widened as Cade held the bolt in place. She tried to fire again, but found she couldn’t move a muscle. Iago was reaching toward her, holding her in place.

“Killed by her own bolt,” Iago taunted. “Wouldn’t that be very poetic?”

“Quite. Don’t worry Missus Skywalker, we’ll be sure to let your husband give you a dignified burial,” Cade taunted, knowing how much Felicity hated being reduced to only Luke Skywalker’s wife.

Felicity glared at Cade. She had always wanted to deliver some epic last words if she were executed, but in that moment she could think of nothing more profound than three simple words.

“Go to hell.”

Cade redirected the bolt, and released it.

Snap-hiss.

An angry cry rang out across the training field and a beam of emerald light swung before Felicity, deflecting the bolt straight into Iago. The Knights of Ren stared in shock as Iago fell down dead, and then turned to the source of the attack.

Standing between Cade and Felicity was a murderous Luke Skywalker.

Yeah, I’ve officially lost control of this story’s length. I’m still not even done what was *supposed* to be chapter one.

Also, yeah, I lifted a few lines from both the adult and junior novelizations.
I Won't Leave You

Chapter Summary

After saving Felicity from the Knights of Ren, Luke must do the hardest thing in his life: tell Felicity to take Rey leave without him.

Chapter Notes

Alright, so since the last update there has been a whole mess of material released that now contradicts the background of this story. I have decided that this will be a whole Alternate Universe called the Rogue Love Verse. This verse contains the stories: The Long Way Home, Definitions of Home, an upcoming story called Beneath the Mask, continuing stories of The Long Way Home covering the events of Episodes Eight and Nine, and probably a few small shorts in the future.

As such, materials such as Bloodline by Claudia Gray and the newly released material for Rogue One are not canon in the Rogue Love Verse. Therefore, keep in mind the following changes:

- Darth Vader being Anakin Skywalker/Luke and Leia's father has public knowledge since shortly after Endor.
- Ben has known basically since birth that Anakin was Vader.
- Luke had a very public life (though not exactly by choice) until shortly after Rey was born.
- Luke lived on Coruscant until a year before Rey was born.
- Leia and Han did in fact live together always while married.
- Han didn’t own a shipping company or become a racing pilot, but to be honest, I’m not sure what he did. Probably things that made the family have a don’t ask, don’t tell policy.
- Leia and Han had constant contact with Luke and Ben while Ben lived on Rornian.
- The Resistance was a Republic approved operation founded by Leia to combat the First Order after footage of Shara Bey’s execution by them was leaked into the public. (More details can be found in Definitions of Home.)
- The backstory of Felicity Rhiaon is (scarily) similar to Jyn Erso’s, but not identical. All information can be found in Definitions of Home, and all relevant points will be mentioned in this story.
- These are the counterparts of the Rogue One characters: Jyn Erso = Felicity Rhiaon, Cassian Andor = Diego Nalto, Bodhi Rook = Riz Drayson, Chirrut = Ji-Dan Hayato, and Baze = Wen “Gunner” Arroyo.
- K-250 does not exist.

Most of this can be found in current and future chapters of Definitions of Home. Now that that’s all settled, enjoy this chapter.
I Won’t Leave You

Luke Skywalker had never felt so angry in his life. He hadn’t even been that angry when he stood in front of the Emperor, having beaten his father into submission. The Knights of Ren had corrupted Luke’s nephew, torn apart his family, slain his students, terrorized his daughter, and had just tried to kill his wife.

In that moment, as Luke stood between Felicity and Cade, he wanted nothing more than their blood. Jaek and Baku exchanged a nervous look as they felt Luke’s anger through the Force, crashing violently against them like waves against a rock. It was so tremendous, even Felicity could feel it bleeding into the Force.

“Hello, Boys,” Luke’s eyes flashed darkly in the glow of his lightsaber. “I believe you forgot to invite me to your little party.”

Cade Ren was unphased, “Stand aside, Skywalker.”

“You don’t actually think I’m going to do that?”

“He does have a point,” Jaek shrugged. “We are trying to kill his wife.”

“Shut up!” Cade snapped.


She couldn’t believe it; Luke had come to save her. Their relationship had never been that of a knight in shining armor and a damsel in distress, but they had grown unafraid of asking each other to help.

Felicity would have resented Luke if he had stolen the glory in a normal First Order battle, but she wasn’t foolish enough to believe she could hold her own against Force Sensitives. No, Felicity was more than willing to pass the buck to Luke. After all, battling Dark Side users was his speciality. But she still kept her blaster primed and pointed at the Knights. No matter the enemy they faced, Luke and Felicity always operated much better as a team than they ever did apart.

Hearing Felicity’s whisper, Luke spared the briefest glance back at her. She was still in the strong pose she assumed to face death, but Luke was happy to see Felicity had relaxed.

Yet there was fear in her eyes.

Luke knew all too well that the only Force Sensitive Felicity had ever feared was Darth Vader. If brought before Palpatine, Felicity probably would have sassed the Emperor all the way to her execution. Felicity didn’t fear the Knights of Ren and would have torn them to shreds in a fair (aka Force powerless) fight.

Then what was it she feared?

Luke reached out into the Force and found his way to the barriers of Felicity’s mind. He gave the barrier a gentle nudge and felt her mind open to him automatically. Over the years, Felicity’s trust of Luke had grown so strong that he no longer needed to vocalize his request to search her mind. One gentle touch and Felicity opened willingly to him.

The cause of Felicity’s fear was forefront in her mind as she relived her memories of that night: Felicity tucking Rey into bed, Felicity waking to Rey’s screams, Felicity racing to Rey’s room, Felicity seeing the pile of blankets on the floor showcasing that their daughter had literally been
dragged out of bed.

Anger flared up again in Luke. They had torn his five-year-old daughter out of bed in the middle of the night? Luke had always sworn to Rey that she would be safe in her bed. He would make the Knights pay for breaking his promise.

Luke shook as he gripped the hilt of his lightsaber tightly. He postured the beam defensively across his body. Luke knew his feelings were wrong: anger and vengeance were not the way of the Jedi. But after all the Knights had done – burning down the Temple, burning down his home, terrorizing his family, and murdering dozens of innocent lives – Luke wanted to tear them apart. It felt like gripping the hilt of his lightsaber was the only thing stopping him from slashing Cade into a million little pieces.

“You have exactly sixty seconds to lower your weapons and step away from my wife,” Luke’s words were ice.

Cade’s face faltered; Luke’s anger was so strong it was almost a physical entity. Luke didn’t notice when even Felicity took a step back from him. She herself wasn’t quite sure if it was out of fear or to simply get out of the splash zone.

“And… And if I don’t?” Cade asked.

Luke’s eyes flicked to Iago Ren laying dead on the ground, “Fifty-five seconds.”

“Luke,” Yoda’s voice suddenly called to him through the Force. “Dangerous feelings, these are. Set them aside, you must. Anger, fear, aggression; the Dark Side of the Force are they.”

“But Master Yoda,” Luke tried to reason into the Force, “the Knights are a threat. They have already done so much damage; I have to stop them from taking what’s left.”

“Stop them, you may,” Yoda replied, “but remember: a Jedi uses the Force for knowledge and defense, never for attack.”

“Forty-five,” Luke hesitated. How was ending Cade’s life not defense?

“Count down all you want,” Cade snarled. He had found new resolve in viewing Iago’s body. Revenge may not be the Jedi way, but it was a powerful motivator in his group, “I’ll be the one laughing when I kill your little wife.”

And Luke understood: he couldn’t stop the Knights by attacking them for murdering his students, he could only stop them by defending his wife.

“I’m afraid you’ll find that you’re both right and wrong,” Luke lowered his saber slightly. He turned and walked towards Felicity who was watching him hesitantly. “You’re wrong in thinking that you’ll be able to kill my wife.”

Felicity frowned at the confident look on her husband’s face. What was he playing at? And why had he given no reaction to the revelation she had lost Rey? Felicity tried not to think of Rey in that moment, trying to keep her mind on the present, but Felicity feared for their daughter while Ben was nowhere to be found.

“And what am I right about?” Cade asked, his eyes following Luke as he settled at Felicity’s side.

Felicity yelped when Luke suddenly pulled her against his hip.
“She’s my wife.”

If it had been anyone but Luke that said it, Felicity would have slapped them. Felicity was no one’s property, least of all some man’s. But Felicity knew Luke like the back of her hand, and she understood that with that one gesture of pulling her against him and declaring his claim on her, Luke was communicating ten different things.

Firstly, it was true, Luke was claiming her to the Knights as his own, but in that case it wasn’t such a bad thing. No matter how hard she tried, the Knights could defeat Felicity. There was no denial of that fact. But they could not defeat Luke, especially if he had someone to back him up. By claiming Felicity to the Knights, he was informing them that if they tried to take her from him, he would destroy them.

Secondly it put them in a better position to fight. Luke held his saber in his dominant left hand, the emerald beam humming as it hovered defensively in front of both of them. At the same time, his free right arm was locked possessively around Felicity’s waist. This meant that Felicity’s right arm was free.

One of the small details Felicity loved about her relationship with Luke was that he was left handed while she favored her right. During fights they could literally stay by each other’s side, each protecting one side for the two of them.

The third thing was that it put them in a position to communicate with each other. True, whispering in that situation could probably be fatal, but Luke and Felicity had long lost their need for whispers. To an extent, Luke could directly speak to Felicity’s mind as long as she was in a reasonable range. Since she was not a Force Sensitive, doing it around other Force users was not a smart idea, and Luke restrained himself, but the duo had another method of communication. After being on one too many adventures gone wrong together, the pair had created their own series of codes communicated entirely by the most discreet of signals. They could convey an entire battle plan without saying a word.

Which led to the fourth thing Luke did with the gesture. Luke lightly traced the letter Resh – the Aurebesh letter for R – against Felicity’s spine. It was their code for “Rey is safe.”

… and yes, sometimes their code was that specific.

The fifth thing came after Luke heard Felicity’s sigh of relief. He could sense that she still worried over the fact that Rey was not physically with Luke, but for the moment knowing Luke had seen her was enough for Felicity. Now that Luke knew Felicity had settled, it was his turn to calm down.

Felicity shot Luke a half glare when he gently tugged the material of her shirt up. He exposed less than an inch of her bare skin to the cold rain, and stroked her soft familiar flesh with his mechanical fingertips.

It may not have been the most appropriate thing in that moment, but Luke couldn’t help himself. Luke needed to feel her, to be certain she was safe and unharmed. After Reine’s death in his arms and denying himself the chance to comfort his daughter, Luke needed to touch his wife.

As he stroked her skin Luke could feel his rage getting replaced with calm and level headedness... and the slight fear that Felicity was going to smack him for this later.

“Sorry,” Luke muttered has he started to move his hand away.

“Did I ask you to stop?” Felicity whispered back.
Luke grinned and replaced his hand on his wife’s hip to Felicity’s satisfaction.

The sixth and seventh messages played off each other. By holding Felicity to him and stroking her side, Luke reassured Felicity that he was there to protect her. On the other side of the coin, it also reassured Luke that she was there to protect him, something she had done nearly as many times as he had in all their time together.

Eighth was the most important thing to Luke: by claiming her, Luke was conveying to the Knights that as long as Felicity was there, Luke would ensure she could escape them. He was more than willing to die to protect Felicity, but he had to know that his sacrifice meant she would be safe.

It was not hard to imagine how Felicity could escape. While the Knights struggled not to show their fear of Luke, neither Cade nor Baku moved to block the gap left by Iago’s fallen body. The Knights knew that the smallest movement could set off Luke and weren’t willing to risk it.

The ninth meaning of the gesture was up to Felicity to convey, and she was more than happy to deliver it.

“He’s right, boys,” Felicity announced to the Knights. “I’m his, but more importantly, he’s mine.”

With a grin and blaster in her right hand, Felicity boldly locked her own free hand around Luke’s muscular torso, staking her claim on the Jedi Grandmaster.

Tenth was the final overall message sent by the duo. How they could look so fierce in the face of death. How they could joke, and smile, and apparently even feel up each other in the middle of a battlefield. But their defenses were not lacking with both sides covered and a near perfect system of communication.

They were a formidable enemy, and above all, they were a team.

“Twenty seconds, Gentlemen,” Luke announced. “This is your last chance. Drop your weapons and surrender.”

“And if we don’t?” Baku challenged.

“Then I’ll remind you of what I did to Forr while my husband reminds you of Iago,” Felicity nodded to the bodies of the fallen Knights of Ren. “Just a quick question, do you prefer burial or cremation?”

Jaek gulped.

“Fifteen seconds,” Luke’s hand ran across Felicity’s back, making a series of marks to communicate his plan to her.

“They’re bluffing,” Cade declared.

“Ten,” Felicity teased as she traced her thoughts on Luke’s plan along his spine.

“I don’t think they’re bluffing,” Jaek’s voice had gone very high.

“We’re not afraid of you,” Baku snarled.

“Five,” Luke said, his hand stroking the one last detail of their plan against Felicity’s shin.

“Guys, I’m a little afraid.”

“Four,” Felicity tapped Luke’s neck to signal she understood the plan.
“Guys?”

“Defensive positions!” Cade ordered.


“Two,” Felicity smiled.

“ONE!” They shouted in unison.

Jaek threw himself to the ground.

Felicity shot Baku, hitting him in the arm while Luke swiped at Cade. Luke missed while Baku’s wound wasn’t fatal. But death had not been their goal: merely distraction, and they had hit their target perfectly.

They ran for the opening where Iago’s body laid. Felicity took the lead, directing Luke towards the trees while firing shots back at the Knights of Ren.

“Switch to blasters!” Cade commanded, grabbing Jaek by the neck and pulling him to his feet. “And get up you!”

Luke trailed behind Felicity, using his lightsaber to deflect the blasts the Knights shot at them. Deflecting the blast of one gunner was hard enough. Deflecting the shots of three people? Luke should have been charging admission to watch the nearly impossible feat.

A blast hit him in the mechanical hand. Luke cried out, and stumbled forward. Unfortunately, the ground was muddy from the thunderstorm, and as he lost balance from the jolt of the shot, he slipped in the mud and smacked against the ground.

“Luke!” Felicity called, turning about face and racing towards him.

“No, Felicity! Run!” Luke called.

But it was too late, she was already at his side.

“Thanks,” Luke said as Felicity pulled him to his feet.

“Anytime,” Felicity winked, responding with their infamous phrase. “Are you okay?”

“I’m fine,” Luke glanced down at his hand. The synthetic skin had been shredded by the blast, and pieces hung limply from the exposed metal skeleton, “Well… Maybe not all of me.”

“Hey, we’ve had this discussion before,” Felicity smirked. “The only parts of you I care about working are your head, your mouth, and your-”

“DOWN!” Luke shoved her shoulder, forcing her to the ground. Lighting his saber, Luke dramatically spun and deflected a blast that if Felicity had stood there a second longer would have nailed her in the head.

The blast bounced off Luke’s lightsaber, and redirected to Jaek. It hit Jaek in the chest, and he fell down dead.

“You know, I kind of liked that one,” Felicity aimed a few shots at the remaining Knights, missing as she clumsily got to her feet. “If he hadn’t murdered all of our friends, I might be sad that he’s dead.”

They took off like a shot, resuming their previous positions of shooting and deflecting. They were down to two Knights, while Ben was still missing in action. Luke had not sensed Ben endangering Rey, so Luke had that small comfort to hold onto.

“Remember the plan,” Luke whispered as he and Felicity crossed into the dark forest.

“Yes, Sir,” Felicity replied in an all too familiar tone that never failed to bring Luke to his knees.

“Is now really the time?” Luke struggled to resist the urge to respond in the usual manner.


“Just turn left,” he spoke to her through the Force so Baku and Cade wouldn’t overhear the direction.

They ran through the forest, and Luke occasionally used the Force to communicate a change in direction. Eventually the voices of Cade and Baku became more distant, and Luke found the terrain more familiar. They were approaching the spot he had left Rey.

Luke suddenly grabbed Felicity and pulled her behind a small patch of trees.


They waited a few minutes, listening to the soft noises of the forest nightlife and their own heavy breathing. There was no sign of any Knight of Ren.

“I’ll check the area,” Felicity pulled out of Luke’s embrace.

“Be careful,” Luke cautioned. He’d rather check himself, but Felicity was a grown woman capable of looking out for the two of them.

“All clear,” Felicity finally declared a few minutes later. “We’re out of danger for now.”


They were in each other’s arms in an instant: kissing, touching, and reassuring each other they were alright.

“Luke,” Felicity groaned, trying to withhold the tears that had been threatening to fall all night. She had gripped the front of his shirt with two hands and pressed him against a tree as she passionately kissed him over and over.

“Are you… all…right?” Luke managed to ask her between breaths. He could not stop kissing her. If their lives weren’t still in danger, he probably would have done something else to her against that tree.

“I’m okay, Sweetheart,” Felicity reassured him, finally ceasing the kissing and just holding him as tightly as she could. “I’m okay. I’m here. I’m safe. I’m alive.”

Felicity buried her head in the crook of his neck as Luke too held onto Felicity as tightly as he could. Luke could feel her tears dripping down his neck, and knew his own tears were returning that favor. Neither of them cared; all Luke cared about with that his beloved wife, Felicity was in his arms.
again.

“I’m alive, Sweetheart,” Felicity whispered. “I’m alive.”


“Luke…” Felicity felt a lump in her throat. She could hardly bear to say the words in her mind, but knew they needed to be spoken. “Luke, I’m afraid.”

Luke couldn’t help but smile. Felicity had been a very guarded person when they first met. Over the course of her life she had lost nearly everyone she loved. As a result, she had put up many barriers to her heart. Her previous relationships struggled to survive when her partners had either ignored her walls or tried to tear them down.

But Luke understood her need of walls, just as he had a few of his own. Their pain had shaped who they were, and their walls were an integral part of their souls. True, Luke was more open and forgiving than Felicity, but that is what made them such a good match. Luke taught Felicity when to let her guard down, while Felicity had taught him when to bring his up.

In the end, Felicity’s relationship with Luke had lasted because instead of tearing down her walls, he had learned where to find the secret passages and side doors to find his way to her heart. No one got to hear when she was sad, broken hearted, or scared. No one but Luke.

So Luke understood how significant Felicity’s admission of fear truly was. It meant that she was unafraid to admit to him that she was afraid.

“Felicity,” Luke whispered, gently stroking her hair. “It’s alright. We’re here together. I’m not going to let anyone hurt you.”

Felicity sniffed, and gave a chuckle, “And I’m not going to let anyone hurt you.”


“Promise,” Felicity kissed him again.

“Better?”


“It’s a good thing you didn’t marry me for my looks then.”

“Actually your looks were probably at least forty percent of the reason I married you.”

Luke raised an eyebrow, “I honestly can’t tell if you’re joking or not.”

“What?” Felicity said. “You can’t blame me. For goodness sake, will you look at yourself?”

“I don’t know how to answer that question.”

“Look, Luke, I know bantering in the face of death is one of our favorite pastimes-”

“We need a new hobby.”

“But we need a plan,” Felicity finished. “Starting with fixing that hand.”

“The synth skin is ruined,” Luke assessed his injury. “And the wiring is pretty shot. I had to fight
Zhan Ren when I landed, and he stabbed me in the hand. I gave it a temporary fix, but the second blast has fried the skin and some of the wiring. The best thing I can do is strip the skin so it doesn’t get in the way, and wear my mechanics bare until I can get a replacement. There’s just one small problem.”

“What’s that?”

“I can’t strip this with one hand.” Luke looked sheepish, “Do you… Do you think you can strip it for me?”

Felicity withheld revulsion. While she didn’t judge Luke for having a mechanical hand, and didn’t mind when he used it to touch her, she wasn’t exactly a fan. Additionally, since Luke’s hand looked so realistic, the thought of Felicity stripping the skin from it made her want to throw up.

“I wouldn’t ask you if I had any other options,” Luke recognized Felicity’s look.

“Luke, what about the sensors? Wouldn’t it feel like I was peeling your skin off?” Felicity muttered, “Add that to the list of sentences I never should have to say but do because I was dumb enough to marry a Skywalker.”

“That’s what you get for marrying for looks. Besides, the sensors aren’t working after the blasts. I can’t feel anything with this hand. Now, please, Felicity?”

“Fine, but you owe me,” Felicity reluctantly pulled a small viroblade off her belt (thank goodness she always had a fully stocked weapons belt in her closet) and began cutting off the fake skin. “I guess you know it’s real love when you are willing to strip a guy’s skin off to help him. Now, where’s Rey?”

“Rey?” Luke repeated, surprised by the change in subject.

“You told me she was safe. Where is she?”

Luke clipped his lightsaber onto his belt, “About a kilometer east.”

“Who’s with her?”

Luke was silent.

“Luke,” Felicity’s voice was perfectly measured as her hazel eyes flicked up coldly at him, “tell me that you did not leave our five-year-old daughter alone in the woods during a massacre.”

“I didn’t have a choice.”

“Luke!”

“What was I supposed to do, Felicity?” Luke questioned. “Bring her further into the fighting where she had the greater risk of dying?”

“You could have left her with someone.”

Luke’s face fell.

“Felicity… There’s no one left,” Luke voice was soft.

Felicity froze.
“No one?” Felicity whispered.

Luke bowed his head, shame enveloping his face. The silent, stillness of the night overtook the pair as the horror of what had happened finally set in. Their home, their friends, everything they had spent the last decade working toward had been taken from them.


As the husband and wife clung to each other, they wept over the loss of their friends.

“At least we have each other,” Felicity struggled to put on a brave face for Luke. She was used to losing the people around her and had learned to mourn later.

Luke was about as experienced as Felicity in the field of loss, but he had the unfortunate habit of pushing his grief aside for a proper moment, and then never would revisit it. Eventually it would grow bit by bit until it overtook him and he lashed out at someone. Felicity had never been particularly bothered by the habit as the person he lashed out against usually deserved it. But after seeing what the Dark Side had done to Ben, and knowing their daughter could suffer the same fate should Luke not properly instruct her to control her temper, Felicity had made it her mission to force Luke to face his emotions as quickly as possible. She refused to lose either him or Rey to the Dark Side, and if that meant Felicity had to put on a strong act for them, then so be it.

“It’s alright, Luke,” Felicity tried to comfort her husband. “Your students died the way they wanted to: defending the Light Side of the Force.”

“But after everything they’d been through, this wasn’t the way they should have died,” Luke replied. His arms were locked around Felicity so tightly, she worried he might accidentally break something. She refused to complain: he was clutching her like he feared she would dissipate if he let go.


When building Temple Village, Luke had been required by the Emissary Office to bring a non-Force Sensitive to Rornian, as well as a medical doctor. Luke had decided to kill two birds with one stone by hiring a non-Force Sensitive doctor. After a rather failed start when Luke was dumb enough to date the first doctor, he hired Doctor Kalonia, a friend of Leia’s.

“Isn’t she at that conference?” Luke tried to keep the desperation from his voice. “That one about the experimental cloning procedure to replace limbs?”

“Yes,” Felicity grinned. “She left a few days ago. She’s expected back next week.”

Luke couldn’t help but laugh as he joyfully pulled Felicity into a kiss, “That’s wonderful! That means at least one person escaped Be-”

The word died in Luke’s throat.

Felicity winced, “I’m so sorry, Luke. This is all my fault. I spent so much time provoking Ben-”

“No, it’s my fault. I should have been more attentive,” Luke sighed, “Felicity… Ben killed Reine. She died in my arms.”
“Tyla Kinall died in mine,” Felicity said. “She helped me escape the house when they set it on fire.”

“You two actually getting along? It’s a miracle.”

“It was for five minutes, Luke. Don’t lose your head.”

Tyla had always had a grudge against Felicity. It was a combination of Tyla’s jealousy that Luke loved Felicity and not her, and the fact that Felicity had very vocal doubts about the Force.

“I guess it literally killed her to be nice to me,” Felicity barely managed a laugh.

A silence fell over the duo as they stood there holding each other.

Then, Luke made a decision.


Felicity frowned, “Go? Go where?”

“The First Order?”

“The Knights of Ren have always been Snoke’s lackeys, and he was the one who corrupted Ben. It’s obvious why they came here.”

Felicity suddenly understood what Luke was telling her.


“No!” Felicity jerked it out of his grasp.

“You have to take Rey and get out of here.”

“We’re not leaving you!”

“We don’t have a choice,” Luke used his extremely calm voice that always annoyed Felicity. It wasn’t fair that someone should sound so peaceful when they were panicked.

“Yes, we do,” Felicity insisted. She lightly gripped Luke’s forearm and hope danced in her eyes, “You can come with us.”

“There’s no room,” Luke shook his head. “The only ship we have access to is my X-Wing. That’s a two seater, Felicity.”

“So what?” Felicity asked. “We can each take a seat, and Rey will sit in my lap.”

“The X-Wing can barely hold two people, it couldn’t fit three of us, let alone bare the weight.”

“Don’t ask me to leave you to die,” Felicity begged. “I’ve left too many people behind to their deaths. I won’t do it to you.”

“Then we condemn Rey,” Luke calmly said. Tear were shining in his eyes, “If we both stay, she does too, and we put her in the line of fire. I have the best chance of the two of us to survive, and I might be able to reason with Ben. Your presence would aggravate him. You’ve already had too
many close calls with death tonight. Please, escape while you still can.”

Felicity threw her arms around Luke’s neck and sobbed into his chest, “I won’t leave you.”


Luke savoured the embrace with a sense of finality. As the time passed, Luke felt increasingly unsure he could bring himself to release her.

“Allowing yourself to let her go is not the same as ceasing to love her,” The ghostly voice of Anakin Skywalker whispered in his son’s ear. “It took me too long to learn that. Do not make my mistake of accepting it when it was too late. In letting her go, you are not asking yourself to permit things to end. You are asking her to live… Even if it means doing it without you.”

Luke sighed: his father was right. No matter how much he wanted Felicity to stay, he couldn’t let that happen.

Luke took a deep breath, and then pulled back from Felicity. He propped two fingers under her chin and tilted her head up. Felicity’s tear filled hazel eyes were locked with own glistening blue orbs.

“I promise you, Felicity,” Luke’s voice was calm, but filled with pain, “I will never leave you. But I cannot always be by your side physically, so you’ll just have to accept my emotional presence. My memory. My promises. You’ll have to trust me that this will not be the end.”


“I love you. I have from the moment I first met you, and I’ll love you even beyond my death. But you have to take Rey and go. It’s our best choice right now. I can handle the Knights of Ren, and you… We both know that you are more capable of making difficult decisions and even sacrifices for Rey’s safety. Decisions… I could never bring myself to commit.”

Felicity winced, closing her eyes as she lowered her head and sobbed. Luke’s words were too true for her to deny.

Luke sighed, making a face not unlike the one he had made upon seeing his father’s unmasked face for the first time: a sympathetic, loving, and pained expression.

He lifted her chin once more, “But that is why I love you. You are strong where I am weak, and we balance each other perfectly. I swear to you, Felicity, this will not be like Brendan. We will see each other again.”

“Promise?” Felicity choked.

“Promise,” Luke sealed it with a passionate lingering kiss.

They poured everything into that kiss. The magnitude of their love, the happiness of their friendship, the firmness of their partnership, the passion of a lover to the person they selected to create a child with, the depth of their promises, and even the sting of the possible finality of their parting.

Then they broke the kiss, they still did not part. They held onto each other, resting their foreheads together, listening to the other’s heavy breathing.

Luke used his flesh hand to stroke a thumb over Felicity’s cheek.

“I love you, Felicity Rhiaon,” Luke whispered, relishing the warmth of her skin.
Felicity ran a loving hand through his soft blond hair, “I love you too, Luke Skywalker. Thank you... Thank you for loving me.”


They embraced one final time, Felicity tightly locking her arms around his neck. Luke reached up and slowly clasped Felicity right hand with his left. Eventually he eased her arms down but did not release their clasped hands.

“Now go,” Luke’s voice quaked as he pressed a kiss to her forehead.

Slowly, Felicity backed out of his embrace, but their hands did not let go.

“Promise me,” Felicity ordered. “Promise me this isn’t goodbye.”

“I promise you, Felicity,” Luke grinned the goofy grin his wife so loved, “we’ll see each other again.”

Felicity gave the smile her husband loved, and let go of his hand.

“Promise me, Luke!” Felicity backed away from him into the treeline towards Rey.

“I promise!” Luke called as she disappeared into the night. “We’ll see each other again! I promise, Felicity. I promise!”

In the years to come, Luke would replay that moment in his mind thousands of times.

He refused to let himself forget the last time he saw his wife.

Luke and Cade were duelling fiercely when they heard it: the confusing scream that changed Luke’s life forever. The scream that led to the one mystery he would struggle to solve: the mystery of how Felicity Rhiaon and Rey Skywalker escaped Rornian.

The scream was faint, but far too familiar for Luke: it was the scream of his daughter.


Luke turned off his saber, and Cade fell to the ground dead. He watched the boy sadly for a moment.

Luke remembered when the young man first came to him. At the time, Cade had been a boy no older than Ben was now. Cade had always been angry and had a thirst for the Dark Side. Luke did his best to curb it, but it was to no avail. He remembered the day Cade had staged a walkout over the announcement Luke would marry a non-Force Sensitive. Luke remembered how Jake Comarila, Zhane Varrs, and Bakura Torven followed Cade Ren, altered their names, and became the first Knights of Ren.

And that’s when Luke remembered: both Baku and Ben were still unaccounted for.
As were Felicity and Rey. Rey, who had just screamed.

Luke tossed Cade’s red saber into the fire that littered the training field. He waited a moment to ensure the saber would catch fire and be destroyed. Luke was so distracted by it, he never noticed the first ship leaving the planet. The very same ship Ben had stolen from the Jedi months ago.

Luke ran for the woods, trying to find where he had left Rey, and hoping Felicity had found her. To his relief and horror, he did find the spot, but there was no one around.

It was the scene that horrified him. The trees had saber slashes on them. There were two marks in the mud that indicated bodies had hit the ground. One was adult shaped and blood was seeped into the mud. The other was child sized. Three sets of footprints – two adult and one child – muddled in a confusing fashion. Eventually all sets led away from the scene: a set of adult prints in one direction, while the child and other adult headed in the other direction. It was hard to tell whether the child prints were accompanied by adult footprints that paralleled the saber marks on the trees or the adult prints that came rushing onto the scene from the direction Luke and Felicity had parted.

Before Luke could puzzle over it some more, he heard another cry from the direction of his X-Wing. Without a thought, he raced towards the scene, but when he arrived, he again found himself too late.

Footprints muddled the scene. Blast marks and saber slashes had hit the trees and the ship. The back hatch was open, and the ladder was lowered. Luke climbed up into the cockpit and was surprised to find two saber slashes over the dashboard, destroying the equipment.

He looked in the back compartment and found the survival bag containing Reine’s lightsaber was gone. Remembering Reine, Luke looked to see where he had left Reine and Zhan’s bodies. They were there, but not far off was another figure.

A brunette.

Luke scrambled down the ladder towards the body, and frantically turned it over. To his relief, it was Baku Ren, dead by what appeared to be a blast to the chest. Next to Baku’s hand was the remains of a lightsaber and the rock that had bludgeoned it to pieces. Luke sighed and looked around. He then noticed that only one set of footprints led away from the scene: adult footprints.

Where was Rey?

There were child footprints leading to and around the scene, but none away. Yet there was no child to be seen.


But there was no answer.

As he puzzled over the scene, Luke heard a distant roar. He looked up just in time to see a larger ship exiting the planet’s atmosphere. Luke would never learn that that was the very same ship the Knights of Ren, save for Ben, had used to come to Rornian.

And then Luke was alone. He could feel it in the Force. There was no Ben. There was no Rey. There was no Felicity. No Reine. No Gavyn. No Zena. No Tyla. No Obik.

Only Luke and the wild dumb creatures that lived on Rornian.

Luke was completely alone.
For a while he couldn't bring himself to move. Everything and everyone was gone. He didn’t know what had happened to his wife, child, and nephew, but he prayed that they were all safe.

Eventually he stood. He left the Knights and his broken X-Wing, but he collected the body of Reine Agim and carried her back to the training field.

Luke was resting her on the ground when a familiar beeping sounded. He looked up to see Artoo wheeling towards him.

“I- I’m fine,” Luke muttered in answer to Artoo’s worried noises. “No, they’re not here. We’re alone, Artoo. Please, just- Can you contact Leia?”

Instantly a projection of Leia’s worried face was before Luke.


As he stared at the image of his sister, Luke suddenly found himself without words.

"I- I..."

"Luke?” Leia frowned, fear coursing through her body. She prayed that it wasn't what she thought it was.

Luke swallowed hard and readied himself for Leia's heartbreak, "Leia... The Knights of Ren attacked... They- They had a new initiate."

Luke could feel the pain that coursed through his twin sister's body. Luke knew she could sense her son's involvement. Her worst fear had finally come true.

And it was all their fault.

"I'm sending the Republic troops right now," Leia promised.


“Why not?”

Luke surveyed the field of dead, “Because there’s no one left.”

Luke didn’t take in Leia’s worried response. There was a ringing in his ears and a thudding in his throat. The world went out of focus and Luke felt like he was removed from reality, observing the tragic scene from afar.

He didn’t register hitting a button on Artoo that cut off the transmission. He didn’t register pulling the hood of his cloak over his head. Luke Skywalker was dead to the world. His eyes were unable to move from the bodies of his students and friends. The magnitude of the situation building.

His students who had fought against Empires, escaped slavery, wished for nothing but to bring justice and peace to the world. They were all dead. His home was burn. His nephew was corrupted. His family had disappeared.

And it was all his fault.

He couldn’t hold it back anymore.

“NO!” Luke screamed dropping to his knees.
He was a picture of sorrow as his cloaked figure posed next to the burning remnants of the massacre. Artoo was in front of him, and Luke used his stripped metal hand to reach out and touch Artoo.

That was how Wedge Antilles and Diego Nalto found Luke when they arrived an hour later.

“Luke!” Wedge spotted his friend and grabbed Diego’s shoulder.

“Luke!” Diego shouted as he and Wedge raced over.

“Are you alright?” Wedge asked, shaking Luke. The droid was the only thing keeping Luke upright. “What happened?”

Luke said nothing. He would remain silent no matter how much Wedge and Diego tried to get him to respond. Luke was too shell shocked. The man they called friend was gone.

“He hasn’t said anything?” Han asked the next morning when he and Leia arrived at the horrible scene.

“Not a word,” Diego shook his head. “Eventually we had to leave him there.”

“We put out the fires and collected the bodies,” Wedge added.

“Is everyone accounted for?” Leia questioned as she looked at the bodies lined up on the training field. She couldn’t stand the sight of the deceased children or her still unmoving brother.

Diego and Wedge exchanged a look.

“Not everyone,” Diego answered. “All the Jedi are here but we’re still looking for three people.”

“Who’s missing?” Han frowned.

Diego and Wedge shared another look.

“One Knight of Ren is missing,” Wedge said. “All six we’re aware of are accounted for, but Luke told you they had a new one. Whoever that is, they’re missing.”

Han and Leia avoided each other’s gaze. They dare not voice the shared thought in their head. Their son just couldn’t just wouldn’t do this.”

“And the other two?” Leia asked.

Diego gave a half-smile, “Felicity and Rey are nowhere to be found.”

Leia let out a selfish sigh of relief.

“I wouldn’t celebrate just yet,” Han shook his head. “You said the house burned down. Are we sure they escaped?”

“Positive,” Wedge replied. “We used my ship’s scanners to confirm there’s no human remains inside. Plus we found Baku’s saber smashed to pieces, and we all know who hates lightsabers enough to do that.”

“Felicity,” Han allowed himself a sigh of relief, and hugged Leia tightly. They were overjoyed to hear Luke’s wife had managed to escape.
Felicity had originally started as Leia’s friend, and even was recruited into the Rebellion by Leia. They had drifted apart after Leia make Han and Luke, but after reintroducing Felicity to Luke, the girls rekindled their friendship. Leia was ecstatic that Luke fell in love with Felicity and was delighted to call Felicity her sister.

"Felicity," Han allowed himself a sigh of relief and hugged Leia tightly. They were overjoyed to hear their friend had managed to escape.

Felicity had originally started as Leia’s friend, and even was recruited into the Rebellion by her. They had drifted apart after Leia met Han and Luke, but after introducing Felicity to Luke, the girls rekindled their friendship. Leia was ecstatic that Luke fell in love with Felicity and was delighted to call Felicity her sister.

Han thought of Felicity as a sister as well. Their personalities were similar enough that the two got along like a house on fire. They even had a running joke that Han could have been a long lost Rhiaon child. Han and Felicity were such a duo that Luke and Leia didn't like leaving them alone because it usually resulted in them sassing someone to the point of tears, a disastrous adventure that cost thousands in property damage, or the occasional pissing off foreign dignitaries to the point they threatened war against the New Republic.

And of course, both Han and Leia adored Rey. It broke their hearts to think of her in any sort of danger, and were disgusted by the fact that the First Order would do anything to hunt her down like an animal. If it was the last thing they did, Han and Leia would see Rey again. They would tear the galaxy apart to find their niece.

But the only question was where to start?

Even worse, there was the question of Ben.


Luke looked up at the sound of her voice. The physical presence of his twin sister seemed to be just the thing Luke needed to snap out of his stupeor. But it did not withhold the shame, the guilt, the sorrow, and the look of being at a complete and utter loss of knowing what to do.


He didn’t need to say the word; Luke’s look said everything.

“Ben,” Han’s voice was thick as he tried to hold back the tears.

His son. His precious, innocent, idiot of a son, who Han had sworn to do everything in his power to protect... had murdered Luke’s Jedi Order.

Han turned away, ashamed to let Luke and Leia see him.

Leia said nothing as Han stormed off. She didn’t dare question what her husband was going to do. Leia would get her answer when she had to bandage Han’s knuckles after he had beaten them bloody while repeatedly punching a tree.

“I’m sorry, Leia,” Luke spoke for the first time since messaging her the previous night. His voice trebled as Luke fought against bursting back into tears, ‘I’m so sorry!’

Leia held her brother, allowing him to wept into her comforting embrace. You've always been
strong. Luke’s words from years before rang through her mind. But she hadn’t been strong. Not strong enough to save her son.

No. If Vader could be saved, then so could Ben. There was still hope. She would be strong for all of them, and she would save their family.

“Luke,” Leia pulled back from her brother, noticing Wedge and Diego had given the siblings some distance. “Where are they? Where are Rey and Felicity?”

“I… I don’t know.”
The Long Way Home

Chapter Four

Half-Brave

“Hey Lando, it’s Han. Have you seen Felicity and Rey?”

“I’m looking for information on someone who might have checked into your inn. Do you have any guest under the name Rey, Felicity, Rhiaon, and/or Skywalker?”

“And you’re sure you’ve checked in with the entire family, Aunt Sola? What about the lake house?”

“Fixer, it’s Luke. I know this is out of the blue, but has anyone been around the old homestead lately?”

“Lando, it’s Han again. Just checking to see if you had any updates from any of your contacts.”

“Tell Admiral Akbar that it’s an emergency and he needs to comm me back as soon as possible.”

“I know it’s a long shot, Pax, but you haven’t heard anything from Felicity, have you?”
“Nothing, Kes? Well, can you get Poe to ask around the academy if anyone has heard news of Felicity or the First Order?”

“For the last time Jaina, I can’t attend to any Senate business. My family is in the middle of a crisis. Tell the other Senators to leave me a message if it’s that important.”

“Yes, I’m aware that this is the fifth time I’m contacting you, Lando! In case you haven’t heard, Rey and Fliss are missing!”

“Are you sure you’ve communicated with the entirety of Rogue Squadron? What about Dak? … Yes, I forgot he died on Hoth! My wife and child are missing! I’m under a lot of stress right now!”

“Nerissa sends her condolences and regrets, Luke,” Leia sighed as she ended the communication with the Queen of Zygerria. “But she hasn’t heard from Felicity either.”

“I guess we can scratch Zygerria from the list,” Diego got off the couch to cross off Zygerria from the large board full of planet names that was propped against the wall.

The Organa-Solo living room had been transformed into a call center dedicated to the search for Rey and Felicity. Luke, Han, Leia, and Diego desperately contacted every person Felicity had ever crossed paths with and nearly every location she had stepped foot in.

Artoo sat in the corner, searching every media outlet, Republic wavelength, and spy network he could connect to for any mentions of his disappeared Mistresses. Lando was contacting every shady connection he had ever made. Wedge and Chewie were leading ground teams of several of Luke’s friends to follow up any leads on the missing women. And Threepio was serving refreshments, translating calls, and loudly panicking, detailing what horrors he feared Mistresses Felicity and Rey must be encountering.

“One more word about Fliss and Rey dying, and I’ll lock you in the closet, Goldenrod,” Han had threatened the droid.

Threepio was oddly quiet after that exchange.

“Cross Naboo off the list as well,” Luke rubbed his temples as he slumped helplessly back onto the couch. Much of his usual liveliness and optimism had been missing since Felicity and Rey’s disappearance three days ago. “My mother’s family has searched Naboo high and low. No sign of Felicity or Rey.”

“I guess that means we start Round Six of messaging our contacts,” Leia sympathetically rubbed Luke’s shoulder as she sat next to him.

“Fine, but someone else has to talk to Lando,” Han replied. “I think he’s going to punch me if I call him again.”

“What’s even the point of contacting the people we’ve already spoken too?” Diego objected. “They’ll let us know if they find anything. We should be looking in places we haven’t checked yet.”

Leia frowned at the list of planets, “The problem is we’re running out of places.”

“This is ridiculous!” Han shook his head. “Fliss wouldn’t go to an obvious significant landmark, but she also wouldn’t go to some random planet we’ve never heard of. She’d go somewhere discrete she knew we could find her. Somewhere only we would guess based on knowledge only we have.”

“Not to mention it would have to be a place she’s quick to think of,” Leia pointed out. “She couldn’t
have had a lot of time to plan her escape.”

“Alright, so Fliss is sitting in the cockpit of a ship with the enemy on her tail,” Han posed. “She has ten seconds to type in a set of coordinates. What does she type?”

Diego froze. He recalled a similar moment between himself and Felicity many years before.

“I can’t fly this thing!” Diego shouted, clutching the bleeding wound on his shoulder. His vision was fuzzy, and the world around him was fading.

Of the five Rogue Squadron members sent in to steal the plans to the Death Star, only he and Rhiaon remained. They were almost out of the woods. The plans were in a chip hanging from a pouch around Rhiaon’s neck, and the two of them had made their way into a TIE fighter to escape the battle station. Unfortunately, Diego had been injured badly on the way in and was barely staying conscious.

“Hold on, Nalto,” Felicity begged. “I just need you to get us into light speed and we’ll be in the clear.”

A blast blot hit the ship.

“I can’t move my arm!” Diego replied. “Look, I’ve got us set up. Just punch in a destination, push the buttons I tell you, and we’ll be out of here.”

“What destination?”

“Anything! As long as it isn’t Yavin IV, Coruscant, or Naboo, I don’t care where you take us!”

“But Nalto-”

“PUNCH IN A DAMN COORDINATE, RHIAON!”

Without any hesitation, Felicity entered a set of numbers.

“What did you type?” Diego asked.

“Jakku,” Diego remembered Felicity’s answer. He looked over at Luke, “She would go to Jakku!”


“Jakku, of course,” Luke scrambled to his feet. “Artoo get me a contact number for- Who did you and Felicity work for again?”


“The planet coordinates are the same numbers as her brother, Brendan’s birthdate,” Luke explained.

Han looked over at Leia, “Brendan? He’s the brother she promised to let teach her to fly, but then he died and now she uses it as excuse not to learn how to properly take off and land?”

“How many brothers do you think Felicity has?” Leia replied.
“Niima Outpost!” Luke exclaimed as Artoo projected a comm station code. He quickly typed it in and waited for the connection to be made. “It’s the only known comm station on the planet. If Felicity’s going anywhere, it’s going to be there.”

Artoo let out a few beeps signifying the connection had been established.

“Message for Unkar Plutt,” Luke said as a comm station operator was projected before them.

“Haku?” the creature replied in confusion.


“Oh right, I forgot to mention most people in Niima Outpost speak Huttese,” Diego explained. “Niima was a Hutt who established the place.”

Luke shook his head and then repeated his message in Huttese, “Wankee che Unkar Plutt.”

The creature replied for Luke to hold on, and the group waited for a few minutes.

“So how friendly is this Plutt?” Han asked.

“Haku chuba naga?” someone suddenly snapped at the group.

Han frowned, recognizing the phrase, “Never mind. Anyone who starts a conversation with ‘what do you want’ can’t be pleasant.”

Luke shot Han a look before turning back to the new creature, “Unkar Plutt?”

“Tagwa,” Unkar confirmed.


A long silence ensued as Plutt just stared at Luke.

“Listen, boy,” Plutt awkwardly scratched his head, “I only know a little Huttese. If it’s not a greeting or bartering words, I have no idea what the hell you’re saying. Mind telling me in Basic what it is you want before I cut this message off?”

Luke turned and glared at Diego.

“Oh yeah,” Diego remembered. “I forgot he doesn’t speak Huttese.”


“Thank you, Han,” Luke nodded at his brother-in-law as he scrambled to think of a rough translation of what he had said to Plutt. “Sorry, Mister Plutt. I’ll try that again in Basic. Hello, I am Luke Skywalker, a Jedi, and my friend bargained with you one time. I want your help searching for a woman and girl who is running from the First Order. I want to bring them home. There is a payment for help.”

“A reward, eh?” Unkar paused at the last sentence. His mouth had opened to tell Luke to bugger off, he wasn’t going to help him look for any runaway females, but the mention of payment intrigued him. “How much are we talking?”
“That all depends on the help provided,” Luke narrowed his eyes. “I’m looking for a woman who once worked for you briefly twenty years ago.”

“Twenty years ago? You’re joking, right?”

“Her name is Felicity Rhiaon Skywalker, and she might come to you in the next few days,” Luke continued. “Additionally, she might be accompanied by a young girl named Rey. Rey looks a lot like Felicity. They’re pale skinned humans, with hazel eyes, brunette hair, and petite statures.”

“That’s what happens when a five foot six man procreates with a five foot three woman,” Han muttered. “ Seriously, why is everyone in this family short?”

Luke ignored Han, “If Rhiaon or Rey shows up, Plutt, you will immediately get them to contact me, and you will take care of their needs until I can come get them. By needs I mean water, shelter, appropriate portions of food, medical attention, and whatever else they ask of you. When I come get them, we will negotiate a reward. If you fail any of my conditions, you will forfeit your prize. Do we have an understanding?”

Plutt considered Luke’s words, “Agreed.”

The transmission was abruptly cut off and Luke sighed.

“And now we wait,” Luke said. “I hope they’re alright.”

“I’m sure they are,” Leia got off the couch and hugged her brother.

“I must say, that was disappointing,” Diego admitted. “I thought they would have been in Niima by now.”

“I did too,” Han admitted. “I guess the only question now is if they’re not at Niima Outpost… Where are they?”

In the middle of the Jakku desert, Felicity silently watched the smouldering transport ship sink into the sand with a cloud of smoke and fire. Rey stood next to her mother as Felicity rested a hand on Rey’s shoulder; the girls taking in the sight of Felicity’s failure of a landing.

“Mommy?” Rey asked in an innocent voice. “Is that why Uncle Han never lets you pilot the Falcon?”

“Yes. Yes, it is,” Felicity simply answered. She looked down at Rey and gently pulled her daughter in closer, “Careful, Sweetheart. I don’t want you breathing in the fumes.”

Rey buried her face against her mother’s leg.

As the wreckage burned – and Felicity thanked the Force neither of them had been hurt in the crash – Felicity looked around her environment. Surrounding them was absolutely nothing but endless desert.

The wreck had been caused by Felicity accidentally triggering a self-destruct when the ship belonging to the Knights of Ren recognized she was an intruder. Apparently one of the Knights had rigged the ship so that unless someone typed in an exact sequence, the ship would blow up when the landing cycle activated. Typical Knight of Ren mentality: lure your enemy into a false sense of security and then unleash hell when they aren’t expecting it.
Felicity sighed; she had wanted to land much closer to Niima Outpost, but now it looked like she and Rey would have to endure several days of walking.

She put down the emergency bag she had swiped from Luke’s X-Wing and rescued from the crash of the stolen ship. This was the exact type of situation they carried the bags around for.

Felicity unzipped the bag and checked over the contents. It had a basic first aid kit; food and water rations; clothing for Rey, Felicity, and Luke; basic navigational equipment like a compass and a star map; extra shoes; flares; a sewing kit; some ice packs that would become cold when you snapped them in half; flashlight; tool kit; basic ship repair kit; two sleeping bags; a pair of lightsabers for reasons Felicity couldn’t explain, though one looked like Reine Agim’s; and several other odds and ends that would be useful.

Felicity grimaced at the weight of the bag. Walking in a desert would be bad enough, but add an extra, what ten? Twenty pounds? Felicity was never great at gauging measurements.

It was only natural that her next task was to figure out a set of measurements. Felicity opened the navigational kit and pulled out a small silver box. It was a simple machine that calculated the latitude and longitude of a person’s location, as well as stored a list of coordinates for popular locations on most chartered planets in the galaxy.

To Felicity’s relief, Niima Outpost on Jakku was one of the places listed. Using the coordinates and the other tools in the navigation kit, Felicity calculated that she and Rey were about three days’ walk from Niima.

Well… three days in ideal conditions.

The first time Felicity had come to Jakku, she and Diego had landed right in the shipyard of Niima Outpost. Additionally, the work they did for Plutt was packing food ration packs for Unkar to dole out. One of the benefits of the job was that Plutt had kept Diego and Felicity in the shade at all times, and provided them a small tent to spends the nights in.

Therefore, Felicity had never really travelled in the desert before. Yes, she had been to Tatooine with Luke a handful of times, but they never walked for long periods of time. Add in the fact that Felicity had her heavy bag to carry, and Rey by her side, and Felicity knew it would be more than three days of walking.

But then how long would it be? And more importantly… How long could they survive?

Felicity rummaged through the bag, taking inventory of their rations. When she finished, Felicity found that she wanted nothing more than to slap Past Luke and Past Felicity.

They had a supply of five days of water, and three days of food… for a single person.

The emergency supplies bag was not designed to support more than one person’s survival for a short period of time. It was because of a rule Luke and Felicity established after Rey was born. Technically only one member of the Rhiaon Skywalker family at a time was allowed to be in a potentially dangerous situation where the bag was needed. Additionally, they were not allowed to be far from a way of contacting each other, that way a rescue could be made as quickly as possible.

Felicity hated herself for her lack of foresight. Luke had altered his X-Wing so that Rey could make a quick getaway with one of them and Felicity had ensured there was an extra set of clothing and footwear for Rey. Why in the Galaxy did they not stock enough food for Rey? Had they really been so naïve to think that one of them wouldn’t bring Rey into a situation with no food?
Looking at the meager rations, Felicity groaned. Everything had to be perfectly portioned if both of them were to survive the trek. Felicity would have to be very strict with Rey when she inevitably asked for more food and water. But what kind of mother would she be to deny her child water?

Luke’s words from the forest echoed in her mind, “We both know that you are more capable of making difficult decisions and even sacrifices for Rey's safety. Decisions… I could never bring myself to commit.”

Felicity looked at Rey and knew. She would be a mother who would rather her child be alive rather than momentarily comfortable.

So how long would it take for them to reach Niima Outpost? Felicity quickly did some calculations in her head. She vaguely recalled Luke telling her never to travel in the desert between 11 am and 2 pm. Factor in at minimum six hours of sleep. Maybe about three hours of resting. So walking for twelve hours a day in desert conditions with a child and heavy bag… Four days? Five?

Felicity decided to budget for five. Ten portions of water and food were needed. Felicity had five portions of water, and three of food. So half a portion of water for each of them a day, and one third portion of food. Felicity’s stomach churned of the thought of her daughter going hungry; maybe she would give up a few of her meals for Rey.

Felicity quickly snapped the ration packets into thirds (and vaguely wondered why she let Luke talk her into stocking the bag with the revolting dehydrated nutrient bars instead of real food) and measured the water in each of the five canisters. A capful every few hours should do it.

Next was the question of attire. Felicity eyed Rey critically; her daughter was still in her pyjamas. Felicity thankfully had thrown on some clothes appropriate enough for the desert during the massacre.

“Rey, come here,” Felicity ordered as she pulled out some clothing for Rey.

Felicity quickly stripped off Rey’s pyjamas, and dressed her in a pair of leggings, short boots, and a long tan tunic.

“Now what are we going to do about your hair?” Felicity mused as she tied a dark brown belt around Rey’s waist. Felicity was trying to keep the mood light before Rey began to panic about the situation.

“My hair?” Rey frowned, touching the dark hair that fell to her shoulders.

“We have to put it up or else it’ll trap heat and make your neck all sweaty,” Felicity gently forced her daughter to turn around. Felicity grabbed a few hair ties and a brush from the bag, “Then it’ll get all matted and tangled and you’ll be terribly uncomfortable. So how do you want me to do your hair? Bun? Ponytail? Braid?”

Tears gathered in Rey’s eyes, “I want Daddy. He does my hair best.”

Felicity paused brushing Rey’s eyes, “I want Daddy too,” Felicity said softly. After a moment of silence in which Felicity had to fight back her own tears, she cleared her throat and put on a brave face, “He does do hair very nicely. He sometimes even does mine. But you know what? Daddy only does hair so nicely because it’s in his blood. You know what Grandma Padmé and Aunt Leia’s hair look like. How about I do something like them?”
Rey sniffed, “Okay.”

“Alright,” Felicity gathered a few hair bands, “well, Grandma had a very famous one bun style, and Aunt Leia had a famous two bun style, how about we carry on the family legacy and put your hair in three buns?”

It took a few minutes for Felicity to properly tie Rey’s hair, but soon she was proudly observing the three bun hairstyle that would become Rey’s signature look.

“There, functional and fashionable.” Felicity proclaimed with a wink, “That’s the Rhiaon way.”

“Thank you, Mommy,” Rey smiled, running her little hands over her hair to make a picture of it in her mind. Rey glanced towards the burning sun, but cast her gaze down quickly when it hurt her eyes. Rey hesitantly looked at her mother and said, “Mommy… I’m hungry.”

“We’ll have to fix that, won’t we? Here,” Felicity gave Rey one of the food portions. As Rey ate, Felicity unscrewed the cap off the first canister and poured the lukewarm water into it the cap, “Drink this. Slowly.”

Rey gratefully took the cap of water, and drank slowly under her mother’s critical gaze.

She didn’t want to say anything, but Rey knew there was something wrong with her mother. Mommy looked like Uncle Han when the Falcon broke. What was the word Aunt Leia taught her? Stressed. Mommy looked stressed.

Rey didn’t know how to help Mommy, so she did the thing that would always help Daddy when he looked stressed. Rey gave Mommy the biggest, brightest, cutest smile she could muster. The same one that Daddy couldn’t help but make his own grin at and give her bug hugs.

Felicity could barely resist Rey’s grin. It was the same goofy grin of Luke’s that Felicity had fallen in love with. There was something about seeing it on the mirror of her own face that made Felicity’s heart lift. Despite their terrible situation, at least Felicity had Rey, the physical proof of her shared love with Luke, at her side.

Rey grinned even wider when she saw the corners of Mommy’s mouth upturn. Even though to only took the corners of Mommy’s mouth, Rey knew it was a full on genuine loving smile, and not the smirk Mommy gave to Daddy that often made Daddy tell Rey to go to her room so Mommy and Daddy could go to bed… sometimes even in the middle of the day.

“More, please,” Rey sweetly asked, politely holding the lid out to Mommy.

Felicity’s smile faltered.

“Rey, Sweetheart,” Felicity went down on her knees to be at Rey’s level. She took the canister lid from Rey and gently clasped her hand over Rey’s, “I can’t give you anymore. I’m sorry.”

Rey’s smile dropped.

“But I’m thirsty,” Rey was confused. Her upbringing never left her wanting for basic needs, so to be denied water was incomprehensible for the five-year-old.

“I know, Sweetheart,” Felicity softly replied, trying to keep the pain from her voice, “but Mommy can’t give you anymore water right now. We have to save it.”

“Why?”
Felicity looked over at the ship, and Rey’s eyes followed.

“Do you think Mommy wanted to land here?” Felicity asked.

A loud bang and a puff of flame and smoke rose from the ship.

“No,” Rey looked back to her mommy. “Where are we?”

“We’re on a planet called Jakku,” Felicity explained. “You remember that from my stories, right?”

Rey nodded, “The planet whose coordinates are Uncle Brendan’s birthdate.”

“Correct. I took us here because Uncle Diego would know to look for us here. He would tell Daddy, who would come and get us, but I wanted to land in a place called Niima Outpost.”

“But the ship blew up.”

“Right, so we’re on the right planet, but just not in the right spot. We have to get to Niima Outpost to call, Daddy.”

“Then who is coming to get us?” Rey asked.

“No one, yet,” Felicity confessed. There was no point in giving Rey false hope with the uncertain path before them. “You, see, the thing is there aren’t any towns or places to get food and water and a ride between here and Niima Outpost. So we have to walk to Niima Outpost, and in order to have the energy to walk, Mommy needs to take special care that we have enough food and water to last the trip.

“Can you carry me?”

“No. That takes a lot of energy and Mommy needs to keep her energy or we’ll never make it.”

“We’ll die?” Rey exclaimed.

Felicity said in a dead serious voice, “You are not going to die. I won’t let that happen. I promise.”

“What about you? Will you die?”

Felicity let the silence linger for a moment too long.

“Mommy!” Rey cried out.

“Mommy will do whatever it takes to keep you safe,” Felicity vowed. “That might mean Mommy does some things you don’t like, and some things Mommy might not be proud of. But I will get you back to Daddy. I swear that to you, Sweetheart.”

Felicity words didn’t comfort Rey, and Felicity couldn’t stop Rey from bursting into tears. She tried to hush Rey, worrying that Rey would deplete the water in her body from the crying, but Rey was inconsolable. Trying not to cry herself, Felicity pulled Rey into a tight hug.

“Shhh, it’s okay, Sweetheart,” Felicity soothingly rubbed Rey’s back. “Please don’t cry. Mommy doesn’t like when you cry.”

“I’m scared, Mommy,” Rey sobbed.

“Mommy’s going to protect you,” Felicity swore. “But she gets needs you to be brave.”
“I can’t,” Rey wailed. “I can’t be brave now.”

As Rey sobbed, her foot accidentally kicked one of the canisters of water next to the survival bag. Seeing the canister, Felicity got an idea. She took a deep breath, gathered herself, and gently pulled back from Rey.

“Then you don’t have to be brave,” Felicity rubbed the sides of Rey’s arms. She had her strong hazel eyes met the mirrored, albeit teary, eyes of her daughter. Felicity said in a strong voice, “Rey, I’m going to tell you a secret. Can you keep a secret?”

Rey nodded, and Felicity smiled, happy to see that her questions were keeping Rey engaged in the conversation.

“People have the same capacity for bravery.” Felicity picked up the canister, “That means they all can have the same amount of bravery. It’s like this canister. You can have a little water in it or a whole lot, but they can only have one canister’s worth. That’s enough for them to be fully brave for one person. Now, you can share your bravery. I can pour some of this water into another canister, but I’ll still only have enough bravery for one person. Does that make sense?”

Rey nodded, her tears drying up as she focused on the canister in her mother’s grasp.

“Now, come in close. Mommy’s going to tell you the secret. Promise not to tell?”

“Promise,” Rey leaned in.

Felicity dramatically looked around, like she feared someone would overhear them, “When a person becomes a parent, they get a second canister of bravery. A whole nother person’s worth.”

“Enough for their baby?”

“Exactly! And they get one for every child they have, whether by blood, or adopted.”

Felicity unconsciously rubbed the tattoo along her right wrist. It read *FN-2187*, the serial number of the child she once upon a time tried and failed to save from the First Order, back when the Resistance’s job was to reclaim children kidnapped by the First Order. Felicity had gotten the tattoo so she would never forget about the disastrous mission where a little boy was literally torn out of her arms by a Stormtrooper called Captain Phasma.

It was an event that set off the infamous rivalry of Phasma vs Rhiaon. Felicity and Phasma had had many encounters since that day, the most famous of which involved Phasma kidnapping Felicity while she was pregnant with Rey. Felicity may have hated Ben, but she despised Phasma more than even Darth Vader himself.

“So the canister,” Felicity shook her head, getting her mind back on track, “is enough so that if a Mommy has a little girl who is afraid, she can pour a little extra bravery into her little girl, and her little girl won’t be scared anymore. Now, I’ve got my full extra canister, but there’s just one small problem. Mommy needs a little bravery herself to get us to Jakku, but Mommy is just as terrified as you.”

“So you need some of the bravery?” Rey asked.

“No. Take all the bravery. Let Mommy be full-brave for you. It’s my job, and I’m happy to do it, but I do need a little extra bravery. So how about this? How about you take to make some bravery, and you share that with me? I make you full-brave, and you make me, what quarter-brave? A third?”
“Half,” Rey grinned. “I can be half-brave for you, Mommy!”

“Half-brave,” Felicity declared. “You’ll make Mommy half-brave! That’s perfect!”

Perfect, because that was all Felicity knew she could manage.

Felicity let the tears fall that night when she was sure Rey was asleep.

The day had been long and hot, and the novelty of adventure had worn off far too quickly for Rey. Felicity couldn’t blame Rey for the complaints near the end of their day long hike: Rey was only five.

Felicity’s stomach growled, begging for more sustenance, her parched mouth echoing the chorus. She prayed that she and Rey had made good headway to Niima, but Felicity was uncertain and far too tired for the calculations to figure it out. Every muscle ached in Felicity’s body as she sat on a smile hill, Rey sleeping silently next to her. Felicity couldn’t find the peace to sleep: she was terrified something might happen to Rey while she was sleeping. Felicity would never let that happen to Rey again. She never would wake up to Rey’s desperate screams; even if it meant Felicity would never sleep again.

She wanted Luke. Throughout the day, Felicity refused to let him enter her mind. It was too painful to entertain the ache she felt for her husband. Felicity wanted Luke. She wanted his arms wrapped around her. His lips pressing against her own. Their hands lazily clasping as they strolled along. Their bodies intertwined and molded into one as they made love.

Felicity didn’t care what they were doing; she just wanted Luke.

She knew he wasn’t dead: the notion of Cade Ren killing Luke Skywalker was ridiculous. Felicity knew somewhere out there he was desperately searching for them. Luke was probably staying at Leia’s apartment on Hosnian Prime. Bags under his eyes, lines across his forehead, arguing with Leia that he didn’t need to eat, but rather find Felicity and Rey. He was probably blaming himself for what happened, but Felicity refused to lay it on anyone but Ben.

Ben Solo had destroyed their life.

Felicity cried softly, trying not to wake the peacefully sleeping Rey. It had taken a long time for Felicity to convince Rey she’d be safe to sleep. Rey could sense Felicity’s distress, and once again Felicity cursed Luke’s damn Force Sensitive DNA for corrupting her little girl. A mother had the right to lie to her daughter that everything would be okay, and have said daughter believe it.

Stupid midi-chlorian tattletales.

Felicity watched the steady breathing of Rey as she slept. Rey was curled up with the survival blanket; a specially designed blanket that would adapt to the environment. Felicity shivered, holding herself in a vain attempt to keep warm. Who knew that the desert got so cold at night.

Once again Felicity cursed Past Luke and Past Felicity for their planning. It was true that their survival pack could only carry so much, but only one blanket? Felicity was seriously doing their other packs when they got home.

Felicity sighed and began digging through the pack. She wasn’t going to keep cold if she didn’t have to. Felicity pulled out some of the spare clothes. It wasn’t like she or Rey needed winter clothes, and Luke’s clothing was free game since he wasn’t around.
Her hands set on something orange, and Felicity paused. It was Luke’s flight suit. It was used, though maybe not really in need of a wash. Luke must have stripped out of it sometime before returning to Rornian. He might have even changed out of it when stashing Reine’s lightsaber in the bag.

Felicity ran her hand over the suit. It was Luke’s. It may have been “dirty” but it was Luke’s. It had touched him not much longer before the last time she had. Felicity lifted it out of the bag, and hesitated. She held it against her face and closed her eyes, pretending he was wearing it as he lovingly held her.

Felicity didn’t try to inhale the scent or anything, because seriously why did book go on about characters smelling like things? To Felicity, Luke either smelled like a person, cologne if he was wearing it, or BO when she would tell him to take a shower. Luke didn’t magically carry the lingering scent of sand, lightsaber, and fried Death Star bits, or whatever the hell the girls wrote in their fan mail to him. No, Felicity justified holding the flight suit against her face on the basis that it was in good enough laundered condition to be like when he was away on a trip, and she stole his pillow as a reminder of him. Yes, it was like a pillow.

…Or maybe a blanket.

Felicity dug out the sewing kit and fished out a pair of scissors. She was about to cut the fabric when suddenly she heard something.

“Daddy,” Rey moaned in her sleep. “I want you, Daddy.”

Felicity smiled; she knew just how to get Daddy for Rey.

Luke tossed and turned in the guest bed of Han and Leia’s apartment on Hosnian Prime. His comlink was set on the side table next to his lightsaber and a set of clothes. At the drop of a hat, he could be up and ready to go get his wife and child.

He wanted them back so bad. A million scenarios played in his mind. Where were they? Were they safe? Were they comfortable?

Luke didn’t want to sleep. He wanted to find Felicity and Rey. Everything that wasn’t tracking them down was a waste of time. Replacing his synth skin had yet to be done, as it wasted too much time. Responding to the media’s questions on the events of the Burning of Rornian was a waste of time. Eating was a waste of time, though Han had physically forced him to after he got annoyed with Luke and Leia’s arguments every meal time.

Sleeping was just wasting time. He wouldn’t even try it sleep if Leia hadn’t tricked him into the room and locked the door until morning. It was the same bed Luke had slept in when he received that blessed yet accursed vision of Rornian burning.

He had had trouble that night too, struggling to sleep without the snores of his petite wife against him, stealing the blanket. Felicity’s snores had become a soothing rhythm to fall asleep to, and even if they weren’t, Luke still got the better end of their bed sharing deal. Luke may not snore, but he was prone to kick in his sleep whenever he got a vision from the Force. Being the Grandmaster, his visions were so frequent that Felicity’s threats to smother Luke in his sleep if he didn’t stop kicking her was almost part of their nightly routine.

Luke missed their nightly routine. He missed tucking Rey into bed while Felicity showered. Luke missed the way Rey’s eyes would light up as he told her stories of their family’s many adventures.
He missed Rey falling asleep in his protective arms and sending Artoo to get Felicity’s help to rescue him without awaking Rey. Luke missed Felicity laughing at his predicament until Luke pinned her against the hallway wall in a playful, passionate kiss. He missed the nights where that passionate kiss would turn into a bout of lovemaking as he inhaled the scent of her freshly washed hair. Luke missed the way he and Felicity would chat for hours whether or not they had made love, talking about everything and nothing until they drifted off to sleep.

He missed them, and he wanted them back.

When he found them, Luke would never again let them go. Well… He would never let Felicity go. Luke would briefly let Rey go and send her to Han and Leia so he could make love to Felicity more passionately than he had ever before.

And that was saying something considering once he threw out his back.

“Daddy?” a hesitant voice came through the Force. Rey was unsure of the connection she was making, and Luke fought back tears as he heard his little girl’s voice speak to him. “Daddy, I want you.”

Luke smiled. Rey was speaking to him. He finally had confirmation that Rey was alive. Luke would have burst into Han and Leia’s room proudly proclaiming the discovery if Leia hadn’t locked Luke’s door. He couldn’t wait to tell them in the morning.


“She won’t answer you,” Obi-Wan Kenobi’s voice replied. “She’s speaking to you in here sleep. She’s not conscious to the connection. I don’t know if she’ll even recall this in the morning.”

“Obi-Wan!” Luke exclaimed. He had gotten into the habit of referring to Kenobi’s true name as not to confuse Ben Solo. “You can tell me! Are Felicity and Rey safe? Where are they?”

“I’m sorry, Luke,” Obi-Wan replied. “But you know the rules. We can only offer you guidance. We cannot tell you the living status, location, or specific current actions of another person. I cannot tell you where Felicity and Rey are, specifically what they’re doing, or even if they’re alive.”

“But you just told me that Rey is sleeping.”

“That falls under the vague category,” Anakin Skywalker input. “Have faith in your family, Luke. Rey’s a Skywalker after all, and that wife of yours… Well, I can count on one hand how many people have ever injured me during the Vader phase.”

“Phase?” Obi-Wan shot.

“Oh, not this again,” Anakin groaned.

Luke chuckled, remembering the story of Rogue Squadron’s encounter with Vader while stealing the Death Star plans. Felicity had managed to get her team away when she shot Vader in the life support system and he went down. When Luke informed his father that he was marrying the girl who once shot Vader, Anakin had chuckled and said, “That girl? I like her. She’s feisty.”

Felicity turned to drinking upon hearing that Darth Vader had called her feisty.

“So, Rey won’t remember what I say to her when morning comes?” Luke asked when he realized Obi-Wan and Anakin had been bickering over definition Anakin’s time as Vader as being a ‘phase.’
“*That remains to be seen,*” Obi-Wan answered. “*But she won’t reply now.*”

“You can still give it a shot,” Anakin encouraged. “*Now if anyone needs me, I’m going to go to that embarrassment I call a grandson and try to talk some sense into him.*”

“He couldn’t have done that before?” Luke bitterly snapped before he could stop himself.

“*Anakin’s been trying for years, Luke,*” Obi-Wan explained. “*Ben just won’t allow himself to see Anakin. I think I’ll join Anakin in his attempt. My namesake is shaming our good name.*”

Luke chuckled as the Force became quiet. Even years after their deaths and the whole Vader fiasco, Anakin and Obi-Wan still bickered like brother. Luke hoped twenty years from now, he and Han still acted the same.

Luke settled in his bed, comforted by his knowledge that Rey was safe. Replaying her call through the Force to him and in his mind, Luke made one last attempt to reach her before falling asleep.

---

“*Rey, wake up,*” Felicity urged the next morning.

“*Daddy*?” Rey moaned in confusion as her eyes fluttered open. Mommy was smiling down at her, and all around was an endless stretch of desert. Daddy was nowhere to be found. *“I thought I heard Daddy. He said he misses us and hopes we’re safe.”*

“It must have been a dream, Sweetheart,” Felicity gathered their breakfast from the survival kit. She didn’t dare get Rey’s hopes up that Luke had contacted them through the Force, but Felicity allowed the thought to secretly comfort herself. She handed Rey her breakfast, “*Eat up. We have another long day of walking.*”

Rey observed her mother as they had their breakfast. Felicity’s eyes had bags under them and she kept yawning.

“*Are you tired, Mommy?*” Rey asked.

“A little,” Felicity confessed. “*I didn’t get much sleep last night.*”

“*Mommy needs her full energy if we’re going to make it to Niïma,*” Rey teased.

“*Cheeky,*” Felicity ruffled Rey’s hair. She then turned to the survival bag and pulled something out, “*I have a surprise for you. This is why Mommy didn’t sleep a lot last night. She was busy making this.*”

Rey gasped as Felicity held up a blanket that had been patched together with the spare clothing in the survival bag.

“*Daddy!*” Rey exclaimed as she focused on Luke’s familiar flight suit taking up the middle of one side of the blanket.

“*Yeah, Mommy needed her own blanket and thought Daddy wouldn’t mind,*” Felicity grinned. “*And if he does, well… Mommy has her ways of making sure he doesn’t.*”

“*Or those the grownup things Aunt Leia doesn’t let Uncle Han and Uncle Lando joke about around me?*”

“Some of them. Daddy didn’t just marry me for one thing after all.”
Rey suddenly noticed something odd about the flight suit, “Mommy, what happened to the sleeves of Daddy’s flight suit?”

“I cut them off.”

“Why?”

“To make this,” Felicity pulled another item out of the bag that made Rey gasp. A small doll had been stitched out of the flight suit and a few other pieces of clothing and stuffed with sand to look like a Rebellion X-Wing Pilot, “I heard you calling for Daddy last night, so I thought I’d make you this.”

Rey happily accepted the doll, “Is it Daddy?”


Rey hugged the doll tightly, “Thank you, Mommy.”

“You’re welcome, Sweetheart,” Felicity packed their items in the bag. She held out a hand and pulled Rey to her feet, “Now, come on. The sooner we get to Niima, the sooner you can show Daddy your new doll.”

Felicity Rhiaon miscalculated.

She realized it on their forth night when she recalculated their position to Niima while Rey slept. They were still a few days from the Outpost, maybe three or four.

Felicity only had enough food and water for one more day.

She did her best to hide it from Rey in the morning, but Rey sensed Felicity’s distress through the Force. Felicity was forced to admit to Rey they were running out of food when Rey asked why Mommy hadn’t eaten breakfast or lunch.

Rey had been upset to hear Mommy was giving up her portions of food and water, but Felicity was tired, hungry, overheated, and frankly had had enough of Rey’s whining. Felicity knew Rey was young and irrational, but she couldn’t stop herself from snapping at Rey.

“Rey, nothing has changed around us! There’s no food, no shade, no water, and no civilization! I cannot do anything more right now! Stop crying about it!”

That outburst led to Felicity apologizing non-stop to Rey during their rest between 11 am and 2 pm. She and Rey shared the last of their water and final portion of food. Felicity refused to tell Rey what running out of food and water meant, and Rey was too afraid to ask.

“I’m hungry, Mommy,” Rey whispered as Felicity laid her against the sand that night to rest. Rey was very pale and barely had the energy to move.

“I know, Sweetheart,” Felicity couldn’t fight back the tears. She kissed Rey’s forehead, “I’m so sorry. I’m so sorry. Please, just close your eyes and sleep. I promise it’ll be better in the morning.”

Rey tried to sleep but couldn’t. Felicity wasn’t mad; she couldn’t sleep either.

“Poe taught me a trick one time,” Rey said as she and Mommy lay next to each other staring at the
stars trying to figure out which one Daddy was on. “He said that if you ever get in a situation where
you get really upset, but can’t do anything to change things, you should dig a hole and scream in it.”

“Dig a hole and scream? Why?” Felicity asked in amusement. It was nice to have a conversation
distracting her from the nagging thought that she was being a terrible parent letting her daughter be
tired and thirsty and hungry.

“The screaming gets the angry out,” Rey explained. “And the digging gives you something to beat
up and focus on.”

“Dig a hole and scream,” Felicity chuckled. “You want to do that?”

Rey nodded.

“Alright, let’s dig a hole,” Felicity sat up but Rey didn’t follow. “Sweetheart?”

Rey looked like she was going to cry, “I- I can’t sit up.”

Felicity cringed as she looked over Rey. Rey was pale and still. Her breathing was labored and if
Felicity didn’t know any better, she might have thought Rey wasn’t breathing.

“How about I dig the hole and then move you to it?” Felicity suggested. “You just close your eyes.”

“Okay, Mommy.”

So Felicity dug a hole. She had no shovel, so she dug it with her bare hands. Frequently she looked
over at her daughter and every time almost had a heart acted. Eyes closed, pale skin, undetectable
breathing, unnaturally still.

Rey looked dead.

When Felicity was finished digging the hole, she did as promised and moved Rey so they could
scream. As they took turns screaming, Felicity had to admit that it did help a little bit. It helped
enough that Rey was able to sleep.

Felicity feared what would happen when Rey woke up.

Rey couldn’t move in the morning.

“Carry me, Mommy?” Rey asked when Felicity determined that Rey wasn’t faking it. Rey
legitimately could not get up and walk.

“All right,” Felicity picked up Rey and began carrying her. They would get there slower, but Felicity
had no choice.

With no food, water, or signs of civilization, they were running out of time.

“Momma, where’s Papa?” Rey’s question on the seventh day threw Felicity for a loop.

Momma? Papa? Rey never called Luke and Felicity those terms. It was always Mommy and Daddy,
or Mom and Dad if she was feeling bratty. Momma and Papa were terms you found in old stories,
and Luke and Felicity hated the titles. Luke always said he felt like an eighty year old grandfather
when he heard the term Papa.

But even more troubling was the question itself.
“Daddy’s with Aunt Leia,” Felicity reminded.

“Why isn’t he here? And where are we?”

Felicity stopped in her tracks.

“Rey, let’s take a little rest. Mommy wants to look at you,” Felicity set Rey down and placed a hand on Rey’s forehead. “Does your head hurt?”

“A little,” Rey answered.

Felicity looked over Rey. Rey’s skin looked red; at first Felicity thought it might be sunburn, but examining her arms closely Felicity determined that Rey was flushed.

She checked Rey’s pulse and watched Rey’s chest as she breathed. Rey was fast on both accounts.


Fear struck Felicity. No, it couldn’t be. She had been so careful. Rey couldn’t have-

Felicity dug in the bag and pulled out the thermometer from the medical kit. She took Rey’s temperature and observed the result with horror. 104 degrees Fahrenheit.

Rey had heatstroke.

Felicity needed shade now.

She threw everything back in her bag, scooped Rey into her arms, and ran. Felicity ran as fast and as far as she could. When she thought she could run no further, she looked down at her dying daughter and found the strength to push forward. Even if it meant she ran until she dropped dead, Felicity would not stop until her daughter was safe.

Felicity had no idea if she was heading in the correct direction, or even what she was looking for, but she didn’t care. She quite literally held a matter of life and death in her arms.

“Hold on, Sweetheart,” Felicity begged as Rey groaned in her arm. “Please hold on.”

An hour later the vomiting started. What little was in Rey’s stomach ended up splatted on Felicity’s clothing. But Felicity don’t even flinch, it was simply a reminder to her that Rey was very close to the end. Again and again, Rey vomited as Felicity carried her on. She threw up until all was left was stomach acid, and then there was nothing.

The sound of Rey’s dry heaving carried across the desert as tears gathered in Felicity’s eyes. She wanted Rey’s pain to stop, but what would happen when it did?

Overwhelmed by the possibility that Rey was about to die in her arms, Felicity did something she hadn’t done in years.

She prayed.

“I don’t believe in destiny or fate,” Felicity let the words in her head reach into the great unknown. “But I know there is something more in the universe. It may not dictate my actions, or have set my choices, but something is out there. And in this moment of desperation, I ask, I pray, I beg please help me save my daughter. Don’t take my ray of light from me. Don’t let her die.”

And the great unknown delivered.
As Felicity came to the top of a desert hill, she spotted it: a downed AT-AT, laying on its side.

Felicity and Rey had seen a great many battle remains on Jakku, and used them as shelter. But they were few and far between, the machines being concentrated mostly near Niima Outpost.

Felicity burst into tears at the sight of the AT-AT, but she paused to observe the situation. She looked down to see that Rey had fallen asleep. Felicity pulled out the survival blanket and laid it on the sand. She rested Rey atop it, and covered her with the patchwork blanket. Felicity pulled out her blaster, and with great reluctance left Rey to check out the AT-AT.

It was abandoned and untouched by the scavengers. There was a large enough space for someone to live in, and even had scraps of supplies. Felicity was quick to bring Rey inside.

Wasting no time, Felicity pulled the gels packs out of the bag and snapped them to activate their cooling powers. In the fog of her own overheated mind, she hadn’t thought to use them before that moment. She rested a pack against the survival blanket to see how it reacted to the backs. When Felicity saw that the blanket cooled, she set about placing the cool packs against Rey’s groin, neck, back and armpits before wrapping her in the survival blanket.

She thanked the Force that Luke had rambled on with so many childhood stories involving people getting heat stroke that Felicity memorised the cooling technique. Of course, Felicity would need to get Rey to the doctor to completely heal her, but it was a start.

Felicity raided the AT-AT for food supplies. Unfortunately all water had been long evaporated, but she managed to find food rations. Expired nutrient bars, but food nonetheless.

Felicity took a small bite out of one to test if they were still edible, and upon tasting food for the first time in days, Felicity finished the whole thing in less than a minute. Finding her self-control, she gathered up the rest and brought them back to where Rey was wrapped up.

“Rey, Sweetheart, I found some food,” Felicity settled next to Rey. “Here, eat this.”

But Rey didn’t stir.

“Rey?” Felicity very was nervous as she saw how pale and still Rey was. She gently prodded her daughter, “Rey, Sweetheart, please wake up.”

Rey didn’t move.

Fear overtook Felicity. No, she had gotten Rey to safety. She had made it. Felicity didn’t care if Rey was so young and sunstroke so harsh, they had made it to safety. Rey had to be alright.

“Rey, come on, this isn’t funny,” Felicity shook the little girl. “Rey, wake up!”

Tears fell from Felicity’s eyes onto Rey’s face, but still Rey did not move.

“Rey! Wake up! Wake up, Rey!” Felicity begged. “You’re safe! You’ll be alright! Please, Rey, wake up. REY! WAKE UP! REY!”

Rey wasn’t breathing.
Felicity immediately began CPR.

“Come on, Sweetheart. Rey, please wake up,” Felicity begged as she pumped her hands against Rey’s chest. “Rey, Mommy’s here. Mommy’s got you. You’re safe. Please wake up.”

Counting thirty compressions, Felicity stopped to administer a set of rescue breaths. She tilted back Rey’s head, pinched her nostrils together, and sealed Rey’s mouth with her own. Felicity watched in disappointment as both breaths failed to raise Rey’s chest. Felicity straightaway went back to chest compressions.

“Please, Sweetheart. Wake up. Come on, wake up. Please, wake up.”

There was no such thing as time anymore to Felicity. It could have been seconds or it could have been years since she started, but she wasn’t going to stop until her little girl was breathing again.

“Come on, Rey. Just one little breath,” Felicity’s voice shook as tears blurred the sight of her tiny daughter looking so pale, lying perfectly still in the sand. “Can you give Mommy one tiny breath?”

Felicity was hysterical. She begged, pleaded, prayed, scolded, and offered Rey anything she could dream of: toys, pets, clothing, delicious foods, her very own lightsaber, never having to go to school again, flying the Falcon at age five. Anything Rey wanted, Felicity would give her. She just needed Rey to live.

“Wake up, Baby. Please, wake up,” Felicity’s tears splashed on Rey’s pallid face.

Felicity was never one for pet names, choosing only to call Rey “Sweetheart” and finding the term “Baby” to be ridiculous. Even Luke chose to only use the pet name “Sweetheart” for Rey and Felicity. Although, he was never really one for nicknames to begin with. After spending too much time with Han and Leia, Luke had really been nicknamed out.

Yet in that moment, as hope slipped further and further away, Felicity could not call Rey anything but Baby. That was what Rey was: Felicity’s little baby girl.

The little baby she had conceived in love and carried in joy for nine months. The little baby who was the light at the end of the tunnel after Felicity’s difficult transition into motherhood. The little baby who was her ray of hope as Felicity struggled through postpartum depression. The little baby Felicity
had fought and killed countless enemies to protect from harm. The little baby Felicity had rescued from a massacre and braved a desert for seven days to keep alive.

The little baby who was lying dead in the sand.

“Please, don’t die,” Felicity wailed. “Please, wake up. Wake up, Rey! Please, wake up!”

But as Rey continued to be unresponsive, Felicity’s desperation turned into anger and guilt.

“Don’t you dare die on me, Rey!” Felicity vehemently chastised. Her firm chest compressions pressed down so forcefully that Felicity wouldn’t be surprised if she broke one of Rey’s ribs. “Don’t you dare do this to me! I promised to protect you, to bring you home. I promised that you’d live, Rey, so live, damn it! LIVE!”

Rey didn’t move.

Felicity didn’t hear the faint rumble of the motor advancing on the AT-AT, but she certainly heard the footsteps when they approached.

Using her break to administer the rescue breaths, Felicity did her best to lean over and grab the survival bag. It was just out of reach. Grumbling as she restarted the chest compressions, Felicity stretched out her leg and hooked her foot over the bag strap. She clumsily pulled it across the sand so the bag was resting next to her. Felicity administered the next set of breaths as she reached for the bag. She had just eased the zipper open when a stranger came barrelling red-faced and furious into the AT-AT.

“What do you think you’re doing?” demanded a male alien, who was a species Felicity had never encountered before. He looked something of a cross between an anteater and a wolf. “This is my territory!”

Felicity ignored the alien and did her best to angle her body to hide Rey from his sightline. She didn’t care if the alien wouldn’t recognize Rey. Felicity dictated who did and did not get to see her daughter, and a hostile stranger did not get to see Rey.

“Did you hear me, girl?” the alien snapped. “This is my turf! I’m the only one who scavenges in these parts!”

Felicity still did not respond.

“Are you deaf or just stupid?” the alien yelled, storming towards Felicity. He didn’t see her hand closing over something inside the bag next to her. He aggressively grabbed Felicity’s shoulder to force her to turn and face him, “This is my walker if I have to drag you by the hair out of here-”

The alien suddenly found himself staring down the barrel of Felicity’s blaster.

“If you try one more time to stop me from resuscitating my daughter, I will kill you,” Felicity coolly threatened.

The alien then noticed the very still, pale child lying on the ground that the woman was kneeling next to. As he registered the woman’s puffy red eyes and the desperation and seriousness in her face, his own transformed into a look of guilt. The alien weakly released his grip on the woman’s shoulder, and she immediately turned back to resume CPR.

“That poor kid,” the alien offered. “Too young to die.”
“She’s _not_ going to die!” Felicity snapped.

The alien gave Felicity a sympathetic look as if she were the most naïve person he had ever met, “Try all you want, Girlie, but we have a saying around these parts. Miracles-”

“Don’t happen on Jakku,” Felicity finished remembering the words from long ago.

She had of course heard them on her previous visit, the people of Niima repeating them so often it might as well be put on the town flag. At the time, after suffering through so much tragedy, death, and betrayal, Felicity had nearly lost herself to the words, altering them and adopting them as her own personal mantra.

**Miracles don’t happen.**

She had repeated them over and over ago. She whispered them to herself in the dead of night after dreaming of ways she would save her friends if she could turn back the clock. She whispered them to herself when the Rebel medics told her she waited too long for treatment, and they couldn’t fix the scar Vader’s lightsaber had left on her back. She whispered them to herself when the report came in that the Death Star plans had been lost and Leia captured. She whispered them to herself when she lost her nerve halfway through stealing a Rebel ship to go rogue and track down the plans on Tatooine. She whispered them to herself when she learned it would take a one in a million shot to destroy the Death Star.

But that had all been before Luke Skywalker.

Luke Skywalker who had given purpose to the death of her friends. Luke Skywalker who loved her scar and taught her not to hate lightsabers, but rather those who used them for evil. Luke Skywalker who had rescued both Leia and the plans, and brought them home. Luke Skywalker who would make that one in a million shot and save the Galaxy. Luke Skywalker who would honor that achievement in a celebration ten years later where he would meet her. Luke Skywalker who had reminded her what home and love felt like. Luke Skywalker who had been her miracle. Luke Skywalker who, with Felicity created the most perfect miracle to ever grace the galaxy.

A miracle that was lying before her dead in the sand.

Felicity didn’t care if she was on Jakku, because of Luke Skywalker she knew that miracles _did_ happen, and she’d be damned if she couldn’t make one happen for Rey.

“You’re going to be alright, Rey.” Felicity didn’t know whether she was assuring her daughter or herself. She _had_ to make this miracle happen. “Come on, breathe! Breathe! **BREATHE**!”

A loud gasp suddenly filled the walker.

“Rey!” Felicity burst into tears, slumping back on the sand in a sitting position. She wept, her hands shaking violently as she thanked the Force over and over for allowing her to save Rey.

Rey gave a series of raspy breaths, her lungs struggling to readjust to a normal breathing pattern. Felicity forced Rey to sit up, and immediately Rey threw her arms around Felicity’s neck. Rey clung tightly to her mother, but Felicity gave a ginger hug, careful not to restrict Rey’s airflow. Felicity would have loved nothing more than to crush her daughter with such a tight hug it would leave her breathless.

“Well, would you look at that,” the alien had a slight smile on his face. “I guess miracles do happen on Jakku.”
"We’re not out of the woods yet," Felicity couldn’t help but give a slight smile. She placed her hands on Rey’s body to feel the heat of her skin. Rey was still burning up. Felicity began to rewrap Rey in the survival blanket, “Just lie still here for a couple minutes, Sweetheart. Mommy has to figure out what to do next.”

The alien shook his head before taking a closer look at the pair, “Sorry for snapping at you. I thought you were a scavenger.”

“So the lack of speeder didn’t tip you off?” Felicity shot, digging through her medical kit for inspiration.

“I suppose not,” the alien chuckled. “Must have had a hell of a walk.”

“That’s one way of putting it.”

“Indeed. I’m Quom Tinadar. Who might you be?”

Felicity considered her answer.

“Jyn Erso,” Felicity offered one of her various aliases from her undercover work during the rebellion. Unfortunately, she had already spoken Rey’s name, so she couldn’t cover that up, “This is my daughter, Rey.”

Rey frowned. Jyn Erso wasn’t Mommy’s name. Rey opened her mouth to question why Mommy had lied when she caught the warning look on Mommy’s face. Rey immediately fell silent.

“What’s wrong with the girl?” Quom asked.

“Heatstroke,” Felicity answered. “It wouldn’t be that bad if she wasn’t so young.”

“What? Heatstroke?” Quom burst out laughing. “You can’t honestly tell me you haven’t used your pills?”

“Pills?”

“Don’t tell me you’re out here without some of Unkar Plutt’s pills. You’d have to be an idiot to wander Jakku unprepared.”

“I?” Felicity paused. Considering her ill-planning on the food situation, Felicity couldn’t bring herself to refute the claim. “What pill are you talking about?”

“The cooling pill?” Quom prompted. “The one that helps with heatstroke? I’d never have a kid that young walking around the desert without.”

“Do you have one with you now?” Felicity demanded.

Quom looked taken aback by the interruption. Jyn had the ferocity of a nexu protecting her cub.

“Possibly,” Quom’s eyes drifted to the entrance of the walker where his speeder and supplies waited not very far away.

Felicity’s eyes narrowed. As much as she could do for Rey, Felicity knew there was no way she could get Rey to a doctor in time without another miracle. A miracle that in this case took the form of Quom Tinadar’s pill.

And she was getting that pill.
In that moment, nothing mattered to Felicity but Rey’s survival. Her ethics as a good person. Her adherence to a moral compass. Her fidelity to her husband. Her honour as a fair individual. Her belief to only taking a life in self-defence. None of that mattered. If saving Rey meant she had to lie, cheat, steal, or even murder the man in front of her, Felicity would not hesitate.

“What would it take to get you to give me that pill?” Felicity asked.

“What are you willing to offer?” Quom countered.

Felicity looked between Rey and Quom, before rising to her feet. She gave Quom her infamous seductive smirk, but kept one hand on the hilt of her blaster. Reaching his side, Felicity looked back at Rey once more before leaning in close enough that Quom could feel Felicity’s breath against his pointed, furry ear.

“Anything,” Felicity whispered. She was fairly certain that Luke wouldn’t be happy that she offered Quom the seduction route, but he also wouldn’t condemn her considering the circumstances.

She watched as Quom looked her up and down. He gulped as her finger stroked the hilt of her blaster. Felicity then smiled and casually looked towards her supply bag. In a few small movements she had presented Quom with his options.

“The choice is yours,” Felicity cocked her head playfully. Her voice was the perfect mix of seduction, bartering, and threat.

“Sorry, Girlie,” Quom chuckled, “while you certainly do get, how do you humans say it? You get my motor running, Vrogem and Humans aren’t… physically compatible. But that’s a nice bag you’ve got over there.”

Felicity knew she had leverage, “Anything catch your eye?”

“Well, let’s take a look.”

“Go ahead,” Felicity gestured to the bag. “You can have anything in this bag in exchange for your pill.”

Rey gave a small whimper and Felicity saw her eyes flick to something.

“Except the doll,” Felicity gave an amused smile. “That’s my daughter’s.”

Quom dug through the bag. “This is pretty good stuff you’ve got. It must leave you wanting for nothing.”

“You’d be surprised.”

“Alright, how about my pill for the flares, flashlight, one of these sleeping bags?”

“That depends. What exactly does the pill do?”

“It’ll cool down the girl’s internal body temperature for a couple of hours. That should give you enough time to take a speeder ride to the doctor in Niima. It’s a good deal. One pill is worth twenty full portions of food, which is several weeks of work. Oh, and I’m also going to demand that you and your girl leave this walker.”

Felicity frowned. She had been so focused on a short term solution, she had barely thought about what she would do next. Staying in a tent for a month was fine when she was twenty-one and with
twenty-seven-year-old Diego Nalto. But her five-year-old daughter?

No, Rey needed a higher level of protection; protection the walker could offer. There wasn’t anything around for miles, and it was a large, sturdy structure. It was the perfect place to hide if Felicity could figure out a way to get to and from Niima to collect food and water. Not to mention she would have to use the communication station in Niima to contact Luke to come pick them up.

Her mind was made up; Felicity wanted food, water, the pill, the walker, and transportation to Niima.

Quom Tinadar was going to give her all of that.

“I’ll give you those items, but the walker’s mine and I get all the food and water you have,” Felicity said.

Quom chuckled, “You two aren’t from here, are you?”

“Look, I don’t care what turf wars are happening on Jakku. I’m just trying to find a way to keep my daughter safe and get her home. If that means setting up camp in a walker for a while, then so be it.”

“Let me guess, your ship crashed and now you think you own the place? Don’t forget, I haven’t given you the pill yet. I still have the upper hand here, Girlie.”

Felicity’s eyes went cold, “First of all, I am not ‘Girlie.’ I am forty-one years old. I am way past ‘Girlie,’ long done with ‘Miss,’ drifting away from ‘Ms,’ don’t even get me started on ‘Mrs,’ and am even pushing ‘Ma’am.’ Do not call me ‘Girlie.’ And secondly, as far as I see it, I found this walker which means it’s mine.”

“And as far as I see it, Erso,” Quom snapped, “I can easily walk away right now with my pill and leave your daughter to die.”

Felicity drew her blaster and pointed it at Quom. The alien froze, fear filling his eyes, as Rey gently whimpered in the background.

“Listen to me, Scavenger,” Felicity’s voice was dark, “I have faced many enemies in my life. If you were to add yourself to my list, I guarantee you wouldn’t break the top twenty. In fact, you’re so insignificant that I would probably even forget I killed you. Don’t make the mistake of thinking I’m a naïve outsider. I’ve been on Jakku before; I’ve dealt with your kind. Yes, my daughter and I are stuck here, but you can’t imagine what we just escaped from.”

Rey shuddered as she remembered the night of the massacre.

“Now, I’m a reasonable woman,” Felicity continued. “I was a professional negotiator for years. I’ve handled far worse than you. I don’t want to kill you – I think it would be a waste, plus a very traumatic sight for my daughter – but I will if I have to. Since I doubt that you wish for me to kill you, I’m fairly certain that somehow you and I can work out an agreement. There has to be something in here I can offer you. Something worth giving up this walker.”

Quom’s eyes narrowed in on the golden bands on Felicity’s left hand, “You’re a married woman.”

“I assure you that I can take care of myself, but if you are foolish enough to involve my husband, I will warn you, he’s definitely someone you don’t want to cross-”

“I want your rings.”

Felicity blinked, “My rings?”
“Wedding band and engagement,” Quom pointed to her left hand. “Those rings of yours each must be worth at least a year of meals.”

“Here,” Felicity pulled them off without hesitation. She held them out, but drew back as he tried to grab them, “But on my terms. I’ll give you the wedding band now; think of it as a deposit. You’re going to give me all of your food and water, plus that pill. You’re going to leave this walker alone, forever. Finally, you will give Rey and I a ride into Niima, taking us to the doctor. After you do, I’ll give you the engagement ring. Deal?”

Quom grabbed the wedding ring, “Deal.”

Felicity watched carefully as Quom administered the pill to Rey with a drink from his canteen. While they waited for the pill to work, Felicity portioned out the proper amount of food and water for her and Rey to eat. After suffering from starvation, eating too much food, too quickly could easily make them throw up.

Next, Felicity took inventory of their remaining possessions as Quom loaded his bounty into his speeder. It was an older model, but vaguely familiar to Felicity. She was fairly certain she had seen another one in a Holo somewhere, but she couldn’t place her finger on where.

After taking Rey’s temperature, Felicity decided that Rey was healing enough that she could stash the survival blanket with the rest of the supplies. While Quom was out of the walker, Felicity took the opportunity to hide her bag. She didn’t want to take it into Niima where someone would try to barter for her items, or worse, steal them.

When Quom helped Felicity get Rey into the speeder, the only things Felicity had on her were her vomit-stained clothes, her blaster, her credit chip, and her engagement ring.

Felicity felt a pang of guilt as she watched Quom stuff her wedding ring into his pocket. While Rey’s life was worth far more than some band of gold, she couldn’t help but get sentimental. She remembered the moment Luke had slid it onto her finger, vowing to love her for the rest of his days. Felicity remembered sliding his own matching band onto his finger and making the same vow.

It was ironic that Felicity had been forced to give up the cold, material representation of her love with Luke to save the living, breathing representation of the very same thing.

With a tear in her eye, Felicity pressed a kiss to her engagement ring. She remembered the day that Luke had presented it to her. He had proposed to her on the hill overlooking Temple Village, promising to build the house of their dreams on that site, and asking her to enter it as his wife. A home he would build, where they would love each other, create and raise a child in, and build a life together.

A home that was now nothing more than ash.

“Let’s get going,” Quom’s gruff voice broke Felicity’s reverie.

Closing her hand tightly around the ring in her palm, Felicity silently nodded and climbed into the speeder.

Sitting in the backseat next to her daughter, Felicity and Rey slowly sipped on Quom’s spare canisters of water.

“How are you feeling?” Felicity gently asked, her hand absent-mindedly stroking Rey’s hot, sweaty
forehead. She couldn’t help but note that Rey’s temperature felt lower.

“Better,” Rey answered.


“I’m a lot better, Mommy,” Rey assured her mother in a chuckling tone Felicity was positive Rey had gotten from Luke. Heck, Rey’s need to reassure Felicity of her wellbeing alone was proof enough that the Skywalker genes were acting up.

“Are you sure?” Felicity gave Rey a playful smile, but her tone betrayed her lingering concern.

“Promise.” Rey glanced down at the canister in her hands, and looked up at Felicity brightly, “I’ve got a whole canister full of okay!”

Felicity couldn’t help but laugh and pulled Rey into a tight hug. She pressed a kiss to Rey’s sweaty forehead, and finally gave a sigh of relief as Niima appeared as a dot on the horizon.

A tear ran down Felicity’s face. Their home may have been burned to the ground, but as long as Luke, Felicity, and Rey had each other, they knew there was still hope.

“Thank you for staying alive,” Felicity whispered to Rey.

Rey grinned and gave Daddy’s famous reply, “Anytime.”

Felicity almost burst into tears when they arrived in Niima. She had done it: she had gotten Rey to safety.

When he parked the speeder, Quom Tinadar pointed out the doctor’s hut and then held out his hand. Felicity sighed and handed over her engagement ring.

“Nice doing business with you,” Quom grinned.

“Anytime,” Felicity sarcastically replied as she lifted Rey out of the speeder. She didn’t trust Rey’s condition enough to let her walk.

“Maybe I’ll see you around, Erso,” Quom chuckled. “You and your little Miracle Girl.”

Felicity just shook her head as Quom started up his speeder. Quom had just barely driven back towards the desert when a creature came up to Felicity.

“Kachay foo je,” the creature demanded in a language Felicity didn’t understand.

For the first time in her life, Felicity missed having Threepio around.

“Pardon me,” Felicity politely said, trying to step around him.

“Nobata,” the creature cut off her path to the doctor. “Kachay foo je!”

Felicity’s eyes narrowed dangerously. Was he really going to put himself between a doctor and a mother holding a dying child?

He began gesturing to a stand in the middle of the outpost where a large group of scavengers were lined up. Felicity was fairly certain it hadn’t been there the last time she was on Jakku. Niima
Outpost was much smaller at the time, Unkar operating out of a small tent. The Battle of Jakku must have expanded the scavenging business.

“I have to get to the doctor,” Felicity snapped. “Move out of the way before I’m forced to harm you.”

“Kachay foo je!” the creature exclaimed looking exasperated.

“Mommy, he’s saying ‘walk with me,’” Rey suddenly piped up. “He’s speaking Daddy’s language.”

“Huttese, of course,” Felicity muttered. “How could I have forgotten?”

Luke had been ecstatic the day he learned Felicity could speak his second language. Of course, it was only bits and pieces she had picked up decades ago, but she did know a little. Over the years, Luke had attempted to teach Felicity to speak fluently. Felicity had always struggled with languages and despite Luke’s best efforts, she could only speak Huttese a bit better than she could land a ship.

Which basically meant her current trip to Jakku was her own personal hell.

Rey on the other hand, was very fluent in the language. The idea to teach Rey Huttese came from a time while Felicity was pregnant with Rey. Luke had gone through a phase where he read every parenting book he could get his hands on. In one, he read that the first few years of a child’s life was the best time to teach them other languages and Luke decided to introduce Rey to as many as possible. Rey, being a Skywalker, had easily picked up on Huttese and often had full conversations with Luke in the language.

Which meant Felicity only had one option.

“Rey, can you please tell him that Mommy needs to take you to the doctor?” Felicity asked.

As Rey turned and said something to the creature, Felicity tried not to dwell on the fact that her five-year-old was acting as her translator.

The creature and Rey exchanged a few sentences, and at one point the creature paused to say something into a comlink. After a few more exchanges, Rey looked up at Felicity in excitement.

“He says we have to come with him because he’s going to help us get back to Daddy!” Rey proclaimed.

Felicity was instantly suspicious, “How does he know Daddy?”

“Daddy called his boss and promised them a reward,” Rey explained.

“Who’s his boss?” Felicity questioned.

“Now you haven’t forgotten me that easily, have you, My Girl?” a voice from the past answered her.

Felicity turned to find herself face to face with the familiar, nauseating form of Unkar Plutt. It had been twenty years since Felicity had encountered him, but not a thing had changed. Especially not the way his beady eyes liked to roam over her body.

“Plutt,” Felicity said shortly. Protectively she shifted Rey in closer, tightening her embrace on her daughter.

“Rhiaon,” Unkar grinned. “You got old.”
“Apparently not old enough,” Felicity glared at his hungry gaze. “What do you want?”

“To congratulate you. That husband of yours in a fine catch. Very handsome, very powerful, and word on the street, very rich.”

Felicity said nothing. It was true, Luke certainly made sure his family wanted for nothing. He had come into a frankly ridiculous amount of credits when he inherited the estate of Darth Vader. There were many rumors about the exact amount, but Luke had not even disclosed it to Felicity until they had been married a full month. Upon seeing the number, Felicity had gone catatonic for an hour until she finally exclaimed that she didn’t care if Vader was the second-in-command for the Empire, Vader had been way overpaid.

That said, Luke and Felicity did not live a life of excess. Most of their money went to charity, funding the Jedi Order, and buying their way out of the trouble that seemed to constantly follow them. The credit chips stored in their survival kits – one of said chips being stored on Felicity’s person at that moment – was more than enough to take care of whatever Felicity needed to do to get herself and Rey off of Jakku.

Not that Felicity was about to disclose any of that information to Unkar Plutt of all people.

“Luke takes care of us,” Felicity offered simply. Normally she would add a caveat that she earned her own way in life, but considering her job was architect to the Jedi Order, Felicity was technically on Luke’s payroll. “You claim to have been in contact with him?”

“About a week ago.”

“Prove it.”

“I thought you might say that,” Unkar held out a small holo recording.

A small blue image of a haggard-looking Luke Skywalker was projected from the disc, “If Rhiaon or Rey shows up, Plutt, you will immediately get them to contact me, and you will take care of their needs until I can come get them. By needs I mean water, shelter, appropriate portions of food, medical attention, and whatever else they ask of you. When I come get them, we will negotiate a reward. If you fail any of my conditions, you will forfeit your prize. Do we have an understanding?”

“I naturally agreed to his proposition,” Unkar flicked off the transmission. “So, how much do you think Lover Boy will give me?”

“Depends on how well you behave yourself,” Felicity smirked. Luke had given her plenty of leverage to get Plutt to meet her demands. “Now, how about that doctor?”

Felicity had barely handed Rey over to Doctor Aletha Kymeri before Plutt was dragging Felicity towards the communication center. She was almost a little disappointed in how eager Plutt was to get his reward. Felicity wanted to stay with Rey, but was also comforted that Dr. Kymeri had been very warm and kindly, vowing to take care of Rey. But only the knowledge that Felicity was about to see Luke and assure him they were okay was what let Felicity leave Rey with the doctor.

“She gets as many messages she needs,” Plutt ordered the station attendant as he followed Felicity into the communication room.

It was a simple room: four black walls forming a small box, a transmission pad to stand on, a number pad to type in your com code, and a machine that listed basic important code numbers such as the Republic Academy, and the Senate Building on Hosnian Prime.
Felicity gave Plutt a look, “Do you mind?”

Plutt looked like he did, but he backed out of the room, “Just tell me when you’re done.”

Felicity turned to the number pad and paused for a moment to fix up her appearance as best she could. She knew Luke was probably already feeling guilty enough, so there was no point in distressing him further by bluntly displaying the hardships she had been through.

Typing in Luke’s personal com code, Felicity let out a sigh of relief. She smiled as the room filled with mechanical squeals as the line tried to connect to Luke.

This was it. After seven days of walking through the desert. After being constantly hungry, thirsty, sleepy, and sad. After the loneliness, the bitterness, the grief, the guilt, and the worry. After house fires, ship crashes, massacres, heatstroke, and bartering. After everything they had been through, Felicity and Rey would finally be saf-

“The line’s busy!” the operator shouted.

What?

What?

“Try it again!” Felicity ordered. “There has to be a mistake.”

“Alright,” the operator retried the call. A few moments of silence passed, “Sorry. Can’t get through.”

He had to be joking. Felicity had just walked through the Force damned desert for seven kriffing days with a laughable amount of supplies basically dragging their dying daughter behind her… and Luke had the gall to be busy?

“Are you positive you can’t get through?” Felicity asked.

“Sorry, but the line’s all tied up,” the operator replied. “Do you want to leave a message? I can bypass the line, and go straight to his message box system.”

“Yes, please,” Felicity’s teeth were gritted.

Oh, she was going to leave Luke a message alright. A long, loud, angry message detailing how she would kill Luke when she got her hands on him.

A busy line; was he serious?

As the operator fiddled with his controls, Felicity paused to mess up her appearance, undoing and worsening her previous appearance. She was going to do anything to make Luke feel the shame of promising to find her and Rey and then apparently being too damn busy to follow through on it.

“You’ve reached the message box of Luke Skywalker,” a tired, familiar voice filled the room. Luke sounded desperate, “I’m currently either using, or away from my line at the moment. Please, feel free to leave a message. However, I am currently going through a family emergency, and most likely will be unavailable to return most calls. If you do have any information on the whereabouts of my wife and daughter, please try to contact either my sister, Leia Organa-Solo or brother-in-law, Han Solo.”

Oh, Felicity had information about Luke’s wife and daughter alright. They were on Jakku, his daughter recovering from her almost death, and his wife pissed off in the communication center. She
didn’t know if she could get even madder than she was at the moment.

“I’m sorry,” the clinical female voice of a recording chirped, “but this inbox is currently full.”

Felicity was madder.

“I can’t get through,” Felicity snapped at the operator, her eyes flashing darkly. “I’m calling someone else.”

“Go ahead!” the operator shouted.

Felicity typed in Leia’s number. Leia was about to get an earful. Felicity knew that Leia would be just as mad. Heck, Felicity figured she probably should go easy on Luke, or Leia might tear Luke to shreds before Felicity could.

A busy line and a full inbox. Felicity couldn’t believe it. And for it to be Luke of all people who was doing this. She couldn’t wait to talk to Leia, because honestly, who was so stupid to-

“That line’s busy too!” the operator called.

Felicity’s jaw dropped. What kind of sadistic joke were they playing on her?

But, the ridiculousness didn’t stop there. Sure enough, just like Luke, Leia’s line was busy and her inbox was full. And so was Han’s, and so was the line for the Falcon, and so was Han and Leia’s home line on Hosnian Prime.

What the hell were they doing that was so much more important than finding her?

That very same moment on Hosnian Prime...

“Lor San, have you heard anything from my wife and daughter?”

“Han, Luke, I have an update: Chewbacca’s taken the Falcon off-line while they search Mandalore.”

“Guys, I think Lando blocked my number.”

Felicity stared at the number pad in disbelief. She couldn’t get through to them. What was she supposed to do now? It would only be a matter of time before the First Order tracked her ship to Jakku. Then what? Would she hide? Flee? How could she do either? She was in the middle of fighting for the lives of herself and her daughter, and yet their family apparently couldn’t be bothered to leave one com line open.

No, she had to keep calling. But who could she call?

Her first thoughts were either the lines to her home on Rornian or Luke’s office line. But considering the last time she saw her home and the Jedi Temple, both were on fire, Felicity had little faith either of those lines were still in service.

She could call her own office, but who would even answer?

Could she call a friend? Diego Nalto? Lando Calrissian? Wedge Antilles? Chewbacca’s family? Kes and Poe Dameron? The thought was tempting, but dangerous. If the First Order was tracking her, calling a friend would put that friend in danger.
Calling someone to deliver sensitive information in the hopes that they could call and deliver that information to someone else – someone even Felicity couldn’t get through to at the moment – was placing a little too much trust in the third party. Felicity did trust her friends, but she didn’t trust that the First Order wouldn’t intercept her message before it got to Luke.

She thought about calling her old work, the Senate Emissary Office on Coruscant. It would be safer considering it was a governmental line. But she remembered her former boss, Nils Arlos mentioning that the com number had been changed a few months back after it was discovered the First Order had bugged their line. If only Felicity could think of another governmental line to call.

Wait, a governmental line?

“Put me through to the Senate Building on Hosnian Prime,” Felicity ordered the operator. “Enter extension 1138.”

A few moments later a cheerful but diplomatic voice chirped into the room.

“You’ve reached the office of Leia Organa-Solo, Senator of Coruscant and Founding General of the Resistance Movement.” Jaina Fel, Leia’s assistant said in a recording. “The Senator is currently experiencing a family emergency, and has taken a leave of absence. You may leave a message if you wish, but know that it might take the Senator some time to return it. If you are calling to express your condolences regarding Felicity and Rey Rhiaon Skywalker, the Senator would like to thank you, but asks you not leave a message to prevent her inbox from filling, and preventing the leaving of messages containing important information regarding search.”

Felicity loudly snorted.

“If you are a journalist calling to seek further details regarding the Burning of Rornian, the search for the Skywalkers, the movements of the First Order, or the newest recruit of the Knights of Ren, I would like to reiterate the address the Senator made the night after the incident. A statement has been released, and the Senator and her family will not be answering any further questions at this time. There will be a press conference held if there has been a development. If you would still like to leave a message, please press 1.”

Felicity pressed one.

To Felicity’s surprise, Chancellor Mon Mothma of all people began to speak.

“Due to the high volume of calls Senator Organa-Solo has been receiving, the Senate has determined to restrict access of this number to a list of specific persons for select reasons,” the recording said. “A computer system will be going over all messages left, and filtering out the unnecessary one. Only the approved persons correctly identified by voice signature, contacting for an approved reason will be forwarded to the office of Senator Leia Organa-Solo.”

Felicity was amazed; people really must have been tying up the Senate lines if Mothma had gotten involved.

Jaina’s recorded voice returned, “At the tone, please state your full name, and one of the following reasons for your message: One, Senate Business; two, First Order Information; three, the Search for Felicity Rhiaon; four, Media Inquires; or five, Other.”

A beep filled the room.

“Felicity Rhiaon Skywalker, the Search for Felicity Rhiaon,” Felicity spoke in a calm, clear voice. She had to be careful that the computer would understand her words, match it to her voice signature,
and actually put her message through.

"Approved," Jaina’s recording sounded.

Felicity vaguely wondered if there was even a denial message or if an unapproved message would just be deleted when it went to the external sorting computer. In fact, she wondered what things would be filtered out. Would they think the search for herself was unimportant for a business line? She hoped not, or else she was in big trouble.

Jaina continued, “At the tone, please leave your message… Beep.”

Felicity took a deep breath and composed herself. She was furious at her family, but didn’t want an aggressive tone to get the computer to delete her message.

“Hey, Leia, it’s Felicity,” Felicity smiled for the recording. “I’m calling you to tell you that safe. I’ve been trying to contact you and the boys, but funny story, all of your lines have been tied up, and message boxes full. Considering the hoops I had to jump through just to get to this inbox, I can only imagine you guys are so busy trying to find me, you don’t really have the time to actually stop and listen for me.”

Felicity took another breath, calming herself before she got into a rant.

“I’m worried that the First Order might try to track me, so I’ll keep this brief. I’m fine – a little battered around from my journey – but fine. I would say I’m doing good, but considering the hell I’ve suffered through the past few days, I’ll stick to the word ‘fine.’ Rey is-”

Felicity paused. How much should she tell about Rey? She certainly wasn’t about to tell Luke via Leia via an answering machine that an hour ago, Rey had basically died but now was fine.

“Well… we can discuss Rey later,” Felicity decided vagueness was the best route. “I’m on Jakku, and I took up that offer Luke arranged. I should be fine for a while, but please, for the love of the Force, would someone please come pick me up? I’d settle for Lando at this point. I love you all. Tell Luke I love him, and that I’m counting the minutes until I see him again.”

Felicity hit the end call button.

There she had done it; she had left a patient, composed, friendly message that would ensure they come get her. No need to get angry, no need to rant, no need to think about how tired and hot and hungry and thirsty she was. No need to think about how much her feet and head hurt, no need to recall the horrifying sight of her dying daughter, and that desperate attempt to save Rey’s life. No need to think about how after suffering through hell, she couldn’t even get a damn message through to her own family. No need to be upset.

And yet, she was.

“Call them back,” Felicity ordered the operator.

She fumed as she waited through the extensive recordings. No, she was not allowing them to get away with this scott-free. How dare they do this to her?

“At the tone, please state your full name, and one of the following reasons for your message: One, Senate Business; two, First Order Information; three, the Search for Felicity Rhiaon; four, Media Inquires; or five, Other.”

“Felicity Rhiaon Why the Hell Did I Ever Marry a Skywalker for the Search for Felicity Freaking
“Thank God for computers searching by code words,” Felicity muttered knowing her voice signature and the keywords of ‘Felicity’ ‘Rhiaon’ ‘Skywalker’ and ‘Search’ were probably the only things that had gotten her through.

Jaina continued, “At the tone, please leave your message… Beep.”

“You know what?” Felicity yelled, “No! I am not letting this go! Who the hell tells someone they’ll see each other again, and then doesn’t leave even one damn com line open so they can contact you. I mean, seriously? Are you kidding me, Luke? I’ve been through hell and back and I get a busy signal? You get your ass here, Skywalker, right now or I swear to the Force itself, I will kill you.”

Felicity slammed her hand against the end call button and loudly exhaled.

“Feel better now that that’s out of your system?” the operator asked.

Felicity smiled, “Much better.”

“There, home sweet home,” Felicity proclaimed later that night as she finished tying up a hammock in the walker.

After the call to Leia, Felicity had gone back to Plutt and worked out a deal. She and Rey got a ride back to the walker, and was promised a ride was available anytime they wanted to go in and out of Niima Outpost. In addition to a handful of supplies, such as the hammock and a small ration cooker, Plutt was going to personally bring the girls food and water rations every couple of days. Felicity preferred to have Rey away from the sketchy figures that populated Jakku, and you never knew who was secretly working for the First Order.

If Felicity received any calls, or if a member of the family showed up on Jakku, Plutt would fetch Felicity immediately. Anything else Felicity wanted or needed, Plutt insisted that all she had to do was ask. It was clear Plutt wanted to milk Luke’s promise of reward for everything it was worth.

Felicity had spent the rest of the day trying to spruce up the walker for herself and Rey. The hammock was strung up and made with the emergency blanket for Rey. For herself, Felicity found a large piece of non-metallic paneling she set on the floor and put the remaining sleeping bag and her cobbled together blanket on top of. Most of the day had been spent on exploring the walker, and figuring out how to turn it into a temporary home.

Admittedly, Felicity was at a bit of a disadvantage when it came to AT-AT walkers. Her only experience with them was during the glory days of the Rebellion where she was forced to run away from them and hope she wouldn’t get shot. Her war stories weren’t as grand as Luke’s who took down a walker with a lightsaber and grappling hook.

Show-off.

But she was a trained architect, and most of her studies had been on Imperial designs. Her schooling had mostly come from her undercover recruitment missions during the Rebellion where she would enroll into Imperial Academies and scout future Rebels.

Her architecture knowledge and the mechanical things she had picked up from others over the years gave her a little room to work with in converting the walker into a livable space. Most of the
exploration would have to wait for the next day, but she and Rey had poked around the walker a little that day.

First off, Felicity knew enough to disconnect the fuel slug tank.

“That stuff’s dangerous,” Felicity warned Rey as she watched in curious interest.

Rey was a true Skywalker and therefore fascinated with all things mechanical. Knowing that the Skywalker love of mechanics originated with Anakin, Felicity had once tried to pin Rey’s love on the Rhiaon side of the family. Luke was only too quick to point out that if that was true, it had to have come from her father, Alaric Rhiaon, Head Technician of the Death Star.

Grandpa Sith Lord or Grandpa Death Star Creator; either way Rey was screwed.

Of course, the whole walker was dangerous. It would take some serious work for Felicity to make it safe for Rey. In the meanwhile, she would have to restrict Rey to stay in the troop section where there was plenty of living space and a lot less danger.

Well, except for the ten E-11 rifles that were still racked and ready, and the five scattered DLT-20 As Felicity found. Thankfully, over the years, Luke and Felicity had firmly instilled in Rey not to touch weapons without both Mommy and Daddy’s permission (both, as there had once been a disagreement when Luke let Rey handle his powered off lightsaber without Felicity’s knowledge.)

The good thing about the guns was that if the First Order found them, Felicity could use the weapons to make a hell of a last stand. Not to mention she could trade them to Plutt for about three months of rations.

Felicity prayed that they wouldn’t be on Jakku long enough for that number of rations to be necessary.

“Mommy, why are you mad?” Rey asked as they got ready for bed. She held her doll tightly in her arms as Felicity laid the emergency blanket over her.

Felicity frowned at Rey, “Why do you say that?”

“I can feel it, like Daddy taught me to.”

Felicity grimaced; there was Rey’s Force sensitivity acting up again. Felicity had tried very hard not to let Rey know how frustrated she was about their situation. She tried to remember why she ever agreed to let Luke teach Rey to sense emotions.

Rey looked down timidly, “Are you mad at me?”

Felicity gasped in shock, “No, Sweetheart, of course not. Why would you think that?”

“Because I couldn’t make it Niima for you, and I think I used up all of our bravery.”

“Don’t you dare worry about either of those things,” Felicity lovingly stroked Rey’s cheek. “We got there and that’s all that matters.”

“But I scared you, didn’t I? When everything went dark.”

“Yes, you did,” Felicity swallowed hard; she never again wanted to think about Rey lying dead in the sand. “In fact, I’ve never been more terrified in my life. I almost lost you today, Sweetheart, and I never want to experience that again.”
Rey whimpered, “I’m sorry.”

“There’s nothing to be sorry about,” Felicity wiped away a tear trailing down Rey’s cheek. “It’s not your job to prevent me from being scared. Now, if you go jump off a roof and knock yourself out, then we’ll have a problem, but if I’m worried about the fact that I have done something that put you in a dangerous situation, like not have enough water for you, or if someone is going to hurt you, it is not your job to make me feel better. It’s my job to protect you and make sure you get out of the situation safely.”

“So,” Rey sniffed and rubbed the tears out of her eyes, “you’re not mad at me?”

“Not in the slightest.”

“Then… why are you mad? Did something happen? Is Daddy ok?”

“I’m sure Daddy’s fine, it’s just…” Felicity sighed, she couldn’t keep it from Rey, “I couldn’t get through to Daddy today.”

“What?” Rey exclaimed, shooting up straight upright in the hammock.

“Relax,” Felicity gently eased Rey to lay back down. “Daddy was so busy trying to find us, I couldn’t get through to his com line.”

“What about Uncle Han or Aunt Leia?”

“They were busy too.”

“So no one’s coming to rescue us?”

“I didn’t say that,” Felicity shook her head. “I was able to get a message to Aunt Leia’s office. You know Aunt Leia’s assistant, Jaina, right?”

Rey nodded.

“Well, Jaina’s going to make sure that Aunt Leia gets the message, and when she does, Daddy’s going to come get us,” Felicity explained.

“When will he come?” Rey asked.

Felicity paused, “Truthfully, I’m not sure, but I know he will, and if Daddy can’t, then either Uncle Han or Aunt Leia will find you and bring you home to our family. I promise. Besides, Sweetheart, we’ve been on Jakku for a while now, it can’t be much longer.”

“Twenty-two days?” Rey echoed the answer she had gotten the last time she asked how much longer until she could see Daddy.

A pained look crossed Felicity’s face; she remembered the promise she had made Rey, a promise that would never come true.

“No, Sweetheart,” Felicity said sadly, “I can’t promise twenty-two days.”

Rey finally broke down. She threw her arms around her mother’s neck and sobbed heavily.

“I want to go home, Mommy!” Rey exclaimed through howls. “I want to go home!”

Felicity clung onto Rey tightly, her own tears falling, “I know, Sweetheart. I want to go home too.”
The next morning, Rey woke up in her mother’s arms, snuggling up to her in the hammock. Rey had cried herself to sleep last night, and Felicity had been stuck with Rey’s arms around her that it made more sense to share the hammock than wake Rey up.

Rey sniffed, remembering the things her mother had told her last night. She couldn’t understand what was happening, and why her parents were breaking so many promises.

They promised she’d be safe in her bed.

They lied.

Mommy promised that Daddy would be home in twenty-two days.

Mommy lied.

Daddy promised to come back for her in the woods.

Daddy lied.

Mommy promised she would get Rey safely to Niima Outpost.

Mommy lied.

Daddy promised that Ben would never try to hurt her.

Daddy lied.

What could she believe anymore?

“Morning,” Felicity’s gentle greeting interrupted Rey’s thoughts.

Rey startled like a deer, and Felicity chuckled as Rey scrambled to gather her bearings, nearly flipping the hammock.

“I’m sorry about last night,” Felicity grasped Rey’s arm to steady and calm her. “I know things have been very scary lately, but I promise you that Daddy and I are trying our best to keep you safe.”

“You and Daddy made a lot of promises,” Rey sniffed, trying to hold back fresh tears.

Felicity took a deep breath, “I know, and we haven’t been great at keeping them lately, so I’ll promise you this: I promise to not make you any more promises I can’t keep. Do you believe me?”

Rey was hesitant, but the words that had been broken were nothing compared to the actions her mother had performed to keep her safe. Facing off against Ben, getting her through the desert, and even using her own breath to restore Rey’s. Rey may not be able to trust Mommy to keep her promises, but she could trust Mommy to keep her alive.

“I believe you, Mommy,” Rey hugged Felicity.

And as Felicity held Rey in her tight embrace, Felicity knew that for just a moment, they were safe.
“Here we are: breakfast,” Felicity placed in front of Rey a plate of Imperial rations Unkar Plutt had given them.

Rey took a bite and made a face, “Ugh! That’s horrible.”

“Rey,” Felicity warned. “What do we say when we don’t like something?”

Rey gave her mother a sheepish look, “I don’t really like that, but thank you for letting me try it.”

“Better. Now eat up; that’s all we have.”

“But Mommy-”

“I know Alliance rations taste better, but I’ve run out of those, and not eating is not an option.”

“I want to eat,” Rey said quietly to herself, remembering all too vividly the pangs of hunger. She took a small bite of her rations and struggled to swallow it. “I’m tired of rations, Mommy. When can we have real food?”

“Not for a while yet,” Felicity answered honestly. There was no point in hiding anything about their situation from Rey.

Rey crossed her arms, “I can’t wait to get home.

Felicity paused, “Rey… when we leave Jakku we’re not… We can’t exactly go home.”

“Why not?”

“Sweetheart, the Knights of Ren set it on fire. I don’t know how much of it is left.”


“It’s probably all gone.”
“But it was my stuff!” Rey exclaimed, her five-year-old not making sense of the concept.

“I know,” Felicity placed a hand on Rey’s shoulder trying to calm her down. “There’s things in there I didn’t want to lose either.”

“Like what?”

“Well,” Felicity dry swallowed. Caught up in the situation of taking care of Rey and getting them to Niima, Felicity hadn’t even entertained their house burning down. “There’s my wedding dress, my blaster collection, all of our family Holos, there’s my and Daddy’s medals of bravery for destroying the Death Star, I had a box tucked in the attic of some of your baby things, all of our personal records – birth certificates, my and Daddy’s wedding license – Uncle Brendan’s urn-”

Felicity couldn’t go on.

Tears had filled her eyes and she put her head in her hands. Felicity’s shoulders jerked as desperate sobs escaped her throat. Every object that meant anything to her was gone for good.

“Don’t cry, Mommy,” Rey’s scared, but trying to be helpful voice broke Felicity’s heart.

“Come here,” Felicity pulled Rey into her arms. She held Rey as tightly as she could and gently stroked her hair, “I know that you’re sad about losing all of your things, and I am too, but the most important thing to remember is that you, Daddy, and I all got away. We’re safe, and soon we’ll be together again.”

Rey buried her face in Felicity’s neck, “Are you going to call Daddy again tomorrow?”

“No, Sweetheart.” Seeing Rey’s shocked expression, Felicity explained, “The people who burned down our home are looking for you and I right now.”

“Why?”

“Because they’re bad people who think we can help them do bad things. I’m not going to let them find us, but that means we can’t draw a lot of attention to ourselves. Sending a bunch of messages would draw attention, so I’m going to wait before trying to call Daddy again. Do you understand?”

Rey nodded, “Mommy, what will happen if the bad people come here?”

“I will do anything and everything to make them go away before they find you.”

“Would you…” Rey looked down, the image of Zena Halcorr flashing through her mind, “Would you kill them?”

There was a beat.

“Yes,” Felicity finally answered. She caressed Rey’s teary cheek, “You know that Daddy and I have a strict code about violence.”

“It’s the last resort.”

“Right, I only use it if I’ve run out of options, but there is no shame in killing to protect someone from imminent danger.”

“Is that true all the time?”

“It’s… a little more complicated than that, but we’ll talk about it some more when you get older. But
you don’t need to worry about any of this because the bad people aren’t going to find us. Daddy’s going to come for us.”

“When will you call him again?” Rey asked.

“A couple of weeks,” Felicity answered.

“How many?”

Felicity smiled, “Why don’t you pick?”

Rey thought hard, “How many days have we been here?”

“Eight. So one day and one week.”

“Then we’ll call him in three weeks to make it a month.”

“Deal!” Felicity held out her hand and the girl shook on it. Inwardly, Felicity shuddered at the thought of being stuck on Jakku for a month. “Now, how about you held me keep track of the days?”

“How?” Rey asked.

Felicity set their plates aside and pulled Rey to her feet. She took Rey by the hand and led her to a large wall where a small sharp object was set neatly next to it.

“I figured this out last night,” Felicity let go of Rey’s hand and picked up the object. She looked seriously to Rey and warned, “You are not allowed to touch this without Mommy’s permission. Do you understand? It’s very sharp.”

Felicity held out the sharp object and Rey nodded.

“We’re going to keep track of how many days we’ve been here by marking the wall,” Felicity scratched eight lines onto the wall.

“Mommy, you forgot to cross your tallies,” Rey pointed to the side by side lines. She was used to seeing hash marks that were crossed every fifth line.

“It doesn’t matter,” Felicity shook her head. “I want you to focus, because if you pay attention you could get a prize out of this.”

“A prize?” Rey’s eyes lit up. “What prize? How can I get it?”

“Rey, you’ve been such a good girl, and Mommy’s put you through so much that I’ve decided to reward you for your behaviour. Every day I’m going to add a line to the wall, and at the end of this adventure I’m going to let you cash in the lines. You can use one for say… double dessert one night, or a small toy. For bigger things, you can cash in multiple lines, so if you wanted a new doll that might cost three lines. What do you think?”

Rey grinned, “I hope we’re here for lots of days!”

Felicity laughed and ruffled Rey’s hair, “Don’t get your hopes up, Sweetheart. This is Daddy we’re talking about. How long could Daddy make us wait here?”

---

Two Weeks Later…
Luke Skywalker stared at himself in the refresher mirror. His hair was done perfectly, his grand black Jedi robes were immaculate, and the rest of his body was freshly washed and polished.

But there was no denying the deadness in his tired blue eyes. There was no denying the weary lines that were etched onto his face. There was no denying the droop of his posture or the way his eyes constantly flicked to his comlink. And there was no denying the look of sorrow and brokenness that haunted his expression.

He missed his girls.

Luke wondered about them constantly. Were they safe? Were they happy? Why hadn’t they contacted him yet? He had barely been away from his comlink for a minute in the past three weeks, yet not a word from his wife.

Today he finally had to pause his search and give his testimony of the Burning of Rornian to the Senate. Thankfully Leia had arranged for Chancellor Mon Mothma to see them privately to give the account, but recalling the events of that night was the last thing Luke wanted to do.

And then there was the issue of outing Ben.

Rumors had swirled about his involvement and new membership in the Knights of Ren, but Luke had refused to publicly confirm a thing. He knew it needed to be revealed at the right time or Leia’s reputation in the Senate would be broken beyond repair.

They had all heard the catty whispers: Darth’s Daughter. Vaderspawn. Imperial Heir. The Sith Senator. It was one of the reasons Leia refused to accept any of inheritance from their father’s estate. Leia did everything in her power to be known as something more than Darth Vader’s daughter. Despite doing all she could to distance herself from their father, Leia could not escape Vader’s shadow.

It was shocking how quickly the public eye had reduced her from a war hero to nothing more than Vader’s daughter. No amount of reminding people that Leia herself had been tortured by Vader seemed to do the trick. Ever since Luke and Leia announced their true parentage, Leia had struggled to hold on to her Senate seat, and every election cycle would just bring up the whole controversy once more.

Luke probably didn’t help her case by constantly advocating for Anakin whenever the subject of Vader came around. Leia always preferred the company of Han and Felicity when the issue popped up. Han would give a gruff response that Vader was a psychopath that Leia wanted nothing to do with, and then threaten to beat up anyone who pushed the issue. Felicity would go on long, angry rants about how much good Leia had done, how evil Vader was, and that if anything it should be Vader who was ashamed to be related to someone as amazing as Leia.

Luke smiled at the thought of his wife. There were still days he woke up and couldn’t believe he had found someone he could love as much as Felicity Rhiaon. He couldn’t have asked for a better woman to be his wife, and the mother of his child.

And he wanted her back so much.


“Coming,” Luke smoothed down his hair once again and slipped out of the bathroom.

He walked with Leia into the living room where Han, Chewie, Wedge, Diego, and Kes Dameron (who had come to visit his son, Poe at the academy) were continuing the search for Rey and Felicity.
“Have you found anything?” Luke asked hopefully.

“Only that you seriously need to make some female friends, Skywalker,” Wedge glanced around at the surplus of men.

A sad look crossed Luke’s face, “I did have some.”

The room was filled with an awkward silence as everyone was forced to remember that Luke’s main female friends – Reine, Alyla, Zena, and so forth – had all been Jedi slaughtered on Rornian.

“Hey,” Han spoke up to break the ice, “remember that time Wedge complained that no one could make the shot to destroy the Death Star and Luke just offhandedly said he did it all the time to womprats?”

Wedge raised a brow, “That’s really the best story about me you can recall?”

“Well, we don’t really hang out a lot, do we Antilles?”

“Personally I would have gone with, remember that time Antilles accidentally put Fliss in the hospital,” Diego suggested.

“Thought about it, but figured it would remind Luke of Fliss and he’d get all mopey,” Han answered.

“Because getting upset over the disappearance and possible death of my wife is apparently not worth getting moody over,” Luke rolled his eyes. “So I take it that there’s no new leads?”

“Sorry,” Kes shook his head. “But we’ll keep looking. Keep your chin up, we might find them yet.”


“Luke,” Leia touched his arm, “it’s time to go.”

“I still don’t think this is a good idea, Leia,” Luke said as they walked towards her office in the Senate building. His hood was pulled over his lowered head so no one would recognize him. He and Leia had been mobbed by a flood of reporters upon entry to the building and constantly stopped by Senators on their way to Leia’s office.

“It’ll only be an hour or so,” Leia replied. “Besides, people need to see that you aren’t just hiding away.”

“Fine, but we go out the back way when we leave.”

“Deal,” Leia pushed open the door to her office.

Jaina looked up from Leia’s desk, “Senator Organa! It’s good to see you.”

“Good to see you too, Jaina,” Leia smiled not at all surprised that her assistant had overtaken her desk. Jaina had been forced to act as a pseudo-stand-in for Leia, and letting her have the desk just made everything easier. “How have things been?”

“Much better since the Chancellor had a computer start sorting your messages.” Jaina looked over at Luke and kindly said, “Master Skywalker, I am so sorry for your loss.”

Jaina had only been in Leia’s employ for a couple years, but the entire family had taken an immediate like to her. Fair skin, dark brown hair and eyes, Han liked to tease Leia that Jaina looked enough like her that Jaina was the result of an affair she had spectacularly managed to hide from him. Furthering the long lost daughter narrative was the fact that Jaina had been born the exact same day as Ben.

However, Leia would always point out that Jaina was obviously not her secret lovechild because not only would it mean that Jaina would be Ben’s twin and ergo Han’s daughter, but what was the point in hiding Jaina from the family? Not to mention fair skin, brown hair, and dark eyed women weren’t exactly uncommon, showcased spectacularly in the Skywalker family (literally the only female in the family who didn’t have those features was Beru Whitesun who had married into the family via the son of a man who had married into the family.)

Jaina was only sixteen, but highly capable for the job of Leia’s secretary. When Leia had hired Jaina two years ago, there had been some question regarding the wisdom of Leia hiring a fourteen-year-old. But Leia had always had a habit of hiring young girls as her assistant, and they had all worked out so far. Felicity had even pointed out that she had been the first example of it many years ago, working as Leia’s very first assistant a few months before Felicity’s fifteenth birthday.

But there was no doubt that the family saw Jaina as a close friend and almost daughter-like figure at times. So when Luke set eyes on her that day, he was comforted by her sincerity.

“I can’t stay long, Jaina,” Leia began collecting some materials from her desk. “Are there any urgent matters I need to attend to?”

“Not much other than the messages the computer set forward,” Jaina replied.

“Anything important?”

“To my knowledge, nothing that can’t wait. I’ve been going through them and saving the ones you need, but there is a bit of a backlog. We’re getting hundreds of messages and despite all the filters, the computer sends dozens a day. I’m going through as many as possible, but with all of my additional duties I have to do, I think we’re about three weeks behind.”

“How many messages are there?”

“Currently?” Jaina hit a button.

“You have 74 unread messages,” an automated voice said.

Leia sighed, “Alright, try to get through as many messages you can today, and call me if there’s any news about Felicity.”

“Actually, about that,” Jaina said, “you got a message a while back from Poe Dameron. He said that he’s asked around the Academy, even the professors and no one’s heard anything, but there’s rumors the First Order is searching the Thalesian system.”

“The Thalesian system?” Luke looked at Leia. “Have we checked it?”

“It was one of the first rumors we heard,” Leia replied. “Chewie checked. It’s just a dummy trail to throw us off. But why didn’t you tell me sooner, Jaina?”

“That’s the thing,” Jaina answered. “I’ve been trying to contact your coms for weeks, but I can’t get through.”

“Because you’re all so busy placing calls nobody can actually get through to your lines. I’ve had a dozen senators come physically to the office in an attempt to communicate with the Senator.”

Luke and Leia went silent.

“No one can get through to us?” Luke whispered. Did that mean that someone might have found something but couldn’t get through to him? Or worse, had Felicity actually tried to call? “No, that can’t be true.”

“Try it yourself,” Jaina offered. “I’m surprised your coms aren’t going off right now.”

“We turned them off so we weren’t distracted during our briefing,” Leia muttered, her mind elsewhere. “Jaina, use the com to call my husband right now.”

Jaina placed the call, and to the shock of the twins, the line was busy.

“Even worse is that all of your inboxes are full,” Jaina added. “Have you been clearing them out?”

Luke’s face was pale, his body froze with horror and shock, “No, I’ve… I’ve been so busy that- No! We had to have left one line open!”

“No,” Leia cringed, inwardly hating herself, “My line, yours, Han’s, the home line, they’ve all been in constant use.”

“I can’t believe this,” Luke put his head in his hands. “What if Felicity’s tried to call? What if she’s waiting for me to respond? What if I didn’t answer and now something’s happened to her or Rey? What if?”

“Stop,” Leia grabbed Luke firmly by the arm. Her voice was strong and commanding, “Look at me, we both know that Felicity wouldn’t just give up after one com call.”

Luke nodded, “She would try other lines.”

“Jaina call Lando Calrissian,” Leia ordered. “His line is probably not busy. Get him to call our main contacts and get them to check their message boxes. Try to get through to Kes Dameron as well. He’s at our home and I know he’s keeping his line open in case his son needs to call him. Kes can tell Han what’s going on. Have Han check our message boxes and clear them.”

“Yes, Ma’am,” Jaina nodded.

“We have to do this, Luke,” Leia reminded her brother.

Luke sighed as Leia rubbed his arm. He wanted so badly to get to work on the new development with Felicity and Rey. He couldn’t fail them.

But there were others he had failed; his Jedi were dead by the Knights of Ren, and he needed to see that justice got served.


“We’ll check our messages the second we’re finished,” Leia promised. “Now come on. Let’s get this over with.”

Thanks to a series of shortcuts and mind tricks, no one noticed the hooded figure slipping down dark hallways of the Senate building and past the security officers. Growing up with a mother as a Senator proved to be quite useful to the figure. He followed the familiar secret passages, his mind focused on his goal: to find the Senator of Coruscant.

He wondered what his mother would think of him and what he had done. Would she hate him? Disown him? Turn him in to security, or worse, his uncle? Would she be in denial of his actions? Would she think he had been framed? Or maybe even think that he had helped his aunt and cousin escape the horror. The figure only prayed his mother could find the forgiveness for him that she withheld for her birth father.

Jaina had been busy listening to the backlog of messages when the figure entered the secretary area of the office. A door stood between Jaina and the figure who was deciding his next move in the area next to Jaina’s normal desk that was filled with a pair of couches in a pseudo-waiting room. Jaina was in her own world, carefully listening to the messages, writing down their contents, and saving them for Leia’s future use.

Then she heard a noise; movement from the waiting room.

Jaina frowned and pulled up Leia’s schedule. No one had scheduled a meeting. Who could it be? Hesitating, Jaina got up from the desk and carefully approached the waiting room.

“Hello?” Jaina called. “Is someone out there?”

There was no response.

Jaina’s finger hovered over the button that would send an alert to the security force of the Senate building. With the events on Rornian, she had been worried that the First Order might pick Leia’s office as their next target.

Taking a deep breath, Jaina once again mourned the fact she was not allowed to carry a weapon in the Senate building. Readying herself, she slowly pressed the button to open the door. Raising her fists, Jaina recalled all of the self-defence training Leia had made it mandatory for her assistants to learn, and Jaina launched herself into the waiting room.

It was empty.

Jaina looked around in confusion. She was certain she had heard someone enter, but there was no one to be found.

Then she noticed it: the chair of her regular desk was pulled out. Someone had been sitting in it.
Jaina carefully approached her desk and was relieved to see no one had hidden under it, but she was concerned when she saw a few files opened on the screen.

Taking another look around, Jaina pressed a button on her wrist com that would connect her to a security officer. She turned her back to the doorway into Leia’s office and turned down the volume of her com.

“Security, this is Jaina Fel in Senator Organa’s office,” Jaina whispered into the com. “Please come in.”

“Miss Fel, this is Security Officer Tymon,” a voice crackled back. “What’s your emergency?”

“I think someone was in my office looking through my computer.”

“What makes you think that?”

“I was in the Senator’s office when I heard a noise and now a piece of furniture has been moved from my desk and there are files open that shouldn’t be.”

“Did you see anyone?”

“No, and they don’t seem to be here anymore but can you check the tapes?”

“Affirmative,” Tymon said. “I’ll check it out and come to the office asap. I would suggest you confine yourself to the main office until I get there. Call me if you notice anything else, and send an alert if they return.”

“Thank you,” Jaina flicked off the communication.

Taking a deep breath, she went back into Leia’s office.

She gave a quick look around to confirm no one was in it. Jaina decided to keep the door open so she could greet Tymon when he arrived. She glanced at the large glass window that made up the back wall of Leia’s office. Jaina was comforted by the fact that the wall gave her an escape route; it had a door opening onto a balcony connected to the fire escape.

Jaina was walking towards Leia’s desk when suddenly the office door slammed shut.

She whipped around to find herself face to face with the last person she wanted to see.

“Ben,” Jaina whispered.

Ben Solo looked terrible. He had pulled the hood of his ratty black robe back, exposing the bags under his wide eyes. His skin was especially pale and had so little muscle underneath that looked like someone had tried to stretch too little skin over his face. His dyed black hair was tipped with its natural brown colour at the roots, and his hands couldn’t stop shaking. But worst of all – worse than the scared, desperate look in his eyes – was the ugly mark of a blaster shot on his face.

Jaina’s hand instantly went to her wrist com.

“No! Stop!” Ben carried out fearfully. He extended a hand at Jaina, his fingers out stretched.

Jaina couldn’t move a muscle.

“I don’t want to hurt you,” Ben’s voice was earnest and regretful. “Please, don’t call security.”
“What do you want?” Jaina boldly asked. Ben may have the upper hand, but she’d be damned if she gave up without a fight.

“I just- I want to see my mother,” Ben answered.

Jaina narrowed her eyes, “If you think I’m going to let you lay a hand on her-

“I just want to talk!” Ben desperately exclaimed. That was the moment Jaina noticed the tears in his eyes and the tremble in his voice, “Jaina, please, I… I made a mistake. What happened on Rornian- I’m in over my head, and I just want to come home. Please, let me talk to my mother.”

Jaina’s face softened. She hadn’t known Ben for long, but she had seen his struggle over the years with the Dark Side. If there was one thing Jaina knew, it was that Ben Solo truly loved his mother. Anytime Ben had gotten in over his head, he would come running to Leia, so it wasn’t stretch for him to have come now to her for help.

“Look, Jaina, I know we don’t really know each other, but I’ve always thought we had a sort of connection,” Ben’s voice was soft and silky. It was hard to resist the complimentary tone, “We were born on the same day, and you are so much like my mother that I’ve always viewed you almost like… like a sort of sister in a way. Please, Jaina, I’m not going to hurt you. Let me speak to my mother.”

Jaina sighed, “Alright, if you’re sincere, I’ll contact her, but you have to let me go and promise not to hurt me.”

Ben smiled and lowered his arm, “Promise.”

“Sit,” Jaina gestured to the chair across the desk and took Leia’s. As Ben obediently sat down, Jaina commed Leia through the office line, while a finger was poised under the desk at the panic button, “Senator Organa, please respond.”

It took a minute but eventually a voice rang through the room, “What’s going on, Jaina? Has there been a development?”

Jaina met Ben’s eyes, “… Of a sort. Senator, I need you to return to your office immediately.”

“Jaina, I’m in a meeting with the Chancellor, it’s going to have to wait.”

“Senator, it’s not the kind of thing that can wait. If you could please just come down-”

“Jaina, it’s not happening.”

“Senator, I strongly insist you return to your office.”

“Jaina-”

“Please, Senator-”

“For goodness’ sake!” Leia exclaimed. “What is so important that I need to leave a meeting with the Chancellor to return to my office?”

“Senator… your son is here.”

There was a pause on the other end, and then a flurry of whispers.

“Jaina, switch us from audio to visual,” Leia commanded.
Jaina pressed a button and a small blue figure of Leia was projected onto the desk.

“Ben,” the blue Leia whispered in disbelief.

“Mom,” Ben swallowed hard, fear in his eyes. “Mom, I’m sorry. I am so sorry.”

Leia was speechless, just staring at her son. Ben waited anxiously, his shoulders shaking as he struggled to withhold collapsing into tears. Leia had never seen him so afraid and upset.

“Ben, I…” Leia looked off screen, probably at Luke who was not shown on the visual. “Ben, I don’t know what to say. What have you done?”

He gave in to his tears.

“I am so sorry, Mom!” Ben wailed, sobbing loudly in a powerful display of sorrow. “I am so sorry! This wasn’t what I wanted. I should never have run away and joined the First Order. They’re evil, Mom, and they want to make me into something I’m not. They want me to do things for them that I don’t want to.”

“Ben,” Leia struggled not to give in to her son’s breakdown. As his mother, Leia wanted nothing more than to sprint down to her office, pull her son into her arms, and hold him as she made everything better. But as a government authority she couldn’t deny the cold, hard facts. “Ben, you killed people.”

“That wasn’t supposed to happen!” Ben insisted. “I didn’t mean for any of this to happen! No one was supposed to get hurt!”

“But they did, and you helped them. You murdered people. People who were your friends and mentors. People who taught how to fight and protect yourself from Darkness. You took those skills and used it them end their lives in the names of monsters.”

“I… I’m sorry, Mom,” Ben could give no other reply.

Leia took a deep breath as she looked over her haggard, sobbing son.

“Ben, what happened to your face?” Leia calmly asked, assuming her political demeanour. She knew she needed to be emotionless and authoritative if she was to ever figure out what was going on with her son.

He unconsciously touched the blast mark on his face and hesitated, “It… it was my own fault.”

“Did someone do this to you?”

“Yes.”

“Who?”

Ben was silent.

That wasn’t good enough for Leia, “Was it the First Order?”

“No,” Ben lowered his eyes.

“Was it the Knights of Ren?”

Ben couldn’t resist a laugh, “Not possible. I’m the only one left.”
“Who did this? A Jedi?”

“No.”

“Snoke?”

“No. He would never.”

“Then who?” Leia demanded.

Ben winced, “You’re not going to like it.”

“Tell me.”

Ben took a deep breath, “It was… Aunt Felicity.”

“Felicity? Why?” Leia didn’t know whether to be more shocked that Felicity had attacked her son… or that for the very first time, Ben had called her his aunt.


Ben gulped.

“What happened, Ben?” Leia pushed. “I know you and Felicity have never gotten along, but she never would have escalated it to violence without a reason.”

Ben bit back a comment about how less than a year ago Felicity had legitimately kidnapped him to take him on a bonding trip. His parents and uncle may have ultimately sided with Felicity, but that didn’t change the fact Ben had been forced on ship in the middle of the night against his will without Felicity informing anyone what she was doing.

“I…” Ben sighed. “I encountered Rey.”

Horror filled Leia’s expression.

“I didn’t actually end up doing anything!” Ben insisted. “I just sort of… tried.”

“Rey?” Leia whispered unnaturally low. It was always the sign that she was about to start screaming at you. Sure enough, “You attacked Rey? Rey! Your five-year-old cousin who looks up to you and idolizes everything you do? Rey who looks at you as one of her heroes?”

“I know, but I didn’t want to do it. I didn’t want to do any of it!” Ben cried out. His face was completely red as a mass of tears streamed down his face. His voice was starting to hitch, “M- M- Mom, p-p-please! I didn- I didn- I didn’t want to h- hurt anyone!”

“Then why did you?”

“It’s Snoke. He’s in my head,” Ben’s hands started to grab and claw at his forehead as if he was trying to dig Snoke out. “He whispers to me all the time, and he won’t let me ignore him. He tells me to do things, and he promises the greatest rewards. He tempts me and I’m not strong enough to resist him. I want him out, Mom! Please help me! I ran away from the First Order to get away from him, but he still follows me. Even now he’s whispering in my ear. GET OUT! GET OUT OF MY HEAD!”
Jaina grabbed Ben’s clawing hands and retched them away so he couldn’t continue to hurt himself.

“Relax,” Jaina said in a soothing voice, trying to calm him. “You’re safe here.”

Ben gave Jaina a half hearted smile and sniffed, “Thank you.”

Leia was quiet, her head in her hands as she struggled between being a governmental agent and Ben’s mother. The situation was unprecedented; what was she supposed to do? What could she do? Justice must be done, but at the same time her son needed help. Help only she could give him.

And in that moment, Leia finally began to understand the way her brother viewed Vader. One foolish decision could forever alter someone’s path, and if no one was there to help bring them back to the Light, a Force Sensitive could be lost to the Dark. That said, Leia was not about to completely forgive Vader, or even ponder the issue of her father all that much. But Ben… Ben needed the understanding and forgiveness that Luke had given Vader, the same understanding and forgiveness that Leia withheld from Vader.

She would not shut out her son.

Leia took a deep breath, “Alright, Ben, let’s see if we can figure this out. I need you to stay right there in my office, and I’ll come meet you there to talk about this. I’ll call your father, and your Uncle and I—”

“NO!” Ben exclaimed looking panicked. “No, don’t bring Dad or Uncle Luke into this. I’m not ready to face them! Please, Mom. Don’t bring them, not yet. Please.”

Leia looked at Luke off screen and after a moment said, “Fine, I won’t bring them, but if there’s any funny business—”

“There won’t be.”

“There better not,” Leia warned. “Stay right there. I’ll be down in a few minutes. Jaina, don’t let him leave that chair.”

“Yes, Ma’am,” Jaina nodded, and ended the call.

“You’re not actually leaving me behind, right?” Luke asked as the transmission cut out.

Leia looked at Luke like his was crazy, “Of course not. My son or not, there’s still a wannabe Sith Lord sitting in my office who wants to see me alone. Chancellor, I’m sorry things got cut short, but can we pick this up again later?”

“Of course,” Mon Mothma replied. As Leia had conversed with Ben, Mothma had busied herself with putting the building on lockdown. “A troop of security officers are already assembled and waiting for you on your level. I trust you understand that Mister Solo must be arrested and tried for his crimes.”

“Absolutely,” Leia nodded. “But, please, let me talk to him first. We don’t want him to get violent, and if I play this right, we might get some information about the First Order out of this.”

“Off you go then, and may the Force be with you.”

Jaina watched Ben sympathetically as he tried to get his sobbing under control.
“I’m sorry,” Ben wiped the tears from his face only to have more tears replace them. “I shouldn’t be crying over this.”

“It’s alright,” Jaina reassured him. “You’ve been through something very emotional and there have been some drastic consequences to your actions. I might think you were heartless if you didn’t shed a few tears.”

“Thank you, Jaina,” Ben smiled, his tears starting to clear up. He gave her a guilty smile, “You’ve always been so kind and understanding. I’ve never appreciated you enough.”

“Think nothing of it.”

Ben grinned and opened his mouth to say something when suddenly he began to cough. They were horrible, hacking, phlegm filled coughs. Ben violently doubled over as the coughs wracked his entire body.

“Are you alright?” Jaina worriedly grabbed his arm.

“Yeah, I’m-” Ben coughed loudly. He patted Jaina’s hand as he cleared his throat a few times, “Sorry, it’s just with all of the crying, I think my body depleted itself of all moisture. My throat is just really dry, but it’ll pass.”

Jaina glanced to her right at the door that connected to Leia’s small en suite bathroom, “How about a get you a cup of water?”

Ben’s eyes widened, “Oh, no! I don’t want to put you out or get you in trouble. Mom did say I wasn’t supposed to move from this chair.”

“Nonsense, I’ll get it for you.”

“Are you sure?”

“Think nothing of it. You just sit in that chair, and I’ll go get you some water,” Jaina stood and crossed towards the bathroom.

Ben watched her go, “If you insist.”

Jaina didn’t notice the wicked grin on his face.

She quickly filled a glass in the sink, leaving the door behind her open so she could keep an eye on Ben. Jaina turned around to exit the washroom and bring the glass to Ben but was startled to find him standing in the doorway.

“Surprise,” Ben grinned.

Jaina gasped as Ben grabbed her by the shirt and violently threw her to the floor. The glass shattered as it hit the tile, and Jaina tried to scramble back to her feet. Ben slammed the button for the door and it slid closed before Jaina could escape. She pushed the inside button to activate the door, but it would not open.

Ben had locked her in.

“Let me out!” Jaina slammed her fists against the door, trying to force it open.

“Hit it all you want, it’s not going to open,” Ben mocked. “I just can’t believe you all actually fell for my little act.”
“Ben Solo, open this door right now!”

“Ben Solo is dead. The name is Kylo Ren, new Master of the Knights of Ren,” Kylo chuckled. “I suppose I should thank my uncle. It’s so easy to climb the ranks of succession when your uncle murders all of your superiors. Of course, now I’ll have to recruit more, but at least I don’t have to take orders from the likes of Cade and Zhan anymore.”

Jaina hit her wrist com, “Senator Organa! Come in!”

“What’s going on?” Leia said a minute later.

“It’s a trap!” Jaina screamed into the com. “He’s locked me in the bathroom.”

There was chattering on the other end for a few minutes.

“Alright, the building is in lockdown and a security team is on its way,” Leia informed Jaina. Her breathing pattern was slightly altered like she had started to run. “What’s he doing right now?”

“I don’t know. Senator, everything he said was a lie.”

“Especially that part about not wanting to hurt Rey,” Kylo called from Leia’s desk. He then whispered to himself, “The sooner the kid is out of the way, the sooner Supreme Leader can focus on my training.”

Truth be told Kylo didn’t really want Rey to get caught up in everything. He rather liked his cousin, and generally Rey was harmless. But only one person could carry on the Skywalker legacy, there could only be one Skywalker Heir, and Kylo sure as the nine Corellian Hells wasn’t going to let it be the child of a man who idolized Vader’s flaws and a woman who despised him.

But he had to find her before he disposed of the child, and her lying, backstabbing mother.

The First Order had had just as much of a struggle to find Felicity and Rey as the Skywalker family had. Snoke was desperate to find the girls before their family did, which is what had led to Kylo’s little charade. After hacking into the family’s message boxes and finding nothing, Leia’s line was the next logical step.

Kylo went to Leia’s messaging system and hit a button.

“You have 74 unread messages,” an automated voice said.

Kylo hit a few buttons and began to listen to the messages. The machine would play the identifier that listed the person’s name and reason for the message, and the listener would then either click the button that marked it unread, or a second button to proceed to the main message. Jaina had already listened to a fair amount of them, but marked them all unread afterwards so that none accidentally got missed.

Kylo patiently listened to the introductions.

“Gilian Kardal, Senate Business.”

“Kyra Varga, the Search for Felicity Rhiaon.”

“Cal Nilar, Senate Business.”

“Jeran Landala, Senate Business.”
Kylo grinned and pressed the play button.

A small blue image of a rather disheveled Felicity Rhiaon was projected. Kylo grinned as she took a deep breath and began her message.

“Hey, Leia, it’s Felicity,” Felicity smiled for the recording. “I’m calling you to tell you that I’m safe. I’ve been trying to contact you and the boys, but funny story, all of your lines have been tied up, and message boxes full. Considering the hoops I had to jump through just to get to this inbox, I can only imagine you guys are so busy trying to find me, you don’t really have the time to actually stop and listen for me.”

Kylo chuckled victoriously. So they didn’t know where Felicity was. Perfect.

Felicity took another breath, “I’m worried that the First Order might try to track me, so I’ll keep this brief.”

“Too late,” Kylo taunted.

In the bathroom, Jaina strained to hear what was going on. She could hear that Kylo was listening to a recording, but she couldn’t make out what it was saying.

“I’m fine – a little battered around from my journey – but fine. I would say I’m doing good, but considering the hell I’ve suffered through the past few days, I’ll stick to the word ’fine.’ Rey is-Well… we can discuss Rey later. I’m on Jakku, and I took up that offer Luke arranged.”

“Bingo!” Kylo grinned as the recording continued to play. He hit a button on his wrist com and said, “Phasma, come in.”

There was a pause and then a reply, “Phasma here.”

“I’ve found Rhiaon’s location. Dispatch a squad to Jakku and send my ride.”

“At once, Sir.”
The transmission cut off just as Felicity’s recording was saying, “Tell Luke I love him, and that I’m counting the minutes until I see him again.”

With far too much satisfaction, Kylo hit a button on the machine.

“Message deleted,” said the recorded voice. “Next message-”

“Open up in there!” a voice yelled as someone slammed on the office door Kylo had locked. “This is Security Officer Tymon. Surrender at once!”

Kylo turned off the machine and went for the balcony door. To his surprise, it was locked.

“We’ve sealed all of the exits,” Tymon yelled. “Only this door will open. Surrender yourself before we are forced to take further action.”

“Ben, please,” Luke’s voice added, “don’t make this harder for yourself. We just want to help you.”

“Sorry, Uncle, but I don’t need your help,” Kylo called back to Luke as he took a few steps back from the glass window and readied him. “Have fun looking for your wife.”

Kylo waved his hands, and with a great surge of the Force, the window shattered into a million pieces.

Hearing the crash, Tymon yelled to one of his technicians, “Open the door, now!”

The technician hit a few buttons as everyone readied their weapons.

“It’s open!” the technician announced.

Tymon forced the door open and everyone flooded into the room, ready to fight Kylo into submission. But the room was empty, and Kylo was long gone down the fire escape and whisked away by his escort.

“Fan out and search the building!” Tymon ordered and the security officers went into action checking over the room, going to the balcony and fire escape, or running back into the hallway to search elsewhere.

Luke and Leia made a beeline for the washroom and released Jaina.

“I am so sorry,” Jaina apologized as Leia sat her down in the desk chair while Luke dug out the first aid kit. She had been cut up by the pieces of glass Kylo had pushed her down on, though there were no major injuries. “I shouldn’t have gotten him the water.”

“It’s alright,” Luke set the first aid kit down on the desk and pulled out alcohol wipes and bandages. “He still would have attacked you somehow. I just don’t understand why he was here.”

“He was listening to your messages,” Jaina looked at Leia as she wiped off a cut on Jaina’s forehead. “I don’t know if he found anything. I couldn’t hear what the messages were saying.”

“Let’s take a look then,” Leia hit a button.

“You have 73 unread messages,” an automated voice said.

“They’re all here,” Leia sighed.

“No wait!” Jaina exclaimed. “There were 74, not 73. He must have deleted one.”
Luke and Leia exchanged a nervous look.

“Please don’t let be what I’m thinking,” Leia muttered.

“Do you have any way to see who all the messages are from?” Luke asked.

“I know they keep the introductions in case there’s a glitch, but it takes weeks to recover them.”

“Leia, I have to know.”

Leia sighed and played the messages.

Luke listened nervously to each introduction, his mechanical fingers – which Leia had forced Luke to replace the synth skin on a week previous – drummed anxiously against the desk. Jaina exchanged a look with Leia, and quickly vacated the chair just in case.

“Trinna Kelrune, Media Inquires.”

“Gunn Aldamar, Senate Business.”

“Felicity Rhiaon Skywalker, the Search for Felicity Rhiaon.”

“Play it!” Luke exclaimed, his heart beating wildly.

How could he have done this? How could he have been so foolish to not leave Felicity an immediate way of contacting him? He would never forgive himself if something happened to her from this. Please let the message be okay.

“This message has been deleted,” the automated voice said. “Please contact your message provider for details on how to retrieve deleted messages.”

Luke collapsed back into the chair. His world had ended. Ben had found Felicity and before he could. Felicity was as good as dead, and Rey would be brainwashed and turned into Snoke’s minion- no, not minion, slave. She would remember nothing but service and loyalty to Snoke. He would exploit her powers for evil, and his little girl would be lost forever.

“No,” Luke put his hand in his hands. “No, this can’t be happening. There has to be something we can do.”

“Jaina call the message provider,” Leia ordered. “Tell them we need that message now!”

“Alright, I just need to remember which button it is,” Jaina hit a button. “Oops. Sorry, wrong button, that’s the back button.”

“Felicity Rhiaon Skywalker, the Search for Felicity Rhiaon,” Felicity’s introduction was repeated.

“No, Jaina,” Leia shook her head, “stop playing these intros and press-”

“Felicity Rhiaon Why the Hell Did I Ever Marry a Skywalker for the Search for Felicity Freaking Rhiaon AKA Me!” an angrier version of Felicity’s voice flooded the room.

The trio stared at the machine in shock.

“There’s another message?” Luke whispered a twinge of hope flaming in his heart. Maybe he could save her. Maybe she had gotten sick of waiting for him, found passage, and was on her way to him right now.
“Please press one to play the message or two to continue to the next message,” the automated voice prompted.

Luke hit one with so much force he worried for a second it might break the machine.

“I can’t believe this,” Leia said in amazement. “She left another message.”

“I don’t understand why she would,” Luke racked his brain for ideas. “What more did she need to say?”

“Well,” Leia replied, “you two did just undergo some pretty traumatic and emotional events. I remember the way I felt after Han was frozen, and how there was so much I needed to say to him. Things like this have a way of reminding us how important love truly is, and how blessed you can be to find your perfect mate, even if you don’t always see eye to eye. Maybe Felicity needed to take a moment to just express and reiterate the depth of her love for you, and how grateful she is to have you as the father of her child.”

“You know what?” Felicity’s recorded voice began to yell, "No! I am not letting this go! Who the hell tells someone they'll see each other again, and then doesn't leave even one damn com line open so they can contact you. I mean, seriously? Are you kidding me, Luke? I've been through hell and back and I get a busy signal? You get your ass here, Skywalker, right now or I swear to the Force itself, I will kill you."  

Luke and Leia stared at the machine in shock.

“…Or to threaten your life for missing her calls,” Leia weakly offered. “I’m sorry, Luke.”

“Did you hear that?” Luke whispered, his eyes unmoving from the machine.

“In Felicity’s defense, she is in a pretty bad situation. You can’t blame her for being upset, but she’ll be happier when we get her.”

“That’s the thing, Leia.” Luke looked up at Leia, horror frozen on his face, “Felicity didn’t say where she was.”

Leia’s jaw dropped.

“Jaina,” Leia ordered, “we need to find the source of this message now.”

“Yes, Ma'am!” Jaina was immediately on the phone with the message provider.

As Luke watched Jaina helplessly, he prayed that he would find Felicity before the First Order did.

But that was a race Luke would not win.

Chapter End Notes

So this chapter was originally going to contain the inevitable abandonment, but this chapter just got so long I had to split it up. That's right, the next chapter is solely devoted to the trauma of a mother abandoning her child. It's terrible and I love it.
Felicity's Sacrifice

Chapter Summary

Felicity makes a decision no mother should ever have to face.

Chapter Notes

This is going to be a tough chapter. Reader discretion is advised.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

The Long Way Home

Chapter Seven

Felicity’s Sacrifice

It was an ordinary day on Jakku when the First Order arrived. A fearsome display of soldiers, ships, and weapons. At first it was worried that it was some sort of attack or raid or that the many criminals of Jakku had been found in some elaborate sting arranged by Plutt. But much to everyone’s surprise, the chrome suited Captain leading the charge was merely there to interrogate the whereabouts of a brunette woman and her child.

“Sorry, haven’t seen them,” a scavenger named Ivano Troade shrugged. “Although, the little one would be useful for getting in small ducts and conduits. I should look into that.”

“Oh yeah, I’ve definitely seen them,” Jarex Zolhar, another scavenger grinned. “Now about that reward?”

Phasma quickly discovered Jarex actually had no knowledge of the girls and was just trying to scam the reward out of her. She ordered that her soldiers beat a lesson into him that he’d never forget.

“I haven’t treated a child in ages,” Doctor Aletha Kymeri told Phasma while tending to Jarex’s wounds.

Aletha had a policy not to give out information about her patients, no matter how hard her arm was twisted. She was from a more civilized planet where doctor-patient confidentiality was a legal obligation, and that was habit she had been unwilling to give up after getting stuck on Jakku.

“A child in these parts? How ridiculous,” a scavenger named Mashra shook her head when she was interrogated at one of Plutt’s washing tables.

“And what of this woman?” Captain Phasma pulled out a hologram of Felicity Rhiaon Skywalker. After a myriad of encounters and scuffles between the two, Phasma wanted nothing more than to
overtake Rhiaon and finally declare herself the champion of their rivalry. “She is a very dangerous criminal who must be subdued.”

Mashra looked up at Phasma in amusement, “Honey, if you’re on the hunt for dangerous criminals, you’ll have your pick of the litter here on Jakku. Now make yourself useful and hand me that brush.”

Phasma slammed her hand down on the brush before the Aqualish could grab it. Even behind her emotionless helmet, Phasma looked intimidating as her chrome suit shone in the sunlight.

“Answer the question, scavenger or I’ll arrest you for withholding evidence,” Phasma snapped, her voice still elegant behind her voice modulator.

“Is there a problem here?” someone asked.

Phasma turned to see a great blob of an alien staring her down surrounded by several intimidating looking creatures no doubt of ill repute. Of course, Phasma knew she could take them all down in seconds, but they hardly seemed worth her time.

“Shiny’s just giving me a few problems, Plutt,” Mashra unaffected by Phasma’s display grabbed the brush and started using it on her salvage. “Asking me about a wanted woman. I warn you, Plutt, you better not charge me for my time at the table she’s wasting.”

“Just this once,” Plutt would have usually fought Mashra tooth and nail on the discount, but the shiny Stormtrooper concerned him. “Ma’am, I must ask you not bother my customers.”

“Sir, I will bother them if I wish,” Phasma turned her focus on Plutt, “and I suggest you cooperate with me if you wish to keep the peace.”

“Now you listen here-”

“Perhaps you can help my search. We are offering a reward.”

“A reward?” Plutt perked up. “What are we looking for? I know every criminal in town and where you can find them.”

“Have you seen this woman?” Phasma held up the hologram of Felicity. “She’s traveling with a young girl. I do not have an image of the child, but reports indicate she is almost the mirror image of her mother.”

“She is that,” Unkar thought. He considered his options. Why wait for Lover Boy to deal him a reward when Lover Boy seemed the be taking his sweet time, and the First Order could deliver one today?

Then again, Lover Boy was Luke Skywalker. Though Felicity refused to speak of her husband’s finances, there was no doubting his was a much pricier meal ticket than some wannabe Imperial. Not to mention Plutt had heard the stories of the Hutt gang who had crossed Skywalker, and attacked his friends. There was no telling what Skywalker would do to someone betraying his wife and child.

“Never seen her,” Unkar shook his head.

Phasma chuckled, “That, Plutt is a bold faced lie.”

“And what makes you say that?” Unkar sounded nonchalant, but inwardly was scrambling to figure out where he messed up.
“You have seen her.”

Phasma paused and looked back at Mashra. She was unsure if she should reveal Felicity’s identity in front of the scavenger. Mashra however, had completely tuned Phasma and Plutt out, and was even shooting them the occasional glare.

“This woman’s name is Felicity Rhiaon,” Phasma continued. “Felicity Rhiaon Skywalker to be exact. Twenty years ago she came to this planet with a man named Diego Nalto. The two of them worked for you for a month. Think hard: Rhiaon. Felicity Rhiaon.”

“Not ringing a bell,” Unkar shook his head. “Listen, Sweetheart, you can’t actually expect me to remember someone who worked for me briefly twenty years ago. I can’t even remember what I had for breakfast yesterday.”

“Imperial rations,” one of the goons suddenly put in.

“Thank you, Dirk,” Unkar rolled his eyes while the goon next to Dirk smacked him. “But my answer hasn’t changed: I haven’t seen that woman or her kid in the past twenty years. Now if you don’t mind, I’m a very busy man with lots to do. Good luck with your search.”

Phasma glared at Plutt, “I’ll be watching you.”

“I’m sure you will,” Unkar grinned.

With that, Phasma turned on her heel and stormed off.

“Roke!” Unkar snapped at the closest goon. He leaned in close and whispered, “Spread the word quickly, anyone who gives up Rhiaon will be dead by nightfall. Her husband’s far too loaded for us not to tap into his resources. And get me a speeder and some rations. I think it’s high time to pay Mrs. Skywalker a little visit.”

“Oof!” Felicity was woken up by a heavy bag landing on her body.

“Rise and shine, My Girl!” a voice called.

Still half asleep, Felicity grabbed the blaster at her side and pointed it at the intruder.

“Hey, don’t shoot!” the voice exclaimed.

Felicity’s eyes focused and revealed that Unkar Plutt was standing at the entrance of the walker. She groaned, setting down the blaster and shoved aside the duffle bag he had thrown at her.

“Mommy?” Rey whimpered from the hammock, clutching her pilot doll tightly. “Are we in trouble?”

“No, it’s just Plutt,” Felicity assured Rey. “Although he’s going to be in trouble pretty quick if he doesn’t explain the rude awakening. Seriously, you throw a bag at me while I sleep? You just lost a hundred credits from your reward for that. And why is that bag so heavy?”

“It has two weeks of rations in it,” Plutt explained. “Enough for you and girl. I can’t come out here to bring you rations or messages for a while.”

“We had a deal, Plutt,” Felicity glowered at him “You promised I wouldn’t have to go into Niima.”

“Trust me, Niima’s the last place you should be right now.”
“And why’s that?”

“Because the First Order decided to make a visit today.”

Felicity shot onto her feet, “The First Order?”

“Mommy, are the bad people here?” Rey asked fearfully.

“No, of course not,” Felicity grinned at Rey. She turned back to Plutt and jerked her head towards the exit. “Can I have a word?”

“Ladies first,” Plutt extended an arm to the exit.

“When did they get here?” Felicity asked the second they were outside.

“Yesterday morning,” Plutt answered. “I would have come sooner, but it’s hard not to draw attention when you go into the desert with a bag of rations.”

“I assume the bag of rations means you want me to stay put for two weeks and hope they leave?”

“I’ve already made it clear to my customers that if they want to continue to eat they’ll not say a word about you or the girl.”

“Never thought you cared that much about us,” Felicity sarcastically shot.

Plutt grinned, “The only thing I care about is the reward Lover Boy is going to give me and I’ve invested far too much in you two to turn you over to the First Order. Besides, Skywalker’s much richer than the First Order. Is it true he personally financed the Jedi Order?”

“For the last time, Plutt, I’m not discussing my family’s finances,” Felicity warned. “Do you really think the First Order will leave in two weeks?”

“You have more experience with them than me. What do you think?”

Felicity sighed, “I need you to call Luke.”

“Tried. They’re blocking all calls.”

Felicity muttered a swear, the origin language of which she had long forgotten.

“I suggest you just wait, hope, and if Skywalker doesn’t show up, I’ll see you in two weeks.”

Felicity had no choice, “I guess I’ll see you in two weeks.”

No one knew what to make of the Stormtroopers that swarmed Niima Outpost. There were many rumors about their reason for being there: they were there to inspect that old Imperial science station or whatever that random military base thing hidden several ridges over was. Some thought they were there to salvage old Imperial artifacts leftover from the Battle of Jakku.

“Good luck,” the scavengers would snicker as they saw teams bring out scanners. Much of the good stuff have been found a long time ago.

But most rumors centered on the image of a woman and young girl that was shoved in the face of everyone who had the misfortune of interacting with a First Order officer. Some had seen the girls: human, pale skin, brown hair, hazel eyes, looking too well-fed, and under the protection of Unkar
Plutt.

The theories about them were abundant: they were spies, foreign royalty, thieves, con artists, slaves, a defected First Order officer and her secret love child with another officer. There was even one crazy story that the girls were the wife and child of the mythical Jedi Grandmaster Luke Skywalker.

None of these theories were shared with the First Order, however. While there was no law on Jakku, there was a sense of order and a set of rules everyone would follow. The most important rules were: 1 – you didn’t ask about other people on Jakku, and 2 – you certainly never gave someone up unless it was in your best interest.

And screwing over someone under the protection of the man in charge of your food supply was definitely not in anyone’s best interest.

Of course, not everyone was intimidated by Unkar Plutt and his cronies. Generally, they were the people who had enough honour not to surrender a mother and child to a faceless military organization.

“Never seen ‘em,” Quom Tinadar lied when the First Order barraged into his mechanic tent. Pulling himself on a small scooter underneath the broken speeder he was fixing, Quom felt sympathetic to no nonsense Jyn Erso and her little Miracle Girl. “People like that – especially people with kids – don’t stay on Jakku long. They tend to find the first transport and get the hell off this dust ball. If they were here, they’re long gone by now.”

“If you see or hear anything, you will let us know,” Phasma ordered.

“Absolutely,” Quom said.

As he fiddled with the machinery he heard the soldiers trample out of his tent. Sighing, Quom pulled himself back out from under the speeder and watched the soldiers outside from the flap of the tent.

It would take a miracle for that little girl and her mother to escape the First Order, and if Quom knew anything, there was no miracles on Jakku.

A thought suddenly occurred to him: if it was discovered that he had helped them, Quom could be in a lot of trouble. But that wasn’t possible, right? There was no evidence to implicate him, no proof that he had ever interacted with Jyn and Rey Erso.

Nothing except for the rings.

Scrambling to her feet, Quom crossed to a small cabinet in the tent where he kept various odds and ends. The top drawer locked, and it was where he had kept the rings. Sure enough, there they were shining brightly in the top drawer.

Quom couldn’t help but admire how well they had been taken care of. Jyn Erso had clearly loved the rings, thoroughly cleaning and polishing her rings on a regular basis.

Whoever gave them to Jyn must have loved her pretty fiercely as well. The golden engagement ring had no less than nine diamonds on it: one large one in the middle that was a little more than one carat, then two smaller ones on each side, and then a further three on either side each the size of a stylus tip. The clarity and quantity of them indicated that the giver had been well off, yet the sizes suggested he still had a sense of modesty.

But it was the touch of personality of the wedding bands that intrigued Quom the most. Engraved on the inside was the phrase: Thank you. Anytime.
He wondered what it meant. Was it some kind of code? A phrase they used often? The first words they ever said to each other? Quom was tempted to track down Jyn and ask her about it. However, he refrained as he felt asking the meaning of the engraving on the wedding ring he extorted from her would probably just get him slapped.

Quom sighed; he felt guilty about taking the rings. After all the rough and tumble people who Quom had to deal with on Jakku, he just assumed that demanding someone’s wedding rings as payment was acceptable. But these Erso girls weren’t from Jakku, and he had taken advantage of Jyn’s desperation for a miracle.

Making up his mind, Quom opened another drawer and found a piece of string. He threaded the rings through it and tied it around his neck before tucking it into his shirt. Wearing the rings around his neck solved two problems for Quom. First, the First Order wouldn’t find it if they raided his tent. Second, he had quick access to them for the next time he ran into Jyn Erso.

Because the next time he saw Jyn Erso, he was going to give her back her wedding rings.

It was the least he could do for the woman who taught him to believe in miracles again.

“‘They’ve moved on to the sacred villages,’ Plutt declared to Felicity two weeks later as he dropped off the next set of rations. ‘I don’t know what’s going to happen when they reach the end of Pilgrim’s Road and find nothing. But if something doesn’t happen soon, they’re going to set up camp permanently and then we’re all in trouble. Jarex Zolhar almost gave you up, you know.’”

“Who is Jarex Zolhar, and why does he want to give me up?” Felicity frowned as she sat next to Plutt on the hill outside the walker.

Rey was safely asleep in her hammock, oblivious to Plutt’s visit. It was for the best, Felicity had always hated the way Plutt stared at her, and he had made one too many comments for Felicity’s liking on how much Rey looked like her. She would keep Rey and Plutt apart as much possible.

“A two-bit scavenger who thinks he’s entitled to whatever he wants,” Plutt answered. “Pain in the ass, but always sells a damn good haul. You would have been done for if he actually had anything to tell the First Order.”

“Why won’t they leave?” Felicity sighed.

“They know you’re here,” Plutt answered. “There’s this really shiny one who is determined to find you. Keeps bugging my customers, and when they’re not profitable, I’m not profitable, and then we have a problem. Shiny’s been on my case from the start. I think she knows something’s up.”

“Shiny?”

“Her suit is chrome.”

Felicity put her head in her hands, “Of course, Phasma is here. Can’t that woman just leave me alone? I have enough to deal with right now.”

“Not to be brash, but there is a little business I’ve meaning to discuss with you. If something were to happen to Lover Boy, you still have a way of paying me, right?”

Felicity glared at Plutt, “Do you want me to shoot you?”

“Funny, Sweetheart.”
“Do not call me Sweetheart!” Felicity snapped. Only Luke was allowed to call her that. “And yes, I do have something I can pay you with.”

“Wh-”

“No, I’m not tell you where I keep it.”

“Damn.”

Felicity sighed, “They’re not going to leave are they?”

“The only way they’re leaving is if they have you on board,” Plutt said.

Felicity refused to believe it; there had to be something she could do to get them to leave.

The only question was: could she do it?

_____________________________________________________

Felicity would be lying if she said the thought never occurred to her. It would cross her mind in the black of night when Rey was asleep and Felicity allowed herself to cry. The nights when she was cold, sad, and missing her husband.

But it was a dark thought, one she refused to allow stay in her head for very long. It was a remnant of those dark days when she battled postpartum depression in secret, avoiding treatment and allowing the condition to worsen due to pride not allowing her admit she had a problem. Those dark days when she allowed the condition to get so bad that an accidental moment of neglect had nearly taken the life of her precious daughter. The incident she never spoke of.

Felicity did not like to dwell on the memories of those days. She had secretly held on to the thought that the incident she never spoke of made her a terrible mother. It was why Felicity always pushed herself to be constantly ensuring Rey was taken care of. She had fought so hard against her depression to accept that just because she made a few mistakes didn’t make her a bad mother and that as long as she did things to keep Rey safe, she would be a good one.

Then why did it seem that in that situation with the First Order on their tail, the only way Felicity could be a good mother was to be a bad one? Why did the thought of a horrific act keep entering her mind? And why did it seem to be the only way to keep Rey safe?

As Felicity laid under her blanket, a hand absentmindedly stroking the material of Luke’s flight suit, she wondered what her husband would do in this situation. Would he take the selfish choice to stay behind with Rey or would he make the sacrifice required of the best choice?

Felicity didn’t need to wonder though; the question had been answered the last time she saw her husband.

“But you have to take Rey and go. It's our best choice right now,” Luke had insisted.

He had made the sacrifice of the best choice, but this was different. Luke knew that Rey would be taken care of by Felicity in that situation. What Felicity was considering now was a whole other matter.

"Then we condemn Rey,” Luke calmly said the night they parted. Tears were shining in his eyes, "If we both stay, she does too, and we put her in the line of fire.”

The First Order was getting closer by the day. Plutt couldn’t even stick to a two week delivering
lations schedule for fear of getting caught by the First Order. Pretty soon, someone on Niima was
going to crack and turn in Felicity, and she was only dragging down Rey with her.

But she couldn’t do it. How could she bring herself to do it? How could she or Luke forgive her for
doing it? How could she even begin to explain it to Luke? How could he possibly ever understand
what she did and how she could do it? Luke would never do it. He would stand and fight, even if it
meant both he and Rey went down in a blaze of glory.

But she wasn’t Luke.

“We both know that you are more capable of making difficult decisions and even sacrifices for Rey's
safety. Decisions… I could never bring myself to commit.”

Felicity hugged her knees to her chest and quietly cried. Luke was right, she could make this
decision. But why did she have to? How could Luke ever love someone like that? How could Rey?
How could she even love herself?

“But that is why I love you. You are strong where I am weak, and we balance each other perfectly.”

Felicity looked over at Rey soundly asleep in her hammock. Rey was the perfect representation of
how Luke and Felicity balanced each other. How they loved each other, and accepted each other,
flaws and all. Felicity had to protect that precious proof of their love.

Rey would never understand why her mother did it, but Luke would, and hopefully one day, he
would explain it to Rey.

“I swear to you, Felicity, this will not be like Brendan.”

Brendan, her beloved older brother who promised to come home from Imperial duty as a
Stormtrooper, and then was blown up by the Imperials in a failed piece of propaganda meant to pin
the incident on the Rebels. An incident that when discovered would lead to one of the highest
number of recruits in Alliance history, second to only the events of the first death Star.

Luke had been wrong; this would be like Brendan: a broken promise to come home.

But then again, Rhiaons never were great at keeping promises to their family. Felicity should be as
ashamed as Vader to call herself a Skywalker.

“We will see each other again.”

No, they wouldn’t; but if this sacrifice meant that Luke and Rey would see each other again, then it
was a sacrifice Felicity was willing to make.

Her mind made up, Felicity crossed to Rey peacefully sleeping in her hammock. Careful not to let
her tears fall on Rey, Felicity bent down and kissed her forehead.

“I love you so much, Sweetheart,” Felicity whispered. “I love you far more than you could ever
imagine. If there was any other way, I swear to you, I’d take it. I- I’m so sorry, Rey. I’m sorry.”

Then Felicity went back to her bed, wrapped herself in Luke’s flight suit blanket, and cried herself to
sleep.

Felicity was waiting for Plutt three days later when he brought them their next set of rations. She
stared fixedly at him, fiddling with her credit chip in one hand. Though her demeanour was strong,
inside Felicity was terrified.

Rey was inside the walker, completely unaware of what her mother was about to do.

“The First Order?” Felicity demanded as Plutt got out of the speeder.

Plutt sighed, “They’ve finished searching the villages and are now searching the wreckage in the desert. You’re running out of time.”

“I know,” Felicity said sadly. She held out the credit chip, “Here.”

“A credit chip?” Plutt raised a brow.

“My emergency funds. This should cover all costs we’ve incurred, as well as enough costs for five years and then some. The passcode to access the funds is ‘Burning Homestead.’”

“Kinda morbid.”

“And ironic, that’s why no one would ever think of it. If you follow my terms, the entire thing is yours to keep.”

“What’s all this? Are you changing our agreement?”

“Call it Plan B,” Felicity’s voice was cold and emotionless. She wouldn’t allow Plutt to be the thing that made her break down.

“And what is Plan B?”

Felicity looked back at the walker.

Plutt understood, “You want me to watch the girl until Lover Boy gets here. Well, I think I can—”

Felicity pulled the credit chip away from Plutt’s grasp.

“You listen very carefully,” Felicity’s voice was firm. “You keep her safe. You keep her fed. You keep her hydrated. You keep her clothed. And above all, more than anything else, you keep her distracted. Are we agreed?”

Plutt grabbed the credit chip and smiled, “Agreed.”

Taking a deep breath, Felicity readied herself as best she could for the next part. She of course, could never truly be ready, but she had no choice. Wiping the tears from her eyes, Felicity ducked into the walker.

Rey was playing with her doll when Felicity entered.

She looked up and beamed at her mother, “Mommy, want to play with me?”

Felicity struggled not to burst into tears. She was the worst mother in the history of the galaxy for doing this.

“Rey, I need you to come here for a minute,” Felicity struggled to regulate her voice. “Mommy needs to talk to you.”

Sensing something was wrong, Rey set her doll down and approached her mother.
“What’s wrong, Mommy?” Rey asked.

“Oh, Rey,” Felicity pulled into a tight hug. “Rey, you know that Mommy loves you more than anything in the galaxy, right?”

“Except Daddy,” Rey said.

“No,” Felicity shook her head and pulled back. Rey’s arms settled around Felicity’s neck as Felicity placed her hands on Rey’s shoulders, “I love you even more than Daddy. More than anything and anyone in the entire galaxy. I swear that to you, and I don’t want you to forget that.”

“I won’t,” Rey looked confused as to why they were having that conversation.

“I know… Rey, do you what Mommy said all that while ago about keeping you safe? How Mommy will do whatever it takes to keep you safe and that might mean Mommy does some things you don’t like, and some things Mommy might not be proud of?”

Rey nodded, “But I’ll get back to Daddy.”

“Right. Well, Mommy has to make one of those choices right now.”

“What choice?” Rey asked innocently.

Felicity took a deep breath, “Mommy- Mommy… has to go away for a little while.”

Rey’s eyes went wide, “What? Where are you going?”

“Mommy has to go see some people so that you’re safe.”

“Where do I go?”

“You… you have to stay here with Mister Plutt. He’s going to take care of you until Daddy gets here.”

“What? No! NO!” Rey wailed as she tightened her arms around Felicity’s neck. “No, I’m going with you!”

“No, you have to stay,” Felicity struggled to maintain her composure.

“NO! NO! Mommy, don’t go! Please don’t leave me!”

“Listen to me, Rey,” Felicity stroked Rey’s tear stained cheek. Tears had swelled in Felicity’s eyes as well, “You listen to me. Our family is going to come back for you. You do not go with anyone but our family. Do you understand? You go with Daddy, you go with Uncle Han, or you go with Aunt Leia. You do not go with anyone else. Even if Uncle Lando or Poe shows up, you don’t go with them. Okay? And under no circumstance do you go with Ben. You see Ben, you run away and you don’t look back. Do you understand me?”

“No, Mommy! Please don’t go! Don’t leave me!” Rey sobbed, clutching onto her mother as a lifeline.

“I’m so sorry, Rey. I’m so sorry,” Felicity tried to ease Rey’s arms off of her, but Rey wouldn’t let go. “Rey, you have to let go of Mommy.”

“NO!” Rey clung on as tightly as possible.
“Rey, please let go!”

“NO! NO! NO! MOMMY! DON’T GO!”

“I’m sorry. I’m so sorry,” Felicity took a deep breath, grabbed Rey’s tiny hands, and using her
superior strength, forced them off of her neck.

“NO!” Rey launched herself at her mother and grabbed her leg.

“Plutt! I need a hand!” Felicity called as she sobbed and tried to pry Rey off only to be reattached the
moment she had. Felicity tried to look strong when Plutt entered the walker. “Please, hold her back.”

Easily Plutt pulled Rey off of Felicity and held her in his tight grip, refusing to let her go, “Take my
speeder. Drop it off with one of my guys and tell them to come for me in an hour. I won’t let her
follow.”

“Thank you,” Felicity gasped in pain at the sight of her daughter fighting against Plutt’s grasp.
“Goodbye, Rey. I love you.”

“NO! NO! MOMMY! DON’T LEAVE! PLEASE, DON’T LEAVE ME!”

Felicity climbed into the speeder and looked back at her daughter one last time. Just a push of a
button and Felicity would have completed the unthinkable act of abandoning her daughter.

“DON’T LEAVE ME!” Rey begged. “PLEASE, MOMMY! DON’T LEAVE ME!”

“I’ll come back for you,” the words escaped Felicity’s mouth before she could stop them.

She wanted to believe it, she wanted her last memory of her daughter not to be Rey desperately
screaming and crying for her to come back. She wanted to someday be reunited with her husband
and child, and be one big happy family.

"I'll come back, Sweetheart," Felicity tried to keep her voice calm and level. Rey was far too young
to understand. "I promise."

Unbeknownst to Felicity, she had just repeated Luke’s own final words to Rey. For the second time,
a parent was abandoning her and Rey didn’t understand why.

“I love you, Rey,” Felicity whispered before starting the speeder.

“MOMMY, NO!”

And Felicity hit the gas.

“MOMMY! COME BACK, MOMMY! COME BACK!”

“I’ll come back, Sweetheart,” Felicity promised as she drove away. “I promise.”

“MOMMY!”

And as Rey disappeared in the distance, Felicity’s heart shattered. Felicity knew that despite
swearing never to make Rey another bad promise, her final words to Rey were a lie.

Because Felicity knew she was never coming back.
Ten minutes later, Felicity stopped the speeder. All courage had been sapped from her as she left her daughter behind in the hands of a man she didn’t trust. She couldn’t stop replaying those desperate screams in her mind. Felicity pulled the speeder over next to a hill, sat behind it and cried.

“Oh, God, what have I done?” Felicity wailed, hugging her knees to her chest. “I’m sorry, Rey! I am so sorry!”

She cried and cried and cried and cried.

Felicity hit herself, spat insults at herself, and screamed to the high heavens. She told herself that she wasn’t worthy of the beloved family she had, and was no better than its lowest members.

She was no better than her father: the man who she had begged on the Death Star to come back to the Rebel base with her, but instead he had sounded the alarm. A man who fatally shot her best friend, Riz Drayson while he stood right next to her. A man whose love and acceptance of her was not unconditional like a proper parent, but only came when she submitted to his terms.

She was no better than her father-in-law: a man who couldn’t even recognize his own daughter and tortured her on multiple occasions. A man who had threatened to turn his daughter to the Dark Side when he did learn of her connection to him. A man who cut off his own son’s hand seconds before asking said son to rule the Galaxy with him.

She was no better than her nephew: a man who betrayed everyone who loved him. A man who worshiped the charred helmet of a dead monster. A man who had attempted to murder his five-year-old cousin for the title of legacy.

Felicity was no better than any of them, and she had committed the offence she most despised of her father.

She hated the disgusting creature she was: a mother who had abandoned her child.

Felicity cried. She didn’t care who heard her. She cried until there were no more tears left in her body, and even then she convulsed with dry sobs. Eventually, with no tears, the crying ceased, and Felicity just sat there staring out at the distance in silent horror at what she had done.

By the time the sun was at its highest point, Felicity knew she was ready to face the First Order. She knew there was nothing pleasant in store for her: torture and even death. They would do all they could to break her. But she also knew that there was nothing they could do to hurt her.

She had nothing left to break.

Feeling dead inside, Felicity slowly stood, got into the speeder, and drove for Niima.

She stopped not far from the outside. There were First Order officers guarding what served to be the entrance of the town. There was no way she could get Plutt’s speeder to one of his lackeys without being stopped by the First Order. Without any means of checking up on Rey, Felicity had no idea if Plutt would break the deal if his speeder wasn’t returned.

Of course, she didn’t know if Plutt could cut off the deal in general, but there was nothing more she could do about that.

What was she going to do?

“Erso!”
Felicity forgot she was supposed to answer to that name when a familiar alien pulled his speeder up next to you.

“Hey, Erso,” Quom Tinadar smiled. “Been a while.”

Felicity frowned, “I’m really not in the mood, right now Tinadar.”

Quom frowned as he took in the red puffy faced, dead eyed sight of Jyn Erso.

“Is everything alright?” Quom shut off his speeder and hopped out of it.

“Oh, just fine,” Felicity snapped. “Or have you been so out of it that you actually believe that statement could be true?”

“What happened?”

“None of your damn business.”

“Come on, you can tell me. I’m harmless.”

“You blackmailed me into giving up my wedding ring or you would leave my daughter to die. What the hell do you call harmful?”

“I’m sorry. Look,” Quom pulled out the rings from his shirt and untied the string from around his neck. “I’m sorry. I was a jerk. You can have them back.”

Felicity stared at the ring hanging from Quom’s grasp. She remembered the ecstatic looks of pure joy as Luke gave her each one. She remembered that goofy lopsided smile she fell in love with. She remembered the passionate kisses he bestowed upon her after agreeing to marry him, and sealing it with an I do.

It hit Felicity hard: she would never see Luke again. His joy would be replaced by sorrow when he learned what had happened to her. That grin would never be given to her again. Those lips would never taste her own again. They had promised each other a marriage until they were old and gray, but would only get six far too brief years.

“No,” Felicity was ashamed; she couldn’t bare to let those rings grace her finger again. “I can’t.”

Felicity couldn’t stop the tears. Her only comfort was that she could at least leave Rey behind for Luke. At least they could have each other.

“Hey,” a furry hand touched Felicity’s shoulder. “Don’t cry.”

Felicity looked up in surprise at Quom comforting her, “I’m sorry, I just can’t take those rings back. I can’t even look at them.”

“How about I hang on to them until you’re ready?” Quom suggested, tying the string back around her neck.

Felicity chuckled, “Sure. We’ll go with that.”

She wondered what Quom would do when he found out Felicity could never take them back.

“What happened? Why are you so upset?”

“I… I’ve done something terrible,” Felicity couldn’t bare to admit what she had done. “It was for the
greater good, but it hurts like hell.”

“Here,” Quom pulled her into a hug. “I’m sorry you had to do whatever it is you’ve done. Please, is there anything I can do to help? No strings attached, promise. I feel terrible about what I’ve done to you and I want to make it up to you.”

Felicity sniffed, “Well… there is something.”

“Name it.”

Felicity pulled out of his embrace and wiped the tears out of her eyes, “Can you take this speeder back to the walker? It’s Plutt’s and he needs it back, but I can’t get it to his crones.”

“Sure, of course,” Quom scrambled to his truck to hitch his speeder to Plutt’s. “But that doesn’t seem like a lot. Is there anything else? I did do something terrible to you.”

“Trust me, it’s not the worst thing someone’s done to me.”

“Well, considering the people you hinted at knowing when you almost shot me, I don’t want to be lumped in with them. Come on, anything you want and I’ll do it. Promise.”

Felicity hesitated, “Alright, if you ever see Rey and she needs help… will you give it to her?”

“Sure, but that doesn’t sound like much,” Quom laughed as he fastened the cable. “After all, you’re very much a Mama Nexu. Where are you going to be when Rey needs some help?”

Felicity was silent.

Quom understood.

“Oh,” He looked down at the sad guiltily. “I didn’t realize-”

“It’s the only way they’ll leave,” Felicity muttered.

Quom didn’t hesitate to hug her again, “I’ll take care of your little Miracle Girl. I promise you, Jyn.”

Felicity smiled, “Actually… my name’s Felicity.”

“Alright, I’ll take care of her, Felicity.”

“Thank you.”

Quom smiled and whispered, “Anytime.”

Felicity didn’t ask how he knew the phrase, but she knew he understood its significance.

When Quom was gone, Felicity took a deep breath, squared her shoulders and said, “I’m ready.”

Without a speeder, Felicity was able to sneak into Niima Outpost unnoticed. If she was going to turn herself in, it wasn't going to be to Random Stormtrooper Number Eighty-Three, she was going the big boss herself.

Phasma was easy for Felicity to find; her suit was blinding in the Jakku sunlight.

When Felicity found her, Phasma was harassing the poor doctor who had treated Rey all those weeks ago. Felicity was upset at the sight; Aletha had been very kind to Felicity on that day.
“So I performed CPR and got her breathing again,” Felicity had said in a panic.

Aletha smiled and put a gentle hand on Felicity’s arm, “She’ll be alright. I’m going to do an ice bath, and that should have her all better in a little while.”

“You swear she’s going to be okay?”

“Take a deep breath, Mommy. You did everything right, and because of that you managed to save her from a very horrible death. It could have been a lot worse, but she’ll sleep soundly in your arms tonight.”

“And wake up in the morning?”

“And wake up in the morning,” Aletha chuckled. “Now go with Plutt and tell her father his little girl will be alright.”

Felicity looked hesitantly at Plutt waiting irritated in the doorway, “Fine but if anything happens to Rey, I’m coming after you personally.”

“Deal.”

“Please! I don’t know anything about a little girl, I swear!” Aletha cried out as Phasma’s troops pointed their blasters at her.

“Well, **someone** knows something around here and I’m not leaving until I get some answers!” Phasma snapped. She looked at her troops, “Let’s see how much she loves her little practice.”

“No! Don’t!” Aletha screamed as the Stormtroopers began smashing her equipment. “I don’t know anything.”

“Let me through!” Felicity ordered the crowd who had gathered to watch. “Move!”

“Now do you know anything?” Phasma turned to Aletha.

“No, I don’t,” Aletha answered. It appeared that Phasma had underestimated her resilience.

“Then we have no choice but to make you talk.”

Aletha yelped as Phasma backhanded her fist across the doctor’s face sending her clattering to the ground.

Felicity pushed her way out of the crowd, “**HEY!**”

Phasma looked in surprise as Aletha cowered on the ground.

“Leave her alone,” Felicity ordered, her eyes flashing fiercely as she marched towards the women.

The Stormtroopers immediately turned their blasters on Felicity.

“Don’t fire,” Phasma held up her hand as Felicity reached them. “Well, well, Felicity Rhiaon finally arrives.”

Felicity glared at Phasma and then bent down to help Aletha, who was lying on the ground.
“Get up and get out of here,” Felicity commanded. “My husband should arrive on Jakku shortly. Find Luke, tell him what happened, and he’ll pay for new equipment. Tell him Felicity sent you. If he doesn’t believe you tell him that I told you to say anytime when he says thank you. Do you understand?”

Aletha nodded.

“Go,” Felicity pulled her up and gently pushed her towards the crowd.

The crowd was a flurry of whispers as Aletha disappeared into them. After weeks of interrogation they were finally getting the showdown they craved.

“So kindhearted,” Phasma said.

Felicity rose to her feet, “From time to time, but it’s my fury that’s my signature.”

“Funny, I thought it was making excuses as it why you’re not just some… what’s the term? Golddigger that leeches off her husband’s legacy.”

“You are wrong on so many levels, the least of which being that fact that the only gold Luke and I own are our wedding rings.”

“Which I see you’re not wearing,” Phasma shot a pointed look at Felicity’s bare hand. “What’s the matter? Gave up so soon? Think the Knights of Ren killed him?”

“Don’t make me laugh,” Felicity shot. “Let’s cut the crap, Phasma. We both know why you’re here.”

“Alright then. Where is she? Where’s the girl?”

Felicity smirked, “In a place you’ll never find her.”

“I doubt that,” Phasma chuckled. “Come on, Rhiaon, make my job a littler easier and just tell me where she is. We won’t kill her; the Supreme Leader has glorious plans for her.”

“He will never lay a hand on my daughter.”

“Just tell me. We’re going to find her eventually. It’ll just save us some time, and if you cooperate the Supreme Leader might find some use for you.”

Felicity glowered at Phasma, “Listen to me carefully, PH-5177, the only way you’re going to get the location of my daughter is if you beat it out of me with my dying breath.”

“Alright then,” Phasma bashed the butt of her blaster against Felicity’s temple, knocking her out cold. She gestured to Felicity lying on the ground, “Get her on the ship and bring us to the base. Have a team stay behind and sweep the area. The girl can’t be too far.”

The crowd muttered to each other as Phasma picked up the unconscious Felicity and carried her to the ship. The citizens of Niima Outpost didn’t usually care about anyone but themselves, but they knew what the First Order had just done to Felicity Rhiaon was wrong.

——

No matter how much Rey fought against Unkar Plutt, he wouldn’t let her go.

“NO! MOMMY, COME BACK! I WANT MOMMY!” Rey screamed, trying to claw her way out of his grasp. She managed to get free only for him to grab her roughly by the arm and hold her still.
Why did Mommy leave? She couldn’t understand why it had happened, but she did understand what had happened. This wasn’t like the times Mommy told Rey to stay in the living room while Mommy went to see Daddy working in the garage. This wasn’t like the times Mommy said to stay with Master Alyla Kene in the meditation garden while Mommy went to see Daddy in his office a few hallways down. This wasn’t even like the times Mommy would said to stay with Uncle Han while he worked on the *Falcon* while Mommy went to Aunt Leia’s office which was a twenty-minute drive from the hangar the *Falcon* was stored in.

Rey knew that Mommy wasn’t just going for a quick visit to someone. But leaving her behind? That had to be a mistake.

Suddenly she sensed it; the Force pulling her attention to a ship in the sky. It was flying away from Jakku, and Rey knew that Mommy was on it.

“NO!” Rey yelled at the ship. “COME BACK!”

“Quiet, girl,” Unkar chastised.

Rey quickly looked over at Plutt, but turned her attention back to the ship, “NO!”

And then something strange happened. The Force was all around her, pushing images and sounds into her mind. Was this what Daddy meant when he talked about getting visions from the Force?

The ship flying away with her mother was heading into the sun. The sky turned red as a dark object eclipsed the precious light.

Then suddenly Mommy was on her knees before a shiny Stormtrooper and a red haired man. They were hitting her and demanding to know where Rey was.

Mommy wouldn’t tell.

The scene shifted to Daddy watching a holo of the bad people hurting Mommy. He was standing next to the dejarik table on the *Falcon*. Uncle Han and Aunt Leia were with him. Mommy said something Rey couldn’t make out.

“NO!” Daddy screamed, falling to floor on his knees. Everyone was crying and hugging.

Rey didn’t like seeing everyone so sad. Why were they sad?

The scene shifted to an orange and white droid. It was BB-8, Rey recognized. That was Poe’s droid, and she loved both Poe and his droid. They played the best with her.

BB-8 was on Jakku with a tall girl wearing the same hairstyle and clothing as Rey.

“I know all about waiting,” the tall girl said.

BB-8 beeped something at the girl.

“For my family,” the girl said. “They'll be back. One day.”

The scene shifted and the girl was talking to a dark skinned boy.

“Don’t go,” the girl begged.

“Take care of yourself,” the boy said. “Please.”
The scene shifted again. The girl was strapped to a table and Ben was standing before her. His hand was outstretched and he was doing the bad mind thing Daddy had forbidden. The girl was struggling to hold back tears.

“You're so lonely... so afraid to leave...” Ben taunted.

The scene shifted to Uncle Han in the Falcon talking to the girl and dark skinned boy.

“Luke felt responsible,” Uncle Han said. “He walked away from everything.”

The scene shifted again. Ben was walking down a hallway carrying Mommy. Mommy was hanging limply in his arms, her eyes glassy like Zena Halcorr’s.

A strange woman’s voice sounded along to the scene.

“Dear child. I see your eyes. You already know the truth. Whomever you're waiting for on Jakku…”

An image of Mommy’s face filled Rey’s mind followed by an image of a chrome Stormtrooper helmet.

“They're never coming back.”

Rey screamed as the images vanished and the sky came into focus again.

Mommy’s ship was gone.

Rey sobbed as she struggled to make sense of the visions and Mommy’s abandonment. She didn’t understand what was happening or what the visions meant. Who was going to take care of her? When was her family going to come back? What was going to happen to Mommy?

But if there was one thing Rey did understand it was this:

Starting now and lasting for a very long time… Rey was completely alone.

Chapter End Notes

... Please don't hate me.
Phasma smashed a fist into Felicity Rhiaon’s face.

“Where is she?” Phasma demanded.

Felicity chuckled, “Oh yeah, hit me again. That’ll make me want to tell you.”

Felicity cried out as Phasma hit her again.

The First Order had been torturing Felicity for five days. They had tried several forms of torture: shoving wedges of bamboo under her nails, electric shocks, whips, burning her joints, dunking her head under the water over and over, and many more unspeakable acts. But despite all of the abuse Felicity endured, she had yet to break.

Felicity Rhiaon was no super human, but there was a strength in her love as a mother that gave her the courage to endure for the sake of her child. Perhaps it was related to the momentary strength that allowed a mother to pull a speeder off their pinned baby. Perhaps it was the Force giving her a boost as it recognized her as the lover of the most powerful living Force user, and being the mother of his heir. Or maybe it was the haunting screams of her child that forced her not to allow that harrowing experience to mean nothing.

Whatever the reason was, Felicity would not break. Not even as she was forced on her knees before Hux and Phasma, with her hands tied behind her back, hair crudely sheered to cut out the dried blood from her numerous beatings, while a security camera openly recorded the incident.

“Cheer up, Rhiaon. When we send this footage to your husband, don’t you wanted him to see your pretty smile?” General Hux jeered as he watched from the sideline. He smirked as Phasma hit Felicity again, “Where is the girl?”

Felicity spat out a mouthful of blood, “You know, I wonder about the might of the First Order when they have little boys like you running the show. What are you? Twenty-one?”

The fist smashed into her face again.

“Then again, I was twenty-one when I stole the plans to the Death Star,” Felicity conceded only to cry out when Phasma kneed her in the stomach. “Damn it, Phasma, you really think kneeing me in the stomach will make me talk?”
“No, that was for bringing up the Death Star again,” Phasma answered. “If I have to hear that story one more time-”

“Captain,” Hux warned.

“Very well.” Phasma pulled Felicity’s head by the hair up to look into her eyes, “Where is Rey Skywalker?”

“There’s no such person,” Felicity shot. “Now if you’re talking about Rey Rhiaon Skywalker, her actual name- AH! You know, at least the Imperial torturers liked the occasional witty banter.”

“Enough,” Hux snapped. “Tell us whether the girl is.”

Felicity’s cold eyes locked with his, “Listen to me very carefully, you can do whatever you want to me. Beat me, cut me, poison me, drown me, burn me, suffocate me, or whatever other creative way you can think of to torture me, but I will never, ever tell you where my daughter is.”

Hux looked at Phasma and nodded.

Phasma threw Felicity to the ground and signalled to the guards, “Clean her off and cut the dried blood out of her hair. We’ll try again in an hour.”

“You know, she’s right,” Phasma walked along the corridor back to the torture chamber with Hux. “If we haven’t broken her yet, I don’t think she ever will. This is a woman who had the nerve to shoot Lord Vader in the life support suit, and then turned around and married his son.”

“Don’t glorify her because Skywalker designated her his bedmate,” a voice suddenly said. The duo turned to see a masked Kylo Ren stepping into the corridor, “She’s no legendary hero because she knows a few tricks under the sheets.”

“I should have guessed,” Hux sneered. “We can’t have one conversation about Rhiaon without Ben Solo expressing his petty hatred. There are bigger things at play here, Solo.”

“Don’t call me that!” Kylo snapped. “It’s Kylo, Master of the Knights of Ren, and don’t act like either of you enjoy Rhiaon’s company.”

“Of course not,” Phasma shook her head. “I’ve despised Rhiaon since the day we met and she became a constant thorn in my side, but even I have to admit that Rhiaon didn’t receive such prestige in the Republic for her marriage to Skywalker alone.”

“What are you even doing here So-?” Hux cut off when he caught Kylo’s look which managed to look annoyed yet deadly from even underneath his mask. Not wanting to piss off the moody teenager armed with a dangerous weapon who had recently murdered a bunch of people, Hux conceded, “What are you doing here, Kylo?”

“I just finished speaking with the Supreme Leader,” Kylo reported, sounding particularly smug.

Hux rolled his eyes.

“The Supreme Leader wants to know why we have yet to retrieve Skywalker’s daughter,” Kylo relished in Hux’s failure.

“Surprisingly, Rhiaon has not been very compliant to her beatings,” Hux sniped. “And don’t you dare criticize my results. We wouldn’t be in this mess if you hadn’t failed that night on Rornian.”
Remind me again, how pleased was the Supreme Leader when you told him your Knights tried to kill the girl rather than capture her?”

Kylo knew he had no comeback so rather than respond to Hux, he turned his attentions to Phasma.

“What about Jakku?” Kylo demanded. “Why did you withdraw your troops?”

“They didn’t *all* withdraw,” Phasma pointed out. “There are still teams searching Niima.”

“But why did you leave?” Kylo snapped. “Felicity Rhiaon turns herself in and you decide there’s no possible way that could lead you to Re… Skywalker’s daughter?”

Hux and Phasma exchanged a look, but neither commented on the guilt riddled way Kylo had failed to utter his cousin’s name.

“With all due respect, Master Ren,” Phasma politely answered, “I’ve been fighting Felicity Rhiaon for a *very* long time. If there’s one thing I’m certain of, it’s that Felicity Rhiaon would not just waltz up to me in the town square after nearly a month of tearing Jakku apart to find her and surrender herself unless her daughter was well-hidden.”

“So then, what’s our plan?” Kylo asked. “Keep beating and healing her until what? She dies? We find the girl? Her husband comes?”

“Until she tells us where her daughter is,” Phasma answered.

“And why after five days of torture do you even think that’s still possible?” Kylo snapped.

“Everyone has their breaking point,” Hux said. “We just have to figure out what it is.”

“Her daughter,” Kylo answered automatically. “Her daughter is her weakness.”

Hux sighed, “Yes, but I highly doubt threatening to kill her daughter so we can capture said daughter is going to work. Are there any other weaknesses she has? Any other children? Maybe she’s pregnant?”

“Negative,” Phasma reported. “We had the medics test her upon capture. But the child idea does have merit. Isn’t she attached to one of our program children? FN something?”

“FN-2187,” Kylo recalled. “She’s so haunted by her failure with him that she had the number tattooed on her wrist. Why don’t we bring FN-?”

“No,” Hux cut off. “The Supreme Leader doesn’t want us touching the children, and I won’t you compromising the program over one prisoner.”

“I’ve said it before,” Kylo muttered, “Clones would be much easier.”

Hux glared at Kylo, “What about the Rhiaon family? Does she have any special attachment to them?”

“Her brother, but he’s dead,” Kylo replied. “Left an ugly scar in her mind, but we can’t exploit… Wait a minute. Her mind! That’s it! That’s her weakness!”

“Of course,” Phasma agreed. “Why didn’t I think of that?”

Hux frowned, “I don’t follow.”
“Rhiaon had postpartum depression when her daughter was born,” Phasma replied. “A very extreme case. Almost killed her daughter.”

“So how do we exploit this?” Hux questioned. “Has she overcome it?”

“Mostly,” Kylo answered, “but there is something I can do.”

“And what’s that?”

Kylo grinned.

Two Stormtroopers were by Felicity’s side cleaning her off when the door opened. She looked up and her expression turned to pure hatred when Kylo Ren stepped into the room.

“You!” Felicity screamed and threw herself forward at him. The two Stormtroopers were barely able to grab and forced her back down on her knees in time.

“Hello, Rhiaon,” Kylo grinned at the sight of his beaten, bloodied, and bruised aunt by marriage.

Felicity growled, “Give me one good reason not to tear your throat out right now, Ben!”

“Well… I’m going to go with the Stormtroopers will stop you. And it’s Kylo, not Ben.”

“You really think I’m actually going to call you that? Hell, I’m the one who gave you that name.”

“As I recall it you actually pitched Skylo,” Kylo shot. “Oh yes, I remember that day. You kidnapped me to Endor, and then took me to Grandfather’s grave and gave this big speech about how this was my destiny if I continued down this dark path, and how I’m not just a Skywalker but a Solo as well, a Skylo if you would, and blah blah blah.”

“Last time I try bonding with you,” Felicity muttered. “Oh, but you left out the part where you desecrated Vader’s grave by stealing his helmet and then hid it under your bed next to your dirty socks.”

“Since when do you care about Darth Vader?”

“I don’t. Hell, if I could, I would punch the man, but that’s not my point.”

“Then let’s get to the point, shall we?”

“Fine, you don’t like me, and – despite the fact that I’m apparently legally obligated to, because I married your mother’s brother – I don’t like you.”

“You don’t like me?” Kylo exclaimed. He pulled off his helmet and threw it on the floor exposing the blast wound on his cheek, “You shot me in the face!”

“You were trying to kill my daughter,” Felicity simply said. “And come on, it’s been like a month. You can’t honestly tell me that that wound can’t be healed by bacta. Have you seriously been walking around with a blast scar to make yourself look more intimidating? God, this is like the hair dye all over again!”

Hux snorted.

Kylo glared at Hux, “Where’s Rey?”
Felicity laughed, “Oh sure, I’ll tell you. It’s not like the last time I saw you, you were trying to murder her!”

“You attempted to murder her?” Hux shot Kylo a look. “You said it was the other Knights and that you stopped them.”

Felicity snorted, “Please tell me you’re not stupid enough to fall for his little tortured hero ploy.”

“You know the Supreme Leader wants her,” Hux continued, though inwardly had to admit Rhiaon had a point. “If he finds out that you—”

“Let that be an issue between the Supreme Leader and myself,” Kylo snapped. “Now, Rhiaon I’m going to ask you one more time, and if you don’t answer, I’m going to have to use force. Where is Rey?”

Felicity’s cold eyes met his, “I’ll never tell you.”

Kylo smiled, “Yes… you will.”

With an impossible grace, Kylo calmly walked over to his discarded helmet, picked it up, and walked over to a table laden with torture devices. He carefully set down his helmet and ran his hand over a scalpel.

“Do you know why I’ve always hated you, Rhiaon?” Kylo picked up the scalpel and made a show of examining it.

“Let’s see, which of the many petty reasons could it be?” Felicity rolled her eyes. “Is it because I stole your special uncle-nephew bonding time? Is it because dared to exercise my right over my reproductive system to build a family that threatened your precious ego? Or is it because I never cared about your age and called you out on things Luke and Leia wouldn’t? Is it because save for being terrible with ships, I’m a lot like the father you inexplicably hate, because seriously who hates having Han Solo as your father? Or maybe it’s the thing that bugs you most: I always have and always will hate Darth Vader.”

Kylo set down the scalpel, “It’s because we’re too much alike.”

Felicity blinked, “Alike?”

She had honestly not expected that answer.

“Yes, we are,” Kylo’s voice was calm, clear, and bordering on threatening. It was easy to tell he was trying to emulate the dangerous, controlled, arrogant taunt someone like Tarkin would give, but Kylo fell short of the mark and came off amateurish. “We idolize the memories of dead men – myself, Vader, and you with your brother. We’re both strong willed and sarcastic. We don’t allow ourselves to be taken in by the myths of Luke Skywalker. But most importantly, we’re both monsters.”

Felicity scowled, but said nothing. She wanted to know where he was taking the conversation before refuting his claims.

“Look at, my so called Aunt, and tell me what do you see?” Kylo slowly began walking toward her. “You would look at me a call me a traitor, a murderer, and a liar. And when I look at you, I see the exact same things. But that is why I hate you, because I freely admit to my crimes while you walk around making excuses and pretending to be a good person.”

“I have never claimed to be a good person,” Felicity coldly shot. “But I am not like you.”
“You are a traitor because you turned your back on the Empire and as a result, your own father to join some petty band of rebels. You are a murderer because you have taken more lives than you can even recall. Knights of Ren, Stormtroopers, Imperial Officers, Slavers, and even assisted your future husband in the massacre of million of innocent lives because they had the misfortune of being assigned to work on the Death Star. And above all you are liar because you promised to keep my secret, and didn’t.”

Felicity’s eyes widened. In a moment she knew what was about to happen next.

“No!” Felicity struggled against the Stormtroopers holding her down.

Kylo casually turned to Hux and Phasma, “Have I ever told you the story of the first time I used the Dark Side?”

Hux smirked as Phasma made a show of shaking her head despite, in fact knowing the story.

“The first time I used the Dark Side, it was on Rhiaon here,” Kylo continued. “But this is not the story of me attacking my aunt. No… she begged me to do it.”

Felicity’s eyes filled with tears at the memory, “I was sick.”

“You were weak!” Kylo snapped. “And arrogant, and a liar.”

“Ben, please,” Felicity whispered.

“It was the first time and only time we ever spoke as if we weren’t rivals,” Kylo turned back to Hux and Phasma. “She had been… different. Withdrawn, moody, impatient, and quick to anger. I sensed her conflicting emotions, I knew there was something in her mind telling her go against everything expected of her and destroying her ideas of right and wrong. I knew that she felt no attachment to her daughter, and in fact resented how her baby took everyone’s attentions from her.”

Felicity closed her eyes, struggling to push away the memories of the darkest time of her life.

“Oh, she was sick, alright,” Kylo ridiculed the story. “But she was so damn prideful that she refused to admit there was a problem to anyone.”

“Anyone but the venerable little boy who confessed he heard a voice in his head,” Felicity shot.

Kylo glared at Felicity, “So the little boy for the first time related to the woman he was supposed to call his aunt. And the little boy told her that the voice in his head had taught him a trick, and that he could use it on the sick woman so that someone could understand what was going on without the sick woman having to say it out loud. The sick woman begged the little boy to do it… and he did.”

“But then the little boy broke his promise and pushed too far into the sick woman’s mind, forcing her to relive her darkest memories while the sick woman screamed at him to stop.”

“And then the sick woman attacked the little boy.”

“I pushed you back onto the couch to break your concentration. I didn’t shoot you.” Felicity’s eyes landed on Kylo’s blast scar, “… that time.”

Hux chuckled and Kylo shot him a dirty look before turning back to Felicity. Kylo was standing only about a foot away from his kneeling aunt.

“I’ll give you one last chance to tell me where Rey is. Otherwise,” Kylo outstretched his hand to
Felicity, “I’ll take by force.”

Felicity spat at his feet.

Kylo smirked, “Then so be it.”

Felicity groaned, muffling a much louder scream as the intrusion began. It was hard to describe the feeling of someone pushing their way into her mind. It was like someone pressing a boulder down onto her forehead but her head would not smash like a melon if a boulder really was crushing her. Then like it was sent forth from the boulder through osmosis, a searing, slinky arm emerged behind her skull, burrowing and weaving through her brain picking through her memories.

She was forced to relive so much darkness.

Vader slashing his lightsaber down her back.

Her father shooting and killing Riz Drayson, her best friend.

A whip striking her as Zygerrian slavers captured her during an Emissary mission gone wrong.

The haunting announcement that Bail Organa and the rest of Alderaan had been destroyed because Felicity has passed the Death Star plans to Leia.

Her brother, Brendan been blown to pieces by the bombs when he was trying to make peace between a civilian and a cruel Imperial officer.

The incident she never spoke of.

Phasma tearing FN-2187 out of her arms.

All of her darkest moments and more. The memories she never wished to revisited were forced to the forefront of her mind. But there was one memory she would do anything to stop Ben from finding. She couldn’t let Rey down now.

But how could she stop Ben, or Kylo, or whatever he was calling himself these days? She was no Jedi, and thus was powerless to stop him from taking control of her memories. How could she prevent him from finding what he wanted when she was physically restrained?

And that’s when the answer hit her. She couldn’t fight him physically… but she could mentally.

She couldn’t stop him in his tracks, she knew that much, but maybe she could divert him somehow. Maybe she could take advantage of that arrogant pride. Maybe if she showed him what he wanted he would stop before he found the truth.

Felicity would not let her sacrifice be in vain.

Taking a deep breath, Felicity remembered how Luke told her that the Force resided in all living creatures. She was not Force Sensitive like him, but it was within her and maybe she could harness what little she had to buy her some time. Felicity gathered all the strength she could muster and poured it into her feeble attempt to call on that microscopic bit of Force and push back Kylo.

“Wait…” Kylo said after a minute. He laughed and in disbelief asked, “Are you trying to use the Force?”

She had the edge. In those brief moments she scrambled to collect her memories and tap into her emotions. She had one shot at this, and she only prayed that she was a good enough actress.
And then she told the lie that would forever change the course of history.

“Rey’s dead!”

Felicity’s proclamation shocked everyone in the room.

“What?” Phasma exclaimed as Hux’s eyes went wide and Kylo’s intrusion stopped.

Hux and Kylo exchanged a look of disbelief as if asking the other if they had heard it too. With a look of determination, Kylo pressed forward again into Felicity’s mind.

“What do you mean Rey’s dead?” Kylo barked.

Felicity’s lie was working.

“I mean that Rey’s dead,” Felicity sobbed uncontrollably. The Stormtroopers were lightly gripping her arms as Felicity was doubled over crying. “My little girl. My sweet little Rey. She’s gone, and it’s all my fault.”

With as much sorrow Felicity had gone through in her life, it wasn’t hard to summon the necessary tears. Her conviction to protect her child pushed forward such an impressive display of grief that even she might have believed it if she was an outsider looking in.

Digging into her mind, Kylo was assaulted by a flood of Felicity’s memories with Rey. Countless happy moments, moments with her mother, father, aunt, uncle, friends, and cousin. Moments that had apparently been brought to an end.

And it was all his fault.

“How did she die?” Kylo demanded.

He had played right into Felicity’s trap. She pushed forward key memories of her time on Jakku, making Kylo believe he was in control and finding the truth. But they were the exact memories Felicity needed to convince him she was telling the truth, and she was going to present them in the order she wished.

Felicity took a deep breath and pretended to gather herself, though her voice was lined with sobs and pauses. As she told her story, Kylo saw the memories she was secretly presenting him with.

“*We- We went to Jakku after the massacre but our ship crashed.*”

*In the middle of the Jakku desert, Felicity silently watched the smouldering transport ship sink into the sand with a cloud of smoke and fire. Rey stood next to her mother as Felicity rested a hand on Rey’s shoulder; the girls taking in the sight of Felicity’s failure of a landing.*

“*Mommy?* Rey asked in an innocent voice. “*Is that why Uncle Han never lets you pilot the Falcon?*”

“*Yes. Yes, it is,*” Felicity simply answered. *She looked down at Rey and gently pulled her daughter in closer, “Careful, Sweetheart. I don’t want you breathing in the fumes.”*

*Rey buried her face against her mother’s leg.*
"We were too far from Niima and had to walk there ourselves."

"Then who is coming to get us?" Rey asked.

"No one, yet," Felicity confessed. There was no point in giving Rey false hope with the uncertain path before them. "You, see, the thing is there aren't any towns or places to get food and water and a ride between here and Niima Outpost. So we have to walk to Niima Outpost."

"But we didn’t have enough food."

Felicity rummaged through the bag, taking inventory of their rations. When she finished, Felicity found that she wanted nothing more than to slap Past Luke and Past Felicity.

They had a supply of five days of water, and three days of food... for a single person.

"I tried to keep her safe."

Felicity drew her blaster and pointed it at Quom. The alien froze, fear filling his eyes, as Rey gently whimpered in the background.

"Listen to me, Scavenger," Felicity's voice was dark, "I have faced many enemies in my life. If you were to add yourself to my list, I guarantee you wouldn't break the top twenty. In fact, you're so insignificant that I would probably even forget I killed you. Don't make the mistake of thinking I'm a naïve outsider. I've been on Jakku before; I've dealt with your kind. Yes, my daughter and I are stuck here, but you can't imagine what we just escaped from."

"I tried to keep her brave."

"So you need some of the bravery?" Rey asked.

"No. Take all the bravery. Let Mommy be full-brave for you. It's my job, and I'm happy to do it."

"But the walk was too far, and Rey was too young."

"I'm hungry, Mommy," Rey whispered as Felicity laid her against the sand that night to rest. Rey was very pale and barely had the energy to move.

"After a few days, Rey started to fail."

"Carry me, Mommy?" Rey asked when Felicity determined that Rey wasn't faking it. Rey legitimately could not get up and walk.

"Alright," Felicity picked up Rey and began carrying her. They would get there slower, but Felicity had no choice.
“The heatstroke had set in.”

She took Rey's temperature and observed the result with horror. 104 degrees Fahrenheit.

Rey had heatstroke.

Felicity needed shade now.

“I tried to get her to shelter in time.”

She threw everything back in her bag, scooped Rey into her arms, and ran. Felicity ran as fast and as far as she could. When she thought she could run no further, she looked down at her dying daughter and found the strength to push forward. Even if it meant she ran until she dropped dead, Felicity would not stop until her daughter was safe.

“One afternoon, Rey went to sleep.”

She kissed Rey's forehead, "I'm so sorry. I'm so sorry. Please, just close your eyes and sleep. I promise it'll be better in the morning."

“But she didn’t wake up.”

"Rey, come on, this isn't funny," Felicity shook the little girl. "Rey, wake up!"

Tears fell from Felicity's eyes onto Rey's face, but still Rey did not move.

“I tried to save her.”

Felicity immediately began CPR.

"Come on, Sweetheart. Rey, please wake up," Felicity begged as she pumped her hands against Rey's chest. "Rey, Mommy's here. Mommy's got you. You're safe. Please wake up."

“But she had stopped breathing.”

"Come on, Rey. Just one little breath," Felicity's voice shook as tears blurred the sight of her tiny daughter looking so pale, lying perfectly still in the sand. "Can you give Mommy one tiny breath?"

“I couldn’t get her back.”

"Don't you dare die on me, Rey!" Felicity vehemently chastised. Her firm chest compressions pressed down so forcefully that Felicity wouldn't be surprised if she broke one of Rey's ribs. "Don't you dare do this to me! I promised to protect you, to bring you home. I promised that you'd live, Rey,
so live, damn it! LIVE!"

Rey didn’t move.

“I screamed and cried to the high heavens at what I had done.”

“Oh, God, what have I done?” Felicity wailed, hugging her knees to her chest. "I'm sorry, Rey! I am so sorry!"

“I was so hot and hungry and exhausted; I wasn’t thinking straight.”

“What happened? Why are you so upset?”

"I… I've done something terrible,” Felicity couldn't bare to admit what she had done.

“So I put her down on the ground and wrapped her in a blanket.”

Felicity pulled out the survival blanket and laid it on the sand. She rested Rey atop it, and covered her with the patchwork blanket.

“I dug her grave in the sand with my own two hands.”

So Felicity dug a hole. She had no shovel, so she dug it with her bare hands. Frequently she looked over at her daughter and every time almost had a heart acted. Eyes closed, pale skin, undetectable breathing, unnaturally still.

Rey looked dead.

“I left her there.”

Felicity pulled out her blaster, and with great reluctance left Rey to check out the AT-AT.

“In the morning, when my head had cleared, I came back, but a sandstorm had happened overnight and I couldn’t find where I buried her. So I went on to Niima alone.”

Feeling dead inside, Felicity slowly stood, got into the speeder, and drove for Niima.

“I called Luke and couldn’t bring myself to tell him what happened. Not through a com message.”

“Rey is-” Felicity paused. "Well… we can discuss Rey later.”
“I waited for him to arrive, and hid myself when the First Order came.”

"When did they get here?" Felicity asked the second they were outside.

"Yesterday morning," Plutt answered. "I would have come sooner, but it's hard not to draw attention when you go into the desert with a bag of rations."

"I assume the bag of rations means you want me to stay put for two weeks and hope they leave?"

"I've already made it clear to my customers that if they want to continue to eat they'll not say a word about you or the girl."

“Eventually I realised that Luke wasn’t coming.”

"What's all this? Are you changing our agreement?"

"Call it Plan B," Felicity's voice was cold and emotionless.

“So I turned myself in, ready to face the punishment for letting my daughter die.”

"Alright then. Where is she? Where's the girl?"

Felicity smirked, "In a place you'll never find her."

"I doubt that," Phasma chuckled. "Come on, Rhiaon, make my job a littler easier and just tell me where she is. We won't kill her; the Supreme Leader has glorious plans for her."

"He will never lay a hand on my daughter."

“Rey is dead,” Felicity finished showing her manipulated memories. “I tried so hard to save her but it was just too much. She fell asleep and never woke up, and because of my haste I don’t even have her body to bury. And that is why Snoke will never lay a hand on Rey… No one can ever touch her again.”

Kylo stared at Felicity in horror and shock. He couldn’t believe it, his adorable little cousin whose only crime was getting in his way. Rey had died a horrible death… and it was all his fault.

Felicity saw the guilt in Ben’s expression, for in the moment it wasn’t the feared Knight of Ren standing before her, but the vulnerable son of her best friends. It wasn’t the boy who hurt her family, but rather the boy who had once reached out to help her through depression in return to safeguard the secret of the voice in his head. At the time, Felicity did not regret telling Luke and Leia, Ben’s secret when confronted with the incident she did not speak of. And now, in that moment, Felicity felt no regret in making Ben believe he had led to the death of Rey.

She was only thankful that Kylo hadn’t even seemed to notice that the memories had taken place in a variety of places and times of day.

“Is it true, Ren?” Hux demanded. “Is Rey Skywalker dead?”

Ben lowered his hand, his eyes meeting the teary red ones of his aunt. Felicity’s eyes shone with
grief, anger, and accusation. Her message was clear.

He had killed her daughter.

Ben couldn’t shake the image of a little girl lying unmoving on Jakku.

“Yes,” Ben whispered. “I saw her memories myself. Rey Skywalker… is dead and buried in an anonymous patch of sand on Jakku.”

Hux sighed, “The Supreme Leader will be most unhappy.”

“Even so, we must follow the orders he laid out for us,” Phasma pointed out. “We know our next move.”

Felicity could barely contain her glee. Everything had gone exactly as she had planned it.

She just didn’t plan on what Hux said next.

“Send this footage to Leia Organa’s office. Luke Skywalker should know his daughter is dead.”

“Clamp,” Han’s hand stuck up from one of the mechanical hatches on the Falcon.

A clamp was placed into his hand.

“Harris wrench.”

A Harris wrench was placed into his hand.

“Power convertor.”

Nothing.

“Power convertor.”

Still nothing.

“Power convertor!”

Silence.

“Dang it, Luke!” Han pulled himself back up. “What is it with you and power convertors?”

Han stopped short was he saw Luke staring blankly at the hallway to the cockpit.

“Kid?” Han hoisted himself onto the floor. “What’s wrong?”

“Do you remember Rey taking her first steps down that hall?” Luke asked, his voice distant.

“Oh yeah,” Han chuckled, settling next to Luke and clapping him on the shoulder. “Fliss had been trying to get Rey to walk to her for six weeks, and then she wobbled right into my arms.”

“Felicity was so upset that she jokingly tried to smother you with your own vest.”

“I’m still not convinced that was a joke. Doesn’t she try to smother you on a regular basis?”

“Only when I kick in my sleep.”
“Well, kid, I’ve been on the wrong end of your sleep kicks, and I don’t really blame her.”

“When have I ever sleep kicked you?” Luke asked. “I only kick when I get visions.”

“One word,” Han smirked. “Hoth.”

“I thought we agreed never to speak of that night.”

“Come on, we huddled for warmth not slept together. Although that certainly would have made the whole love triangle thing a lot more awkward.”

“I thought we maxed out our awkwardness when we discovered the accidental incest.”

“Fair,” Han conceded. “But like I said, that night on Hoth wasn’t too bad if you take out the kicking and the almost dying. But you smelled terrible.”


“Don’t feel self-conscious, kid,” Han punched Luke playfully in the arm. “Despite all of your flaws you still managed to bag a pretty good wife.”

Luke’s grin faltered a bit as sadness flashed behind his eyes, “Yeah… I did.”

“Hey,” Han slung an arm around Luke’s shoulder. “We’ll find her. Promise.”

Luke patted Han’s arm, “Thank you.”

“Anytime,” Han echoed Felicity’s usual reply. “Now, how about you hand me that power convertor and we get this ship in shape so when we do find Fliss, we can get to her straight away.”

“Alright,” Luke laughed handing Han the convertor. “I’m sorry I’m so distant lately. I just feel like… something’s wrong.”

“Well, I tell you what, Ben is so grounded when he gets home. Plus, he is paying for the window he broke.”

“Yes, because breaking Leia’s window is the worst crime he’s committed lately.”

Suddenly, Luke’s comlink started beeping. Han paused from jumping down into the hatch and shared a look with Luke. Luke’s eyes were lit up with hope, and he was looking at Han as if seeking permission to allow the emotion. Han nodded at Luke, and Luke pressed the answer button.


Luke frowned, “… Han?”


“No!” Lando cried out.

Luke grinned at the exasperation in Lando’s voice, “Wedge?”
“Nalto?” Han teased.

“What was your co-pilot’s name again?”

“Would you two shut up and listen it me?” Lando exclaimed. “I got Fliss’ message!”


“Not… exactly,” Lando said in the tone that always proceeded the confession he had done something shady. “Look, people are really interested in the massacre, and no one’s answering any questions so I sort of… found a guy who tapped Leia’s Senate com to sell information to media outlets and he passed Felicity’s messages to me. Do you want to hear them or not?”

“Yes!” Luke exclaimed. He paused, “… also, we should probably tell Leia her com is tapped.”

“Later,” Han waved off. “Lando, play the message.”

“Sure thing,” Lando said.

A moment later, Felicity’s familiar voice came through the com.

"You know what?" Felicity yelled, "No! I am not letting this go!"

“You can skip this one,” Luke said quickly.

“Oh, come on,” Han laughed. “I like that one.”

Luke rolled his eyes as his com went silent for a moment before playing the next message.

"Hey, Leia, it's Felicity," Felicity smiled for the recording. "I'm calling you to tell you that I'm safe. I've been trying to contact you and the boys, but funny story, all of your lines have been tied up, and message boxes full. Considering the hoops I had to jump through just to get to this inbox, I can only imagine you guys are so busy trying to find me, you don't really have the time to actually stop and listen for me."

Luke and Han exchanged a guilty look.

“I'm worried that the First Order might try to track me, so I'll keep this brief. I'm fine – a little battered around from my journey – but fine. I would say I'm doing good, but considering the hell I've suffered through the past few days, I'll stick to the word 'fine.' Rey is- Well… we can discuss Rey later.”

Luke frowned, “What do you think she means by that?”

Han shrugged.

“I'm on Jakku, and I took up that offer Luke arranged. I should be fine for a while, but please, for the love of the Force, would someone please come pick me up? I'd settle for Lando at this point. I love you all. Tell Luke I love him, and that I'm counting the minutes until I see him again.”

“You know, I don’t really appreciate the ‘I'd settle for Lando’ comment,” Lando said.

“What are we waiting for? Let’s get going!” Han shoved his toolbox into a storage container and the men sprinted for the cockpit.


“I’ll be sure to call that in next time I get in trouble.”

“Don’t you always?” Luke chuckled. “I’ll talk to you later. I have to go now.”

“Go get your girls, Skywalker!”

And with that the line went dead.

“Putting in the coordinates now,” Han said in the pilot’s chair as Luke settled in the co-pilot. “Why don’t you call Leia to tell her we found the girl and we’re going to get them, and then give Plutt and your wife a head’s up we’re on our way? Oh, and one thing: you’re stepping off the ship first. If Fliss is going to tear the first person apart, it’s going to be the one who told her to go to Jakku in the first place.”


He was about to type in Leia’s com number when suddenly he stopped.

“What’s up?” Han asked.

“It’s Leia,” Luke had a slight frown on his first. “She’s here in the hanger bay… she’s coming towards us.”

“Maybe she’s bringing us lunch?” Han suggested. “Either that or yell at us. What’s the matter? Doesn’t this save us a call?”

“Han…” Luke’s eyes were squeezed shut. “Something’s wrong. Leia’s blocking her mind from me. She doesn’t want me to sense her.”

Han frowned. Before he could say anything, he spotted something in the window: Leia entering the hanger.

“Well, there she is,” Han pointed to Leia. “Why don’t we go find out what’s going on?”

---

“Leia, what’s going on?” Han called as he and Luke ran down the loading platform. Reaching her, Han grabbed the sides of Leia’s arms and observed her.

Han didn’t like the look on Leia’s face. It looked too much like Luke the day after the massacre: dead, distant, and uncomprehending. Her posture was drooped, and she was fiddling with some sort of disc. Tears were glistening in her eyes.

“Honey?” Han asked. “What’s wrong?”

“I…” Leia looked at her twin. “Luke, there’s something I need to tell you.”

Luke looked anxiously back to the Falcon, “Not to be insensitive, Leia but can this wait? We just found out that Felicity’s on Jakku, and—”

“Felicity’s not on Jakku.” Leia held up the disc in her hand, “The First Order captured her and they sent me this security footage and…”

“No!” Leia interrupted. “As far as I know, she’s still alive.”

“Then what’s wrong?” Han asked.

Leia looked between Han and Luke.

“Luke… I think you should sit down.”
In the wake of her niece’s death, Leia makes a career-changing decision.

“NO! NOT REY! NOT MY LITTLE GIRL!”

Han Solo would never forget the sound of Luke’s scream when he discovered his daughter was dead.

“NO! NO! NO!” Luke fell to his knees next to the dejarik table where they had watched the footage of Felicity’s torture and confession. “IT’S NOT TRUE! IT CAN’T BE TRUE!”

Han found that Luke had always had a sort of quiet grace when it came to reacting to death. Han had always figured it was because Luke had always been expecting the deaths of people he lost. Luke knew going to his burnt down home that he wouldn’t find anyone alive. He knew seeing how old Yoda was that he would soon pass from the world. He knew taking off Vader’s helmet that it meant Anakin Skywalker would die. He knew heading into a battlefield he would lose good fighters and friends. The closest to an unexpected death Luke had experienced was Ben Kenobi’s death, but even that reaction had been brief as Luke had always known someday he would outlive Ben.

But this time was different. This time his reaction was more akin to the discovery that Vader was his father, for this revelation was completely unanticipated. This death was the death of Rey: his innocent five-year-old daughter with a vast future ahead of her. A future that would now never be.

Luke remembered the first time he held her: she was tiny, pink, and squalling. Felicity had waved off her chance to hold Rey immediately after delivering her, instead telling Doctor Kalonia to pass Rey to Luke as she was so exhausted by the labour. (Several months later, Luke would realize that her disinterest in holding Rey had been the first sign of Felicity’s emerging postpartum depression.)

The moment Doctor Kalonia put Rey into Luke’s arms it seemed like the world paused. There was a brand new life, a life he had created, a physical proof of love, radiating with the Force, and filled with the potential to do anything. This miniscule delicate little girl who wasn’t even the length of his forearm was bonded to him for life. She would grow tall, beautiful, and strong, looking to him for morals and guidance. He would show her the world and teach her everything she needed to succeed in it. He would provide and care for her: feeding her when she was hungry, warming her when she was cold, holding her when she was sad, healing her when she was injured, and protecting her when she scared.

Luke stared at his little girl in wonder, amazed that he could love someone so much and so quickly. He looked into those large eyes – which at the time were blue – eyes that stared up at him in echoed
wonder and love. Through the Force, she knew who he was and what he meant to her, just as he had known her from the exact moment of her conception.

“Hello, my Ray,” Luke whispered using the nickname that later would be altered and made into her given name. “I’m your Daddy.”

The yet-to-be-named Rey gurgled happily at her father’s words.

The depth of his overpowering love made Luke want to embrace his beautiful little girl with all of his might. On the other hand, he didn’t want to hurt her, so he held her gently in his arms taking in the magnificence that was this miracle. He held her close to his chest, Rey resting mostly in the crook of his right arm.

Luke carefully shifted Rey so that his left hand was free to move. He brought it to her face and used two fingers to gently stroke her cheek. Rey squirmed a little, but Luke couldn’t wipe the grin from his face. He relished the feeling of her skin against his natural flesh. The cold hard metal of his right hand would be confusing to the small girl, but his left hand provided her with the gentle, loving hand he would raise her with. He would not be like his vicious father that severed his own son’s hand. Luke would never harm nor allow anyone to harm a hair on her head.

“I love you so much, Sweetheart,” Luke whispered, using his daughter’s pet name for the first time. “I’m going to spend the rest of my life loving, guiding, and protecting you. And someday, when I pass from this life and leave you behind, I promise that I will have learned how to preserve myself like Ben Kenobi, so that I can continue to be there when you need me. I promise that I will never leave you; not even in death.”

Luke had made the promise on the assumption that he would be the first of them to pass away. The thought of Rey dying before him never crossed his mind. He never expected to outlive her. He never wanted to outlive her. He was not meant to outlive her.

And yet he had.

But why? Why did the Force decide to take her – his innocent little girl – away from him? A parent was never supposed to bury their child… and even worse, because of Felicity’s rashness, he never would.

His little Rey of Hope was lost to the desert of Jakku.

If only he knew how literal that truth was.

“NO! NO! NOT MY REY!” Luke cried, the hot thick tears splashing down his face. “NOT MY LITTLE GIRL!”

On the floor of the Falcon, Luke sobbed uncontrollably in front of Leia and Han. He didn’t care what anyone thought of him. He had been utterly destroyed by the fact that his daughter was dead.

“TAKE ME INSTEAD!” Luke begged the universe. “BRING BACK MY LITTLE GIRL AND TAKE MY LIFE INSTEAD!”

Tear flooding her eyes, Leia fell to her knees in front of Luke and clutched him tightly. She tried her hardest to stop Luke from throwing himself prostrate on the floor. The sight of that was just too heartbreaking to witness.

Han saw Leia’s struggle to keep Luke upright and decided to intervene. Han knelt behind Luke and
locked his arms around his brother-in-law, firmly holding him up and against his chest.


“IT’S NOT ALRIGHT!” Luke tried to fight off Han, but Han held tight. “MY DAUGHTER – MY BEAUTIFUL LITTLE RAY OF HOPE, OF LIGHT, OF JOY – IS DEAD AND LOST IN AN ANONYMOUS STRETCH OF SAND ON A DESERT PLANET OF ALL PLACES! NO! GOD, NOT MY REY! NOT MY BABY! WHY? WHY? OH, GOD WHY?”

Leia and Han held Luke tightly, kneeling on the floor of the Millennium Falcon sobbing over the death of their little girl. Their niece, their daughter, their hope for the future was gone.

They cried together for a long time, no one speaking as they worked through the unbelievable turn of events.

“I want her back,” Luke finally spoke, his voice congested but at a more regulated volume. His head was buried in Leia’s shoulder leaving an ugly stain of tears and snot on her shirt. “I want my Rey back.”


She was the calmest of the trio as she had watched the footage the moment she got the transmission. It was a horrible thing, knowing she had heard of her niece’s death before her brother had. Off in a far hanger, Luke was completely ignorant of the fact that his daughter was dead. It was why she had blocked herself from Luke, so he wouldn’t learn of the terrible news from her thoughtlessness.

It hadn’t been any easier when he did know.

Letting Leia know through the Force that he was ready, Luke pulled back from her embrace. His face was a wet, red, swollen mess. He was utterly destroyed.

“This is my fault,” Luke whispered. “I told Rey I’d come back for her, and then I told Felicity to take her and run. And then I ignored her messages—”

“No,” Leia objected. “That’s not your fault. You heard Felicity; Rey was already gone by the time she sent her message.”

“I still told Rey I’d come back.”

“And you had every intention of doing so,” Leia rubbed his shoulder. “But it turned out not to be the best choice.”

“Wasn’t it?” Luke snapped. “If she had stayed, if I let Felicity stay on Rornian, we would have ended the Knights of Ren, and then they both would have been safe with me.”

“And then the First Order would have turned up the next day,” Leia pointed out. “They wanted her and would have done anything to get her.”

“I just can’t believe she’s gone,” Luke wiped the tears from his eyes, only to have them be swiftly replaced. “If I had heard it from anyone else… if it wasn’t Felicity who said it, I would never…”

“Shhh,” Leia tried to calm her brother. His sorrow was bleeding into the Force sending pain through it all around them. She was almost upset that she didn’t see the shape of blue Force ghosts come to comfort Luke in his time of need.
“Are we sure Fliss was telling the truth?” Han suggested. “I mean if she thought they might break her, wouldn’t Felicity lie as a last resort?”

“You heard Ben,” Leia answered sadly. “He saw it in her memories. Felicity couldn’t possibly manage to lie about that.”

“I suppose not,” Han sighed, turning his face away so they wouldn’t see his tears. Someone had to be strong for the family, it only made sense for it to be him. Luke and Felicity would mourn their daughter, Leia would comfort them and cry with them, and he would keep them all standing tall with a grin, a joke, a load of optimism, and schemes of revenge.

But strength was hard to find when his five-year-old niece had died a horrible death. As Han tried to be strong for Luke, he was struggling not to recall the flood of memories involving his niece that were trying to tear to the forefront of his mind. Her little laugh, her bright smile, the way her eyes would light up when he taught her about the different parts of the Falcon, playing with her and spoiling her as “Fun Uncle Han,” telling her less desirable stories about her parents. All of it was gone.

“I want her back,” Luke said with a sudden determination. He grabbed the rim of dejak table and shakily pulled himself to his feet, “I want Felicity. I want her safe in my arms, away from those monsters. And I want her to tell me to my face that our daughter is gone.”

Han and Leia exchanged a look; there was a dangerous obsession in Luke’s eyes. Broken, angry, and determined, Luke looked like a feral animal ready to tear off the head of anyone who stood in his way. It was one of those terrifying moments when no one could deny that Luke Skywalker was the son of Darth Vader.

“Where is she?” Luke demanded as Han and Leia rose to their feet. “Where are they holding her?”

“Tonides,” Leia answered. “It’s in the Ouvis System. They set the security footage with a set of coordinates…and a message.”

“What message?” Luke’s hand gripped the dejak table like it was the only thing holding him up.

Leia hesitated, “You don’t need to see it. It just says that you’re free to come collect Felicity.”

“Leia!” Luke knew she was holding something back. “I want to see the message.”

Leia shot a reluctant glance Han who gave her a sympathetic look. Behind her, Leia could hear Luke’s mechanical fingers drumming impatiently against the table. She sighed, pulled out a small holo disk, set it on the table, and pressed play.

It was a continuation of Felicity’s interrogation. Felicity was kneeling on the floor, her hands bound behind her back, and a pair of Stormtroopers were holding onto her shoulders. Phasma, Kylo, and Hux were still in the room, but they had turned to face the camera and directly speak to Luke.

Hux smirked, “Well, Skywalker, with the girl dead it appears that we have no further need of her mother. You are free to come collect Rhiaon, but bring only two companions with you. If you bring more, there will be consequences. Don’t worry about this being a ruse, we have no problem with allowing you to reunite with your wife and take her to wherever you now call home. After all, the Supreme Leader will be needing the two of you to get to work on replacing the child you wasted.”

“Wasted?” Luke exclaimed. There was a loud crack as his mechanical hand broke off a small section
Felicity seemed to echo Luke’s anger at the careless mention of their daughter’s death. Enraged, Felicity screamed and threw herself forward to attack Hux. Yelling profanities from over a dozen different languages, Felicity fought against the Stormtroopers to take her revenge on the First Order’s golden trio.

“As I said before,” Hux continued while Felicity hurled insults in the background, “we will deliver you your wife in good condition.”

One of the Stormtroopers smashed a baton against Felicity’s temple. She cried out and collapsed to the floor as blood poured from her head.

“Well… mostly good,” Hux watched as the Stormtroopers pulled the limp Felicity back to her knees. “We have sent you the coordinates to her location. You have one week to arrive and collect her. If you don’t appear in the next seven days, we’ll assume you don’t want her anymore, and we’ll dispose of her for you.”

Luke clenched his jaw, his fingers pressing down on the dejarik table with threatening cracks.

Though Han was horrified and angered at the holo message and what was being done to Felicity, he couldn’t help but wince as Luke destroyed one of the few sources of entertainment on the Falcon.

In the background, Phasma had approached Felicity and the Stormtroopers, and muttered a few orders.

Taking advantage of their distraction, Felicity looked to the camera and shouted, “LUKE, NO! REMEMBER WHAT-”

A piece of fabric cut into Felicity’s cheeks, muffling her words as Phasma gagged her. The Stormtroopers tied her feet together and fasten the rope to her bound hands, immobilizing her.

Luke’s eyes narrowed; the Dark Side coursing through his veins. He watched in disgust as Felicity continued to scream out muffled warnings. Warnings that Luke misunderstood as Felicity telling him to not come rescue her.

Sometime later, after discovering Rey was in fact alive, Luke would look back on the memory and realise that Felicity was trying to remind him of her first message she sent on Jakku. With horror, Luke would recognize that it was Felicity’s last ditch attempt to get him to go to Jakku and collect Rey from Unkar Plutt.

And maybe, if he had, things would have gone differently.

But he hadn’t… and they didn’t.

“Seven days, Skywalker,” Hux warned. “The clock is ticking.”

The message cut off.

Han, Leia, and Luke stared wordlessly at the holo disc, angered and horrified at what they had seen.
No one would ever comment on how Ben had stood there watching in glee as the First Order beat and degraded his aunt. No one would comment on how Luke had broken the table in his fury. And no one would comment on how the image of Felicity Rhiaon hogtied and bleeding profusely from her temple would be forever seared into their memories.

“You know it’s a trap, right?” Han asked casually, his eyes inspecting Luke carefully. Both he and Leia were sure not to make any sudden movements.

“Of course it’s a trap!” Luke snapped. “But I’m still going to get her! Do you actually think I’m going to leave her there to be tortured like that?”

“I didn’t say you were!” Han exclaimed. “Don’t take this out on me, Luke! This isn’t my fault!”

“So it’s mine?”

“Stop it, both of you!” Leia ordered. “Luke, I know you’re going through a lot of emotions right now, but Han is just trying to help. Don’t lash out at him because of what others have done. We’re your family, and we’re here for you.”


Distantly in the Force, Luke heard Leia’s words echo in another woman’s voice. A woman who was very beautiful, kind, but sad. It was a woman Leia didn’t remember much of, a woman who Luke remembered nothing of, and a woman their father had once fruitlessly killed hundreds so they would remember everything of.

A woman that when his father lost her, he lost himself. A father who left Luke a very clear picture of what could happen if he gave into his grief. A father who had ignored the plea of the woman that was now being echoed by their daughter to their son.

Luke sighed and pulled Leia into a hug, “I’m sorry. I shouldn’t have snapped at you. It’s just… Ten minutes ago I was on my way to rescuing my wife and daughter, and now…”

“I know,” Leia whispered as Luke lost himself to grief again.

Silently, Han walked up to the two and placed his hand on Luke’s shoulder. Luke looked up. When he met Han’s eyes, guilt flooded his features.

“I’m sorry I snapped at you,” Luke hung his head in shame. “You’ve always had my back. I shouldn’t have—”

“It’s already forgiven and forgotten,” Han smiled weakly at Luke. “Promise.”

“Thank you.”

“Come on. Fliss is waiting for us and I count three people in this room. I’ll call Chewie to let him know what’s up. He’s off getting a few things for the ship and will be confused if he comes back and finds we’re gone”

“Wait,” Luke frowned. He looked at Leia helplessly, “People need to know that… I have to announce that… People are wondering and searching for… I…”

“Rey,” he simply said.

Leia nodded, “Han, call Chewie. Tell him to accompany the two of you. I’ll stay here and inform our friends what happened.”


“This is my fault,” Diego Nalto’s projected com figure sat with his head in his hands, overcome with grief. “I should have gone there the second I thought of it. Jakku is no place for a little girl, and we just left Fliss-“

“It’s no one’s fault but the First Order,” Leia assured Diego as she sat on the couch of her empty living room.

He was just one of dozens of com calls Leia had to make telling their family and friends that Rey had passed away. No matter how many times she relayed the message, it never got easier. In fact, it felt like it had gotten worse.

Leia remembered each and every call. She remembered each expression of grief, similar yet individually unique.

Chewbacca had been the first call, made before Leia had left the Falcon for home. Upon hearing Rey was dead, Chewbacca let out an agonized roar that made everyone jump back at the intensity of it. He then babbled on in Shyriiwook, which Han informed the twins that Chewie was rambling nonsensically, overtaken in grief. What he was saying was a mix of crying out to the universe for an answer of why it happened, vowing revenge on the First Order, saying some traditional blessings for the dead, and repeating words they did recognize: the Shyriiwook version of Rey’s name.

It was long and something the humans couldn’t attempt to pronounce. Han tried to explain the meaning to them many times, but Shyriiwook was complicated and he never could get the point across. The closest translation was “The Queen of Light Who Walks the Skies” which was a play on all three parts of the name Rey Rhiaon Skywalker.

Queen was taken from Rhiaon, which was a Coruscant name meaning “Great Queen.” Light was what Chewie decided to call the made up name of Rey, relating it to the term “Ray of Light” as well as the fact that her father’s name also meant “Light.” Walks the Skies was again Chewie’s own decision on the meaning for Skywalker.

When informed of the mission to rescue Felicity, Chewie cried out that he would be honored to join “Life Saver and Wookie Friend” (his name for Han) and “Knight of Light Who Walks the Skies” (Luke) to save “Joyous Queen Who Walks the Skies” (Felicity, who Chewie also sometimes called “Lands Ships with Many Flames.”)

Artoo and Threepio were the next call, waiting at Han and Leia’s apartment continuing their search for Rey and Felicity. As Threepio wailed in his typical over-the-top fashion, Artoo spewed a collection of angry squeals that were too impolite to translate.

Lando Calrissian had been called while Leia traveled home. He was overwhelmed with sorrow, openly crying before Leia. Lando had a soft spot for Rey, always bringing her toys and other gifts from his travels. Leia had vivid memories of Lando spoiling and playing with Rey, taking her swimming, flower picking, giving her piggyback rides, playing hide and seek, and sneaking her hot chocolate before dinner while Felicity wasn’t looking (and buying Luke’s silence with another cup.)
As Lando ended the transmission so Leia could inform other people, she could see that he was heartbroken.

After that things had become very much a blur for Leia.

The Naberrie family mourned deeply, and her grandparents offered to help Luke and Felicity with working through the death of their daughter as they had worked through the death of his mother.

Mon Mothma gave her deepest condolences and told Leia to take off as much time as she needed.

Doctor Kalonia cried hard over the death of the first baby she had ever delivered. Leia couldn’t blame Kalonia for her intense grief. She had left home and had her entire community slaughtered leaving only three survivors, and now one of those survivors was dead.

Jaina Fel had collapsed to her knees and begged Leia’s forgiveness for falling for Ben’s trick. It took Leia nearly an hour to convince Jaina it wasn’t her fault, and that Rey had been long gone by the time she was tricked.

Admiral Akbar was furious, ranting and raving about the First Order and how more than ever the Resistance needed to take action against them.

Wedge Antilles was very quiet. He was sad, but not outraged, almost like he wasn’t affected too much by what had happened. Wedge had seen so many families destroyed by the war, Leia wondered if he had gotten so used to death that he regarded it with now no more than a shrug and a “Oh, well. Dang. I’m going to miss them.”

Leia didn’t know why she called Maz Kanata next. There was something odd that pulled her to Maz, and Leia found herself dialing the number. Maz was calm and grandmotherly, but angry under the surface.

“That poor girl,” Maz shook her head. “Far too young for such a great tragedy. Those First Order soldiers are truly monsters. I will never forget the eyes of that little girl; her strong, beautiful, brave, mother’s eyes.”

Lor San Tekka told Leia about the branch of his church on Jakku and that if they ever found anything, he’d let her know. Leia didn’t expect his people to go actually searching for Rey, but it was comforting to know someone would keep an ear and an eye open.

After ending her call with Diego, Leia started to type in the number for Kes Dameron.

“Mistress Leia, perhaps you should take a break from these calls,” Threepio walked into the living room with a tray of lunch. It was a simple sandwich and glass of juice, but considering he had made them without Leia requesting it, it was the thought that counted. “They do seem to be upsetting you greatly.”

“It has to be done, Threepio,” Leia wiped the tears from her eyes as Threepio set the tray on the caf table. “Our friends should hear it personally from a member of the family rather than whichever media outlet finds out first. Plus telling people makes it so I can’t pretend this hasn’t happened. It makes it real.”

“I wish it was not,” Threepio said sadly. “Though I don’t remember it, I was there when Master Anakin was a child, I was there when Master Luke and yourself were born, despite Captain Solo’s best efforts, I was there was Master Ben was born, and I was there when Mistress Rey was born… I had thought that maybe I might be around long enough to see her own child before I made my way into the scrap heap.”
"I did too," Leia said sadly. She looked at her lunch, and then back up at Threepio, "Thank you for the food."

"As you may recall, Princess, I am first and foremost a droid of etiquette. I have many customs in my database spanning dozens of planets and races to perform for a grieving person that I intend to perform for you."

Leia frowned.

"Exactly how many customs are we talking about, Threepio?" she asked apprehensively.

"438 for a grieving family member, 78 of those being specific to an aunt grieving for a niece, and 17 specific to the sister of the firstborn brother grieving his firstborn daughter. The 438 customs are as follows: One-"

There was a knock on the front door.

"Thank the Force," Leia leapt to her feet, thankful she was saved from Threepio going on about 438 grieving customs.

"Hello Senator Organa," A tall, tan young man flashed Leia a pearly white grin. She was surprised to find Poe Dameron standing at her door with his droid, BB-8 at his feet. "May we come in?"

"Of course," Leia frowned slightly at the unexpected guest. She gestured for him to follow her, "I was just about to call your father. What can I do for you, Poe?"

BB-8 followed behind Poe and let out squeal when he saw Artoo. The orange droid rolled up to Artoo letting out many excited beeps rolling in circles around him. Not fond of the younger droid, Artoo let out a few short angry beeps, one of which Leia was fairly certain meant whippersnapper.

"Yesterday was the last day of the semester at the Academy," Poe chuckled as BB-8 persisted in trying to make friends with Artoo. "I’m done now until the fall so I thought I’d come volunteer for the search effort. Felicity’s always been a good family friend, and you know how much I fell in love with that little girl of hers. It’s just killing me to know they’re out there suffering somewhere."

Threepio spoke up, "Actually-"

"Threepio," Leia silenced him with a look. "Don’t you have to switch the laundry over?"


Threepio gave a slight bow and headed to the laundry room. Artoo rolled after him but stopped short when BB-8 started following. Artoo gave another angry beep, but BB-8 chattered happily back. Suddenly, Artoo extended one of his attachments and zapped BB-8 with an electrical shock. The room filled with a mechanical yelp as BB-8 rolled as fast as he could to hide behind Poe’s legs.

"Sorry, buddy," Poe laughed at the droids’ antics, “but no means no. You should have backed off when he asked you to."

BB-8 gave a sad trill.

"BB wants to help find Rey too," Poe told Leia. "I promised her we’d come visit over the summer and she could play with him. She adores BB-8 and he adores her. It might be nice if after all these terrible things she’s been through she got a little time with her favorite droid."
A very loud, angry beep came from the other room.

“Why do I feel like Artoo would legitimately fight me over not calling him Rey’s favorite droid?” Poe joked.

“Rey sure does love BB-8,” Leia said sadly as she sat down on the couch. She gestured for Poe to do the same, “Please sit.”

The summer Poe turned sixteen, he had lived on Rornian with Luke, Ben, Felicity, and Rey who came to absolutely adore him. Kes had bought Poe BB-8 for his birthday, and Poe, Ben, and Rey spent an afternoon assembling him. Overjoyed with the adorable droid roughly the same height as her three-year-old self, Rey had fallen in love with BB-8 the moment she saw the box. Rey had cried just as much over BB-8 leaving at the end of the summer as she had cried over Poe.

And now neither Poe or BB-8 would ever see her again.

Leia took a deep breath and gathered herself to deliver the news.

“I’m afraid that you’ve come too late,” Leia said. “The search for Rey and Felicity is over.”

“They’ve been found?” Poe asked, excited as he sat on the couch opposite and BB-8 settled by his feet.

“Not exactly. Luke and Han are on their way to Tonides to rescue Felicity from the First Order. Rey on the other hand… I’m afraid that Rey has passed away.”

“WHAT?”

“Felicity meant to hide themselves at Niima Outpost on Jakku, but her ship crashed in the desert and they had to walk the rest of the way. Rey was so small and the conditions too harsh. At least it happened painlessly. One day she fell asleep and then… well, she just never woke up.”

“Oh God, Rey,” Poe’s head was in his hands, his back hitching with small sobs. “That poor little girl. How could this happen? It isn’t fair!”

“Death rarely is,” Leia said sadly.

BB-8 watched his Master cry. He pulled up his memory files concerning Rey Rhiaon Skywalker and found that they were talking about the nice little girl who loved to hug and play with him. BB-8 let out a whimper and his head drooped down as he updated his record file of her to the living status of Deceased.

“How can I help?” Poe asked. “Do you need any help bringing her body to here or Rornian or… man, what are you guys going to even do with her? I know Luke’s all for cremation but she seems a little young for that.”

“Actually,” Leia looked down guiltily, “there’s no body to recover. In the panic of her grief, Felicity buried Rey in the sand. When she realized her mistake it was too late: a sandstorm had happened and the grave site was gone. Rey’s… out there somewhere, lost forever to the sands of Jakku.”

Leia couldn’t go on. She broke down crying in front of Poe and BB-8. BB-8 made a small noise and rolled over to Leia, nudging her leg and purring to comfort her.

Poe however was not enveloped by sadness; he was consumed by anger. Rey Skywalker had done nothing to anyone, and yet because of the First Order she was lying dead in the sand.
His decision made, Poe shot to his feet.

“General Organa,” Poe declared with a salute, “I would like to formally request to join the Resistance.”

Leia looked up at him in horror, “Absolutely not.”

“I’m not going to let that little girl die for nothing!”

“I won’t let you join.”

“My studies will be finished next year and I can participate full time during the summer.”

“It’s out of the question, Dameron,” Leia refused.

“Come on, there are kids younger than me fighting in the Resistance!” Poe exclaimed.

“Poe, you know why I don’t want you to join.”

Poe locked his eyes with Leia’s.

“And that’s exactly why I have to,” Poe’s voice was distant as his worst memory replayed in his mind. “The First Order executed my mother. She wouldn’t back down as they tried to steal the little children of our community, so they forced her on her knees and opened fire. Footage of it was leaked to the media, and everyone in the galaxy saw my mother die. I remember the speech that you gave afterwards. You quoted my mother’s last words: any force will be met with proper resistance. You used the outrage to form the Resistance, and have saved countless lives as a result. I’ve always meant to join when I was old enough, and now it’s time. My mother lost her life to the First Order on fighting to save the children of the next generation. Now the First Order has taken the life of one of those children, and it’s my turn to fight back.”

Leia thought over Poe’s words carefully. She thought about the speech she made all those years ago. She thought about the speeches she had made since, begging the Senate to recognize the threat of the First Order. They had waved her off as an alarmist and warmonger, and because of that her niece was dead.

There was only one thing left for her to do.

“Please, General,” Poe begged. “Let me join.”

“On one condition,” Leia looked up at Poe and smiled. She patted BB-8’s head, “BB-8 has to join too.”

“Deal,” Poe held out his hand to her.

“Poe Dameron,” Leia shook his hand, “welcome to the Resistance.”

“Aren’t you sure you want to do this?” Jaina questioned for the hundredth time as she followed Leia and Poe into the Senate box.

“No,” Leia said pressing a button for her pod to float forward. “But it needs to be done.”

“At this time, the Chair recognizes the Senator of Coruscant,” Chancellor Mon Mothma broadcasted to the Senate as Leia’s pod floated to the center of the room. “The Senator has an announcement to make.”
Her eyes met Leia’s briefly, and they shared a sad look. Mothma knew what Leia was about to say, and although Mothma didn’t like it, she knew it was something Leia had to do.

“Senators,” Leia began, “for weeks I’ve faced a barrage of questions concerning my brother and the disappearance of his family. Today I come forward with an answer to your questions. My brother’s wife, Felicity Rhiaon Skywalker is being brutally tortured and held as a prisoner of the First Order.”

Chatter spread throughout the room. Intermixed with the concern and horror was the usual disbelief and hand waving of the seriousness of the situation that came anytime Leia tried to speak to the Senate about the First Order. But this time it was different; this time she would make them listen.

“However that is not the announcement I must make,” Leia continued, shooting dirty looks at those who dared question the validity of her statements. “I come forward today to tell you about the other missing Skywalker. My five-year-old niece, Rey Rhiaon Skywalker who is loved by and charms everyone she meets, an innocent with pure goodness radiating from her very soul, the daughter of famed war heroes Luke Skywalker and Felicity Rhiaon… is dead.”

The whole room gasped as one. Outrage cried from the Senators who were horrified, angered and even some unconvinced at the news. Shutters clicked madly as the media scrambled to record announcement. Luke and Felicity had been hounded relentlessly after the announcement of Rey’s birth; Leia could only imagine how it would be with her death.

“She died fleeing the First Order,” Judgement and admonishment for the opposition to Resistance laced every one of Leia’s cruel words. “Rey wasted away in the hot Jakku sun, and her grief-stricken mother dug the grave with her own two hands. Then her mother was captured by the First Order and tortured for her dead daughter’s whereabouts, only to reveal it when they violated her mind. And what did this honorable, non-threatening organization that we don’t need to concern ourselves with do? They sent a holo of the beating and confession to her husband. My brother learned his daughter is dead from watching a holo of the First Order brutalizing the woman he loves. This wasn’t about them; this wasn’t about anything they did or believed in. It was about the views of the Republic, and yet it is Rey and Felicity who paid the price. My brother is on his way right now to get back his wife, but he will never get back his daughter.”

Leia took a long pause as she looked around the room.

“But this announcement means nothing to you, does it?” Bitterness dripped from Leia’s voice. No longer the measured politician, Rey’s death had made something inside of Leia snap. “For years, I have been begging you all to recognize the threat the First Order poses. Yet every time I broach the subject, I’m met with mockery and indifference. I’m told that the Resistance and all of its efforts to save innocent children from being stolen from their families is nothing more than hobby. The last defense between the Republic and destruction has been viewed with no more seriousness than knitting. There was time where I placed my faith and trust into politics and our justice system. But that’s all been a folly, for what good has politics ultimately done to protect the people I love and fight for? You sit here and squabble while people are out there dying. I believe now more than ever we need this Resistance, but I will no longer stand idly by as lives are lost because of petty bureaucracy. That is why today I come forward to announce that I will be stepping down as the Senator of Coruscant, and will commit myself fully to the Resistance.”

Leia’s stunning announcement caused even more commotion.

“I do not come to this decision lightly,” Leia continued above the shouts, “just as I did not come to the decision to form the Resistance lightly. Ten years ago, I stood before this Senate and made a speech, begging for you all to understand. I asked that you take a moment and think of the children in your life, children that are now fully grown. I asked you to imagine what it would be like to lose
that child to the First Order, and have no one care to even lift a finger. And I told you that this was not about igniting the war of the past, but preventing the war of our future. Well, now the future how come, and the war has not been prevented.”

Leia paused to look back at Poe. With a resolute expression, Poe nodded at Leia to resume her speech.

Leia turned back to the Senators, “That speech was prompted by the execution of a woman named Shara Bey who lost her life protecting a group of children from the First Order. I founded the Resistance in the name of Shara Bey, and on the promise that her eight-year-old son, Poe Dameron would not have to fight her war. Earlier today the now eighteen-year-old Poe asked to join the Resistance. Prompted by the death of a little girl, Shara Bey’s son will now take up arms to protect the future his mother tried to give him. All because of ignorant, self-serving politicians, most of whom never even fought against the Empire like I and the Rebel Alliance did. We gave our lives, our blood, our sweat, and our tears, and now our children are being murdered thanks to the negligence and indifference of selfish people.”

The outrage at Leia’s speech was great that she could barely be heard above the commotion. Leia didn’t care; the words were coming out of her mouth like snarls. Her eyes flashed menacingly in the chamber, for a split second turning yellow like her birth father’s had been after the slaughter on Mustafar. Leia was vaguely aware that the Dark Side was pumping through her veins. She could almost hear Luke telling her to take it down a notch, but Leia didn’t care. She had given so much to the Resistance, and for what? For Rey to be dead? For her pleas to be ignored? For the sacrifice of time that could have been used helping her son not fall to darkness?

Leia finally understood the way Vader had viewed politics. For years she had clung to the values her mother Padmé Amidala, and adoptive father, Bail Organa had lived by, but it was Darth Vader who had ultimately gotten it right. While Leia certainly wasn’t about to advocate for a dictatorship, she understood his frustrations with the Republic. They just sat there and squabbled, doing nothing while people lost their lives. If Leia ever wanted anything done, she would have to do it herself.

A hand placed on her shoulder jolted Leia out of her reverie. Jaina was touching her, looking on in concern while Poe frowned in the background. Leia then realized that she was shaking, and tears were blurring her vision.

Luke was right: losing yourself to the Dark Side was easy.

Wiping the tears from her eyes, Leia turned back to the Senate in determination, “My resignation begins immediately. I will not let the names of Shara Bey and Rey Rhiaon Skywalker get scrubbed from history. I will ensure they are remembered for their sacrifices as Martyrs of the Resistance and our fight for freedom. If any wish to join our cause, we welcome you with open arms. And to those who still deny the reality of the situation, I say this: Wake up, Senators! Wake up! This isn’t a game; this is a battle we cannot afford to lose. If you continue to allow your ignorance and stubbornness to prevail, then you are digging your own grave. This Imperial wannabe already has Stormtroopers, already has TIE Fighters and Star Destroyers, they already have Dark Force Users in charge. How much longer until they build another Death Star? How long until they target this system? Now is the time to make your decision, and I only pray that you all make the right one.”

The room has quieted, waiting for what Leia would say next. Having the orphan heir of Alderaan suggest the creation of a new Death Star dropped in their stomachs like lead. Fear filled the room.

Leia took a deep breath and looked around the room, “It has been an honour serving as the Senator of Coruscant, and I only hope that my new role will come to serve you even better. Be careful Senators, and goodbye.”
“Organa’s speech has thrown the Government into utter chaos,” the Anchor of HoloNews Nightly reported.

Luke, Han, and Chewie watched the projection on the dejarik table as they mended the table rim, still hours away from the Ouvvis System and Felicity. Leia’s shocking announcement was all over the news on every channel. The boys had been greatly surprised when the story broke, Leia not having informed them ahead of time. While Luke and Chewie had stared at the news station in shock, Han decided to break the ice by declaring that he guess it meant he needed to get a job.

“Reports are pouring in of the different responses Organa’s speech has provoked,” the Anchor continued. A muted image of Mon Mothma at a press conference was brought on screen, “Less than an hour after Organa’s speech, Chancellor Mon Mothma announced that she was stepping down in protest of the way the Republic has handled the issue.”

The clip of Mon Mothma played.

“I am horrified that two of our brightest and most revered war heroes has lost their child as a result of this inaction,” Mon Mothma said in a passionate, yet measured tone. “My condolences go out to Jedi Grandmaster Luke Skywalker and Resistance Lieutenant General Felicity Rhiaon. I apologize for and willing bear partial responsibility for your loss.”

“The Chancellor was not the only politician to step down in protest of Rey Skywalker’s death,” the Anchor said as they cut to a clip of Luke and Leia’s cousin, Pooja. “Senator of Naboo, Pooja Naberrie, cousin of Organa and Skywalker has also announced her resignation.”

“This is an awful blow to our family,” Pooja said in her own press conference. “My aunt, Padmé Amidala did not fight against Palpatine and give up her life so that her granddaughter could suffer an unimaginable death. As long as the Republic and Naboo remains indifferent, it shows that we are no better than champions of Palpatine and all that he stood for.”

“The military took a large hit today as well,” the Anchor was the focus again. “Many of the highly ranked military commanders of the Republic Army and Air Force fought alongside Skywalker and Rhiaon during the Rebellion. Twenty-five of them have resigned their commissions in protest.”

“Luke is not a man who leaves a soldier behind,” Wedge Antilles told a camera crew. “He’ll save even the man with no chance of surviving, yet still is somehow breathing. It’s heartbreaking to think that his child couldn’t be saved.”

“I’ve been on Jakku,” the camera cut to Diego Nalto, “I know that suffocating heat. I remember Felicity and I practically crawling to Niima Outpost, the heat being so terrible. I can’t imagine what Felicity went threw when she lost Rey to that heat. And to dig the grave of her daughter with her own two hands…”

Diego couldn’t go on.

“But those aren’t even the most shocking things to happen,” the Anchor continued. “The planet of Zygerria is withdrawing its membership in the Republic. Queen Nerissa released a statement: Felicity Rhiaon, Luke Skywalker, and a dozen Jedi helped me overthrow my cruel sister, and bring
an end to a thousand generation of slavery on Zygerria. We stand with Luke Skywalker, Felicity Rhiaon, and the Jedi. Justice must be served.”

The footage then cut to yet another press conference, where the entire staff of the Republic Emissary Office stood in front of the reporters.

“And the most shocking development was the resignation of the entire Senate Emissary Office,” the Anchor announced. “Felicity Rhiaon was employed as an Emissary for over a decade, before leaving Coruscant to become the Jedi Order’s architect on Rornian. Nils Arlos, former Head of the Senate Emissary Office and Rhiaon’s former boss, explained their reasoning.”

“Felicity Rhiaon is an excellent worker, and a close friend to all of us,” Nils told the cameras. “Dozens of planets joined the Senate because of her hard work. News of her loss as devastated us and shaken our views. None of us can continue on in our roles as we do not believe it to be right to advocate planets joining a government we no longer can stand behind. We ask that as long as the Republic refuses to do anything about the First Order, each and every planet must seriously revaluate their membership.”

“Man, people are pissed,” Han gave a low whistle as the station cut to montage of stock images of Luke, Felicity, and Rey as a pair of political analysts discussed the situation. “Then again, they’ve got a cute little girl as the face of the issue.”

Luke said nothing, staring with teary eyes at the images of Rey. Han looked at Chewie, who growled that maybe they should turn the news off. With a sheepish expression, Han flipped off the projection.

“I’m really sorry, Luke,” Han said quietly.

“I just can’t believe she’s gone,” Luke whispered. He swallowed hard and looked at Han and Chewie, “You know, I always thought that if anything were to happen to you guys, especially Leia and Rey, I would sense it, but… Nothing. I didn’t feel a thing. I had no idea-”

“It’s alright, Luke,” Han placed a hand on Luke’s shoulder. “Most people don’t sense that sort of thing. And you know… maybe it’s better you didn’t sense it. Can you imagine what would have happened if while we were searching for Fliss you suddenly sensed that Rey was gone? You were already pretty broken down and desperate, that may have just pushed you off the deep end.”

Luke lowered his head, “What am I supposed to do now?”

“You go on living.”

“How?”

“… I have no idea.”

Taking in the despondent expressions of the men, Chewie growled something.

Han perked up at the words, “You’re absolutely right!”

Luke frowned, “What did he say?”

“Look, nothing is going to ever fill the void that Rey left behind, and the Jedi may be gone too, but not everything’s lost. You still have us, you still have Leia, and you still have Fliss.”
Luke gave a small smile but said nothing as he contemplated Han’s words. Han and Chewie were right, Rey left a very unique hole in his heart. Rey was more than family; Rey was part of him in a way she was part of only one other. The combination of two hearts, yet one unique individual in her own right. Luke could never replace Rey, nor did he want to, but there was only one person who could ever come close to mending the wound left by Rey’s death. And that person was the other heart who had created Rey; the person who was the other half of Luke’s soul.

Luke took a deep breath and found the strength to hold on.

For as long as Felicity Rhiaon was alive, Luke still had hope.

The confrontation of his nephew on the Tonides base of the First Order had occurred over a month ago. As expected, the whole thing had been a trap. Han had done his best to distract the guards while Luke and Chewie pressed forward to find Felicity. Instead they found an unmasked Kylo Ren waiting for them with a legion of Stormtroopers and devastating news.

“I killed her myself!” Kylo had been gleeful at the thought of his aunt being murdered. “I ended her miserable existence, and ridded the world of her corruptive influence.”

“No, You’re lying,” Luke had said, half in fear and half in genuine disbelief. “Felicity is not dead.”

“Yes, she is,” Kylo had grinned. He had pulled out a small HoloDisc from his cloak. “See for yourself.”

Kylo had switched on the HoloDisc. It had projected the image of Felicity on her knees, tied up, face bruised, bloodied, and hair sheered crudely. Evidently the footage had been recorded seconds after Hux telling Luke he had seven days to get Felicity.

The camera was zoomed in extremely close, only Felicity’s panicked expression filling the screen. There were muffled screams behind her gagged mouth, and she was shaking her body, trying to wrench free.

Luke would never forget her wide hazel eyes; panic and fear filling them as she tried to scream for help. He would never forget the gloved hand that brought the blaster to her temple. He would never forget Felicity’s muffled shouts as the hand squeezed the trigger. He would never forget the blast, the way Felicity’s eyes went blank, and how she fell to the ground.

“And do you know what I did next?” Kylo had asked gleefully, watching as Chewie let out a roar of grief and his uncle literally shaking with anger, struggling not to attack Kylo where he stood. “Do you know what I did to that schutta you call a wife?”

Luke would never forget the image Kylo next showed. The thing he would refuse to ever tell Han and Leia. The thing he would swear Chewbacca to secrecy about. The thing that would cause Luke to leave the base without his wife’s body.

Because what the First Order did to Felicity Rhiaon ensured Luke would have no body to lay to rest.
She was lost, just as Rey had been.


Kylo was arrogant. He was not the naïve Ben Solo, Luke had been pleading with to come home. Luke looked upon Kylo with new eyes: he knew there was no redemption. Even Vader wouldn’t have sunk to the level of vicious anger and bitter hatred that Kylo had resorted to. In Luke’s eyes, Vader was a hero for strangling his pregnant wife compared to what Kylo did to Felicity.

Kylo couldn’t stop gloating, going on and on about what he had done to his rival and how much he enjoyed every moment of it. Luke didn’t hear any of the words, them becoming muted in the background, an angry buzzing paired with the pounding in Luke’s ears. It was only when Kylo slipped the disk into Luke’s breast pocket that Luke finally snapped.

The Dark Side flooding into him, Luke grabbed his nephew by the throat and threw him to the ground. Kylo let out a surprised yelp while Chewie roared and the Stormtroopers advanced. Despite their efforts, and the objecting cries of Force Ghosts in his mind, no one could get Luke to stop. Consumed by hatred, anger, and the Dark Side, Luke wrapped his hands around the throat of his own nephew and refused to let go until Kylo Ren was as dead as his wife and daughter.

It was Chewie who eventually got Luke off of Kylo, locking his arms around Luke’s chest and pulling him backwards. Holding Luke in place with one arm, his used his other to bash away a line of Stormtroopers and pulled Luke towards the door.

“No! NO!” Luke had cried out, struggling to escape Chewie’s unyielding grasp.

By the time they got to Han at the Falcon, Luke had calmed enough for Chewie to let him go. Luke was in complete and utter shock: shock at what happened to Felicity, and shock at what he had done to his own nephew.

“Let’s get out of here!” Han had cried when he caught sight of the others. When they came closer into view, running at top speed for the loading ramp of the Falcon, Han frowned at the number.

“Wait! Stop! Where’s Fliss?”

There was a heartbreaking silence.

“Felicity’s dead,” Luke couldn’t believe his own words.

He still didn’t believe his words a month later. His wife, Felicity Rhiaon, the love of his life, his other half, his opposite, his match, his soulmate, his true love, the mother of his child, and keeper of his heart… she was dead.

And it was all his fault.

If he had gone to Leia’s office the second Ben showed up…

If he had stayed in Leia’s office in the first place to listen to the messages…

If he had called Unkar Plutt again…

If he had left his line open…

If he had gone with them to Jakku…
If he had let them stay on Rornian…

If he had never left in the first place…

If he had stopped Ben’s fall to the Dark Side…

So many errors, one disaster after another and now the two most important women in his life were dead. True he had Han and Leia, but knowing what Ben had done, knowing he had failed their son, Luke could barely stand being in their presence. It was all his fault; he had destroyed their family, and this time there was nothing to go back to.

It felt hollow to be back on Rornian. The ceremony to burn and bury the ashes of his Jedi was long past, and now Luke and a team of people were picking through the rubble of the Jedi Temple and his home to see what they could recover.

It felt even more hollow for Luke to be standing in the office of his late wife. As architect, Felicity’s office stored all of the blueprints of the various buildings on Rornian, and Leia had sent Luke in to get the ones for the Temple to make sure they didn’t miss any rooms. The fire had collapsed and buried many walls and hallways, and it was hard to recognize the once familiar floorplan.

Luke suspected ulterior motives to being sent in to Felicity’s office. It was the only building left standing of personal significance to the Skywalker family. The home, Temple, and Luke’s office within the Temple had been burned down, but Felicity’s office had been left untouched. Unlike some of the houses that though left standing, had been trashed, Felicity’s office was exactly like she had left it. Looking around the room, Luke could imagine Felicity had gone home for lunch and would be back to start on work any minute.

But she would never step foot in that room again.

The office was a small building not far from the Skywalker residence. Originally it had been a house for a Jedi named Obik Kenu, but two years after moving to Rornian, he had married Reine Agim and moved into her bigger house. Obik had very simple tastes, and his one floor house had zero frills. The entrance way had relatively unchanged as had the small bathroom and kitchen. The ship garage was retained, though always sat empty as Felicity would walk to her office from home. The living room was converted into a waiting room, the guest bedroom as the designing room with her easel, drawing implements, measuring equipment, and other such tools, and the master bedroom served as Felicity’s actual office.

Unlike the office Felicity had during her years as a Senate Emissary, her architecture office was very homey. Personal holos riddled the walls and various surfaces, and a set of clothing, weapons, and a fold up cot were stored in the closet for times she had to pull all-nighters. A fully stocked caf station sat in the corner, accompanied by a select of hot chocolate mix for the times her husband would visit her. There was a small box with toys and activities that Felicity would open during the days she had to work and babysitting for Rey fell through (Felicity being relegated to watching Rey as Luke’s duties didn’t allow him a lot of distractions and were honestly a lot more boring to Rey.)

The rest of the house had other such personalization to it that sometimes Luke would joke that she secretly was planning to leave him and live there but just needed to figure out what to do with Rey. There was a tiny element of truth to the idea as during the two or three times Luke and Felicity had gotten into a big enough fight that they need space from each other for a while, Felicity had actually lived in her office building for a few days. It was extremely rare for their fights to get to that level, and it usually ended with one of them going to the home of the other, both apologizing and falling into each other’s arms in a bit of passionate reconciliation.
Those fights had mainly been for the really big issues such as when Felicity suffered her postpartum depression, or one time when they had gotten into a huge disagreement involving Ben and how Felicity no longer felt safe with letting him be alone with Rey. Luke had managed to eventually convince Felicity that everything would be alright, and Felicity had come home.

And because he won that argument, now Felicity would never come home.

Luke sighed as he retrieved from a cabinet the small data chip that contained the blueprints of the Jedi Temple. Felicity had not designed it, and in fact had only been designing things for a little more than six years. Most of Temple Village had been completed when he and his new bride had moved to Rornian, and in fact that had been the whole point. Luke had thought it selfish to put his personal needs before that of the Jedi Order, and thus made a point of having his home be one of the last buildings constructed.

Yet looking around Temple Village, one could see Felicity’s projects all around. The small school where Jedi Knight Eline Typhe-Korden taught the children their basic education. The library where the residents would gather for entertainment and trade HoloNovels, HoloVids, HoloMags, and other such Holo technology. The market building Felicity had convinced Luke to build so that all supplies would be in a central location. There was no money exchanged between the residents of Temple Village, and all supplies was communal, trusting that people would take only what they need. Before Felicity created the market, one had to go to each individual location to collect their needs: medical supplies at Doctor Kalonia’s office, food from the meditation gardens, outside materials from the delivery hangar, and so forth.

Now none of it would be needed; only he and Doctor Kalonia were the last people alive.

A light knock on the door stirred Luke from his thoughts.

“Come on,” Luke hastily called as he wiped the tears he just realised had formed in his eyes.

The door slid open to reveal Poe Dameron carrying a small storage crate, followed by BB-8.

“Hey, General Organa said I could find you here,” Poe hesitantly lingered at the door. “Am I interrupting anything?”

“No, of course not.” Luke gestured to the chair across the desk, “Please, come on.”

Poe gave a half smile and entered the room.

“Thank you, again Poe for coming to help go through the debris,” Luke said. “I know there’s a huge list of things you’d rather spend your summer vacation doing.”

“Don’t think anything of it,” Poe set down the crate on the desk. “It’s the least I can do. This is the first box of things we’ve found. Some of it’s a little charred, but everything’s in a good enough condition. General Organa said to go through it when you’re ready…You know, Luke, I don’t know if I’ve had to chance to express my condolences. I’m really sorry for your loss.”

“Yeah,” Luke said, his voice distant as he stared at a Holo on Felicity’s desk. It was a simple shot of Felicity with her arms wrapped around Rey in a hug, the two girls laughing. “I’m sorry too.”

“Is it true what they’re saying about Felicity? She’s gone too?”

Luke nodded as he lowered his head, trying not to let Poe see his tears. BB-8 watching from the corner made a sad noise and updated the living status of Felicity Rhiaon’s file in his system to deceased.
Poe sighed and dropped his own head, “I’m sorry. She was a good friend to me and my family. If you need anything at all.”

“I know,” Luke gave Poe a smile, but Poe could see the pain and falseness behind it. “Thank you.”


“Wait, can you give this to Leia?” Luke handed Poe the data chip with the Temple blueprints.


“You too, Poe.”


Luke sighed and looked at the crate Poe had delivered. It was filled with the smallest of things, most of which had no reason to have escaped the flames yet through a series of random circumstances had manage. They were a lot like Luke, he should have been lost to those flames, yet there he stood.

Shifting through the box, Luke didn’t find much of significance. A charred frying pan, a blast remote to practise using a lightsaber to deflect bolts, a chip containing some poorly written science fiction HoloNovel Luke had probably found in a one credit bin at a refueling station to pass the hours on a long trip.

But there were also a few things that Luke was glad to see had survived: the box containing both Luke and Felicity’s medals of bravery for defeating the Death Star, the replica the gold jacket Luke wore at the medal ceremony where he met Felicity, Felicity’s favorite blaster – a blocky silver NN-14 Han always liked the look of – and the japor snippet Anakin Skywalker had once gifted Padmé Amidala that had been reclaimed by the Naberrie family before her burial that Padmé’s sister Sola later gave to Luke.

There was also an assortment of old Holos including a fifteen-year-old Luke posing on Tatooine in front of his first speeder, a Holo of Felicity and Leia with Felicity’s brother Brendan that was taken a month before his death, a Holo of Padmé Amidala that Luke had received from the Naberrie family, and a Holo of Luke and Han in their suits at Han and Leia’s wedding.

The thought of weddings led Luke to probably the most painful item in the box. Though her wedding dress had been eaten up by the flames, the metal box Felicity had stored her wedding veil had proven to be flame-resistant.

Luke’s hands shook as he lifted the veil out of the box. The day he married Felicity Rhiaon had been the happiest day of his life, rivaled only by the day she gave birth to their daughter Rey.

“Do you, Luke Skywalker take this woman to be your partner in life and sharing your path; equal in love, a mirror for your true self, promising to honor and cherish, through good times and bad, in sickness and in health, for as long as you both shall live?”

“I do,” Luke vowed, unable to wipe the adorably goofy grin off his face that made Felicity Rhiaon fall in love with him in the first place.

Felicity have that mischievous one corner of her mouth upturned smirk that Luke could never resist,
“Good. I did not spend all that time getting this dress altered for you to go, ‘yeah, maybe not’ at the last second.”

Luke broke down at the memory. How many times had he pictured with growing old and grey together? How many times had the argued over whether or not Felicity would allow Luke to grow a beard when got to be a wrinkly, wise, ancient mentor? How many times had Felicity boasted that she was going to stay in good enough shape that she could still kick Captain Phasma’s ass in hand-to-hand combat when Felicity was fifty-five or even sixty? How many times did Han and Luke joke that Luke was going to freak out his grandkids with his false hand? How many times did Luke imagine walking Rey down the aisle, maybe even as she wore her mother’s veil on her wedding day?

He sobbed as his clutched his wife’s wedding veil, the words ‘for as long as you both shall live’ echoing in his head. Luke remembered the day he and Felicity decided on those words in place of ‘till death do you part’ as they had both knew that their love would last beyond the grave. Luke had always thought that when they did pass, it would be at the very most a few years apart. Secretly, Luke had even hoped that they would pass away peacefully in their sleep in their nineties on the very same night, maybe even holding hands.

And yet there he was at thirty-nine, a widower to the greatest woman he could have ever hoped to love.

As sadistic as it sounded, Luke wished there had been a body. He wished that the First Order had been cruel enough to throw his wife’s corpse at his feet. At least then he could have held her, desperately clutching his cold, still body in his embrace as he cried out to the heavens. It would have been something out of a gothic tragedy, his sorrow consuming him as her head hung limp and her glassy eyes staring unseeingly at the sky.

He would have built her the best pyre imaginable, and cremated her with the highest respect and noblest of ceremonies. It would have been the same for Rey if he had her body. Luke probably would have laid Rey in her mother’s arms, and watch silently as they burned.

Then again, maybe it was a good thing he couldn’t light their pyre. If he had, Luke probably would have thrown himself upon it.

Is this what it felt like for his father the day he was told his wife and child was dead? This anger, this emptiness, this rage at the world? Luke could almost understood wanting to build a Death Star and destroy all the people who had taken them from him.

Almost.

Slamming the lid of the veil box shut, Luke dropped to his knees and sobbed. Everything he had loved and worked so hard for was gone. And it was all his fault. He stayed there, crouched underneath Felicity’s desk, sobbing, uncaring if anyone saw him. Nothing could ever make this better.

But a person can’t cry forever, and eventually Luke ran out of tears. He body convulsed with dry heaves, but soon that too came to a stop. Luke just crouched there, his mind blank like it had been the night of the massacre, staring at nothing, dead to the world.

And then he saw it.

Lying forgotten underneath the desk was a doll.
Rey had many toys, in fact probably too many. She had many honorary uncles, plus an actual aunt and uncle who liked spoiling her with treasures from their travels. Even Poe Dameron and the other Jedi had gotten in on the game. Luke and Felicity tried their best to taper off the excess of gifts, but the other had soon caught on to the idea that if Rey saw the gift before Luke and Felicity said no, her parents rarely had the heart to deny her her present.

Lando was probably the worse offender, always bringing her lavish gifts, spoiling her like she was his own daughter. Eventually things got out of control with Lando’s gifts, and Felicity had had a few ‘words’ with him. Luke wasn’t certainly exactly what was said, but the next thing he knew, Lando eased back to a reasonable level.

But this doll wasn’t something a family friend had picked up in a shop. This doll had been handstitched by Felicity.

It was a hobby Felicity had picked up in the early days her involvement of the Rebellion. In need of stress relief, Felicity would take scraps of fabric and sew them into various creatures, and the dolls would be handed out to children during aid missions. Felicity had become rather famous in the Rebellion for her hobby and often received requests for her to sew them for the newborn children of Rebel soldiers. In fact, Poe Dameron’s first toy had been a loper sewn by Felicity.

This doll in particular had been modeled after Felicity, Rey begging her mother to make her a mommy doll to go with all the dolls her uncles bought her that looked like Rey. It was faceless and had brown hair tied into a messy bun. She wore Rey’s favorite outfit of Felicity’s: the one she had worn while stealing the Death Star plans. Black pants and boots with cool looking gun belts strapped around her waist and right look. Brown fingerless gloves and vest, and a long sleeved blue shirt. Luke shared Rey’s love of the outfit, often saying that if he had run into Felicity when he was nineteen, he definitely wouldn’t have spent all those years mooning after Leia.

Luke grabbed the doll and stared at it painfully. How many times had he scolded Rey for leaving her toys laying around everywhere? How many times had he scolded her for bringing toys to the dinner table? How many times had he scolded her for playing with her toys when it was bedtime?

How many toys had he scolded her for the stupidest things? For rolling her eyes while someone said something she found stupid (something Luke knew for a fact she had picked up from Han.) For refusing to eat all of her vegetables? For throwing a temper tantrum like any five-year-old? For touching something she shouldn’t? For going outside to play without supervision?

How many times had he made his precious daughter sad? Angry? Frustrated? How many times had he hurt his little girl?

He wanted to take it all back. Turn back the clock and replace every bad thing with something good. He wanted to hold her in his arms and make her smile. He wanted to play with her endless sea of toys. He wanted spin her around, dance, laugh, and do anything that made her happy. He wanted to show and teach her the things he had waited until she was older to do. He wanted to teach her hand-to-hand combat, how to use a lightsaber, how to fly a ship, comfort her the first time someone broke her heart, let her have her first sip of alcohol, let her cut and dye her hair in whatever crazy fashion the rebellious teenager wanted to.

Luke slowly rose to his feet and set the doll on the desk next to Felicity’s wedding veil.

He wanted a lifetime with his wife and daughter… and all he had was useless junk.

Luke finally let out the scream of rage he had been holding back for months. He grabbed things out of the crate at random and threw them against the wall.
It was all useless junk! Junk that could never replace having Rey and Felicity in his life, only haunting him with their memories.

Loud crashes filled the room as most of the item broke them a shatter. What good was any of it? They were gone and it was all his fault. Though Luke felt the catharsis of the destruction, he felt empty when he ran out of things to break. He still didn’t have his girls, and now his treasured possessions were broken.

And it was all his fault.

Luke fell to his knees and sobbed again.

Felicity and Rey were dead, Ben was corrupted, and the First Order was taking control. It was all his fault. He couldn’t save them, the people he loved had been hurt, and it was all his.

His fault. His fault. *His fault!*

Luke felt a warmth on his shoulder like someone trying to put their hand on it.

“I’m so sorry, my son,” the ghostly voice of Anakin Skywalker filled the room. “I understand how you feel.”

Luke looked up with tear filled eyes to see the blue form of his father trying to comfort him as Obi-Wan Kenobi and Master Yoda looked on sympathetically. As Luke’s eyes took in his father, rage flared up in his chest.

“This is all your fault,” Luke whispered. Anger building in his core, Luke stood and screamed, “**THIS IS ALL YOUR FAULT!**”


“Calm down? *Calm down? MY WIFE AND DAUGHTER ARE DEAD AND IT’S ALL HIS FAULT!*”

Anakin tried to defend himself, “Luke, listen-”

“No!” Luke screamed. “Everything truly bad that has ever happened to me is because of you! You cut off my hand! You threatened my sister! You burned down my childhood home, murdering my aunt and uncle! You killed the Jedi! You dismantled the Republic! You created the Empire! You killed Obi-Wan! You froze Han in carbonite! You shot down Biggs! You tortured Leia and killed the innocent billions of her planet! You made my mother die!”

Anakin physically recoiled at the final accusation.

“And after all that you *somehow* managed to find redemption,” Luke spat the words as if they were bitter acid. “Yet the effect of your tyranny lived on. How many people wake up everyday with loved ones dead because of you? How many people wake up screaming like Felicity does… *did* sometimes, remembering the things you did to them? But it doesn’t end there, because Vader’s legacy lived on. *The Empire’s* legacy lived on. Now we have the First Order. Now we have another slaughtered Jedi Order. Now we have another Sith, or whatever Snoke and Kylo want to call themselves. Now we have another dead mother and child who wastes away in a desert. Except this
time that child will never leave that planet. Felicity and Rey are dead because of you!”

Anakin closed his eyes and lowered his head in shame. He had no excuse to give.

“I want to see them,” Luke turned to Obi-Wan. “Make Felicity and Rey appear to me like you do!”

Obi-Wan looked at the other Jedi awkwardly, “It doesn’t work like that, Luke.”


Plus there was the little fact that not both Rey and Felicity were dead. Obi-Wan however, could not tell Luke that. It was against the rules of being a Force Ghost. If he tried to say something like ‘hey, go to Jakku, Rey’s actually alive and waiting for you’ Obi-Wan would be physically incapable of opening his mouth.

It was painful to see Luke suffering from the thought that his wife and daughter were dead, but it was worse knowing that it wasn’t true.

“Careful with your grief, you must be,” Yoda advised. Luke angrily noticed that Yoda didn’t appear to be too perturbed by Luke’s grief. “Of the Dark Side these emotions are. Against attachments for this is exact reason, I advise.”

“Uh, oh,” Anakin muttered, taking another step back.

“Well, excuse me for getting upset over the fact that my five-year-old daughter is dead!” Luke’s eyes flashed. “I don’t mean to bother you with my petty problems! Of course that wouldn’t be a problem if I hadn’t been too old to be trained and brainwashed by your mantras against human emotion! But of course, that’s not my fault, is it? Who was the one who waited until I was nineteen to start training me?”

Obi-Wan looked away.

“Insult the child, I did not intend to,” Yoda calmly replied.

“Of course not, but her mother who doubts the Force is free game, isn’t she?”

“We have nothing against Felicity, Luke,” Obi-Wan assured him. “She is a good partner for you. We’re just worried about how you’re dealing with your grief.”

“It’s very easy to become obsessed with loss, Luke,” Anakin added. “Take it from someone who made that mistake. It gets you nothing in the end, and you just push anyone who might be left to support you. You can’t waste your life on what if, because if you do, when your life comes to an end you wind up thinking what if I hadn’t wasted my life. Maybe if I hadn’t let my grief consume me, I could have been saved a lot sooner.”

Luke stared at his father, conflicting, bitter emotions swirling about, “I don’t care about anyone getting saved. It’s too late for Rey and Felicity and the others.”

“What about Ben?” Anakin asked.

Luke’s face hardened, “After what Kylo did to Felicity… I don’t want to save him.”

Silence filled the room. Luke Skywalker who believed in Darth Vader after Obi-Wan and Yoda
gave up, had just sentenced Ben Solo to a life of darkness with no chance of redemption.

“Errored we have in the past,” Yoda admitted. “Natural, grief is, and allow time to work through it, we must. For your wife and child, grieve, Luke Skywalker. Then in their memories, rebuild the Jedi Order you will.”

“What?” Luke felt like he had been slapped. “You’re already telling me to rebuild the Order?”

“And the essence, time is,” Yoda nodded.

Anakin was in the corner, shaking his head, “How am I the smartest ghost in the room right now? I thought cutting off my son’s hand before asking him to rule the Galaxy with me was a good idea.”

Luke however, was shaking, “I have spent the last twenty years of my life rebuilding the Jedi Order and fixing the mess you three made! Yes, three! Because of your pride and stubbornness, whether it was on the idea of allowing attachments, unwillingness to confess you had a problem, or view that Sith are unredeemable, the Jedi Order fell and took the Republic with it. You waited nineteen years to do a damn thing about it, and put it all on my shoulders. I struggled for three years without any guidance, and then was told I couldn’t be trained, despite everything apparently riding on me being so. Then you kept to your stubborn pride that put us here in the first place and told me somehow to fix things. And I did. I gave everything I had for twenty years to rebuild the Jedi Order, and in one moment, because one boy decided to idolize your mistakes it was all gone. Dozens of people were slaughtered because of the legacy of your mistakes. Now their bodies are barely cold and you’re asking me to replace them?”

And then Luke hit upon it, the question he hadn’t considered since he was nineteen years old. He always knew it was his duty, his responsibility, his mission to be and rebuild the Jedi.

But did he even want to be one? A long time ago his answer would have been an automatic yes, but as he stood in the ashen village of his efforts, he felt the passion gone.

He had once spoken with Felicity on the topic of optimism. She had called herself a pessimist, but Luke told her she had a spark in her eye. Felicity had told him it was a dying ember that Luke replied could be fanned back into a flame. He had only known her a few months at the time, the conversation taking place at the beginning of their friendship. Luke would spend the next ten years fanning that ember, helping Felicity believe in the world again.

And then Ben cruelly stamped out that flame, and with it, so went out the flame of Luke’s passion to be a Jedi. He didn’t want it anymore, people trusting him, believing in him, and relying on him. He just let them down.

It reminded him of another memory of Felicity from a time when the two of them had seriously questioned whether or not they could be a couple with her disbelief in the Force.

“I love you, Luke,” Felicity said. “But you need to understand that I’m never going to view the idea of destiny with more than raised eyebrows. To me it’s all just a logical sequence of events, with the occasional random thing thrown in. Believe me, I’ve tried not to be this way, but I can’t do it. I can’t find it in myself to believe something like my brother’s entire purpose was to die so that I could steal the plans to the Death Star so that some farm kid could get his sorry butt off Tatooine.”

Luke replied, “And I can’t believe that all of that wasn’t part of a plan to save the Galaxy from the Empire, find Han and Leia, and lead me to you.”

“And I respect that, but I can’t bring myself to agree.”
Then where does leave us?"

Felicity smiled, “At a compromise.”

Luke frowned questioningly at her as Felicity put a hand on his cheek. As Felicity gave a happy sigh, Luke placed his hand over hers.

“Luke, we can make this work,” Felicity pressed her forehead against his. “And do you know why?”

“Why?”

“Because I will never believe in destiny… but I’ll always believe in you. I know that we love each other, and that what we have is special. So no matter what comes our way, we’ll always be at each other’s side, keeping each other from harm.”


“Always,” Felicity whispered. “I will always believe in you.”

It was gamble that cost Felicity her life… and that of their daughter.


Obi-Wan sighed, “In time.”

“No!” Luke snapped. “Never! I’m done! Done with the Jedi, done with the First Order, done with you!”


“I want you to leave,” Luke coldly declared. “All of you. Go back to the Force, or the afterlife, or wherever you go when you’re not bothering me, and never come back.”

The ghosts looked at each other in a loss of what to say.


Yoda sighed, “If that is what you wish.”

And Yoda was gone.


And Obi-Wan was gone to.

Luke locked eyes with Anakin who looked like he desperately didn’t want to leave his son.

“Luke,” Anakin pleaded. “Please don’t do this.”


And Anakin was gone.
Luke was alone. Looking around the room, he felt a heavy sense of finality and displacement.

“I have to get out of here,” Luke whispered.

Luke crossed the room and pulled a holo to the side revealing a small locked safe hidden away.

“Passcode?” the safe prompted.

“Brendan Rhiaon died a martyr,” Luke spoke Felicity’s passcode and a minute later the safe clicked open.

Only one thing sat in the safe, a small pouch hanging on a string that could be tied as a necklace. Inside was a data chip that once held a copy of the Death Star schematics, but now it held the Jedi Order’s greatest secret.

Closing the safe, Luke tied the string around his neck. He grabbed the Holo of the laughing Felicity and Rey, and Rey’s Felicity doll.

Luke didn’t look back as he walked away.

It had to have been the worst time for Luke to walk past the door of Han and Leia’s room. Staying in the guest room of Reine Agim’s house, Leia and Han were in the middle of a heated argument.

“Don’t play stupid, Sweetheart!” Han snapped. “I saw the torture footage! I heard what Ben said to Felicity! When exactly were you going to tell me that the reason we sent Ben to Luke was that he was hearing voices in his head?”

“T’m sorry, Han but what was I supposed to say?” Leia replied, her voice twice the volume as normal.

“I don’t know, how about, hey Han, our son’s hearing voices! Maybe we should do something about it!”

“Look, I didn’t think you’d know how to deal with it. Luke and I are Force Sensitive so we understand this a little better, and Felicity only knew because she’s the one who told us in the first place.”

“Right, sorry, I forgot, you and Luke are the might Jedi and I’m just the guy who knocked you up.”

“It’s not like that, and you know it!”

Luke winced as he stood in the hallway. This was his fault, he had failed Ben and now Han and Leia were paying the price. More sure than ever of his decision, Luke carefully slipped into his room and started packing.

Leia was sitting on the bed, head in hands as Han stood facing the wall, hands pressed upon it and leaning forwards. It was painful to hear the quiet sobs Leia was trying to repress.

Han sighed and walked over to the bed, “I’m sorry.”

Leia sniffed and said, “Hold me.”

Han sat down on the bed and pulled her into his arms. He couldn’t help remember the night on Endor Luke had left. Leia had asked him to hold her the same way, and it had been the moment Han
knew he wanted to spend his life with her. No matter what fight they had, no matter what secret they may hold, no matter what trauma they went through, no matter what forces may try to tear them apart, Han needed this five foot nothing trigger happy Princess who could match him in their battle of wits. He may just be some stuck-up, half-witted, scruffy-looking nerf herder, but he was her stuck-up, half-witted, scruffy-looking nerf herder.

“Hey, I love you,” Han said.

“I know,” Leia couldn’t stop the small smile that graced her expression. “We can’t keep doing this.”

Han grinned, “Actually, I think it’s because we haven’t been yelling at each other as much as usual that this happened.”

“Han-”

“I don’t care if you didn’t tell me about Ben. I know I haven’t been the best father, and that’s on me, but now this is bigger than Ben being a moody teenager.”

“I know,” Leia sighed, resting her head on his broad chest. “I can’t believe we’re going back to war.”

“Hey, if the First Order thinks they can kill our sister and niece and get away with it, then bring it on.”

“What are we going to do about Luke? I can’t imagine the pain he’s going through right now.”

“We do what we should have done when he found out Vader was his dad. He stand by him and help him through this. We’re not going to leave him to suffer and blame himself like last time. Now, in my defence of last time, I was frozen in carbonite, but I don’t know what your excuse is.”

“Han,” Leia warned.

“I’m just messing with you,” Han squeezed Leia. “But I’m serious, we need to stand behind Luke.”

“And we’re not going to let him blame himself and do something drastic.”

Little did they know, he already had.

“Looking for something in particular?”

Luke jumped nearly a foot when he was caught by Doctor Kalonia raiding the medical closet of her office.

“Doctor Kalonia! I didn’t hear you come in,” Luke said, trying to calm his heartrate back to normal.

“You didn’t answer my question,” Kalonia said pointedly.

“Uh,” Luke looked back at the closet. “I was having troubles sleeping and wanted to find something for that.”

“Really? Because your bag is filled being topped with what looks like basic first aid supplies,” Kalonia stared at the duffle bag at Luke’s feet that was filled with clothing, food, weapons, credit chips, and other such provisions. “Planning a trip?”

“Sort of,” Luke confessed. “Look, if we could keep this just between us…”

“Well, I’m just glad someone other than me survived.”

“I’m glad I caught you, actually… if it was because you’re raiding my supplies. I’ve been meaning to ask you something.”

“What’s that?”

“Your sister has asked me to join the medical team of the Resistance. I told her I would be honoured, but my first duty is to the Jedi Order.”

“Doctor, if you want to join the Resistance, that would be fine with me,” Luke said.

“I know,” Kalonia nodded. “But that’s not what I was getting after. If you need me, I’ll stay, but if I don’t have a job anymore…”

“I’m afraid I don’t understand what you’re getting at.”

“Luke, will you be rebuilding the Order?” Kalonia asked. “If yes, I’ll stay on, but if you’re not…”

Luke looked down, “I’m afraid that the Jedi Order is going to be put on hold for a while.”

Kalonia nodded, understanding the words that Luke dare not utter, “I understand. I’ll tell Leia in the morning that it would be my honour to serve the Resistance.”

“I’m glad of it.”

A silence hung in the room.

“Luke,” Kalonia finally said. “I know you’ve been through something traumatic, but be careful, you don’t want to do anything rash.”


“If you ever wanted to talk to someone I can recommend a few therapists who might help you.”

Luke laughed, “I think I’ve been a lost cause to therapists ever since I found out the man who cut off my hand was my father and that I’d made out with my twin sister.”

Kalonia couldn’t suppress her chuckle.

“Here,” Kalonia reached up and grabbed a small box, “it’s a first aid kit that has a few more advanced things your average kit doesn’t.”

“Thank you,” Luke smiled and put the kit in his bag.

“It’s been an honour to serve you, Luke.”

“The honour’s all mine.”

“If you ever need anything, don’t hesitate to ask.”

Luke shook Kalonia’s hand and picked up the bag, “Goodbye my friend.”

“May the Force be with you.”
“And with you.”

Luke thought he was in the clear when he made it to his X-Wing unnoticed. He had stored his bag in the hatch when he heard a familiar beeping.

“Quiet, Artoo,” Luke ordered as Artoo rolled towards him. “I don’t want anyone to hear me.”

Artoo beeped something.

“I’m… going away for a while.”

Beep beep.

“No, I’m not sure where.”

Bop, beep, bleep.

“No… you’re not coming with me.”

**BEEP, BEEP, BOP, BOOP, BLIP!**

“Because I need to be on my own for a while.”

Bleep.

Luke sighed, defeat lining his voice, “I can’t do it anymore, Artoo. I can’t stay here knowing what happened to my students… and my girls.”

Beep, beep, boop.

“I do want you to come, but it’s just not for the best.”

Bloop, bee, boo.

“Well… there is one thing you can do.”

Bee?

“Hide the map. The one to Ahch-to. Don’t let anyone know you have it.”

Boop, bop, beep.

“No, I don’t know if I’m going there, but just in case…”

Bee, bee, bee.

“Yes, I’m sure about this.”

Suddenly Artoo rammed into Luke’s leg. At first Luke thought Artoo was attacking him as Artoo did from time to time when he was determined to stop Luke. Then Luke recognized what Artoo was saying and realized Artoo was giving his imitation of a hug.


Beep, bop, boop.
“No, Artoo, I won’t forget it,” Luke chuckled. “Goodbye my friend. I hope we see each other again.”

And with that, Luke climbed into the cockpit and flew away.

Blaming himself, Luke walked away from everything.

Artoo watched him leave sadly. Luke had been the constant in Artoo’s life for twenty years, and the Skywalkers for decades before that. Artoo belonged to the Skywalkers, he loyally served Padmé Amidala, then Anakin Skywalker, then Leia Organa, and finally Luke Skywalker with eventually the addition of Rey Rhiaon Skywalker. Artoo was made to be their friend, his purpose was to help the Skywalkers, and he would belong to no other. Now Artoo was without one, he had no Skywalker to serve, and thus, no point to continue on. Masterless, Artoo did not know what next to do.

And then he decided.

Artoo’s dome turned to scan the room and he locked visual on the charge port. He wheeled himself up to it, plugged himself in, and switched into low power mode.

Someday a Skywalker would return for him. He just had to wait.

“Master Luke!” Threepio shuffled down the hallway in search of his former Master.

There had been quite a commotion that morning when everyone woke to find Master Luke had disappeared. Several of his possessions were missing and Doctor Kalonia reported that Master Luke had discussed a trip the previous night, but Threepio wouldn’t believe it. Master Luke would not simply just run off of his own accord.

Well… except that time Master Luke discovered Artoo had run away.

… And that time Master Luke realized the Empire would have traced Artoo and himself to the Lars Homestead.

… And that time on the Death Star when Master Luke convinced Captain Solo to rescue Princess Leia.

… And that time Master Luke went with Artoo to Dagobah to meet Master Yoda.

… And that time Master Luke left Master Yoda to rescue them on Bespin.

… And that time Master Luke surrendered himself on Endor.

… And that time the terrible Captain Phasma had taken Mistress Felicity hostage while Mistress Felicity was carrying the developing fetus of Mistress Rey within her reproductive system.

… And that time-

Threepio’s hardware detected a pattern.

Oh, dear.

The others had taken to the woods and various buildings on Rornian to find Master Luke, but Threepio had been assigned Master Luke’s temporary residence. Determined not to let anyone down, Threepio was being most thorough in his examination of each room, but had yet to obtain a positive result.

“Oh, Artoo, there you are,” Threepio said as he entered the garage. “Where have you been? Master Luke is missing and we need your help to find him.”

Artoo said nothing.


Artoo was silent.

“Artoo, I am speaking to you!”

Nothing.

“… Artoo?”

Threepio shuffled over to Artoo and tapped his dome. Still Artoo didn’t move. That was when Threepio recognized the signs of low power mode.

“Artoo, wake up! Please wake up, my friend!”

Nothing.

“Artoo, please, loathe I am to admit it, I… I need you.”

Nothing.

“Artoo, please, is there anything I can do to get you to wake up?”

But there wasn’t. No matter how much Threepio begged and pleaded, no matter how many people Threepio raced to, hysterically shouting the news and begging them to do something, no matter how many planets Threepio insisted Leia drag Artoo along with them to on the off chance that this time his pleaded would finally work… Artoo would not reply.

It would be fourteen years before a Skywalker returned, and R2-D2 woke up.
The Key to Ahch-to

Chapter Summary

A look into the history of Luke Skywalker, Felicity Rhiaon, and the map to Ahch-to.

Chapter Notes

So this chapter delves into some of the backstory of Felicity and the Rogue One mission. I’d like to make it clear that all of the backstory was plotted out before we got any information about Rogue One. That said, there ended up being some freakish similarities, but remember that this is not me trying to write the script for Rogue One. Much like how Felicity Rhiaon is not meant to be Jyn Erso, this is an interpretation of how events of Rogue One could have gone and how they went in the Rogue Love universe.

Also to those of you that want to complain about the fact that is a flashback chapter mostly focusing on Felicity and not moving the story forward really at all, I want to say this. Today is my birthday, and if I want to write a chapter that is 90 percent Felicity flashbacks, then I’m going to write a chapter that’s 90 percent Felicity flashbacks.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

The Long Way Home

Chapter Eleven

The Key to Ahch-to

Let us pause the narrative for a moment to discuss an important element of the forthcoming story. Years later, when news of the map to Luke Skywalker broke, many people would have questions about it. Where did the map come from? How did Luke get it? Why did he follow it? How long had he known about it? Why didn’t he tell anyone about it? Who else knew about it? How did Lor San Tekka come into possession of it? And why on earth was there a piece cut out of it?

There are answers to each of those questions, and surprisingly enough it actually all starts with Felicity Rhiaon…

Six Months Before the Battle of Yavin

“Again!” Diego Nalto, a twenty-eight-year-old pilot for the Rebellion, codenamed Rogue Two ordered.

Riz Drayson, a twenty-four-year-old hacker/technician codenamed Rogue Five struggled to get to his
feet on the gymnasium exercise mat as he shakily gripped a staff.

“Is this really necessary?” Riz asked. “I mean, what’s the likelihood that we’ll have to use staffs to fight the Empire?”

“Come now,” his sparring partner, Ji-Dan Hayato, a fifty-year-old soldier codenamed Rogue Three smiled at Riz, holding his signature staff casually. “Are you really afraid of fighting a blind man?”

“I am when that blind man has knocked me on my ass six times today,” Riz rubbed one of his many bruises.

“Come on, Riz! You can do it!” Felicity Rhiaon, a twenty-one-year-old recruitment officer codenamed Rogue One cheered from the belchers.

Diego shot her a look, “Don’t you have work to do, Rhiaon?”

“Oh, what, and miss the warmth of your company?” Felicity shot before flicking on her tablet to study the details of their mission for the thousandth time.

“Settle down, kids,” ordered Wen ‘Gunner’ Arroyo, a forty-six-year-old soldier codenamed Rogue Four. He was lounging on the bleachers next to Felicity, cleaning his huge stockpile of blasters. “We’re all on the same team here. Who cares who gets to be in charge, or who has a higher status rank normally? The enemy won’t care who is Rogue One and who is Rogue Two when they’re shooting at us.”

“Hey, he started it,” Felicity muttered.

“And a commander should know better than rise to bait,” Diego shot.

“Nalto, I will come down there,” Gunner warned.

Diego shuddered.

“Shall we try again?” Ji-Dan asked Riz.

Riz whimpered.

“Begin!” Diego ordered.

Five seconds later, Riz was back on the ground.

“Alright,” Riz weakly crawled across the mat, “I’m tagging out.”

“Rogue Five, get back here!” Diego commanded. “Honestly, Drayson you’re going undercover in two months and you still can’t fight back properly. Do you want to get killed?”

“That’s enough, Nalto!” Felicity snapped. “I’m in charge here and I say that Riz has earned a break.”

Diego rolled his eyes, “Yes, because a recruitment officer knows best when it comes to training for combat. Remind me, Rhiaon, how many combat missions have you taken part in? Twenty? Thirty? Oh right, your entire combat history consists of one time you got arrested at a protest, and then let go when the arresting officer turned out to be your father.”

“I wouldn’t dismiss such an event out of hand, Lieutenant Nalto.” Ji-Dan reminded, “It’s the entire reason we have this mission in the first place.”
“He’s right,” Felicity said, setting down her tablet. “It’s my father’s offer to give Riz and I a job if we ever want to come back to the Empire that’s getting us into the Death Star.”

Felicity couldn’t fight back the memory of the deal Alaric Rhiaon had put forth two years earlier when she and Riz got arrested by him at a protest. Riz had only been dragged into the mess because Alaric had caught him with Felicity. In all fairness, they should have avoided each other in such a public space. That screw up was on them.

She could still recall the desperation in her father’s eyes as he begged her to come home. It had been a few years since the day Alaric told his daughter that if she walked out the door, she could never come back. Felicity had walked out with no regrets and not a glance back. Yet as she stood before him years later, she found that Alaric did regret his ultimatum. After losing his wife to illness, and his son to a bomb going off in the middle of a town square, Felicity was all Alaric had left.

But then came the revelation that the bombing that killed Brendan Rhiaon had been a set up by the Empire in an effort to pin it on the Rebels to garner support in the fight against the Alliance. The incident had pushed Felicity straight into the arms of the Rebellion. It had been Alaric’s refusal to accept the circumstances of Brendan’s death that caused Felicity to leave home and disavow him as her father. Even worse was what Felicity later learned after joining the Rebellion. She had been destroyed by the knowledge that Brendan had been planning to join the Alliance, and when the Empire discovered it, he was specifically targeted to not only be killed by the explosion, but to have his death filmed and used as the face of the tragedy.

Perhaps it was Alaric’s refusal to accept that fact that made Felicity have no qualms about using him to get inside of the Death Star.

“Riz and I are going to be undertaking the most dangerous part of this mission,” Felicity said. “We’ll be living for several months as employees on the Death Star. Of the five of us, Riz and I are the ones most likely not to make it out of there alive.”

A heavy silence fell upon the men of her team. Even Diego looked like he was taking Felicity seriously.

“So that means if Riz is tagging out of training today…” Felicity climbed down the bleachers, grabbed Riz’s training staff, and stepped onto the training mat. She faced Ji-Dan with an eager grin, “I’m tagging in.”

Sensing Felicity’s smile from her lighthearted tone, Ji-Dan returned the expression and bowed his head respectfully to his opponent.

“It is an honour, Rogue One,” Ji-Dan held out his staff in front of him in a customary salute. “The honour is all mine, Rogue Three,” Felicity repeated the custom, signalling to everyone that the duel may proceed.

Felicity was on the ground in less than five minutes.

“Ok, seriously, what is your trick?” Felicity groaned as she struggled to stand up. She was as always amazed when Ji-Dan offered his hand in the exact correct spot to pull her to her feet. “You’re blind as a bat yet I’m pretty sure you’ve cracked my tailbone.”

“Then let’s get you to your seat,” Ji-Dan helped Felicity hobble to the bench Riz was sitting on. “And it’s no trick you can’t learn yourself. I just simply trust the Force.”

“It’s complicated.” Ji-Dan struggled to explain, “It’s a sort of energy that binds the world together and dictates the order of things. Not quite a God, but it’s more than destiny.”

“Destiny? There’s no such thing,” Felicity resisted the urge to roll her eyes. He may be blind and saying ridiculous things but Ji-Dan was one of her closest friends.

“Wait, the Force?” Riz frowned. “Are you talking about the whole Jedi thing?”

“In part,” Ji-Dan nodded. “The Jedi were a significant influence on our knowledge of the Force, but you don’t need Force Sensitivity to tap into its might. Everyone has at least a small part of themselves that can connect to the Force and harness its power. The Jedi were just more adept at it.”

“Oh please,” Riz laughed. “Everyone knows that the Jedi are just a myth. A bedtime story when your kids won’t sleep.”

“Are you kidding?” Diego asked in genuine disbelief. “How young are you? The Jedi were absolutely a real thing. They fought in the Clone Wars. I remember growing up and seeing them on the HoloNet.”

“The Jedi were amazing,” Gunner agreed. “Especially the Grandmaster. Yoda may have been small and green, but that alien was impressive.”

“Nah, you know who I liked?” Diego asked. “It was that really famous one. The one all over the HoloNet. I can’t remember his name right now but they called him something like the Fearless Hero?”

“You mean the Hero with No Fear? Anakin Skywalker?”

“Yes! That’s the one! Anakin Skywalker! Now there’s a heroic sounding name! I’d follow someone named Skywalker into battle any day!”

Felicity scoffed, “Oh please, Anakin Skywalker? Sounds like a pompous ass who would throw a temper tantrum that would level a building.”

“Hey, are you insulting Anakin Skywalker?” Diego sounded even more aggressive than usual.


“Don’t play with me, sister. You wanna take this outside?”

“We’re in space. We take this outside, we die.”

“Children!” Gunner snapped.

Normally the adults would get defensive at being reduced to a child, but when Gunner called them it, Felicity and Diego would shut up before he was forced to do anything drastic.

Ji-Dan just chuckled, “Bicker all you want, but the Jedi were real.”

“What happened to them?” Riz inquired.

Ji-Dan’s face hardened, “The Emperor and Darth Vader eliminated them and destroyed all of their temples. There’s rumors some Jedi managed to survive, but until the day they return, we’re stuck with waiting for it to arrive.”

“For what to arrive?” Felicity asked.
Ji-Dan smiled at her, “For a new hope. For someone to take up the reins, rebuild the temples, and bring the return of the Jedi. I’ve studied the Force and the history of the Jedi for years, and I want to witness the return of the Jedi Order. But more than anything, I think I would love to see a Jedi Temple.”

Felicity couldn’t help but smile. She had to admit she was intrigued by the story. As little as she cared for destiny – and how much she doubted the abilities she had heard Jedi were rumored to have – Felicity like the idea that they were actually waiting for something special.

A new hope.

That didn’t sound bad to her at all.

---

**35 Days Before the Battle of Yavin**

“And… in!” Riz cried as loud as he dared to risk. Breaking into not only the quarters of the second-in-command of the Empire, but also Vader’s personal computer was far too impressive to blow it all on a victory shout getting overheard.

“Good job,” Ji-Dan patted Riz’s shoulder as he stood next to the seated technician at the Vader’s desk.

“Yeah, great work, Kid.” Gunner congratulated as he stood guard at the door ready to blast anyone who discovered what they were doing. “Now, hurry up before we get caught.”

Diego remained expressionless as he guarded the door with guard and Riz hacked his way through Vader’s computer.

“Come on, it’s only a test run,” Diego urged. “Get in and get out quick.”

“I know,” Riz waved them off. “I’m just trying to find a piece of data that’s expendable. Something they won’t notice I’ve deleted.”

“Just pick something from the Aureks and do it already!” Diego restrained a scream. He spoke into his com, “Rogue One, do you read?”

“I read, Rogue Two,” Felicity’s voice answered.

“How we doing for time?”

“Well, we’re lucky Vader doesn’t arrive on the station until tomorrow, but we’re cutting it close.”

“Alright, keep them stalled as long as possible.”

“I thought I was the one giving orders, Rogue Two. Speaking of. Guys, be prepared to get out of here if this doesn’t work. If we can’t pull and delete a meaningless piece of data, we have no chance to get the Death Star plans.”

“I don’t get why they want us to delete anything in the first place,” Gunner shook his head. “If we delete the Death Star plans, they’ll know we’ve stolen them.”

“It’s better that they don’t have the plans so that if we find a weakness they won’t know what it is,” Ji-Dan answered. He patted Riz’s shoulder again, “How are you doing?”

“I’ve got the files starting with Aurek open, but I don’t know what to delete,” Riz reported.
“Alright, read the names to me and I’ll tell you what to delete.”

“Well… he has over ten thousand files concerning something called Amidala… And he’s meticulously numbered them and keep detailed names. Listen to this: ‘378 - Amidala, age 24, white drees, Tatooine’ ‘1576 - Amidala, age 25, purple outfit, speech at Alderaan anti-war conference, 6:48 minutes long’ ‘9765 - Amidala, age 27, blue dress, pictured with Bail Organa, Mon Mothma, Chancellor Palpatine.’ Man, it sounds like whoever this Amidala is, she’s got a Sith Lord stalker.”

“If Vader is that meticulous about this information, he’ll probably notice if any disappears,” Ji-Dan said. “What else is there?”


“Wait, what was the last one?” Ji-Dan interrupted.

“Oh, the Empire keeps tabs on applicants to the Imperial Academy,” Riz replied.

“No, Ahch-to,” Ji-Dan corrected. “What’s that file?”

Riz typed a few things, “It looks like a map to an uncharted planet. Why, what’s Ahch-to?”

“It’s a very special place,” Ji-Dan smiled, recalling the day he read about the first Jedi Temple. “And one I don’t want Vader destroying. Can you use this file for our test?”

“Well…” Riz checked the data, “It’s a little too big to delete without anyone noticing.”

“Can you cut a piece out of it?”

Riz gave Ji-Dan a surprised look, “That’s an odd request.”

“Vader cannot peruse this map,” Ji-Dan said, praying that Vader had not had time to use it. Luckily for him, Vader had in fact not used the map yet. “Can you destroy his ability to?”

“Let’s find out,” Riz pulled from his shirt a small drawstring bag that hung around his neck. From the bag, he pulled out a data chip and plugged it into the computer. After several minutes of tense typing, Riz announced his results, “I did it! I copied a piece of the map onto the chip, and I deleted it from the computer. Now there’s no record of this piece of the map in any Imperial archive!”

“Rogue One,” Diego reported into his comm, “Rogue Five was successful.”

“Great job, Rogue Five!” Felicity congratulated. “Do you think we’ll be able to pull off the real heist anytime soon?”

“The computers are sending out their automatic reports to the main Imperial archives in approximately thirty-seven hours,” Riz answered. “There will be so much data transferring that us pulling the plans will go unnoticed. Rest easy, Rogue One, two days from now you’ll be buying me a drink in celebration.”

33 Days Before the Battle of Yavin

The blast hit Riz straight in the chest and he collapsed to the ground.

“NO!” Felicity screamed as she and the others exchanged shots with the Stormtroopers her own
father had called in when he discovered them stealing the Death Star plans.

Alaric looked guilty in the glow of the blast fight as he accidentally murdered what appeared to be his daughter’s best friend. As an Imperial Officer, Alaric was required to shoot at the Rebels, but he had intentionally been missing, firing shots near, but not actually at Felicity. That way he could say he fulfilled his duty without harming his daughter.

He just hadn’t planned on Riz Drayson jerking himself backward to dodge a bolt, putting himself right in the path of the one Alaric had just fired.

“I’ve got your back!” Diego nodded to Felicity. “Get the chip!”

Felicity dropped to her knees and crawled to Riz.

“Riz, hey, it’s Fliss,” Felicity grasped his bloody shirt and shook him. “Come on, buddy, stay with us.”

“I- I’m sorry,” Riz gave Felicity puppy dog eyes as he gripped the drawstring pouch in his hand. He was so ashamed at his failure. “I got the plans… but I couldn’t delete them from the Imperial system.”


“No, Fliss. It’s the end of the line for me; we both know it. Don’t weigh yourself down with my corpse. I’m already dead.”

“Riz,” Felicity whispered, tears shining in her eyes.

“Take it,” Riz pressed the pouch into her hand. “And promise me one thing.”

“Name it.”

“Promise me that you’ll do whatever it takes to get the plans to the Rebellion, and if for any reason you have to transmit the plans to someone else, promise you’ll delete the original copy on this chip. I- I don’t want them to build another one of these stations.”

Felicity smiled, “I promise.”

Holding Felicity’s hand tightly, Riz gave an exhale of relief.

He would not inhale.

Pressing her head to his chest, Felicity wept over the corpse of her best friend. She could feel her father’s guilty eyes on her. Because of a single blast, Felicity no longer had a best friend.

… Nor did she have a father.

2 Days Before the Battle of Yavin

“I’m going to Tatooine, and you can’t stop me,” Felicity boldly declared.

The hangar bay was dark and mostly empty save for a few pilots watching the stand-off between Felicity Rhiaon and Mon Mothma.
“I understand that you have been through a lot, Miss Rhiaon,” Mon Mothma calmly said.

“A lot?” Felicity snapped. “I did not spend months undercover as an Imperial, lost Riz, Ji-Dan, and Gunner, betrayed my father, took a freaking lightsaber to the back, and then spent a month alone with Nalto on Jakku so that the Empire could destroy Alderaan!”

The announcement of the destruction of Alderaan had hit the Alliance hard. The death of Bail Organa had left Mon Mothma in charge, but she never expected it would affect Felicity Rhiaon enough to lead the girl to attempt to steal a ship to go after the wayward Death Star plans.

“Leia and Bail Organa are dead because of me!” Felicity exclaimed. “It took me a month to get in contact with the Alliance and then I blow it all on transmitting the plans to Leia rather than wait for my transport to arrive the next day. It’s my fault Vader attacked her ship and killed everyone on board. It’s my fault the Death Star destroyed Alderaan. I have to get those plans. I have to wash this blood from my hands. I have to make sure it wasn’t all a waste.”

The gravity of everything finally set in and Felicity broke down. She fell to her knees in front of the X-Wing she was trying to steal and sobbed. Never mind that she had no clue on how to fly it, she had just been so determined to get to Tatooine pesky details like that hadn’t occurred to her.

Felicity didn’t care that she was crying in front of a bunch of strange pilots and the head of the Rebel Alliance. There was no one to comfort her. Most of her friends were dead, and those that were living had gone away.

Felicity was on the Joorvan Rebel base, a base not far from Mon Mothma’s home planet, Chandrila. Diego was on a med ship orbiting an uninhabited planet called Rornian. Shara Bey had been assigned to report to the Verenis base after she had delivered Felicity and Diego.

Finally, Biggs Darklighter, her first recruit – and occasional friends with benefits – had been stationed on the Yavin IV base awaiting the Death Star plans. The plan had been to meet up when Felicity brought the plans, but that had gone awry when Felicity never made it to Yavin IV. She had in fact been planning to comm Biggs on her way to Tatooine to see if he could help her in the search for the plans, but Mothma had put a stop to Felicity’s escape plan.

Mon Mothma had the tendency to feel a little cold with her elegant posture and posh accent. Her fair features gave the impression of an ice queen, and her intolerance for antics made Felicity certain Mothma hated her.

So Felicity was greatly surprised when Mothma crouched to the ground and wrapped her arms around Felicity as she cried.

“It’s alright, Miss Rhiaon,” Mothma said in a motherly tone. “War is difficult for us all. We lose people we love, but we continue to fight to protect those we do have now, and those we will have in the future. I had to learn that lesson a long time ago, and I still struggle with it now. But one thing I have learned is that you will never be alone in life. Friends come and go. Family does the same. In ten years, the people you spend your life with will not be the same as today. But we will never forget those we lose.”

“Yes, we will,” Felicity bitterly shot. “No one’s going to remember what I’ve done. No one is going to care who stole the plans to the Death Star. If we fail to get them back, I’ll just be that girl who tried to steal them. If we do get them back, but the Empire finds and destroys us, I’ll be the girl who killed us all. And if we get them back and destroy them? No one will care about anyone other than the arrogant pilot or bomb team, or whatever that sets the charge or fires the shot that destroys it. No one will care that Riz, Ji-Dan, and Gunner died for the plans.”
Mon Mothma let the silence linger before saying, “Yes, they will care, and if you come with me, Miss Rhiaon, I’ll show you why. You just have to promise to stop trying to steal the ship.”

Felicity sniffled, “Alright. Couldn’t get the damn thing off the ground anyway.”

Mon Mothma just laughed.

“I want you to have this,” Mon Mothma pulled something out of a drawer in her office.

Felicity frowned, recognizing the drawstring pouch, “The data pouch?”

“We checked it to make sure the plans weren’t still on them.”

“Riz asked me to delete it if I had to transmit them,” Felicity explained.

“I understand the reasoning,” Mothma replied. “The test data wasn’t anything too important, but we decided not to wipe it. However, because it isn’t important, I’m at liberty to give this to you.”

“You want me to have it?” Felicity scowled as she took the pouch.

“A memento of your adventures and reminder that your friends didn’t die for nothing. Their legacy will live on, and their efforts will be appreciated. With this you can remind people of their sacrifices.”

“Thank you… Commander.”

Felicity hesitated.

“What is it?” Mothma asked.

“Riz couldn’t delete the Death Star plans from the Imperial Database,” Felicity explained. “…and as he died, he worried that the Imperials might build another.”

Mothma frowned, “I certainly hope they don’t.”

“If they do, can you promise me two things?”

“What’s that?”

“First, don’t let anyone forget the sacrifices of the team who gets the intel on the new Death Star.”

“Consider it done,” Mothma nodded. She would follow through on that promise four years later when she emphasised the death of Bothan spies to a room full of Alliance leaders. “What’s the other request?”

Felicity replied, “I want to be told in person about it. Don’t let me hear it from the grapevine. I’ve earned that much.”

“I will make sure of that too,” Mothma made the second promise she would follow through on.

When news arrived of the second Death Star, Felicity Rhiaon and Diego Nalto were escorted into a room and privately told.

Felicity Rhiaon flipped over a desk, and Diego Nalto put a chair through the window.

Neither objected to the stripping of certain privileges as punishment… though they weren’t happy about having to fix the window.
“You know,” Felicity sniffed, tying the pouch around her neck. It felt heavy, like she was bearing the physical weight of her friends’ legacies, “Ji-Dan told me that the reason we’re fighting this war is because we’re waiting for a new hope… Maybe… Maybe I can help us find it.”

“I hope you can,” Mon Mothma said. “I promise you, Miss Rhiaon, these sacrifices will not go to waste.”

Mon Mothma’s third promise would also come true.

Two days later, a Rebel pilot would blow up the Death Star, killing all on board, including Alaric Rhiaon.

Thirteen years later, Felicity Rhiaon married the pilot who killed him.

13 Years After the Battle of Yavin

“Thank you so much, Alyla for letting me use your computer,” Felicity said as she powered up the Jedi Master’s personal computer.

Newlyweds Luke and Felicity Rhiaon Skywalker were temporarily staying in the home of Jedi Master Alyla Kene as Luke attended to some business in Temple Village. Due to the fact that the Grandmaster didn’t actually have a standing residence on Rornian, Felicity found that she and her husband were forced to play “musical house guests” rotating between which Jedi they would impose upon during their visits.

“Anytime,” Alyla replied as she casually perused her bookshelf for some form of entertainment. “Just don’t open personal files.”

“Yeah, considering you have a weird on-again, off-again thing with Lando Calrissian of all people, I certainly don’t want to know what you’re taking pictures of,” Felicity grinned. “Although, I sometimes wonder if it’s just charm that gets women flocking to him.”

“Shut up!” Alyla blushed bright red and threw a notebook at the laughing Felicity.

“Ok, seriously, who has paper notebooks these days?”

Alyla shook her head. It was going to be an interesting week alone with the new Mrs. Rhiaon Skywalker.

While Luke had his typical Grandmaster duties, Felicity didn’t have anything to do in Temple Village. She was three months away from the construction of her and Luke’s home from being completed, and she was five months away from finishing her architecture degree and taking on the duties of architect to Temple Village.

Alyla didn’t have anything to do either. Usually she was in charge of training the children of Temple Village, but she had the week off while her twin brother Gavyn Kene and his wife Zena Halcorr had taken them on a field trip to the crystal caves of Illum. Alyla typically took her weeks off to meet up with Lando, but those plans were halted when it came up as her turn to host Luke and Felicity.

Alyla strongly suspected that the roster had been tampered with considering that Luke and Felicity had only been married two weeks, and they were definitely still in the honeymoon phase. Between the other Jedi Masters being married, having children in their house, jealous of the Grandmaster’s choice of wife, or generally having a stronger backbone than Alyla, Alyla was fairly certain she had been the target of “who isn’t going to tell the newlyweds to knock it off?”
Although she had certainly put her foot down earlier than day in the kitchen. Honeymoon phase or not, there were some things one didn’t want to see over breakfast.

Speaking of honeymoons…

“You and Luke are going on your honeymoon next week, right?” Alyla asked.

Felicity frowned, “Are you still upset about breakfast? We said sorry. We weren’t even doing anything that bad.”

“I’m not trying to get rid of you,” Alyla laughed. “Just making conversation. Although seriously, stay away from my kitchen table.”

“And if we don’t?” Felicity teased.

“I’ll tell you all the things Lando and I have done on it.”

Felicity shuddered, “Okay, you win. And yes, we’re going next week.”

“How exciting! Where are you headed, and for how long? Luke isn’t scheduled to come back to Rornian for another two months.”

“We’re spending a month on Takodana. Han has a friend who found us a nice villa by the ocean. Maz is… a little odd, but a very good friend.”

“That just sounds wonderful,” Alyla sighed. “I should take a vacation.”

“If it’s with Lando, promise not to show me any Holos.”

Alyla shook her head and watched as Felicity plugged a data chip into the computer.

“What’s that?” Alyla asked.

“The Museum of Rebellion History on Yavin IV is doing a whole exhibit on the Rogue Squadron Death Star Mission,” Felicity replied. “They asked if they could borrow the data chip and pouch that held the plans so they can display it for about year. I told them yes, but I want to wipe the chip first in case someone tries to steal it. The plans are gone, but we still have our test file on it and I don’t want it falling into the wrong hands.”

“What’s in the test file?”

“No clue. Boys did that part of the mission by themselves. Let’s see here, file name ‘Test’… and open.”

The room was suddenly filled with the projection of a star chart with a red line traced through it.

“A star map?” Alyla raised a brow.

“Only part,” Felicity scowled at it. “It’s not complete. What in the galaxy did they pull, and why?”

“Here,” Alyla came up to the computer and switched off the projection. She took control from Felicity and explained, “Zena taught me a few hacking tricks from when we would fudge the slave records during operation on Zygerria. If I do this… There, the name of the source file was… No way.”

“The file was called, ‘No Way?’”
Alyla looked at Felicity in excitement, “It was called ‘Map to Ahch-to!’”

“What’s an Ahch-to?”

“What’s an Ahch-to? What’s an Ahch-to?” Alyla exclaimed.

“Repeating my question does not answer it.”

“Afternoon, Ladies,” Luke suddenly walked into the room followed by Artoo. He automatically crossed the room to greet Felicity with a kiss, “I missed you.”

Felicity nuzzled him, “I missed you too.”

“He was gone an hour,” Alyla rolled her eyes.

Luke shook his head, “Sometimes I wonder how with your cynicism, you and Lando ever got together.”

“Alyla and I were discussing that very thing earlier, weren’t we?” Felicity teased.

“I will throw this at you again,” Alyla brandished the notebook threateningly.


“Do you want to sleep alone tonight?” Felicity gently punched his arm. She smiled as Luke pressed a kiss to her cheek and wrapped his arm around her. “Hey, Sweetheart, what’s Ahch-to?”


“Would everyone stop repeating the word Ahch-to and just tell me what it is?” Felicity exclaimed.

Luke shook his head, “Ahch-to is a lost planet that was home to the first Jedi Temple. I would kill to visit there.”


“Where did you hear the name?”

“A… HoloNovel about Jedi. Sort of a romance/fantasy/one credit bin at a fueling station thing.”

Luke winced, “Ugh. Next time save yourself the money. Pretty much all romance novels concerning fictionalized versions of Jedi are terrible.”

“Agreed.”

“Hey, Alyla?” Luke looked at the Jedi who had been watching them in curious amusement. “Have any packages arrived for me?”


“For Artoo over there,” Luke jerked his head towards R2-D2 in the corner. Luke looked quite annoyed, “Apparently he hasn’t been wiped in almost fifty years, and since he refuses to delete any extra data as ‘you never know when it’ll come in handy’ I had to purchase extra memory storage chips for him.”
Artoo beeped something from the corner.

“No, don’t you try to defend yourself,” Luke rolled his eyes. “You steal and hoard data like your battery will die if you don’t.”

Beep, beep, boop.

“Artoo, you downloaded a copy of the entire Imperial database when we were on the Death Star!” Felicity’s ears perked up.

Beep, bop, beep.

Luke rubbed the bridge of his nose, “No, I’m sure you don’t see a problem with that.”

Alyla chuckled, “And people ask me why I don’t want a droid.”

“Honestly, sometimes I feel like he’s my child I have to look after.”

Boop, bop, beep.

“Yes, Artoo, I am aware that you are older than my father.”

Beep.

“And my mother too,” Luke sighed. He leaned over and quickly kissed Felicity who was staring at something on the computer, “Sorry to run off so quickly. I have a class to teach with Zena.”

“Oh, that’s alright,” Felicity pulled him back in for another quick kiss. “I’ll see you at dinner. I love you.”


“Actually,” Felicity interrupted. “Do you mind if I borrowed Artoo for a bit? I wanted to double check a couple details about our house.”

“Of course,” Luke nodded. “And feel free to change or adjust or outright get rid of anything you want. You’ve been designing this home since you were a teenager, I want it to be the house of your dreams.”

“Honestly, kudos on your choice of husband, Felicity,” Alyla nudged Felicity. “I wish someone would build me a house as a wedding present.”

“If you worked things out with Lando, I’m pretty sure he would give you the entirety of Cloud City,” Felicity replied.

“She does have a point,” Luke teased. “My wedding gift to you was pretty amazing. I don’t know how your present to me could ever top it. Have you thought of anything yet?”

Felicity grinned, “I have an idea. Now off you go. Zena will not accept ‘I was late for class because I was bantering with my wife’ as an excuse.”

“And Gavyn will make fun of you for it,” Alyla added.

And with that Luke was gone.

“So,” Alyla turned to Felicity, “what is this big wedding present idea?”

Felicity turned on the projection of Ahch-to.

“What better present for the Jedi Grandmaster than a map to the first Jedi Temple?” Felicity grinned.

“Artoo? Is it true what Luke said? Do you have a copy of the Imperial database?”

Beep, bop.

“Can you find a file named ‘Map to Ahch-to?’”

A minute later the room was filled with a projection of the full star chart, the projection of Felicity’s piece fitting in perfectly.

“Bingo,” Felicity chuckled. “Artoo, call Maz Kanata. I have to adjust our honeymoon plans.”

“Keep your eyes closed,” Felicity covered Luke’s eyes with her hands as she stood behind the pilot’s chair on the private shuttle they had rented for their honeymoon.

“Felicity, Sweetheart I can’t land the ship if my eyes are closed,” Luke laughed. “Come on, I know you diverted our travel plans to have a stay over at another planet. Would you just tell me what the big surprise is so that I can launch the landing sequence without pulling a Rhiaon?”

“You know calling a ship crash ‘pulling a Rhiaon’ is not going to win you any brownie points with me.”

“No, but this will.”

Felicity yelped as Luke suddenly pulled her into his lap. She laughed as she reclined across his lap, his arm wrapped firmly around her waist to stop her from falling. Felicity arched her neck as he trailed fervent kisses up it. Felicity let out a moan as his lips hit the special spot right behind her earlobe that always made her go wild.

“Oh, yes, that’s the spot,” Felicity groaned.

“Now do I get to have my surprise?” Luke nuzzled the sensitive skin of her neck.

“Alright, you’ve earned it,” Felicity grinned. “But you still have to close your eyes.”

“Fine, but if we crash the ship, your bank account is the one paying the rental company for repairs.”

“Deal. Now close them.”

When the world went black, Luke felt his wife’s small hand wrap around his wrist. Relaxing his hand, Luke allowed Felicity to guide it towards her. His hand felt something warm and soft as she set it on what felt like the center of her chest.


“You know, Felicity, if you wanted to make love on the ship, all you had to do was ask,” Luke began trailing his hand down her breast only to be surprised by a smack.

“Hands where put them, Mister,” Felicity chastised bringing his hand back to the original spot.
“There will be plenty of time for that later. Right now we’re focusing on your surprise.”

“And what is my surprise?”

“Feel and find out.”

“I just tried and got smacked for it.”


His hand shifted to find a cord hanging from her neck. Gripping the string, he ran his hand down and extracted a small drawstring pouch from underneath her shirt.


“Go ahead,” Felicity consented.

Luke opened his eyes to observe the drawstring pouch around Felicity’s neck. It looked familiar, but he couldn’t place where he had seen it before. It was definitely Felicity’s possession, but he couldn’t recall the significance of it.

“Open it,” Felicity urged.

Luke did and find a small data chip inside. He failed to make the connection.


Felicity grinned, “Good. Now, I’ve put some coordinates in the computer. Land us there and put on your hiking boots. We’ve got a bit of a walk ahead of us.”

“How many freaking stairs are on this hill?” Felicity exclaimed as she and Luke walked up the ancient path built into the mountains.

“I can’t answer that considering I don’t know where we are,” Luke pointed out. He looked in interest as they came upon a cluster of strange huts shaped something like a beehive. “Felicity, does anyone live her? I don’t want to trespass.”


Luke paused, “So let me get this straight, the first day into our honeymoon you take me to a planet won’t tell me the name of, lead me to an island no one inhabits, and make me walk up a perilous cliff using stairs that are little more than ruins… Felicity, I trust you, but I have to ask. Has this been a long con where you married me for my money and now are going to kill me with no witnesses and claim it was an accident and take my fortune?”

“Of course not!” Felicity grinned and grabbed his arm, “You haven’t amended your will to make me your beneficiary yet. I’ll kill you once you’ve done that.”

Luke shook his head, unable to fight off his grin as Felicity laughed.

“Come on,” Felicity quickly pecked him on the lips. “I think it’s just over this hill.”

“Hey, what are you doing?” Luke frowned as Felicity suddenly started unclipping the lightsaber from his belt.
Felicity looked up at Luke and smiled, “Luke, Sweetheart, I love you. You’re brave, and loyal, and kind, and loving… but you’re also a total drama queen. And I know that when you see your surprise, you’ll want to dramatically summon your lightsaber, ignite it, and strike a pose. So I thought I’d help.”

Luke rolled his eyes, “I am not a drama queen.”

“Luke… you literally delayed rescuing Han from Jabba the Hutt just so you could do a fancy backflip.”

“I didn’t delay it for the backflip! …That was just a perk.”


Luke sighed, “…I suppose if there is the opportunity.”

He handed over the saber to a chorus of Felicity’s laughter.

“Let’s get moving,” Luke couldn’t help but crack a smile.

As Felicity had expected, at the top of the hill, the steps ended, as a grassy summit lay before them. On the opposite ledge were several stones, most of them lining the edge of the cliff. One short slab of rock stood out among the rest. It looked like a grave marker, but Felicity knew what it really was.

The couple walked forward into the summit, but Luke was surprised when Felicity suddenly came to a stop.

“Go on,” Felicity said as she caught Luke’s confused expression. “Look at the stone.”

Luke hesitated; he knew that whatever this place was, it would be special to him. He could feel the intensity of the Force on the island, not unlike the feeling of Dagobah. Luke was surprised and happy to see that Felicity had extended something Force based as her wedding gift to him, but it felt wrong not to share the moment of discovery with her.

“It’s alright,” Felicity encouraged her husband. Though not a Force Sensitive, Felicity did have somewhat a grasp on being able to read Luke’s expressions and emotions. “Go on without me. I want you to have this.”

Luke gave her a small smile and proceeded forward. He wasn’t sure what to expect, but he was in for a surprise as the slab of rock came better into view. Luke could see words etched upon it.

“Here marks the site where the founding Grandmaster of the Jedi Order first made contact with the Force.” Luke looked up at Felicity in shock, “Is this…”

Felicity grinned, held out his lightsaber and declared, “Luke Skywalker… welcome to Ahch-to.”

Luke let out a disbelieving huff of air. There he was on Ahch-to, the home to the first Jedi Temple, standing where the first Grandmaster had started it all.

As he looked at Felicity, he couldn’t help but lock the image of the scene into his mind. Standing across the summit was the woman he loved most in the galaxy. Brown hair tied back into a bun, hazel eyes shining at him in joy, arm outstretched, offering him his lightsaber.

“Go on,” Felicity smirked. “You know you want to.”
With a confident grin, Luke extended his hand and summoned his lightsaber. Igniting the brilliant emerald blade, Luke raised the saber and struck a dramatic pose worthy of a poster.

Felicity couldn’t help but laugh at her husband’s larger than life antics. He may be a drama queen with delusions of grandeur and unfailing optimism, but Felicity wouldn’t want him any other way.

Luke joined in the laughter as he met her eyes. They had a vibrant spark burning in them that showed up far too rarely. He couldn’t believe how lucky he was to have her. Despite all the trauma Felicity had endured, and mental defenses she put up as a result, she was still able to put aside her issues with the Force and give Luke the best wedding present he could imagine.

And he had no idea how he was going to thank her.

Luke and Felicity’s heavy pants filled the air as they lied next to the fire in one of the huts. Covered only by a thin blanket, their clothing was scattered about the floor. Felicity rested her head against Luke’s muscular chest and his arms were wrapped securely around her waist.

“I told you there’d be time for that later,” Felicity grinned.

“You know, as Jedi Grandmaster, I don’t think I was supposed to do that here,” Luke said, lazily brushing his fingers in random patterns against the soft skin of Felicity’s thigh. “I’m pretty sure we just desecrated a holy site.”

“Luke, of all the things we usually do in the bedroom, we definitely didn’t desecrate this place as much as usual.” Felicity shifted onto her side so she was face to face with Luke. She ran a hand through his sandy hair and down his broad chest, “Besides, I don’t think the Jedi introduced the no attachments rule until they were long gone from this planet. I highly doubt you’re the first Jedi to bring a pretty girl into one of these huts.”

“No, but I’ve definitely brought the most beautiful.”

“Flatterer.”

“I try.” Luke sighed, “I don’t want to go to Takodana tomorrow.”

“I know, but Maz was already mad enough that I cut our trip short one day, I don’t think she’ll be too happy if we don’t show up tomorrow. Besides,” Felicity rolled over so that she was lying on top of him and rested her forehead against his, “the rest of the honeymoon is going to be mostly this anyways.”

Luke chuckled, “I suppose it is.”

He tilted his head up and captured her lips in a soft tender kiss. Felicity put her hand on his jaw, lightly pulling him in closer. Her eyes slipped close as Luke took charge, his lips caressing hers hungrily for several minutes.

When they finally pulled apart, Luke smiled, “Felicity, promise me something.”

“Anything,” Felicity vowed.

Luke took a deep breath.

“When we… When we have children,” Luke’s hand slid across the juncture of Felicity’s stomach and pelvis. His voice was almost a whisper. Though they had long ago discussed their desire to start
a family, being still so newlywed had made the topic somewhat taboo. “Promise me that we’ll bring them here.”

Felicity smiled, “I promise.”

Luke kissed her again, and slowly as the fire died, Luke and Felicity fell asleep in each other’s arms. The last thought that ran through their minds before sleep claimed them was that they could never imagine feeling any emotion but pure love for each other.

15 Days Before the Burning of Rornian

Felicity slammed the cup of hot chocolate on the desk in front of Luke.

“I sense you’re mad at me,” Luke observed.

“You think?” Felicity shot him a look before wrestling roughly with her office cabinets.

Luke sat in silence, watching her as he took a measure sip from his cup. He winced as the boiling water scalded his tongue. He knew he had messed up when she made him drinks that hot.

“Felicity,” Luke said politely, “when you took this job, we agreed that we wouldn’t let our personal issues interfere with our work relationship. When we are in this office we are professionals, not husband and wife. So if this display of anger is centered around a home issue, I must ask you to stop it and withhold it until we return to our home tonight. Can you consent to that?”

Felicity gave Luke a very dangerous look.

“… Please don’t live here for the next week,” Luke said meekly.

Felicity rolled her eyes.


Luke frowned at the building proposal file on the desk he had given to Felicity, “Well, I thought it would be like a pseudo-restaurant but without the need to hire waiters and such. A sort of gathering place at meal times to bring the community together.”

“Are you- IT’S NOT THE DINING HALL I’M UPSET ABOUT!”

“Then I’m afraid you’ve lost me.”

“BEN, LUKE! I’M ANGRY BECAUSE OF BEN!” Felicity shouted.


“Oh? That’s all you have to say?”

“Well, what do you want from me? I can’t change what happened!”

“Alyla Kene is dead, Luke!” Felicity snapped. “Ben killed her, and slashed Reine Agim seven times across the face, horribly scarring her face, all because they got between him and the charred mask of his dead Sith Lord grandfather. Two months ago, Ben Solo, your nephew killed a woman in cold blood, stole a ship, and ran away to join the First Order. And you want to build a dining hall.”
“What do you want me to do? Go after him? I would if I knew where to find him.”

“I want you to take this threat seriously. Luke, he’s going to come back… and he’s going to come after Rey.”

“I don’t believe that,” Luke looked away affronted, but Felicity could see how tightly he was clenching his fists.

“Well, I do believe it,” Felicity said. She took a deep breath, “And if I have to, I’ll take matters into my own hands.”

Luke’s head snapped back to her.

Dead seriousness in her eyes, Felicity warned Luke, “If you don’t take this seriously, I’m taking Rey and I’m leaving.”

“No! I will not put her in danger on the faint hope that Ben can be redeemed. I know he’s your nephew and you love him, but I’ve seen first hand what he can do. He may hesitate to harm his uncle’s child, but there will be no second thoughts when he remembers she’s mine. He will go after her, Luke. He’s determined to be the heir to the Skywalker legacy, and he will remove any obstacle in his way.”

“Alright,” Luke put his head in his hands; he couldn’t fight her words any longer. “What should we do?”

Felicity pulled something out of her desk drawer and tossed it to Luke.

It was the drawstring pouch.

Felicity answered, “We hide.”

14 Days Before the Burning of Rornian

“You want us to what?” Tyla Kinall exclaimed.

“We’re going to temporarily relocate to Ahch-to,” Luke repeated to the gathered community of Temple Village. They were holding a meeting in the meditation gardens, a peaceful place that would calm anyone and thus made the perfect meeting spot. Luke was standing in front of the assembly, gently gripping Rey’s shoulders as Felicity stood by his side supportively, daring anyone to refute him. “We can’t deny the danger that Ben Solo poses.”

Rey frowned in confusion, “Daddy, what’s wrong with Ben? Did he do something bad?”

“Hush now, Rey,” Luke whispered kindly but authoritatively. “I need to discuss this with the adults.”

“Come here, Sweetheart,” Felicity gently eased Rey into her arms. “Let’s be nice and quiet for Daddy right now, and Mommy will explain things later.”

“I don’t understand why we need to go anywhere,” Tyla crossed her arms. “If I recall correctly, Ben only has hatred for a certain non-Force Sensitive. Maybe instead of all of us relocating, Mrs. Skywalker goes somewhere else for a while.”
Felicity gave Tyla a sickly sweet grin, “Hey, Tyla, remind me when my daughter’s not around to tell you where you can go.”

“Ladies,” Zena Halcorr warned.

“Sorry,” Tyla and Felicity muttered.

Luke shook his head, “I’m not forcing anyone to leave. This is completely voluntarily, but I strongly urge that you come with us. There’s no knowing what might happen if Ben comes back.”

“And where exactly would we be going?” Reine Agim asked.

Luke could barely look his second-in-command in the eye. The scars marring the brown skin of her face served as a constant reminder of Ben’s betrayal and Alyla’s murder. Luke had had no doubt that Reine would join in on the exodus, but sting of Luke’s failure still hurt him.


The crowd gasped and loudly began chatting among themselves.

“You know where Ahch-to is?” Eline Typhe-Korden asked in shock. “How?”

“Long story short, my team stole a map from the Death Star,” Felicity answered. “Now, Luke and I have been to Ahch-to. We checked it out a few years back. There are existing structures that we can use at the start. However, there’s a finite amount of them, so unmarried people will be receiving a roommate… or hutmate. Masters, you will share quarters with your Padawans. Children will be with parents, and husbands with their wives obviously. Luke and I have already started working on some designs of further structures to build using materials that already exist on the planet. There’s some vegetation and lots of fish, but we will need to bring additional supplies. We should gather these as quickly as possible. I don’t want us leaving any later than a week from now.”

“So how long would we be going?” Doctor Kalonia asked. “I have a conference in a few weeks I was looking forward to attending.”

“Felicity and I were estimating about three months and hopefully we can come up with a plan of action by then,” Luke replied. “However, Doctor Kalonia, I was thinking that because you are not a Jedi and ergo not much of a target, that it might be best if you simply went to the conference on Kamino a few weeks ahead of time and stay there for a while. I’ll pay for all of your expenses.”

“Look, I take what’s happened very seriously,” Obik Kenu said, “but I don’t think running is the answer. We’ve never run away before, we stand and we fight honourably to protect our values. Why shouldn’t we face them with honour?”

“Because they won’t face us with the same,” a voice came from the back on the crowd.

Everyone turned to see Gavyn Kene sitting on a bench far away from the rest of the group. He was staring at a spot on the floor, with ghosts in his eyes. No one needed to say it, they all knew that it was the spot Gavyn had discovered his sister’s body.

Alyla and Gavyn were twins, and had never been apart. They had not been separated when they were abandoned at an Old Republic hospital and tested positive for Force Sensitivity. They had not been separated when they were taken in by the old Jedi Order to be raised until they could be trained. They had not been separated during Order 66 when a Jedi named Vonar Ghyron had taken them and fled the massacre of the Jedi Temple. They had not been separated when Vonar was caught when they were 13, when they were sold into slavery as a result, or any times they were resold. And they
had certainly never been separated when Luke and Felicity helped free them and accepted them into
the new Jedi Order.

Only death had managed to take Alyla from Gavyn, and the loss had taken its toll. The usually
sarcastic and peppy Gavyn Kene had become quiet and reserved since his sister’s murder. It was
hard losing Alyla… but it was worse seeing the affect it had on Gavyn.

“Ben won’t care what his goal is,” Gavyn’s voice was low, but no one dared speak over him. “If he
comes for Felicity, or Rey, or even Luke, and one of us gets in his way… he’ll kill us. It won’t
matter who, and it won’t matter how hard we fight. Ben Solo does not fight fair, and he will take
advantage of that fact. Do not offer him an olive branch. He’ll only use it as a distraction to murder
you… just as he used the distract of Alyla’s death to scar Reine.”

A heavy silence fell over the room as they thought of Alyla and what Ben had done.

With their daughter, Miri following, Zena Halcorr walked over to her husband and placed her hands
on his shoulders. Gavyn looked up, slightly comforted by the gesture and squeezed her hand in
thanks. He then turned to Miri and hugged his daughter tightly.

Luke could understand the heartbreak Gavyn was going through, imagining how it might feel if he
lost Leia. But Luke knew that as long as he had his wife and daughter by his side and his Jedi pupils
to have their backs, he had something worth living for.

“We’ll accompany you,” Zena declared.

“So will we,” Reine glanced at her husband Obik.

“I’ll take you up on your offer concerning Kamino,” Doctor Kalonia agreed.

One by one, each Jedi pledged to follow Luke to the temple on Ahch-to. Even Tyla Kinall
conceded, though Luke had to stipulate that her home be the furthest away from his family’s, and
that she and Felicity weren’t allowed next to a cliff together. Luke would honestly not put it past
either Tyla or Felicity to struggle with the urge not to throw the other off a cliff. They wouldn’t
actually do it… but better safe than sorry.

The Jedi quickly began making their plans to flee to Ahch-to. It was agreed that no one outside of
Temple Village was to be told where the Jedi went. It was up to Doctor Kalonia to inform all
outsiders that the Jedi were safe and had a plan.

There was just one small problem Luke didn’t account for.

“This isn’t fair,” Felicity sat that night on the edge of their bed, her head in her hands.

A mixture of sorrow and anger riddled her body as the curls of her brown hair cascaded down her
back, bathed in the moonlight. It was a beautiful sight that might have led to a moment of passion
had the couple not been so frustrated.

It had been hours since Luke got the unexpected call from Chancellor Mon Mothma informing Luke
that he had finally been summoned for his meeting. He and Felicity had spent the entire night
desperately searching for a way out, but the timing made things unfortunate. It would look terrible if
Luke refused to meet with the Senate to negotiate the extent of Jedi authority, and then the Jedi
mysteriously disappeared for several months. In fact, it could come across suspicious enough to look
like rebellion and vigilantism that could get the adults of the Jedi Order arrested, and the children
seized by Child Protective Services.

“I don’t have a choice,” Luke sighed, sitting next to his wife, his mechanical hand resting atop hers. “I have to go.”

“I don’t want you to,” Felicity leaned her head against his shoulder.

“I don’t want to either. I’d much rather spend the next month home with you and Rey.”

“What are we going to do?”

“We have to postpone the move. It’s too risky to keep both pieces of the map together, and I need Artoo with me on Hosnian Prime. I suppose the rest of you will have to work on getting things ready for the move.”

“When do you have to leave?” Felicity asked.

“Six days,” Luke answered. “I’ll spend all of that time helping however I can. We’ll just have to hope that nothing happens while I’m gone. And if something does-”

“We can worry about that in the morning. Right now there’s a more pressing issue I need to attend to.”

“Oh? What’s that?”

Felicity grinned.


“The issue that my husband is going to be away for an entire month,” Felicity crawled on top of him, pinning his wrists to the bed. Grinning like a minx, Felicity began unbuttoning his shirt, “I’ve only got six days to get my fill of him, so I’m going to need all the help I can get.”

“Well, I am most happy to help, Miss Rhiaon,” Luke chuckled as Felicity’s lips roamed his neck. “But first, I think I’m going to have to get a little more comfortable.”

Felicity squealed as Luke flipped her onto her back. After that they became nothing more than a flurry of limbs, laughter, and physicality of love.

3 Days Before the Burning of Rornian

“How’s the move going?” the Holo of Luke asked Felicity during their nightly transmission.

Luke had made a transmission earlier to say goodnight to Rey before she went to bed, but Luke would always make a second one later with his wife as they got ready for bed. The solar cycles of Rornian and Hosnian Prime were so similar that their time zones equated to about an hour apart, causing Luke and Felicity to go to bed roughly the same time. Anytime one was away from home, Luke and Felicity would comm each other and spend an hour or two just chatting so they did when they were home in bed together. It had become such a ritual for the pair that Felicity found it hard to sleep without her nightly chats with Luke.

“It’s going fine,” Felicity glanced back at the Holo as she brushed her hair at the nightstand. “We’re a little antsy, waiting for you to come back, but we’ve been able to gather more than enough supplies. We should be good for six months on Ahch-to.”
“That’s good to hear.” Luke sighed, his eyes following the brush, “I wish I was there with you, running that brush through your hair. Have I ever told you how much I love your hair?”

“Yes, and it’s usually followed by me joking that you love it so much you might have a fetish.”

“I can’t help it. Your hair is just so amazing. It’s so soft and silky and beautiful. I wish I was there, running my fingers through your hair as my lips suckled on the sensitive spot under your earlobe.”

Felicity smirked as she set down the brush, “Now, now, Master Skywalker, if this is going to become that kind of comm and least let me lock the door so Rey doesn’t wander in.”


“Misses you like crazy. She threw a fit today because I couldn’t do her hair as well as you.”

“Well, don’t tell her yet but I think Han’s going to make a visit next week to cheer her up.”

Felicity frowned, “Is that wise considering we’re secretly organizing an escape?”

“I’ve hinted to Han and Leia that something might be up with the Jedi, and Han doesn’t really ask questions like that.”

“Well, I’m not going to be relaxed until the three of us are safe and together.”

Luke was quiet.


“Yes?”

“If something happens… if you feel like something might compromise our plans for Ahch-to, I need you to promise me that you’ll hide the map.”

“Hide the map?”

“Put it in the safe in your office. No one will look there. Ahch-to needs to remain a safe haven, so if something goes wrong, I want you to hide the map. Can you promise me to do that?”

“Of course,” Felicity nodded.


“Anytime,” Felicity grinned. “Now, how about I lock the door and we go back to you telling me what you would do if you were here?”

Luke chuckled, “I love our transmissions.”

14 Hours Before the Burning of Rornian

Transmission Failed.

Felicity frowned at the error message for what felt like the thousandth time. It had been happening all day. No one in Temple Village could get a message to or from anywhere on Rornian. A team had been sent to the Communication Station, but there had been no response from them all day.
It worried Felicity, and she couldn’t help but feel a sense of dread. Nothing else had been wrong – the weather had been perfect, and day free of anything but the most minor of transgressions – yet Felicity thought that something felt off.

She knew there was no evidence to support her fear, but she had long ago learned to trust her gut.

Felicity took off the drawstring pouch from around her neck and pulled aside the Holo on her office wall that hid a safe. She opened it and placed the map to Ahch-to in the otherwise empty safe. Nothing might happen, but the map needed to be secured just in case.

*Passcode?* The safe requested as Felicity closed its door.

“Brendan Rhiaon died a martyr,” Felicity spoke her standard passcode and the safe happily accepted it.

‘Brendan Rhiaon died a martyr’ and ‘Burning Homestead’ were Felicity and Luke’s standard passcodes. Morbid, but no one would ever guess them. Felicity knew that if something happened to her, Luke would be able to guess the passcode and get the map.

“I’m probably being ridiculous,” Felicity muttered to herself. “Nothing’s going to happen.”

That night, Felicity woke to the scream of her daughter getting dragged out of bed by the Knights of Ren.

78 Days After the Burning of Rornian

"Brendan Rhiaon died a martyr.”

Approving the passcode, the safe unlocked. With a shaking hand, Luke Skywalker pulled open the door and found it. Untouched since Felicity had stored it, sitting in the safe was the drawstring pouch containing the map to Ahch-to.

Luke gave a sigh of relief. He knew his wife well enough to know that she would have locked the map away at the first sign of trouble, but he had been worried that the attack had been so unexpected that she hadn’t had to chance to do so.

He grabbed the pouch and tied it around his neck. The rest of the map that was stored on Artoo had been downloaded into the computer of Luke’s X-Wing. The plan had been that Luke was to meet the others on Ahch-to after he was done with the Senate.

Unfortunately, as most often happened in Luke Skywalker’s life, things had decidedly *not* gone according to plan. With his wife, daughter, and students dead, Luke was drifting aimlessly through life.


He didn't look back as he walked away.

So that is how a small piece of the map to Ahch-to secretly came into Luke Skywalker’s possession. Of course, it was not a complete secret as many of the still living people who had taken part in the story would later recall the events. Rumours would swirl about, supported by testimony from Doctor Kalonia that the Jedi were planning a move and that Luke did have possession of a map.
As for how that map fell into the hands of Lor San Tekka? Well, that is where our story continues…

90 Days After the Burning of Rornian

Rey was crying.

Luke viewed the sight with displeasure. Curled up in a hammock in an odd environment of machinery, Rey was clutching a doll and crying. She looked smaller than usual in the giant hammock. A patchwork blanket made from clothing including oddly enough an orange flight was wrapped around her. Tally marks were etched into one of the walls of the machinery, and an endless stretch of sand was all Luke could see beyond the door to the outside world.

Rey was dirty, shivering, and scared as she quietly sobbed. Luke wanted to run over to her and gather her in his arms, but he observed the scene as if a ghost. He was rooted to the spot and Rey did not appear to see him as she wept.

“Mommy, Daddy, please come back,” Rey cried. The tears running down her face broke Luke’s heart. “Please come back for me.”

A woman’s desperate scream filled the air. Rey and her hammock were gone, the image replaced with a brown haired woman trapped in a cell. She was pounding on wall, her cries drowned out by distant blaster fire.

Luke would recognize her face anywhere.

“LUKE!” Felicity screamed as she pounded on the wall frantically. “LUKE!”

In the distance, Luke could once again hear Rey’s sobs.

“Daddy, come back,” his little girl cried. “Please, come back.”

“YOU HAVE TO GO BACK, LUKE!” Felicity shrieked.

Suddenly it felt like whatever was freezing Luke in place melted away. Experimentally he lifted a hand, and to his joy found he could move. Luke couldn’t believe it; Felicity was alive and within arm’s reach.


Felicity stopped banging on the wall and turned to face him. She had a strange expression, like she had the still, blank face of a porcelain doll. Her eyes were glassy and unseeing, her posture mechanically straight, and it looked as if her joints were fused together.


“Felicity! Felicity!” Luke’s right arm wrapped around her waist and crushed her into his embrace. His left hand rested on her temple, holding her head against his chest. “I’m here. You’re safe.”

Something felt hot and sticky under his natural hand. Luke pulled it away from her head and froze with horror. His hand was covered in blood. His eyes flicked back to Felicity’s face. Blood was pouring profusely out of her temple which was marked with a fresh blaster mark.

“NO!” Luke cried out as Felicity collapsed in his arms like a rag doll. Falling to his knees, Luke lovingly cradled her suddenly cold body. Tears streamed down his face as he shook her, “Come on,
Felicity. Please, wake up! Please, wake up!”

Felicity’s corpse made no reply.

“NO! GOD, NO! FELICITY! FELICITY!”

Then, she spoke. Her lips did not move, nor her body revive, but around him like the wind, Felicity and Rey’s voices called to him.

“LUKE!”

“Daddy!”

Everything disappeared. Luke stood in utter blackness as the voices of his wife and daughter circled him.

“YOU HAVE TO GO BACK, LUKE!”

“Come back, Daddy! Come back!”

“YOU HAVE TO GO BACK!”

“You promised, Daddy!”

“GO BACK, LUKE!”

“Daddy!”

“YOU HAVE TO GET—”

Luke shot up straight in his bed.

He was breathing heavily, his heart beating wildly. The sweat on his bare chest stuck to the blanket belonging to the cheap hotel he was hiding himself away in.

Grabbing his aching head, Luke tried to blink away the images of his strange dream. Rey and Felicity had not been uncommon guests in his dream as of late, but there was something different in this dream.

Dream? …Or was it a vision?

It didn’t make sense; his wife and daughter were dead. He had seen Felicity’s execution for himself. There was no reason to question that his wife was gone.

The image of blood pouring from Felicity’s temple haunted Luke the most out of his dream/visions. Holding up his left hand, Luke had to double check that it wasn’t stained with red. To his relief it wasn’t, but he could still feel hot stickiness of it.

But what did it all mean? Why has Rey crying in a desert? Why was she covered in a blanket made from his suit? Why were she and Felicity begging him to go back somewhere?

Did it mean that… Rey was alive? Had Felicity’s ghost or influence in the afterlife teamed up with Rey to send him a message that she was waiting for him? No, Luke refused to let that hope take root. Rey wasn’t strong enough in the Force to connect with him, and a non-Force Sensitive speaking beyond the grave was impossible.
It had to have been a dream. Rey and Felicity were dead, and the dream was just Luke’s subconscious trying to reconcile the tragedy.

Why else would Luke have dreamt of Rey?

Little did he know, that night was the first time Rey’s desperate plea through the Force managed to connect to him.

And it wouldn’t be the last.

Chapter End Notes

So, I would just like to state for the record that Felicity having a line about washing blood from her hands and then Luke having a vision of her blood on his hands was totally not intentional. Nor was Luke seeing Felicity’s blood on his hands meant to be a metaphor for him blaming himself for what happened to her. Those were just happy (or maybe unhappy) coincidences.

Also please send me lots of reviews for this chapter! It’s my birthday and I’ve given you a supersized chapter. What more does a girl need to do to get reviews?
**Desperate to Sleep**

Chapter Summary

While Luke unknowingly connects to Rey in his dreams, Felicity's influence causes Rey to make some friends.

Chapter Notes

So the chapter ran away on me again causing me to split it in half. So, good news: quicker updates for this and the next chapter, but the bad news is we’re yet another chapter away from the reunion. However, it absolutely will be taking place in chapter fourteen so you guys can stop ending every review with “how much longer until the reunion?” Chapter fourteen, I swear.

As for when will TFA kick in… according to my plan Chapter Twenty-One. Then again, in the last twenty-four hours alone I’ve added three extra chapters to my outline (I’ve decided to do a mini story for every one of the fourteen years on Jakku, plus I’m going to rewrite the Rey portion of Before the Awakening, although the Finn and Poe parts won’t be canon in my story.) At this point TFA is just a distant dream.

… Why do I get the feeling Episode 8 is going to be out before I’m done the Episode 7 portion of this story?

---

**The Long Way Home**

Chapter Twelve

Desperate to Sleep

Luke Skywalker was lost.

Well… *metaphorically*. Luke knew exactly which backwater outer rim dust ball he was on. Not that it was much different from the dozen other backwater outer rim dust balls he had wandered between in the last two months.

Honestly? He had no plan of action. Sure, he had vague notions of running off to Ahch-to and wallowing for the rest of his life in the memories of what he had lost. It would be torture to live there; a constant stream of memories flooding into his mind as the slightest thing reminded him of his students or family. Of course, that was the whole idea, exiling himself was punishment for his failure to protect his students, wife, and daughter. Maybe he’d even take up residence in the hut he had made love to Felicity in all those years ago. Just to twist the knife a little more.

He already had the full map logged into the navi-computer of his X-Wing. Just the push of a button and he’d seal his fate.
Yet, he couldn’t bring himself to go. Instead he’d fly himself to a nothing planet where barely anyone could (or would care to) recognize him. He’d rent a room in a seedy inn and spend his days drinking at a bar, watching Leia’s desperate pleas on the HoloNet for someone to find him and bring him home.

If there was one thing Luke did regret about leaving, it was that he didn’t tell Han and Leia goodbye. He didn’t know why he hadn’t. Perhaps it was because he’d acted too quickly. Perhaps it was because he was ashamed of himself. Or perhaps he thought Chewie might break his promise and tell them what Ben did to Felicity.

That would make them understand.

The nights were unbearable. Dreams, visions, and nightmares of what could have happened and what had.

Rey dead in the sand. Ben dead by his hands. Felicity bleeding out on the floor of the First Order base. The Jedi successfully fleeing to Ahch-to. Rey alone and scared, crying herself to sleep. Felicity in his arms, crying in relief. Luke on his knees, crying in grief. Rey as a beautiful grown woman fighting the First Order by his side. Felicity pounding on the door of prison cell, begging him to go back.

Not a night went by that he didn’t wake in a cold sweat, haunted by a dream of either the horrible reality of what had happened, what could have.

The ghosts of his mentors had obeyed Luke’s command to leave him alone, but the Force hadn’t. It spoke through his dreams and interrupted his days with visions. In the day he was strong enough to push them out of his mind, but in the dead of night he was too tired to resist. In fact, part of him didn’t want to resist. In his dreams they were alive. In his dreams he held Felicity, he watched Rey grow up, and he trained his students. In the dream world they were still there, and as long as he kept them in his mind, the ones he loved would never be banished to the black world of death and nothingness.

But it was the same message every night: go back. Rey begged him, Felicity begged him, Leia begged him. Yet he ignored them all. How could he ever go back? How could he ever start again? Replace them? Forget what they died for? And ultimately fail all over again?

He could never do that.

Eventually, Luke would be recognized by someone on the planet he was hiding on, so he would pack everything up, pay his tabs, and move on to the next planet.

Truth be told there wasn’t even much Luke had to pack. Stored in his X-Wing was a couple of credit chips, a few Holos, some basic supplies, his lightsaber, a spare glove for his mechanical hand, his hand repair kit, Rey’s doll, and some clothing. He had about three outfits, all of which were black. Luke used them as a sign of mourning, and honestly didn’t know if he could ever stand to wear any other colour for the rest of his life.

It wasn’t just his clothing Luke used as a sign of mourning, he had stopped keeping his hair the way Felicity liked it. Shaggy and unstyled, his hair resembled less of his appearance on the Second Death Star, and more like when he was on the First.

Plus, he had grown a beard. Luke Skywalker was known for his clean cut look, and had barely even considered facial hair an option. The one time he had decided to give it a try, the decision was firmly vetoed by his family. Leia had given him a twenty-minute lecture on the importance of public
appearance and maintaining a certain image, and Han had proclaimed that he looked like Ben Kenobi got hit by a speeder. When Luke called them out on how a family was supposed to be loving and supportive, Felicity had told him she loved him too much to support such a stupid decision. She then proceeded to refuse to sleep with Luke until he shaved.

To Luke’s credit, he lasted six weeks.

As such, growing a beard seemed to be a fitting punishment for Luke. He had destroyed his public appearance, earned Han’s taunts, taken on Ben Kenobi’s legacy as a shameful recluse, and would never again make love to his wife.

He couldn’t get rid of his lightsaber, however. True, it was as special to him as many of the things he had left behind, but it was not for sentimental reasons he continued to carry it. Nor was it for his protection. Truth be told, he was heartbroken enough that he had potentially become suicidal. Luke wouldn’t plan or attempt anything – heck he wouldn’t even imagine trying to hurt himself – but if someone were to try and kill him… Luke honestly wasn’t certain how hard he would fight back. The draw of living wasn’t nearly as great as it was to being reunited with his dead loved ones.

The reason he kept his lightsaber was probably the only noble thing he had done in his whole running away to become a hermit plan. Luke would not allow a lightsaber to be carelessly abandoned for anyone to claim. He would not risk letting a tool of justice fall into the wrong hands and let it take innocent lives.

That was also the reason he kept the drawstring bag around his neck. As far as Luke knew, the only completed map to Ahch-to on record was the one in his navi-computer. No one could find Ahch-to without the piece that hung around his neck, and that was the way he was going to keep it.

It was hard for Luke to stop being a Jedi; it had been a part of his life for so long. So that was how he would respect the legacies of those who had died for the Order. He would protect what little was left by withholding his lightsaber from Darkness, and keeping Ahch-to to himself. He would be the protector of the Jedi Order, and ensure its legacy – though not its operations – would live on beyond his death. He would spend the rest of his pitiful days tending to the site of the First Jedi Temple, and hiding the last Jedi lightsaber (the others had been burned at the memorial with their owners, and who knew where his father’s had ended up?)

Just the push of a button and he’d seal his fate.

And yet, he still couldn’t bring himself to go.

So, Luke Skywalker simply ordered himself another drink and watched the HoloNet recording of Leia begging him to come home.

Luke Skywalker was lost.

… Metaphorically.

Rey Rhiaon Skywalker was lost.

… Literally. Rey was lost. She had no clue where she was or how to get back home. Or at least what passed for her home these days.

Did she even have a home? Mommy said it had burned down, so where was their new home? Not Jakku, Rey was certain. No place was home if Mommy and Daddy weren’t there. Even her warm, comfy bed on Rornian wasn’t home when Mommy or Daddy went away on business.
Rey missed Mommy and Daddy. Why hadn’t they come back for her yet? What was taking so long? Didn’t they want her? Both Mommy and Daddy told her to stay where she was and then left her alone with bad people.

Well… maybe not bad people. Mommy left her with Mister Plutt, and while he wasn’t nice, he didn’t seem to be evil. When Daddy left her in the woods, however…

Unwanted memories flashed through Rey’s mind.

Rain pouring down from the sky.

Lightning and thunder crackling dangerously.

A figure emerging from the trees.

“Ben!” Rey crying out.

Rey hugging Ben.

“You came to save me!”

A scary look in Ben’s eyes.

“I’m sorry, Rey.”

A red lightsaber swinging down.

Rey couldn’t bear to remember anymore. The memories of that night were too scary. She didn’t want to remember what happened in the forest with Ben. She didn’t want to remember what happened with Mommy and Baku Ren by Daddy’s X-Wing. She didn’t want to remember the monsters dragging her out of bed. She wanted to forget all of it. She wanted to wake up and find it was all a dream.

But she never would.

Holding back tears, Rey looked around Niima Outpost in confusion. Unfamiliar places and people surrounded her, and not one friendly face appeared who would help her.

When Mommy first went away, Mister Plutt kept her cooped up in the walker. Well… first he had raided the walker for anything valuable, but luckily one of Mommy’s games had been exploring the walker and stashing anything of value in case Mommy needed to barter with Mister Plutt. Rey knew exactly where Mommy had put everything, but since Mister Plutt didn’t think to ask Rey, and Rey didn’t want to upset Mommy by revealing the secret, Rey kept quiet.

While Rey was confined in the walker, three times a day Mister Plutt would send someone to bring and cook her food. At first it was a little fun to Rey. She’d play make believe and pretend she was in some epic adventure like one of her family’s stories.

She’d be Grandma Padmé during the invasion of Naboo, and Great Uncles Obi-Wan Kenobi and Qui-Gon Jinn would come save her. Or she’d be Aunt Leia in the Death Star, and Daddy would come bursting into her cell in a Stormtrooper outfit saying, “I’m Luke Skywalker. I’ve come to rescue you.” Or she’d be Mommy trying to save the baby FN-2187 from the evil First Order, and Daddy would come pull her away to safety just in time, but tragically had to leave FN-2187 behind
and would get angry at Daddy, hitting him and yelling at him before collapsing in tears in his arms.

Rey wasn’t actually supposed to know that last story, but she’d overheard Uncle Diego talking about it one time. Actually, Mister Plutt had said Mommy had gone to the First Order. Rey wondered if Mommy had met up with FN-2187. Maybe Mommy would rescue him and bring him home with her when Mommy came to get Rey. Would that make FN-2187 her brother? Rey didn’t like that idea, but she really did want to meet him. She hoped FN-2187 would like her.

After a week of Plutt’s lackeys bringing Rey food, he had gone on a tirade about it wasting too much gas to go there and back three times a day. He was bound to his promise to Felicity to keep Rey in the walker, but she didn’t have to spend every minute there.

So Plutt changed his plans. Every morning one of his minions would drive to the walker, wake up Rey, and make her breakfast. He would then bring her into Niima where she was free to wander wherever she wanted until midday when she would return to the concession stand for lunch. Plutt had enough eyes in town to make sure Rey didn’t get in trouble, or that any of the locals got too friendly with her. Rey would then be free to wander until sundown when one of Plutt’s minions would bring her back to the walker and make her dinner.

They would then leave her to spend the cold nights alone and add another scratch to the wall. Rey knew Mommy told her not to touch the sharp object, but she wanted to make Mommy happy that she had continued keeping count. She didn’t even cross her tallies out of respect for Mommy.

Sometimes she would look at the tallies and frown. Rey knew how to count, but the tallies were starting to add up quite a bit. Without Mommy there to tell her, Rey had lost track of how many days she had been on Jakku, and the tallies were too frustrating for Rey to count.

If she had counted them, she would have known that she had been on Jakku for 157 days.

She had spent 118 of those days alone.

Rey hadn’t changed out of the clothing Mommy put her in. She was afraid if she did, Mommy might not recognize her and would accidentally bring home some other little girl. Not that Rey had seen any other little girls on Jakku, but Daddy had always said that their family had “the Skywalker curse” and anyone named Skywalker was cursed to have terrible luck.

She had always been confused about whether the curse applied to her since her name wasn’t Skywalker, but rather Rhiaon Skywalker. However, Mommy told her that after Mommy and Daddy got married, they both changed their names to Rhiaon Skywalker, which was apparently very strange for Daddy to do, but not Mommy? That part always confused Rey. Why did girls have to take boy names, but boys couldn’t take the girl’s name?

However, even though Mommy and Daddy were both called Rhiaon Skywalker, Daddy claimed to still be under the Skywalker Curse. True, professionally (Rey thought that was the right word. She had read it in one of Aunt Leia’s boring politic books that made no sense) Daddy continued to call himself Luke Skywalker, rather than his actual name of Luke Rhiaon Skywalker, but every now and then Mommy also blamed Daddy that she fallen victim to the curse and that she should never have become a Skywalker. That must mean that the Rhiaon Skywalker name was enough of a Skywalker for the curse to get her, and Rey didn’t want to take any chances. She was so afraid of the curse getting her, that Rey refused to even change the hairstyle Mommy had given her. Rey would do whatever it took not to fall victim to the curse Daddy warned her so many times about.

Of course, being five, Rey failed to understand Luke was joking.
Every night was the same for Rey. She would scratch a tally on the wall and then climb into the hammock Mommy had strung for her. Rey had taken the sleeping bag and Mommy’s clothing blanket and would cuddle up in them in the hammock. Clutching her pilot doll, Rey would cry, feeling so lonely. So afraid to leave.

At night, desperate to sleep, Rey would try with all her might to reach out into the Force and find Daddy. She could see him sometimes, but he didn’t look like the Daddy she knew. His hair was shaggy and unstyled, his eyes were sad, and he had beard.

She would focus on the image and push forward the image of herself bundled up in the hammock, clutching her doll and crying.

“Please, Daddy,” Rey cried. “Please, come back. You promised you’d come back. Come back, Daddy! Come back!”

Every night was the same for Luke. He would drink at the bar of the inn he was staying at and kept drinking until the pain was just an angry buzzing in his mind. He would then pay his tab and stumble back to his room.

Clumsily he would strip off his shirt, boots, and belt, and carelessly toss his lightsaber and effects on the dresser. He would go into the fresher to splash water on his face and stare silently at his reflection for twenty minutes, wondering what he was doing with his life.

Entering the bedroom, he would climb into bed and get under the covers, but not turn off the light. Instead he would stare at the wedding ring on his left hand for an hour, losing himself in memories of his wife. He would wonder if tonight was the night he finally admitted she was gone, he was a widower, and it was time to take the ring off.

His bed always felt like something was missing when Felicity wasn’t curled up next to him, but now knowing that she would never again be at his side, his bed felt cold and empty. The sight of the ring she had once slipped on his finger in exchange for a promise to love her as long as he loved was a knife to the heart.

Ben hadn’t even been kind enough to give her rings back to Luke. He would have liked to have just that small memento to hang onto. Maybe it would numb some of the pain and Luke could finally move on. But Ben had despised Felicity, and probably took great pleasure in knowing he had denied his uncle the small token of his enemy. And after what Ben had done to Felicity, Luke knew he could never recover them.

Of course with that thought Luke would only be reminded of the horrifying reason he hadn’t been able to bring Felicity’s body home. He didn’t know if he could ever forgive Ben for how he disposed of Felicity’s body. The act was horrifying, albeit not the worst thing he could have done to her. It was really the sentiment behind it, the cruel irony, and intentional strike at Luke that came with it that made what Ben did so unforgivable. If Ben had merely killed Felicity, he and Luke may have come to an understanding, but Ben had taken it one step too far.

Luke sighed. Though he refused to admit it to anyone, carrying the secret of what Ben had done was one of the reasons he had left. How long could he have kept it from Han and Leia? They didn’t need to carry that burden, and it would only bring them shame, horror, and regret. Luke couldn’t stand the idea that every time they looked at him, they would be reminded of what Ben did.

It was on those dark nights that Luke would do something he was ashamed of. No one knew, not even Chewbacca, but Luke had kept the holo Ben had slipped into his pocket. The holo of his wife
getting shot.

And Luke would watch it.

Over and over, Felicity’s muffled screams tearing at his heart as the blaster was raised to her temple. After a lifetime of fighting and never backing down, Felicity was powerless to avoid her fate. She begged for mercy, but none was shown.

Over and over, the trigger was pulled and she fell to the floor. Unlike his dreams, there was no blood pouring from Felicity’s head: a blast shot was a clean death, but at point blank range it would have hurt like hell.

Over and over Luke would wonder how she felt in that last moment. Was she afraid? Did it hurt? Did she think of him? Was a part of her happy that she would be reunited with those she loved and lost? What did she do when she reached the afterlife? Was she greeted by those she had loved and lost? Did she jump into Brendan’s arms? Did she pick up Rey and twirl her around? Did Rogue Squadron gather for a group hug? Did Luke’s Jedi praise how she fought to save them? Did she hug and thank Bail Organa? Did she slap Anakin Skywalker as she proclaimed so many times to be her plan if she encountered him in the afterlife? Did her father miraculously appear and they finally found reconciliation? Did the mother Felicity barely knew greet her? Did the mother Luke barely knew?

Over and over Luke listened to Kylo confirm that he hadn’t felt the death through the Force, and ergo Luke hadn’t either. Hux would explain and show footage that earlier they had held Felicity down and stuck a needle into the back of her neck. They injected her with a specially formulated serum primarily consisting of ysalamir blood that blocked Force Sensitives from sensing her in the Force. The Force could still be used against her, but Luke wouldn’t feel the moment she was shot.

Over and over Luke would watch the horrifying thing Ben did next to Felicity. The thing that would give him nightmares for years to come. The thing that if Luke could manage it, he would take with him to his grave.

Eventually he could watch it no more and would throw the disc across the room in anger. But just before it hit the floor and shattered, Luke would use the Force to cushion the landing so he could torture himself another night.

Then he would finally turn off the lights and try to cry himself to sleep.

It rarely worked.

At night, desperate to sleep, Luke would try with all his might to reach out into the Force and fend off the visions that barraged him. He could see them sometimes: Rey dirty and sunburnt on Jakku. Leia sobbing as another day passed with no sign of Luke. Han staring out at the horizon without a clue how to handle everything. Kylo begging the helmet of Darth Vader to speak to him. Anakin on the floor of the Lars Homestead workshop with his head in his hands. Obi-Wan muttering apologies as he sat on an ashen hill next to the molten banks of Mustafar. Felicity lying on the bench of a prison as she stared up blanking at the ceiling. Padmé crying in her apartment on Coruscant as the Jedi Temple burned. Lando knelt in front of Alyla Kene’s grave regretting the life he was too afraid to make with her.

There were dozens more he saw: people both living and dead, suffering through various scenarios both real and imagined.

But it was the image of Rey that haunted him the most.
He would focus on the image of Rey bundled up in the hammock, clutching her doll and crying.

“Please, Daddy,” Rey cried. “Please, come back. You promised you’d come back. Come back, Daddy! Come back!”

Luke sobbed as he punished himself for breaking that promise. Why hadn’t he gone back?

“Please, come back, Daddy. I miss you.”

Rey’s words sounded so much like the ones she had said during their nightly transmission the day before the Burning of Rornian. He had comforted her with hints of their move to Ahch-to and promises of the fun they would have there. Luke could imagine training Rey in the field Felicity had presented him his lightsaber. He could imagine telling her stories by the fire in the hut he had loved Felicity in all those years ago. He could imagine her getting tired of all the steps like her mother and him giving her a piggyback ride as he jokingly complained about having to carry Yoda like that all those years ago on Dagobah.

The ghost of Yoda had always liked to chuckle whenever Luke told that story. Luke had been none too pleased the day Anakin told him that had never been a part of Jedi training. Obi-Wan had tried to defend Yoda by saying he was doing what he could with the environment provided.

Yoda himself offered no further excuse than, “Old, am I. Keep up with you, how else could I? Hmm?”

Surprisingly, Luke found thinking of Ahch-to to be comforting. As his mind filled with visions of the ocean and the island, he felt the visions of Rey drift away.

The images flooded Rey’s mind as she pushed forward her own. They slipped into her mind so easily it felt like she was imagining it herself.

She imagined an ocean. She could see it. She could see the island.

And Luke Skywalker. She could feel his touch behind it. He was the greatest father she could ever have. He would have never disappointed her.

Luke felt the vision of Rey lessen and slip away. There was a certain serenity and comfort flooding through the Force. A relaxing feeling like the exhale of a deep, cleansing breath.

The images of Rey disappeared.

With a smile on her face, Rey Rhiaon Skywalker slept soundly, comforted by the Force and the images her father had sent her.

With a smile on his face, Luke Rhiaon Skywalker slept soundly, comforted by the Force and the images his daughter had sent him.

Little did he know, that night was the first time Luke managed to answer Rey back in the Force with comforting images of Ahch-to.
And it wouldn't be the last.

During the day when Rey was left to wander, Mister Plutt would always warn her not to go too far from the concession stand and not to lose track of what turns she had made. So of course, it was only natural that she had forgotten that she took three right turns, a left, two more rights, and then left twice.

It was her own fault for getting lost. She should have followed Mister Plutt’s warnings.

Looking around the Outpost, Rey had no clue how to get back to the concession stand. Had she been more mature, Rey could have come up with the idea to follow the scavengers who were coming in to trade their scrap to Plutt. But her underdeveloped brain could only think about how hot and thirsty she was, how her stomach was growling, and how much her skin hurt.

Her skin hurt a lot. She had turned as red as Admiral Akbar, and her skin had gotten hot and peely. It hurt too much to touch, but it was so itchy. She would cry as she sat huddled in the shade and scratched her painful skin, doing more damage than good.

Rey vaguely understood that it was sunburn. She had gotten it the year before, when it got extra hot on Rornian. She remembered Mommy calling it a “heatwave” and that when Daddy went on a business trip for a few weeks, Master Obik Kenu had “commandeered” (which Master Reine explained meant he took without Daddy’s permission) part of the money meant to build more homes, to get air conditioning installed in every building in Temple Village. Daddy was not happy when he got home.

Daddy was even more unhappy about what Mommy accidentally did to Rey. The day before Daddy came home, all the Jedi were so bogged down by the heat, Reine officially declared it a day off and everyone went to the lake to cool down and have fun. Mommy was supposed to put something called screen (or at least Rey thought it was called screen) on Rey, but fell asleep reading a HoloNovel in the shade while Rey played with the other children. Mommy later claimed she thought one of the other adults would have put the screen on Rey, but the others thought Mommy had done it. In the end, both Rey and Mommy got horrible sunburns and Daddy was really annoyed.

“Don’t give me that look,” Mommy had chastised Daddy, as Daddy rubbed Rey down with some lotion. “I said I was sorry.”

“I just don’t understand how this could have happened,” Daddy had replied. “I thought you’d be careful.”

“I was careful!”

“Not careful enough.”

“Well, I’m sorry, but not all of us grew up on planets with two suns,” Mommy had rolled her eyes. “I grew up on the planet of air conditioning in every building.”

“Speaking of,” Daddy had given Mommy a suspicious look, “I have a few question concerning the architecture budget and a certain withdrawal that was recently made.”

“Hey, had nothing to do with Obik’s little expenditure. If you’re looking into who authorized the withdrawal, you take that up with Reine.”

“Believe me. I will.”
“Oh, stop moping,” Mommy had laughed at the grumpy expression on Daddy’s face. “Not everyone can stand the heat like you, Desert Boy. The rest of us are very happy about the air conditioning, and as for the sunburn, it happens, Luke. Kids get sunburn, it’s not the end of the world.”

But as Rey struggled with the pain of her sunburn on Jakku, she couldn’t help but think it was the end of the world. Rey remembered a little about how Daddy treated it (mostly lotions Rey didn’t know where to find) and she had no idea how to stop from burning in the first place.

With one last look around, Rey gave up. She let the tears fall as she scurried towards a large tented structure that cast a lot of shade. Curling up against the entrance flap, Rey cried as she desperately scratched at her burns, her stomach hurting with hunger, and having no clue how to get back to Mister Plutt. Worse yet, not one person seemed to care about the little girl crying against the tent. Wasn’t there anyone willing to help her?

Suddenly the tent flap flew open and out stepped Quom Tinadar.

“What in the galaxy is that noise?” Quom looked around for the source of the high pitched gasping coming from outside his workshop tent. He looked down and was shocked to find a familiar little girl at his feet, “Why if it isn’t the Miracle Girl.”

Rey sniffed and looked up. She recognized the alien who Mommy had threatened into helping them.

“Hullo,” Rey muttered, hugging her legs tightly. She wasn’t sure if he was supposed to be a good guy or a bad guy. He seemed friendly, but Mommy had threatened to shoot him, and it wasn’t the joking way she usually threatened to shoot people.

“Are you okay? You don’t look too happy,” he sounded concerned, but Rey wouldn’t look him in the eye. When she said nothing, he asked, “You’re Rey Erso, right?”

Rey shrugged.

Quom’s brow furrowed. The girl needed help, but she clearly didn’t want it from him. He had half a mind to leave her alone like she wanted, but he remembered the promise he made to Felicity Erso (or whatever her name was) and knew he had to push on.

“Well, hello Miss Erso,” Quom gave Rey his nicest smile. Unfortunately, due to his intimidating Vrogem features of long snout, sharp pointed teeth, and fur set in patterns around his mouth and eyes that conveniently always made him look like he was scowling, his nicest smile looked like something out of Rey’s nightmares. Quom winced at the withheld fear in Rey’s eyes, “My name’s Quom Tinadar. Do you remember me?”

Rey looked down at the ground and nodded, “You took Mommy’s rings.”

The smile on Quom’s face froze.

“Uh… yeah,” he said awkwardly. “But I can give them back if you want.”

“No,” Rey shook her head. “They’re Mommy’s. We don’t take things that belong to other people.”

“Smart girl. And you’re right, I shouldn’t have taken them. But if you don’t take them, how am I supposed to make up for taking them from your Mom?”
“Give them to her when she gets back.”

It hit Quom like a knife to the heart. Not only had Felicity Erso been forced to abandon her daughter and surrender herself to certain death, but Rey had no idea. Rey thought her mother was coming back.

Well, promise or no promise, Quom certainly wasn’t going to be the one to tell her otherwise. He may have owed the Erso Family a debt, but not one that big.

“Alright,” Quom said. “I’ll hold on to them for a while. So, do you want to tell me why you’re crying?”

Rey shook her head.

Quom was starting to remember why he’d never had a litter of pups.

“Look, Girlie, I just want to help you,” Quom insisted. “Your mom asked me to help care of you while she was gone.”

“She- She did?” Rey sniffed, wiping her nose on her arm. “I thought she wanted Mister Plutt to help me.”

“I don’t think anyone wants Unkar Plutt to help them. He’s far more of a scavenger than any of us who strip those ships in the desert. Your mom probably only asked him to help because he’s got all the food around here… that and an army of muscle you don’t want to be on the wrong side of. Me, on the other hand, she asked because she thought I could help you a lot better than Unkar Plutt. After all, I did kind of rescue you guys.”

“You made Mommy pay you for it.”

Quom sighed, “Listen, Rey, there’s something you should understand about Jakku; it’s a very rough place. People around here often can’t just give help without needing something in return. Resources are precious and few, so giving out of the kindness of your heart is hard to do when it might mean the difference between life and death. It’s not like, where’d you grow up?”

Rey shook her head, “Daddy says don’t tell personal things to people without Mommy and Daddy’s permission.”

“Smart guy. Alright, can you answer this? Where you grew up, is there food on the table everyday?”

Rey nodded.

“What about heat and electricity?”

“Oh huh.”

“A nice house with a bed where you can sleep safe and sound?”

She wakes with a jolt. Hands grabbing her, dragging her forward. Rey tries to scream but a hand covers her mouth. She grips the sheets but she goes over the edge of the bed and hits the floor. They’re surrounding her with raised crimson lightsabers.

“Don’t cry,” Cade Ren laughs cruelly. “We’ll make this quick.”

“MOMMY!” Rey screams as the Knights hold her down.
Rey shut her eyes tight and grabbed her head. She let out a sob as she tried to forget the night her bed no longer was safe.

“Hey,” a furry hand touched Rey’s shoulder. “Don’t cry.”

Rey looked up in surprise at Quom comforting her, "I’m sorry.”

“There’s nothing to apologize for,” Quom smiled; the girl really was her mother’s daughter. “I’m sorry if I scared you. I’m a pretty scary guy.”

“Not the scariest I’ve seen,” Rey tried to smile for him, but couldn’t forget the monsters who destroyed her home.

“I don’t know if I should be flattered,” Quom laughed, purposely avoiding the pain in Rey’s lighthearted tone. “Listen, what I was trying to say to that Jakku doesn’t have things like food whenever you want it. That’s why I had to ask your mom for something in return for help. But I crossed a line, and I shouldn’t have asked her for her rings. I asked your mom how I could make up for that and she told me to help you for her, so let me help. What’s wrong?”

Rey sniffed and held out her arms, “My arms hurt.”

Quom winced as he looked over Rey’s arms. It was by far the worst case of sunburn he had ever seen. Her skin was dark red, blistered, and peeling off in several layers. She was a tough little girl not to be screaming in pain.

“Ouch,” Quom said. “That’s not a pretty sight. Come in here, I’ve got something that’ll help.”

Rey hesitated but after a glance around making sure none of Mister Plutt’s men was around looking for her, she followed inside.

The workshop of Quom Tinadar was simple. It was a large tent, big enough to host a speeder. On the ground was some repurposed paneling, and he had a small scooter to roll under a speeder to work on it. There were various benches and cabinets of drawers filled with odds and ends: wires, tools, spare parts, cleaning supplies, power cells, and so on. In the far corner there was a curtained off area with a table, ration cooker, and a cot.

Quom was busy pulling things out of drawers, muttering to himself as Rey wandered into the tent. She tried to stay quiet and still, but being surrounded by so many tools and mechanical parts made her Skywalker half restless…and actually the Rhiaon side too.

Both her Uncle Brendan and her Grandfather Alaric had been big into fixing and designing machines. Felicity’s disinterest had come from her mother, Dinah’s side of the family. In fact, the Andromias family were supposedly very minimalistic and anti-machinery as much as possible. They were livid when Dinah married a technician.

Apparently Felicity had also inherited her mother’s need to marry the man who would piss off her father the most…though with all fairness to Alaric, Felicity had married the man who killed him.

Something shiny caught the corner of Rey’s eye. Rey was drawn to the bench nearest her, on top of which sat some copper wiring with a small flashing box attached. Not thinking, Rey reached out to grab it.

“Don’t touch that,” Quom ordered firmly but not harshly. “You can’t imagine how long it took for me to get a hold of one of those. I’m trying to fix up my R3-187K generator and you can’t get one to
run without a-

“Talis 13KR4 wiring conversion plug,” Rey said in unison with Quom. Seeing Quom’s shocked expression, Rey blushed and looked at the ground, “Daddy likes fixing things, and I like watching Daddy.”

“You are full of surprises, aren’t you Miracle Girl?”

Rey grinned.

“Now have a seat,” Quom gestured to a chair, his other hand holding what looked like a couple bundles of fabric. “I’m going to show you a trick to stop sunburn.”

Rey nodded and climbed into the chair.

“Hold out your arms,” Quom ordered.

Rey did as she was told. Quom unwound the two bundles of fabric and began wrapping them around Rey’s arms.

“The sun is going to burn any exposed flesh, so to stop you from getting all burned up, we have to cover you as best we can,” Quom explained, careful not to wind the fabric too tight against Rey’s wounds. “I want you wearing these all the time from now on, okay?”

“No!” Rey pulled her arms from his grasp. “I can’t change my clothes! Mommy needs to recognize me! I don’t want her bringing home another little girl.”

Quom couldn’t help but chuckle, “Your mom is a smart woman, I’m fairly certain she can tell the difference between her own daughter and another little girl. Besides, you’re not changing your clothes, you’re just… accessorizing.”

Rey crossed her arms, a resolute expression on her face.

“I do know she won’t recognize you if you’re a different colour than how she left you,” Quom said.

“Fine,” Rey held out her arms.

“Alright, that should do it,” Quom announced as he secured the white arm wraps. He then grabbed another, longer, thicker piece of fabric, “Now, let’s talk scarves.”

Twenty minutes later, Quom had fully educated Rey on how to wrap a scarf to protect her face and head from the sun. He had also educated her on the versatility of a scarf and how it could be used in a bind as a bandage, a sling, an oil rag, a shade from the sun, a very small tent or blanket, or even a napkin.

“There’s not limit to what you can use these handy guys for,” Quom proclaimed.

“Then why don’t you have one?” Rey’s eyes observed how Quom used merely the hood of his dark brown cloak as a shade from the sun. Though the cloak was shabby and threadbare, the cloak’s colour offset Quom’s black fur very nicely.

“I’m a Vrogem,” Quom explained. “We’re built differently than you humans. We have a special kind of fur on the tops of our heads that traps heat there, allowing the rest of our bodies to remain cool. People sometimes call us ‘Hot Heads’ because of that.”

Rey giggled.
“Laugh it up all you want, Miracle Girl,” Quom grinned waggling his long, pointed ears. “At least I don’t have to worry about sunburn. Now, come on. I’ve shown you how to prevent sunburn, now I’m going to show you how to fix it.”

Rey didn’t hesitate to take Quom’s furry hand and follow him out of the tent.

Doctor Aletha Kymeri had just finished setting up the last of her new medical equipment when Quom Tinadar walked into her tent with a little girl.

“Would you look at that,” Quom looked around, impressed. “Finally got the place back in order, Doctor.”

“The First Order certainly left quite a mess, and haggling around town for new equipment wasn’t the easiest thing,” Aletha raised an eyebrow at the sight of Quom holding the little girl’s hand, but didn’t comment. “People were surprisingly hostile to trading with me. You’d think people would want the only doctor in the outpost to be properly stocked.”

“It’s Plutt’s monopoly, that’s what it is.”

“Unfortunately, you’re right,” Aletha shook her head. “Anyways, what can I do for you?”

“Not me. Her.” Quom looked down at Rey, who was practically glued to his leg, “Have you met, Rey Erso?”

“I believe so.” Aletha got down on one knee to be at Rey’s eye level, “Hello, Rey. Do you remember me?”

Rey nodded, “You made me feel better when Mommy got scared. She said you were nice and I would be safe with you while she went to call Daddy.”

“You’ve got a great memory,” Aletha smiled. “Now, is there something wrong you need me to help you with?”

“My arms hurt,” Rey held them out.

“She hasn’t been covering up properly and got really bad sunburn,” Quom explained as Aletha began unwrapping Rey’s coverings. “I wrapped them up for her but she’s going to need some help.”

“Oh, this is bad. Really bad.” Aletha went over to a drawer and pulled out a tube of paste, “I’m going to put this on you. It might hurt a little but that means it’s working. Do you think you can hold still for me?”

Rey looked apprehensive but nodded.

“Alright then,” Aletha smiled.

Rey tried not to make faces as the paste burned her skin, but it hurt so badly.

“Hold still,” Aletha reminded as Rey squirmed in her seat. “We’re almost done… There. It’s probably going to hurt for the next half an hour, but I promise you’re going to feel a lot better.”

“Thank you, Missus Doctor,” Rey said, forgetting what Aletha’s name was.

“You can call me Aletha or Doctor Kymeri. Whichever you’re comfortable with. And actually it’s Ms. Doctor. I’m not married anymore.”
“What happened?”

Aletha gave a sad smile, “My husband died fighting in the Rebellion.”

“I’m sorry, Doctor Aletha. My mommy and daddy fought in the Rebellion,” Rey said proudly. “But they didn’t die.”

“Well that’s good they didn’t die.” Aletha ruffled Rey’s hair, “If they had, by my calculations you wouldn’t exist, and what a terrible tragedy that would be.”

“A life not worth living,” Quom winked.

Rey giggled at the adults’ antics.

“Here, Rey,” Aletha opened a cabinet and pulled out a bottle. She handed it to Rey, “I want you to have these.”

“What are they?” Rey squinted at the label. Mommy and Daddy had started to teach her to read, but she didn’t know what the words zinc, folic acid, or pyridoxine hydrochloride meant.

“Vitamins,” Aletha replied. “Rations aren’t good for a growing girl to live on alone. While these aren’t going to be a miracle pill, vitamins will help you get the things you need to develop strong bones and muscles and keep you healthy. I want you to take one every day with your…”

Aletha paused.

“Rey, how are you eating right now?” Aletha asked.

“Rations,” Rey replied. “Mommy paid Mister Plutt to give them to me.”

“How much and how often?”

“One portion, three times a day.”

Quom raised an eyebrow while Aletha gave a sigh of relief. Rey was eating better than both of them… put together.

“Okay, I want you to take one vitamin every day with your first meal,” Aletha instructed. “Only one, though. Promise?”

“Promise,” Rey vowed.

“Good,” Aletha smiled.

But as satisfied with Rey’s answer Aletha was, there was something bothering Quom.

“Where do you stay?” Quom asked.

Rey carefully thought over her words, “The place you found me and Mommy.”

Quom frowned, “Why are you here then? Why not stay at…”

He noticed Rey’s nervous look. She couldn’t hide where she lived from Quom, but she clearly was worried about telling Aletha. Her mother probably warned her not to tell anyone.

“Your place?” Quom finished.
Rey took a deep breath and explained the situation with Plutt as best she understood it. At the conclusion, Doctor Aletha and Mister Tinadar were exchanging a bad look. It was the kind of look Uncle Han would usually exchange with Mommy or Daddy or Uncle Chewie or Aunt Leia before proclaiming he had a bad feeling about this.

“So Plutt has you just…” Aletha was at a loss for words, “wander the outpost?”

“Oh huh,” Rey nodded.

Mister Quom and Doctor Aletha exchanged that look again.

“You know, Rey,” Aletha said, “if you’re every feeling lonely or bored, you can come see me for a while.”

“Or me,” Quom offered. “We can talk all about those things your dad fixes.”

“He’s really good at it,” Rey said proudly.

“He’s gotta be if his five-year-old knows what an Talis 13KR4 wiring conversion plug is.”

Aletha stared at Quom, “What is that? A radio?”

Quom frowned at Aletha but whatever he was going to say was lost to time when a yell ripped across the road.

“WHERE IS THE GIRL?”

There was no mistaking the voice of Unkar Plutt.

Rey whimpered, intimidated by the angry tone. Quom and Aletha shared yet another look. The two had never really been friends, or even much more than Aletha fixing up Quom every now and then. Yet, there was something about their mutual desire to care for Rey that had brought them together. They need not exchange words to communicate; in one simple glance they had set on their plan.

Aletha began rewrapping Rey’s arms with the fabric, running a soothing hand up and down Rey’s shoulder to relax her. While Aletha did that, Quom very calmly walked to the entrance of the tent and looked for Unkar Plutt.

“Plutt!” Quom called. “She’s over here!”

Unkar Plutt offered no thanks as he barged into the tent, roughly pushing Quom aside as his goons followed in.

“Where have you been?” Plutt demanded of Rey. “You were supposed to be at the stand two hours ago! Do you want to starve?”

“No,” Rey whimpered, looking down.

Aletha’s eyes narrowed, and she took up a protective position at Rey’s side, gripping the top of the chair.

“You don’t need to yell at her, Plutt,” Quom said boldly. “The girl got lost.”

“It’s her own fault,” Plutt said. “I warned her not to go too far. And what business is this of yours, anyway? She’s under my protection.”
“I was bringing her to you when I noticed how badly burnt her arms were,” Quom replied. “I brought her to the doctor so she could get treated.”

“And she was,” Aletha affirmed. Without showing any signs of fear of Plutt, Aletha looked to Rey, “Sunshine, your arms aren’t fully healed, so I want you to come to me every day for the next two weeks, and I’ll reapply the paste. Understood?”

“Uh huh,” Rey nodded. She liked the idea of spending time with Doctor Aletha. She was a very nice lady, and Mommy trusted her, so Rey could too.

“Now wait a minute,” Plutt interrupted. “I’m not having her run up a medical bill I’ll have to pay you.”

“You won’t have to,” Aletha countered. “It’s free.”

“Really?” Plutt didn’t sound convinced.

“Well… not exactly,” Aletha confessed. “When the First Order destroyed my equipment, her mother told me that Rey’s father would be willing to pay for replacement equipment.”

“Did she now?” Plutt sounded too interested and exchanged a suspicious look with his lead goon Roke.

“I’ve got a dozen witnesses who came verify my claim,” Aletha shrugged looking causal, but Quom could see her actions were measured carefully. “I’ve gathered what I can, but there’s still a few things I need that I’ll take him up on. I’ll factor her treatments into our negotiations. Oh, and I’ve given her a bottle of vitamins. She needs to take one every morning. You boys can supervise that.”

Quom took a step back in fear. No one ordered Unkar Plutt around. But every more terrifying was the “pleasant” smile he gave.

“Of course,” Plutt said in a far too jovial voice. “Come on, My Girl. Let’s get you back where you belong. Dirk, drive her home and give her her lunch when you get there.”

“What about her dinner?” Dirk asked, though he was staring back out the tent flap distracted by something shiny.

“Stay with her until then,” Plutt rolled his eyes. “Honestly, sometimes.”

“Come on, Girl!” Roke ordered.

Rey gave a reluctant look at Aletha and Quom. Aletha gave her a false smile and nodded. Rey dry swallowed and recalled a distant memory of her mother telling her to always walk into battle with your head held high. Gripping her bottle of vitamins, Rey found her courage and jumped off the chair.

“Thank you, Doctor Aletha,” Rey called as she scurried over to Dirk. “Thank you, Mister Quom. I’ll see you tomorrow, okay?”

“See you tomorrow, Sunshine,” Aletha smiled, entertained by the innocence of Rey’s youth that yet held a veiled hint of ferocity.

“See you, Miracle Girl,” Quom gave her a wink.

“So,” Dirk said as he and Rey stepped out of the tent. “What is a vitamin?”
Rey just giggled.

“Well, I should go too,” Quom made to exit but found the way blocked by Plutt and Roke.

There was silence as Plutt and Roke stared down Quom and Aletha. With Rey gone, the threat and danger lingered in the air. Plutt wasn’t happy.

“Be careful,” Plutt said simply.

And with that Plutt and Roke were gone.

Aletha and Quom stood in the continued silence.

“We made the right choice, right?” Quom asked, uncertain of his actions.

“Plutt can intimidate me all he wants,” Aletha replied. “I’m not going to let that little girl suffer.”

“You know,” Quom looked slyly at Aletha, “vitamins are really hard to get here on Jakku. You’re really just giving them all to her?”

“She’s a growing girl.”

“Nah, there’s more to this. Come on, giving up your precious stock of vitamins to the girl and free medical care? What’s the deal?”

“Her mother saved me,” Aletha explained. “When that Captain came looking for them, I refused to give them up. The Captain beat me and destroyed my equipment. Rey’s mother—”

“Felicity,” Quom interrupted.

“Felicity,” Aletha nodded, “she put herself between us. She saved me, she made sure I was alright, she provided an opportunity to let me escape, and she promised to reimburse me for my losses. She didn’t have to do any of that. There were dozens of others there that day, and none stepped in to help me. She protected me when no one else would, so I’m going to protect her daughter.”

“You know she’s probably dead, right?”

“Yeah, I figured.”

“Girl thinks she’s coming back. What do we do if she doesn’t?”

“We wait for her father,” Aletha replied. “Apparently his name’s Luke. I’ve got a little phrase to use as a code to identify myself, I think.”

Quom raised a brow, “That phrase wouldn’t happen to be, Thank you. Anytime.”

Aletha raised a brow back, “And how would you know that?”

“Long story short, I accidentally stole her wedding rings,” Quom pulled the cord with them out from under his shirt.

“How do you accidentally steal her wedding rings?”

“Fine, I extorted her, regretted it, and now I’m watching over Rey to pay back my debt.”

“Why don’t you just give the rings back?”
“I’ve tried twice now. At this point, the onus is not on me!”

Aletha chuckled as she walked towards the tent entrance.

“So what do we do now?” Quom asked, following her.

“We wait for this Luke to come back and take care of her until then,” Aletha replied.

“Wait about Plutt? Aren’t you worried he’s going to get a little annoyed about us meddling in what I assume is his meal ticket.”

“Meal ticket?”

“Based on Plutt’s dedication to the girl and the value of Mrs. Felicity Erso’s wedding ring, I’m going to guess that Mr. Luke Erso is pretty well off,” Quom held up Felicity’s engagement ring.

Aletha’s eyes widened at the sight, “Maybe I should think about charging him for Rey’s medical costs.”

“Tell me, Doctor, do you taken insurance in this little backwater outpost?”

“Scavengers,” Aletha shook her head. She held open the tent flap, “Now, go on. You’ve got some ships to scavenge and you’re burning daylight.”

Quom chuckled as he made to pass Aletha, but he suddenly came to a stop.

“What is it?” Aletha asked.

“Take a look,” Quom replied.

Aletha joined Quom outside the tent and stopped short at the sight across the road. Plutt was furiously yelling at his goons, pointing back at her medical tent. They could make out the names Tinadar and Kymeri among his shouting.

“Are you thinking what I’m thinking?” Quom asked.

“Yep.” Aletha sighed, “I have a bad feeling about this.”
The Kindness of Strangers

Chapter Summary

On the day of Felicity’s birthday, Aletha and Quom cross a line, and Luke makes a drunken mistake.

Chapter Notes

Fun fact, a lot of this chapter includes things directly from the book Rey’s Survival Guide. It’s actually a really interesting book that gives you the best idea on Rey’s life on Jakku, and I’ve referenced it a few times in the past. In fact, Felicity teaching Rey to disconnect the fuel slug tank and saying, “That stuff’s dangerous” is a direct quote. Check it out if you have the chance.

I AM A HORRIBLE LIAR. THE REUNION WILL NOT BE NEXT CHAPTER! THIS CHAPTER AGAIN GOT TOO BIG AND HAD TO BE SPLIT. IF I DIDN’T FOCUS SO MUCH ON CHARACTER’S FEELINGS AND PROPER DEVELOPMENT, THEN THIS CHAPTER WOULD HAVE BEEN THE ORIGINAL SIZE, BUT I CAN’T JUSTIFY NOT SPLITTING THIS CHAPTER WHEN THERE’S STILL ANOTHER FIVE SCENES THAT HAVE TO HAPPEN BEFORE LUKE CAN SET OFF FOR JAKKU.

Also, the life on Jakku portion got expanded again and now the start of TFA is going to be chapter 26.

I AM VERY SORRY.

The Long Way Home

Chapter Thirteen

The Kindness of Strangers

Dedicated to the lovely Thechosenbibliophile, a constant reviewer who submitted the 100th review.

“What’s the most important danger in the graveyard when scavenging?” Quom quizzed.

“Heat,” Rey automatically answered.

“What are the four things you can do to protect yourself from it?”

“Wear wrappings and sun goggles. Carry much more water than you need. Have replacement parts for your speeder. Leave the site ninety minutes before you think you should.”

“Gold star,” Quom grinned. “Now pass me that wrench.”
It had been two weeks since Quom found her crying, and Rey had spent every day with Quom, or Aletha on the days Quom ventured into the graveyard of ships to scavenge.

“Mister Quom?” Rey had asked the first time Quom had handed off Rey to Aletha. “Why are you going into the ship graveyard? Aren’t you a mechanic?”

“As much as I can be,” Quom had explained. “I only go out to the graveyard about once a month actually. I collect things that need repairs and bring them to my shop to fix up. Most scavengers take what only needs a little tweaking, but I do full restoration. In addition to my projects, sometimes people will bring me items they need fixing before they can sell it. You know, a lot of the stuff in the graveyard just needs a little elbow grease, but most scavengers don’t like thinking long term. When I run out of projects to work on, I go back out.”

“Why don’t you just stay here and get people to bring you stuff all the time?”

“People get really protective about their haul around these parts. They really don’t want to have to pay someone to fix something that either they can fix themselves, or that ends up costing more than they sell it for in the end. I would love it though, if I could get someone to either stay here and fix while I scavenge or vice versa.”

Rey loved spending time with Quom. He reminded her of Uncle Han the way he would get her to help him fix things and teach her all about survival and mechanics.

“How do you identify fuel, MG?” Quom used his nickname for Rey, which was short for Miracle Girl.

“By the colours they leave in the sand,” Rey answered proudly. “Rhydonium is chrome and can be salvaged but don’t touch it with your bare skin. Barium is green, but it’s poisonous so be careful handling it. Rubidium is purple and strontium is red. You see it, you back up. Even breathing them in can kill you.”

“Aletha’s right; you do have a great memory. Keep it up and you could write a book. Rey’s Survival Guide. Sounds like a bestseller.”

Rey laughed.

Although she preferred the company of Quom, Aletha was able to offer Rey something he couldn’t: stories about fighting in the Rebel Alliance. Even better was that Doctor Aletha had no connection to any of the Skywalker family, so she had a huge repertoire of material Rey hadn’t heard from her family or surplus of honorary uncles. It was especially interesting to hear stories about other aerial battles as Aletha’s late husband, Antar Kymeri had been a member of the Tierfon Yellow Aces, a squadron Rey had never even heard of.

Rey loved hearing tales of all the battles Antar fought and the gruesome injuries Aletha had fixed up over the years. There were a few stories Rey wondered if Mommy and Daddy might not want her to hear, but Aletha had never been great with the concept of “maybe you shouldn’t tell the five-year-old the story of how your husband got in a ship crash and had to cut off his own arm to escape and survive.”

Of course, Rey wasn’t great with the concept either and had simply proclaimed, “Daddy has a fake arm too! Except it’s not because it got pinned in a crash and he had to cut it off.”

“Well, what happened then?” Aletha had asked.

“His daddy cut it off.”
Aletha decided to stop asking questions about Rey’s family.

As Rey spent more time with Quom and Aletha, she found herself happy and not thinking about Mommy and Daddy so much. True, she would still leap to her feet every time a ship landed in Niima, but she was crying a lot less. There were even some nights where Rey didn’t feel sad enough to reach out to Daddy in the Force. Still, Rey missed her family and talked about them constantly, but Aletha and Quom were doing a good job of distracting her. It was a happy little arrangement they had come up with.

And one that Unkar Plutt didn’t like.

True, Rey still got her food and rides from him, but Aletha and Quom could sense the danger. It had become rare for them to look over their shoulder and not find one of Plutt’s cronies watching them. Even at times when they didn’t have Rey, Plutt’s men were still there like shadows. They were taking advantage of Quom and Aletha’s services a lot more, even coming in for the most minor of things like a small cut on their finger, or simply needing to turn a device off and back on again.

And they would ask question; lots and lots of questions. Most of them were directed to Rey when she was around. How long have you been here today? Did Doctor Kymeri feed you anything? Did you get that new scarf from Tinadar? What’s he been teaching you? What’s that new bottle of vitamins Kymeri gave you?

The questions for Aletha and Quom were even more intrusive. Why are you teaching her about the graveyard? Where have you taken her? What has she said about her family? Exactly how much does that bottle of vitamins cost? Why were you looking at children’s clothing at Tryvon’s stall yesterday? Has the child been doing anything weird or unusual, like magic tricks?

Plutt’s men hadn’t done anything… yet. It was the yet part that worried Quom and Aletha.

When darkness fell and Rey was long gone back to her walker for the day, they would secretly meet in each other’s tents. It was inconsistent whose place they would go to, as not to establish a pattern for Plutt. Two days at Quom’s, three at Aletha’s, alternate dates for a week, and so forth.

They would discuss Rey and what their plan of action was if something happened. While Rey had continued to hide certain facts from one person over the other, Aletha and Quom had told each other all they knew. Aletha knew about Rey’s walker, while Quom knew that when Aletha had been saved, Phasma had called Rey’s mother Felicity Rhiaon.

Unfortunately, neither of them had been familiar with the name, and didn’t know that she had stolen the Death Star plans (Luke Skywalker being the only name ever thrown around while Aletha was in the Alliance.) Nor did they know that Felicity Rhiaon was the name of Luke Skywalker’s wife, or that Rey was his daughter. Leia’s whole declaration of Rey’s death was not important enough news to reach Jakku, and indeed would not come to Jakku for over a decade.

Many nights Aletha and Quom would try to puzzle out the mystery of the names Erso, Rhiaon, Rey, Luke, Felicity, and Jyn. Eventually they settled on just calling the family Rey, Felicity, and Luke Erso and would change it if there was a new reason.

They had also decided on their plan of action which was to take as best care of Rey as possible without crossing a line with Plutt. This meant that sometimes they had to take a firm stance with Rey. Rey was not allowed to share her food with Aletha and Quom, even when she saw how little they had and how much she did. Rey was not allowed ask them to give her any rides, cook her food, or let her sleepover in their tents. Rey was not allowed to suggest that her parents were going to give the duo any form of compensation, and insisted to her that this all was merely out of the goodness of
their hearts.

Rey had been very confused by that one as she recalled Quom’s speech about how people on Jakku couldn’t do any such thing.

So with Plutt’s minions watching their every move, Aletha and Quom walked a tightrope to take care of Rey without upsetting Plutt. But here’s the thing about tightropes; no matter how good of an acrobat you are, you can’t walk one forever. Eventually, you will lose your balance and fall.

And ironically, it was a fall that did them in.

He should have been watching her more carefully, Quom chastised himself. In fact, he probably should have just sent her to Aletha that day. Rey was too curious for her own good. Quom had turned his back for one minute, just one minute.

Quom had been working on his speeder, a TS-742 that had always given him problems over the years. Rey had proclaimed his speeder was like her uncle’s ship, it kept breaking but Quom loved it so much that he would somehow patch the problem temporarily and leave the worry for another day.

It had stopped working yet again and Quom was doing a deep repair. Many parts were laid out on the floor of his workshop – many sharp parts – and he was too focused on his repairs to notice Rey. The accident was inevitable.

A loud shriek made Quom slam his head against the popped hood of the speeder and he spun around frantically to see the crying Rey. She was clutching her bloody knee, ripped open by a deep gash from something sharp she had tripped on. He immediately scooped her into his arms and made a beeline for Aletha’s tent.

“Quom’s got you, MG. Don’t cry,” Quom assured Rey as he ran through the town, eyes following him as they sought the source of the wailing. He had no time to think about the number of those eyes belonging to Plutt’s minions.

Aletha was tending to what she suspected to be a self-inflicted wound on Roke when Quom burst into her tent.

“Doc, you gotta help me!” Quom exclaimed as Rey cried in his arms.

“Put her on the cot,” Aletha was immediately on her feet. Rummaging through her drawers, Aletha asked, “What happened?”

“I was fixing my speeder and she cut herself on a part,” Quom explained as he set Rey down on the cot in the back of the tent that served as both surgery bed and Aletha’s own sleeping area.

Roke said nothing as he sat in his chair, lightly clutching the “injury” on his left arm. Observing the scene with a measured expression, Roke’s eyes felt like they were burning in Aletha’s back as she scrambled to fix Rey’s wound.

“This is really deep,” Aletha frowned as she put some rubbing alcohol on a cloth. “Hold still, Sunshine. This is going to hurt.”

Sharing a look with Aletha, Quom understood that Rey might lash out when Aletha put the cloth on her knee. Being in such a desolate place, medicine typically tended to be more of the makeshift/natural remedy/battlefield operation/frontier variety. Quom knew from experience that the alcohol Aletha used to clean wounds hurt twice as much as the more diluted solutions found in more civilized places, and with a gash that bad, Rey was going to hurt like hell.
Standing behind her, Quom wrapped his arms around Rey in a pseudo hug. The gesture was comforting with its outward appearance, but Quom gripped Rey firmly enough to restrain her from hurting Aletha.

“Be a good girl for the doctor, MG,” Quom cautioned Rey.

Sure enough, when the cloth met skin a piercing scream ripped through the tent and Rey jerked violently in Quom’s grasp. Having plenty of muscle on her, Quom was able to hold her back, pulling her away every time a limb got too close to Aletha. He stroked Rey’s hair and whispered comforting words in her ear, but she sobbed hard as the stinging pain shot through her body.

Aletha was resolute as ever, unphased by Rey’s actions. For someone who had once performed an impromptu appendectomy literally in the middle of a crossfire, putting some rubbing alcohol on a little girl’s knee was nothing.

“Just a few more seconds… There!” Aletha declared as she pulled away the cloth and grabbed the roll of bandages on the table. Wrapping up Rey’s wound, Aletha smiled and asked, “That wasn’t so bad, was it?”

Rey just sniffled.

“You’re a brave girl,” Quom praised. “Just like your Mom.”

That got a smile out of Rey.

“She gonna be okay?” Roke asked, reminding everyone of his presence. “Plutt isn’t going to be happy if you damaged his merchandise.”

Aletha narrowed her eyes at Roke’s cruel label, “She’ll be fine in the morning, but she needs to stay off her feet for the rest of the night. I suggest you take her home, otherwise she may aggravate the wound and develop more permanent injuries. The cut got very close to her tendon.”

Roke chuckled, “I can run it by Plutt, but I can already tell you that the answer’s going to be no. He likes his people in town during the busy periods. I don’t think he’d even send Dirk off mid-day.”

“Call him,” Quom challenged.

“Excuse me?”

“Call him. If he’s so determined to protect his… Quom couldn’t bring himself to call Rey merchandise, “…ward, then he’ll send her home. Call him.”

“Yes, call him,” Aletha smirked at Roke.

Roke looked in surprise between the two who dared to stand up to Plutt. He thought about it for a minute, then smiled and exited the tent.

As they listened to the vague arguing over Roke’s com outside, Aletha and Quom shared a look. Aletha nodded at Quom, and Quom nodded back before giving Rey’s shoulder a pat. They knew that they were about to do something very dangerous, but they would stand together as they did it.

After about twenty minutes, the voices outside stopped and Roke walked back into the tent, ready to deliver the verdict.

“Well?” Aletha pressed.
“Plutt says no,” Roke answered. “The girl’s going home at the regular time.”

“Did you tell him that if she doesn’t go home and rest that she could develop further injuries?”

“He said that if that happened, you and him can press her dad into paying more.”

“Are you kidding me?” Quom was disgusted. “He’d mess up this kid’s life to get more money?”

Roke smirked, “You have met Unkar Plutt, haven’t you?”

Quom gritted his teeth, resolving to make the dangerous and difficult decision he had to. He remembered how pale and dead Rey looked when he first came across her. He remembered how desperate and upset her mother was, and how much Felicity Erso had sacrificed to reunite her family. He had made a promise to help Rey when she needed it, and now was the time to pay back the debt he owed the Erso family. Even if that meant crossing Unkar Plutt and risking not only his food source, but his very life.

“Doc, can MG walk?” Quom asked sending her a significant look.

Aletha was silent for a moment as she processed the implications of Quom’s question.

“I’d rather she be carried and stay off her feet for the rest of the day,” Aletha answered, her tone sending the unspoken message to be careful.

“Alright,” Quom scooped Rey into his arms. “Let’s go, MG.”

“What are you doing?” Roke snapped.

“Well, if you’re not going to take her home, then I will,” Quom replied, staring at Roke with a look that said just try and take her from me. “Now, get out of my way.”

“Plutt’s not going to be happy about this,”

“Good thing I don’t care.”

“You take that girl home, and Plutt’s not giving her food tonight.”

Rey looked up and Quom fearfully, “Mister Quom-”

“It’s okay, Sunshine,” Aletha said, pulling a ration packet out of a drawer. It was one of her emergency stash. “Take this.”

Quom shifted Rey into the crook of his massive left arm and held up his right. Aletha tossed the ration to him, and he impressively caught it without dropping Rey.

“There,” Aletha declared. “Food and a ride. I sent some medical supplies with her the other day, so you should have bandages if they need to be changed. Do you need anything else?”

“Just for Roke to get out of my way,” Quom replied. He looked to Roke, “You going to cooperate?”

Roke looked between the pair a few times. The silence was terrifying as Roke processed the fact that Aletha and Quom had outright challenged and defied Unkar Plutt. He met their eyes multiple times as if waiting for one to crack. But the strength in their eyes did not fail, and in fact it seemed to increase. They weren’t going to back, consequences be damned.

“Alright,” Roke chuckled and surprised them by stepping aside. “If you’re sure.”
“Positive,” Quom pushed past Roke. He instructed Rey, “Say goodbye to the doctor, MG.”

“Bye, Doctor Aletha!” Rey called innocent to the dangerous situation formulating around her.

“Bye, Sunshine,” Aletha gave a false smile as Quom carried Rey off.

In a minute, they were gone.

Roke and Aletha said nothing as they stood there unmoving, waiting to see who made the first move. Aletha knew that she had just sealed her fate by committing the worst offence against Plutt possible: she had provided Rey with food. With Quom, she had challenged Plutt’s claim of reward from Luke Erso.

She looked Roke dead in the eye.

“I won’t hesitate to do it again,” Aletha avowed in a measured voice.

Roke gave a dark laugh, “Perfect.”

Quom probably pushed his luck by not only driving his barely repaired speeder out to Rey’s walker, but also by staying with her in it the rest of the day. The walker had changed slightly since the last time he had been there, but he couldn’t help but stay there. As much as Felicity Erso had tried to make the walker into a home, it was so lonely and he couldn’t bear leaving Rey alone in it.

Rey was ecstatic to show Quom her home. She showed him her hammock and her doll. She showed him her tally marks and proudly proclaimed that she was doing it for her Mommy. She showed him the parts of the walker she had explored and Quom checked through everything eliminating dangers Rey and her mother had overlooked. When it came to identifying dangers in the structure of a walker, Felicity Rhiaon may have been an architect but Quom Tinadar was a scavenger.

Quom was impressed with the presence of mind Rey demonstrated to him. She refused to divulge any secret stashes or even let him look in the duffle bag at the contents Felicity had once used to barter Rey’s life for with him. Even after he pointed that out, Rey still wouldn’t let him look inside.

He was a little disappointed as he had wanted to ask her about something he had seen in it that had been gnawing at his mind. Two silver tubes with buttons on the side that made Felicity Erso tense up when he touched them. Oh well, maybe some mysteries weren’t meant to be solved.

As much as he enjoyed spending time with Rey in her walker, it eventually started to get dark.

“I should get going,” Quom declared.

“What?” Rey’s eyes went wide. “You’re leaving now?”

“I have to, MG. It’s too dangerous to drive when it’s dark.”

“I just thought, maybe…” Rey trailed off, looking down at the sand guiltily.

“What?” Quom asked.

Rey took a deep breath, “Mister Quom, can you stay with me tonight?”

Quom was shocked, “What? Stay with you? No, I couldn’t-”

“It’s scary at night and… And I get sad and lonely. I thought maybe if you were around, I wouldn’t
Damn it. Rey’s eyes were filled with shame and tears and she looked so cutely pathetically. It wasn’t fair to Quom! He was already in so much trouble with Plutt, but staying overnight was taking it to a whole new level. And yet she look so damn cute and sad, how could he possibly say no?

Quom didn’t know what had brought Rey to Jakku. He didn’t know why the First Order was after them so much. He didn’t know why she was separated from her father or what was taking Luke Erso so damn long to get there. He didn’t know why death had been the only answer for Felicity Erso. He didn’t know what had happened to this innocent little girl, but he knew something bad had happened.

He had suspected for a while that Rey may have had a mild case of PTSD from whatever happened to her. There had been many times Quom had said something off hand only for Rey to suddenly go reeling into some horrifying memory he struggled to calm her down from. Yet, despite all the blanks that needed to be filled in, Quom had uncovered one answer.

"A nice house with a bed where you can sleep safe and sound?" Quom had asked all those weeks ago.

Rey shut her eyes tight and grabbed her head.

Quom sighed, “You know, you’re lucky you’re cute.”

Rey giggled, “I know.”

“Hey, don’t let it get to your head. You’re only cute for a human. You should see Vrogem children. Now come on, MG, let’s get you to bed.”

Quom took great care as he tucked Rey into the hammock. She seemed a lot calmer than normal, the usual sad look behind her eyes all but disappeared. He told Rey a story of one of his scavenging adventures, and settled down on the piece of panelling that Felicity had used for a bed.

He ended up falling asleep before Rey, but she didn’t mind. She was so relaxed by the thought that she could fall asleep knowing there was someone to protect her, and soon she had drifted off to sleep herself.

Though she didn’t realise it, that night she didn’t reach out to her father in the Force.

Luke had done some terrible things since the death of his wife and child. He had abandoned all responsibilities and fled into the night like a coward. He had walked away from his family and friends without so much a word. He had banished his mentors from contacting them, blaming them for failures they couldn’t fix. He had spent every waking moment in the last nearly three months getting drunk as a means to forget his pain. He had tortured himself by watching over and over again the footage of his wife getting shot in the head.

And yet, despite it all, Luke Skywalker had not yet hit rock bottom.
The night Quom stayed with Rey in her walker had actually been the day of Felicity Rhiaon’s forty-first birthday. Rey had no way of realising this fact, but Luke could not let himself forget.

Felicity had never been one for grandiose birthday celebrations. A Felicity Rhiaon birthday mainly consisted of a few presents in the morning and a com call with birthday greetings from Mon Mothma, the Damerons, and her friends in the Emissary Office. Diego, Han, Leia, and Chewbacca would come to Rornian for a visit. Lando would join them too, but it wasn’t so much that Felicity wanted him there as Lando never passed up an opportunity to come to Rornian to see Alyla and get a free meal. Felicity would try to go to work as normal, only to be dragged off by her friends to some simple activity like spending the day at the lake. The group plus a handful of Jedi Felicity was close to would have a nice dinner together, and then Leia and Han would take Ben and Rey for the night so Luke and Felicity could have an uninterrupted night of lovemaking.

That was probably one of the harder missing points for Luke that night. It had been almost four months since Felicity had been shot, and nearly seven since he had made love to her. At first his mourning had been focused on the general thought of living without her. Eventually it turned to more specific thoughts like never sleeping next to her, never kissing her, never having another child with her, never dancing with her, never stargazing with her, never comforting her while she cried, or never intimidating Rey’s first boyfriend (or girlfriend) with her. He, Felicity, and Han literally had a file folder filled with ideas on how to mess with Rey’s significant other should Rey even pursue a romantic relationship with someone.

But all of that had been focused on missing their emotional and romantic relationship, it was only when the shock had faded away and living without Felicity normalized that Luke suddenly was starting to deal with losing their physical relationship. Sure, he had thought about the fact that he would never get to make love to her again, but it was the first time he was struggling with craving it. And so, on the night of Felicity’s birthday, Luke found himself facing an unexpected question. How was he supposed to handle moments of lust when his wife was dead? Even worse, what was he supposed to do when that lust centered around thoughts of her? Was it wrong to feel that way? To think of her in that way? To center his thoughts on the physical attributes of hers he loved? Would doing something to… alleviate those urges dishonour Felicity’s memory? Of course, Luke would never take some other woman to bed to deal with the situation, but there were other things he could do.

Luke really had to stop this train of thought.

After a few drinks in, Luke called it an early night and tried to go to bed. Yet as he lay in bed, once again desperate to sleep, he found something odd. For the first time in nearly a month, Luke didn’t get the image of Rey in the desert begging him to come back.

Did that meant he was healing? No, nothing had changed since the previous night. In fact, with the painful reminder of Felicity’s birthday, Luke’s sorrow had probably increased in the last day cycle.

He tossed and turned for hours, struggling to get to sleep, but he couldn’t without the strange urges from the equally strange visions. Eventually, Luke gave up; he couldn’t sleep so he might as well go downstairs back to the bar and have a few more drinks.

No bothering to throw on his hooded cloak, Luke returned to the bar. He ordered a drink, his famous features broadcasting his identity to all the patrons. As his drink was placed in front of him, Luke threw it back in one go, not caring if anyone recognized him.
But as he set down his glass, he was surprised to find someone he recognized.

Luke blinked a few times, confused and stunned at the figure sitting by herself at a booth in the corner. Pale skin, petite stature, hazel eyes, angular facial lines, straight brown hair that fell a little ways past her shoulders, and the right corner of her mouth quirked in an irresistible smirk. Luke would know that face anywhere.

“Felicity,” Luke whispered as he stared at the woman who unmistakeably looked like his wife. “It can’t be. It’s impossible. It can’t be her.”

And Luke was right, it wasn’t her. True, the woman did look identical to Felicity Rhiaon in a genuinely terrifying case of doppelgängers, but it wasn’t her. It took Luke’s alcohol riddled brain several minutes to realize that the woman didn’t look like a forty-one-year-old Felicity Rhiaon, but rather a thirty-one-year-old Felicity Rhiaon, exactly like how Luke first met her.

Luke sighed, chastising himself for daring to hope. It hadn’t been the first time we thought he saw Felicity or Rey wandering around. The sight of brunette females had been tricking Luke for months. He had long last track of how many times he had embarrassed himself by running up to some strange woman thinking she was his wife. Even worse were the times he had approached little girls he mistook as Rey.

He turned away from Felicity’s double, ordered another drink. But it was too late, he had drawn the attention of the woman.

“Excuse me,” the woman approached Luke. “I don’t mean to interrupt, but I noticed you were looking at me.”

“Oh, yes,” Luke cleared his throat, looking away from the familiar face. He was slightly relieved to find that the woman’s voice didn’t sound identical to Felicity… although it was a little similar. “I’m sorry, I thought you looked like someone I know. Sorry for interrupting you.”

“You didn’t,” the woman had a grin that held a secret. “You’re Luke Skywalker, aren’t you?”


“Don’t worry,” the woman said. “I won’t tell anyone it’s you or that you’re here, I just am honored to meet you if you are. As in, you have no idea how much I’ve always wanted to meet you.”

“I guess there’s no point in hiding it,” Luke chuckled. He had always been amused when he met a fan. “Yes, I’m Luke Skywalker. And you are?”

“Sienna Ternan,” the woman replied, settling in the chair next to Luke. “So this woman you thought I was… that was Felicity Rhiaon?”

Luke gave a sad sigh, “Yeah, but uh… I knew it was impossible.”

“Don’t worry,” Sienna patted his hand in a comforting gesture, “it’s certainly not the first time. Ever since she came into the spotlight, I’ve had people constantly mistaking me for her. It’s actually gotten really uncomfortable lately with having to explain to people that no, I’m not Felicity Rhiaon who secretly faked her death.”

Luke was silent.

Sienna bit her lip, “I’m sorry for your loss. From what I heard, she was a wonderful woman.”
“She was,” Luke looked away, wiping a tear from his eye.

Sienna was quiet for a few moments, wrestling with her next words.

“Uh, Master Skywalker?” Sienna asked.


“Luke,” Sienna smiled. “I know it’s kind of embarrassing, and you probably get asked this all the time... but, can I take a picture with you?”

“A picture?” Luke repeated in surprise. It certainly wasn’t the first person to ask him that, but it was very unexpected for the situation.

“It’s stupid, but my friends and I have this sort of game,” Sienna explained. “Since I get mistaken so much for Felicity Rhiaon, and people actually ask for pictures with me, we started trying to find ways for me to meet and get a picture with different people who know- well... knew her.”

“You’re kidding?” Luke was surprised to find himself grinning. There was something so innocent and undemanding about the way she was speaking with him. She wasn’t like so many others who wanted to talk about nothing but his loss, but rather just talk about something fun.

“Yeah, we have this list of people associated with her, and we ranked them. Every picture that person arranges, you get a certain amount of points. After Felicity herself, you are obviously the highest ranked person. I’ve been trying to pull ahead in the points with my friends for years, but they’re much better at tracking your people down.”

Luke chuckled, “Who all have you met?”

“Loads. Mostly Rebels and Senators. But there’s been Admiral Akbar, her ex-fiancé, Pax, there was Diego Nalto, Nils Arlos, Lando Calrissian, and a few Jedi even. I’m surprised you haven’t heard about it.”

“To be honest, someone probably mentioned it in passing,” Luke shrugged. “So how many points am I worth?”

“500. Felicity was 1000. I’m currently at 347 points. My buddy, Eran’s at 738. I’d love to pull ahead, and also just have proof that I met, well, Luke freaking Skywalker himself.”

The smile on Luke’s face froze as an unwanted memory pushed to the forefront of his mind. A memory of the conversation that had pushed Luke and Felicity from people acquaintances to friends.

"So, you knew Shara too?" Felicity said at the funeral of Shara Bey. "Or are you here because you're well... Luke freaking Skywalker and can pretty much freely attend any Rebellion affiliated event you want?"

Luke chuckled, "As true as that may be, I actually did know Shara. In fact, her last mission with the Rebellion was helping me track down a Force Sensitive tree."

Felicity raised a brow, "A Force Sensitive tree? You're joking right?"

"Why would I joke about that?"

"Come on!" Felicity laughed. "It's hard enough to believe in the Force on its own, but now you're asking me to believe there are trees that are 'one with the Force?'"
Luke then recalled Felicity's speech at the Tenth Anniversary Celebration of the Battle of Yavin where they met, "You don't believe in the Force?"

"I believe it to an extent," Felicity admitted. "I believe you personally can sense people's emotions and move things with your mind, but the whole destiny aspect is where you lose me. There's no mystical force that decides my fate, and if there is – after everything it's taken from me – I want nothing to do with it."

Luke swallowed hard. He had to stop thinking about her. He had to stop thinking about how Felicity had ultimately been right about not wanting anything to do with a mystical force that takes everything one loves away from them.

And he had to stop thinking about how much Sienna looked like Felicity.

“Are you okay?” Sienna asked.


“Good. So where are we on that picture? You in?”

Luke grinned, “Only if you buy the next round.”

“Deal,” Sienna signalled to the bartender.

They had the bartender tended take the picture using Sienna’s tablet, and Luke had her join him in the next round of drinks… and the next… and the next. Luke found it very easy to losing himself in conversation with Sienna. It was probably from how much she looked like Felicity, and how much alcohol they were consuming. They had long lost track of how many drinks they had, each offering to buy the other just one more.

And that was how Luke spent his wife’s forty-first birthday. Lonely, missing the visions Rey would send him, unable to sleep, drinking copious amounts of alcohol, desiring to make love to Felicity once more, and chatting it up with a woman who looked identical to her.

It was a recipe for disaster.

“You know what I don’t get,” Sienna’s loud words were slurred. She and Luke were away past the point of no return level of drunk. To be honest, it was very surprising that neither of them had passed out. “Why the heck did it take you so long to get married?”

“Because I have very bad luck with women,” Luke chuckled. Both had lost their inhibitions on topics of conversation. Luke was so far gone, he probably would have regaled Sienna with a play-by-play of Rey’s conception if she asked. “I dated a lot of attention-seeking drama queens, and people who wanted my money. I even had one girlfriend, Calla, who was just flat out insane. When I got engaged to Felicity, Calla took out a hit on my sister.”

“You’re joking.”

“I am dead serious. But it wasn’t all my fault. My brother and sister apparently actually used to chase off any girl they thought wasn’t worthy of me.”

“Well, what made Felicity so worthy?” Sienna asked.

“Because it wasn’t just about being a romantic couple,” Luke said, gulping down another drink.
“That’s the secret to finding a good relationship. To making it work. Felicity and I are friends first, partners second, and lovers third. That’s my advice to you, young Padawan. Marry your best friend… or second best friend. I didn’t marry my best friend, Han. He married my sister after knocking her up in an Ewok village.”

Sienna burst out laughing, laughing harder and louder than what was appropriate.

“But that doesn’t mean that because she was my lover third, that she wasn’t a good lover,” Luke chuckled to himself. “As smart and intelligent and independent and loyal and passionate and smart and athletic and creative and smart and funny and caring and smart as she was… that woman had one hell of a body, and by God did she know how to use it. Oh, and she was smart. I think I forgot to say that.”

“You know, I don’t think I’m allowed to say she was pretty without looking arrogant,” Sienna smiled. “Do I really look like her?”

“Too much. You have no idea how many times I kept thinking you’re her and having to stop myself from doing something to you… I’m sorry. I don’t mean to be creepy. I promise I’m not going to try anything.”

“That’s ok… You don’t seem like you’d do something like that. Besides, we barely can stay on our bar stools. I think if you jumped on me, we’d both fall down.”

“Most likely,” Luke grabbed Sienna’s arm as she tipped precariously to the side.

Sienna laughed as Luke brought her upright, but he didn’t let go of her arm.

“So, she was attractive?” Sienna asked.


“I wish I can find someone who thought I was the most beautiful woman in the galaxy.”

“Well, considering how much you look like the woman I think deserves that title, I think you get at least half points from me.”

“Man, if you were like five years younger and unmarried, I probably would try something with you.”

“So that wasn’t your original intention when you can to talk to me?” Luke teased.

“I’m just after a picture and freeze booze,” Sienna laughed as the bartender refilled their glasses. “I guess I just need to find your doppelgänger.”

“If you do, promise to send me a wedding invite.”

“I will take that up on you, good sir!” Sienna downed her drink in time Luke. “So… tell me, what feature did you like most about her… or us I guess.”

“Her hair,” Luke admitted. “I think I’ve always had a thing for hair. Probably some strange incestuous thing considering how nice the hair is in my family. But I am not going down the road of incest… again.”

Sienna giggled again… she was definitely a happy drunk.

“But Felicity’s hair was just so long and soft and just the right shade of brown,” Luke had a faraway look in his eyes. “She usually just threw it in a bun, especially during formal events. My favorite part
was undoing her hair tie and it cascading down her shoulders.”

Sienna unconsciously tucked back a lock of her hair.

“Or when it fanned out around her on the bed as I laid atop, making love to her,” Luke continued, losing himself in memories. “Her expressive hazel eyes squeezed shut, her mouth hanging open in ecstasy. Those soft, sweet lips that I could just kiss all day. The way the taste lingers on my tongue.”

Sienna licked her lips.

“And her legs,” Luke chuckled. “Smooth and muscular. I miss the way they wrapped around my hips. I miss trailing my lips from calf to thigh, her moans getting louder as she squirmed in expectation.”

Sienna squirmed as she crossed her legs.

“I wish… I wish I could make love to her one last time. Kiss her. Touch her. Taste her. Make her call my name. Love her until she bucked against me and-”

Sienna’s lips were on his.


“I don’t know,” Sienna look genuinely embarrassed. “I just got lost in what you were saying and wondering how all those incredible things would feel. I didn’t mean to. I promise.”

“I believe you,” Luke said. “Look, I can’t deny the fact that I’m extremely attracted to you. How could I not be when you look so much like her? But that’s why I can’t do this. It wouldn’t be because I wanted you, it would be because I want her… God, I want her so much.”

Sienna looked down and considered her words. She was a sensible woman who had just wanted a picture with Luke Skywalker, but in the fog of alcohol and lust it had taken an abrupt turn. She couldn’t deny the fact that in that moment, she wanted Luke Skywalker. Not for bragging rights, not for fulfilling her teenage fantasies, but simply because she wanted to be touched the way he had described. And because this nice man had had his heart broke so terribly, and she wanted to make him feel happy again.

Then Sienna said something that she would spend the rest of her life hating herself for saying.

“What if you could have her?” Sienna asked.

Luke’s eyes met Sienna’s and he understood.

“No, I couldn’t,” Luke said, hating that a part of him liked the idea. “I couldn’t do that to you or her.”

“I wouldn’t tell anyone.”

“That’s not why I’m saying no.”

“Then why? You want her but you can’t have her. But you can have me, the closest approximation to her. Look, I don’t care what goes through your head. I don’t care if you call me her name, or pretend that I’m her. Let me help you. Let me give you closure. Luke… let me be her.”

Luke closed his eyes and kissed Sienna.
“Sienna,” Luke whispered as he pulled back for air.

“Felicity,” Sienna urged.


It was just a horrible set of factors that caused Luke to do it. Too much alcohol, too much sorrow, too much resemblance, too painful a day, and too much unbridled lust.

He kissed her as if he were kissing Felicity. Sure, it wasn’t the same, Sienna not knowing how Felicity would kiss him, and uttering a different set of moans, but it was close enough. As his lips moved along her jaw and down her neck, Luke could pretend for a moment that he had his wife again. And beneath the fuzz of the alcohol, he fully intended on ending this in his room.

Luke’s hands wrapped around her waist and pulled her off the bar. His lips ran across her neck as he began to lead her to the stairs to his room.

“Oh, Luke,” Sienna giggled as his scruffy facial hair pleasurable scratched against her neck. “I love your beard.”

It was like someone threw a bucket of ice water over his head.

Luke reeled back from Sienna, regaining his senses immediately. She liked his beard? The beard that Felicity had hated so much she refused to sleep with him, as in literally moving into the guest room to not share her bed with him?

The woman he was kissing was not Felicity and never could be. We was using some strange girl as a proxy for his dead wife. He was dishonouring this girl, he was dishonouring his wife, and he was dishonouring himself.

“I… I’m sorry, Sienna,” Luke said. “It was nice meeting you.”

Luke turned and went back up to his room alone. He threw himself on his bed and cried.

“I’m sorry, Felicity!” Luke begged into the Force. “I’m so sorry!”

A vision overtook his mind of Felicity curled up in the corner of a small room, crying hysterically into her hands.


On the night of Felicity’s forty-first birthday, filling with regret and drunk off his ass, Luke Skywalker cried himself to sleep.

The next morning, Luke found a holo recording disc slipped under his door. He was surprised to turn it on and find the recording of an extremely guilty Sienna Ternan.

“Luke, I left the inn this morning but I wanted you to know that I’m so sorry about last night,” Sienna’s recording said. “I didn’t mean for it to happen, and I’m sorry for even suggesting pretending to be her, much less actually going through with it. Thanks again for the picture, and I
wish you the best of luck in your travels. Goodbye and may the Force be with you.”

The recording flicked off and Luke smiled. Faults and all, Sienna Ternan appeared to be a genuinely nice girl. He hoped someday she’d find that Luke Skywalker doppelgänger.

So with a half smile on his face, Luke Skywalker packed up his room and moved on to the next planet.
The sun was just barely beginning to shine on Jakku, but Niima Outpost was already alive with the activities of Unkar Plutt and his minions. Crowding around the concession stand, they waited for Roke to return with his report.

“Well?” Unkar Plutt demanded as Roke approached.

“Confirmed,” Roke reported. “Tinadar didn’t come home last night. He gave the girl a ride and spent the night with her.”

“And Kymeri gave her food?”

“A ration packet. Tinadar probably cooked it for the kid.”

“Well, then, it seems we have a problem to deal with. Roke, take a few of the men to the walker to deal with Tinadar,” Plutt ordered.

“And the doctor?” Roke asked.

“I’ll deal with her myself,” Plutt grinned. “And when you’re done with Tinadar, bring him to the doctor’s. I think it’s time we three had a chat.”

Quom Tinadar was aware of the figure standing over him before he had even fully woken up. It took him a few moments to remember why he was sleeping on a piece of panelling in Rey Erso’s walker, but when he opened his eyes and saw Roke, it all came rushing back.
“Good morning,” Roke grinned, backed by four others of Unkar Plutt’s goons.

Panicked, Quom tried to jump to his feet, only for Roke to step on his chest, pinning him to the ground.


“Mister Quom?” a whimper came from Rey’s hammock. She was clutching her pilot doll, curled up, making the tiniest ball she could. Rey whispered as if she could magically make only Quom hear her words, “What’s going on?”

“And good morning to you, too,” Roke turned to Rey with a smile she knew meant no good. “Did you sleep well with Tinadar here last night?”

Rey gave a reluctant nod.

“Good,” Roke’s toothy grin was truly terrifying. “Now get a move on! Dirk’s taking you to the Outpost to have breakfast this morning.”

“What about Mister Quom?” Rey dared to ask.

“We have some… business to take care of.”

Quom didn’t like the look in Roke’s eyes.

Rey looked fearfully at Quom, “But—”

“MOVE!” Roke roared.

Rey clumsily scampered out of the hammock and hid herself behind Dirk’s legs.

“Dirk,” Roke shot a look at the goon.

Dirk grabbed Rey’s hand and lead her out of the tent, “I really like your doll. Where’d you get it?”

“Mommy made it,” Rey answered.

“That’s so cool! Do you think she could make me something?”

“I can ask her when she gets back.”

“Cool! I want an acklay.”

Pinned down by Roke, Quom listened nervously as a speeder started up and Rey and Dirk’s voices became more distant. No one said a word, the tension inside the walker building as Roke stared at the entrance of the walker… waiting.

And then the voices were gone.

“Take him!”

Quom didn’t have time to get away. The second Roke moved his foot, two goons grabbed Quom under his armpits and hauled him up. Quom tried to jerk from their grasp but the third goon slammed a fist into Quom’s face. Going limp in their arms, the goons forcibly dragged him out of the walker into the lonely desert.
Roke followed them, observing the situation clinically like he was a member of corporate upper management in Unkar Plutt Rations Incorporated. He was willing to let the other goons do the dirty work… until they threw Quom on the ground.

They beat him. A flurry of fists and kicks pounding his flesh. Eight arms and nine legs – Plutt’s goons were a diverse set of creatures – doing all they could to inflict as much pain on Quom as possible.

He tried to fight back, but there were four of them, each with at least a hundred pounds of muscle on him. Quom didn’t stand a chance. All he saw was hate, limbs, and spots of black. And he felt was unbelievable, unending pain. All he tasted was blood, dust, and sand. All he heard were his own screams. And all he smelt was… well, he was getting beaten in a desert, there honestly wasn’t much to smell.

It felt like it went on for hours, though admittedly Quom’s beating probably only lasted sixty minutes at the most. But it did cease, and when it did, Quom lay before them, a mess, unable to move, unable to do anything but moan in pain looking pathetic.

After an embarrassing stretch of time as the goons mocked and watched his humiliation, Roke gave a chuckle.

“Don’t get too comfortable, Tinadar,” Roke warned. “We’re not done yet.”

Quom was suddenly hoisted up by two of the goons. They dragged Quom to his own speeder – theirs having been taken by Dirk and Rey – and threw Quom into the backseat.

“Come on, Tinadar,” Roke climbed into the pilot’s seat. “We have to go see the doctor.”

Aletha was doing her weekly inventory when Unkar Plutt and a few of his goons walked into her tent. She tensed at the sight of them. It wasn’t their appearance that surprised her – she had been waiting for this since she and Quom dared to defy Plutt – but she was surprised when they starting hauling into her tent brand new, extremely expensive medical equipment.

“What’s this?” Aletha demanded. She was standing straight and slightly puffing out her chest to show she was standing her ground and that Plutt didn’t scare her.

“I’ve thought very hard about the offer Rey’s mother made you, and thought I’d help out,” Plutt explained. “I got you everything needed to replace what the First Order destroyed, so when her father comes he can just pay me for it rather than you having to go through all that hassle.”

“Is that so?” Aletha arched a brow. Observing her new equipment, she knew Plutt had bought many things she hadn’t originally possessed.

“I bought all the best equipment-”

“You mean the most expensive.

Plutt grinned, “Is there a difference?”

Aletha didn’t dignify a response, “I appreciate the gesture, Plutt, but I’m afraid this isn’t necessary. I can deal with her father myself, and besides, I’ve already obtained most of what I need.”

“Yeah… about that.”
Plutt snapped his fingers.

Aletha shrieked when one goon grabbed her by the waist, restraining her as the rest began smashing and destroying her old inventory.

“No! Stop!” Aletha screamed, struggling in the goon’s grasp. She cried out as the goon suddenly threw her to the ground and started beating her.

“That’s enough,” Plutt ordered after several minutes, though Aletha’s beating did not endure nearly as long as Quom’s. “The doctor has a patient to attend to.”

Four of Plutt’s men entered the tent, and Quom was suddenly thrown next to Aletha. Both of them were beaten and bloody, but Quom looked like he could barely move.

“Doc,” Quom moaned. “You okay?”

“It’s okay, Quom,” Aletha assured him. “We both knew what we were signing up for.”

“I know. And you know what’s funny?”

“What?”

“I’d do it again in a heartbeat.”

Aletha smiled and grabbed Quom’s hand, “Me too.”

Both were met with a swift kick to the face.

“Worth it,” Quom grinned.

The goons grabbed Quom and Aletha and sat them on Aletha’s cot. Plutt pulled up a chair across from them, his bulbous mass threatening to fracture it into kindling. His goons lined up behind him, forming a menacing wall of muscle.

“We have a problem,” Plutt began. “And that problem is the girl.”

Aletha sighed, “Plutt-”

“Quiet!” Plutt snapped. “I think you two misunderstand the situation. That girl is not yours to take care of. Sure, entertain her, keep an eye on her, give her lessons, give her free medical care even. But you do not give her food.”

Plutt’s burning eyes locked with Aletha’s.

She did not look away.

“You do not give her rides,” Plutt looked to Quom.

Quom did not look away.

“You don’t give her clothing. You don’t give her water. And you sure as hell don’t sleep at her feet like a hothead dog!”

“Hey!” Quom snapped at the Vrogem slur.

“In case you forget, her mother made a deal with me. Me!” Plutt roared. “Not either of you. I am her
protector and provider! I am the one to watch out for her! I am the one to keep her alive!”

“And what about comfortable?” Aletha challenged. “What about happy? That girl is heartbroken and lonely!”

“I don’t give a damn,” Plutt replied. “Her mother told me to keep her fed, clothed, hydrated, safe, and distracted. I didn’t agree to entertained or happy or wipe her tears at night. It is not my fault that the girl is heartbroken and lonely. It’s the fault of the mother who abandoned her.”

“Hey!” Quom snapped.

A ripple of indignation shot through Quom and Aletha. Plutt may have witnessed the moment Felicity Erso left her child, but they had been witnesses to how destroyed she had been by that decision.

“How dare you?” Aletha whispered, unable to say anything more.

“We all know that her mother is dead,” Plutt continued. “No doubt the First Order put a bolt through her temple the first chance they had. But you know who isn’t dead? Her father. Now, if you haven’t guessed yet, her father is a very rich man. One whom I plan to take full advantage of. If I have to take care of his brat, I’m going to get my money’s worth. But imagine what will happen if he comes here and the girl tells him, ‘No, Unkar Plutt didn’t take care of me. Aletha Kymeri and Quom Tinadar did.’ Well… then we’ll have a problem.”

Quom’s head snapped up.

“Why wouldn’t,” Aletha gasped.

“You both know I would,” Plutt smirked. “If that girl is going to be worth nothing to me, then she’s going to be worth nothing to you. Since these beatings have proven that you’re willing to endure violence for the girl, then maybe violence against her will make you behave.”

Quom’s eyes burned with hatred, “And what is going to stop me from telling her father about your threats?”

“Because from this moment on, the girl will always be within arm’s reach of my men,” Plutt answered. “The second you tell her father what I said, my man snaps her neck. If her father is going to kill me over something, I’m going to make sure it’s for a damn good reason.”

The hate coming off of Aletha and Quom in that moment was palpable.

“You disgust me,” Aletha whispered.

“Here’s how things are going to work from now on,” Plutt said. “You are going to graciously accept my gift of medical equipment and let me charge her father for the cost. We’ll just pretend that the items you originally gathered were the ones destroyed by the First Order, and the items they destroyed were actually destroyed by me. You replaced the items I destroyed, and the husband follows through on Rhiaon’s promise. Everything’s fair then.”
Aletha let out a mirthless chuckle.

Plutt ignored her, “Now when it comes to Rey, you can continue to watch her during the day, but if I catch you overstepping your bounds again then I’ll consider that as you deciding to take over the role of her caretaker. And we all know what that means. Do you understand?”

“Yes,” Aletha hissed through gritted teeth.

If looks could kill, the ones Quom and Aletha were giving Plutt would have killed him ten times over.

“Good,” Plutt smiled. “Come on, boys. We’re done here.”

The group thundered out the tent one by one, darkly joking among themselves about what just happened.

“Oh, Doctor?” Roke turned as he reached the tent flap. He was the final one to exit. He gestured to the broken glass and machinery on the floor as well as their bloody wounds “You might want to clean this place up. It’s hardly professional.”

Quom had to physically restrain Aletha from tearing out Roke’s throat.

Rey slipped away from Dirk the first moment she could. She had been scared for Mister Quom since Roke had pinned him to the ground. Then Plutt, Roke, and the other goons returned to the concession stand with bloody knuckles and joking about Mister Quom and Doctor Aletha. Rey knew she had get to them.

She was aware that one of the goons was tailing her, but she ran as fast as her little legs could carry her. Reaching Aletha’s tent, Rey would have thrown open the flap when she felt something jolt through the Force.

“Stop!” a ghostly voice ordered.

Rey failed to recognize the voice of Obi-Wan Kenobi, although unbeknownst to anyone, she had heard him, Yoda, and her grandfather through the Force before. Rey knew that she could trust the voices. The voices had always only said things that protected her, though she hadn’t yet figured out to have a conversation with them.

She didn’t find the phenomena of hearing them weird, having witnessed her own father talking to them through the Force. Rey had even secretly seen the blue outline of Anakin Skywalker talking to Daddy once.

Following Obi-Wan’s instructions, Rey paused at the tent flap and listened as Quom and Aletha spoke inside.

“We can’t just stop taking care of her, Doc,” Quom said.

“I know, but we need to figure out a way to do this without anyone getting hurt,” Aletha replied. “I’m willing to take as many beatings as possible, but if they go after Rey-”

A barrage of images filled Rey’s head. The Force revealed to her the events of that morning. Quom’s beating. Aletha’s attack. Plutt’s threat. Graciously, the Force spared Plutt’s discussion of Felicity’s likely death.
Rey hesitated outside the tent. She knew what she would see if she entered the tent: Aletha’s equipment destroyed and Quom and Aletha injured from their beatings. Beatings they had happily endured to protect her.

Rey was young and naïve, misunderstanding jokes about curses as literal, and unable to use common sense to find her way to Unkar Plutt without Quom’s help. But she did understand the concept of selflessly putting yourself in harm’s way to protect someone else. It was a complicated lesson she had learned a year previous from Uncle Han.

Uncle Han had shown up at their front door unannounced, as he usually did. Rey had been happy to greet him, racing forward to tackle him in a hug, but Mommy and Daddy had been very unhappy. Uncle Han was bruised and bloody, fresh from one of his many adventures.

Rey watched as Uncle Han had greeted Ben with an air of surprise, almost like he had forgotten the living location of his own son. The tension was increased when Han pulled Ben into an awkward hug, almost like an afterthought, only to quickly push him away when Ben hurt one of his bruised ribs. Ben had made a cold comment about how Uncle Han never bothered to visit him without getting beaten up, and Daddy told Ben to take Rey and go his room.

Ben had spent a long time with Rey in his room, ranting about how much he didn’t like his father. He then got frustrated when Rey failed to understand how someone couldn’t like their daddy, especially since it was Fun Uncle Han, and going on about how much she loved hers.

Eventually Ben decided to start beating the punching bag Mommy got him for his fifteenth birthday (the only time Felicity and Ben had actually genuinely gotten along.) Rey watched as Ben did the weird thing where he started muttering to himself like he was having a conversation with a person only he could hear. Rey always thought he must be speaking to Grandfather Skywalker as Ben talked about him a lot.

With Ben distracted, Rey took the opportunity to sneak downstairs.

Hiding behind the couch, Rey tried with all her might to block her Force Signature from her father. It was the very first thing Daddy taught his students as it was the first line of defence they had. An enemy can’t hurt you if they can’t find you.

“When are you going to stop all of this, Han?” Daddy sounded very unhappy as he helped clean up Uncle Han.

“Kid, if I wanted a passive aggressive lecture from a Skywalker, I would have gone home to Leia,” Uncle Han chuckled.

Daddy let out a noise that Rey didn’t think sounded happy.

“Don’t you give me that look, Kid,” Uncle Han said. “You get in as much trouble as I do.”

“That’s because people seek me out for trouble,” Daddy replied. “I don’t go and find it like you.”

“Oh please. Don’t make me laugh, Kid. You absolutely do go looking for trouble.”

“Do not.”

“Do too.”

“Do not.”
“Do too.”

“Knock it off, Boys!” Mommy’s voice called from the kitchen, “It’s really sad when Rey and Ben have more intellectual arguments than you two. And he’s right, Luke. Both you and Loud Mouth Solo go looking for trouble.”

Rey giggled at Mommy’s nickname for Uncle Han.

“Fine, but I’ve definitely cut back after Rey was born,” said Daddy. “I mean, honestly, don’t you think you’re getting too old for this? You’re forty-eight and have a fifteen-year-old son.”

“You say that as if Ben actually cares what I get up to.”

“Well, maybe if you tried spending a little less time getting into scrapes and more time at home with him-”

“Last time I checked his home was here with you,” Uncle Han snapped. “Maybe if you and Leia hadn’t insisted on sending him to live with you and Fliss when he was eleven I wouldn’t have messed up this whole father thing. I mean honestly, he thinks I didn’t want him, that I’m unworthy because I don’t have the Force, and that my closest female friend who I sent him to live with, is the devil.”

“Hey!” Mommy yelled from the kitchen.

“Look me in the eye and tell me he doesn’t think that, Rhiaon!” Uncle Han yelled back.

Rey didn’t need to see Daddy to know he was shaking his head.

“So what happened this time?” Daddy asked. “Promise me it wasn’t a gang.”

“Come on, Luke, you know I promised no more gangs as long as you’re around to keep me in line,” Uncle Han laughed.

“That does explain those four months I was on Malaita and you ended up dealing with Kanjiklub.”

“Oh no, I’m never messing around with Kanjiklub again. Believe you me.”

“So what was it then?”

“A buddy from my former smuggling days-”

“Former?”

“Earlier smuggling days,” Uncle Han corrected. “Think circa the time I won the Falcon from Lando. Chewie was away on Kashyyyk for a few months and I teamed up with a guy named Marklin. We were hired by some seedy characters to move some merchandise... Merchandise to be delivered to Zygerria.”

“Slaves,” Daddy said with no question in his voice.

“When we figured out what was going on, we refused to go to the pickup site, gave back the payment advance, and reported the operation to Imperials. I heard that there was a raid, the slaves were freed, and the slavers were personally executed by Vader... who had a surprisingly strict anti-slavery policy. For a man who did a magnitude of horrible things, I will admit that Vader did have morals when it came to the slave trade.”
“Benefits of being a former slave.”

“I’m still not sure I believe that story.”

“Han, there’s plenty of evidence to prove it.”

“I’m sorry, it’s just the part where you claim that he built Threepio that you lose me.”

Mommy once again called from the kitchen, “You have to admit that it only makes sense for Threepio to have been built by someone as evil as Vader.”

“Felicity, I don’t mind you eavesdropping while making lunch, but could you please stop calling my father evil?” Daddy sounded very annoyed. “I don’t want Rey to overhear and develop preconceived notions.”

“I make no promises.”

Daddy sighed and Rey giggled again from behind the couch.

Uncle Han shifted in his seat.

“Go on,” Daddy urged.

“Marklin and I went our separate ways,” Uncle Han continued. “Marklin reformed himself, settled down, and had a few kids. We ran into each other a few years back and exchanged numbers in case either of us needed a favor.”

“And he needed a favor.”

“The guys we turned in were part of a larger operation who wanted revenge for what we did. Marklin disappeared off their radar, but they’ve given me trouble a few times over the years. They even threatened to go after Ben once, but dropped that notion when I reminded them if they did that, they would be hunted down not only by me, but by a Far Too Happy to Tap into the Dark Side Mama Nexu Senator, a Jedi Grandmaster Who Has Literally Murdered Millions, a Wookie With a Life Debt to Ben’s Father and a Hell of a Crossbow, a Strangely Protective Astro Droid You Don’t Want to Upset, and a Trigger Happy Emissary Who May Hate Ben but Will Shoot You in the Face If You Mess With Her Family.”

“We are not a family you want to cross. So what happened then?”

“They left me alone, but they found Marklin, kidnapped his seventeen-year-old daughter, and sold her into slavery. Marklin called me and we’ve spent the past six weeks tracking her down and rescuing her.”

“So you got these wounds by helping free a former smuggling buddy’s daughter from slavery?”

“You say that like it’s a bad thing,” Uncle Han accused. “Oh, don’t give me that look. I would have done it if it were Rey.”

Daddy sighed, “It’s different if it was Rey-”

“Are you actually going to continue that train of thought?”

“No. You’re right. I’m not.” Daddy sighed again, “It’s just, Han… I don’t know how many more times I can handle you showing up unannounced, beaten and bloody on my doorstep. It sets a bad example for Rey… and Leia yells at me.”
“Honestly I like it when she yells at me. It kind of makes me-”

“Are you actually going to continue that train of thought?”

“No. You’re right. I’m not,” Uncle Han chuckled. “Alright, fine, for Rey I’ll stop showing up uninvited like this. But in all fairness, corrupting her is in my job description as Fun Uncle Han.”

“I know,” Daddy said dryly. “Rey hasn’t stopped making fun of me for power convertors since your last visit.”

“It’s your own fault for telling me that story.”

“I didn’t tell you. Artoo showed you footage of it.”

“I always did like that droid.”

Daddy groaned, “There, you’re all fixed up.”

There was a bunch of clattering that must have meant Daddy was packing up the first aid kit.

“Come on,” Daddy ordered. “If you’re joining us for lunch, you at least are going to set the table.”

“Can I do the dishes instead and use this time to go visit that girl who is far too adorable to be your kid?” Uncle Han suggested.

“Step in this kitchen after doubting my fidelity, Solo, and I will slap you,” Mommy angrily called.

“I’ll say that’s a yes,” Daddy laughed.

Rey heard a set of footsteps leading away to the kitchen. Then Daddy’s voice sounded distantly in the kitchen, exchanging some words with Mommy who sounded mock-angry, but after a few words from Daddy, she laughed and Rey knew they probably had started kissing.

Uncle Han chuckled, and Rey was suddenly aware of the fact he was about to go looking for her. She was going to be in a lot of trouble if she got caught spying.

Rey was busy thinking about how to get upstairs before Uncle Han when he casually lifted his arms and stretched. Suddenly his arms came down, and scooped up Rey, plopping her on the couch in front of him.

Uncle Han grinned at her, “You may be able to use the Force to hide from your dad, Kiddo, but I would recognize that little giggle anywhere. Especially if it’s coming from right behind me.”

Rey giggled and launched herself at Uncle Han, “I missed you, Uncle Han.”

“I missed you too. Ow!” Uncle Han winced and gently pried off her arms from his torso. “Sorry, Sweetie. Uncle Han’s ribs hurt too much for that.”

“Sorry,” Rey looked down. “… Uncle Han?”

“What’s up, Kiddo?”

“Did you really get hurt saving that girl from slavery?”

“Yes.
“Slavery’s the bad thing that happened to Masters Alyla and Gavyn and the others, right?”

“Right again,” Uncle Han nodded.

“What is slavery?” Rey asked.

“Uh... Ask your parents.”

“But it’s a bad thing, right?”

“One of the worst things in the world,” Han nodded.

“Did getting beat up hurt?”

“A lot.”

“How much did your friend pay you?”

Uncle Han looked surprised, “He didn’t pay me, Sweetie.”

Rey frowned, “Why not?”

“Because saving people is not something you pay someone to do.”

“Daddy pays the Jedi to save people.”

“That’s different. That’s their job. I did this out of the kindness of my heart.”

Rey looked suspiciously at her uncle, “How close are you with this girl?”

Uncle Han burst out laughing, “Don’t worry, Kiddo, you’re still my Number Two Girl.”

“Number Two?”

“Aunt Leia would get really mad at me if she wasn’t my Number One. But don’t worry.” Han looked around conspiratorially, “It’s a very close race.”

Rey giggled, “You’re funny, Uncle Han.”

“I try my best. To answer your earlier, though, I never met Marklin’s daughter before this.”

“Why did you save her then? If there’s no reward and you don’t know her, why would you save her?”

Han wrapped an arm around his niece’s shoulder, “Rey, Sweetheart, I’m going to teach you something that it took me too long to learn. It’s something really vital in life, but I didn’t do until your dad showed me the importance of it.”

“What’s that?”

“It’s called being selfless.”

Rey rolled her eyes, “I know what selfish means, Uncle Han.”

“Not selfish,” Uncle Han chuckled. “Selfless. It means doing something for other people without any benefit to yourself. You remember the story of how I met your dad and brought the Death Star plans to Yavin?”
“Uh huh.”

“Remember how I was going to run away after I got my reward?”

“Yeah, and then you came back and saved Daddy.”

“Well, that was me being selfless,” Uncle Han explained. “There are going to be times in your life when people need help. People are going to be at risk of getting hurt, and only you can stop it. Now, sometimes there’s not going to be a reward or benefit for doing it, but it will help the other people. Rey, when that happens, I want you to promise me something.”

“What’s that?” Rey leaned forward eagerly.

Uncle Han looked her in the eye and without a trace of humour said, “If you can ever help someone and stop them from getting hurt, and in no way can you get hurt by helping them, I want you to promise me that you’ll do it.”

“What?”

“Because it’s the right thing. It’s what good people do. And sometimes just making someone else smile is the best reward. But you never know what’s going to end up happening because you chose to be selfless. Think about the Death Star. If I hadn’t come back and saved your dad, he would have been killed in that battle, I never would have had my best friend, your mom would be lonely having never met your dad, Aunt Leia would have been killed when the planet was blown up, Ben wouldn’t exist, Vader never would have turned back to the Light Side, the Empire would still reign, and worst of all, you wouldn’t exist. All that because I chose to be selfless and save that naïve farm kid I picked up on Tatooine. Promise me, Rey. Promise me you’ll be selfless.”

Rey nodded, amazed by Uncle Han’s words, “I promise, Uncle Han.”

“Good.” Uncle Han grinned and ruffled her hair, “Now, let’s go make fun of your dad.”

Rey giggled and followed Uncle Han into the kitchen.

As she came to the end of her memory, Rey was surprised to feel a tear running down her face. She missed Uncle Han, Daddy, and Mommy. What was taking them so long to get back to her?

Rey looked back at the tent and remembered what had triggered the memory. Mister Quom and Doctor Aletha had gotten beat up for taking care of her. And Plutt was going to hurt them even more if she continued to stay around them.

But if she didn’t…

Uncle Han’s words echoed in her head.

“If you can ever help someone and stop them from getting hurt, and in no way can you get hurt by helping them, I want you to promise me that you’ll do it.”

If she left them alone, no one would get hurt. It would be like the days before they found her. She would be sad and lonely, but no one would get hurt.

But she didn’t want to be sad and lonely. She had spent so many nights crying herself to sleep, afraid that the bad people were going to drag her out of bed again. That she would get hot and hungry and woozy and things would get dark like when Mommy got scared. She didn’t want to be lonely,
desperate to sleep, and waiting for her family. Rey wanted to sleep the way she had last night with Quom there to protect her.

She wouldn’t do it. She would be selfish and keep Mister Quom and Doctor Aletha around and not be lonely. Rey sent a mental apology to Uncle Han, and with the confidence of her parents walking into danger, Rey opened the flap of the tent.

Rey stopped dead. She saw the broken glass and equipment on the ground. She saw the pile of already used bandages soaked with Quom’s blood. She saw the bruises on Quom and Aletha’s faces. It was one thing to see the visions in the Force, but it was different when it was right in front of her.

This was the price of selfishness.

And it wasn’t a price Rey wanted to pay.

“Rey,” Aletha looked up in surprise. Worry etched across her face as her eyes flicked around at the mess left by Plutt’s goons. “Are you alright?”

“Uh huh,” Rey looked at the ground. “Is Mister Quom going to be okay?”

“They can’t keep me down that easily, MG,” Quom grinned.

But Rey couldn’t return the smile.

“I’m sorry that my place is such a disaster right now, Sunshine,” Aletha said as she began picking up the pile of bandages. “Give me a few seconds to finish up with Quom and he’ll take you to his place-”

“No,” Rey interrupted.

Aletha froze.

“What?” Quom blurted out.

“I’m not going to Mister Quom’s anymore,” Rey firmly said. “And I’m not staying with you, Doctor Aletha. Mister Plutt hurts you for taking care of me, and I don’t want you to get hurt anymore. So I came to say goodbye.”

Aletha and Quom shared a disbelieving look.

“Rey,” Aletha started in a coaxing voice, “you don’t have to-”

But Rey ran out the tent, refusing to let herself be swayed. She heard Aletha and Quom calling after her, but Rey pushed into the crowd and soon enough lost them.

She would stay away from that part of the outpost for a while. If she saw them, she would run and hide. Rey couldn’t trust herself not to break down and go back to them. The first few days Aletha and Quom tried to find her, but Rey hid until they gave up and stopped. It may have hurt all three of them for Rey to avoid them, but it would hurt so much more if she allowed anything to happen to them.

So Rey banished herself from their friendship. She followed her promise to Uncle Han and selflessly avoided putting Quom and Aletha in anymore danger.

And she had never felt more alone in her life.
“I don’t believe you,” Eran Kestral declared. “There’s no way you actually met Luke Skywalker. That picture’s got to be something you made on the computer.”

Sienna frowned at her friend, “Why would I make a fake picture that has him looking almost nothing like he usually looks?”

“She’s right,” Pollix Octhar agreed. “What’s the point of the beard?”

“Besides, we all know little Sienna here can’t use a computer to save her life,” Zeven Ruellis laughed as he perched himself on the arm of the couch next to Sienna.

Sienna rolled her eyes, and pushed Zeven off the couch.

“Ignore Eran,” Tendra Kestral playfully shoved her husband. “He’s just bitter you scored so many points.”

“Yeah, about that,” Zeven said, using the couch arm to pull himself off the floor. “Now that, you know, Rhiaon’s dead, should we reevaluate score values? I mean, none of us can arrange a photo with her anymore unless we do something very illegal like dig up her body.”

“Don’t the Jedi practice cremation?” Sienna asked.

“They do, but she wasn’t a Jedi,” Tendra answered. “I don’t know if they burned her, or buried her, or whatever else there is.”

“I heard there wasn’t even a body to bring home,” Pollix said.

“Hey, maybe she’s alive,” Zeven suggested.

“Don’t be ridiculous,” Tendra chastised.

“Fine, but I’ll be the one laughing when she makes her miraculous return.”

“You do that.”

“I just felt so bad for him,” Sienna admitted. “I actually met him on the night of Felicity’s birthday. He was so heartbroken.”

“Losing his wife must have been hard on him,” Tendra sadly shook her head. “How did he deal with meeting someone who looked so much like her?”

“Uh… It wasn’t his finest moment.”

Her friends or not, there was no way Sienna was about to admit that she and Luke had gotten near alcohol poisoning levels of drunk and then she offered to slept with him while pretending to be his dead wife.

In fact, Sienna was a little disappointed that the mass amounts of alcohol she had consumed hadn’t killed the brain cells containing that humiliating memory.

“I heard he’s taken it pretty badly, basically vanishing from even his own family,” Pollix said.

“Can you blame him?” Tendra asked. “I mean, we all know what happened to his little girl. And then with his wife’s death, well…”

“You gotta wonder what happened to her body,” Pollix mused.
“Frankly, considering how torn apart he was, I don’t think I want to know the answer,” Sienna shook her head.

Silence filled the room as the group imagined a thousand horrifying possibilities of what had been done to Felicity Rhiaon.

“… I still don’t believe you met him,” Evan suddenly declared.

Sienna just sighed.

He shouldn’t be there. Luke knew that he had no business returning to Rornian after running away like a coward. And yet somehow he found himself back in the place where everything went wrong.

His heart broke at the sight of Temple Village: it had been abandoned. All reconstruction stopped, the buildings boarded up, and the weeds overgrown. After his disappearance it appeared that the world had moved on from the Jedi Order. It was frightening how quickly people gave up on the notion of hope and greater purpose in the face of tragedy.

Then again, who was he to judge anyone for that?

Luke had had no idea what he would find when he returned to Rornian, but he was slightly relieved to find himself alone.

He had come to see them: the graves of those he had failed. With a heavy heart, Luke walked through the graveyard where the ashes of his fallen pupils had been buried. Every grave marker sent a stab of pain into his heart as he read the names of his friends.

While the graves were clearly cleaned up by someone every so often, there was one grave that stood out from the rest. The grave of Coria Pellis was extensively adorned with fresh flowers, Holos, thoroughly burnt candles, and other such mementos. Luke had no doubt who had been furbishing Coria’s grave. Queen Nerissa Scintel’s extraction of Zygerria from the New Republic had not been purely politically motivated. Nerissa and Coria had been lovers for almost two decades, a difficult long-distance relationship that they struggled to make work. Luke remembered Nerissa’s heartbroken reaction when he informed her of Coria’s death. In fact, Nerissa had been the first person Luke called after the massacre. At the time, he couldn’t imagine how it would feel to hear second hand of his wife’s death long past any opportunity to save her.

He wished he still didn’t know how it felt.

There was another grave that appeared to be tended more frequently than the rest. Blue morning glories had been planted at Alyla Kene’s grave. The flower’s dual meaning of love and mortality was a sad testament to the story of Alyla Kene, blooming in the morning but dead before the afternoon. Luke remembered how Lando Calrissian struggled to withhold tears, dirt caking his fingers as he planted them with nothing more than his own two hands. Luke had never truly understood the relationship between Lando and Alyla, but as Luke and Gavyn had watched Lando plant the flowers at her grave, he knew that whatever it was they felt, it was real.

Luke had done his best to comfort Lando after Alyla’s passing with Lando latching onto spending as much time with Rey as possible due to associating Rey with Alyla’s love of caring for young children. It had been hard for Luke to help Lando, for although he had lost many people in his life, he hadn’t lost someone who he loved like Lando loved Alyla.

But now that he had lost Felicity, Luke understood it far too well.
Luke sighed, looking up from Alyla’s grave at the large glowing tree that resided at the top of Burial Hill (the name of the graveyard as it was on a hill.) She had been their first loss on Rornian, and the Jedi had been unsure where exactly to bury her ashes. It had been Miri who suggested they bury her aunt under the large Force Sensitive tree that was planted at the top of the hill. It had been the very same tree that Shara Bey helped Luke steal from the Empire. Luke and Reine had planted it on Rornian two months later as a symbol of their start to rebuilding the Jedi Order.

It was a small hill the tree sat on, so Felicity had voiced concerns regarding its ability to provide enough space for the burials of the future generation. Luke had waved off the concern, saying that the hill would be for them as a memorial for the first generation of the New Jedi Order, and that the next generation would find somewhere else to put themselves.

Luke never imagined that it would become a memorial three months later when he buried his entire Jedi Order.

His eyes painfully scanned the names etched on the gravestones. Alyla Kene was buried next to her brother, Gavyn Kene, who was buried next to his daughter, Miri Halcorr-Kene, who was buried next to her mother, Zena Halcorr. Luke’s second-in-command, Reine Agim was buried at the top of the hill next to her husband, Obik Kenu. Tyla Kinall was near the bottom of the hill near Genko, and the husband and wife pair of Jafan Typhe, and Eline Typhe-Korden. Dozens more Jedi graves littered the hill, but it was the two graves directly under the tree that broke Luke’s heart.

Slowly approaching the graves, Luke placed a hand on each of the headstones. His eyes filled with tears as they read the inscriptions Luke never wanted to live to see.

Felicity Rhiaon Skywalker
Fighter, Mother, Lover.
Rogue One
21 BBY – 20 ABY
*

Rey Rhiaon Skywalker
Daughter, Niece, Friend.
A Light in the Dark
15 ABY – 20 ABY

Luke fell to his knees and sobbed. How could this have happened? Of course, the graves of his wife and child did not actually contain their bodies. Both had been cruelly lost to fate, but Luke had been unable to let them go without a memorial.

The most heart wrenching part of the grave inscriptions by far were Rey’s dates. Five years. *Five years.* Her life had only begun and her parents had wanted her so much. Why did the Force see no other option but to bring her life to such a quick end?

When Rey was born, Luke and Felicity weren’t exactly at their peak fertilities. They had become new parents at the ages of thirty-four and thirty-six. Of course that was due to the fact that they had already been twenty-nine and thirty-one when they met, then thirty-three and thirty-five when they married.
That said, Rey wasn’t the result of years of struggle in conceiving. In fact, Rey had been semi-unplanned. Recognizing the dangers of a later pregnancy, Luke and Felicity agreed to go off birth control for a year and see what happened. If nothing happened, then they would start making a serious effort, but of course during the year, Rey happened. Then after Felicity’s bout of Postpartum Depression, she decided that due to her age and fear of going through PPD again, she refused to ever get pregnant again. Luke and Felicity had actually started looking into the process of adopting their next child, but Ben Solo had thrown it all out of the window.

They were gone. Luke would never see his precious wife and child again, and there was nothing he could do about it.

“I’m sorry,” Luke whispered to his family’s graves. Getting to his feet, Luke looked back at the graves and his pupils and proclaimed, “I’m so sorry.”

It was a cruel irony that the graves were located underneath the Force Sensitive tree, which Luke had dubbed the Heart Tree. It had been ten years ago that he stood underneath that very tree and proclaimed Temple Village open for operation.

Luke stood proudly at the top of the hill, immaculate in his formal, black Jedi robes. Reine stood proudly at his left (Luke had always referred to her as his “Left Hand” because his dominant hand was the left instead of the right) and Ben stood to his right as a representative of the future generation who the Order would one day be passed to. The Jedi made up the first rows of the assembled audience, but Luke’s friends and family had been given a spot near the front.

As the crowd chattered and waited for Luke to give his speech, Luke’s eyes found Felicity’s in the crowd. She waved at him, and he gave her a large, goofy grin.

Though their attraction to each other was – unbeknownst to them – budding, both had come to the opening of the Temple on the arm of another. Luke with current girlfriend, Calla who would later prove to be his infamous crazy ex, and Felicity was with her podracer boyfriend, Drystan. It would be several months before either Luke or Felicity discovered their attraction to the other, but Calla and Drystan would be the last people they dated before getting together. In fact, Drystan would dump Felicity a mere two weeks later, and Calla would get dumped by Luke a week after that.

Luke cleared his throat and launched into his speech. He told the history of the Jedi Order, and how he discovered it through Obi-Wan Kenobi. He told the tale of his father’s redemption. Expectations and plans for the future were revealed, and lists of people were thanked for various contributions. The speech was long, and elegant, and clearly written by Leia, but there was one part that Luke remembered most of all.

“I promise that Temple Village will be a safe haven for all,” Luke declared. “There will be no judgement or rejection on these grounds. This is a welcoming place for anyone who wants to learn about the Force, regardless of whether or not you can use it. We all have a past. Whether you were a Rebel.”

Luke looked at Reine.

“Oh an Imperial.”

He looked at Tyla.

“Whether you sought me out the second you learned of your powers.”

Luke looked at Obik.
“Or decided not to use them at all.”

He looked at Leia.

“Whether you were a slave.”

Luke looked at Gavyn and Alyla.

“Or a slave master.”

He looked to Zena.

“Whether you always believed in the Force.”

He looked at Lor San Tekka.

“ Took some convincing.”

Luke smirked at Han.

“Or even outright reject some aspects of it.”

Luke’s eyes found Felicity’s, and she smiled.

“It does not matter to me who you were,” Luke continued. “What matters is who you strive to be now. And I promise you that as long you fight for justice, freedom, goodness, and light, I will help you. I will have your back and nurture your skills. I will teach you all I know, and learn all you can teach me. I will provide a comfortable home and a place where you never need to worry about where your next meal will come from. But above all, I promise to fight to protect you with every ounce of strength I have, from this day until the day of my last breath. I promise to never let you be lost to evil. I promise to keep you safe, and keep you alive.”

He had failed to keep that promise. They had all trusted him, and he let them all down.

How could he ever even think about going to such a scared place as Ahch-to?

But then where was he supposed to go next?

A vision of Rey flooded his mind.

“Come to me, Daddy,” Rey sobbed in her hammock on Jakku.

It changed to an image of Obi-Wan.


The vision turned to Leia.

“Come home, Brother,” Leia whispered as she stared at her household com.

The vision shifted to Felicity.

“Come back, Sweetheart,” Felicity sat on a bench in a prison cell.

It changed to Ben.
“Come face me, Uncle,” Ben stared out the window of a Star Destroyer at the skies around him.

Luke turned back to the tree like it was a connection directly to the Force he could request answers. Where was he supposed to go? Who was he supposed to listen to? What was he supposed to do?

What he really needed was some clear guidance.

“Master Skywalker?” a voice suddenly came from behind.

Luke froze like a deer in the headlights. Fear coursing through his body, paralysing it. Luke wanted to bolt for his X-Wing, but couldn’t move a muscle. It was too late to run; the figure was already behind him.

The figure grabbed Luke’s shoulder. Looking pale as a sheet, Luke gulped and slowly turned around. He found himself face to face with Lor San Tekka, a friend of his who was a leader of the Church of the Force.

“Master Skywalker, I don’t believe it,” Lor San looked over Luke in shock. “What are you doing here?”

Luke thought for a moment whether he should answer Lor San’s question or just make a run for it. He might have selected the later if he could think of a destination, but Luke’s mind was oddly blank.


“I come here every week to tend to the graves. Master Skywalker, I must say you look…”

“Terrible?”

“I was going to say unkempt.”

Luke snorted, “That’s one way of putting it.”

Lor San Tekka found he had no reply. An awkward silence hung in the air as both men refused to address the obvious situation at hand.

“I saw your sister a few weeks ago,” Lor San finally said. “She was here with flowers for Rey and Felicity. Calendulas if I remember correctly. The Alderiaan flower for grief.”

Luke looked away, “How’s she doing?”

“Better than you.”

“That’s not saying much.”

“Well, there’s nothing much to say.” Lor San sighed, “Master Skywalker, I’m not going to pretend I need to ask why you did it. Very few men could go through something like that and find the will to continue on.”


“But I will ask what you’re going to do now. There’s been rumors of sightings of you here and there, but no clear plan.”

“Truth be told, there is no clear plan.”
“I hardly believe Luke Skywalker would go do something without at least a vague plan.”

“I think Master Yoda might disagree with you on that one.”

Lor San grinned, “Just because one is impulsive does not mean one has no plan. Sure, you may throw yourself into danger, but you always have some idea of what you want to do… even if it’s a stupid idea.”


“Come now,” Lor San urged. “What’s your plan? What is it that you’ve been wandering the galaxy aimlessly, avoiding the people who care about you for?”

“I… I can’t.”

“Luke, I’m your friend. I won’t talk anyone your plan if you wish me not to, but I do want to know you’ll be alright. Tell me, what is this burden you carry?”

Luke sighed, his hand reaching up for the data pouch around his neck tucked under his clothing.

“I have a map to Ahch-to,” Luke confessed. “Felicity’s team stole it from Vader on the Death Star, and I have the only full map of it stored on my X-Wing’s computer. They cut a piece out of the map which I now carry around my neck. The Order and I were planning on hiding there from the First Order and the Knights of Ren, but then I got called to the Senate, and well…”

Luke’s eyes drifted around at the graves.

“I see,” Lor San nodded. “And you intend on… going there?”


“Well, then, let me help you decide. Tell me, why don’t you want to go?”

“Too many memories. Too many reminders of my failure. Too strong with the Force to run away from being a Jedi.”

“And why do you want to go?”

Luke gave an ironic smile, “Lots of memories. Lots of reminders of my success. Too strong with the Force to run away from being a Jedi.”

Lor San laughed, “I can see where you would struggle. Alright, so the scales are balanced, but I think I know how to get you to make a decision.”

“How’s that?”

“Answer this one question: what would be the consequence – a new one, mind you, not a continuation of something like abandoning your sister – what would be the consequence of you leaving for Ahch-to today and never returning?”


“I suppose to would be that no one would ever find it again,” Luke answered. He took a long pause to think about the situation. “You have to understand; I don’t want to be a Jedi anymore… but that doesn’t mean no one else should be. Our history has to be preserved, and maybe someday, someone else can start it again, fix our mistakes, and rebuild. I just can’t be a part of that.”
“And if you go to Ahch-to that can’t happen?” Lor San inquired.

“There’s going to be records they follow, but to be cut off from the birthplace of it all, it’s not fair to the generations to come. If there was a way I could ensure that that legacy doesn’t die—”

“What if I offered you that?”

Luke looked at him oddly.

Lor San was quiet as his plan formulated, “I may not be a Jedi, but the Church of the Force respects and honors what you and the brave Jedi before you did. We can preserve the history and pass it on to the Jedi of the future.”

“But what about Ahch-to?” Luke asked. “No one can find it without this data pouch.”

Lor San smiled, “Then give it to me.”

“… What?”

“Give it to me.”

Luke frowned and said nothing.

Lor San urged, “Give it to me, and then go to Ahch-to,” Lor San urged. “Give yourself some time alone to work through this all. Mourn your losses, accept their deaths, and rediscover why it is you love the Force. Be something you’ve been unable to be for years: a normal man. Don’t be the hero who destroyed the Death Star, the Leader of Rogue Squadron, or the Jedi Grandmaster. Be Luke Skywalker, and find again who that is. I will keep the map safe until the day the Galaxy truly needs the Jedi again. And with or without you, the Jedi will thrive, and you will find peace.”


“Perfect.”

“But you have to promise me two things.”

“Anything.”

“Promise me that unless the world truly, absolutely, has no other option needs me… Don’t send anyone to find me,” Luke warned. “I want to stay hidden unless there is no other way out. Promise?”

Lor San nodded gravely, “Promise. What your other request?”

Luke unfastened the data pouch and pressed it into Lor San’s hand, but did not let go.

“Swear to me that the First Order will never get their hands on this,” Luke requested.

Lor San smiled and clapped his other hand overtop Luke’s, “I’ll give my life to protect this.”

Little did they know, in fourteen years, Lor San Tekka’s promise would come true.

Having said his goodbyes to Lor San, Luke climbed into the cockpit of his X-Wing. He took a deep breath and set the coordinates in his X-Wing to Ahch-to. In a few minutes, the calculations were complete and with the press of a button, he would be on his way to Ahch-to.
And yet, he found he couldn’t press the button.

“Daddy, come back.”

Images of Rey had flooded his mind, her tears leaving a scar in his brain. His little girl had suffered a tragic death and now would suffer an entirety buried under the sand of Jakku.

Rey cried as she lay in the sand, clutching her doll and crying out, “Daddy! Where are you, Daddy? I want to go home!”

Luke clutched his head, eyes squeezed shut as he tried to rid his mind of the images.

“Daddy, please!” Rey sobbed. “Daddy, please come get me! Daddy!”

Just a press of a button.

“Daddy!”

“AHHH! I CAN’T!” Luke slammed his fist against the console. He rubbed his head in a frenzy, almost like he thought he could physically extract the visions from his mind. “I CAN’T DO IT!”

Then the images were gone.


What was he supposed to do?

“Daddy, please come back,” Rey begged again.

And then he made his decision.

“I can’t keep the vision out of my head,” Luke said to himself. “She’s my daughter. I’ve gotta find her.”

And in a moment that would change the course of history, Luke punched in the coordinates for Jakku and took off.

As he flew to Jakku, one mission was set in his mind. No matter how long it took, even if he had to sift through every single grain of sand on Jakku with his bare hands, he would find Rey and give her a proper burial. Maybe then he might finally be able to get some closure.

And sure enough, Luke would find Rey on Jakku.

He just didn’t expect her to be alive.

Chapter End Notes

Yes, the reunion is next chapter. I don’t know whether I’m more excited to write it, or to
finally stop getting reviews bugging me about it. Nah, I love you guys, I’m just kidding… mostly.
An Unexpected Reunion

Chapter Summary

Arriving on Jakku to find and bury Rey, Luke discovers that might be a little difficult when it turns out she's not actually dead.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The Long Way Home

Chapter Fifteen

An Unexpected Reunion

There was an odd sense of familiarity to Luke when he saw the planet of Jakku. Though that was probably because desert planets tended to all look the same and Luke couldn’t help but think of his home planet of Tatooine when he set eyes on the drab planet.

It made sense why Felicity had chosen the planet both times she needed to hide away. It seemed to give off an air of uncomfortableness that naturally led outsiders to want to leave the planet as soon as possible.

It broke Luke’s heart to think this was the last planet Rey had ever seen. When she had been born, Luke had been determined to ensure Rey saw as many different types of environments as possible. Planets of water, of fire, of forests, of ice, of deserts, mountains, cities, and hundreds more. He didn’t want her to be some nineteen-year-old staring up at the skies of a barren wasteland, dreaming of better worlds.

As he broke atmosphere, Luke paused to consider where he was going to start his search for Rey. Thinking back on Felicity’s torture session – he had replayed it so many times that he had memorized it – Luke found himself at a loss at to where Rey’s body was supposed to be. Felicity said that they crashed and had to walk to Niima, but for how long and from what direction?

This has going to be a lot harder than he expected.

Luke first idea was to get low to the planet and skim the surface to see if there were any ship crashes around. However, that plan went out the window when he saw the remains of the Battle of Jakku and how many hundreds of ship crash sites there were.

Where was he supposed to start?

Then it hit him: he would start with Niima Outpost and Unkar Plutt. Felicity had reached Unkar and hidden somewhere in the vicinity of Niima for weeks. Maybe she had left Rey not far from wherever she set up residence. If not, then maybe she had mentioned something to Unkar during her time in Niima.
Using his computer to determine the location of Niima Outpost, Luke found that he wasn’t far from it. If he was on foot it would probably only be about an hour’s walk. Below him, Luke noticed a small set of caves.

Having always been interested in the differences between Tatooine and Jakku, Luke had had plenty of conversations with Felicity and Diego about Jakku. Luke was fairly certain that the set of caves below him had been the topic during one of those conversations.

Diego had dubbed them the “Miracle Caves” while Felicity had titled them the “Rogue Caverns” after learning the phrase “there’s no miracles on Jakku.” In truth they were called the Qyhsh Caves after some Teedo God based on a legend in the Teedo religion. There was a very long story about Qyhsh, the banished son of the Teedo mother Goddess R’iia and the trials he went to redeem himself, that frankly made the history of Mandalore seem like a short story.

The Qyhsh Caves were technically considered to be an offshoot of Carbon Ridge, despite being hundreds of miles apart. Diego’s best guess for the classification had been that there were so few caves on Jakku, the residents probably thought they might as well count all of them as the same.

But the reason the caves had been remembered by Diego and Felicity is that the caves had been the site of their salvation. Hiding their stolen TIE fighter inside the cave, Felicity and Diego had trekked out to the caves every day and attempted to signal a Rebellion ship that was close enough to Jakku to hear their signal. It took a month, but hidden in the caves, finally one day they made contact with the Tantive IV, and the rest was history.

Recalling Diego and Felicity’s stories of the shady scavengers that populated Niima Outpost, Luke decided it might be best to hide his extremely recognizable X-Wing in those caves. Not only would it conceal his ship, but an hour’s walk in the desert might allow Luke to collect his thoughts before reaching Niima.

Landing his X-Wing flawlessly, Luke hopped out of the cockpit and opened his cargo hatch. After several minutes of rummaging through his possessions, Luke found a more desert appropriate outfit than the ensemble he was wearing. Already sweating under the hot Jakku sun, even shaded by the cave, Luke was seriously regretting his vow to always wear black in memory of his wife. True, when he went to save Han from Jabba, he had braved the desert of Tatooine in a slick black outfit, but that had been all about projecting a certain image and showcase of power, demonstrating how he was mighty and well put together and…

Okay, maybe he just thought he looked really good in that outfit and only planned to be in the sun for a short period of time.

… Felicity had been right; he was a drama queen.

Of course the reminder of Felicity only made Luke struggle with foregoing black completely in favor of comfort. He could almost hear her mocking him, “Oh, you don’t want to wear black because you’re uncomfortable? Well, don’t let the fact that I literally died because of the depth of my love for you hold you back. I mean, I have been dead a whole four months. Hey, why don’t you just throw your wedding ring off a cliff too? What is the matter with you? You know what’s even more uncomfortable than wearing black in the desert? GETTING SHOT POINT BLANK IN THE TEMPLE AND DYING!”

He really had been on his own for too long.

Luke decided to keep his black boots, belt, and glove. Though his false hand had long ago been patched up, Luke always worried about getting sand in his mechanics. He wore a light grey under
tunic, brown over tunic, and dark brown pants and hooded cloak. A blaster was clipped to one side of his belt and his lightsaber hung off the other side, but Luke kept it tucked away from view under his robes. Grabbing his satchel, Luke packed it with some containers of water, some first aid supplies, a few credit chips, and Rey’s Felicity doll. He knew Unkar Plutt would call Luke on the promise of reward, and he wanted to be prepared. As for the doll, well… he wanted to give his daughter something to comfort her when he laid her to rest.

Prepared for his trek, Luke made his way to the entrance of the cave when a thought occurred to him. He could use the Force to try to find Rey.

Luke had tried avoiding using it as much as possible since his abandonment of the Jedi Order, but the idea had its merits. Rey’s flame may have been snuffed from this life, but perhaps the ashes still smouldered somewhere on Jakku.

Taking a deep breath, Luke closed his eyes and reached out into the Force, searching for that tiny, yet familiar signature.

And he found it. Far from Niima, lost somewhere in the desert, Rey’s signature echoed in the Force. Feeling a spark of hope, Luke was overjoyed to sense that his search wouldn’t be for folly. Out there, somewhere Rey was waiting for him.

As he set off eagerly for Niima, Luke failed to realise that Rey’s presence was living.

Rey was awoken by a strange feeling. It wasn’t physical, something spiritual and familiar reaching out to touch her presence in the Force.

Blurry-eyed and half-conscious, she tried to reach out and touch it back, identifying what it was. It felt familiar and loving, and part of her instinctually yearned for it. Safety. Comfort. Kindness. Loving. Protector.

_Daddy._

Scrambling in her hammock, Rey pushed hard into the Force, trying with all her might to answer the call. It had been the first time she was aware of him answering her calls in the Force, and the first time he had initiated contact. But all too soon, the touch was gone and Rey was alone again.

What did it mean? Was Daddy nearby? Was he looking for her? Was he trying to tell her something?

“Come back, Daddy,” Rey whispered looking down at her pilot doll as if she was talking directly to her father. “Please come back.”

But the touch didn’t return.

As the tears fell from her eyes, Rey got out of the hammock and scratched another tally onto the wall. The wall was covered in scratches, a constant reminder of how many days it had been since she was separated from Daddy. If she counted them she would know that she had been parted from him for 192 days.

But, they would not be parted for 193.

About twenty minutes from Niima, Luke started to encounter the speeders. They whizzed past him, carrying their hauls from the ship graveyard. Many yelled unprovoked insults at him, and a few nearly ran him over (Luke doubted most were accidental.) Still, his eyes locked forward in the
direction of Niima, Luke trekked forward to the Outpost. He didn’t know what he would find when he got there, but it was too late to change his mind.

Luke had tuned out the shouts of the scavengers, instead filling his mind with memories of his loved ones. But his attention was drawn back when there was a sudden loud BANG!

His head snapped to the left.

“Stupid piece of junk!” An alien creature kicked their speeder. Thick black clouds of smoke were pouring out of the control panel.

Luke frowned, recognizing the speeder model. It was a TS-742, the first kind of speeder Luke had ever owned until he wrecked it in a race in Beggar’s Canyon. Honestly, it had been completely Biggs’ fault, but Uncle Owen had refused to hear it and disallowed Luke from applying to the Academy for another year as punishment.

“Need a hand?” Luke called to the alien. He knew exactly what was wrong with the speeder, and being a Skywalker, he felt the uncontrollable urge to go fix it.

The alien looked up at the strange human on foot nearby that apparently was offering help. Had he heard that correctly.

“Come again?” the alien said as Luke came closer.

“No need help?” Luke asked the creature he now recognized to be a Vrogem. “I couldn’t help but see that you were having a problem with your speeder. Forgive me, but I used to own one of these and I think I know what your problem is.”

“Really?” The Vrogem raised a brow. After twelve years of his speeder giving him problems he was reasonably skeptical at the idea that someone knew how to fix his ruddy speeder. “And what would that be?”

“It’s your wiring,” Luke opened the smoking control panel. He pointed to a pair of wires – one red and the other blue – plugged in next to each other. “The power cables to the breaks and the handling were mixed up in production. It’s a fault all the 742 models had; that’s why they’re so cheap. It’s fine for a while since there’s not much of a difference in their power requirements, but after a while the breaks spark. You’ll need to replace a few parts in them, but as for preventing the issue in the future all you need to do is swap the two wires.”

“Oh, well, thanks,” the Vrogem looked surprised as Luke switched the wires. “You a mechanic?”


“What do I owe you for the assessment?”

It was Luke’s turn to look surprised, “Oh, I didn’t mean- It’s free. I just recognized your problem and thought I’d save you some trouble and tell you what was wrong. I fixed my own 742 so I knew it would work, and thus save you from getting the run around from an uninformed mechanic. Not many of these speeders are still around, and only a handful were ever released. Technically they were all meant to be recalled.”

“You think you could fix mine?” the Vrogem asked. “I’ve made a few modifications throughout the years and I think I’ve messed up the mechanics somewhat fierce, which is very embarrassing since I’m actually a mechanic. Not professionally trained, mind you, but I’ve always had a mind for figuring out machines.”
Again Luke was surprised, “Well there are a few issues I think I can give you some advice on, but I’d need to do a full assessment to fully fix this… if that’s even possible at this point.”

The Vrogem laughed, “I know. It’s basically homemade at this point. Probably the worst put together thing you’ve ever seen.”

Luke chuckled, thinking of the Falcon, “You’d be surprised.”

“So you in? I’ve got plenty of supplies in my shop.”

Luke glanced at Niima Outpost. A pit stop couldn’t hurt. It wasn’t like Rey’s body was going anywhere.


“Nice to meet you, Quom,” Luke smiled.

“Of course the tension coil would snap halfway there,” Luke groaned.

“Quit whining and keep pushing,” Quom grunted as he and Luke pushed the speeder through town. He purposefully avoided Aletha’s questioning gaze and raised eyebrows as they passed her tent.

“We’re almost there. It’s the blue tent right by the town well.”

“You have a town well?”

“Yes.”

“As in people can just walk up and get as much water they want?”

“If you don’t mind sharing with the happabores,” Quom replied. “You from a desert planet?”


“No man who hasn’t lived through drought gets excited at the thought of free water.”

“You should have seen me the first time I visited Kamino.”

“Honestly, I avoid that place on principal,” Quom grunted as they pushed the speeder into his tent workshop. “There. Help me unload my haul and then we can take a look at this thing.”

As Quom got to work, Luke began setting things around the tent in whatever spot seemed appropriate. He was placing some power convertors in a drawer when he came across a drawer full of small human clothing: goggles, scarf, a tunic, and some shoes.

“You have a child?” Luke asked, holding up the shoes.

“Of a sort,” Quom replied. “The girl isn’t mine, but I was watching over her for a while. Thought I’d get her some clothes in case she outgrows or ruins the ones she has. What about you? You got a litter of your own?”

“I had a daughter,” Luke sadly put the clothing back in the drawer. They would have fit Rey perfectly.
Quom decided not to pry on the man’s use of past tense, “So what are you doing here, Outmian?”

The Vrogem’s usage of the Huttese word for foreigner threw Luke off for a minute until he remembered they spoke it on Jakku.


“Anything in particular?” Quom pressed.


“Oh great,” Quom groaned. “You’re one of those people.”

Luke just chuckled, “Actually you might be able to help me. Do you know where there was a sandstorm about four months ago?”

Maybe he could find a general search area of where Rey had been left and covered by the storm.

Quom frowned, “Four months ago? I don’t think there was one.”


“Not positive, but I think we went about three months without one before the big one two months ago.”

“Huh,” Luke dismissed Quom’s claim. Felicity had sworn that she lost Rey during a sandstorm. The Vrogem’s memory had to be faulty.

For the next hour Luke and Quom thoroughly inspected the speeder, Luke making suggestions where he could.

“That should be about it,” Quom declared. “You want to help me start with the repairs.”


“Well, thanks. If you ever want to swing by a work on something, you’ll always be welcome.”

“I’ll take you up on that. Hey do you know where I can find Unkar Plutt?”

Quom flinched, “Take my advice, Outmian. Stay away from him.”

Luke shook his head, “Unfortunately he’s a vital part of my search.”

“Are you a bounty hunter?”

“No.”

“Damn,” Quom muttered. “Well, you should find him in the middle of the town. Big concession stand, you can’t miss it.”

“Thanks,” Luke said. “Good luck with your speeder, Quom.”

“And good luck with your search, Outmian.”


Luke nodded and exited the tent.

Sighing, Quom turned back to his speeder and busied himself with fixing it. It took a good ten minutes before Quom’s mind clicked.

His name was Luke.

Racing out of his tent, Quom frantically around the street for the long haired, bearded man named Luke who had a daughter and was searching something. Could it possibly be Luke Erso, finally arriving to collect his daughter?

… Nah.

Quom went back into his tent, shaking his head at his foolishness. What were the odds he would actually randomly find Rey’s father in the middle of the desert?

Though Luke had long craved for anonymity, he found it rather inconvenient when he achieved it on Jakku. Joining the line up at Unkar Plutt’s concession stand, many creatures were all too happy to shove in front of the itemless human who clearly wasn’t there to trade anything.

Looking around at the gruff creatures who populated Niima Outpost, Luke grimaced at the thought of Felicity living among them. She of course could well handle herself, and Luke had never been a particularly jealous man, but he hinted the though of Felicity having to deal with them day in and day out, their hungry eyes roaming for the newest pretty thing. Diego had secretly told Luke that there had been a time on Jakku that a scavenger tried to get a little too handsy with Felicity, only for her to break their wrist. Luke wouldn’t be surprised if Felicity in her heartbroken state had put half the town in the hospital.

“Did you see when the First Order took the woman away?” a scavenger by the name of Jarex Zolhar was saying to his posse at their washing table.

“No, I missed all the fun stripping that A-Wing for you lot that day,” the other male of the posse replied. “Why do you guys keep rubbing it in?”

“It wasn’t that exciting,” sneered one of the woman. “The Stormtrooper took one shot to the woman’s head and she went down like a bag of bricks.”

“Why would you carry bricks in a bag? OW! Fallah!”

“I’ll hit you again, Dairh.”

“It was rather anti-climatic after all the fuss they made,” the other woman said. “You’d think the First Order would at least tear the planet apart for someone pretty.”

“You’re just jealous, Minati,” Jarex laughed. “The woman was gorgeous. I wouldn’t have minded trying to get her onto her back.”

Luke smirked at Jarex’s yelp when the gas cartridge he was cleaning mysteriously exploded in his hand.

The creature behind Luke shoved into his back, and Luke realised the line was moving forward.

Letting his eyes wander, Luke noticed two large creatures that were overseeing things had started to mutter to each other as they watched him. Luke figured by their supervisory role that they must be
employed by Unkar Plutt. He gave them a smile and looked back at the front of the line where Unkar Plutt was bartering with a scavenger.

Suddenly a large man dragged Luke out of line.

“Hey, what?”

“Shut up!” Roke snapped at the stranger.

Luke was dragged off to the side, still within sight of the concession stand while six of Unkar Plutt’s goons surrounded him.


“You don’t have haul and you don’t come from here,” Roke demanded. “What do you want?”

Luke grinned, they had no idea who he was.

This could be fun.

“I merely seek an audience with the great Unkar Plutt,” Luke smoothly said.

“Stop talking like you’re addressing a Hutt!” Roke snapped. “And Plutt doesn’t just talk to anyone. Now get out of here before I kick you so hard out of town you end up in the next star system!”

“Gentlemen,” Luke looked around at the goons, “I would be careful if I were you. I am not a man to be trifled with.”

“Oh yeah?”

The goons moved in closer, creating a wall through which Luke could not escape. The sound of cracking knuckles filled the air and a few of the goons chuckled menacingly.

“I’ll say it again, Gentlemen,” Luke said. “I wish to speak to Unkar Plutt, and I know he wants to speak with me as well.”

“And why’s that?” Roke’s voice was dangerous.

“I’ve been so rude, Gentlemen. Allow me to introduce myself. My name is Luke Skywalker, and I’m looking for my daughter, Rey.”

The goons were tripping over themselves to back away from Luke. Many stammered out hasty apologies as Roke just stared at the amused Luke in wide eyed shock.

“Skywalker?” Roke whispered.


“…Excuse me a second,” Roke was ten feet away on his com in an instant.

Luke watched as Roke frantically spoke with Plutt while the other goons sweated under Luke’s gaze. None of them seemed to know what to do with him. Should they talk to him? Assure him that the threat was gone and they weren’t going to hurt him? All had the feeling that despite Plutt’s orders
to isolate and deal with the stranger, they would pay for menacing the stranger tonight.

In the distance, the window of the concession stand slammed shut. Then Roke had Luke by the arm, pulling him towards the concession stand going on about how happy Unkar Plutt was to see Luke and offering his apologies of their earlier treatment of him.

Unkar Plutt was… not what Luke expected, and yet in a way was exactly what he expected. A giant lumbering mass, Unkar Plutt had earned the nickname of the Blobfish the residents of Niima Outpost called him behind his back. Luke had talked to Unkar Plutt on the com, but it was another thing seeing the intimidating creature in real life.

Of course, Luke could easily slaughter him and all his goons without breaking a sweat but he’d rather keep his hands clean of blood as much as possible.

“Master Skywalker,” Unkar greeted. “We finally meet. Mrs. Skywalker told us so much about you.”

“Really?” Luke raised a brow. “Did she mention that she hates the moniker Mrs. Skywalker and will punch you if you refer to her as such?”

An awkward silence hung in the air.

“She… might have mentioned it,” Unkar finally replied. “I apologise for the slip of tongue. I can give my regrets to her in person if you’d prefer.”

A heavy weight pressed upon Luke’s chest, “I’m afraid that Felicity is no long with us.”

“My condolences,” Unkar’s voice held no true emotion in it. “She was a good woman.”

“The best,” Luke whispered. Unkar may not have believed his words, but Luke would give his life to defend the statement. “I suppose I should just get to it and explain why I’m here. I’ve come to find my daughter.”

“Of course,” Unkar said. “We’ve been expecting you for a while.”

“You… You have?”

“We did have an agreement after all.”

Luke recalled the deal he had made with Plutt, “I just didn’t think you expected me to actually come to Jakku.”

“Well, we didn’t think you were going to send just anyone to come get her,” Unkar frowned. He was puzzled at Skywalker’s words. Felicity Rhiaon didn’t seem like the woman to marry a man who would delegate the collection of his daughter.

Luke however, was also puzzled, “You were expecting someone to… get her?”

“Of course,” Unkar answered. “Your wife was very clear about the bargain.”

“Bargain?”

“When she amended the plan.”

“Plan?” Luke frowned. What was going on?

Unkar sighed, trying to keep the annoyance from his voice, “When she turned herself in to the First
Order. So made it very clear how we were to handle the situation with the girl until you came to collect her and pay us. We’ve been taking care of her ever since Felicity left.”

“Taking care of her?”

“Of course. She left your girl in our care, and I assure you we’ve been taking very good care of her.”

There wasn’t a sandstorm, Luke remembered Quom’s claim. She left your girl in care, Unkar claimed.

Wait… had Felicity lied? Lied to protect the whereabouts of Rey to prevent the First Order from finding her? Was it possible that Rey… hadn’t been lost to the deserts of Jakku?

Luke simply couldn’t believe it.

Felicity had left Rey’s corpse with Unkar so Luke could bring her home and bury her!

“You have my daughter?” Luke whispered in disbelief. “Is she close?”

“In town as we speak,” Unkar assured. “We can bring her right to you.”

“I just can’t believe this. I thought I had lost her forever.”

“Don’t you worry about that at all Master Skywalker. Rey’s been safe with us, waiting for you to come get her,” Unkar Plutt assured Luke in his smooth-talking voice which Luke would find at home in a salesman at a used speeder lot. “As I said, we’ve been taking very good care of your little girl.”

“I’m truly thankful, Mister Plutt,” Luke sighed, bittersweet feelings fighting for control. “It takes a large burden off me to know I don’t have to spend years tearing Jakku apart to find her.”

“Well, I don’t think it would have taken years to find her,” Unkar chuckled. “Now, I know this may seem a little insensitive but we do have an issue of payment to discuss.”

“Of course.”

“I’ve got the boys putting together a final statement, but I’ve been keeping careful track of all the expenses your girls have incurred. I’ve tried to keep them down as much as possible, but this has proven to be quite the costly venture for me.”

Luke frowned, “With all due respect, I’m not sure how it could be.”

After all, it was just Felicity’s expenses for a few weeks and then caring for a dead body.

“Well, that wife of yours was very specific as to what my responsibilities with your daughter were,” Unkar replied. “I’ve kept her safe. There’s been at least one of my men with her at all times, but usually I’ll have two or three protecting her.”

“Sounds reasonable,” Luke nodded, vaguely surprised at how prevalent the act of corpse looting appeared to be on Jakku.

“Kept her in clean clothing, nice and wrapped up, protected from the sun.”


He had been slightly worried that in his grand plan to find Rey, he would end up finding Rey in a
state of decomposition. It would be terrifying to find his daughter’s body to begin with; it would be horrifying to find her rotting under the hot Jakku sun.

“Protected her from the First Order.”

“Great.”

Luke was glad the First Order wouldn’t get his daughter. They had already taken away his chance to bury his wife, but at least Luke could have the chance to bury his daughter. He’d probably take her to Romian and put her in her grave. Or maybe he’d take her to Ahch-to and bury her in the field Felicity had brought him too ages ago.

“Made sure to give her lots of water,” Unkar continued.

Luke paused, “… Come again?”

“We kept her hydrated,” Unkar repeated. “Just like your wife asked.”

Luke gave Unkar Plutt a strange look, “… Okay.”

That’s odd. Why did a body need water? Maybe it was some sort of embalming or preservation technique Luke had never heard of? A special desert technique? Growing up on Tatooine, Luke never had water he could spare for such things, but Jakku was different. He remembered Diego telling him that despite the desert conditions, there were plenty of wells, and water was not much of a problem for the people of Jakku. Maybe the water thing was simply a technique not possible to be performed on Tatooine.

“And we’ve kept her distracted from the situation,” Unkar continued.

Luke scowled, “Distracted?”

“Yep,” Unkar nodded.

Luke figured that Unkar Plutt must have misspoke. Clearly he meant to say *And we’ve kept* others *distracted from the situation.*

Right?

“And of course, we’ve given her plenty of food.”

Wait, what?


“Three portions a day,” Unkar Plutt said proudly.

… And now Luke was lost.

Rubbing the bridge of his nose, Luke struggled to make sense of what Unkar Plutt was saying. Water, food, distractions? None of it made any sense. He of course anticipated Unkar to jack up the prices however he could – he had heard far too many stories from Felicity and Diego not to expect it – but this was ridiculous, and frankly, insulting to his intelligence.


And then it hit him.
“Rey…” Luke whispered, his eyes wide as a duet of hope and horror blossomed in his chest, “Rey’s alive?”

Unkar Plutt looked surprised, “What? Of course she’s alive. Like I said, we’ve been taking good care of her.”

“So we’re not talking about her corpse?” Luke clarified.

“Her corpse? Wait, did you think she was dead?”

This couldn’t be. Rey couldn’t possibly be alive. He would have sensed it if she-

Wait a minute.

Luke reached out in the Force and located Rey again. He focused on her presence, digging hard into the Force to see where she was and what was going on. It was a very rare Force ability to get that intimate into someone’s Force presence, and could only be done through the strongest of Force connections. Luke had only ever seen it performed between a parent and child, and it took all of his might to perform it then.

Focusing hard, he saw the image of Rey, sad and lonely. He felt the air in her lungs and the blood pumping through her heart.

He roughly stroked his own presence against Rey’s in an over-the-top way that he knew she couldn’t ignore. Luke waited with bated breath for a few minutes, and then he felt it.

Rey touched him back.


Luke half expected to drop dead in that moment. Had the Force taken up his offer to trade his life for hers? Yet nothing happened. He still lived, he still breathed, his heart still beat in his chest. Just as Rey’s heart beat within her own.

The joy and hope was tremendous; Luke was almost afraid he’d choke on the overwhelming feelings. Rey was alive. His daughter was alive. His Rey of Hope was alive! She had been alive on Jakku this whole time!

And then the horror overtook him.

Rey had been alive on Jakku this whole time!

While Luke spent his nights getting drunk at bars and making out with women who looked like her mother, Rey had been crying herself to sleep, lonely on Jakku.

And he had known about it the whole time.

Luke wanted to throw up. All those visions of her crying, begging him to come back, they had been genuine pleas through the visions. He had abandoned his daughter alone on a desert planet.

He would not tolerate another moment of them being parted.

“Where is she?” Luke demanded, cutting Unkar Plutt off.

Unkar looked surprised. Luke only realised then that Unkar had been speaking the entire time and he
didn’t take in a single word.

And yet, Luke didn’t care.


Unkar hesitated and looked over at Roke, “Go get the girl. Don’t worry, Master Skywalker, Roke will get the girl while we discuss the bill.”

“No!” Luke snapped. “You’re not getting a credit until I have Rey in my arms! How long will it take for her to get here?”

“Well…” Unkar looked at Roke. “We’re not entirely sure where she is at the moment. We sort of… let her wander town between meals.”

“What?”

“It’s okay, Master Skywalker. My men would never let her get hurt and Rey’s made a few friends in town. Gotten all buddy buddy with the doctor, in fact. Speaking of, you’ll probably want to talk to the doctor as your wife made a few monetary promises to her. But I’ve helped with that debt so we’ll go over that later.” Unkar leaned offered and jovially grasped Luke’s arm, “Just give us an hour and-”

“No!” Luke shook off Unkar’s grip. “If she’s not here, I’m not going to just stand here and wait for her. I’m going to find her!”

“I can’t let you do that, Master Skywalker,” There was a threatening edge to Unkar Plutt’s voice, and his goons started to surround him again. “I’m afraid that you’re going to have to stay right here and-”

“You will let me go find my daughter,” Luke waved his hand at Plutt.

“I will let you go find your daughter,” Plutt replied, his eyes glazing slightly as he stepped out of Luke’s way.

Luke smirked. The mind trick worked on Unkar Plutt; that would come in handy.

“Sir?” Roke frowned. “Should we let him go?”

“Yes,” Luke used the trick.

“Yes,” Plutt repeated.

Roke glanced at one of the goons, “… Okay.”

The goons all disengaged, and Luke took off a shot.


“I have no idea,” Roke shook his head.

“I want to learn that!” Dirk exclaimed.

Roke slapped Dirk.

“Thank you, Roke,” Plutt said.
“Anytime, Sir,” Roke grinned.

“Excuse me, have you seen a girl?”

“Sir, have you seen a little girl?”

“I’m looking for a little girl.”

“Have you seen my daughter?”

“Anybody seen a girl?”

“Kickeeyuna stuka emeela?”

“Around somewhere, alone and afraid.”

“Dee boonkee tchuta, solo an theechu.”

“Has anyone seen my daughter?”

Switching between Basic and Huttese, Luke ran up to everyone in the street, begging for information. Most shoved him away and those that didn’t usually had a few swear words for a reply. Still, Luke pressed on. Somewhere in Niima Outpost his daughter was waiting for him and he would find her.

“Excuse me, Doctor?” Luke ran into the tent of the doctor, startling a blonde woman. “Have you seen my daughter?”

“I’m sorry?” Aletha blinked, still confused by the sudden intrusion.

“My daughter,” Luke repeated. He held up a hand against his leg, “She’s about that high, brown hair, hazel eyes, pale skin, human. Her name’s Rey!”

“Rey?” Aletha repeated in shock. Wait, wasn’t this the guy Quom had been with earlier?

“Yes, Rey!” Luke exclaimed. “Do you know where she is?”

“Well, not at the moment, but-”

Luke ran back outside.

“Wait!” Aletha called, running out of her tent, but Luke was already gone. “Oh my God.”

She knew exactly where to go.

“Quom! Quom! Quom Tinadar!” Aletha yelled racing into the mechanic tent.

Quom rolled on his scooter out from under his speeder, “What’s up?”

“It’s about that man you were with earlier,” Aletha said.

“Oh, him.” Quom got to his feet and handed Aletha a flashlight, “Hold that would you?”

“What?” Aletha found the flashlight shoved into her hand as Quom popped the hood of his speeder. “Uh, sure. I mean, why are you being so casual? Don’t you hear the panic in my voice?”
“Yeah, but I just did something that might blow up this speeder and kill us both if I don’t fiddle with a few things in the engine, so hold the light straight.”

Aletha sighed, “Why did I get involved with you?”

“Beats me. You initiated it with the whole vitamins thing. And don’t think you can escape this newfound friendship. We took kicks to the face together. That sort of thing bonds you for life. Alright, that should do it. My speeder is completely fixed!”

Aletha didn’t look convinced, “That speeder is completely fixed?”

Quom shrugged, “Well, either it’s fixed or it’s going to blow up in fifteen minutes. So what’s this about the guy?”

“Quom,” Aletha said seriously, “he’s Rey’s father!”

“Huh, so I was right.”

“You knew?”

“I had my suspicions.”

“Why didn’t you tell me or Rey?” Aletha exclaimed.

“Well, I wasn’t certain,” Quom replied. “Besides, it’s not like I know where Rey is. She hasn’t exactly been hanging out with us since our beatings. Tell me, how can a kid that young be that selfless?”

“Would you get out of here!” Aletha grabbed Quom by the arm and dragged him out of the tent. “We’re going to find Rey and reunite her with her father!”

“I don’t think that’s necessary,” Quom pulled out of Aletha’s grasp.

“And why not?”

Quom grinned and pointed at the street.

“Please, has anyone seen my daughter?” Luke exclaimed.

“Get out of here!” a creature shoved Luke away.

Breathing hard, Luke turned in spot, scanning the streets for any sign whatsoever of his daughter.


And then he stopped.

Sitting ten metres away on the ledge of the well, directly in front of him, crying gently as she clutched a pilot doll in her arms… was Rey.

“Oh my gosh, we have to tell her!” Aletha moved forward to get Rey’s attention as Luke stared in frozen disbelief at his daughter.

“No, no, no,” Quom grabbed Aletha and pulled her to a halt. “Let the magic unfold naturally.”
“Quom-”

“Aletha,” Quom’s voice turned serious. “This is their moment. Let them have it.”

Aletha smiled and grabbed Quom’s hand, “I promise I’m not going to cry.”

“I make no such promise.”

Rey’s tears had been brought forward by the moment she felt her Daddy’s presence brush against her own. Desperately she brushed back and for a moment it worked.

But then Daddy was gone again.

Rey had collapsed, sitting on the edge of the well, clutching her pilot doll as she wailed. She was so sick of waiting. Of being alone. Of sleeping by herself. Of crying. Of her heart aching as she missed her mommy and daddy.

She loved them so much. Why were they teasing her? She just wanted to go home. She just wanted to see them again. She wanted to be safe in their arms as they made the monsters go away. She wanted Mommy. She wanted Uncle Han. She wanted Aunt Leia. She wanted to snuggle into Uncle Chewie’s fur. Get spoiled rotten by Uncle Lando. Get taught and taken care of by her Jedi friends. Listen to Uncle Diego’s embarrassing stories about Mommy. Listen to Uncle Wedge’s embarrassing stories about Daddy.

Rey wanted Daddy.

How much longer did she have to go through this pain? How many nights did she have to be alone? How many times did she have to reach into the Force and beg Daddy to come get her? She just wanted her daddy. She couldn’t understand what was going on. Why things were taking so long.

Where was Daddy?

“REY!”

Luke watched as Rey’s head snapped up. Her eyes widened as they locked across the street with his.

In that moment, the world stopped. They didn’t move, they didn’t speak, they didn’t even breath. There they were, metres apart, and no amount of blinking to clear from view, no amount of pinching to be woken up, no amount of doing anything to clear the image from their minds made it go away.

It was real. They were there and moments from being together again.

“DADDY!” Rey screamed.


Rey was running to him and he to her. Subtly using the Force, Luke cleared the path between himself and Rey. They ran to each other, nothing on their minds but the thought of sharing each other’s warm embrace. The sweet victory they had so longed for.


Three.
“REY!”
Two.
“DADDY!”
One.
“REY!”
“DADDY!”
Collision.

Luke’s arms locked around her body and hoisted her into the air.

“Daaddyy!” Rey wept, burying her face into Luke’s shoulder as her daddy spun her around.

“Rey!” Luke sobbed as his clutched onto her for dear life. She alive and safely in his arms. “Rey! Oh my Sweetheart.”

“Daddy! Daddy, you came back!”

“I came back, Sweetheart, just like I promised.”

“Daddy!” Rey wailed, her sobs hitching in her throat.

Uncaring of the eyes on them, Luke fell to his knees still holding his daughter tightly in his embrace.

“It’s you,” Luke said in amazement, his hands running all over her. Running over her face, her eyes, her cheeks, her arms, her hands, her neck, her chest, and pausing to feel her heartbeat. Caressing, reassuring, and verifying that she was truly alive and breathing. “You’re okay.”

“Daddy, don’t leave me!” Rey desperately pleaded. “Please, don’t leave me! I don’t want to be alone again!”


Rey sniffed, the goofy grin she had inherited from him running across her face, “I love you, Daddy.”

“I love you too, Rey,” Luke laughed, unable to wipe the mirrored grin off his face. “I love you so much. It’s okay. Daddy’s here.”

Standing at the entrance of the mechanic tent, Aletha Kymeri and Quom Tinadar watched the scene of the father and daughter’s reunion with utter joy.

“I said I wasn’t going to cry,” Aletha was grinning as the tears streamed down her face.

“I made no promises,” Quom blew his long nose onto his scarf. Catching Aletha’s disgusted look, Quom shrugged and held up his scarf, “They’re very versatile.”

It felt like ages Luke and Rey were knelt on the ground, holding each other and sobbing. They didn’t need to move, they didn’t need to speak, they didn’t need to do anything but feel the other’s warm,
familiar embrace.


And after 192 days apart, Luke had fulfilled his promise.

Luke couldn’t believe it; that morning he had woken up prepared to dig through Jakku’s desert to find his daughter’s corpse, and now she was alive and safe in his arms.

“I love you, Rey,” Luke kissed her over and over as he held her tight. “I love you so much.”

He rested his head atop hers and held her with all her might. He thought he had lost her, he had spent so many hour crying, begging the universe to have her back, and now she was.

Luke could see those moments he thought lost. Rey growing up. Rey learning to read. Rey learning to drive. Rey learning how to fix ships. Rey learning how to fly. Rey getting her first crush. Intimidating Rey’s first boyfriend or girlfriend. Rey’s first sip of alcohol. Rey going through teenage rebellion. Rey doing stupid things she needed her father to come in and fix. Rey getting married. Rey having children. Rey living a full life that lasted far longer than five measly years.

Luke could fulfill his promises he thought lost. He could spend the rest of his life loving, guiding, and protecting Rey. And someday, when he passed from this life and left her behind, he could preserve himself so that he could continue to be there when she needed him. He would never leave her; not even in death.

And there was one more small perk to Rey being alive. It meant that the First Order hadn’t take away the woman Luke loved so much. As long as Rey was alive, Felicity’s spirit lived on in her daughter.

Luke couldn’t have been happier than to have Rey in his arms again.

And Rey couldn’t have been happier than to be in Daddy’s arms again.

He had come back, and now she didn’t need to be afraid. Daddy would protect her from whatever monsters came for her next. She wouldn’t have to spend another night alone, missing him, and sad. She could go home, to a real home and eat real food and see her real friend and but loved by her real family.

It was a dream come true.

So they knelt there in the middle of the streets of Niima Outpost, holding each other and revelling in their reunion. Luke and Rey Rhiaon Skywalker, together again forever.

Just for a moment, everything was right with the world. For a moment, they were together, safe, and above all, happy. In that moment, nothing could destroy their joy.

And then reality came crashing down.

“Daddy? Where’s Mommy?”

Chapter End Notes
What? You actually thought I was going to let you come away from this chapter feeling good?
“Where’s Mommy?” Rey repeated as Luke stared open-mouthed at her.

Words stuck to his dry throat. How was he ever going to tell Rey that Mommy wasn’t coming home? It was a pain Luke had yet to cope with himself; how could he thrust that upon his innocent little girl?

The sight of Rey’s bright hazel eyes, shining with hope – eyes that were mirror copies of the woman Luke so thoroughly mourned – tore at his heart. How could he break his daughter’s heart? She had been through so much already and they had finally found happiness in their reunion. Why did Luke have to deliver such cruel news that the mother Rey adored wasn’t coming back?

He didn’t want to tell her… but he knew he had the responsibility to do so.

“Rey,” Luke gently stroked her cheek. “Oh, my Sweet Rey of Sunshine.”

Tears glistened in his eyes but Luke would not allow them to drop. He struggled to keep himself together, to be strong and catch Rey when she made her eventual fall into sorrow. Yet he selfishly prayed that something, anything would intervene and delay telling Rey the news her mother was dead.

“Rey,” Luke whispered hoarsely. He paused to clear his throat after the false start. This was one of the hardest things he would ever have to say, “Rey, Mommy… Mommy’s not-”

BANG!

The explosion cut off any train of thought the residents of Niima Outpost might have had. Instantly, the street turned as one to identify the source of the noise and see if it would negatively affect them in any way.

A cloud of smoke was arising from Quom Tinadar’s tent as Doctor Aletha Kymeri looked violently perturbed – eyes wide and shaking like a startled steelpecker – from the explosion.

Quom Tinadar however, looked completely unphased.
“Alright, maybe the speeder isn’t quite fixed,” Quom said casually. He looked down at his watch and grinned, “Hey, look! I was right; fifteen minutes on the dot!”

Aletha groaned, throwing her head down into her hands.

“What?” Quom asked innocently.

Rey gasped when her eyes set on Quom and Aletha. Daddy was here! Mister Plutt only wanted Daddy’s money, and now that he could have it there was no reason to harm Mister Quom and Doctor Aletha. That meant that she could safely see her friends again and tell Daddy everything they had done for her.

She was about to start for the pair when Rey suddenly remembered her vision of Plutt’s words.

“But imagine what will happen if he comes here and the girl tells him, ‘No, Unkar Plutt didn’t take care of me. Aletha Kymeri and Quom Tinadar did.’ Well… then we’ll have a problem.”

Rey paused to think. She would have to be very careful about what she told Daddy. Rey knew her father was a man few dared to cross, but she still didn’t know what would happen if Daddy learned the truth about Mister Plutt. It was only when Rey was positive that she, Doctor Aletha, and Mister Quom would all be safe that she could tell Daddy what the mean Mister Plutt had threatened to do.

But there was one thing Rey was positive about: she could see her friends again.

“Daddy! Daddy!” Rey exclaimed, tugging on her father’s arm. Luke was still knelt on the ground, at eyelevel with the standing Rey. She wildly pointed towards Quom and Aletha, “Daddy, come see my friends!”

Luke was surprised at Rey’s sudden enthusiasm. Rey had friends on Jakku? Had Felicity known about them? Were they under Plutt’s employ? Was his daughter warranted in trusting them?

Luke was cautious about the idea of Rey’s supposed friends, but truthfully he was a little relieved that Rey had been distracted from the question of where her mother was. Of course, it left Luke with a lingering dread of when he did have to tell her, but at least he didn’t have to deal with it at the exact moment.

“Daddy, come on!” Rey pulled on his arm insistently.


“Yay!” Rey let go of her father and ran towards the panicked looking Aletha and Quom.

“They’re heading this way,” Aletha said, a sudden sense of fear enveloping her. “What do we do?”

“I don’t know!” Quom exclaimed. “We didn’t think this far ahead! …Should we run? There’s a clear path to the left.”

“No, they’ve already seen us. Besides where would we hide?”

“Your tent?”

“Rey would follow us.”

“Damn it! What do we do? Plutt’s going to kill us!”

“I don’t know!” Aletha’s eyes darted to the tantalizing open path as she reconsidered the option to
run. No, it was too late; Rey was almost to them with her father. They’d have to face the Ersos and hope that it didn’t get them killed by Plutt. “Just play it by ear, and follow my lead!”

“Aye aye, Captain!” Quom gave a quick salute.

“Actually I was a Lieutenant in the Rebellion,” Aletha quickly muttered. “My husband was the Captain.”

“Ground team or pilot?” a male voice asked and Aletha found herself face to face with Rey’s father.

“Doctor Aletha!” Rey attached herself to Aletha’s legs in a tight hug.

“Hello, Sunshine,” Aletha leaned down and hugged Rey.

Aletha had always been the kind of person who attached themselves to others very quickly, and in such fashion, Aletha had become dedicated to the sweet little girl. She had worried fiercely about Rey’s wellbeing during her avoidance of them, and Aletha was happy to see Rey was in good condition. In fact, Aletha would confidently bet that Rey looked even better now that her father was back.

Detaching herself from Aletha’s leg, Rey turned to Quom.

“Mister Quom!” Rey pounced on the Vrogem, knocking him to the ground.

“Hello there, MG,” Quom laughed as Rey embraced him tightly.

How Rey had missed her friends.

As Aletha smiled at the scene, she heard a quiet chuckle from the man to her left. Aletha spared a glance at the mysterious figure that was Rey’s father. She had heard so much about this man that it almost seemed unreal to encounter him in the flesh.

Felicity Erso had spared some words about her husband while Aletha had treated Rey for heatstroke. Felicity told Aletha how grateful Luke would be for saving their daughter and hinted at providing Aletha with some sort of reward. Felicity had also mentioned him being an ass and an idiot, but Aletha took it with a grain of salt considering those proclamations came after Felicity’s failure to contact Luke’s comm.

Plutt and his cronies had whispered about Luke Erso being powerful, and that he was absolutely loaded. Aletha didn’t know how much of that to trust considering it came from Unkar Plutt, but then again, Felicity Erso had promised that her husband could cover the costs of Aletha’s broken medical equipment so there probably was some truth in it.

Most of what Aletha had heard about Luke had come from Rey. She loved to boast that her daddy was a hero who kicked butt in the Rebellion along with her mommy (although they didn’t kick butt together as they met when the war was over.) According to Rey, Luke Erso was brave and smart and strong and loved her oh so very much. But the thing Rey had been most confident in was that Daddy would not let her down. Daddy was going to come back to Jakku with Mommy and save Rey and take her home.

And Rey was correct, Luke Erso had come to Jakku… though he was noticeably Mommyless.

Aletha’s weak blue eyes met the sad but strong gaze of Luke Erso. He was rather handsome. Luke was noticeably fit, though not particularly tall – Aletha was surprised that he stood head to head with her height of 5’6”. He had shaggy blonde hair that was tinged with his first grey hairs and a beard
that looked unkempt in the way the newly bearded did. A single black glove covered the hand Rey had informed Aletha to be false, and a wedding band was set on his left hand. The most striking thing about Luke Erso was how he seemed to carry an air about him that was both confident and modest. But there was also something noticeably sad about him; a tinge of guilt in his eyes and a slump to his posture as if he carried the physical weight of his sorrow.

In turn, Luke observed Aletha. Though he had yet to acknowledge the connection, he recognized the Vrogem to be the same he had helped earlier that day. It was the strange woman Rey had declared to also be her friend that intrigued Luke.

Doctor Aletha, Rey had called her, and a Rebel, Aletha claimed to be. For a moment, Luke worried that she might identify him, but he could sense no recognition in her. He went through his memories of his time in the Rebellion and her face appeared in none of them.

She was a human that was tanned, though from his life on Tatooine, Luke could tell it was not of ethnic origins as the tan skin of Alyla and Gavyn Kene had been. Aletha was likely naturally pale, and had earned a tan from her many years on Jakku.

Aletha was probably somewhere between four and seven years older than Luke, and had wispy ice blonde hair peppered with streaks of grey. Unlike Aletha’s assessment of them having the same height, Luke suspected that she may have actually been half an inch taller than him. (Being exact in measurements of height had become a point of survival in the Skywalker family as Luke and the girls’ short statures had been mocked ruthlessly by the ridiculously tall Han Solo and later Ben in one of the few points of bonding between father and son.)

But the thing had disturbed Luke was how slender Aletha was. Her bone structure did suggest Aletha had a small frame, but her skin clung onto her bones with very little muscle. Aletha’s eyes were slightly slunk into her head, her ribcage stuck out, and she was lightly shivering, a result of lower body temperature caused by starvation.

She didn’t look like Luke could easily snap her in half, but there was no denying the Doctor was underfed. Perhaps that was the reason for the sadness that haunted her eyes, and yet she also had a gleam of light. Luke felt a sense of kinsmanship; Aletha was a woman who had seen too much yet somehow retained a sense of hope.

“So,” Aletha finally spoke, “you must be the Mister Luke Erso I’ve heard so much about.”


“Of course,” Quom grinned, getting to his feet when Rey had finally crawled off him. “Husband of Jyn Erso.”


Rey frowned, “But Daddy, Mommy’s name is-”

“Hush now, please Rey,” Luke ordered. Recently reunited or not, Luke was unafraid to step into an authoritarian role with Rey when needed.

“Oh, it’s okay,” Quom lazily waved his hand, “we know her real name was Felicity Rhiaon, but hell if we can figure out what the big deal about that was. So Luke Erso, Luke Rhiaon, Luke Insert Last Name Here, take your pick.”

Luke chuckled, “How about we go with Erso?”
“Works for me,” Quom smiled. “I’d introduce myself, but you and I know each other already.”


“Your dad helped me with my speeder this morning.”

“Is that what exploded?”

Quom was silent, “… Yes, yes it was.”

Luke couldn’t help but grin, “Rey, why don’t you properly introduce me to your friends?”

“Okay, Daddy!” Rey said excitedly. “Mister Quom, Doctor Aletha, this is Daddy.”


“Daddy, these are my friends,” Rey introduced. “The nice lady is Doctor Aletha Kymeri. She and her husband fought in the Rebellion, and her husband, a pilot named Antar was in a crash and cut off his arm and got a mechanical one like you. But he’s dead now.”

Luke raised a brow as Aletha stifled a laugh.

“Don’t you love how blunt children are?” Aletha grinned at the horrified Luke.

“I’m more concerned with how blunt your storytelling has been,” Luke said.

“Daddy, I’m talking,” Rey tugged on Luke’s pant leg, annoyed that she had been interrupted.

Luke bent down and kissed Rey on the forehead, “Go on, Sweetheart. I’m listening.”

“You better be,” Rey crossed her arms.

Luke shot her a look and Rey understood she had crossed the line from cute and bossy to demanding and rude.

“Sorry, Daddy,” Rey said.

“You’re forgiven,” Luke said, but gave her a look that clearly meant don’t do it again. “Now, who is your other friend?”

“Mister Quom Tinadar,” Rey proclaimed. “He’s a mechanic and been teaching me survival stuff. Mommy almost shot him, but we’re okay now.”

It was Quom’s turn to get Luke’s horrified look.


“Look,” Quom said casually, “I don’t know you and I don’t really know your wife, but let’s be honest, does Felicity threatening to shoot me sound out of character?”

Luke opened his mouth and paused, “… Yeah, I’ll be honest, that sounds right on the mark.”

“I thought so.”

Luke sighed, “Alright, now that we’ve all been properly introduced, why don’t we get down to it? I’m very confused as to everything that’s gone on here. If you don’t mind me asking, can you please explain how exactly you knew my wife and why I should trust either of you with my daughter?”
To emphasis his point, Luke wrapped his arm tightly around Rey’s shoulders and pulled her firmly against his leg.

“But Daddy!” Rey cried out. “They’re good guys!”


“No, Daddy, listen to me!” Rey pulled out of her father’s grip.

“Hush!” Luke snapped, grabbing her arm and pulling her back against him. “I’m not going to ask you again, Rey!”

That was when Luke noticed the tears in her eyes.

It was like he had been punched in the face. How many times in the past few months had he regretted yelling at Rey? Heck, he had cried over it that very morning, and yet here he was angry again with her.

“Please don’t cry, Sweetheart,” Luke knelt before Rey as she started to sob. He wiped the tears from her eyes and pulled her into his loving embrace. “I’m just trying to make sure you’re safe.”

“But I am safe!” Rey wailed. “They’re my friends!”

“I know they’re your friends,” Luke said. “But I don’t know them and after everything we’ve been through I’m so terrified that someone is going to try to hurt you again.”

“But they made sure I didn’t get hurt! They got beat up so I wouldn’t!”


“MG, we don’t need to talk about that,” Quom said nervously. “It’s okay. Listen to your dad. He’s a smart man who just wants to protect you. Besides, we know how to get him to trust us.”

Luke frowned at Quom and Aletha. What was Rey talking about? They had taken a beating? And someone had tried to hurt Rey?

Luke’s eyes meet Aletha’s and he silently pleaded for more information. Aletha shook her head and mouthed the word, later. Luke nodded and turned back to Rey.

“Alright, Sweetheart,” Luke kissed her forehead and held her close. “Why don’t we let Quom and Aletha prove they’re trustworthy?”

Rey sniffed and wiped her nose on her arm. “How?”

“How about we start with what your mom told me to say to him?” Aletha suggested.

Suddenly Luke’s throat felt very dry, “What? …What did she say to tell me?”

A strange feeling bloomed in Luke’s chest. Felicity had left a message for him? As he rose to his feet, he struggled not to get too excited over the idea that Felicity had managed to speak to him one last time. Was it some dire message? Was it an explanation of what had happened? Was it a taunt that she had been right about Ben the entire time? Was it a final declaration of love?

Aletha gave him a gentle smile. She regretted that Felicity had not left some epic final message to her husband, but Aletha prayed that somehow the simple words would offer Luke comfort.
“She said to say that Felicity sent you, and if you were to ever say ‘thank you’ that I should say ‘anytime’ and you would know what that meant,” Aletha relayed.

Luke felt the tears gather in his eyes. No, Felicity had not left some epic final message, but the words did offer a strange comfort. Their phrase was so simple, but for Luke and Felicity it meant so much more.

He remembered the first time they ever exchanged those words. It had been on the day they met, at the tenth anniversary celebration of the Battle of Yavin. Luke had praised Felicity’s unrecognized efforts in stealing the Death Star plans so that the Battle of Yavin and the destruction of the Death Star could be possible.

“Thank you,” Felicity had said what would be their sacred words for the first time. “It's nice to see someone appreciate my team's accomplishments for once.”

Luke had grinned at her, “Anytime.”

Felicity had later told Luke that that had been the moment she realized she loved his smile; her often professed favorite feature of his.

Their sacred phrase had been repeated later that day when Luke had given his tribute to the fallen pilots of the Battle of Yavin. It was when he got to Biggs Darklighter that Luke struggled to go on.

“Biggs Darklighter,” Luke's voice had broken on the last name. “Biggs was my best friend, and we had just been reunited. I was going to tell him all about the adventures I had had, but…”

Luke couldn't bring himself to finish the sentence.

Felicity had looked up at him. Luke was staring into the flames, tears shining in his eyes. As if it was the most natural thing in the world, Felicity had gently touched his arm. Luke visibly relaxed at the gesture of comfort.


Felicity had smiled, “Anytime.”

Luke would have been lying if he said he hadn’t probably loved Felicity from the very start. Of course, they hadn’t fallen immediately into each other’s arms. That’s what probably had made their relationship work so well; they had taken the time to become friends over lovers.

Perhaps that’s why losing her had so destroyed Luke. He hadn’t just lost his lover, but his best friend and partner. Both of them had endured so much trauma in their lives but were always determined to stand on their own and deal with things on their own. It was only once they found each other that they had found someone to catch them when they fell. Luke had become so dependent on Felicity that now he let himself fall, but only at the last moment had he remembered she was no longer there to catch him.

“I promise you, Felicity,” Luke's voice had been calm, but filled with pain during their final encounter, “I will never leave you. But I cannot always be by your side physically, so you'll just have to accept my emotional presence. My memory. My promises. You'll have to trust me that this will not
be the end.”

Felicity had painfully whispered, “Luke-”

“I love you. I have from the moment I first met you, and I'll love you even beyond my death.”

Felicity had not needed to repeat Luke’s professions; he knew every word he spoke could be perfectly switched around. She would never leave him, and she would love him beyond her death.

And that’s why that one final thank you meant so much to Luke. The words thank you and anytime had become so much more than gratitude; it was an unrivaled testament of love, a vow to catch the other when they fell, and a promise to be there even when they couldn’t physically.

“I love you, Felicity Rhiaon,” Luke had whispered during their final night, relishing the warmth of her skin.

Felicity ran a loving hand through his soft blond hair, her final gesture of intimacy, “I love you too, Luke Skywalker. Thank you... Thank you for loving me.”

Luke had gently smiled, “Anytime.”

As the memories faded away, Luke found himself staring at Doctor Aletha Kymeri through a veil of unfallen tears.


Still smiling her gentle smile, Aletha nodded and said, “Anytime.”

“So... does that get you to trust us?” Quom asked, feeling kind of awkward during the silent emotional moment.

He wasn’t the only one; Rey was squirming by her father’s feet. Why was Daddy so sad to hear his and Mommy’s phrase? Couldn’t Mommy just tell him that when they all got home? And where was Mommy?

“A little bit,” Luke admitted, wiping the tears from his eyes. “But I’m still uncertain as to your connection with my wife. Do you two work for Plutt?”

“Oh God, no!” Aletha exclaimed in disgust.

“I’d rather be dead,” Quom proclaimed. “No, your wife and I met independently of Plutt. She later asked me to keep an eye on Rey to pay off my debt.”


Quom awkwardly scratched his back, his eyes darting away, “Uh... we had an interesting first meeting.”

Luke narrowed his eyes, “Go on.”

“Well... We made a bargain and I sort of took advantage of the situation and overstretched my demands.”
Luke said nothing but crossed his arms and gave Quom a look the Vrogem was terrified to be on the receiving end of. Luke Erso appeared to be a man who was willing to cause a lot of damage to anyone who crossed his family.

“I tried to give it back!” Quom exclaimed. “But she wouldn’t take it and neither would Rey!”

Luke looked down at Rey, “Is that true?”

Rey nodded, “We don’t take things that aren’t ours, and it belongs to Mommy, not me.”

Luke ruffled her hair, “Well, I’m not going to chastise you for following that rule. But what exactly are we talking about here? What of my wife’s do you have?”

Quom untied the string around his neck and held it up, “These are some pretty rings, don’t you think?”

“Felicity!” Luke gasped, grabbing the rings. Turning them over in his hand, Luke studied them intently, “I thought these were lost.”

“Nope,” Quom shook his head. “They’ve been hanging around my neck for months, waiting for you or you wife to take them back.”

Without seeking permission to claim ownership, Luke tied the string around his neck, his wife’s rings resting on his chest. Luke had been so angry at Ben for not allowing him to have that small memento of Felicity, and now Luke had them, the metal pressing next to his heart.

Rey frowned, “Daddy, are you okay?”

Daddy was looking sad again and she didn’t like it.

“It’s okay, MG,” Quom assured her. “I think your dad has just been through a lot lately and it’s hard for him to take it all in. ‘Specially since he doesn’t understand everything that’s happened.”

“Don’t be sad, Daddy,” Rey hugged Luke’s leg tightly. “How can I make things better?”

Luke laughed, “It’s not your job to make me feel better.”

“Mommy said the same thing, but then she kept getting sad and I didn’t like it. She cried when she thought I was asleep, but I didn’t say anything cause I didn’t want to make her more sad.”

A harsh silence clung to the air as Luke failed to find a response to Rey’s blunt admission. He hated the thought that Felicity had been so sad on Jakku, but it was worse knowing that Rey had witnessed it.

“I’m sorry, Daddy,” Rey looked at the ground. “I didn’t mean to make you sad again.”

“No,” Luke got down on one knee and pulled her into a hug, “I’m not sad. In fact, I’m happier than I have been in five months. I have you back, and that’s all that matters.”

“But you keep crying.”

“Sometimes it’s not easy to be happy when you’ve spent so much time being sad. I just need a little help from time to time to get happy again.”

“I want to help! How can I do that?”
“Why don’t we tell him about all our adventures, MG?” Quom suggested. “Where should we start?”

“What’s an MG?”

“MG?” Quom asked. “It’s shorthand for Miracle Girl.”

“Miracle Girl?” Luke glanced down at his daughter. “Isn’t there some sort of phrase against miracles around here?”

“There’s no miracles on Jakku,” Aletha said the infamous mantra.

“That’s the one,” Luke nodded.

“And one that I believe in.” Quom grinned, “Except when it comes to this little girl.”

“Why’s that?”

“Well, how many people do you know that come back from the dead?”


What the hell was going on on this crazy planet Felicity had brought their daughter? Rey was dead, but not really, but actually was, but then got better?

Where was aspirin when Luke needed it?

“Knock it off, Tinadar!” Aletha smacked Quom’s arm. “He’s making it sound worse than it was.”

Luke frowned, “So… Rey didn’t die?”

Aletha weighed her words, “Well… technically she did.”

“What?”

“She suffered a clinical death,” Aletha explained. “Rey suffered an extreme case of heatstroke and at one point her breathing ceased and heart stopped beating. Felicity Erso managed to revive Rey via cardiopulmonary resuscitation.”

Quom stared at her.

“CPR,” Aletha said.

“Oh,” Quom nodded.

Luke sighed, rubbing his temples in exasperation, “You know... maybe we should just start from the very beginning?”

“Sounds good to me,” Quom declared. He held open the flap to his tent, “But why don’t we have seat? This might take a while.”

And so they told Luke everything. Luke sat on Quom’s cot with Rey in his lap, as Quom sat in a rickety metal chair and Aletha settled on a workbench. They told Luke all that had happened as far as they understood it.

Quom told of his encounter and bargaining with Felicity in the walker. While Luke felt pride at the
retelling of Felicity protecting Rey, he was less than impressed at the part where Quom implied Felicity had offered herself as a bartering option. Considering the circumstances, Luke wasn’t going to put a black mark against her memory, but he still didn’t like the idea of someone else being intimate with his wife.

Rey stayed silent during the story. Even when Daddy asked her questions about the missing parts that had involved only her and Mommy, Rey refused to answer them. She didn’t want to think about that scary hike through the desert. She didn’t want to remember when Mommy went away. She didn’t want to confess how sad and lonely she had been. She didn’t want to make Daddy feel bad about not coming earlier.

Rey could feel the guilt in him and didn’t want to make it worse. Though Daddy hadn’t said anything about it, Rey could feel deep down that if Daddy could have come earlier nothing in the galaxy would have stopped him. So as the adults urged her once more to fill in a blank neither Quom or Aletha could fill, Rey shook her head and snuggled into her father’s loving embrace. Luke accepted his daughter’s decision to stay silent, and kissed her forehead as he continued to lovingly stroke her hair.

Of course, there was another part of the story that got left out, and that was where Quom and Aletha had endured a beating for Rey. As intrigued as Luke was about it, the others knew it was too dangerous to cross Plutt until they had set up the proper circumstances. Plutt would not get away with it, but they would like to have it end preferably with unsnapped necks.

So as far as Luke knew, this was the story of Felicity and Rey’s time on Jakku:

Quom had found Felicity and Rey in a walker where Rey had suffered heatstroke. Felicity saved Rey via CPR and bartered with Quom for his cool down pill. Quom brought Felicity and Rey into town and headed back out for the desert. Shortly after, Unkar Plutt had brought Felicity and Rey to Aletha. As Aletha treated Rey, Felicity made her comm attempts and came back without success.

Neither Quom nor Aletha saw Felicity and Rey for two weeks but Plutt was seen taking portions out of town every few days. Then the First Order arrived and searched for the girls for several weeks. Plutt threatened to cut off and/or kill anyone who turned in Felicity and Rey to the First Order. Both Quom and Aletha were interrogated by Captain Phasma but hid their knowledge out of moral principal.

One day Quom encountered a tearful Felicity Erso by herself. She claimed to have done something terrible for the greater good, and later implied that she had abandoned Rey. Felicity forgave Quom, and rejected her rings. She then asked Quom to return a speeder to Plutt’s goons and asked if Quom could, to help Rey if she needed it.

After her equipment was destroyed, Aletha was beaten by Phasma. Felicity intervened and turned herself in, saving Aletha. Though Aletha had fled, word had spread that Felicity was knocked out by Phasma and taken onto the First Order ship.

Aletha bashfully mentioned to Luke that Felicity promised compensation for her destroyed equipment, and quickly said he didn’t have to as Plutt had already replaced it. Luke just smiled and said they’d discuss it later.

Rey was then left in the care of Unkar Plutt until one day Rey got lost and wound up on Quom’s doorstep (or rather, in front of his tent flap.) She had gotten sunburn, so Quom took her to Aletha and they became friends with Rey. Rey started spending time with them everyday until an incident where Rey cut her knee at Quom’s. After that, Rey started avoiding the two of them.
Luke had raised his eyebrow at that. Rey had gone very stiff in his lap at the story, and neither Quom nor Aletha would look him in the eye. Clearly there was something more to the story, and Luke strongly suspected that it had to do with the mysterious beating. The only question was who was behind the beating?

“And then today I was coming back in from scavenging,” Quom came near the end of the story, “and I ran into you of all people. It wasn’t until you told me your name and left that I realised who you might be. I couldn’t find you so I chalked it up to coincidence. It wasn’t until Aletha came to me and said she had been accosted by you that I was certain you were Rey’s dad.”


Luke chuckled, “Considering my desperation, I wouldn’t be surprised if I did. My apologies, nonetheless.”

Aletha smiled and shook her head, “You know, Rey’s a lucky little girl. Not only does she have a Mama Nexu, but she appears to have a Daddy Nexu as well. I very much would not like to get between either you or your wife and Rey.”

Luke’s smile dropped slightly at the mention of Felicity, “We would do anything to keep her safe.”

“Daddy?” Rey looked up at him. “Why didn’t Mommy come with you to get me? She knows Mister Quom and Doctor Aletha. She could have told you we were friends.”

Luke bit his lip and avoided Rey’s eyes, “Rey-”

“I know she doesn’t like this planet!” Rey objected as if that were the reason Luke was about to give. “But she said she’d come back to get me! Why didn’t she come back?”

Quom and Aletha exchanged a look.

Luke sighed, “Rey-”

“And if she didn’t want to come, why didn’t you comm her and ask her if Mister Quom and Doctor Aletha were okay?” Rey demanded. “And why didn’t she tell you where my walker was so you could have come get me first thing this morning? I felt you, Daddy!”

“Rey-”

“And why didn’t Mommy-”


Rey fell silent at the look on Daddy’s face. There was anger, but even more so, sadness; a sadness that frightened Rey. The same kind of sadness that had been on Master Gavyn Kene’s face after Master Alyla died. The same kind of sadness that had been on Aunt Leia’s face when Ben ran away. The same kind of sadness that had been on Mommy’s face when she went away.

Rey didn’t want Daddy to have that kind of sadness.

“Daddy?” Rey whimpered, her fear shining on her face.

Luke couldn’t stop the sob that escaped him as he placed his hand over his eyes, shielding his tears from Rey. How could he tell her that Mommy wasn’t coming home?

“Rey,” Luke swallowed, taking a moment to compose himself. When he felt he could hold himself
together, Luke took a deep breath and removed his hand. His heart broke as his eyes met Rey’s innocent hazel gaze. Gently stroking her cheek, Luke said to Rey with a hitch in his voice, “Sweetheart… There’s something I need to tell you… Mommy-”

At that moment the tent flap flew open and Unkar Plutt barrelled into the tent with his minions.

“There you two are!” Unkar Plutt declared jovially as his beady eyes set on Luke and Rey. The joy in Plutt’s voice was clearly false, and yet that’s what made it so dangerous.

As Rey tucked herself into the safety of her father’s arms as much as possible, both Luke and Aletha groaned at the interruption.

“Honestly, at this point I was expecting something like this to interrupt,” Quom shrugged.

Unkar Plutt grinned at Luke, “Well, it looks like you found your little girl, Master-”

“Erso,” Luke cut off before Plutt could reveal to Quom and Aletha that he was the famous Luke Skywalker.

“Erso?” Plutt frowned.

“Erso,” Rey nodded, a look of satisfaction on her face. She may not understand the game, but she did occasionally know when to play it, “It’s our last name. Luke, Fliss, and Rey Erso.”

Plutt looked at Luke, “… Okay.”

Luke couldn’t help but smile; it amused him that Rey would default Felicity’s name as her nickname Fliss. Luke never used it – secretly he thought the name Fliss was awful – but it was Han and Diego’s moniker of choice for Felicity, and Leia used it often. Clearly Rey had been influenced by those three in her usage of names and not her parents.

Then again, both Luke and Felicity had almost exclusively referred to themselves and each other as Mommy and Daddy to Rey. It was a small concession to Luke who always tried to speak to Rey as a level-headed equal.

Luke didn’t speak to Rey in the third person as Felicity did, nor did he judge her for doing so. It had been a coping technique Felicity practiced during her struggle with postpartum depression that stuck around years afterwards. It allowed Felicity to stop spending so much time placing blame and guilt on herself, and mentally removed herself from the equation so she could look at the situation objectively.

Ultimately that was the difference of their parenting styles, and a strange inverse of their personalities. While professionally Felicity was great at negotiating one on one, and Luke was great at mechanics and equations, Luke held the one on one approach to parenting while Felicity viewed it as an equation of the greater good.

There was no doubt in Luke’s mind that if he had been the one on Jakku, he never would have walked away from Rey.

Luke looked down at his blissfully unaware daughter. Rey knew that horrible things had happened over the past few months, but she didn’t understand why. Yet there she sat patiently waiting for answers and knowing it wasn’t her turn yet to speak.

Thank the Force, Padmé Amidala’s patience had been stronger than any of the Skywalker, Andromias, or Rhiaon genes.
Especially the Skywalker genes.

“Well, isn’t this a nice little picture?” Plutt gestured to Luke and Rey. “Father and daughter, all safe and reunited.”

Luke didn’t know why, but he suddenly felt the need to wrap his arms firmly around Rey.

“There aren’t words that can describe how glad I am to have her back,” Luke said politely.

For some reason, Rey pressed back against his chest as if trying to bury herself in his grasp. Luke could sense her fear. Suspicious, Luke glanced over at Aletha and Quom. Both were rather stiff and uncertain where they should be looking, but certain their eyes should be downcast.

Luke had a bad feeling about this.

“I don’t mean to intrude on your happy reunion, but I’m afraid we still have some business to conduct,” said Plutt. “Namely the issue of compensation for my services to care for your daughter.”

Aletha let out an involuntary snort. Luke frowned at her while Plutt shot her an icy stare. Aletha lowered her head, but there was a smirk across her lips.

“Yes, well, forgive me,” Luke said, “I’m still trying to assess the situation and understand what all has gone on around here in my wife’s absence. Quom and Aletha were explaining everything to me.”

Both Quom and Aletha’s eyes went wide and Plutt’s beady eyes set on them.

“Have they now?” the threat was clear in Plutt’s voice.

“Yes, they have,” Luke observed their reactions carefully. There was definitely something more to this Plutt situation than was being spoken. “Perhaps you might have something to add?”

“Depends on what they’ve been saying,” Plutt growled.

Quom looked away sheepishly.

Then his eyes set on it; Luke’s arms wrapped around Rey.

Quom quickly looked back at Plutt. Plutt was several feet away from Luke and Rey; close enough to be a threat, but far enough that they would have some reaction time to act. But the best part was that all of Plutt’s goons were backing him up, making their usual intimidating wall of muscle.

They were even further away from Rey.

“Doc,” Quom whispered.

Aletha looked up and Quom nodded to the goons. Not understanding, Aletha frowned at Quom but he kept jerking his head towards the goons. Aletha gave him her best “what are you saying” look and shook her head. Quom looked her in the eyes and very obviously let them drift over to Luke’s arms wrapped around Rey.

Then Aletha understood.

“Because from this moment on, the girl will always be within arm’s reach of my men.”

Aletha looked back at Quom and shared a gleeful look. Their eyes shared an unspoken conversation of “should we do it” and subsequent agreement. Plutt had made a grave error, and it was unlikely he
would make one of this magnitude again. If they were ever going to do it, now was their chance.

Oh, this was going to be fun…

“Don’t worry, Plutt,” Quom laughed heartily, “we’ve behaved ourselves.”


“Of course,” Aletha grinned. “We wouldn’t dare cross the great Unkar Plutt. Don’t bite the hand that literally feeds you after all. No fear, Mister Plutt, we’ve only told him about our interactions with Rey and her mother. The personal conversations exchanged between you and us are none of Mister Erso’s business. We would never tell him that you had us beaten and extorted for taking care of Rey in the ways you purposefully neglected.”

“Excuse me?” Luke’s eyes shot to Plutt. There was a dangerous storm brewing behind his blue gaze.

“And we would never tell him that upon Doc questioning Rey’s need to be happy and comfortable you said.” Quom paused, “What was it, Doc?”

“I think he said, ‘I don’t give a damn,’” Aletha replied. She had always had a mind to remember conversations word for word. “And then he said, ‘Her mother told me to keep her fed, clothed, hydrated, safe, and distracted. I didn’t agree to entertained or happy or wipe her tears at night. It is not my fault that the girl is heartbroken and lonely. It’s the fault of the mother who abandoned her.’”

Plutt looked back at his goons in fear. That look usually was the signal for Roke to take his place by Plutt’s side, but with Luke Skywalker’s anger directing itself on Plutt, Roke didn’t feel the urge to put himself between his boss and the Jedi Grandmaster.

Aletha continued, “And of course we wouldn’t tell him that if we continued to take care of his daughter that you would stop taking care of her yourself, and then we would have a bigger problem.”

“Would we?” Luke said through gritted teeth. He could sense the honesty coming from Quom and Aletha, and even if he couldn’t, the fear coming from Plutt was more than enough to convince Luke that they were telling the truth. “And what problem would that be?”

Aletha pretended to be scandalized, “Why I could never tell you that the problem would be that if he stopped taking care of her, then he couldn’t get a reward from you. And even worse that if she wasn’t going to be worth anything to him, she wouldn’t be worth anything to us.”

“Yeah,” Quom chuckled, “and we wouldn’t dare dream of telling you that if she became worthless to him that he would have his men-”

Quom stopped as he noticed Rey’s fearful eyes on him.

“Snap her neck,” Quom had to say it, but he felt no delight as Rey buried her face against her father’s chest.


Unkar Plutt was honestly surprised he didn’t just explode on spot.

Silence filled the tent as all eyes fell on Luke. He said nothing, but his eyes were cold and dangerous. An energy filled the tent; it was hot and suffocating, a weight pressing down on them, crushing them, burning them.
“Daddy?” Rey whimpered. She knew it was the Dark Side of the Force and she was scared.

At the sound of her innocent voice, Luke looked down. He blinked. It was like he had forgotten she was there. He smiled down at her and then closed his eyes and took a deep breath. The Darkness washed away with the exhale of his breath, and Rey felt the Light fill her father once more.


“I love you, Daddy,” Rey whispered back, as if her words were some dangerous secret.

“I love you too, Rey,” Luke stroked her cheek, intimately pressing his forehead against hers. It was the same act he had done the last time he held her mother in his arms.

Aletha sighed in part happiness and part longing. It had been a long time since she had seen someone demonstrate that depth of love. Though over the years she had seen many parents rejoice at the healing of their child, there was something that much more special about a father declaring their love for their child when their child was completely safe in their arms.

And that was exactly what Quom had been playing off of.

“As we said, Plutt, we would never tell him that you threatened to kill his daughter.” Quom paused, “That is… unless she was safe and sound, literally in his arms while your goons are much too far from her to do any harm to Rey.”

“Yes,” Aletha grinned, “I can see us making an exception for that.”

Calmed by Rey’s presence, Luke was able to restrain himself from acting on the more Skywalker half of himself, and gathered the patience his mother had passed to him.

“Mister Plutt,” Luke said calmly, “may I have a word with you? Privately?”

Unkar Plutt swallowed and dumbly nodded. A dozen goons backing him up or not, Luke Skywalker was a man even Plutt knew not to cross, and now that Skywalker knew he had been crossed… maybe there was still some way to salvage this.

“I’ve got a building not far from here where I meet my traders from off-world,” Plutt said. “It’s empty now. We can discuss business there.”

“Very well,” Luke nodded. “Rey, Sweetheart, Daddy has to go talk to Mister Plutt for a few minutes. Can you stay here with Quom and Aletha?”

Rey’s eyes went wide.

“No, Daddy! No! Please don’t leave me!” Rey screamed, locking her arms around her father’s neck. Tears coursed fast and thick down Luke’s neck as Rey begged him not to leave her behind. It was too soon to be alone again; Daddy had only just come back. How could she be certain he would return if he went away again? “Daddy, no! Don’t go!”

“Hey, hey, hey,” Luke tried to soothe Rey, rubbing her back as she sobbed on his shoulder. His heart broke to see that Rey feared abandonment, but he certainly wasn’t going to deal with Plutt in front of her. “It’s okay. I’m not leaving you behind again. Okay? I promise I’ll never leave you behind again, but I need to talk with Mister Plutt and that’s a private conversation for grown ups.”

“I don’t care!” Rey sobbed. “I’m scared you won’t come back! Like Mommy didn’t come back!”
Pain coursed through the room as Luke struggled to calm Rey. Both Quom and Aletha wanted to grab her and promise that they’d make sure her daddy came back, but if Luke couldn’t convince Rey he would return, what chance did Quom and Aletha have? Tears shined in the eyes of many of the assembled as they watched the heart wrenching scene, and there was a loud sob that sounded suspiciously like it came from Roke’s direction.

Luke held Rey close as her words devolved into meaningless sobs. Her screams teared at Luke’s heart. How could he possibly assure her that he wasn’t going to abandon her?

And then he thought of it.

“Rey,” Luke whispered. He didn’t move or make any indication to their audience that he had spoken. Rey’s head buried in the crook of his neck poised her ears perfectly next to his mouth. His lips barely moved and the volume of his speech was nothing more than glorified breaths. “Rey, don’t cry. It’s going to be okay. I’ll prove to you that I’m not going to run away. Do you want to know how to do that?”

Rey still cried but she gave a small, indiscernible nod. She recognized the privacy of their conversation.

“Well, I can’t run away from you if you track where I am. Can I?”

Rey shook her head.

“Rey, if I show you how to track me, can I go with Plutt while you stay with your friends?”

Rey sniffed and nodded.

Luke smiled, “Reach into the Force, Rey. Can you feel my presence?”

Rey took a deep breath and closed her eyes. She reached into the Force like Daddy had taught her. She felt the energy surrounding her, warming her, embracing her, moving in and out of her with every breath. The Force was concentrated largely in the spot in space she occupied; it wasn’t like the spots where Quom, Aletha, Plutt and the others stood where the Force was moving in and out with each breath, but with a lower quantity.

“Find me, Rey,” Daddy’s voice whispered.

Rey concentrated and remembered how Daddy had explained finding an individual in the Force. He had explained it to her like colours; every presence, whether Force Sensitive or not, had its own unique colour. Presences were affected by genetics, being a mixture of their parents’ colours, yet were individual in their own right.

Daddy liked to explain that was how he had first sensed her in the Force when Mommy was pregnant with her. He had sensed a new colour in the Force, a sort of purple presence. Whenever Rey had reached into the Force she saw what Daddy meant. The energy occupying her spot had a lilac hue. Mommy’s hue was crimson, and Daddy’s was a sort of sky blue, like the colour of his eyes. Together that crimson and sky blue had mixed together to form lilac, half blue, half red, and yet a colour in its own right.

Of course bloodlines and their hues weren’t strictly mother and father related and not always as exact as the genesis of Rey’s hue had been. Aunt Leia’s hue was navy, a blue like her twin, strong yet calming.

Rey had always liked determining the hues of the people she loved. Uncle Han was a yellow-gold
like the medal he had been given after saving Daddy in the Battle of Yavin. Ben was a green, dark like the ominous and scary forest on Rornian. Uncle Chewie was a golden brown like the shade of his fur. Uncle Diego was copper like the X-Wing he flew in the Republic Military. Poe was bright orange like BB-8. Uncle Lando was black like his hair and the market that he liked to trade things on (Rey always wondered why the colour of a market was so important. What did it matter if Uncle Lando used a black market or a white market? And why did markets have colours anyway?)

The Naberries had shades similar to mulberry, like the flowers they brought to Grandma Padmé’s tomb every week. Maz was saffron like the spices in the yummy dishes she made in her watering hole (Uncle Han had brought Rey there once in a really dire emergency and Daddy hadn’t been happy.)

Reine was charcoal like the dark metal of her lightsaber hilt. Obik was parchment yellow like the old books he read and organized as the Jedi Historian. Alyla was magenta like one of the pretty dresses she preferred to wear over the earth toned robes of most Jedi. Gavyn’s hue complemented hers as a deep violet, the colour of his daughter’s eyes, and a hue he had never been ashamed of. Zena was emerald like the lightsaber she was fiercely wielded (Rey had always thought Zena was Daddy’s best fighter.) Miri was aquamarine, the only colour present in both her mother and father’s hues and reminded Rey of the lake where Miri liked to go swimming all the time. Tyla was silver like ice to match the cold personality she always gave off.

Mister Quom was a rusty grey like the machine parts he scavenged and worked with. Doctor Aletha was a crisp clean white like the walls of a hospital. Mister Plutt was dirt brown, like the-

“Rey, focus,” Luke ordered, sensing her trailing thoughts.

“Right, Daddy.”

Rey focused her attentions back to the Force and on finding his comforting sky blue hue. It didn’t take long for her to find it. It was entwined with her lilac hue, embracing it, guarding it, and protecting it.

“Found you,” Rey whispered, holding onto Daddy extra tight. The hue of his presence was calming like refreshing water pouring over her as she stood under a waterfall.

“Good,” Luke smiled, himself taking in her lilac hue. In his arms she felt like the flower of her hue; bright, lively, craving the light, always thriving best when surrounded by others, but tiny that could easy crushed with one careless movement. “Now, I want you to focus on me. I’m going to go to Plutt’s place and you’ll follow me in the Force. After that, I’m going to come right back. If you feel me divert my path in anyway, you have my full permission to come chasing after me. But you can only do that if you stay here with Quom and Aletha. Agreed?”

“Agreed.” Rey wiped her eyes and smiled, “Daddy, does this mean you trust Mister Quom and Doctor Aletha?”

Luke glanced at his daughter’s protectors, “Absolutely.”


Luke gave Rey one last firm squeeze of a hug and kissed her on the forehead, “Be good for your friends.”

“I will, Daddy,” Rey promised.

He gestured to Quom and Aletha, and Quom approached with arms outstretched in understanding.
With what could only be described as elegance, Luke gracefully stood, lifting Rey as his lap disappeared from underneath her. In the same motion, he placed Rey into Quom’s arms and turned back to Unkar Plutt.

“Shall we, Mister Plutt?” Luke asked.

Unkar Plutt frowned and looked at the suspiciously red-eyed Roke.

“If you’re going to make a break for it, now’s the time, Plutt,” Quom grinned. “Of course, then I’d have to tell the other scavengers you ran away with your tail between your legs.”

Plutt moved his hand to signal to his goons.

“Not so fast, Plutt.” Quom held up Rey like a shield, “I have Erso’s daughter. You can’t touch me.”

Plutt glared at Quom and declared, “Let’s move out, Boys!”

Rey waved at her father as he followed Plutt and his men filing out of the tent. She couldn’t stop the fear in her heart that Daddy would never return, but she also felt a new sense of hope.

“Come on, MG,” Quom plopped Rey on the ground when Plutt’s party had gone. “I’ve got a speeder to fix, and you have some identifying indicators of things buried under the sand to brush up on.”

“Yay!” Rey raced towards the toolbox.

Aletha just shook her head, “First, come here, Rey. I want to take a look at you and make sure you’ve been keeping yourself in good order while on your own.”

As Aletha led Rey to the corner to examine her, Quom sighed in contentment. He was happy to see Felicity Erso’s husband had finally come for his daughter. No doubt Luke Erso would take her away from them very shortly, and Quom would miss her, but at least he had gotten Aletha as a friend out of the deal. After all, they took kicks to the face together, and that kind of stuff bonds you for life.

There was a tap on Quom’s shoulder.

“Yes?” Quom turned around to find himself face to face with Roke.

“You set the girl down,” Roke smiled.

Roke slammed his fist into Quom’s stomach, and Quom fell to the ground.

“Nice doing business with you, Mister Tinadar,” Roke bowed his head and exited the tent.

Quom groaned and pushed himself up on his elbows.

“Worth it,” Quom grinned.

Quom collapsed back onto the ground.

Luke was silent as Unkar Plutt and his goons led them to a small building next to the nearly empty shipyard. It was a high-tech building for Jakku… by which high-tech meant it secured with locks and had air conditioning.

Luke waved off the offers of food, water, and to take his cloak. He just followed Plutt into a small
room with a door, table and chairs set on either side. Luke wanted to be in and out of the building as fast as possible. This wasn’t a business meeting, but rather the chance to tie up the last loose ends of his agreement with Unkar Plutt.

Roke nodded to the other goons, and they did not follow Luke and Plutt into the room. The goons lined the wall of the hallway opposite of the door, and Roke stationed himself in front of the door, shutting it, leaving Luke and Plutt alone.

“Are you sure I can’t get you anything?” Plutt asked, trying to sound put together but his nerves getting the best of him.

“No, thank you,” Luke glided over to the table and pulled out a chair. “Let us have a seat.”

Plutt nodded and muttered a few things Luke couldn’t make out. Luke wasn’t sure if they were failed attempts at trying to come up with an apology or way to explain the issue away, or if Unkar Plutt actually had the nerve to utter a few insults to Luke Skywalker himself.

The bulbous mass that the residents of Niima Outpost called the Blobfish behind his back, took the seat across from Luke. Luke neatly folded his hands and placed them in front of himself on the table. He said nothing but watched as Plutt shifted uncomfortably under his gaze. The minutes stretched on as Luke enjoyed Plutt’s discomfort and fear, while Luke also took the time to figure out his objective in the meeting.

Finally, Luke spoke.

“I only want to ask this once,” Luke began, his voice calm and level. “Mister Plutt, do you think I’m an idiot?”

“What? No!” Plutt spluttered. “Please Master Skywalker, let me just explain-”

Luke held up his hand and Plutt fell silent.

“Good,” Luke lowered his hand. “You know… I grew up in conditions not unlike the ones in this town. Given, they were certainly better in some regards, but there is a general sense of Tatooine on this planet. One of the biggest similarities is the gang control in both environments. I grew up living under the thumb of Jabba the Hutt, and believe me, it was not easy. He controlled many things, but the thing I remember most is him controlling the water during a particularly bad drought. To deny water to a person is one of the worst things you can do.”

“With all do respect, Master Skywalker,” Plutt interrupted, understanding the veiled meaning behind Luke’s words, “I provide a valuable service by doling out food to the residents of Niima Outpost. We can’t grow anything here, and by bringing in and distributing food from off-world, I’m doing the citizens a favor.”

“I do not object to your food distribution business, Mister Plutt. It is your other activities that concern me. Now, I’m not a fool. I know that I cannot possibly waste my time on taking down gangs and their activities. There are too many in the Galaxy and more always spring up in their place. I have not come to shut you down. My job is not to seek out and take down criminal activities; it is to keep the peace.”

“Of course.”

“But I will make an exception when my family is threatened.”

Unkar Plutt said nothing.
Luke took a long pause, “Mister Plutt, have you ever heard what happened to Jabba the Hutt?”


“When I became a Jedi, I never intended to return to Tatooine and bring an end to Jabba’s reign of terror. There were far more important things for me to concern myself with. That is, until it got personal.”

Plutt said nothing once more.

“My best friend, Han Solo, who would later become my brother-in-law, was captured by Jabba the Hutt and held as hostage—”

“I heard he was a wall decoration,” Plutt snorted.

Luke raised an eyebrow and Plutt fell silent.

“The method in which he held Han hostage is irrelevant,” Luke continued, his voice level as ever. “I approached Jabba multiple times and tried to come to a fair agreement. He refused. Finally I came in person and offered a peaceful agreement that there would be no violence. If he did not agree, I would be forced to take action. I told him the choice was his but not to underestimate my powers… He refused.”

Unkar Plutt looked down at the table. Without his goons surrounding him and his concession stand to hide in, he felt very powerless next to the Jedi Grandmaster.


“You killed them all,” Plutt answered. “They say you used your lightsaber to cut Jabba the Hutt’s throat himself.”

“Well, actually my sister strangled him, but yes, me and my friends systematically murdered Jabba and his gang. Now people on Tatooine are safe, but many families mourn and crave revenge for their dead loved ones. It didn’t have to be that way for Jabba… and it doesn’t have to be that way for you.”

Unkar Plutt looked up in shock.

Luke looked Plutt directly in the eyes, “My first choice is always to forgive. I forgave Darth Vader; I certainly can forgive you. I don’t know what possessed you to think to threaten my daughter… my helpless, innocent, never did anything to harm you, five-year-old daughter… but I’m not certain you truly meant it. Maybe it was a reputation thing. I certainly have fallen victim to delusions of grandeur. Maybe you felt your income was threatened and that Quom and Aletha were too afraid of you to force you to act on your threat. Or maybe you really did mean to kill my daughter if you couldn’t get a paycheck. The fact of the matter is that my daughter ended up safe and in my custody. Ergo, I will forgive you and forget this matter.”

Unkar Plutt couldn’t believe what he was hearing, “Thank you, Master Skywalker! Thank you!”

“But if I ever hear you threaten her again—”

“It will never happen. I swear it.”

Plutt frowned, “Uh… Sorry, but don’t we still have an issue of money to discuss?”

“I don’t see that we do.”

Plutt scowled, “You promised that I would get a reward.”

“Yes,” Luke nodded. “If you followed the terms of agreement. Since you violated them, I see no reason to give you anything further.”

“Now listen here!” Plutt shot to his feet. “We had a deal!”

“And what deal was that?”

“I would follow everything your wife said, and she told me to keep Rey fed, hydrated, clothed, safe, and distracted.”

Luke glared at Plutt, “Alright, I’ll play your game. Yes, those were the terms of our agreement, but you did not fulfill those terms.”

“Now you listen here,” Plutt growled.

“I will give you that you kept Rey fed and hydrated,” Luke continued. “While Rey does noticeably has less mass than when I last saw her, I will chalk that up to the little nutritional value of rations. Now, that’s not me accusing you of not feeding her properly; I know well enough that rations are perfectly fine to survive on. I can’t tell you how many times I ate them during the war. As for the issue of water, I have been informed of its strange abundance on this desert planet, and not once has Rey complained of thirst. But do you really wish to argue me on the points that she was clothed, distracted, and safe under your care?”

“Yes, I will argue,” Plutt replied. “True, I may have not done the possible job that maybe I could have, but that girl has been distracted, safe, and certainly well-clothed while in my care.”

“Really?” Luke raised an eyebrow. “Mister Plutt, is it true that Doctor Kymeri treated my daughter for sunburn?”

“Well… yes,” Plutt frowned, uncertain where Luke was going with this.

“Third degree sunburns. Burns that the doctor has described to me as some of the worst she’s ever seen?”

“She’s the doctor, isn’t she?”

“Mister Plutt, why did Rey get this terrible sunburn?”

Plutt thought hard, still trying to figure out Skywalker’s game, “Because her skin was exposed to the sun.”

“Correct,” Luke gave a pleasant smile that did not reach his eyes. “She was burned because she did not have proper arm or facial coverings. Ergo, you did not keep her clothed.”

“A mistake, but one that was corrected.”

“But not by you,” Luke shot. “Don’t lie to me, Plutt. I recognize her tunic, boots, and leggings. I recognize them because they are from an emergency supplies bag stored in my X-Wing, a bag I know that my wife took to this planet. My wife dressed Rey in her clothing, and I know that Quom Tinadar provided her with the extras, as well as had a backup set of clothing from her. Is any of this
information incorrect?”


Luke narrowed his eyes, “Mister Plutt, are you aware that both Rey and I have the ability to use the Force?”

“Of course.”

“And are you aware that I get visions through the Force of things that are happening or will happen?”

“Yes.”

“And are you aware that Rey is able to communicate to me through the Force via these visions?”

Plutt went white, “No, I wasn’t aware of that.”

“I thought not.” Luke said. “So do not sit there and tell me that you kept Rey distracted, because I know for a fact that every night Rey has gone to sleep in tears, wallowing in her situation, and begging for me to come find her. Or do you call that distracted?”

Plutt shook his head.

“I thought not. Now, the issue of safety-”

“Don’t you dare, Skywalker!” Plutt snapped. “I kept that girl safe from the First Order, and went through hell to do so. Sure, maybe I neglected a few bullet points, but that this was all about, wasn’t it? Hiding her from the First Order. Well, I did that! Don’t you dare try to weasel out of our agreement! You owe me big time for watching your brat, and if you walk away without giving me a single credit then I promise you that my boys are going to hold you here while they make a little visit to your precious-”

Luke slammed Plutt against the wall.

“Do not underestimate my powers!” Luke growled. “Especially when the situation concerns my daughter! Keeping her safe does not count when it’s keeping her safe from your wrath!”

“Boss, what’s going on?” Roke called.

The door swung open and Plutt’s goons barreled into the room. Roke stopped short when he saw Luke pinning Plutt against the wall, murder flashing in his eyes.

“Sir!” Roke exclaimed.

“Anyone who intervenes will not leave this room alive,” Luke warned.

Roke looked to Plutt, and Plutt gave Roke a frantic nod. Roke swallowed and signalled for the others to back down.

“Good,” Luke turned back to Plutt, who he was still holding in place against the wall. “I said I only wanted to ask this once, but it appears it needs to be reiterated. Mister Plutt, do you think I’m an idiot?”

“No,” Plutt whispered.
“I may be a good man who fights to justice and Light, but I am also a very dangerous man who has no qualms about ending your life if you or any of your goons touch my daughter. Rey is the only good thing I have left, and I will defend her with all of my skills and abilities. I’m not afraid of you, and I’m also not going to fall fool for your little act.”

“I just wanted what I was promised.”

“Shut up!” Luke barked. “Don’t you try to fool me! I know you’ve already been paid a great deal!”

“You... you do?”

“Do you seriously think I don’t watch my bank accounts? I know that several months ago, one of my accounts was emptied of a certain large sum. The exact sum that was on a credit chip connected to the account that was kept in the same emergency supplies bag that Rey’s current clothing was in. Felicity paid you enough to cover Rey’s expenses for five years and then some.”

“Okay, fine!” Plutt admitted, “She paid me. I just thought I might get an additional reward.”

“You thought wrong,” Luke smiled and released Plutt. He took a step back, “Now I’m a nice man, and you did fulfill some of your promises. My wife and I have been through a difficult time, and you helped ease part of the burden when you didn’t have to. Therefore, I will allow you to keep all the money you already were given. But there’s a few rules and here’s how things are going to go. The money was enough to cover the expenses of Aletha Kymeri’s equipment, which I’ve been told you helped replace. We will consider that debt settled. It was also enough to feed and care for Rey for her duration on this planet. We will also consider that debt settled. Now, it’s getting late and seeing as I didn’t know Rey was going to be alive, I don’t exactly have a plan for my next move at the moment, but I feel like I’ll probably spend a few days on Jakku making arrangements. Therefore, you are going to make an account book with me. Every day that Rey and I are on this planet, you will feed us three portions each. You will then deduct the cost from the remaining amount of money you received from the credit chip after we subtract the previous debts. We will use this account book to subtract any other deals I may make with you. Lastly, we will make a large subtraction today. I require a method of transportation on this planet, so you are going to use part of that money as my payment of buying a high-quality speeder with a full tank of gas. Are we understood?”

Unkar Plutt nodded, “And what happens to the money when you leave?”

“You get to keep whatever remains.”

“And what if you run out of money before you leave?”

Luke shrugged, “I suppose I would have to make another payment. But before you decide to fudge the numbers, there’s another rule for our deal. Every time we make a transaction, I will view our book and sign off on the deduction. Do we have a deal?”

Unkar Plutt hesitated, “Am I in a position to refuse?”


Plutt grabbed Luke’s hand and roughly shook it, “Done! Boys, someone get Master Skywalker a speeder. Or would you prefer Mister Erso?”

“I’ll be keeping my true identity secret, thank you very much. Now, that speeder?”

“This way, Mister Erso.”
Luke grinned and followed Unkar Plutt out of the room. He certainly didn’t trust Unkar Plutt, but he didn’t have a reason to worry about him. Plutt was afraid of the power Luke wielded, and swayed by the amount of money he possessed. And worse came to worse, Plutt was susceptible to the Mind Trick.

The important thing was that Luke had secured a way to keep himself and rey properly fed for five years. But that was absurd in itself. Luke wasn’t going to spend the next five years with Rey on Jakku.

… Was he?

Chapter End Notes

Ok, I know this chapter was kind of a tease about Luke telling Rey about Felicity, but I did intend on him telling her right before Plutt showed up. The problem was that once I hit this massively emotional level of a five-year-old who got abandoned by her mother being told that her mother was murdered, I couldn’t scale back the emotional level to have Luke deal with Plutt. It just wasn’t a good tonal fit to hit the peak of emotion and then lower down to anything else. So the next chapter will be a chapter mostly dealing with Rey’s reaction to Luke’s news and his subsequent decision to stay on Jakku.

And for those of who who want to know, there’s going to be a collection of chapters spanning the fourteen years of Luke and Rey on Jakku, with the occasional pit stop to check up on Han, Poe, Leia, and Diego in which I set up their storylines for TFA, and then we will finally be into TFA. So basically, next chapter ends act one of this story, and I promise that every chapter of the fourteen years on Jakku does set up at least one element for the later story.

Remember, even though the summary does say “basically Luke in TFA” this is really about the story of Luke being in Rey’s life. It is really important to me to show how her life changes on Jakku with Luke there before he changes her life off Jakku.

And if you’re still upset with me for wanting to take detours, blame Before the Awakening and Rey’s Survival Guide for having too much fodder for me to work with. I kept reading them through and going “hey, how would Luke react to that” “oh that’s perfect for Luke and Rey to spend time together” or “well, that would certainly never happen if Luke was around.”

This fic has ruined my ability to enjoy Star Wars stuff independently of it.
The Man Becomes the Myth

Chapter Summary

Luke makes a decision that changes the course of history.

Chapter Notes

Sorry that it’s taken so long to update but working retail during the holiday season and writing fan fiction don’t mix very well. Then I got knocked on my butt (again) with a nasty cold. I also took a little time to start writing a side fic about Felicity’s backstory and the theft of the Death Star plans called Operation Citadel. Please check it out if you haven’t already, especially since there are going to be parts of this story that reference the backstory that story establishes.

And of course, this chapter is dedicated to our beautiful Princess who left us too soon. Rest in Peace Carrie Fisher.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

The Long Way Home

Chapter Seventeen

The Man Becomes the Myth

With his speeder issue resolved, Luke Skywalker exited Plutt’s building. He was going to head back to Quom Tinadar’s tent when he was surprised to find Doctor Aletha Kymeri waiting for him.

“Hi,” Luke smiled at her, unable to stop his confusion from seeping through.

“Hey,” Aletha grinned, walking up to him. “I thought you might need help finding your way back to Quom’s and came to walk you back.”


“Why not?”

“I managed to get myself a speeder from Plutt.”

Aletha’s jaw dropped, “You got a- …Oh my god! What did you do to get that kind of deal from Plutt? Witchcraft?”


“She’s fine. Quom managed to distract her with repairing his speeder. I told him no explosions next to the four-year-old.”

Aletha nodded. “My mistake. So… if you don’t mind me asking, what’s next for you and Rey? Heading out today, or…?”

Luke laughed at himself, “Honestly? I have no idea.”

“Come on. You must have some idea.”

“Not a clue.”

“Well, what was going through your mind when you came here to pick Rey up? ‘Whatever, I’ll think about it later.’”

Luke’s smile fell and he looked to the ground guilty.


“Of course,” Aletha nodded.

“Aletha… when I came here… I wasn’t expecting… I didn’t plan for… I thought…” Luke gave a loud sigh, “Aletha, I thought Rey was dead.”

Aletha’s eyes went wide, “Dead! Why?”

Luke rubbed his face, “It’s… a complicated story that might get you in a lot of trouble if anyone discovered you knew it, but the First Order had an interest in my family and captured my wife. She lied and told them that Rey was dead, and the First Order showed me enough evidence to make me believe it.”

“They didn’t capture your wife,” Aletha interrupted.


“The First Order didn’t capture Felicity. She turned herself in. Remember your wife’s apprehension for what it was: the bravest, most selfless act I have ever seen a mother do for their child.”

Luke grinned. After the hell Felicity had gone through with her postpartum depression and the lingering fears it had left behind in her, Luke knew that Aletha’s declaration would have meant the world to Felicity.

“She truly was the most… amazing woman I have ever had the pleasure of meeting,” Luke felt the lump forming in his throat. “It was the greatest honour in my life to be selected to be her husband and the father of her child.”

Luke looked back to the ground and fought the tears threatening to fall. Aletha gave Luke a sad smile. She touched Luke’s arm and a sob escaped from his throat.

“She’s dead, isn’t she?” Aletha asked softly.

Luke looked at her with wet, red eyes and nodded, “It’s my fault. She’s gone, and it’s all my fault!”


Luke clutched onto Aletha and sobbed harder than he had dared to in months. He rested his head on the junction of her neck and shoulder and wailed in a heart wrenching display. It was the first time he
had truly focused on the loss of Felicity without alcohol or Rey being a factor. He had lost his
soulmate, and he needed to experience the physical catharsis of letting it all out.

But Aletha didn’t care as she held Luke in her arms. It wasn’t like the other hugs Luke had gotten
during his breakdowns about Felicity. It wasn’t Leia or Han holding him; struggling and failing to
hold back their own tears. Aletha just held him, eyes dry, stroking his hair and alternated between
telling him it was okay and making a soothing shushing noise.

“It’s alright. I understand,” Aletha used her best bedside manner tone. “I lost my husband several
years ago.”

“She wasn’t supposed to die,” Luke sobbed. “She was supposed to come back and we’d be together
again.”

“I know. It was the same thing with Antar. He was supposed to go out, make his final stand against
the Empire, and then we would live happily ever after. He wasn’t supposed to be shot down on these
pathetic heap of a planet,” Aletha glared at the very ground of Jakku.

“How am I supposed to tell Rey that her mother is dead?” Luke asked, slowly pulling himself away.
“I wasn’t expecting to find Rey, and now not only do I have to figure out what to do next, but I have
to tell her the worst news of her life.”

“Well, I’m not great with kids or mourning, so I can’t really help you with that, but I will say this.
Just remember that no matter how terrible this news you have to share is, this could have gone a lot
worse. You could have lost both of them, or worse, what if you spent the next fifteen or twenty years
thinking you had lost Rey and she grew up alone on Jakku?”

Luke shuddered at the thought. He could imagine it, being a bearded hermit on Ahch-to until one
day the Millennium Falcon arrived on and he found himself face to face with his grown daughter he
didn’t raise, her frame thin from starvation and loneliness.

That sounded horrible.

“Besides,” Aletha went on, “if that little girl has a tenth of the strength her mother had, she’ll be
fine.”

Luke smiled, “Yes, she will be. I just have to be open and honest with her. Nothing from ‘a certain
point of view.’ Just the full truth… But I still have no clue what to do next.”

“Why don’t you stay here on Jakku for a little while and figure things out?” Aletha suggested.

Luke was surprised, “Stay here?”

“Quom and I will help you with Rey any way you want, and apparently, the place Rey is staying is
pretty safe and stable for Jakku. You could do worse.”

Luke hesitated at the thought of living for any amount of time on Jakku, “I suppose a few days
couldn’t hurt, and it would give her a sense of normalcy which she probably hasn’t had in a while.”

Aletha just grinned at him.

“Oh alright,” Luke conceded. “We’ll stay for a little while.”

“Perfect,” Aletha looped her arm around Luke’s. “Come on. Let’s go tell that little girl her mother’s
never coming home.”
Luke didn’t know why he smiled, “You’re not really great with this whole kid thing, are you?”

“You don’t even know the half of it.”

“Lead the way,” Luke gestured in the direction of his new speeder, and together they set off.

Thankfully for Luke, Quom had managed to distract Rey enough that her first question to him wasn’t the whereabouts of her mother. In fact, she was rather set on the idea of showing Daddy the walker where she had been living.

After Luke revealed his new speeder, the group agreed on driving arrangements, and set out for the walker. By that point, Quom’s speeder was functional again, and they tethered Luke’s new speeder to Quom’s (because Quom was driving), towing it behind them as they rode in Quom’s speeder. Quom led the way to the walker, instructing Luke on the landmarks he would need to memorize to drive to and from Niima everyday. Luke’s new speeder would stay with him, while Aletha and Quom would take Quom’s speeder back into town when it came to bow out, which they did very quickly after arriving.

Luke was naturally hesitant about the fact that his daughter had been living in a walker, but he supposed it could be worse. However, he wasn’t expecting the wave of guilt and nostalgia that swept over him as he entered the living space of the walker and faced the evidence of his wife’s history there.

So many little things were scattered across the room, and so many of them were tied to powerful memories.

The hammock strung up, Luke remembered sharing (not well as it was made for one person) during a mission gone wrong with Felicity, as they stared up at the stars of Thahd waiting for the next day’s rescue.

The water canisters he remembered filling up as he packed his emergency bag before leaving for Hosnian Prime. He and Felicity had spoken about the move to Ahch-to as he filled the canisters, unaware that they would be the difference between life and death for Rey and Felicity very soon.

The patchwork blanket containing his flight suit: the suit that Felicity would never admit drove her wild. He remembered the way she would always act coy, yet in control as she flirted with him, pressing herself suggestively against his body, yet lightly enough to tease him. And the way she would grasp the zipper of the suit and slowly drag it down as she gave him that smirk that raised the right corner of her mouth that he always made him want to press his lips to hers.

But the flight suit was also attached to bitter memories; the memory of the last time he had worn it. He had stripped it off quickly and chucked it into his emergency bag on the night Rornian burned. Though Luke didn’t know it, Felicity had wondered why he had taken off his suit that night. Why had he paused in that scene of panic, almost not making it in time to save Felicity, just to take off his suit?

That was because Felicity didn’t know that the blood on the suit didn’t belong to Luke. It was Reine’s blood that had stained the orange suit as she died in his arms. How could he ever again wear the reminder that Ben had murdered Reine?

“And that’s where I eat. And that’s where I sleep. Daddy are you listening?”

Luke hadn’t even realised Rey was talking to him, “Sorry, Sweetheart, I was just thinking about a few things. What did you want to tell me?”
Rey crossed her arms and shot him an annoyed glare in a way that reminded Luke far too much of Leia.

“I was showing you around.” Rey sighed dramatically and set her pilot doll on the hammock, “This is where I sleep with the doll Mommy made me.”

“I was wondering about that,” Luke grinned, realising he had yet to ask her about the doll. “Is that my flight suit?”

“Uh huh,” Rey nodded. “Mommy made it to make me feel better. She said it can be you, or Uncle Wedge, or Uncle Diego, or Poe, but I made it just be you. When Mommy was here we were all a set. A mommy, a daddy, and a me. But now it’s all wrong. There’s no mommy, two daddies, and a me.”

“Well, some families only have two daddies,” Luke pointed out.

“Like Uncle Wedge and Uncle Ceren?”

“Exactly. And it’s nice to know I can so easily be replaced by a doll,” Luke teased. “But I think I know how to fix our problem.”

“How?” Rey frowned.

Luke dug in his satchel and pulled out Rey’s Felicity doll, “Does this look familiar?”

“Mommy!” Rey exclaimed, snatching the doll and hugging it tightly. “Mommy said this went away in the fire.”

“Hey, even in doll form you know it takes a lot to bring Mommy down,” Luke grinned, and then realised he should probably change the topic before it segued into the bad news. That was when he noticed the marks on the wall, “Rey, what’s that?”

“It’s the count,” Rey set her Mommy doll next to the pilot doll. She followed Daddy as he approached the wall, “It’s how many days we waited for you.”

That almost brought Luke to his knees; the wall was covered in tallies.

“Rey,” Luke whispered, running his hand over the marks scratched into the metal, “how many marks are here?”

Rey shrugged, “I lost count.”

But Luke didn’t; he stood and counted all 192 scratches on the wall. He was horrified to realise that he had miscalculated and that Rey had been on Jakku not four months as he previously thought, but five.

Dear God, how many of those days had she been alone?

“I’m sorry, Daddy,” Rey said when she saw the horror on his face, “I know Mommy said not to use the sharp object myself, but I didn’t want to lose any points. And I didn’t hurt myself!”


Rey very quickly explained the promise Felicity had made about the tally.

“Can I still have my treats for the days Mommy wasn’t here?” Rey innocently asked at the end of her explanation.
“Sweetheart, you can have as many treats you want.” Luke frowned and touched a tally that had a small v above it. “Rey, why is this mark different?”

“That’s the day Mommy went away. It made me sad. I didn’t want Mommy to leave.”

Luke looked down at his daughter, “Rey, I promise you, Mommy didn’t want to leave you either.”

“Then why did she?” Rey had tears glistening in her eyes.


Luke picked up his daughter and sat the both of them on the hammock. This would be the hardest conversation he’d ever have in his life, but he knew what he had to do. Transparency was key. No stupid, traumatizing from a certain point of views. He would tell Rey the bitter truth, no matter how much it hurt.

“Rey, did Mommy tell you why she brought you here?” Luke asked.

Rey nodded, “She said that bad people wanted to make us do bad things.”

“That’s right. Well, you see Mommy thought you would be safe here until I came for you, but I made a mistake.”

“You wouldn’t answer your comm. You were too busy looking for us to find us.”

Luke couldn’t help but smile, “You really are a blunt one, aren’t you?”

Rey grinned, “I get it from Mommy.”

“You certainly do,” Luke ruffled her hair. “Rey… Mommy left to protect you.”

“Protect me from what?”

“The bad people found you before I could. They came to Jakku to take you away, but Mommy wouldn’t let that happen.”

“So she came to find you?” Rey guessed.

Luke shook his head, “No… she gave herself up to the bad people so they would go away and leave you alone.”

Rey frowned, “Why would going with them make them leave me alone?”

“But lying’s bad.”

“Not always,” Luke replied. “It’s like violence, it’s never good to lie but sometimes you have no choice.”

Rey struggled to work out what was going on, “So… Mommy’s with the bad guys?”

Luke closed his eyes, “…No. She’s not with them anymore.”

“Then where is she?” Rey asked. “And why didn’t she come with you?”

Luke didn’t know what to say next, it was an impossible scenario, telling his long thought dead
daughter that Mommy wasn’t coming home. But he couldn’t avoid it anymore; Rey needed to know what had happened to her mother.


Rey’s eyes went wide.

“No!” Rey exclaimed. “No! You’re lying! Mommy said she’d come back! She’s coming back, Daddy!”

“Sweetheart… I’m so sorry,” Luke raised his hand to stroke Rey’s face. “But Mommy’s gone.”

Rey swatted his hand away, “STOP LYING, DADDY!”

“Rey,” Luke struggled to keep his voice calm for her, “I’m not lying. Mommy’s not coming back.”

“She promised she would!” Rey screamed, tears flowing down her face as her two tiny hands tried to shove her father away. “YOU’RE LYING, DADDY! WHY ARE YOU LYING?”

As Rey wailed desperately, Luke made a decision. Firmly, but not roughly, he grabbed Rey and held her against him. She struggled under his grasp, but his strength was far superior. Words came from her sobbing like “No” “Stop” “Liar” “Why” and “Promise” but the clearest and most frequent word was “Mommy.”

“I’m sorry,” Luke whispered as he held his crying daughter closely and tenderly. “I’m so sorry, Rey.”

Tears fell from his own eyes as he held her tightly as if he were afraid she’d disappear if he let go.

It broke his heart as his daughter wept in his arms, but Luke sat there stroking her hair and kissing the top of her head as Rey processed the horrific news about her mother. Slowly but surely, Rey stopped fighting her father’s grip and she clung to him desperately, her mind a mix of sorrow and fear.

Together they held each other, broken hearted but together, mourning the woman they loved most in the Galaxy. Rey’s grief came in waves as her sobs ebbed and then restarted, some new facet or reminder hitting her every few minutes. Her desperate pleas for explanation and insistence that Mommy was coming back eventually ceased until she just whispered over and over again the simple, loving word, “Mommy.”

As Luke held his daughter, he never wanted to let her go. The warmth of her body reminded him of how close he came to losing her, and her tears reminded him of the grief that had been inflicted upon her. He never wanted Rey out of his arms; he would hold her forever, not letting the cruel world ever hurt her again. Luke didn’t care what he had to do, lie, cheat, steal, murder, he would die before he ever let Rey hurt this much again.

Hours stretched on as they held each other, slowly allowing silence to fall upon them. As the sun set, Luke kicked off his boots and reclined back in the hammock, pulling Rey to lie on top of him.

Rey followed suit, kicking off her own boots with a glassy-eyed look that terrified Luke when he remembered it was the same look Felicity had in her eyes during her postpartum depression.

“It’s going to be okay, Sweetheart,” Luke whispered as he used the Force to summon the patchwork blanket and lay it over them. “I know it hurts now, but for I’m here for you no matter what. Okay? We’ll find a way to smile again, I promise.”
Rey sniffled, letting a long stretch of silence fill the walker as she stared up at the twisted metal above. Luke could see in her face that her mind was worlds away, wondering the same questions about Felicity that he had asked himself over and over in the past few months.

Then finally, Rey spoke.

“Daddy?” Rey’s voice was barely a whisper as if she were afraid to ask her question.

“Yes, Sweetheart?” Luke used his flesh and blood thumb to wipe a tear from her cheek. Neither Luke nor Rey hated his mechanical hand, but in that moment, he needed to feel her with his own flesh. Just as he had needed the first time he held her in his arms.

Rey swallowed hard, gathering the courage to ask her question, “Daddy… If I’m extra, extra, specially good… will Mommy come back?”

It broke Luke’s heart.

“Oh, Sweetheart,” Luke felt a fresh stream of tears roll down his face. He clutched her tightly, too tightly, but Rey made no protest. Her innocent question teared at his heart, awash with guilt and regret anew that he hadn’t been able to save Felicity. Luke’s voice shook as he fought a losing battle against sobs, “Sweetheart… Rey, I swear to you, if there was anything anyone could do to bring her back, I swear… She’d be here right now, holding you and drying your tears.”

Rey sniffled, wiping her nose on her arm, “Anything?”

Luke closed his eyes, debating his next words.

“Rey…” Luke whispered. “I would do anything to get your mommy back to you. Even if it meant trading my life for hers.”

“No, Daddy,” Rey buried her face in his neck. “Don’t leave me too.”

Luke took a deep breath and kissed the top of her head, his paternal strength filling him with determination.


But that was a promise he wouldn’t be able to keep.

Luke wasn’t aware he had fallen asleep until he heard the whisper in the Force that woke him. The first rays of the sunrise were creeping up the sands of Jakku when Obi-Wan Kenobi’s voice came to Luke in the Force.

“Luke… I’m sorry. I wish I could have told you the truth.”

Luke frowned as he looked around; Obi-Wan was nowhere to be found but his words echoed in Luke’s mind. Obi-Wan wished he could have told Luke the truth? What truth? About Rey? About Vader? About everything?

But Luke received no reply to his unspoken thoughts; just silence.

Frowning, Luke started to sit up when he heard a small groan. He had forgotten about the tiny girl lying in top of him. Luke smiled, joy filling his heart as he reflected on the fact that he could once more wake up to the sight of his precious daughter.
There was something symbolic about waking up that morning to the sun’s first rays. He woke up to a
new peace that he had not experienced in many months. Bathed in the morning’s warmth, his
daughter lay against his chest, soothed by the steady beats of his heart. The world had hope again as
he had his light Rey of Light back in his life.

And now what was he to make of that life?

All Luke wanted to do was take Rey home and resume their life as normal, but that chance had
literally gone up in flames. There was nothing to go back to in that life; no home, no Jedi, no Felicity.
But more importantly, there was no safety in that life.

The First Order had come for Rey once; they would come for her again.

Luke’s next thought was to contact Han and Leia; they would be so happy to hear that Rey was
alive.

… Which was exactly why Luke couldn’t tell them.

He trusted his family with all his heart, but he couldn’t put them in that position. He especially
couldn’t let Leia know the truth, not if Rey was to remain safe. Leia had made a grand gesture and
accusation when she announced Rey’s “death.” Many people had resigned their jobs as a result, and
the Resistance had profited by getting new recruits and supplies. If Luke told Leia that Rey was
alive, she would be obligated to reveal the truth to the galaxy or else face possible charges of fraud.
And if the galaxy knew Rey was alive, then so would the First Order.

He couldn’t tell Han either; he wouldn’t put his brother-in-law in the position of hiding that sort of
news from Leia. Luke couldn’t help but remember that bitter argument he overheard the night he ran
away. Han and Leia had more than enough to fight about; Luke wouldn’t help one of them betray
the other… not again. Not after what happened with Ben.

Luke couldn’t tell Han and Leia about Rey. The thought broke his heart. It wasn’t the answer Luke
wanted – he wanted to be able to tell Han and Leia that Rey was alive – but ultimately, Luke knew
both Han and Leia could keep his secret, but he also knew they shouldn’t.

But then what was he supposed to do?

Ahch-to was the next thought in Luke’s head. Yes, Ahch-to made so much sense! It was hidden, it
was uninhabited, it was peaceful, strong with the Force, a place where they could live a good life,
and most of all, it was his planned next move!

… Which was exactly why he couldn’t go there.

Luke’s face fell as the realization hit him. He had told Lor San Tekka what his plan was. He
confided his plan, his location, and left behind a map directly to it. He trusted Lor San Tekka, but the
man wasn’t infallible. If the First Order ever learned that Lor San had a map to him, they would take
it by any means necessary. Worst of all, Luke would only have the Force as a means to be tipped off.
If he didn’t sense the First Order coming for them, he could find himself coming home to a burned
down house and a dead family for the third time in his life.

And that would probably actually kill him.

But then, what was he supposed to do? Where could he hide that Rey would be safe. He wouldn’t
let them take her, but it was only a matter before they started looking.

Luke needed to clear his head.
Naturally, Luke couldn’t help but wake Rey as he eased her off him to get out of the hammock. Thankfully, Rey was still in the middle of her early morning sleep fog, so while she did plead with her father not to leave her, so didn’t protest too much when Daddy whispered that he was just going outside and to go back to sleep. Luke smiled as Rey curled up in the blanket and went back to sleep with a look of utter trust and peace as she knew Daddy was there to protect her. She would be safe to sleep in her bed.

“I love you, Sweetheart,” Luke stroked a hand lovingly down the side of her face and kissed her forehead.

When he was young, Luke found it easiest to think when he stood in the sand, staring at the sun across the endless desert. The landscape was so empty, full of possibilities that his mind couldn’t help but clear.

What was he going to do? The only thing that now mattered to Luke was keeping Rey safe. He had come so close to losing, and he would never endure that again. It didn’t matter what he had to do to protect her, to hide her, to keep her away from the First Order. He would never let Ben take Rey away from him.

… Or so he thought.

But we’ll get there.

Luke stood there in the silence of the sunrise, trying to come up with a plan. Everywhere seemed too dangerous, too obvious, too hopeless. Where could they live that no one would think to look for them? Where was the last place someone would look? It couldn’t even be the last place, because the last place would be obvious as the first place to look. But then again, he also couldn’t go to the first place, because that would be too obvious. Luke had to figure it out. Where was the place that was the least obvious that wasn’t the most obvious but also not the most obvious that it would be the least obvious?

… Of course, it would probably be a lot easier for Luke to figure out the answer if there wasn’t someone standing behind him, staring at him.

Luke took a deep breath but did not turn around, “I thought I told you to leave me alone, Father.”

The ghostly form of Anakin Skywalker chuckled, but did not approach Luke, “Well, Son, I don’t know if you’ve noticed this, but I’ve never been great at following the rules.”

Luke couldn’t help the smirk that twitched his face, “Yes, my entire existence is proof of that.”

“Hey, don’t pin that all on me,” Anakin objected. “Your mother deserves at least fifty percent of the blame on that one.”

“Considering what I know of your relationship, I’d go more with twenty percent.”

“Forty-five.”

“Thirty.”

“Deal.”

A laugh escaped Luke’s throat as he shook his head. He knew he should be angry that his father had appeared to him, but part of him glad. After all, like some many times before in his life, Luke had questions that could only be answered by the mouths of the dead.
Behind him, Luke heard his father sigh, “Ask it.”


“The question in your mind,” Anakin’s voice was uncharacteristically serious.

Luke was tempted to reply with the question of how Anakin could sigh when he was ghost and didn’t need to breathe, but there was something pressing on his heart; a question that needed to be asked.

Luke sniffed, realising that he had the urge to cry. He wiped his eyes and nose on the sleeve of his cloak, refusing to let his father see him like that.

“Did…” Luke’s words caught in his throat as he struggled against an unbidden sob. “Did you know?”

Anakin closed his eyes and lowered his head, “Yes… I knew Rey was alive.”

“This whole time?”

Anakin nodded, “This whole time.”

Luke squeezed his eyes shut, lowering his forehead into his hand as he began to shake.

“Why?” Luke’s voice shook as violently as his body. He spun around, his emotions a flurry of anger and lack of understanding. “Why didn’t you tell me? You know that pain, Father! The pain of thinking your child is dead. Why did you inflict that upon me?”

Anakin looked very regretful as he slowly walked over to Luke and put a non-corporeal hand upon his son’s shoulder. There was no weight to Anakin’s touch, but Luke could feel the warmth.

“If I could have told you, I would have,” Anakin swore. “But there are rules to this, and you know that. I can’t tell you the living status, location, or specific current actions of another person. I couldn’t tell you that Rey was alive on Jakku, trying to reach you in the Force.”

“Couldn’t you?” Luke frowned. “When I was on Hoth, Ben told me that Yoda was alive and on Dagobah. Doesn’t that violate the rules?”

“You were dying of hypothermia at the time, Luke,” Obi-Wan’s voice reminded Luke. It seemed that Obi-Wan was more willing to respect Luke’s request to not appear to him anymore, and Obi-Wan’s form did not appear before them. “You were on the bridge between life and death, and the rules are more relaxed on the bridge. Why else would I have not told you about Yoda until three years after my death?”

Luke let out a singular laugh, “Well… that solves a mystery I’ve been wondering for seventeen years.”

“Hey, look Obi-Wan!” Anakin joyful exclaimed. “You were forthcoming for once! Gold star!”

“Knock it off, Anakin. There wasn’t much harm done by my secret keeping, and nothing that would concern you.”

“You let my children commit incest.”

“Oh, it always comes back to the incest with you two! It wasn’t like I was telling them to kiss.”
“Guys? Can we get back on topic?” Luke interrupted knowing if he didn’t put a stop to this, it could go on for a while. “Did either of you have any regrets about not telling me Rey was alive?”

Anakin’s eyes flicked to the side as if he was perhaps looking to an invisible Obi-Wan next to him. There was an odd look on Anakin’s face as he thought something over.

“Luke… I’m going to be honest with you,” Anakin said. “You know I’ve never been anything but forthcoming when I could. So let me just say this, if I could tell you everything, if I could tell you about Rey, about Felicity, about Ben, about Han and Leia, and Padmé, and all that’s happened, and all that’s to come, I would. You know, I would.”

Luke sighed, “Yes, I do know that.”

“I’m sorry that I can’t tell you everything,” Anakin continued. “There are things I wish I could have told you, and there are secrets that I wish I could tell you now.”

“But everything will be revealed in time,” Obi-Wan promised. “What matters now is what you choose to do next.”

“And what is next?” Luke asked.

“Things are coming, Luke,” Anakin warned. “Faces from the past, choices that will mean life or death, enemies who are friends, and friends who are enemies. Love, hate, betrayal, hope, death. But all that’s changed now that you’ve found Rey.”

“Changed?” Luke frowned. “Was I not meant to find her?”

“It is pointless to dwell on what could have happened,” Obi-Wan replied. “You have found her, and that’s all that matters.”

“Luke, now that you’re together this story could change,” Anakin said.


“The story that awaits you,” Obi-Wan answered. “For what happens when the First Order finds your daughter.”

Luke’s eyes went wide, “They’re going to find her?”

“You won’t be able to hide Rey forever,” Anakin continued. “And you won’t be able to hide yourself.”

“Nor should you,” Obi-Wan pointed out.

“The past will catch up, Luke,” Anakin said. “It always does. And when it does, how this story ends is up to you. How you’ll change it might mean the difference of life and death for the ones you love. Your family’s story, your family’s fate is now in your hands. Choose your next move wisely.”

Luke rubbed his temples. Their ominous words frustrated him as he tried to fill in the blanks. What was so dangerous to his family and how was he supposed to change it.

“And this story begins now?” Luke asked.

Anakin glanced at the invisible Obi-Wan again, “Uh… well… Not quite.”

“Well… You know how this family sort of gets a pattern of big adventures alternating with lulls? … You’ve reached a lull.”

“Have I?” Luke said in a cross-examining tone Anakin knew for a fact Luke had gotten from Padmé. He hated when Padmé got like this, and their son was no better. “How long is this lull?”

“That is not for you to know,” Obi-Wan answered.

“Are you kidding me?” Luke exclaimed. “You can tell me all this nonsense about lulls and the fate of the Skywalkers rest in my hands, but you can’t give me a timeline to plan accordingly?”

“See, this is why Padmé would have never made a good Jedi,” Anakin said.


“Your priority is to keep you and your daughter safe until the day comes to fight.”


A long silence followed.

“I’m not saying it,” Anakin crossed his arms.

“Anakin,” Obi-Wan warned.

“You can’t make me say it!”


“There’s no other way and you know it,” Obi-Wan said. “Think of your granddaughter, Anakin. Do you want something to happen to her?”

“Of course not,” Anakin snapped. “You think I’ve been sitting at her feet every night while she slept because I’ve been bored?”


“Watching over Rey for you,” Anakin confirmed. “Just because I couldn’t tell you about her, doesn’t mean I couldn’t alleviate her suffering a little. Why do you think no animal or stranger has come into her walker? I’ve been keeping them away.”

“Why didn’t she tell me?”

“Rey can’t see me, Luke. She doesn’t know.”

Luke smiled; there were tears in his eyes again, but this time they weren’t of sorrow.

“I would hug you, if I could,” Luke told his father.

“We’ll catch up in the afterlife. But didn’t go rushing there just to hug me,” Anakin winked. “You got a kid to think about. Don’t pull what I did and die right after getting her back.”

“I’ll do my best,” Luke chuckled. “So, tell me, where is it that the First Order would never think to look for me?”

Anakin sighed, “This hurts me to say, Luke… but maybe you should stay… here.”

“Luke, I would not advocate a member of this family living on a desert planet unless it was necessary.”

“But, why here? This is a place my family has a connection to.”

“The same reason I took you to your aunt and uncle on Tatooine, ” Obi-Wan answered. “It’s the last place your father wanted to ever step foot on, and the site of where your daughter allegedly died would probably be the last place you ever wanted to go.”

“Well, unless you were dumb enough to want to comb the desert for the body of a little girl,” Anakin smirked.

Luke locked his gaze on Anakin, “I blame your genetics.”

“I second that notion.”

“I’m not dumb enough to do something like that!” Anakin exclaimed.

Obi-Wan chuckled, “Anakin, do the words ‘I have the high ground’ ring a bell?”

“So, you really think I should stay with Rey on Jakku?” Luke asked. “It’s not exactly the best environment to raise a child, and I’d be at the mercy of Unkar Plutt.”

“Every place you go is going to have its dangers,” Anakin said. “But you’ll learn to make it work, and besides, I think you asserted your dominance over Plutt. He steps out of line, you put him back in his place.”

“I don’t know if I should be taking advice from a Sith Lord.”

“I never said you had to be a Jedi.”

Luke shook his head and thought about his father’s suggestion.


That temporary shot would end up being fourteen years.

“And that’s why we’re going to stay here,” Luke finished explaining their situation to Rey later that day. He of course, had not included every detail, but he told Rey what she needed to know and did not hide anything that would harm her down the line. “Do you understand?”

“I do,” Rey nodded sadly as they sat on the floor of the walker eating their lunch rations. “Does that mean we’re not going to see Uncle Han and Aunt Leia for a while?”


“I’m going to miss them.”


Rey nibbled at her bread, “Daddy?”

“Yes?”
“Is it still safe to use the Force?”

Luke was surprised at her forethought, “Maybe, not entirely. We could still use some things, but maybe-”

“If it’s not going to be safe, I don’t want to know any more stuff,” Rey refused. “You can stop teaching me the Force, Daddy.”

“Rey,” Luke slightly chuckled, unsure what to make of Rey’s decision. “You don’t need to stop.”

“Yes, we do!” Rey exclaimed. “I’m scared, Daddy. The bad guys want me because of the Force. Don’t they?”

Luke sighed, he hadn’t expected Rey to figure it out, “Yes, they do, but Rey, Sweetheart, I’m going to protect you.”

“You can’t always protect me,” Rey’s eyes glistened with tears. “You didn’t protect me when they pulled me out of bed. You didn’t protect me from Ben in the woods.”

“Rey-”

“You didn’t protect me when Mommy and I had to walk all that way. You didn’t protect me when I got hot and the world went dark.”

“Rey-”

“You didn’t protect me when Mommy went away. You didn’t protect me when Mister Plutt hurt my friends.”

“Rey-”

“But that’s okay,” Rey wrapped her arms around her father’s torso. “It’s okay, Daddy.”

Luke’s jaw hung open; was he hearing that right? Was she… forgiving him? He had spend so much time beating himself up over failing her and she had it in her heart to know and be willing to forgive him. It was unbelievable, after everything he had done, how could he deserve forgiveness? It was like… It was like…


It was like how he had forgiven his own father.

“Oh, Rey,” Luke wrapped his arms around her and pulled her in tight. “Thank you for taking after me.”

“I like having your forgiveness part,” Rey nuzzled his neck, enjoying the warmth of his embrace.

“I like you having the forgiveness part too,” Luke chuckled. He sighed, “Oh, Rey… what are we going to do? Jakku is such a hard place. I don’t want you to suffer.”

“I won’t,” Rey grinned and pulled out of his embrace. He started to tug on his arm, “Come with me, Daddy.”

Luke slightly frowned but followed her outside of the walker.

“When Mommy went away, at first I was really sad,” Rey led her father around the lopsided
structure they had made their home. “I didn’t think I could live here. Everything around was so… Mommy used a special word. …Barren. She said it was barren.”

“It is,” Luke nodded. “Do you know what that word means?”

“Not really, but I think it means no sign of life.”

“Something like that.”

“Well, I was sad and didn’t think I could survive by myself… then I found this.”

Rey brought them to a stop in front of the walker’s hip joint. There was a little groove where a few millimeters of sand had accumulated. And growing out of that tiny groove was a speck of green: a tiny spinebarrel flower somehow alive in the dead desert.

“People around here say there’s no miracles,” Rey told her father. “But Mister Quom calls me the miracle girl because I made a miracle happen. Miracles do happen on Jakku, Daddy. Mommy saved me, you found me, and this little flower somehow manages to survive. And when I saw it, I decided if that little spinebarrel could survive here, so could I. We can do it, Daddy. We can survive here on Jakku without the Force.”

Luke was amazed at his daughter’s words, “You are a very wise person, My Little Rey of Light.”

Rey smiled up at him, “Whether big or small, life finds a way on Jakku, Daddy. We’ll find a way. I promise.”

And with those words, Luke knew they’d be alright. Rey was right, if that tiny flower could thrive in the desert, then she could too.

Luke wrapped an arm around Rey, lovingly pulling her against his side, “Thank you, Sweetheart.”

With another woman’s twinkle in her eye, Rey answered, “Anytime.”

And so, against his better judgement, Luke stayed on Jakku, the safest place to hide his daughter from the First Order. Aletha, Quom, and Plutt all thought he was insane for staying voluntarily, but secretly, each for their own reasons, was glad of his decision.

Luke was careful in how he introduced himself to others, and when Quom offered him a job as a fellow mechanic, Luke jumped at the idea. As for Rey and their ties to the life they left behind, Luke slowly began transitioning their bedtime stories and conversations away from the subject. He would not outright lie to Rey, and he would not gaslight her, but he knew it was too dangerous for Rey to have an open knowledge about their past while she was still so young and vulnerable. Ultimately, to Luke’s discomfort, he decided that the best course of action was to simply stop talking about the past with Rey and hope that one day she would forget.

Rey also continued to insist they distance themselves from the Force, but Luke knew he would continue to use parts of it to his advantage, even if it wasn’t openly in front of Rey. Someday he might teach her, but hopefully it would be before the end of the lull.

Now if only he could figure out how long the lull would be, but he knew he would enjoy every moment if it. Something was coming for them in the future, but for now, nothing else in the galaxy mattered but loving, protecting, and caring for his precious child.

So Luke Skywalker became the man called Luke Erso, and to Rey, the man who called himself
Luke Skywalker became nothing more than a myth.

---

**Three Months Later…**

“Happy birthday, Dear Rey, happy birthday to you,” Luke and Aletha sang as Rey grinned at the tiny cake set in front of her. A single lit candle proudly stood in the middle as Rey, Aletha, Luke, and Quom held their small gathering in Quom’s tent.

They were celebrating Rey's fifth birthday. Actually, it technically wasn't Rey's fifth birthday. Rey had turned five during her adorious trek in the desert, on the day she had gotten heatstroke and Felicity found the walker. Felicity had had more important things on her mind that day - like not letting her daughter die - and so it wasn't until a few days later that Felicity had acknowledged it when she knew they were safe and calm. They celebrated it alone in their walker with very little fanfare, and the night ended with Rey crying herself to sleep in her mother's arms wanting nothing more for her birthday than to be home with Daddy. When Luke arrived two months later, she and Luke were so caught up in being reunited that neither even thought about Rey's missed birthday. It wasn't until Aletha casually asked Luke when Rey's birthday was, that he realized his error and sought to correct it.

Luke couldn’t believe Aletha had actually pulled off getting Rey a cake for her birthday party. Apparently, Aletha had made a deal with one of the traders Unkar Plutt allowed her to make transactions with to get medical supplies.

Her most frequent supplier, a man named Jedek was a proud family man who liked to go on about his five children (a girl, two boys, another girl, and then the most precious baby boy you’ve ever seen, Jedek would always say.) Jedek had met Rey a few weeks after Luke’s arrival on Jakku and instantly taken a liking to her. Of course, with the rules Plutt enforced on Jakku, Jedek wasn’t allowed to openly give her anything, but every now and then he managed to sneak a treat for Rey in his business transactions with Aletha.

The cake wasn’t the kind of homemade cake Rey had celebrated all her birthdays with, but rather one of those mass-produced, small, packaged cakes one bought for a couple of credits at a refuelling station. The kind that was always sat next to stale strudels, questionable muffins, and cream-filled snacks that contained a person’s daily amount of calories. But still, after almost a year of eating nothing but rations, Luke knew that Rey was over the moon. If he hadn’t taught her drooling was rude, she would be doing it.

“Make a wish,” Aletha grinned at Rey.

Rey thought for a minute and closed her eyes tight. She blew it out on the first try and was met with a round of applause from Aletha, Luke, and Quom.

“Happy birthday, Sweetheart,” Luke pulled Rey in for a hug. “I can’t believe you’re already six years old. You’re growing up so fast.”

“Not fast enough,” Rey pointed out. “You still won’t let me drive.”

“Yes. For good reason.”

“Your daddy started driving racers when he was six.”

“Rey, what do we say about Grandpa Ani?” Luke asked. They had transitioned into calling Anakin Grandpa Ani as it would be harder for anyone to figure out who Luke and Rey were talking about.
“If Grandpa Ani did it, it’s probably a bad idea,” Rey recited.

“HEY!” came the ghostly shout of Anakin Skywalker in Luke’s ear.

“That’s exactly right,” Luke grinned, giving Rey another quick squeeze of a hug.

Aletha smiled at the happy moment and did her best to cut up the tiny dessert. The adults were willing to let Rey have the whole thing for herself, but Rey had insisted on sharing her cake.

“Uncle Quom, why didn’t you sing with Doctor Ally and Daddy?” Rey asked using the nicknames she had transitioned into using for Quom and Aletha over the past few months.

For Rey it was only natural to call a close adult male figure who wasn’t a Jedi, her “Uncle” due to her relationships with Wedge, Lando, Chewie, and Diego.

The first time she had called Quom “Uncle” she hadn’t made a big deal about it. It had been about a month after Luke came to Jakku that she did it. She simply slipped the term “Uncle Quom” into a casual conversation, not expecting it to stop Quom dead in his tracks. He had been shocked that Rey had learned to love him as an avuncular figure, and he was willing to take up the mantle of Uncle Quom.

Luke was relieved that she had found someone to fill the empty part of Rey that had missed Han, Chewie, and the rest. She had spent so many nights asking about when she could see them again, and struggled to accept that it was best they don’t see their family for a while. It had been especially hard for Rey to let go of Han, but over time Rey stopped asking about Fun Uncle Han so much. She still brought him up at least once a week, but she was phasing out of it.

Of course, it only made Luke feel that much guiltier to know he was making her forget Han.

But oddly, when it came to Aletha, Rey would not call her Aunt. In Rey’s life there was only one Aunt, and that was Leia. The other significant women in Rey’s life had been Jedi Masters and in Kalonia’s case, she was called Doctor Kalonia. Thus the term Aunt in Rey’s mind was for women she was actually related to. However, due to the whole debacle of the titles of Aunt, Uncle, Doctor, and Master, Rey had also formed the idea that she had to give everyone a title. Or at least people who were the age of her parents, having no title for people like Ben and Poe.

But Rey didn’t think about Ben or Poe anymore.

Feeling uncomfortable with choosing between Ms. and Mrs., Rey continued calling Aletha “Doctor” but had decided to switch into calling her Ally to signify that she had a close relationship with Aletha.

When Rey had explained it to them, Aletha and Luke had both been extremely surprised with how analytical the (then) five-year-old had been with her decision. Luke blamed his father-in-law, Alaric Rhiaon who had managed to logic his way into not only justifying disowning and betraying his daughter, but justifying creating a death machine that destroyed planets.

Then again, Anakin Skywalker had managed to convince himself the Dark Side was a good thing…but there was probably a lot less logic involved in that decision.

“Yeah, Quom,” Aletha teased, nudging him with her elbow. “Why didn’t you sing? You have a lovely singing voice.”

“I have my ways,” Aletha grinned mysteriously.

Luke wasn’t even going to bother asking.

“Vrogem do not acknowledge the survival of year by singing,” Quom said with a sneer, as if Aletha had just said one of the most offensive things ever.

After three months with Quom, Luke had learned that Vrogem culture was complicated, strange, and made very little sense. It was just best to not ask questions most of the time.

“So then how do you ‘acknowledge the survival of year’ in Vrogem culture?” Aletha asked.

Quom grinned and pulled a small neatly wrapped package out of a drawer, “With a gift.”

“Thank you, Uncle Quom!” Rey squealed in delight as she tore open the package and found a small paper book. She opened it and frowned, “Uncle Quom, the pages are blank.”

“Well then,” Quom chuckled, “I guess you should fill them up.”

“With what?”

“Writings. Drawings. Whatever you want. But I think you might get a little inspiration if you read the title.”

Rey squinted at the title and read aloud, “Rey’s Sir- Supper- Service-”

“Survival,” Luke corrected and made a mental note to work on Rey’s reading skills.

“Thank you, Daddy,” Rey smiled. She tried to read the cover again, “Rey’s Survival Guide.”

Rey gasped.

“Like we talked about?” Rey asked hopefully.

“You fill those pages MG with everything you learn here,” Quom said. “Can’t let all that knowledge go to waste. And who knows? Maybe it might prove to be helpful to someone else someday.”

“Thank you, Uncle Quom!” Rey threw her arms around Quom. “My writing’s not so good right now, but when it goes better I’ll write the book. Promise.”

“Deal,” Quom smiled and hugged her back.

“Gets better, Rey,” Luke corrected her usage of goes.

“It will, Daddy,” Rey nodded. “Promise.”


“Alright, time for cake,” Aletha announced, and the group descended on the tiny dessert as the small, odd family they had become.

Though Rey did appreciate the present, it would be many years before she actually wrote her guide.

But when she did, written on the first page was the following:
If you’re reading this, then something’s gone wrong.

You’re stranded on Jakku – a barren little planet with nothing but baking sand, hot sun, and wrecked starships.

Stranded like me.

My name is Rey. I’ve been here my whole life, scratching out a living with the lost and the broken. I don’t know how I got here, or why. But I know it was a mistake – and somebody out there will make things right, someday.

That means I need to wait for them. And that means I need to survive.

And survive she did, but it wasn’t as big a struggle as it could have been, because one major change had occurred: she had her father by her side.

Although Luke’s presence in Rey’s young life could not alter every event and protect her from every danger or heartbreak, it would be quite reasonable to say that her life did change for the better. True, maybe Jakku was not the best place to raise a child, and maybe Luke could have done some things better, but there was no denying that until fourteen years later when BB-8 showed up on Jakku, Rey and Luke Erso were generally safe and happy.

But don’t get me wrong; those fourteen years were very eventful.

Chapter End Notes

Coming Up Next Chapter…

Something Strange About Him

Luke learns that trust can only go so far on Jakku when a friendly partnership takes a sinister turn.
Rey the Scavenger

Chapter Summary

Luke learns that trust can only go so far on Jakku when a friendly partnership takes a sinister turn.

Chapter Notes

I DIDN’T WANT TO DO THIS! WHY DO I HAVE TO DO THIS! I HATE WHEN I HAVE TO DO THIS! I ONLY DO THIS FOR YOU PEOPLE TO HAVE A MORE ENJOYABLE READING EXPERIENCE! I AM SO SORRY! SERIOUSLY SCREW EXPOSITION AND HOW MUCH OF THE WORD COUNT IT TAKES UP!

… So yeah. I split the chapter in half again.

WHHHHHHYYYYYY?

TRIGGER WARNING: This chapter contains the description of violence against a young child. The events are limited to only showing the bare minimum of what is needed, the scenes are written tastefully, and Luke totally kicks their ass later, but this chapter does include a storyline of a young child getting physically abused. If you can’t handle the subject matter, you have my total blessing to skip this chapter, and I promise to recap the important (non-child abuse) events that affect the rest of the story in the author’s note of the next chapter. This fic is a safe place, and if at any point you have any issues with content or fears that certain content may appear in the story, please let me know so I can accommodate you. I have already worked out one arrangement regarding a person’s discomfort with certain content, and I am happy to make this fic as inclusive and comfortable for all of my readers. I love you guys and I want to keep you on this wild ride.

And for anyone wondering why I would include this in the fic, it’s suggested in the canon book Rey’s Survival Guide that something of this nature happened.

Finally, since each chapter in the life on Jakku section is supposed to be a full mini-story, don’t be surprised if the chapters start clocking in between 10-15k. We’ll go back to short chapters (6-8k is apparently my definition of “short”) when we get to TFA, but these mini-adventures need a little bigger wordcount. Hopefully I won’t have to split all of these chapters like this one.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.
If you can, fix it yourself. But sometimes that isn’t possible.

If that’s the case, tinkerers in the bazaar will recharge gear or let you poke through their replacement parts. Not for free, of course – nothing on Jakku is free except heat – but they’ll make a better deal with you than Unkar will.

- Rey’s Survival Guide

AGE SIX

“What planet was the capital of the Old Republic?” Luke quizzed.

“Coruscant,” Rey diligently answered.

“What planet is the capital of the New Republic?” Quom asked.

“Hosnian Prime,” Rey replied.

“Perfect,” Luke smiled. “Now hand me the 4 gage, rertal clamp.”

Rey hopped off her little stool in Quom Tinadar’s tent and handed her father the tool.

“Thank you,” Luke was lying on the scooter beneath a speeder, fixing the last few details while Quom tinkered with the engine over at the workbench.

It was another ordinary day in their mechanic shop. A few days ago, Quom had gone into the desert and pulled new material for he and Luke to work on. Rey would watch and help the men most days, and other days she liked to hang out with Aletha. Luke trusted Aletha enough at that point and Rey was over her attachment issues enough that Aletha could be with her alone.

Every day, no matter where Rey went, the three adults would homeschool her. Jakku had no school system so it was up to Luke, Quom, and Aletha to teach Rey all she needed to know. It was difficult at times to figure out exactly what they should be teaching her and what difficulty level she should be having. They all helped out each other, but they had settled into different areas of expertise.

Luke, being the one who interacted with the civilized world most recently, was in charge of history and language, both in dialect and the study of grammar and literature.

Aletha, having a medical degree, took on the subject of science, mainly focusing on biology while Quom proved to have an outstanding knowledge of geology.

And Quom’s main focus was on mathematics when he proved to be able to do complicated mental math as quickly as a calculator. Everything else they just sort of winged with whoever knew it best.

“Now, spell your full name,” Luke ordered as he pulled himself under the speeder to change the oil.

Rey paused to think, “Rey Erso… Resh, Esk, Yiry is Rey, and Erso is Esk, Resh, Sen, Osk.”

“Sorry, Daddy,” Rey apologised.

“That’s alright,” Luke assured her. “So, how do we spell Erso?”

“Esk, Resh, Senth, Osk. Erso.”

“Perfect.”

“Now what?” Rey asked.

“Here,” Quom walked over and handed a datapad to Rey. “Read that schematic, and I’ll quiz you on it in twenty minutes.”

“Yes, Sir!” Rey eagerly examined the datapad.

“Good girl,” Quom ruffled her hair. The tent flap opened, and Quom nodded to new arrival, “Morning, Ivano. Here to pick up your engine?”

“You know it,” Ivano Troade, a fellow scavenger nodded, dropping his pack on the floor with a loud thud. He nodded at Luke’s legs sprawled out from underneath the speeder, “Hey, Erso.”


“Could be better,” Ivano grumbled.

“Still trying to get that driver matrix?” Quom chuckled.

It had been a few weeks since Quom had stumbled upon Ivano at the same crash site trying to strip a driver matrix from a long, narrow shaft. Driver matrixes were worth quite a bit to Unkar Plutt, so Ivano was set on claiming it. The problem was that the shaft it was down was ridiculously small, which was probably why no one had gotten to it yet. But Ivano was determined to get that driver matrix if it was the last thing he did.

“Yep, still just out of reach,” Ivano said ruefully. “Hey, you wouldn’t happen to have a very large stick, would you?”

The statement was so ridiculous that Luke pulled himself out from under the speeder specifically to shoot Ivano an incredulous look.

“Or a pole,” Ivano offered. “A pole would work too.”

“Yeah, I don’t think it would.” Quom wiped one final speck of grease off the engine and proclaimed, “There! Done. That’ll be five portions.”

“Really, Tinadar?” Ivano scoffed. “Five full portions?”

“Sorry, Troade,” Quom shrugged. “I’ve got employees now, so prices are up.”


“You’re welcome,” Rey replied innocently.

“Besides, Plutt’s going to give you a minimum of twelve portions,” Quom replied. “It’s only a forty percent cost. Well… 41.6 repeat.”

“Highway robbery,” Ivano said.

“Hey, we could always keep the engine as payment,” Quom shrugged.

Ivano grumbled, “Fine. I’ll bring you the portions once I sell it, but I swear Tinadar, one more trade like this and I’m bringing it straight to Plutt next time.”

“Be my guest,” Quom grinned. “But broken equipment fetches far less, and you know it.”

“Whatever,” Ivano grinned as Luke got up from under the speeder and began wiping the oil and grease off his face.

“Oh, stop moaning,” Quom rolled his eyes. “You’re only upset because you can’t get that driver matrix.”

“It’s just driving me insane that it’s just out of reach,” Ivano complained. “Just another foot, but it’s too small to reach in the crawl space. I mean, what would I give to-”

He stopped when his eyes set on Rey.

“Hey, is anyone using the kid?” Ivano asked.

Luke frowned, the grease rag pausing on his cheek, “I beg your pardon?”

“The kid. The girl. Is someone using her?”

Luke’s eyes narrowed as he set the rag down, “You’re asking if someone is using my daughter?”

“Yeah,” Ivano nodded, completely missing the danger in Luke’s tone. “Is she free? I could really use her to get into that crawlspace. I’d give you a cut if you let me borrow her.”

Luke looked over at Quom and raised an eyebrow. Luke was incredulous that Ivano was asking to borrow Rey to get into a dark, dangerous crawlspace with the same cadence one would use to ask to borrow a screwdriver.

“Well, technically she is free,” Quom pointed out.


“I never said I was trying to,” Quom shrugged as he turned and started work on another project.

“So,” Ivano looked at Luke, “is that a yes?”

“No!” Luke snapped. “Of course, you can’t borrow my daughter!”

“Why not?”

“Are you serious?”

“Look, that driver matrix is going to be worth at least ten portions,” Ivano explained. “Now I know you’ve got some fancy deal with Plutt where you don’t have to worry about food, but the rest of us do. Ten portions could feed me for over a week, and I’ll give you a fair cut.”
“It’s not the economics of the situation that concerns me,” Luke said. “It’s the fact that you are asking to send my six-year-old daughter into a dark crawlspace that could be very dangerous.”

“He’s right,” Quom agreed. “The Doc had to deal with Rohm Skjed just last week when he walked into some jagged metal and sliced open his throat. Poor man didn’t make it.”

“Aletha was heartbroken,” Luke sighed. He really hated to see Aletha sad.

“We’d have a flashlight, and besides, she’s short,” Ivano offered. “Look, if you would feel safer coming with us—”


“So, we’re negotiating then?”

Luke felt like he was moments away from a blood vessel bursting in his head. He was about to yell at Ivano when he felt a small tug on his pant leg.

“What is it, Sweetheart?” Luke looked down at Rey.

“I wanna do it, Daddy,” Rey replied. “I want to help Mister Troade.”


“But I want to,” Rey pleaded. “Please, Daddy, I’m so bored sitting around watching you and Uncle Quom and Doctor Ally do things. I want to climb the ships like you and Uncle Quom.”

“It could be dangerous, Rey,” Luke pointed out.

Rey gave a wicked grin that looked like it could have equally come from either Felicity Rhiaon or Anakin Skywalker. “I live for danger!”

Luke grinned and shook his head; she was definitely the offspring of himself and Felicity.

“Come on, Daddy!” Rey insisted. “I’m not a little kid anymore. I’m six whole years old.”

Luke smiled, “You’re right, you’re practically ancient.”

Rey frowned, “Wait, if I’m ancient, what does that make you?”

A loud thud sounded as Quom dropped his toolbox from laughing so hard. Ivano had to prop himself against the workbench to hold himself up as he too burst out laughing.

“Laugh all you want. You both are older than me,” Luke pointed out.

“Excuse me,” Quom was offended, “but I am 103 years old; just barely out of young adulthood.”

Luke blinked, “Wait, you’re how old?”

“Daddy!” Rey tugged on his leg again.

“Sorry,” Luke shook his head. “Are you sure you want to do this?”

“Please, Daddy?” Rey begged. “Please?”

“Yeah, please?” Ivano joined in.
Luke sighed, “Alright… but I’m supervising, and we get a one-third cut.”


“One hundred and three years old?” Aletha repeated in shock, two weeks later.

She and Luke were washing dirty bandages at the small tent that offered laundry service (aka, tubs of water, scrub boards, and clothing detergent at a ridiculous markup.)

“I know, I was surprised too,” Luke hung the clean bandages on the clothing line. “How long do Vrogem live anyway?”

“Apparently, pretty long,” Aletha answered. “I wonder how many years he’s been on this planet? Do you think he saw the Battle of Jakku?”

“Who knows? It’s amazing,” Luke shook his head. “That means he’s seen the fall of the Old Republic, the entire war, the rise of the New Republic, the fall of the Old Jedi Order, the rise of the New Jedi Order, the fall of the New Jedi Order—”


Luke froze in fear. He had not confided in either Quom or Aletha his identity of Luke Skywalker. He trusted them, but still not quite enough. Even if he did trust them that much, divulging his identity would put them in grave danger, and he didn’t want that. They were his friends, and he had already gotten far too many friends hurt in the past.

“It was fairly recently.” Luke tried to change the subject, “How long have you been here?”

“I came shortly after the Battle of Jakku,” Aletha answered quickly. She clearly did not want to discuss the subject as she too tried to immediately change it, “So did Rey like scavenging?”

“I think a little too much,” Luke admitted. “She’s been begging me to do it again.”

“Aw, we’ve got ourselves a little scavenger on our hands.”

“Force help me if that’s true.”

“Hello, Doctor Kymeri,” a voice suddenly greeted.

Aletha turned to see a familiar Aqualish woman in a cast, “Hello, Mashra. How’s the arm doing?”

“Better,” Mashra replied. “Can’t wait to get this cast off, though.”

“Three more weeks,” Aletha said in her professional authoritative tone. “Doctor’s orders.”

“Well, I’ll have to stretch my rations a bit better. I was hoping I could sweet talk you into getting it off sooner.”

“Look, I know it’s hard to do, but this is exactly why I advise everyone to keep an emergency stash of rations. You never know when a three-day sandstorm is going to hit, or when-”

“You’ll fall off a ship deck and break your arm?” Mashra completed.

Aletha nodded, “Exactly.”

“Don’t rub it in,” Aletha teased, though a part of her agreed with her words.

Everyone on Jakku knew that Luke had a steady stream of food, and anything he earned working with Quom was pure profit. Usually he used that profit to purchase new tools, services like laundering clothing and baths, and various other items like new clothing and things to make his walker home more comfortable. It also helped that Luke could use the Force to sense good spots to scavenge, so he and Quom frequently hit the jackpot. Luke shared the wealth with his friends, especially Quom and Aletha, but sometimes it was annoying that Luke was what would be considered “wealthy” on Jakku.

“Actually, I had another proposition for you, Erso,” Mashra said. “I heard from Ivano Troade that you let your little girl help him a few weeks back for a one third cut. That sounds like a great deal. Would you consider extending the service to me?”

Luke’s jaw dropped, “I’m sorry, what?”

“I would like to borrow your daughter. How far in advance do I have to book? A week? Two?”

Aletha giggled.

“I’m sorry, I think you misunderstand,” Luke said, wondering exactly when he started renting out his daughter like heavy machinery. “My daughter did a favor for Ivano; nothing more.”

“Yes, and I’m asking if she could do a favor for me,” Mashra replied. “Come now, Erso, your daughter can’t possibly be that entertained on a planet like Jakku. Maybe it would be beneficial to have her doing something like this.”


Aletha shrugged, “Well, she does make a good point. The stimulation of investigation and getting a first-hand examination of how ships are put together might be good for her brain development which is paramount in a child of her age.”

Luke scowled at Aletha, “You and Quom are the worst.”

“Come on, Luke,” Aletha laughed, “how much longer are you really going to get have Rey sit around doing nothing all day? You said it yourself, she loved helping scavenge. Maybe you should give it a shot. Not all day, every day, but once in a while might be good for her.”

Luke sighed, once again finding his hands tied, “Alright, if Rey wants to do it, we’ll give it a shot.”

And that’s how Rey Rhiaon Skywalker became a scavenger at age six.

---

I worked for others at first, climbing into ducts and conduits too small for grown-ups. Some of the scavengers I helped were kind like Ivano Troade and Mashra. Others – whose names I won’t mention – thought I was their property.

-Rey’s Survival Guide

---

**AGE SEVEN**
Rey had been scavenging for a year when Jarex Zolhar and his posse approached Luke for her services.

Luke had stuck to a core group of people allowed to work with his daughter, mainly Ivano, Mashra, Quom, and himself, but he did occasionally let her work with others. Tym Montoya, Binz Scoty, Dione Aldan, Nyla Renarus, Zexter, Turgot Mynes, and Varé Malago had all passed Luke’s vetting system to work with Rey and were frequent customers.

Rey loved every moment of it, and Luke took great joy in seeing her so happy. She made friends easily, which was hard with how reserved most people on Jakku were. Ultimately, Rey could only count on Luke, Aletha, and Quom, and without them she would be lonely, but she did have casual acquaintances that made the days a little more bearable. She cried the day that Turgot Mynes messed up, forgot his cooling pill, and died of heatstroke in the desert, but Rey had to learn quickly that death was not a stranger in Jakku.

Luke was very strict about the conditions under which Rey was allowed to work. She could only work for three hours a day, you had to have a certain amount of food and water on your person, and a dozen more rules like that. Some people impressed Luke and found themselves on the very short list of people who were allowed to have Rey scavenge with them without Luke’s supervision.

It would be Jarex Zolhar and his posse’s actions that made Luke rescind that rule.

At the time Jarex approached Luke, Luke had forgotten that Jarex was the one who had made crude comments about Felicity the day Luke was reunited with Rey. Luke was also oblivious to the fact that it had been Jarex who attempted to turn Felicity in and was beaten by Phasma when he failed to deliver.

Luke thought himself a good judge of character, being able to use the Force to sense people’s intentions, but Jarex was a charming man. He was tall and handsome with dark hair and eyes. His clothing was as tattered as anyone’s on Jakku, but his signature was a small silver ring with the symbol of the Empire that he wore on his right hand. Luke had once asked Jarex about it, suspicious that the man may have once been an Imperial, but Jarex claimed to have gotten it off a body he once looted. Luke thought it was unethical until he remembered that Jarex was literally a professional scavenger. He was kind and gracious and generous when he approached Luke, causing no alarm bells to go off in Luke’s head.

“It’s just a couple places we want to hit, and your daughter would be a very valuable asset to help us,” Jarex finished his spiel.

“Yes, I can see that,” Luke said politely, “but Rey’s already got so many people wanting to use her, and she’s still a little girl. I can’t send her out every day to every person who wants her.”

“I understand that,” Jarex nodded. “But I think I have something to sweeten the pot.”

Luke crossed his arms, “Oh really?”

“Look, I’ve got a four-person team, so giving you a one third cut isn’t really feasible,” Jarex pulled out a data chip out of his bag and plugged it into his datapad. He handed the datapad to Luke, “I hope this might make up the difference.”

“What is it?” Luke examined the datapad. On the screen was some sort of numbers lesson.

“A schooling program. I found it in the desert several years back,” Jarex explained. “It was in the personal effects of an Imperial bunk. Probably some soldier bringing it to his homeschooled child.
Plutt wouldn’t give me anything for it, so I’ve been stuck with it for years. I figure that maybe you might be able to use it on your daughter.”

Luke examined the program and was blown away. It had almost everything he needed: spelling and vocabulary lessons, math, literature, science, and even history. Sure, it was Imperial era propaganda, but Luke could correct whatever was wrong and use it as an example of what the Empire was and not to trust the government implicitly.

“This is perfect,” Luke admitted. “But still… This is my child we’re talking about.”

“Erso, I have the utmost respect for you and your parenting,” Jarex swore. “I love kids and would never let your daughter come to harm. Please, come out with us tomorrow with Rey and let me show you how great a team we’ll be. Besides, don’t you want the schooling program?”

Luke sighed and looked down at the datapad. He really didn’t want Rey’s education to suffer, and Jarex did seem like a good guy.

“Oh, why not?” Luke gave in. “We’ll do it.”

After all, what was the worst that could happen?

It had been three months since Luke and Rey had started working with Jarex’s crew. Luke had left Rey and Jarex alone for two minutes while he and Dairh loaded some bulky pieces of equipment into the speeders parked outside. Returning, Luke came around the corner to find Rey standing on Jarex’s shoulders, head completely submerged in the exhaust vent she was rooting around in.

“What is going on here?” Luke asked.

“Hi, Daddy!” Rey called as Jarex gripped her legs tightly, trying his hardest not to let her fall.

“Hi, Sweetheart,” Luke said pleasantly and he wasn’t looking at Jarex with the happiest expression. “Jarex, I thought we discussed my rules about what is an appropriate method of boosting up my daughter.”
“Sorry, Erso,” Jarex flashed him a smile, “but Rey saw something shiny and I just couldn’t say no to her. You know this little one has me wrapped around her finger.”

It seemed all of Jarex’s team was wrapped around Rey’s finger. They stumbled over each other to dote on her, giving her whatever small prizes they found that would only be worth less than a portion. They loved to share their lunch with her, give her piggyback rides, and play with her. The girls, Fallah and Minati, adored redoing Rey’s hair into her signature buns which Rey still refused to change to honour her mother. Aletha had actually gotten quite jealous as fixing Rey’s hair was usually her job. Overall, the team had completely fallen in love with Rey and she had fallen for them.

“Got it!” Rey proclaimed. “Let me down! I wanna see what it is!”

“Alright, let’s see this treasure,” Jarex chuckled, lowering her to the ground.

As he set her down, the object in her grip became clearer: an old Rebel Alliance helmet that must have been blown off a pilot during an explosion.

“Cool!” Rey exclaimed as she took in her treasure, studying the symbols on the side.

Luke felt a lump in his throat; he had so many memories of strapping on a helmet just like that.

Each Alliance helmet was different, customized by their owner. There were many symbols pilots put on their helmets; but the most notable were the small Vs of different colours. The most morbid symbols of all, each V kept track of a pilot’s kill count.

The helmet Rey held had three yellow Vs on either side. A yellow V represented twenty kills, so the pilot who owned that helmet had made 120 kills in their career. Luke felt sick as he remembered flashes of the battles he fought and the lives he took. Luke didn’t know how many people he had killed in the war. Literally millions, as he had blown up the Death Star, but he didn’t even know how many he had killed in direct ship-to-ship combat. On either side of his personal helmet had been two yellow Vs and three red Vs. Each red V represented fifty kills.

Luke’s collective six red Vs and four yellow Vs boasted of 380 kills… Luke had stopped counting after that.

He tried to focus on the other symbols on Rey’s helmet. There was a yellow starbird, the representative of the pilot’s squadron.

When he was a member of Red Squadron, Luke’s symbol had been a simple red firebird, but when he became the leader of Rogue Squadron they changed the symbol. First off, the firebird had become blue (Red Squadron was not willing to give up their colour to even Luke Skywalker.) It was surrounded by a twelve-pointed star of fire, and at each tip was a miniature ship.

Thinking about the symbol caused a tightness in his chest. Luke had seen that symbol time and time again, long after the war, because it had been tattooed on the woman he loved.

During the war, Felicity had gotten arrested and one of her punishments was getting the starbird tattooed on her right shoulder to identify her as a Rebel to everyone. After falling for Luke, Felicity had the tattoo altered into the symbol of Rogue Squadron as a way to honour her original Rogue team as well as her love for Luke.

Luke had to tear his thoughts away from Felicity. He couldn’t believe that it had been almost two years since he lost her, but he still missed her so much. It hurt every day as Rey grew more and more into an image of Felicity. Every milestone Rey reached seemed an insult for Felicity not to witness. But Luke had to carry on because he knew she was never coming back.
He switched his attention onto another symbol on Rey’s helmet. It was one that adorned Luke’s helmet too; a symbol that denoted he fought in the Battle of Yavin. That same circle with lines through it sat on the back of Rey’s helmet near the base of the skull. That surprised Luke; did he know who this pilot was?

“Rey, what name is on that?” Luke asked.

Rey looked at the helmet and gasped, “Raeh!”

“No, Sweetheart,” Luke chuckled, “not your name. The name on the helmet.”

“No, the name is Raeh!” Rey repeated. She held up the helmet to her father, “Look! Resh, Enth, Herf! That spells Raeh!”

Luke’s jaw dropped, “Raeh?”

“Yeah! Raeh!” Rey exclaimed.

Luke chuckled as he took the helmet and confirmed the name on the side, “Well, would you look at that.”

“Daddy, what does this mean?” Rey asked.

“It’s obvious, isn’t it?” Jarex laughed. “Clearly, you were meant to find it, Rey. It’s destiny.”

Luke looked away; he didn’t like discussing destiny these days.

“Can I keep it?” Rey asked.

Jarex lovingly ruffled her hair, “Well, I can’t keep it if it has your name on it, can I?”

“Thank you! Thank you! Thank you!” Rey threw her arms around Jarex in a hug.

Jarex chuckled and returned the hug, “No problem, Little One.”

Luke couldn’t help but smile. As he watched Jarex with his daughter, he realised that Jarex truly cared about Rey. Finally, Luke decided that he could trust Jarex with Rey.

“You can’t trust him, Luke,” Aletha warned the next day.

Luke had finally consented to allowing Jarex and his team to take Rey alone for a few hours. Quom and Aletha had not been too pleased with the announcement.

“I think I can,” Luke replied as he sat at Quom’s workbench cleaning up Rey’s helmet. “My gut’s telling me to trust him.”

“Then your gut must be sick after eating too many rations,” Quom replied as he tinkered with his latest project. “Doc’s right. Jarex has a bit of a reputation.”

“I know he does,” Luke said. “I have been living here for almost two years now.”

“Wow, has it been that long?” Quom mused.

“You must not have noticed since you’ve already lived 104 years,” Aletha teased.

“I should have never told Luke my age,” Quom grumbled.
“Look, I know that Jarex can be intense,” Luke said, “but every time I’ve seen him with Rey, he’s focused on her safety and comfort. He adores her and treats her with respect. I have no reason to distrust him with Rey other than vague rumours about, what? Yelling matches at best?”

Aletha sighed, “I still don’t trust him.”

“Well, it’s not up to you to trust him, is it?” Luke snapped at a far more intense tone than he had ever taken with her before. “She’s my child, not yours! I’m not going to fail at protecting her! Not again!”

Aletha said nothing at his outburst, but fixed him with a pointed glare. A minute later, Luke had been firmly put back in his place.


“We are not your enemy, Luke,” Aletha sternly reminded him.

“I know that,” Luke sighed. “Look, I’ll keep an eye out, but until then, can you just please trust me to make good decisions for my daughter?”

“Alright,” Aletha conceded. “But I’m going to keep an eye on her as well.”

“And I’m grateful for that,” Luke smiled, glad that Aletha didn’t appear to be mad at him anymore. With one last wipe, Luke set down the polishing rag and declared, “There, all done.”

“Spiffy job, Erso,” Quom complimented. “Nice and ready for battle.”

“Rey’s going to be so happy,” Luke grinned. “I just wished I could tell her more about the owner of this helmet. I don’t recognize the squadron, and I only have the last name and a kill count. Not the best picture to paint for a child.”

“Here,” Aletha reached for the helmet, “let me try.”

Luke raised a brow, “You?”

Aletha shot him a look, “I will remind you, Luke Erso that I too fought in the Rebellion and met a few pilots myself.”

“Alright,” Luke tossed her the helmet, “give it a shot.”

Aletha grinned as she caught the helmet. She set it in her lap and looked down. Instantly the smile fell off her face.

“The Tierfon Yellow Aces,” Aletha said quietly. Ghosts flitted behind her eyes, “This is Captain Dosmit Raeh’s helmet. Yellow Leader.”

Luke and Quom shared a look. Aletha liked to tell Rey stories about the Rebellion, but every now and then, her face would drop and she would start speaking in that sad tone of voice. Usually it involved her husband, Antar and the query as to why Aletha had come to Jakku. In the two years Luke had known Aletha, she had yet to divulge the reason she had chosen to live on Jakku after the war.

“Aletha?” Luke reached forward and placed a comforting hand on her leg. His blue eyes met hers and he gently asked, “Is there something you want to talk about?”

Aletha sniffed and wiped her eyes on her sleeve, “No. Not at this time.”
Luke gave her a soft smile, “Alright. But know that if you ever want to talk about it… I’m here for you.”

Aletha smiled and placed her hand overtop his, “I know, but for now… Just tell Rey that Dosmit was a good woman and to take special care of that helmet.”

Luke nodded, “I will.”

They let the silence linger for a few minutes. Aletha didn’t ask Luke to move his hand from her leg, and Luke had no inclination to do so.


Aletha took a deep breath, “Please be careful with Rey and Jarex. You… You can never guess when you might lose the one you love.”

Luke looked down at the gold band he still wore on his left ring finger, “I know. Believe me… I know.”

For four months, nothing happened with Jarex; in fact, Rey had the absolute time of her life with him. She begged Luke every day to go have fun with Mister Jarex, and Luke was only too happy to comply. It sadden Quom and Aletha to see Rey attaching herself to someone else, but they were still there for her every day.

But try as she may, Aletha could never shake the feeling that Jarex was bad news. She stopped bringing it up to Luke because although he agreed that something felt off, there was no reason to doubt him. Of course, Aletha may have understood a little bit better why Luke wanted to give Jarex the benefit of the doubt if she had known he had been willing to give Darth Vader the benefit of the doubt as well. Still, every day Aletha watched Rey go off with Jarex and worried that something bad was going to happen.

And unfortunately, she was right.

It can take a couple of days to remove all the salvageable gear from an X-wing, so keep your lips zipped until it’s a chassis full of sand.

- Rey’s Survival Guide

Rey didn’t mean to do it; she honestly didn’t mean to reveal the location of their huge score to Dione Aldan. Rey had thought Jarex and their team had finished stripping everything from the X-Wing, so when she mentioned the site to Dione, she thought there would be no harm in it.

When Jarex announced they were going to the X-Wing again the next day, Rey knew she had messed up. Dione had already arrived at the ship with a team of others and was stripping the last few good things when Rey and the others showed up.

Rey saw Jarex’s face go red, and the team hopped back into his speeder so he could drive them away. For twenty minutes, Jarex drove, and no one said anything. Finally, they stopped where the sand stretched endlessly and there was no one in sight.
“Everyone out,” Jarex ordered coolly.

Rey diligently followed Minati, Fallah, and Dairh out of the speeder. They lined up side-by-side, and Jarex paced the length of them.


Rey was afraid. She no longer practiced the Force and had nearly forgotten about it, but she could still sense when something was wrong, and something was very wrong.

“Who told?” Jarex snapped.

Rey swallowed hard; if she stayed silent, the others might get hurt and that wasn’t fair to them.

“I did,” Rey said in a quiet voice, taking a step forward.

Jarex looked surprised, “You told?”

“Uh huh,” Rey nodded. She tried to keep her voice light because she knew that Jarex liked her and that she really shouldn’t have a reason to fear. “I’m really sorry. I thought we were done and I only mentioned it in passing. It won’t happen again, I prom-”

Jarex hit her.

The world seemed to stop.

Rey’s mouth quivered, her face buzzing with heat from the impact as she tried to process what just happened. Jarex had punched her in the face. Her hands started to shake as she breathed heavily, shocked by her friend’s actions.

Why? Why had he done it? Rey thought he was her friend. He gave her gifts and played with her. Why had he hit her? It didn’t make sense. He wasn’t the type of man who would hit a child. But he had, and that only meant one thing.

She had to have done something to deserve it.

“I’m sorry,” Tears streamed down Rey’s face, her heart thudding wildly in her chest. “I’m sorry! I didn’t mean to!”

Fallah, Minati, and Dairh didn’t know what to say. They couldn’t believe that Jarex had just punched a seven-year-old child in the face.

“What are we going to do?” Fallah whispered.

“We’re not going to do anything,” Jarex said, taking a deep breath. He composed himself, then smiled and got on one knee in front of the sobbing Rey. “Rey… I… I shouldn’t have done that. I lost my temper, and… and that was wrong. You just shouldn’t have told anyone about our site. Do you understand?”

Rey’s breathing was erratic. She looked at him with fear in her eyes, but his gentle tone and apologies soothed her.

“I understand,” Rey nodded. She looked at the ground, “I’m sorry, Jarex.”

“It’s okay,” Jarex pulled her into a hug. “We both made some mistakes and it won’t happen again. I promise.”
“I forgive you,” Rey said, not realizing he hadn’t actually apologized. “It won’t happen again. I promise.”

“Good girl.” Jarex glanced back to his team, “I don’t think we need to tell anyone about this, right? Rey, you don’t need to tell your dad, okay? This can stay between us.”

Fallah had an uncertain look, “But what if there’s a bruise?”

“Then she’ll say she tripped,” Jarex ordered. He looked sternly at Rey, “Right?”

Rey looked at Jarex in a confusing mass of emotions, “R- Right.”

“Good girl,” Jarex patted her head and stood up. “You’re not going to tell anyone, Rey. You’re going to keep coming with us every day, you’re going to sound excited about it, and most of all, you and everyone here is going to keep their mouths shut. Understand?”

Minati and Dairh didn’t look at all phased or disturbed by Jarex actions, but the scene unsettled Fallah.

“What if we don’t?” Fallah asked.

Jarex smiled at Fallah, “Whoever tells about this incident, or any future ones is going to get a lot worse than what happened today. Understand?”

Fallah looked away and Rey nodded her head.

Rey understood perfectly what was happening to her… she just didn’t know how to get out of it.

Two days later, Luke and Rey were eating their dinner rations when Luke noticed the purple bruising around Rey’s eye.


Rey nearly dropped her plate. For the past two days, she had done everything in her power to hide what happened from her father. She struggled to keep her mood positive and her face down. At first her eye was just swollen so she spent enough time looking at the ground that her father didn’t notice, but now that the bruising had set in, Luke couldn’t overlook it anymore.

“Oh, um, that,” Rey struggled to think of an answer.


She wanted nothing more than to tell her father what happened, but she remembered the threat of what Jarex would do if she told. She didn’t want to know what worse was, so she would do as he asked and keep her mouth shut.

“I, um…” Rey though hard. “I walked into a… a low hanging pole, yesterday. I mean, the other day. I mean… There’s nothing to worry about. Nothing at all… It was an accident. I’m… I’m clumsy now… Lately. Have been. How’s your dinner?”

Luke frowned; Rey wouldn’t look him in the eye. He set down his plate, then reached over and grabbed Rey’s hand. She looked up at him, nerves riddled clearly on her face.

“No, of course not,” Rey insisted.

Luke felt her hands shaking.

“Rey…” Luke’s words were cautious, “You know you can tell me anything.”

Rey wanted to tell him, but what could he do to help her? How could he protect her from Jarex? Her father may love her with all of his heart, but Luke Erso wasn’t a violent man and Jarex was. What chance would Luke Erso stand next to Jarex Zolhar?

“There’s nothing going on, Daddy,” Rey insisted. “I promise. I just got a little clumsy.”

Luke sighed, “Alright, I trust you wouldn’t lie to me about this.”

“I wouldn’t,” Rey lied. A part of her feared what he would do when he learned she had lied to him.

“Just remember, you can come to me with anything,” Luke promised, brushing his hand through her hair. “I love you more than anything or anyone in the universe. I would never let anyone hurt you, but I need to know there’s a threat before I can protect you from it.”

“There’s no threat, Daddy, promise.”

Luke gently pulled her into a hug, “I love you, My Rey of Light.”

“I love you too,” Rey buried her face into his neck and struggled not to let the tears fall. “Daddy?”

“Yes, Sweetheart?”

“…Can you hold me for a little while?”

Luke closed his eyes; he was certain something was wrong.


He needed to figure out what had happened. Aletha’s warning about Jarex came to mind, but Luke brushed it off. Rey hadn’t dealt with Jarex in the past two days, and she had been interacting with him with no incident for months. Jarex was a friend who had never so much as raised his voice to Rey before. No, it had to be something else.

Was it Plutt? Roke? Had she truly walked into a pole and just been upset by something different? Did the something different distract her enough that she had walked into the pole? And what could that something different be? A different one of Plutt’s minions? Was it a memory of Felicity? A flashback of Ben? Had she heard news about the First Order?

Luke had to figure it out.

Rey held onto her father and tried not to cry. She was being silly about this; it was nothing to worry about. She remembered times where her parents had gotten physically aggressive with other people. It had to be a normal thing.

No, Jarex was her friend, and she knew deep down that he would never hit her again.

But it did happen again.

And again.
And again.

It was a cycle: an incident would happen, followed by apologies and gifts, then she would do something that frustrated him until he finally snapped and hurt her again. For two months, Jarex abused Rey, and his team kept their mouths shut.

Rey struggled to keep the abuse hidden from her father. She would cover up the bruises, lie that she had done something clumsy, tell him she had been with someone other than Jarex, faked being overly happy and eager to spend time with Jarex, and do whatever it took to make her father believe she wasn’t being abused.

But Luke knew; he heard her crying at night and saw the bruises. Over and over he begged her to talk to him, to confess what was going on, but Rey refused. She simply pretended she had gotten clumsy, and with Rey hiding how frequently she was with Jarex, it was nearly impossible for Luke to figure out who was hurting his daughter.

So many people kept asking to have Rey help them and he had to narrow the list to discover her abuser. Slowly, Luke whittled down the list of people he trusted, and unfortunately Jarex’s charm and Rey’s silence ensured he stayed on the list. Luke tried reaching into the Force to identify his daughter’s abuser, but as more time went on that he stopped using the Force, Luke found his connection to it weakening. The Force wouldn’t help him discover who was hurting his daughter.

But who was doing it? Mashra? Ivano? Roke? Jarex? Plutt? Loathed he was to admit it… Luke had started keeping a close eye on Rey’s interactions with even Quom and Aletha. Luke was getting to the end of his rope. It was at the point where he was scared enough for Rey that he was seriously considering keeping them in the walker all day for a while.

Rey wanted to tell him, but Jarex terrified her. His threats never left her mind, and it seemed like lately nothing she could do was right. She deserved the bruises, and Jarex appeared so sad to have to hit her. He was kind though, Rey insisted to herself at night. He wouldn’t hurt her more than she deserved, and he’d just leave bruises, never break any bones.

She avoided her old friends now; Rey no longer could stand the scrutinizing looks of Doctor Aletha Kymeri. Rey didn’t bring her injuries to Aletha anymore because she feared the questions.

As the deception got deeper, Rey feared more and more the consequences of what would happen if she told her father the truth. She would be in so much trouble for sneaking off and lying. It was almost worth the bruises rather than seeing the look on Daddy’s face if she told him the truth.

Rey was trapped. It was as Jarex had said so many times: she was his property now and there was nothing she could do to escape.

Jarex was comfortable in his position; his team was too afraid to admit they had assisted in child abuse. Minati and Dairh had even started taking a few swipes at Rey too. Fallah on the other hand had completely freaked out and left Jakku on a merchant’s ship a few weeks later when she couldn’t take it anymore. Jarex feared that Fallah was going to tell Luke Erso what happened before she left, but she was too afraid of Jarex and had kept her mouth shut.

Things were going good for Jarex; he knew he had complete control over Rey. The girl would never tell her father, and even if she did, what did that matter? Jarex obviously could kill the man if it came down to it. No, Luke Erso was nothing to worry about, and Rey Erso was Jarex’s to harm as he pleased.

There was just one small problem with that thought. It’s wasn’t Luke Erso’s daughter, Jarex Zolhar
was beating.

It was Luke Skywalker’s.

Chapter End Notes

Coming Up Next Chapter…

Something Strange About Him

Luke discovers what Jarex has been doing to Rey, but when Jarex takes drastic action after their confrontation, Luke risks revealing the truth about his identity.
Something Strange About Him

Chapter Summary

Luke discovers what Jarex has been doing to Rey, but when Jarex takes drastic action after their confrontation, Luke risks revealing the truth about his identity.

Chapter Notes

Also, today marks the one year anniversary of when I posted chapter one… so at this rate, Episode 9 will probably be out when I finish this story. Oh god, what have I done?

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

The Long Way Home

Chapter Nineteen

Something Strange About Him

Still, there are always new scavengers who don’t know the rules, or are desperate enough not to care. I keep my ears open in Niima so I know who might do something stupid.

-Rey’s Survival Guide-

“Aletha, can I ask you a question about child development?” Luke finally asked after two months of Rey’s abuse. There was just something too wrong about the situation to wave off anymore. He needed an answer.

“Of course,” Aletha replied. “Is it about Rey?”

“Yeah, look, she’s been getting a lot of bruises lately,” Luke admitted. “I was wondering if maybe children start getting clumsy during growth spurts?”

Aletha considered the theory, “I suppose some children might. They’re not used to the length of their limbs and start having mishaps.”

“So, that might be what’s going on with Rey?”

“Well, I would have to see the bruises to tell you for certain.”

Luke frowned, “You haven’t seen her bruises?”

Aletha sighed, “She’s been avoiding me, Luke. I think something’s going on.”
“I think so too,” Luke admitted. “I just can’t figure out what’s causing it… or who.”

Aletha let the silence linger for a minute, “Luke? …Is that why you’ve been keeping Rey from me lately?”


“Luke, you know I would never do anything to your daughter!” Aletha desperately cried. “I love that little girl!”

“I know,” Luke assured her. “And for the record, I don’t think you’re the one doing it, but I’m just trying to make sure. I’ve got to get to the bottom of this, Aletha.”

“I understand,” Aletha placed her hand on his arm and Luke visibly relaxed at her touch. “Let me help you, Luke. Next time Rey gets an injury of any sort, I want you to bring her in directly to me whether she wants to come or not.”


It would be a full minute of Luke and Aletha silently staring at each other and smiling before she moved away her hand. And truth be told… Luke would miss the feel of her touch.

“Daddy, I don’t need a doctor!” Rey whined as Luke led her by the arm to Aletha’s tent two weeks later. A nice black bruise was forming on her cheek.

“Rey, you’ve been getting hurt a lot lately,” Luke explained. “I just want to make sure you’re not sick.”

“I’m fine! Daddy, please don’t make me do this!” Rey begged as Luke dragged her into the tent.

“Sit,” Luke ordered, pointing at the cot.

Rey scowled and crossed her arms as she plopped down in the cot.

“Hello, Sunshine,” Aletha greeted, her voice sounding overly cheery and lyrical. “It’s been a while.”

“I’m not sick, Doctor Ally,” Rey said immediately.

“Well, I don’t think you’re sick, but I do see a nice bruise forming here,” Aletha leaned in close to examine Rey’s cheek. “Now how in the world did you get such a big bru-”

Aletha stopped dead, her eyes wide with shock.

“Luke,” Aletha’s voice was smaller. “Can you take a look at this?”

Luke was puzzled and raised a brow at Aletha before walking over.

“Right here,” Aletha whispered, pointing at a part of the bruise. “Does that look familiar?”

Luke frowned at the small, odd shape, “That’s… an Imperial symbol.”

“Exactly what I was thinking.”

“But what does it mean? Why would a bruise form like that?”

Aletha glanced at Rey. The little girl’s eyes had widened, but the second they met Aletha’s, Rey
quickly looked down.

“Can I see you outside, Luke?”

“What’s going on, Aletha?” Luke asked as the tent flap closed behind them. “What’s that mark?”

“Luke,” Aletha carefully placed a hand on his forearm like she had done so many times before. It had become a gesture of comfort and support between the two. “That shape… is an indentation mark.”

Luke scowled, “I don’t understand. What does it mean?”

Aletha took a deep breath, “It means that… Luke, somebody hit your child.”

Luke’s eyes went wide as horror washed over him like being dunked in a lake of ice cold water. It was his worst fear… someone was abusing his child.

“No,” Luke clenched his fist. He was shaking. “This can’t be.”

“I’m so sorry, Luke,” Aletha rubbed his arm.

“How can you be certain? What is an indentation mark and why does it make you say this?”

“An indentation mark is a mark left behind when someone is hit with an object. If Quom smacked you hard enough with a wrench, the mark would take the shape of said wrench.”

“And the Imperial mark?”

Aletha cocked her head to the side, “A very small mark, wouldn’t you say? Almost the size of… I don’t know… a ring?”


“My guess is that he back handed her while wearing his ring,” Aletha observed. “And I would also guess that this isn’t the first time he’s hit Rey.”

Luke’s hands were shaking as his mind was abuzz with the situation. Over and over he examined every single moment between Jarex and Rey, searching for overlooked clues that signalled the abuse. Memory after memory shot through his mind, his brain obsessively picking out the most random details and analyzing them from every angle until there was nothing left to examine.

A smile from a hot day. A compliment on her skills. A gift given as reward. A request to spend time with Jarex. A lie that nothing was going on. Was there something beneath the surface to every action? When had the abuse started? Why didn’t Rey tell him? Why didn’t he stop it? Why didn’t he sense it?

Why her? Why Rey? After everything they had been through, why was she suffering again?

Rey was not perfect, but did she truly deserve the terrible things that had happened to her? Her home burning down, getting attacked in her bed, almost dying from dehydration in the desert, her cousin trying to kill her, her mother abandoning her, the mother getting captured by the First Order who shot her and did something horrific to the body, being alone for months while her father thought she was dead, getting abused by someone she thought to be a friend, and not to mention the incident Felicity
never spoke of (even in his own thoughts, Luke did not like to dwell on what happened that day and what Felicity had done to Rey in the haze of her postpartum depression.)

Rey deserved none of this, just as Luke had never deserved the horrible things that had happened to him. Was it his fault then? Had he passed this life of misery and tragedy to his daughter as easily as he had passed on his jawline? Was the so called “Skywalker curse” not a simple joke, but rather the worst thing he could have done to his daughter? Was he a terrible father?

The last question was easy for Luke to answer: yes, he was a terrible father. For what else could he call a man who let his daughter be abused?

“How did I not see it?” Luke put his head into his hands. A few rogue tears slid down his cheeks as he let out a strangled sob. “How could I let this happen?”

Determination setting on her face, Aletha gently, but firmly pulled Luke’s hands down and lifted his chin so he was forced to look her in the eyes.

“You listen to me, and you listen carefully,” Aletha had her authoritative tone on. “This is not your fault.”

“Isn’t it?” Luke shot aggressively, yet not angrily. “I left her alone with him. Force… why didn’t she tell me? Can I not be trusted to protect her? Of course, I can’t. I let this happen. Why would Rey ever trust me after that?”

“Stop it!” Aletha ordered. “This is not your fault! This is a classic case of abuse, Luke. He probably has scared her into silence. After all, who’s more terrifying to a child? A brute who hits her? Or a man who likes to talk things out and gives unlimited second chances?”

Luke clenched his jaw, Aletha’s words ringing in his mind. She was right, no one on Jakku other than Plutt and his cronies knew of Luke’s true identity. No one feared him. He was the nice mechanic who could fix almost anything, had the sweet little scavenger daughter, and had an uncanny ability to identify wrecks with big pay offs.

No one knew about the lightsaber he kept hidden beneath his clothes, tucked away on the back of his belt. No one knew how he had duelled Darth Vader himself into submission, how he had slaughtered Jabba the Hutt’s gang, killed hundreds of Imperial pilots in aerial combat, and once killed several million people – his father-in-law included – with a simple press of a button.

No one on Jakku feared Luke Erso, or even knew what he was capable of.

But that was about to change.

“Luke?” Aletha called as he turned and marched back into the tent. “LUKE!”

He threw the tent flap open with a flourish, and Rey looked up timidly from the cot. Luke marched directly to her, and dropped to his knee in front of the cot to look Rey straight in the eyes. Her father looked angry, but there was still the gentleness in his eyes he always had for her.

In a moment, Rey knew the jig was up.


“Don’t,” Rey jerked her head to the side to avoid his gaze.

“Don’t,” Rey simply repeated.

Luke sighed and shook his head. Behind him, he sensed Aletha quietly slip into the tent. He took a moment to collect himself, recognizing aggressiveness wasn’t going to get him anywhere with Rey. Then he tried again.

“Rey,” Luke lifted a hand to turn Rey’s face back to him, but froze when he saw her flinch. He considered the implications for a moment, then sighed and dropped his hand. “Rey… please. Talk to me.”

“What’s to talk about?” Rey’s voice was watery.

“Rey…” Luke took a deep breath. “I need you to tell me the truth. Did Jarex Zolhar hit you?”

Rey sniffed and wiped her nose on her sleeve, “… No.”

“Rey,” Luke said her name again, soft yet sternly. Repeating her name was a subtle way to maintain control and authority over the conversation, while also pushing at her to correct her actions. “You are not a liar. You are a good girl; trustworthy and honest. Please do not lie to me. I don’t deserve that.”

Rey’s face scrunched up, contorting in sadness as she struggled with all her might to hold back her tears, “I’m sorry, Daddy. I’m sorry.”

“Oh, Rey. My Sweetheart.”

Luke lifted his hand again to touch her. Rey flinched once more, but this time Luke merely held his hand still for minute and then proceeded. He stroked the side of her cheek with his left hand, his natural skin ghosting over the bruise. Rey was sobbing, her breathing erratic, but was comforted by his warm, loving caress. Slowly, her cries ceased as Rey relaxed. She dropped her head to rest against his hand. Luke cradled her marred cheek and stroked his thumb in circles over her jaw.


“Daddy,” Rey whimpered.

“It’s okay,” Luke promised. “But we need to talk about why there’s a bruise on your face in the shape of Jarex Zolhar’s ring.”

“I… I’m sorry, Daddy.”

“It’s okay, Sweetheart. There’s nothing to be sorry about.”

“But I lied to you, Daddy,” Rey confessed. “I lied to you a lot.”

“I know,” Luke could sense her fear through the Force. “But I’m not mad at you.”

“You’re- You’re not?”

“No,” Luke said in his how could you ever be so silly, but it’s okay, I love you anyway, and totally validate your feelings tone of voice. “Of course I’m not mad at you. But I can’t accept your apology until you tell me everything that’s happened.”

Rey sniffed and looked up at him, fear shining in her eyes, “Everything?”

Luke gave her a slight, mischievous sort of gotcha grin, “Everything.”
So Rey did. She told her father about the abuse, the cycle, the lies, the bruises, everything.

Luke didn’t say a word for Rey told him the story in a very familiar way. The way she told the story was identical to the way Felicity had once told Luke the story of her past. Luke knew that like her mother, Rey needed to get it all off her chest with minimal interruptions. There was a time for questions later, for now Rey needed validation that someone would listen to her and care.

“And that’s why I didn’t tell you,” Rey finished. “I was scared that it would get worse. It’s going to get worse, Daddy. Please don’t tell him I told you.”

“I can’t do that, Rey,” Luke shook his head.

“But Daddy!”

“No, Rey,” Luke said firmly. “I’m not going to let him get away with this. He won’t touch you ever again, Rey. I promise you, and he’s going to pay for what he’s done.”

“No,” Rey sniffled, the tears beginning anew. “No one’s going to be able to stop him. Not even you.”

Luke smiled, “Rey… That is a bet you don’t want to make.”

He brought Rey into his arms and held her tightly.

“Stay here,” Luke whispered, pressing a kiss to her forehead. Before Rey could object, Luke was on his feet and heading towards the flap of the tent. He looked at Aletha and said, “Watch her for me.”

“Where are you going?” Aletha frowned.

“To talk to Jarex Zolhar.”

Jarex and his posse were just getting out of line from the concession stand when Luke found them.

“Jarex Zolhar!” Luke yelled across the Outpost, completely uncaring that most of Niima Outpost’s residents were in the small area.

The son of a bitch of course greeted Luke with a smile.

“Erso!” Jarex greeted with a charming tone as Luke stalked across the market. “Nice day isn’t it? I was thinking I would take your little girl out and—”

Luke’s fist smashed into Jarex’s face, sending him sprawling to the ground.

As Luke stood over Jarex, he smiled. It was satisfying to see how much damage he could do without the Force and using his natural hand rather than the mechanical one.

All activity in the market had ceased to watch the scene of goody goody Luke Erso punching the daylights out of Jarex Zolhar. The residents gasped, whispering among themselves in shock and speculation of why he had done it and where in the Galaxy Luke Erso could have come from that taught him to punch that well.

Plutt and his goons, on the other hand knew that Luke Erso was Luke Skywalker, and knew that if Jarex Zolhar had pissed him off, they were in for a show. Roke had already started taking bets on how long Jarex would last. Only Dirk was dumb enough to bet that Luke wouldn’t end up killing Jarex, and the idea was ridiculous enough that Roke accepted the bet with 100 to 1 odds.
For a moment, Luke could have sworn he heard his father say, “That’s my boy!”

“Don’t encourage him, Anakin,” Obi-Wan’s voice followed.

“Son of a bitch!” Jarex cried out. “What the hell was that for?”


The market fell silent.

Niima Outpost was not the kind of place where people banded together. Luke’s friendship and pseudo family situation with Quom and Aletha was viewed with the same air people viewed polygamy on Coruscant, strange, unnatural, and harmful (not to mention the ridiculous rumour that the three-way friendship was a polygamous relationship.) Rey was not beloved by the community and people tended not to look down on crimes like assault and murder.

But child abuse was another story entirely.

Survival of the fittest was the way of life in Niima Outpost. If you were harmed by another, it was your own fault for not defending yourself and you deserved it. But a child could not possibly defend themselves against an adult and that was where Niima Outpost drew the line.

Jarex could feel the eyes on him as every resident of Jakku turned their hardened expression on him. Luke Erso’s furious expression was a sight to behold, but Jarex wasn’t about to yield to the likes of a mechanic.

“Seriously Erso?” Jarex tried to pass the situation off with a laugh as he slowly got to his feet. “You think I’d hit your kid?”

“I know you did,” Luke replied coldly. Out of the corner of his eye he could see Ivano Troade in the crowd just barely holding Quom back. “Rey told me everything.”

“Well the kid has got quite the imagination then, though I don’t know why she would turn it against me. Clearly the girl is lying-”

Another punch sent Jarex back to the ground.

“Why don’t we try that again?” Luke urged as Jarex held his jaw.

“Nice one, son!” Anakin cheered.

“Alright... I will admit that was a good punch,” Obi-Wan conceded.

“Taught him that, I did,” Yoda boasted.

Luke sighed; it was a miracle he got anything done with those three voices in his head.

Lucky for Jarex, Luke was not giving in to the worst part of himself. Han had made sure that Luke learned long ago how to throw a punch without giving in to the Dark Side. Though considering his mentors’ comments, he wasn’t sure he would be chastised if he had given into the Dark Side.

“Look,” Jarex slowly got to his feet again but put a few steps between himself and Luke. He glanced behind him at Dairh and Minati who looked extremely nervous. “I have no idea where this is coming from. I have never hit your child.”

Luke raised an eyebrow, “Then why is there a bruise in the shape of your ring on my daughter’s
“Keepuna,” Dairh swore in Huttese under his breath.

Unfortunately it was loud enough for both Jarex and Luke to hear… and confirm Jarex’s guilt. Jarex winced as he met Luke’s steely gaze, and then gave a soft chuckle. With a smile still on his face, he turned to Dairh and addressed him in Huttese. Jarex hoped that Luke Erso hadn’t picked up more of the language than the usual curses and business terms thrown around on Jakku.

Jarex spoke to Dairh in a lighthearted tone to mask his anger from Luke, “Chuba doompa, dopamaskey kung.” [You low-down, two-faced scum.]

Dairh shook his head, “Jarex… Soong peetch alay.” [Jarex… It's too late.]

“Keel-ee calleya ku kah,” Jarex sneered. Without turning to face her, he said to Minati, “Koona t'chuta?” [You disappoint me.] [Going somewhere?]

Minati winced, her attempt to slink away from the group brought to the forefront of the conversation, “Jarex, chess ko.” [Jarex, be careful.]

“Minati,” Jarex growled.

“Uba cheesp bo coopa!” Minati warned. She gestured to Luke, “Haba hees azalaus. Uba heeta emeela!” [You better watch out!] [Maybe he is dangerous. You hit his girl!]

“Smeelleya whao toupee upee,” Jarex instructed Minati as he grinned falsely at Luke, trying to keep up the façade. [Smile when you say that.]

But Minati continued, “Bona nai kachu, Jarex.” [You're in trouble now, Jarex.]

“Schutta!” Jarex snapped. [Shut it!]

“Hees koona tah killee chuba!” Minati exclaimed. [He's going to kill you!]

“Sie batha ne beechee?” Luke calmly cut in. [Are you talking about me?]

Three sets of eyes widened in fear before Luke. Jarex, Minati, and Dairh knew now they were truly screwed.

“Hagwa boska blastoh,” Luke instructed as Dairh’s hand moved towards his blaster. Luke couldn’t help the smug look that consumed his face as he added, “Ubana nabuke wu.” [Don't go for that weapon.] [You'll never win.]

Jarex stared at Luke in horror and confusion, “Ah'chu apenkee?” [Who are you?]

Luke shook his head.


Jarex took a deep breath and plastered across his face the most charming smile in his arsenal.

“Eniki, hi chunkee fa goota?” Bargaining was Jarex’s only hope to get out of this encounter alive. “Ting cooing koo soo ah… er rateena.” [Ok, what's your final offer?] [I've got the credits… er
Luke’s gaze hardened, “Bargon wan chee kospah.” [There will be no deal.]


“Ban gon wan she co, cah,” Luke declared, pulling Jarex’s arm from around him. [There will be no bargain.]


“Rey harl tish ding,” Luke desperately fought the urge to punch Jarex a third time. Catching Dairh and Minati’s movements in the corner of his eye, he snapped, “Pasta mo rulya!” [Rey’s through with you.] [Hands off your weapons!]

Dairh and Minati held up their hands and took a step back from Luke.

Luke took a measured breath and then turned back to Jarex, “I trusted you. I trusted you with the most precious thing in my life, and you betrayed me. You hit my daughter. Don’t you dare try to deny it.”

“Fine!” Jarex snapped. “You want me to say it? I hit her. Happy now?”

Luke gave a mirthless chuckle, “You think that admission makes me happy? Why did you ever think it was okay to harm any child, much less mine?”

“Come on. Everyone knows the saying: spare the rod, spoil the child. You spoil your kid and I was just giving her a little much needed discipline.”

Luke clenched his fist; he was shaking with his withheld anger, “Well, your generosity isn’t appreciated. From now on, only I will be doling out punishments for Rey. Is that understood?”

“Fine!” Jarex barked, a little more intensely than he intended to. “I won’t hit Rey on our outings anymore! Now are we done here?”

Luke’s eyes narrowed, “You don’t actually think you’ll be allowed anywhere Rey from now on?”

“What? But I need her to get to the small stuff in wrecks!”

“You should have thought about that before you hit my child.”

“No!” Jarex snapped. “Rey’s going to continue coming with me or I will.”


Jarex froze; the look in Luke Erso’s eyes were terrifying. Something in the back of his mind – perhaps his survival instincts – were telling him back off.

Luke stepped forward so he there was barely an inch of room between himself and Jarex. Luke knew that dealings in Niima could not be solved with logic and negotiation. Deals in Niima were more primal in nature, and it was a battle of animalistic nature that went head to head. By standing so close to Jarex, Luke was asserting his dominance and establishing himself as the alpha male; a figure to be feared and never challenged.
“Let me tell you how this is going to go,” Luke said in deadly whisper; cold and measured, yet also loud enough that the people around them could still hear. “You are never going to interact with my daughter again, and if you are stupid enough to ever lay a hand on my daughter again… Anything you do to her… I'll do tenfold back on you.”

Luke turned to view the silent crowd watching them.

“That goes for everyone here!” Luke announced. “If anyone hurts my daughter, they deal with me. And as nice as I seem… trust me, you don’t want to get on my wrong side. Don’t believe me?”


“Well…” Luke chuckled. “I’m more than happy to provide references.”

Jarex glared at Luke and shook his head, “How dare you stand there and pretend to be the perfect father. You’re not!”

As he turned back to face Jarex, he struggled not to let it show how deep Jarex’s words cut.

“You let this happen for months,” Jarex laughed, “and despite knowing something was up, you still let it happen. You pretend to be the perfect father, but I know the truth. You’re no better than that obona wife of yours who left your kid to die in the des-”

The next thing Jarex comprehended was the intense pain of something metal slamming into his jaw. He fell to the ground, clutching his jaw as the metallic taste of blood seeped onto his tongue. A few of his teeth were loose and the main source of the blood, and his jaw hurt like hell to move.

Luke shook out his right hand, the sensors in his mechanics sending appropriate messages of pain to his body as the natural result of punching someone.

“What was that?” Jarex shouted, despite the pain of moving his jaw.

“I warned you,” Luke simply said. “I’ll do tenfold. That was for the bruise on Rey’s face.”

“What the hell?” Jarex clutched his face. “What in the galaxy even happened? That felt like you hit me with a pole… or a wrench… or- Or- Or… something that’s not a fist!”

“Oh, have I never told you?” Luke pulled off the glove that always covered his mechanical hand. He held up his bare hand, pulled down his sleeve, and flipped open the control panel on his false wrist to reveal the mechanics, “I lost my hand years ago. This one’s metal.”

Luke smiled as he enjoyed Jarex’s dumbfounded look and heard the murmuring from the crowd.

His enjoyment only got greater when he heard Quom exclaim behind him, “Wait. Was that not public knowledge?”

Luke couldn’t help but recall the day Quom found out about his hand, because it had almost been beat for beat the same as the day Han found out. In both cases, Luke had been working on fixing some electrical unit – the control panel of the Falcon in Han’s case, and a plasma conduit in Quom’s – only for the item to spark and zap his hand, shorting out the workings of Luke’s false hand. Both Quom and Han had asked if Luke was okay, only for Luke to assure them he was, and then proceed to open up his wrist and strip stripping wrists to their shock and horror.

“This is your only warning, Jarex,” Luke snapped close his wrist panel. He looked back to the crowd and said, “Everyone’s only warning.”
No one said a word as Luke marched out of the market, head held as high as ever, clearly overtaken with delusions of grandeur. The market was silent for a long time as they tried to process what had just happened. No one dared to make the first move and speak. What should they even talk about? Jarex Zolhar hitting Rey Erso? Luke Erso asserting a foreign amount of confidence and dominance? The fact that Luke Erso had a freaking mechanical hand.

Then… someone spoke.

“Does that mean I win the pool?” Dirk innocently asked Roke.

His only reply was Roke smacking him upside the head.

I try to avoid those scavengers but if it comes to it, I’m not arguing with a blaster. Anyone operating that way in the Graveyard isn’t going to last much longer anyhow – they’ll make a mistake and stop being a problem.

- Rey’s Survival Guide

“Luke, can you hand me that screwdriver?” Quom asked.

“Sure,” Luke muttering, moving away from the engine to fetch Quom his tool.

Luke’s confrontation with Jarex had been the previous day and Luke had been seething all morning as he and Quom worked in their shop.

Pulling their toolkit from its storage crate, Luke set it on one of the work benches and began to rummage through it.

“I was thinking I would take out your little girl.”

Jarex’s words from the day before haunted Luke. How many times had he said those words to Luke knowing full well he was going to beat Rey when Luke’s back was turned?

“Clearly the girl is lying.”

He had tormented Rey and made her fear her own father. Jarex had cared Rey into submission that she believed Luke would be more upset that she lied to him than that someone was beating her.

“Okay, what’s your final offer?”

And to think Jarex thought he could make it all go away with what? Some ration packets?

“Fine! I won’t hit Rey on our outings anymore! Now are we done here?”

And he had the nerve to think that Luke would let him anywhere near Rey anymore.


Quom worked on the engine for a minute as Luke stood silently next to the toolbox.

CRASH! went the toolbox as Luke suddenly lashed out and violently kicked the workbench over. A small clattering filled the room as various tools and miscellanea like screws and bolts spilled onto the
Quom just stared at the overturned toolbox, “Well, that was unnecessary.”

Luke took a deep breath, “Quom, I’m sorry. It’s just-”

“No, I get it. Trust me, I don’t blame you at being mad at Jarex. I am too.”

“Really?”

“Of course. MG means the world to me. You don’t think I’d be upset at hearing someone’s been beating her? Last night, I seriously considered sneaking over to his tent and smothering him in his sleep.”

Luke shook his head, “I’d be lying if I said the thought hadn’t also occurred to me.”

“Well, what I don’t get is why you let him live,” Quom picked up the toolbox, and they started cleaning up the mess. “If she was actually my child – and I completely perceive her as such at this point, but I’m not going to oversteps our bounds – I would have teared him limb from limb.”


“Why not?”

“Because it can be very dangerous if I give into such darkness.” Luke sighed, he couldn’t possibly make Quom understand without confessing the truth about his past, “Look… it’s complicated.”

“I get it,” Quom waved off. “Part of that super secret past that made the First Order go after your wife personally. I won’t pry more.”

“Really? You don’t want to know?”

“Oh, I do want to know, but I also know that once I learn about your past, I’m probably going to end up on some list that means I could suffer the same fate as your wife. I love you like a brother Luke, but I really don’t want to be caught up in the kind of drama that makes a man think raising his kid on Jakku is the safest course of action. Force protect me from your past.”

Luke paused as he did every time Quom threw around the word Force. It came up every now and then, not enough to make Luke think Quom was a member of the Church of the Force, but enough to make Luke wonder.

“But I still don’t get why you simply punched Jarex three times and told him to stay away from Rey,” Quom continued. “I’d want to beat him to a bloody pulp and force him to leave the planet.”

“Jarex has nothing beyond scavenging,” Luke explained. “The only way I could comfortably force him to leave Jakku is to pay for the pilot to take him and give him credits to find his way in the world, and I’m not about to give Jarex Zolhar any credits. As for beating him to a pulp, I hit him a few times, but I don’t want to teach Rey that violence begets violence.”

Luke sighed and looked down at his mechanical hand. So much pain and violence in the history of the Skywalkers, Solos, Rhiaons, Organas, and Amidalas.

Han Solo tortured and frozen in carbonite. Padmé Amidala strangled while pregnant. Anakin Skywalker all of his limbs removed by lightsaber, then lit on fire and left to burn. Brendan Rhiaon blown to bits. Leia Organa tortured by her own father. Luke Skywalker hand cut off by his own
father and electrocuted by the Emperor. Alaric Rhiaon killed in an explosion caused by his future son-in-law. Rey Rhiaon Skywalker attacked by her cousin. Ben Solo attacked by his aunt. Felicity Rhiaon a lightsaber slashed down her back by her future father-in-law, shot in the head by her nephew, and then…

Luke couldn’t bare to think of what Ben had done next to her.

“There’s been too much violence in my family,” Luke said quietly. “I don’t want that legacy to continue with Rey.”

Seeing the pained look on his face, Quom simply nodded and patted Luke on the shoulder.


Luke smiled, “Thank you, Quom.”

“So,” Quom closed the lid on their reorganized toolbox, “where is Rey right now?”

“With Aletha. I’m having her do a thorough look over Rey and talking to her to see if she can get any further answers from her.”

“Did Doc try to pull the ‘I’m not great with kids’ card again?”

“First words out of her mouth.”

“I don’t why she does that,” Quom shook his head. “She’s great with Rey.”


“Why are you humans always so mysterious?”

“Excuse me, but you’re not exactly forthcoming with your own past. I don’t even know why you came to Jakku.”

Quom just shook his head, “Hand me the wrench, Erso before I make you look for a new job.”


Jarex watched Rey and Aletha from the shadows of the tents across the makeshift street of the marketplace. Rey looked happy and was laughing with the Doctor. But Jarex’s thoughts were not of reciprocal happiness; in fact he was rather angry.

“Are you sure we should do this?” Dairh nervously asked.

“I agree,” Minati frowned at Jarex. “After yesterday, I don’t think going after Rey Erso is a very good idea.”

Jarex glared at his companions, “Shut it, both of you. After the way I’ve carried you two over the years, you don’t get to doubt my decisions. We’re going after her, and that’s final.”

Minati glanced at Dairh, “But why?”

Jarex’s eyes narrowed at Rey, “Because no one makes a fool of me.”
“LUKE! LUKE!” Aletha’s desperate screams far preceded her dramatic entrance into the workshop.

“LUKE!”

“Aletha?” Luke instantly dropped his tools and rushed to her side.

Tears were streaming from Aletha’s eyes, her clothes were torn, hair mussed, and her face was bloody and bruised like someone had smashed her face first into a piece of machinery.

“What’s going on, Doc?” Quom too was at her side, his own project abandoned. “Did someone attack you?”


Luke was headed for his speeder instantly.


Jarex had taken his daughter, and he was going to make him pay.

“I tried to stop them, but there was three of them,” Aletha explained through her tears. “I’m so sorry, Luke.”

“It’s okay, Aletha,” Luke muttered, his mind focused on nothing but getting Rey back. He had no idea where they would take her, but he knew exactly how to find them.


Then Luke’s fury rose.

“Why not?” Luke hollered, whipping around more than ready to tear Quom to shreds for impeding the way to Rey. But he stopped dead when he saw Quom open the lid to a familiar box.

“Because you’re not armed,” Quom pulled out a blaster from his weapons case. He immediately began fastening as many weapons as possible to his person.

Luke smiled and joined him at the case with Aletha he started to pick out her own weapons. Though quick, Luke selected his weapons with much thought as the weight of his hidden lightsaber pressed against his back. There was no denying that this confrontation would end in violence, but he would only use his lightsaber as the absolute last resort.

“Getting Rey out safely is the priority,” Luke instructed as he reloaded his blaster’s power cell. “We should take two speeders. Quom and I will go in the first, Aletha, you in the second. Once we have Rey, I want you to take her and go, Aletha.”

“You think I can’t handle myself?” Aletha said with an edge to her voice.

Quom and Luke watched silently as Aletha dramatically cocked and set a very large blaster rifle in flawless, fluid motion. They had seen her shoot enough steelpeckers to know the damage she could do.

“That’s not it at all,” Luke said carefully.

He used his hand to gently lower the barrel of Aletha’s rifle. She was taking a practice aim with to check if the scope was properly functioning. Luke was reminded in that moment of his friend, Diego Nalto and his similar affinity for sniper weapons.
“It’s because you’re a doctor,” Luke explained, “and I think Rey would be in more need of you after this than Quom.”

“Alright, then,” Aletha strapped on her final weapon. “Then let’s roll, boys.”

Looking quite imposing, the trio exited the tent and made their way to the speeders. It wasn’t really an unusual sight in Niima to see a group of heavily armed people head out as if they were on a mission, but the sight of Luke, Quom, and Aletha still turned some heads. Friendly mechanic Luke Erso, generally passive Quom Tinadar, and kindly Doctor Aletha Kymeri weren’t usually part of those groups.

“Luke, how are we supposed to find them?” Aletha asked as she crawled into Quom’s speeder – her own was parked by her tent. “We don’t know where they’re headed.”

“Oh, I’ll find them,” Luke’s face was serious and determined. “I’ll find them.”

Aletha and Quom didn’t ask any questions. They had long ago learned that if Luke Erso side he could do something and offered no other explanation, that meant he could unquestioningly do it.

As they set off, Luke focused more energy into the Force than he had in years. He stretched out with his mind using all his might to find that familiar like lilac-coloured Force Signature.

And sure enough, he found it.

If they doubted Luke’s ability to find Rey, it was confirmed when they heard her screams a few minute before arriving.

There they were, Jarex, Dairh, and Minati surrounding a screaming Rey next to some old shipwreck.

“You’ll go in there now!” Jarex roared, a tight grip on Rey’s wrist.

“No!” Rey shouted defiantly, but the fear was clear in her eyes. “I’m not afraid of you! Daddy said I don’t have to listen to you!”

“You’ll do what I say or I swear I will kill you! Now, get in there!”

He threw her against the jagged wreck. Unfortunately, the way Rey landed was hand first. It buckled as the contact point to the ground, contorting at an awkward angle, and pain shot through her arm as her full body weight. Luke and company could hear the sickening crash and the ear-splitting scream by Rey from yards away.

“HEY!” Luke yelled, bringing his speeder to a halt.

Aletha just barely stopped Quom’s from crashing into it as she brought it to a halt. Luke and Quom had jumped out of the speeder and were alright charging at the group. Aletha was quick to follow.

“Boss!” Minati yelled.

Jarex and Dairh instantly began shooting at the group. Luke was tempted to use the Force to pull the blasters from their hands, but even in that moment he couldn’t risk revealing his true identity.

Aletha and Luke’s war experience took over, and they fell into the routine of dodging and firing blasts at the enemy. Luke had a history of being a commandeering, and Aletha willingly obeyed his orders.
As a blast hit Dairh’s hand, causing him to drop his weapon for a minute, Luke found that steelpeckers weren’t the only thing Aletha could sharp shoot well. She had taken up position behind Jarex’s speeders, which were parked close to the shipwreck next to Jarex’s group. Aletha helped clear the way as Quom and Luke pressed forward.

Quom wasn’t all that great with a blaster it turned out – which was odd considering how much he had liked to threat to use it on others – but he was great at calculating where the next blast would come from. If Luke didn’t know better, he might have though Quom was Force Sensitive and using the Force to detect it as Luke was. But Luke knew one fact about Vrogem that he had known long before ever meeting Quom: there were no Force Sensitive Vrogem.

But it seemed that Quom’s instincts were even better than Luke’s as after one shot by Minati – who had since joined the fray – Quom tackled Luke to the ground. If Luke had stood for another moment, Minati’s blast would have nailed him in the head.


“No problem,” Quom chuckled. “ROLL!”

Laying on the ground, Luke and Quom rolled in opposite directions, just barely avoiding a blast from Dairh.

“DADDY!” Rey screeched.

Luke looked up. Jarex’s arms were locked around her, and his large hand bearing the silver Imperial ring was over Rey’s throat. He was no squeezing her throat, but the threat was there.

Fury raged in Luke’s heart and he leapt to his feet. He aimed his blaster right for Jarex’s head, and cocked it.


“Not so fast,” Minati snapped.

Both she and Dairh aimed their weapons on Rey.

“Anyone fires their weapon and we kill her,” Dairh warned.

Quom, Aletha, and Luke all lowered their weapons without a second thought.

“Alright,” Quom held up his hands and took a few steps back, “we’ve stopped. Don’t hurt the girl. Please.”


“It’ll be okay, Sunshine,” Aletha set her rifle in front of her on the speeder and lowered her hands behind the speeder. “You’re going to be okay.”

No one could see what was happening with Aletha below forearm level. He one could see her hand inching for the small blaster strapped to her ankle. No one was paying attention as Quom slowly, step-by-step inched ever closer around the group. All eyes were fixed on Luke whose eyes were burning with fury.

“Let her go, Jarex,” Luke’s voice was deadly.

Jarex snorted, “I don’t think I will. In fact, I think I’m going to claim this girl for what she is: my
Luke had never wanted to Force Choke someone more than in that moment.

“This is your last chance, Jarex,” Luke warned. “I’m altering our agreement. Now instead of you being able to live on Jakku, here’s what’s going to happen. You’re going to hand over Rey now, then I’m going to pay a pilot to take you and your friends off-world, and you will never return. I will give you now credits and no further hospitality. Pray I do not alter our agreement further.”

“And if I don’t hand her over?” Jarex scoffed; who was Luke Erso to threaten him?

“Accept the offer I have given you, or prepare to lose your life.”

Minati laughed, “Well, look who talks the big talk. Come on, Erso, saying you would kill for your child is just hyperbole. You wouldn’t actually do it.”

“I don’t suggest to taste me on this, Minati,” Luke seethed. “Hand my daughter over now or my friends and I—”

“Your friends?” Minati gave a shrill laugh like the noise of a dog whose tail has just been stepped on. She looked mockingly over at Aletha, “What harm is Aletha Kymeri going to do?”

Minati yelped as Aletha’s blast hit her square in the kneecap. Dropping her weapon, Minati clutched her knee in pain.

Aletha lifted up her concealed blaster and aimed it at Minati’s heart, “Next one goes higher.”

“Dairh!” Jarex shouted.

Dairh fumbled with his weapon to aim at Rey when suddenly he was tackled by Quom. A clash of limb, claws, and teeth occurred. Quom’s sharp Vrogem features were finally put to a test as he subdued Dairh.

“Fight back, you fool!” Jarex yelled at Dairh as his hand squeezed down on Rey’s throat.

Rey let out a literally strangled cry and Luke took a warning shot next to Jarex’s head. Minati turned her blaster at Rey, but Aletha fired again. Luke too turned his weapon, and Minati was forced to go on the defensive and dodge Luke and Aletha’s blasts.

She dodged very well, but Luke was primarily distracted by the fact that Jarex was strangling Rey. Taking a deep breath, Luke knew there was only one way he could subdue Jarex without Rey getting too hurt in the process. He threw a pained look at Aletha, who seemed to have the same train of thought. Reluctantly, Aletha nodded at him, signalling that she approved the medical risk.

Rey’s vision was going fuzzy as she gasped for air. She tried calling out her daddy’s name, but words couldn’t make it through her throat. Barely any air could even do that.

She watched in confusion as Daddy flipped a switch on his blaster. Rey frowned as she recognized it: it was the lowest stun setting on his blaster. Fear filled her heart when she saw Daddy point the weapon at Jarex. If Daddy stunned Jarex while he was touching her… Rey would be stunned too.

Rey could have sworn she suddenly heard Daddy’s voice in her ear, “I’m sorry, Rey.”

Another voice spoke, a voice she sometimes heard in the night. It had the same accent as Daddy and usually was as sarcastic as Mommy, “This might hurt a little, my child.”
Anakin was careful not to use the term grandchild, but still wanted to convey affection.

“Just close your eyes, Rey, and everything will be alright,” said a third man’s voice that had Mommy’s Coruscanti accent.

Rey felt something warm fill her and closing her eyes, she took a deep breath. Though she didn’t understand it, the Force overtook her, filling her, protecting her, shielding her, and giving her the strength to do what came next.

With great reluctance, Luke shot Jarex stunning him… as well as his own child. Jarex and Rey hit the ground and Luke’s heart ached at the sight of Rey’s prone body.

But there was no further time to think: they had to act now. Luke turns his weapon on Minati and stunned her as well. There was no need to stun Dairh, as Quom was doing an excellent job of subduing him with his fists and teeth. Dairh would need a lot of bandages when Quom was through with him.


“They won’t be out for long,” Aletha warned.

“It’ll be long enough,” Luke dismissed. “How is she?”

Aletha sighed, her hands on Rey’s injured arm, “Broken wrist.”

“Keepuna,” Luke muttered. “Alright, grab Rey and we’ll get her back to-”

Jarex lunged at Luke with a roar, pinning him too the ground. Apparently, Luke had miscalculated exactly how effective the blast was.


“Get her back to Niima!” Luke yelled, turning his focus on fighting off Jarex. The distraction cost Luke his weapon as Jarex managed to get a hold of Luke’s last blaster and threw it across the desert. Jarex was meant with a swift punch to the face with Luke’s mechanical hand.

As they scuffled, Luke could hear the commotion behind him, though he did not turn to face with throughout his entire confrontation with Jarex. He heard Quom and Aletha’s voices, the scuffle between Minati and Dairh, a pair of footsteps, an engine starting, and a speeder driving away. Luke sensed that the lilac Force Signature had disappeared. He felt no need to check Aletha or Quom’s, knowing they would have told him if something had happened.

Relief washed over him; Rey, Aletha, and Quom were safely away.

Which was a good thing, because as Jarex had Luke pinned to ground with no weapon close at hand, it seemed that Luke’s only option was the lightsaber pressing into his back.

His mind made up, Luke slammed his forehead against Jarex’s. It made Jarex stumbled back for a moment; enough time for Luke to reach behind himself, unhook the saber from his belt, ignite it, and swing.

A yell carried across the vast desert as Luke’s emerald blade severed Jarex’s hand from wrist. Dairh and Minati, who had been rushing to aid Jarex, stopped dead in their tracks. Screaming and clutching his new stump, Jarex fell to his knees and looked up at Luke in fear.
Standing before them like a great warrior, the emerald lightsaber humming in the grip of his left hand, Luke simply looked down at Jarex and said, “I warned you.”

Dairh’s gaze hardened and he reached for his blaster.

Luke sensed it, and without a second thought, reached into the Force to pick up Jarex’s speeder – the one Aletha had used for cover – and threw it at Minati and Dairh. The clattered over like bowling pins, but Luke ensured that the speeder was not left on top of them. They were in pain… but they would not die.

Luke glared at Jarex, who was moaning in pain and said, “Don’t worry, lightsaber cauterize wounds. It won’t bleed or become infected. Hurts like hell for a while, but you won’t die from the wound. I would know, my father cut off my hand with his own lightsaber.”

Jarex looked up at Luke in fear and awe. Finally the pieces all fell into place.

He was running from the First Order. His wife and daughter had been of special interest to the First Order. His wife was reportedly executed by the First Order. His had a hatred of anything Imperial. He had the ability to find jackpot hauls. He spoke fluent Huttese. He had Unkar Plutt in his pocket. He had a lightsaber. He had a false hand. His father had cut off his original hand. He could move objects with the Force. He could sense where Rey was.

*His name was Luke.*

“Oh my God,” Jarex breathed heavily, clutching the stump of his arm, his eyes wide with fear. “You’re Luke Skywalker.”

Luke seemed to look even more fearsome with the revelation of his identity, “Yes, that is a name I once went by. And I warned you not to get between me and my daughter.”

“What have we done?” Minati whispered, falling to her knees like he was a God.

“A very foolish thing,” Luke replied. He glared at all three of them, “Yes, I am Jedi Grandmaster Luke Skywalker. My daughter is Rey Rhiaon Skywalker, my sister is former Senator Leia Organa, my brother-in-law is Han Solo, my mother is Padmé Amidala, my father was a man known both as Anakin Skywalker and Darth Vader, and my wife was Felicity Rhiaon, Rogue One, the leader of the team who stole the plans to the Death Star. I come from a very powerful, very passionate, and very angry family. You strike one of us, you strike all of us. My brother-in-law was captured by Jabba the Hutt, and my sister, our friends, and I killed all of his followers… But I am not agent of Darkness. I could kill you so easily right now, but for my own sake… I will refrain.”

Minati, Jarex, and Dairh were shocked.

“What?” Jarex blurted out.

“Why?” Dairh asked, and Minati smacked him upside the head.

“I don’t want to tell my daughter that I killed three subdued, defenseless people in cold blood,” Luke’s gaze was ice cold. “I did not kill my father after he threatened to turn my sister to the Dark Side… I will not bother with killing the likes of you. But we are done here. This whole situation is done. You are all leaving Jakku tomorrow morning and never returning. And if you even think about coming after Rey tonight, I will kill you. Do not make the mistake of testing me again. …Oh, and don’t even think about telling anyone in Niima who I am. Are we agreed?”

All three nodded.
“Go.” Luke moved their speeder upright with the Force and used it to pop open the driver’s side door, “Now… get out of my sight.”

They didn’t need to be told twice. Luke watched with a grin as they hurried away with their tales between their legs. He could sense that they would be no further problem. Luke had won, and he kept him identity a secret.

With a satisfied smile, Luke turned back to his speeder.

Quom was standing in front of it with his jaw on the floor.

Luke’s eyes went wide, “Quom! I- I thought you went with Aletha and Rey.”

Quom just shook his head. His eyes very obviously drifted over to the still lit lightsaber in Luke’s left hand.

“Oh, that,” Luke couldn’t deny the emerald blade in his grasp. “I, uh…”

As the silence stretched on, Quom just raised an eyebrow at the lightsaber and his friend.

Luke sighed and deactivated his lightsaber, “I think we need to talk.”

If you ask the people who live here why they do, you’ll get a number of answers – none of them good.

- Rey’s Survival Guide

“And that’s the whole story,” Luke finished as he pulled his speeder with himself and Quom up to the Qyhsh Caves.

Luke had told Quom the entire tale from beginning to end, including the horrifying thing that had been done to his wife’s body and the history that made the act so horrifying. He hadn’t intended to tell Quom that, but once Luke had gotten on a roll, Luke found he couldn’t stop.

“Whoa,” Quom said as they started to walk into the Qyhsh Caves, “no wonder you decided to stay here. So you can really talk to dead Darth Vader?”


“Good because I have a few bones to pick with him.”

“I’m not being your go-between, Quom,” Luke denied the unfortunately usual request that always seemed to come when Luke tell people he could talk to his father. Luke paused, “But out of curiosity… why do you want to talk to him?”

Quom stopped walking and sighed, “He’s the reason I came to Jakku.”

Luke frowned but said nothing.

Sensing the push to continue, Quom asked, “What do you know about Vrogem, Luke?”


“Vrogem are very close with the Force,” Quom explained. “The story goes that our planet Vongar
used to be a very fruitful place. The trees were close with the Force and the Light Side. So close there were two trees kept in the old Jedi temple on Coruscant. Or so the legend says.”

“It’s not a legend. Those trees are from Vongar?”

Quom was surprised, “You know them?”

“I rescued them from the Empire. One was planted on Yavin IV, and one on Rornian in Temple Village,” Luke explained. “I can’t believe they’re from Vongar. Isn’t it a barren planet? Very arid, almost desert conditions?”

“It is,” Quom nodded. “The tale goes that a Sith Lord saw how powerful our planet was, so he infected one of our trees with the Dark Side. We tried to save our planet by removing the trees. Our leaders abandoned it on a lost planet, one called Dagobah. There a cave formed, one where a Force Sensitive would be tested with Darkness.”

An imagine of his own face behind the mask of Darth Vader in cave on Dagobah flashed through Luke’s mind.

“What happened?” Luke was intrigued by the story. He wondered where the line between fact and legend was drawn in Quom’s story.

“We couldn’t save our planet,” Quom continued. “Darkness infected and ravaged our land, changing the climate into a desolate place. It’s said that the Force itself stepped in and battled the Dark Side, stopping its assault. The Light Side protected us, altered our features to survive in the desert, and did the most extreme thing it could do.”

“What was that?”

“It made all of our bodily energy to be rooted in the Force.”

Luke frowned, “… Sorry, what exactly does that mean?”

“Basically we got a lot of Midichlorians,” Quom replied. “Since the Dark Side would attack non-Force Sensitive individuals, the Force made us all artificially Force Sensitive. We can’t use the Force like Jedi, but our energy is heavily influenced by the Force. That’s why when someone is using the Dark Side of the Force around me, I’ll start getting hostile and irritated.”

Luke thought back on his experiences with Quom. He was shocked to find the truth in Quom’s words. The most dramatic case of Quom being hostile had been when he met Rey, and she was overcome with fear, the Dark Side lingering around her after she fell unconscious. Quom had always side that he calmed down when Rey had.

And of course there was the previous day when Luke was very close to using the Dark Side and Quom had to be held back by Ivano Troade from attacking Jarex.

“I can’t believe I never noticed,” Luke said in wonder. “But what does this have to do with my father?”

“As a result of our connection with the Force, we have a close relation with kyber crystals,” Quom went on. “Touching on regulates the energy in our bodies and stabilizes our emotions. When the Empire formed, we could feel the Dark Side all around, and that was bad for us. So we started hoarding all the kyber crystals we could find to stabilize ourselves… The Empire didn’t like that.”

Luke’s stomach dropped; he could only imagine the tale about to follow.
Quom balled his fists as he remembered the worst day of his life, “I was away the day it happened, so I survived. I was one of the lucky few who would go to the crystal caves of Illum and scavenge all the crystals I could find. But one day, I returned to find our village had been burned down and slaughtered, while our stores of crystals had been ransacked. We knew who did it because we weren’t the first village hit. Vader was leading raids on our planet and leaving no survivors but the ones who were lucky enough to not be around.”

As many times Luke heard the stories of the terrible things his father had done, it never got any easier when something new came up.

“I wasn’t married,” Quom said, “and I didn’t have a litter… but that didn’t mean I didn’t lose anyone. With my family and friends dead, I did what the rest of my kind did. I escaped to a desert planet and decided it was better to live this life than one of fear of the Empire. I thought about going to Tatooine, but I couldn’t live under the thumb of the Hutt clan. When I arrived, about… what calendar is used now? Right, it was about 6 BBY. Back then things weren’t like this in Niima… in fact there barely was a Niima. About two years after I came, Plutt arrived and when he did he was a pretty decent fellow. You could trade scrap for food back then, but you didn’t have to. It wasn’t until Niima died shortly after the Battle of Jakku that Unkar Plutt took control. But by then I was trapped. No credits, no prospects, where could I go but Jakku?”

“I’m so sorry, Quom,” Luke said. “I will not defend my father’s actions, but I know he is remorseful now.”

“Thanks,” Quom wiped away a tear and started back down the cavern path. “So, enough about my sad story. What are we doing here?”

Luke brought them to a halt; a giant boulder was blocking the rest of the path into the cave. The boulder was big enough that maybe two men could roll it away with much effort, but certainly not one by himself.

“Stand back,” Luke instructed. He reached into the Force and used it to unblock the path and reveal his old X-Wing hidden away. “This is my X-Wing.”

“Nice job,” Quom admired the cockpit. “Not many could manage to make this a two seater. Is it comfortable?”

“No, but that’s not the point. It’s to make sure that I can always make a quick getaway with Rey. She’s my top priority.”

Quom sighed, “You’re a good dad, Luke. Sure, you make mistakes, but at the end of the day, Rey always come first.”


Quom frowned, “What do you mean?”

Luke took a deep breath, “I can’t hide her forever, Quom. Someday the First Order will learn she is alive, and I need to make sure she’s protected. Now that you know the truth about me, I have to ask you keep her safe.”

“Oh course. Should we go get Doc, and show her this too?”

“No,” Luke shook his head. “The best way to keep her safe is to keep her unaware. You would still be unaware of my identity if I could help it.”
Luke glanced at his X-Wing, his mind still reeling from Quom’s story.

“Quom?” Luke said. “There’s something I want you to have.”

Luke opened the hatch and pulled out a familiar bag. It had been the bag Felicity Rhiaon carried across the desert years ago. Luke had hidden it back with his X-Wing for fear someone may find the walker and steal the contents. Digging through, he pulled out an object for Quom: one of the three lightsabers he owned. One Luke kept on his belt, one Luke kept in the bag, but one Luke was willing to be parted with.

“You said that kyber crystals help Vrogem?” Luke began taking apart the lightsaber. He got to the heart of it and pulled out the crystal, “What about manmade ones?”

Quom could sense the unnaturalness of the crystal. If the crystal was used in a saber, it would have projected a crimson blade like all agents of the Dark Side.

“They’re not as effective as naturals,” Quom hesitantly reached out for the crystal. A good feeling overtook him as he touched, like all the energy in his body balanced. “You know… I recognized those sabers when I was dealing with your wife. I’ve always suspected you had some connection to the Jedi, maybe even were a survivor of the Burning of Rornian. I just never expected you to be Luke Skywalker.”


Quom laughed, “I guess that should have tipped me off… Thank you for the crystal, Luke.”

“It’s nothing, really. That saber was used to kill many people I love. I’ve wanted to get rid of it for years, but I feared the parts would get in the wrong hands. I… I can’t give you the other crystal, though. The natural one. I can’t…”

Luke fought his tears as he remembered the day Reine assembled her saber.


Quom put a hand on his shoulder, “It’s okay. This one will be fine.”

“Are you sure?” Luke asked. “The connection to the Dark Side won’t throw you off balance, or tip you towards the Dark Side.”

“There’s Darkness and Light to everyone, Luke. It’s all about learning to balance them. I’ll be fine. Thank you for the gift.”

“You’re welcome,” Luke smiled. Quom’s words about Darkness and Light couldn’t help but remind Luke of Ben. Naturally that made his thoughts turn to the First Order. “Quom… I want you to promise me something.”

“Anything,” Quom offered.

Luke looked at his X-Wing, “I can’t hide Rey forever. Someday, the First Order will discover she is alive and when that day comes, she needs to be protected.”

“Yeah, you already said that bit,” Quom chuckled. “I assume you’re going to explain why you wanted to show me your X-Wing.”

“I wanted to show you it so you knew where it was… because I want you to promise that if the First
Order comes to Jakku, and I can’t protect Rey… I want you to take this ship with her to the Resistance, and my sister, Leia. Can you promise me that?”

Quom put a hand on Luke’s shoulder and said, “Promise.”

And indeed, one day those events would happen; Quom would use Luke’s X-Wing to leave Jakku with someone fleeing the First Order and take them to Leia Organa and the Resistance.

… But Rey was not that person.

I’d put on my helmet and help Captain Raeh explore the walker and the sand outside, and together we’d find lost rebels and get them back to their ships.

I don’t do that anymore. But I’ve kept these things anyway – to remind myself of how far I’ve come, I guess.

- Rey’s Survival Guide

It was about midnight when Luke woke to the sounds of Rey crying.

“Rey?” Luke sleepily looked up from his bed, a rickety old cot that was placed near, but not exactly next to Rey’s hammock.

Over the years on Jakku, Luke had secured them pillows and blankets, though Rey still slept every night with the patchwork blanket Felicity had made. Luke expected to find Rey curled up in that blanket, but inside found a shapeless pile of bedding in her hammock.

His heart pounded wildly as he shot up in bed.

“Rey? Rey!” Luke called in fear. Had Jarex taken her away in the middle of the night while Luke slept unaware. He nearly had a heart attack at the thought, but relief washed over him when he spotted Rey sitting in the corner. “Oh thank goodness, Rey. You scared me.”

Rey’s only reply was a wet sniffle.

“Rey?” Luke frowned, pushing his blankets aside and approaching her. “Rey?”

In the dark of the night she was barely more than a silhouette in the corner. Luke grabbed the flashlight and shone it on her as he walked closer.

She was sitting next to the wall of scratches where Rey insisted they still keep tally as technically she hadn’t been able to leave Jakku yet. Rey was crying, her knees tucked against her chest as she held Dosmit Raeh’s helmet in her hands.

“Rey, what’s wrong?” Luke knelt down beside her and wrapped his arm around her shoulders.

“Nothing,” Rey automatically leaned into his embrace.

“Rey,” Luke said softly, stroking her hair, “you promised me you wouldn’t lie anymore.”

“I’m sorry.”

“It’s okay, just please tell me what’s wrong.”
Rey sniffed and looked up at him. Utter guilt was etched across her face.

“I don’t want this helmet anymore, Daddy,” Rey admitted.

Luke frowned, “But you love playing with this helmet. How many times have I had to tell you to take it off and go to bed… And then compromised and let you sleep in it?”

Rey grinned softly, “You’re the best daddy, you know that?”

“I’m not the best daddy,” Luke chuckled. He glanced at his false hand, “But I’m certainly not the worst. Now, come on, Rey. Why don’t you want the helmet?”

Rey lowered her head in shame, “Jarex gave it to me.”

Luke had forgotten about that, “Oh, my little one. I’m so sorry this all happened to you.”

“It’s okay.”

“No, it’s not okay,” Luke said firmly. He placed his hands on her shoulders and looked her directly in the eyes, “Rey, I’m sorry I let this happen. I’m sorry that I wasn’t aware enough to notice what was going on with Jarex. I’m sorry that I put you in a position where he could hit you and I wouldn’t know. I’m sorry that you didn’t think I was strong enough to protect you against him. I’m sorry for every tragedy I’ve ever made befall on you. You are the most precious thing to me in my entire life. My love for you is unmeasurable and unimaginable. I should have been better and I’m going to be better. I promise.”

“I promise to be better too,” Rey vowed. “I’m going to be more honest and trust you, Daddy.”

“Good, because we’re in a delicate situation here, Rey. This whole thing, this relationship between us can’t work unless we fully trust each other. Okay?”

“Okay.”

Luke smiled and let the conversation have a silent beat before he began again.

“But…” Luke continued. “That doesn’t mean I’m the only person you can trust. Don’t let Jarex do this, Rey. You are free of him and his control. Do not let him spoil the things you love.”

Rey looked at the ground in pain, “But it hurt so much, Daddy.”

“I know, Sweetheart. I know,” Luke sighed. He looked at the helmet for a few minutes, “Rey, I think you should keep your helmet.”

Rey frowned, “Why?”

“Because every time you look at this helmet now you can remember how strong you are,” Luke smiled. “You can look at that helmet and say ‘I survived’ because that’s what you are, Rey. You’re a survivor. No matter how many times this terrible world has tried to take you from it in one way or another, you scrap, kick, and fight to survive, and you succeed every time… You remind me of your mother in that way.”

“Really?” Happy tears filled Rey’s eyes at the thought of being like her brave mother. She was starting to remember less and less of the woman who had given her life, but the memory of Felicity Rhiaon’s strength, love, and bravery would forever be seared in Rey’s mind.

Pain stabbed at his heart as he stroked a lock of hair out of Rey’s face. It was Felicity’s hair, brown and curly that Rey had. Hair Luke had loved to run his fingers through, a gesture he had taken up with Rey (though in a paternal fashion rather than the original romantic way it was done with Felicity.)

Felicity had not left him, and certainly not in his dreams. Luke didn’t like to talk about how at least once a week he dreamed about Felicity locked in a cell, crying, asking why he had done what he had done, and begging him to come back. Try as he might, Felicity haunted him just as much as his father and mentors so literally did (apparently that “go away” command he made was only good for a year before the Jedi party started back up in his head.)

“Mommy would have wanted you to keep this helmet, Rey,” Luke held up Dosmit’s helmet. “And you know what? I think Dosmit would too.”

“Really?” Rey frowned. “Why?”

“Because she gets to live on in your heart and go on adventures with you. I never met Dosmit Raeh, but if she fought in the Battle of Yavin…” Luke pointed to the symbol at the base of the helmet. He had long ago figured Dosmit must have been part of Gold Squadron, and probably left it when she was offered her own command of the Tierfon Yellow Aces, “Then she must have been one amazing fighter. And she would be flattered to serve as a symbol of hope and strength to you.”

Luke did know what that last thing felt like. Although the pressure got to him sometimes, Luke had been proud to serve as a symbol of hope and strength while fighting in the war.

“So,” Luke asked, “are you going to keep the helmet?”

Rey smiled, “Absolutely!”

“That’s my girl,” Luke laughed, setting the helmet on top of her head. “Now, come on, time for bed, Sweetheart.”

"But I'm not tired!" Rey's declaration might have been convincing had it not been concluded with an enormous yawn.


For some reason that made Rey smile. Those words sounded familiar, though she couldn’t place from where.

"Okay, I might be a little sleepy," Rey confessed. "But I would be even sleepier if I heard a story."

Luke shook his head and smiled, "Fine, one story but then you sleep. It'll be short, and I pick the story to ensure it is. We're not having another 'Daddy, tell me the entire story of Qyhsh’s banishment and request for redemption' incident."

"Deal," Rey settled into her hammock.

"Alright," Luke tucked Rey in. He looked at the helmet on Rey’s head and suggested, "How about I tell you about the Battle of Yavin?"

A crowd gathered to see Jarex, Minati, and Dairh leave, but Luke, Rey, Quom, and Aletha had a special spot at the front of the crowd.
Luke watched silently as Minati and Dairh hung their heads and slunk into the ship of the pilot Luke had handsomely paid off. They would never be foolish enough to return.

His arms were wrapped protectively around Rey. She stood in front of him sporting a brand new cast on her left wrist, clinging onto the arms of her Luke and Felicity dolls with her right hand, and crowned with Dosmit Raeh’s helmet. Rey held her head high with an air of confidence and bravery. She had overcome Jarex’s abuse and although a tragic event it was, she was stronger for it.

Luke recalled the old adage Obik Kenu lived by: we are not thrown into the fire to show we are wax to melt, but rather that we are steel to forge. And Rey had truly been forged by the experience.

As Jarex Zolhar reached the threshold of the ship, he paused and looked back at the crowd. Luke Skywalker stood front and center in the middle of the guileless crowd. None of them knew the truth about the blonde mechanic that lived among them; no one knew the threat he posed.

But looking down at the stump that used to be his arm, Jarex was reminded. For the rest of his life he would be reminded that he had been foolish enough to cross the man that called himself Luke Erso, who was truly the myth they called Luke Skywalker.

It was a harsh lesson to learn, but never again would Jarex mess with a man without knowing who they truly were. And never again would he victimize a child who had someone there to protect her.

Luke’s eyes met Jarex’s and the Jedi gave Jarex a stiff nod. The message was clear: it was time to go.

Jarex nodded back and took a deep breath. For years he had done nothing but scavenged Jakku. Now his future was unclear; he had no money, no plan, and nowhere to go. But there was one thing he was certain of.

He was going to get the hell as far away from Luke Skywalker as possible.

“He’s gone,” Rey declared when the ship became less than a dot in the sky. She gave a breath of relief, “He’s really gone.”

“Yes, he is,” Luke gave her a tight hug.

Rey bit her lip as a scary thought occurred to her, “He won’t come back, right?”

“Not a chance MG.” Quom grinned at Luke, “I don’t think anyone’s going to cross you or your dad after yesterday.”

“He was quite a sight to behold,” Aletha jokingly nudged Luke with her elbow. “Quite the hero. One might even call it the deeds of a Knight.”

“A Knight, huh?” The former Jedi Knight blushed. Luke could feel Quom’s smirk burning at him, “That’s one way of putting it.”

“Doctor Ally’s right, Daddy!” Rey hugged her father tightly. “You’re my hero!”

“Well, don’t discount our friends,” Luke chuckled. “Quom had some impressive hand to hand combat with Dairh and I’m still amazed at that knee shot you pulled on Minati, Aletha.”

“Nothing to it,” Aletha waved off. “Besides, the brave one here is you, Rey. You pushed aside your fears and told us what happened. Once again you demonstrated that you are by far one of the bravest people I have ever met. And I fought in a war.”
“Yeah, our little Miracle Girl is a brave one,” Quom scooped up Rey in his arms and swung her around playfully. “So what do you want to be MG? Solider like your mom? Pilot like your dad? Medic like Doc? Or scavenger like me?”

“Pilot like Daddy!” Rey laughed, bucking up her helmet crowned head like a strutting rooster.

“Be careful,” Luke half-heartedly warned as Quom swung his daughter around in the air. His eyes nervously followed them, terrified by the thought that someone could hurt his daughter again, but his heart warmed by Rey’s joyous laughter.

“Come on, Captain Rey,” Quom put Rey on his back and wrapped her arms around his neck for a piggyback ride. “Where are we flying to today?”

“Kamino!” Rey cheered. “A planet full of water.”

“Your wish is my command!” Quom laughed and headed them for ‘Kamino’ which was what they called the town well in their games of make believe.

Luke chuckled as Quom zoomed with Rey on his back through the market. He was making completely undignified whooshing flying ship noises that destroyed his reputation but made Rey smile.

Aletha gave a soft chuckle of her own from Luke’s side, “They’ve certainly come a long way from him leaving her to die unless he got your wife’s wedding rings.”

“Yeah,” Luke nodded. He wrapped an arm around her and said, “We all have.”

“You know, as tragic as the situation that brought you here was… I’m glad you and Rey came into my life. Even if it meant dragging Quom into it as well.”

Luke smiled at her, “I’m glad you came into my life too. You have no idea how much you’ve meant to me over the past two years with Rey, and I don’t think I’ve ever properly thanked you.”

“It was nothing, Luke,” Aletha dismissed.

“No, you’ve been there for us. You’ve helped me raise Rey, you’ve comforted me, and related to me in a way that no one has been able to with my loss of Felicity. I honestly don’t know what I would have done without you.”

“Well then,” Aletha grinned. “You are most welcome. And thank you for finally livening up my life on this truly horrible planet.”

“If Jakku’s that bad, why do you stay?”

“The people need me,” Aletha answered. “And besides, how could I ever walk away from you lot now? Quom and I took kicks to the face together for Rey after all, and you defended us from Plutt for that. Things like that bond you for life.”

“They really do,” Luke chuckled remembering the numerous situations of insanity his family and friends had dragged him into throughout the years. “So, what’s your plans for the rest of the day?”

“Inventory of my supplies and laundering the bandages again.”

“Need an extra set of hands?”

“As always,” Aletha wrapped her arms around Luke’s waist and he hooked his left arm around her,
“Let’s go, Mister Erso.”


So off the quartet went; Quom and Rey to play in the town well as they got many dirty looks from the happabore owners and people filling up their canteens, and Luke and Aletha to her medical tent to engage in another boring day of inventory that for some reason seemed a lot less boring when they were around each other. They were a family again, and as happy as one could possibly be in a place like Niima Outpost living the lives of scavengers, mechanics, and doctors with minimal equipment.

And they never did think much about Jarex Zolhar again.

---

One Year Later…

“Well, if it isn’t my favorite Wookie and his pet smuggler,” Maz Kanata greeted before they had even stepped foot through the door.

“Hiya, Maz,” Han couldn’t help but grin, glad she didn’t yell his name across the room for once.

“What business brings you two around this time?” Maz asked, her voice well-practiced to carry over the noise of her watering hole. “Another ‘business man’ needing you to move ‘merchandise’ for him?”

“Actually, Resistance business,” Han replied. “Diego Nalto has an old army buddy that’s heard a few whispers about the First Order. Chewie and I are meeting with him to learn what we can.”

“Why didn’t Nalto come himself?”

“He and Leia are on D’Qar, investigating it as a possible permanent base.”

“Oh, he’s with Leia?” Maz lifted her non-existent eyebrows. She had probably seen other creatures do it so much that she adopted the habit herself.

The tone of her voice annoyed Han.

“What about it?” Han snapped.

“Just rumours,” Maz waved off.

“What rumours?”

“Just that Leia Organa and Diego Nalto having been spending a lot of time together.”

Oh, great, this again.

“Nalto has become the second-in-command of the Resistance ever since Luke’s disappearance,” Han dismissed the irritating rumours about his wife and Nalto for what felt like the millionth time. “He became very motivated to get justice after the First Order murdered his best friend. You remember Fliss, right?”

Dang, even three years after her death, Han couldn’t mention what happened to Felicity without it hurting. While Leia had always been the paramount woman in his life, and both Chewie and Luke easily surpassed Felicity in the best friends department, Fliss had been special to Han. His best female friend and a woman he honestly thought of more like his sister. Not a day went by that he
didn’t miss her… and not an hour went by that he didn’t miss Rey.

“Look, Nalto’s not interested in my wife,” Han pushed away the painful memories. He had to keep his head in the present and complete his mission. “He’s never really been interested in any woman. Honestly, I used to think he was one of those weird guys who were into inanimate objects since he’s so into his ship. Then Luke told me Nalto has dated several women casually over the years. I think he’s more like Lando is… or was, you know… before Alyla.”

Of course that only reminded Han of how Lando hadn’t even flirted with a woman since his son, Ben had murdered Alyla in cold blood.

“Anyway,” Han pushed away his thoughts again, “Leia and I are fine. We even… reconciled a little a couple days ago.”

Maz gave he a knowing smile, “So, you and Leia got back together?”

Han rolled his eyes, “We never broke up.”

“Han.”

“Our relationship is complicated,” Han interrupted, vaguely wondering why he was talking about it to Maz of all people. He didn’t even like talking to Luke about his relationship with Leia. “Just because we’re currently not living together doesn’t mean we’re not together. Chewie, would you help me here?”

Chewbacca let out a few roars.

“Well, look who’s suddenly the relationship expert,” Han glared at the Wookie. “When was the last time you even saw your wife?”

“How is Malla doing?” Maz asked.

Chewbacca and Maz instantly fell into conversation about his wife and family. Han just shook his head and wondered once again how he had ended up with these people as his friends.

When Chewie started gushing about his son, Waroo, Han felt a wave of pain hit him. He couldn’t help but think about his own son. Ben would be nineteen now, the same age Luke and Leia had been when Han got dropped smack in the middle of their crazy lives. He had heard rumours of Ben – now called Kylo Ren – and his terrible actions. Han didn’t know what to believe, but one thing was certain: Ben was killing people, and he was being control by Snoke like a puppet.

Han sighed; some days he really regretted ever crossing paths with Ben Kenobi.

“It was Luke Skywalker himself. I couldn’t believe it.”

Han’s head turned automatically at the sound of his brother-in-law’s name. A tall, dark man with a false arm and an Imperial ring was regaling a crowd with some story about Luke.

Leaving Chewie and Maz to their conversation, Han slowly got closer, listening carefully to the story.

“It wasn’t Skywalker,” a woman dismissed. “You’re so full of it, Zolhar.”

“It was! I swear!” Jarex Zolhar insisted.

“But Skywalker’s been gone for years,” a man pointed out.
“Well, I saw him last year,” Jarex crossed his arms. “What a sight he was with that lightsaber.”

“Only a year ago?” an Aqualish questioned.

“Swear on my mother’s grave.”

Han stopped in his tracks. Someone had sighted Luke?

Obviously this was not the first claim Han had ever heard, but even though every time ended up being a lie, Han’s heart still lifted with hope every time he heard a claim. Maybe today was the day he would finally find Luke and bring him home, because one day he would find Luke, and one day he would bring him home.

Even if Han had to literally drag him kicking and screaming all the way back to Leia.

Of course, Han knew Luke was supposed to be an Ahch-to, but something nagged in the back of his mind. Something whispered to him that Luke never made it to Ahch-to.

He’s not there. He’s not there. Over and over again it played in his mind.

Sometimes he could have sworn that voice sounded like Ben Kenobi.

“But there he was,” Jarex bragged. He had long ago gone his separate ways from Minati and Dairh. “What a sight he was with that brilliant green saber.”

“Where’d you see him?” Han asked.

Jarex looked up at the new voice, “Who wants to know?”

“Don’t pretend you care,” Han shot. “I know guys like you; you just want attention. Here, I’ll give you some. Where’d you see Luke Skywalker?”

Jarex considered Han’s words and then said, “Jakku.”

Han blinked, “Jakku?”

“Jakku,” Jarex nodded. “Something special about it?”

“No,” Han muttered.

He felt like he had been punched in the chest. Luke had gone to Jakku? No, that was impossible. Why would he ever go to that junkyard?

… Rey.

He would go to find Rey. Of course. Luke couldn’t bring himself to abandon everything, not without finding his daughter’s body first.

Han struggled not to picture his niece’s tiny body wasting away in the desert of Jakku. It was too perfectly in-character for Han to ignore. Forget meeting with Nalto’s buddy, he had to go to Jakku.

“So then I said, ‘Oh My God. You’re Luke Skywalker.’ And he says, ‘Yes, that is a name I once
went by. And I warned you not to get between me and my daughter.’”

Wait, what?

“What was that you said?” Han interrupted.

Jarex rolled his eyes, “I said, ‘Oh My God. You’re Luke Skywalker.’ And he says, ‘Yes, that is a name I once went by. And I warned you not to get between me and my daughter.’”

Han’s heart dropped.

“Never mind,” Han muttered as he began walking away. “Enjoy your drinks.”

Han tried not to feel too dejected as he walked away. He had been a fool, of course he wouldn’t find Luke on Jakku based on the word of some drunk in a bar. How stupid could he be?

“Hey Maz,” Han approached the little woman still engaged in conversation with Chewbacca. Han nodded towards Jarex, “You might want to cut that guy off.”

“Why’s that?” Maz asked. She hadn’t served Jarex too many drinks.

“Because he’s telling some wild story that Luke is on Jakku. Only a drunk would tell a lie like that.”

Maz frowned, “And how are you certain his story is a lie?”

“Because he’s saying that Rey’s alive, and that… that’s impossible.”

It would be eleven years before Han Solo learned that Jarex Zolhar had been telling the truth.

Chapter End Notes

Coming Up Next Chapter…

The Strength to Let Go

When Luke realises he has a growing attraction to Aletha, he struggles to let Felicity go.
Doctor's Orders

Chapter Summary

The town of Niima Outpost comes to a stand-off when Roke violates Aletha's only rule.

Chapter Notes

You know what? I can’t do it. I can’t stick to my original plan of trying to do 2-3 years of Rey’s life per chapter. If I do that, it’s going to end up being 15k per chapter, and I physically and mentally cannot handle that. So, I’ve reassessed my outline and broken down the chapters to more reasonable levels. This way we can get a fuller, more well-developed story without killing me in the process. As a result, I have added an additional five chapters. Thank you to everyone who says they’ll read 15k chapters, but I’m not going to put you through it.

In other words, the whole Luke struggling with his feelings for Aletha is going to be pushed back two chapters. And please… don’t even ask about The Force Awakens at this point.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The Long Way Home

Chapter Twenty

Doctor’s Orders

The Blobfish’s thugs keep their faces hidden while they work, which I’ve always found funny.

- Rey’s Survival Guide
For those wondering, Rey would write her survival guide at the age of seventeen after witnessing one of the most traumatic events of her life. That is saying a lot considering that before age seventeen, she had been front and center in the events of a massacre, and after age seventeen she would be kidnapped, assaulted, and have her mind violated by her own cousin.

What was this horrifying event? You will learn in time, but it is important to note the age of which she wrote the above phrase to understand the situation a little better. Up to this point of our story, there has been no mention of facial coverings on Unkar Plutt’s goons, and you may be wondering the origin.

Rey herself did not know the origin, but the adults around her did because it was the fault of the adults around her. Specifically, one fateful encounter between Roke and Aletha Kymeri that would cement one very firm rule in the rule-free domain of Niima Outpost:

Do not piss off the only doctor in town.

AGE EIGHT

“I’m just asking you to consider it,” Ivano Troade insisted as he cleaned his findings at one of Unkar Plutt’s wash stations.

“Ivano, it’s nothing personal,” Luke replied, seated at the wash station next to Ivano, “but after what happened with Jarex, I’m just not comfortable letting Rey go scavenging alone with anyone but myself and Quom.”

“Come on! You don’t think I’m going to hit your kid. Don’t you trust me?”

Luke sighed, “I’ve been burned too many times by people I thought I could trust. I’m sorry, but where Rey is concerned there is no wiggle room. End of story.”

“Whatever,” Ivano rolled his eyes and looked at Mashra on his other side. “I think he’s being ridiculous.”

“It’s not my prerogative to question the wisdom of a father protecting their child,” Mashra’s reply was followed by a series of cringe worthy coughs; the usual postscript to her sentences.

“That’s sounding pretty bad, Mashra,” Ivano observed. “Have you seen Kymeri lately?”

“Yesterday,” Mashra answered. “Got the usual advice. Stay away from the southern reaches; they’re much too dusty and aggravate your condition. I live in a desert and have a chronic respiratory condition; everything’s going to aggravate it.”

“Aletha’s just trying to help,” Luke pointed out. As much as he liked Mashra, he never could bear anyone disregarding Aletha’s medical opinions. “Maybe staying north for a while would do you good. Your cough is getting worse by the day.”

“Out of the question, Erso,” Mashra shook her head. “Everyone knows the north has been picked over. The south is where the value is.”

“She’s got a point,” Ivano shrugged.

Luke rolled his eyes. The people on Jakku had to be the most stubborn people he had ever met... and his family contained Leia Organa, Felicity Rhiaon, Han Solo, and Darth Vader.
“Daddy!”

Luke looked up to see Rey racing towards him with Aletha trailing at a distance.

Aletha was smiling at the sight of Rey being so happy to see her father. Her brown happabore leather medical bag was slung over her shoulder like it always was when she was out and about. She was quite literally ready for a body to drop in the street at any moment... which wasn’t entirely unusual in Niima Outpost. Luke couldn’t help but notice that Aletha’s hair was looking especially golden from the sun today... At least what parts hadn’t been streaked with grey; she was forty-eight years old after all.

“Hello, Sweetheart,” Luke hugged his daughter as she launched herself at him. “Did you have fun with Aletha this morning?”

“I guess,” Rey shrugged, looking quite sullen all of a sudden.

“We did inventory and sanitation this morning,” Aletha explained. “While very important and necessary, I don’t think she found counting and cleaning my equipment to be the most fun thing in the world.”

“Well, not everything’s going to be fun in life, Rey,” Luke pointed out. “So there’s no need to get upset every time you have to do something boring.”

“Alright, Daddy,” Rey conceded. She glanced at Aletha, “Sorry, Doctor Ally.”

“No need to apologize, Sunshine,” Aletha laughed. “Hey Luke, I’m sorry we interrupted you.”

“Aletha, I’m never going to be mad over Rey interrupting my scavenging business. What’s up?”

“I’ve got to go talk to a supplier who is behind on my orders,” Aletha gestured vaguely behind her where the visiting merchants and traders congregated, “and Quom’s busy dealing with that speeder.”

“The one that’s leaking gas fumes?”

“Right. I don’t want Rey near that stuff, and who knows what’s going to happen with my supplier. He... doesn’t have the best temper so it’s probably best to keep Rey away. So I was wondering if instead of dropping off Rey later with Quom like we planned, maybe you could watch her until he was done with the speeder. I know you wanted to head back out into the desert for a second trip, but-”


“Are you sure?” Aletha asked.

“Aletha,” Luke chuckled, “she’s my daughter. Trust me, it’s no hardship to watch her. Go talk to your supplier.”

“Thank you so much!”

Aletha surprised Luke by suddenly hugging him. Luke blinked and gave a hesitant pat on her back. He hadn’t really noticed the ease of intimacy she felt with him. Before he could think of something to say, Aletha was already scurrying off to talk to her supplier.

“Huh,” Luke found himself staring after her.

“Daddy, you have a weird look on your face,” Rey blurted out. “What’s wrong?”
“Nothing, it’s just...” Luke blinked. “Since when does Aletha hug me?”

Rey looked confused, “What do you mean? You guys do that all the time. Is that weird?”

“No, it’s just... I’ve never noticed.”

Luke shook his head and turned his attention back to cleaning his haul. As he absentmindedly scrubbed a power coupling and Rey played with a screwdriver, Luke couldn’t help but recall a certain memory.

“So be honest, Han,” Luke asked, “what was it that made you realize I was in love with Felicity... before even I did?”

“The hugging,” Han shook his head like he was disappointed in Luke. “That first time she hugged you in front of us, and you just so casually accepted it like you did it all the time – which you did – I knew you were falling in love.”

Luke shook his head. No, Aletha’s hug wasn’t like the way he started hugging Felicity. Aletha’s hugs meant absolutely nothing.

... Right?

“Thanks for watching her, Luke,” Quom came up to Luke and Rey in line for the concession stand. A bulging bag was slung over his shoulder; a portion of their stockpile Quom used to trade Plutt for rations. Quom could be very proud at times and had time and time again rejected Luke’s offer to procure rations for Quom out of his credit line with Plutt. “I’m sorry to put you out so much, but the speeder—”

“Really, it’s okay!” Luke insisted, ignoring the dirty looks from Ivano, Mashra, and the rest of the people who he had just let Quom cut in line in front of. “She’s my daughter. I’m just glad I have you and Aletha to help watch her.”

“Speaking of,” Quom turned to look towards the market. “Have you seen what’s going on with Doc?”

Luke frowned as he sighted Aletha and her supplier. Even from several yards away there was no doubting how heated the argument was. Yelling and wild failing of the limbs broadcasted the disagreement of parties at all around. Aletha was very passionate about providing the best possible medical service to the residents of Niima Outpost, and Force help you if you got in her way of that. Aletha was also the kind of person who got really relentless and petty while pissed off. She had no concept of personal space and would even give some downright nasty threats. Given, she only used them when the argument was about someone else’s health or safety, but Aletha could be downright brutal sometimes. But after spending years on Jakku having to do surgeries without sedatives, and amputations with an everyday saw, pain and discomfort had been quite normalized for Aletha.

She was giving into that concept in her argument with her supplier. Aletha had gotten right up into his face, standing so close to him that she was basically on his toes. One might think that she would use a low volume of voice because of the lack of distance to her supplier, but there she was screaming right in his face.

The anger on the supplier’s face was clear even from Luke’s position. The supplier looked like he
very much wanted to tear Aletha to shreds.

Plutt’s goons were monitoring the situation from distance, ready to step in if things got violent. The last thing anyone needed was for Plutt to lose a repeat customer, and the doctor to lose her supply chain.

“Should we do something?” Luke asked as he frowned at the scene.

Mashra laughed, “Really Erso? Haven’t you lived here long enough to know to leave people to their own disagreements?”

Luke glanced back at the group, “But-”


“Yeah, Daddy! Doctor Ally’s tough!” Rey joined in.

The group chuckled at the proclamation, but that was soon cut short when Mashra’s laughter devolved into a series of coughs.

Rey frowned, “Are you alright, Mashra?”

“I’m... fine... Little One,” Mashra’s body wracked with coughing so hard she was having trouble keeping her bag of haul on her shoulder.

“Let me help,” Rey offered, tugging at the bag to carry for Mashra.

“That’s alright,” Mashra shook her head, her coughs still going hard.

“I insist!” Rey’s voice was authoritarian as she took Mashra’s satchel. Her head was held high as she shouldered the satchel that was much too large for her. Yet even as the bag dragged on the ground, Rey looked confident and in charge.

Luke and Quom shared a grin as they watched Rey’s act of kindness.

“We may be raising MG on Jakku,” Quom nudged Luke, “but it looks like at least we’re doing it right.”

“Yeah, we are,” Luke smiled at his daughter.

“NEXT!” Unkar Plutt roared.


Luke scowled as Quom strode up to the concession stand.

“See,” Ivano said, pointing at Quom, “you shouldn’t have let him cut.”

Luke opened his mouth to reply.

“YOU LISTEN TO ME YOU LITTLE SHUTTA!” Aletha’s supplier roared.

Luke’s head whipped back towards Aletha just in time to see the supplier roughly grab her by the arm and yank her against him. Luke’s eyes narrowed as fury ripped through his body.

“Quom, can you watch Rey?” Luke glanced back at his friend but found Quom was still dealing
with Plutt. He then looked at Mashra, Ivano, and Rey, “Looks like you got your wish, Troade. Watch my daughter for a second.”

“The Doctor can handle herself!” Ivano called as Luke stalked towards the confrontation.

It looked like Ivano’s words were right; just as Luke began walking towards them, Aletha wretched her arm out of the supplier’s grasp. She got even more into his face as a result, and looked like she was close to hitting him herself.

That’s when Constable Zuvio stepped in.

The closest thing we’ve got to law and order in Niima is Constable Zuvio. You’ll see him under his big Kyuzo helmet, with his fellow self-proclaimed guardsmen. Zuvio and his men are decent enough, actually – they step in when the Blobfish’s thugs get too rowdy. But like everybody else on Jakku, they work for Unkar and they know it.

- Rey’s Survival Guide

As Plutt’s goons had taken a few steps back from the confrontation, Luke figured they must have had Plutt call Zuvio in. Zuvio had stepped between Aletha and her supplier, forcing them apart to calm the situation. Luke couldn’t hear what was being said, but whatever it was it appeared to be diffusing the situation.

After a few minutes, the supplier threw his hands in the air and stormed back into his ship. Aletha and Zuvio patiently waited for his return.

As she waited, Aletha’s eyes drifted around the marketplace until they met Luke’s concerned gaze. He watched her smile at him and nod, and he let out a breath of relief. Yet his eyes still didn’t move from hers. In fact it seemed they were locked in an endless duet as Luke couldn’t tear his eyes from her kindly and comforting gaze. The world around him seemed to go silent; he could hear Quom and Plutt’s negotiations, he couldn’t hear Plutt’s goons barking orders at the people in the wash stations, and he could even hear the coughs that still wracked Mashra’s body.

In that moment there seemed to be nothing but those beautiful blue eyes upon his.

And then Aletha’s suppler returned with a large box to shove into her arms, and the moment ended. Luke smiled as Aletha continued to speak to her supplier, struggling to hold the large box containing
her coveted medical supplies. He was considering going over to offer his help when a scream ripped across the marketplace.

“DADDY!”

He whipped around in an instant.

Mashra was on the ground, convulsing, blood spewing out of her mouth with every cough. Rey was staring at her, frozen in horror as it literally sounded like Mashra was trying to cough up her lungs.

Luke raced back as Ivano dropped to his knees by Mashra’s side, trying to find a way to help.

The whole market heard Rey’s scream, including Aletha. The second she saw Mashra on the ground, she dropped her box and ran as fast as she could.

“Medical emergency! Move!” Aletha screamed, abandoning the medical supplies she had argued so hard for.

The crowd parted instantly for Aletha. No one in Niima dared get between the doctor and someone having a medical emergency. It wasn’t out of sympathy or any sort of instinctual need to help one’s fellow man; it was simply that Aletha had one hell of a memory. If you got between Aletha Kymeri and a medical emergency the next time you broke your arm, Aletha might find she was conveniently out of casts. Of course, Aletha had never denied medical attention in the serious, life-lasting cases, but she could be petty about the little stuff.

Luke had actually once called her out on it, only to get the answer of “they had to treat that stuff themselves before I got here, and they’ll have to do it again when I leave one day. They might as well get the practice and remember that on planets like Jakku, having a trained medical doctor is a luxury. It’s sad, but true.” Luke had no argument to respond with.

“Is she breathing?” Aletha skidded to a stop and got down on her knees to assess Mashra’s situation.

“I don’t know,” Ivano tried not to sound panicked. While friendly with Mashra, Ivano didn’t have a relationship with her anywhere near the extent of Quom, Luke, and Aletha’s friendship. Sure, he would try to help her if she dropped dead next to him – as it looked like she was about to do – but he wasn’t ready to be responsible for her.


“She just started shaking and then dropped and started coughing up blood,” Ivano explained.

“Luke, get me the stethoscope and towels out of my medical bag,” Aletha ordered.

Without a second thought, Luke did as she said. It wasn’t until Aletha was instructing Luke to mop up the blood as she checked the now passed out Mashra’s pulse that Luke noticed Rey still watching the scene in horror.

“Daddy?” Rey whimpered.

Luke’s eyes went wide, “Rey-”

“I got her,” Quom seemed to come out of nowhere to scoop Rey into his arms and carry her away from the scene. “Come on, MG. Let’s let Doc work.”
“How’s she doing?” Luke asked as he noticed Aletha frowning at the results of the pulse check.

“Not good,” Aletha reported.

“What’s wrong with her?” Ivano asked.

“Let’s be honest, even if I explained it to you, neither of you would understand,” Aletha’s voice contained no humour. “Basically she has a terminal Aqualish lung disease and it’s slowly killing her. Today it’s decided to take a real swing at killing her. I’m going to have to operate immediately. Luke, can you help me carry her?”

Luke scooped up Mashra into his arms, “Let’s go.”

The only stop Luke and Aletha made on their way back to her tent was a brief one to pick up the box of supplies Aletha had abandoned.

“Lay her on the medical cot,” Aletha ordered upon their arrival as she started to sanitize the area for surgery.

“Here we go,” Luke was careful to lay Mashra on the medical cot, and not the personal one Aletha slept on every night. “Do you need anything? An extra set of hands to give you things? Someone extra to mop up blood?”

“Are you asking to be my nurse?”

“If that’s what you want to call it.”

“I’d love it, Luke, but you don’t know medical instruments,” Aletha replied, tying up her hair. “If I’m in the middle of surgery, I don’t have time to explain the difference between a catheter and an intravenous tube.”

“You won’t need to explain anything,” Luke assured her. “Just tell me what you need and I’ll know.”

“How?”

Luke gave her a mysterious smile, “Another benefit of my mysterious past.”

“Of course. The secret past,” Aletha gave him a smile against her will, but her face didn’t seem to want to obey the part of her brain saying it was inappropriate. “Alright, scrub up, Nurse.”

“Yes, Doctor.”

“And can you put up the black sheet?”

“Of course,” Luke set about putting up the black sheet over the entrance of Aletha’s tent before going to scrub up.

Aletha used a series of differently coloured sheets over the entrance of her tent to signal her availability. White meant that you were free to come in. Brown was you can come in, but knock first. Grey was knock only if there was an emergency. Blue was that she was sleeping. Green was that she was away at the moment, usually paired with a note of where she was. Purple was she was with someone but it shouldn’t take long. Red was that she was with someone already and it would take a while so it was best to come back later.
For every colour of sheet, Aletha was very flexible. She would bend the rules for emergencies, but if there was one colour you did not mess with that was when the black sheet was up. It was usually used when Aletha was performing surgery or the handful of times she had delivered babies on Jakku. The black sheet meant do not under *any* circumstance come into the tent.

And as Niima was about to find out... she truly meant that.

---

“Is Mashra going to be okay?” Rey asked as she and Quom sat outside Aletha’s tent waiting for the surgery to finish.

Quom had his arm around Rey and was resting his head atop hers, “I don’t know. To be honest it would probably take a miracle to fix her.”

“There’s no miracles on Jakku, Uncle Quom.”

“Don’t you believe that for a minute, MG,” Quom used his thumb to wipe a tear rolling down Rey’s cheek. “There *are* miracles on Jakku.”

“How can you be sure?” Rey sniffed.

Quom hugged her, “Because I’m looking at one, Miracle Girl.”

Rey sighed and hugged him back.

“Doctor! Where’s the Doctor?” Roke’s voice roared across the market.

Quom and Rey looked up.

Roke was stomping towards Aletha’s tent. He was clutching his face that was bloody and torn.

“What happened to you?” Quom blurted out.

“None of your business, Tinadar!” Roke barked. “Where’s Kymeri?”

“In her tent,” Quom jerked a thumb toward it.

Roke made a beeline for it.

“Whoa, stop!” Quom cried. “She’s got the black sheet up. She doesn’t want to be disturbed.”

“I don’t give a damn what colour of sheet she’s hung!” Roke snapped. “A steelpecker just tried to eat my face. I need medical attention.”

Quom put himself between Roke and the tent, “She’s doing surgery. Come back later. Your face isn’t going to get worse.”

“Get out of my way.”

“Or what?” Quom challenged.

Roke’s eyes shifted to Rey, “I’ll go after the girl.”

Rey whimpered and hid behind Quom’s leg. Quom’s face harden as he felt her arms wrap around his arms. After the Jarex incident, *no one* messed with Rey and got away with it.

“You wouldn’t dare,” Quom place a hand protectively over Rey.
“Erso’s not around to stop me,” Roke replied. “Now, move.”

Quom didn’t move an inch.

Roke let out an aggressive grunt. He grabbed Quom and threw him to the ground out of the way. Quom fell on Rey, so he was too busy checking to see if she was alright to stop Roke from barging into the tent.

Luke was in the middle of handing Aletha another size of scalpel when Roke barged in. He was shocked that someone would intrude when the black sheet was up, especially when Aletha literally had Mashra cut open so he could clearly see her lungs. In fact, Luke was so shocked he nearly dropped the scalpel.

Aletha however didn’t even look up.

“The black sheet’s up, Roke,” Aletha simply said taking the scalpel from Luke.

“I got attacked by steelpeckers,” Roke replied. “You need to stop what you’re doing and help me.”

“Not happening. Now get out.”

“I could make your life very difficult for you, Kymeri.”

“You already do. Get out.”

“This isn’t up for argument, Kymeri,” Roke warned.

Finally Aletha looked up.

“No, you’re right, it’s not!” Aletha snapped, the irritation finally getting into her voice. “Do you not see that I’ve literally got a woman cut open in front of you, seconds from death? You’re contaminating a sterile environment! Get the hell out of my tent!”

Luke saw it before it happened: a flash of the image of Roke grabbing Aletha by the throat and Mashra dead as a result.


He moved a fraction of a second before Roke did, but it was enough time to shield Mashra and make it so that Roke could only grab Aletha’s arm.

Roke roared in her face, “You’re going to treat me right now, Kymeri, or else I’ll-”

The coldness in Aletha’s eyes made Roke stop dead.

“Let me go right now and get out or I swear I will never treat you for anything again,” Aletha threatened in a tone that even scared Luke.

Roke hesitated. With a grip still on Aletha’s arm, he sent an uncertain look at Luke who was still guarding Mashra. He was met with a single nod, and Roke released Aletha.

“Get out!” Aletha screamed. “NOW!”

Roke retreated trying not to look too much like he was limping out with his tail between his legs.
Aletha threw her bloody rubber gloves in her medical wastebasket.

“Done,” Aletha declared.

Mashra was all sewn up and resting. She was aided by a few of Aletha’s sleeping pills to ensure she had slept through the entire four-hour surgery.

“Did you heal her?” Luke asked hopefully. He rather liked Mashra as she had a fondness for Rey and often entertained her while they were working at the wash tables.

“I fixed her problem... temporarily.”

“But she’s not better?”

Aletha sighed, “She has a terminal respiratory condition. I bought her a few more years, but she is going to die from this someday.”

Luke gently took Aletha’s hand in his, “You and I know more than anyone that death is a natural part of life. Just as we lost Felicity and Antar, one day we’ll lose Mashra. The important thing is to savor what time we have left.”

Aletha smiled at him and pulled him into a hug, “Thank you, Luke. You always know what to say.”

Luke hesitated for a moment, then slowly wrapped his own arms around her, holding her tight. He couldn’t shake the notion that his arms around her just felt so... right.

Aletha and Luke exited the tent holding hands. They were laughing at some joke she had made and Luke couldn’t stop smiling.

“Well?” Quom prompted as he and Rey came up.

“How’s Mashra, Daddy?” Rey added.

Luke scooped her into his arms and hoisted her up, “She’ll be fine for now, but you have to understand that Mashra is very sick. Someday soon she’s going to pass away.”

“Can I say goodbye to her before she does?” Rey asked. “I didn’t get to say goodbye to Mommy when she died.”

Luke nearly dropped Rey. The question was so innocent, but it completely broke his heart.

Aletha and Quom shared a look; the expression on Luke’s face was of utter devastation.

“I’ll try my best to get you there in time,” Aletha rubbed Rey’s back.

“How about this, MG?” Quom offered, “When Mashra starts getting really sick, you come sleep in my tent so Doc can get you there in time if things should take a turn for the worst?”

“I’d like that.” Rey looked at her father, “Daddy, can I do that?”

“Sure, Sweetheart,” Luke’s mind was clearly elsewhere; probably lost in memories of Felicity.

“Hey,” Aletha whispered, putting a hand on his arm. “Are you okay?”

“I’m fine,” Luke sighed, trying to bring his mind back to the present.
“Deep breath, Luke,” Aletha instructed. She wrapped her arm around his waist in a gesture to keep him upright. “Take it one day at a time.”

Luke smiled at her, “Thank you.”

For a minute, they shared another of those strange moments. Those moments where everything just seemed to be right for a minute. Though the problems of the world did not go away, in those moments none of the world’s problems seemed to matter. There would always be peace in those moments. Peace, safety, and happiness.

“Kymeri!”

And there was also always someone like Roke to ruin those moments.


Aletha wouldn’t look at him; she was frozen in shock and fury. Rage was slowly filling her features and her hands had started to shake.


“Yes,” Aletha’s teeth were firmly gritted. “I have completed Mashra’s surgery. Thankfully she’s going to live. She’s recovering in my tent for a while.”

Murmurs of conversation filled the street at Aletha’s pronouncement. Even in uncivilized worlds like Jakku, humanity had a morbid fascination with death. Mashra’s medical emergency gathered a small crowd outside Aletha’s tent to see if the Aqualish would live or die.

Roke’s interruption had drawn an even larger crowd to see how Aletha would deal with it once she was done her surgery. Everyone expected Aletha to charge triple her usual rate, or give Roke a public dressing down, screaming so loud the Sacred Villages could hear her.

No one expected what happened next.

“Come on, Kymeri,” Roke gently grabbed her arm to direct her into the tent (he honestly would have grabbed her much harder if she didn’t have her other arm around Luke Skywalker.) “Let’s get my face all fixed before it leaves scars.”

Aletha didn’t move.

“No,” Aletha whispered.

Roke froze, “What did you say?”

Aletha could hardly believe the decision she was making, but she had no choice. Roke had violated the one rule she refused to have broken. Such actions needed consequences, even if they would result in further consequences to herself.

She took a deep breath, readying herself and looked Roke directly in the eyes.

“No,” Aletha declared, her voice loud enough to carry to the crowd. “I’m not going to fix you.”

The entire street went quiet.

It was hard to tell which emotion dominated Roke’s face more: anger or fear.
“What do you mean you’re not going to fix me?” Roke tried to sound as fearsome as ever, but he couldn’t deny the terror that Aletha’s refusal caused. His face had been mauled by steelpeckers. Not only were they nasty little buggers that could tear a man apart in seconds, but those who were lucky enough to survive would have agonizing pain until properly treated. Not to mention the scars that would form if left untreated would be hideous.

But the most terrifying thought of all to Roke was if Aletha refused to heal him... Who else would refuse him?

Aletha narrowed her eyes, “I am a very flexible woman, Roke. I’m not some puritan, and am willing to bend the rules when needed. I became a doctor to heal people; to help them. I stayed on Jakku because I saw how much you people all needed me. I stayed here for Mashra. I will do most anything for the people of Niima, and I don’t ask questions. I starve and sweat and thirst so you can have a better life. And all I ask – all I have ever truly asked – is that you obey one simple rule: do not enter my tent when the black sheet is up... and yet you did.”

Roke could feel a few dozen eyes on him. The people of Niima Outpost would literally tear him to shreds if he had made their doctor decide to leave.

Luke and Quom exchanged a look. The street was charged with a dangerous energy.

Slowly, Luke placed Rey down and ordered her, “Rey, go into Aletha’s tent.”

Rey knew better than to argue.

“You broke my rule, Roke,” Aletha continued once Rey had scampered inside her tent. “Not only did you violate my rule, you compromised the sanitation of my surgery area. Now I’m not going to pretend it was the cleanest area – we do live in a desert – but you compromised the safety of my patient as a result. Actions have consequences, Roke; so will this one. Your punishment for violating my black sheet rule is that I will not treat this wound.”

“You can’t do that,” Roke whispered.

“Yes, I can.” Aletha paused to look at the crowd gathered, “Take this as a warning for everyone. I am the only trained medical personnel on the entire planet. I am not bound by the rules of a hospital or even a licensing agency on Jakku. I can choose to refuse you service.”

“Wait, does that mean she has an expired medical license?” Quom muttered to Luke.

Luke shrugged, “Considering how long she’s been here, probably. But are you really going to turn your nose up at the only trained doctor on the planet?”

“Fair enough.”

“No,” Roke shook his head. “You can’t refuse me. Not in Jakku! I, me, Plutt’s top man! You have to treat me!”

Aletha gave a cold smile, “Make me.”

Roke lunged at her. Before she could defend herself, Aletha was pinned against the display table of the clothing merchant whose tent was next to Aletha’s. Roke was holding her down by the throat, and Aletha was making desperate gasps for help.

It happened in a matter of seconds, but already Luke, Quom, Ivano, and a few others had their weapons pulled on Roke. Trying to kill the only doctor on the planet wasn’t going to fly.
“Let her go!” Luke ordered as half a dozen blasters were pointed at Roke.

But it seemed that trying to kill Aletha might fly, for all of Plutt’s goons in the vicinity had their weapons turned on Aletha’s defenders. To cross Roke was to cross Plutt, and no one was going to cross the only food source in Jakku.

But then more people turned their weapons on Plutt’s goons; they wanted to protect the only source of medical help. Then others turned their weapons on those people; they didn’t want to risk Plutt getting upset and cutting off the only source of food.

Eventually everyone in the market had their weapon turned on someone else. It was a question that divided the town: who did they need more? Someone to provide food? Or someone to provide medical aid? If it came down to it, most everyone could find some way of treating a wound or getting food. Some would fail, and die as a result, but so could the same thing happen with a stable source of food or medical aid. The only question which was more important to have a stable source to fall back on, and everyone had to make a decision that day.

As Luke held his blaster on Roke, he was glad that Rey was hidden away in the tent. Things were about to get messy, and fast.

For several minutes the town was at a standstill. No one wanted to make the first shot. Then they all watched as Constable Zuvio slowly made his way to Plutt and his concession stand.

Zuvio and Plutt talked for a long while. People were glancing around nervously, and arms started to shake from holding up heavy weapons for a long period of time. Everyone was waiting for Plutt to make the decision of what was to happen next, and if he would allow Roke to kill Aletha. Roke was waiting patiently for the call, holding Aletha down so she was immobilized and in pain, but wouldn’t die.

As Aletha gasped desperately she let her eyes turn to Luke. When their eyes met, Luke was brought back to a moment three years previous. He remembered holding Ben down in a similar fashion for taking away the woman he loved. And now Roke was threatening to take away Aletha, another woman he loved.

You know… as a friend.

Finally, Plutt made his decision.

The order came over Roke’s comm, “Let her go, Roke.”

The town let out a collective breath of relief and lowered their weapons.

“What?” Roke exclaimed. “No! I won’t!”

The weapons went back up.

“You heard the order, Roke,” Quom said. “Let her go. Even Plutt doesn’t want the town to obliterate itself. Which is fair because then who could he swindle?”

“Butt out, Tinadar!” Roke snapped.


Roke stared Luke down for a minute, then slowly he withdrew his hand from Aletha’s throat.
Aletha just laid there for a few moments: panting and recovering her breath. She glared at Roke, who was hovering over her, inches from her face.

“You win,” Roke growled as the crowd dispersed, but he could feel Luke and Quom’s eyes and weapons still on him. “But I won’t forget this, Kymeri.”

Aletha narrowed her eyes, “Neither will I.”

Suddenly she slammed her head up into his face. Roke yelled in pain as he reeled back. He clutched his face which throbbed in pain as the headbutt further aggravated Roke’s steelpecker wounds.

Aletha took the opportunity to leap up from the table – but not before apologizing for the scene and messing up of merchandise to her neighboring stall owner. Without a second’s thought, she ran right into Luke’s arm. She held his tightly and whispered her thank yous over and over again. Luke just smiled and held her, telling her it was okay and he had her. He could feel her shaking in his arms; apparently, the event had scared her a little more than she had let on.

Quom joined them almost the second Aletha hugged Luke. He wrapped his own arms around Aletha, and the two males stood their hugging their precious friend. After everything they had been through, they were a team and a family, and would literally kill to protect each other.

And sometimes it was good to get a reminder of that.

Luke watched Roke as he held Aletha. Roke was sulking, and swatted away Dirk who came to offer his assistance.

A smile crossed Luke’s face as his eyes set on a small sand stuffed acklay toy that Dirk carried in his breast pocket. It was a gift Rey had made him the previous year when she overheard Dirk say no one had remembered his birthday. Dirk had actually been the only one who had his weapon turned on his own men in the stand off. Dirk had a soft spot for Rey, and no doubt wanted to not have to tell her that her pseudo aunt had been killed.

Dirk was… a little slow mentally. It was a joke on Jakku, but he was broad and strong so Plutt used him as a wall of muscle. Rey however did not see him as a joke and wanted to do anything to help him. After her lessons, she would sometimes see Dirk by the well – these days supervised by Quom, Aletha, or Luke – and try to teach what she learned that day to him. Quom had told Rey that Dirk had never learned to read or write, so she took it upon herself to teach him.

It warmed Luke’s heart to see Rey deal with Dirk. Very few people had shown him kindness, and he was proud to have a daughter that no only respected him, but tried to help him overcome whatever mental difficulties Dirk struggled with. Luke knew in his heart that Dirk was the one goon of Plutt that he never had to worry about.

But Roke was another story. As Roke wandered away from Aletha’s tent, he threw an innocent bystander into a display table. Roke would forever be sore about what Aletha did to him, and everyone knew this wasn’t over.

Luke’s gaze hardened as he watched Roke walk away. He looked down at Aletha, and felt something stir in his heart. He wasn’t going to let anyone take away a woman he loved.

Not again.

Three Weeks Later...
It was the same dream he always had; Luke would observe the bare cell and the woman within. The cell looked to be about ten feet by ten feet, it had bland grey walls, a metal bench bolted to the wall, a single locked door, and a bucket in one corner of the floor. Considering the condition of the room, Luke didn’t need to wonder what the prisoner used the bucket for.

She was in the same position he always found her; laying on the bench, staring up at the white ceiling with the single light bulb that lit the room and the security camera recording her every action. The woman had a blank, glassy-eyed stare she held during her battle with postpartum depression.

Even dirty, tired, depressed, starving, and locked in a cell, Felicity Rhiaon was still the most beautiful woman in the galaxy to Luke Skywalker. But time and situation had taken its toll on her appearance.

Her hair was bloody and shortly cropped like it had been in her torture recording, but grey streaks had formed over the years. Her skin was dirty as always; a result of the lack of bathing resources provided to her. It also had a sickly pale tone from the deprivation of sunlight. She wore the same clothing that she had that final night on Rornian, but they were now barely more than rags on her. Those beautiful hazel eyes he had spent so many hours staring into her sad and distant. Her body weight was lean, no doubt from her starvation on Jakku and subsequent underfeeding at the hands of the First Order. Though oddly she had a more muscle to her, probably from the hard labor of surviving on Jakku and making that endless trek through the desert.

The way Felicity looked had helped Luke identify the scene the first time he had had the dream, so many years ago. It had to have been some sort of take on her imprisonment in the First Order, though over the years the scene had shifted, mixing elements of reality and visions of the Force. It was hard for Luke to tell exactly what was real and what was a manifestation of the guilt that nagged at his mind.

The scene preceded as it always did, with the most heartbreaking moment of what was to follow. The moment when Felicity would Luke up from her bench and see him. It killed Luke to see her face light up at the sight of him.


She leapt off the bench and ran into his embrace.

“Luke!” Tears would stream down her face as she threw her arms around his neck and held him tightly.

His tears would mingle with hers as he held her as tightly as humanly possible. Luke wouldn’t let himself pretend this was anything more than a dream and a ghost haunting him from within. Yet was he held her, as he kissed her, as he whispered sweet nothings in her ear, every time it felt so real. Too real. Real enough that his heart always broke anew each night.

Every night for three years he had dreamt of that moment; the moment of reunion with Felicity he knew would never come. Yet as he kissed her over and over, each kiss lingering until his lungs stung, begging him for more air. It was worth the pain to savor her familiar taste, the one that had never left his lips since the first time, that night on the roof of their apartment building on Coruscant when they first pressed against his.


“I am,” Felicity’s eyes would always light up. “I’m here, Luke… but you’re not.”

“Felicity,” Luke would struggle not to let his sobs take control of him.
He would always fail.

“Felicity!” Luke burst into tears. He was sobbing as hard as he had in Chewbacca’s arms as his Wookie friend had pulled him off Ben after attacking his nephew for killing his wife. Luke’s thumb stroked Felicity’s cheek as he lovingly held the side of her face, “I’m so sorry I didn’t come.”

“You still can,” Felicity would always insist, breaking his heart. “Don’t you understand? It’s not too late.”

“Yes, it is,” Luke would whisper.

The script was the same every night; he watched was more as Felicity’s gentle pleas turned angry.

“No, it isn’t!” Felicity snapped, pulling out of her grip.

Luke would always reach back for her, not wanting to feel her leave his arms as she did the final night on Rornian.

“You promised to come back, Luke!” Felicity’s eyes would flash. “You promised to find me! Why did you give up? Why have you left me behind? You need to find me! To save me! I can’t save myself, Luke! I’ve tried so many times!”

That was when her tears would start.


“Shh, Sweetheart,” Luke would soothe her, holding her and stroking her hair as her face pressed into his chest. “It’ll be okay.”


Luke would say nothing but cry over how he had failed to succeed at her request.

“I’m so sorry, Felicity,” Luke would kiss her hair.

“Don’t be sorry,” Felicity begged. “Save me, Luke! Please, come back!”

In those moments Luke could have sworn like she was holding something back. Perhaps it was the part that used to beg him to save Rey, and piece of the dream that had ceased once he found her.


“Felicity,” Luke whispered, but he was always at a lose for words as her pleas dominated the dream.

“Come back, Luke!”

“Felicity… I can’t.”

“Please, come back for me!”

“Felicity-”

“Come back, Luke! Please, come back!”
“Felicity-”
“Come back!”
“Feli-”

“icity!” Luke exclaimed as his eyes shot open.

He was back in the pitch-black darkness of night in the old metal AT-AT walker. Luke was sleeping on his cot, bundled up in blankets, protected from the freezing desert nights.

Rey slept in the hammock next to him. If she had been woken by her father’s yell, she made no indication of it. She had long ago learned to pretend she didn’t hear her father’s nightmares every single night. Nor would she acknowledge that every single night, he would cry in the middle of the blackness, with the name Felicity on his lips.

But some nights she would. Some nights, she would creep out of her hammock and crawl into his arms. Rey would let him sob, holding her so tightly she could barely breath, and listen without comment as he apologized over and over for letting her mother die.

This was one such night.

Unkar’s thugs are big and mean, but they’re used to people who are too scared to fight back.

- Rey’s Survival Guide

“Bad night?” Quom asked as he noticed Luke moving particularly sluggishly that day.

“The Felicity vision was particularly bad last night,” Luke sighed, glancing down at his wedding ring. “I miss her so much, Quom. Just when I think I’m over her death, I’m sent right back to square one.”

“Whoever told you that a person gets over a loved one’s death told you a damned lie. You never get over someone that special to you; you just get used to missing them.”

“Well, I’m sure I wasn’t lied to. I’m sure it’s true,” Luke let a small smile grace his lips as he shot Quom a look, “… from a certain point of view.”

“Look, I know you respect Kenobi, but I swear if I ever encounter him in the afterlife, I am so going to give him a good beating for messing with you on the whole certain point of view thing.”

“Well, he’s a Jedi Master so good luck with that.”

“I’m serious. No one messes with my Luke!”

Luke slowly raised an eyebrow, “Uh… Thank you?”

“Come on, Luke, you know you love me too,” Quom grinned.

“I guess if I had to put a label on it,” Luke teased. “Though I’m not exactly sure what to call our relationship. I wouldn’t quite say pseudo-brothers – we don’t really get into the emotional or personal stuff that often – but we’re more than friends. I don’t know, what do you call really good friends, business partners, people who are raising a child together, and one person holding the secret of your
true identity that you’re fairly certain you’ll never be rid of said person?"

Quom thought for a minute, “… Platonic life partners?”


“Morning, Boys!” Aletha greeted in a sing-song voice as she and Rey entered the work tent. “Good haul this morning?"

“Pretty decent,” Luke shrugged, bending down to give Rey a hug. “Thanks for letting me drop off Rey early. I was having troubles sleeping last night and thought I’d start the day early.”

“Anytime,” Aletha waved off. “Get anything interesting today? See any X-Wings?”

“I wish,” Quom laughed. “And no, we just found the usual stuff. What about you? What’s the word in town?”

“Daddy?” Rey nudged her father. “Can I go see Dirk by the well?”

“Sure, Sweetheart,” Luke smiled. The well was close enough to Quom’s tent that Luke felt safe letting Rey go alone – with the added bonus of supervising via the Force. “But stay within sight of the tent.”

“Thank you!” Rey scampered off.

Quom chuckled, “That kid gets cuter by the day.”


“Totally must get it from her mom.”

Quom ducked the screwdriver aimed at his head.

“Nice try, Erso,” Quom laughed, though he knew if Luke had really wanted to get him he would have used something heavier… and he wouldn’t have missed. “As I was saying, what’s new in town, Doc?”

“Well, did you hear about Roke?” Aletha settled on the work bench.

Luke frowned, “No. What’s going on with Roke?”

“Remember how people started to talk back to him and ignore him after our little… incident?”

Luke and Quom traded a look.

“You mean after you proved just how seriously you take the black sheet rule?” Quom smirked. “Of course, we do.”

“Didn’t people start making fun of his steelpecker scars as well for that?” Luke cringed remembering how furious Roke had gotten the first time someone dared to do it.

“Exactly,” Aletha replied. “In fact, things have been so bad for Roke that Plutt’s image has been compromised. People aren’t obeying him anymore. Sure, he’s got the other guys to keep the town in line, but Roke’s basically the only person who is up for beating people without direct orders from Unkar.”
“And he kicks hard,” Quom rubbed his jaw, recalling his beating by the walker years ago.

“Well, it’s so bad for Roke and Plutt that the Blobfish has a new rule,” Aletha continued.

Luke shook his head, “I can’t believe this town actually calls Plutt ‘The Blobfish’ behind his back. So what’s the rule?”

Aletha leaned in and grinned, “From now on, all the goons have to wear facial coverings and hoods and voice modulars and use only Huttese or Teedospeak to talk to people.”


Aletha shook her head, “I’m not. Go outside, see for yourself. You can’t tell who is who, except for Mast Surko because he’s got the black metal cybernetic leg. Oh, and Dirk because he carries around the acklay.”


“Who knows?” Aletha shrugged. “Maybe it’s permanent. I guess I’ll have to brush up on my Huttese. You’ll help me, Luke?”


“Well, I guess this goes to show you one thing,” Quom said.

“What’s that?” Aletha asked.

“In this rule-free domain that we call Niima Outpost, we do have one firm rule.” Quom slung an arm around Aletha’s shoulder, “Do not piss off the only doctor in town.”

Chapter End Notes

Coming Up Next Chapter…

A Deal’s a Deal
Luke finds himself in a difficult situation when he runs out of credit with Unkar Plutt. Meanwhile, when Wookies come to Niima, Rey becomes fascinated by the stories of Han Solo and his friends.

UPDATE: I miscalculated that Rey writes her guide at 16 when it's really 17. I have since corrected my mistake.
A Deal's a Deal

Chapter Summary

Luke finds himself in a difficult situation when he runs out of credit with Unkar Plutt. Meanwhile, when Wookies come to Niima, Rey becomes fascinated by the stories of Han Solo and his friends.

Chapter Notes

Due to the re-evaluation of the story’s pacing, the timeline got changed a smidge, and I have edited the previous chapter to say that the traumatic event that spurs Rey to write her guide happens at age 17 instead of 16.

Also, I’ve cleaned up chapter three a little bit and added some new pieces. For example, I originally mentioned that Luke couldn’t sense Alyla on Rornian in the list of people who Luke couldn’t sense. This doesn’t make sense (no pun intended) for Luke to mention her in that list considering Alyla had been murdered a good while earlier. She and Genko have been replaced by Obik and Tyla, who have since become more prominent characters and naturally be people Luke thinks of in that situation.

If you are reading on AO3, I forgot to make the changes on that site at the same time I was editing the fanfictiondotnet version, so I might have missed a few parts when I edited the AO3 version.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

The Long Way Home

Chapter Twenty-One

A Deal’s a Deal

Unkar trades rations for the gear scavengers salvage from the Graveyard. That’s it. No credits, no barter – except for food.

- Rey’s Survival Guide

AGE NINE

“What do you mean we’re out of food?” Luke exclaimed.

Unkar Plutt smirked at the dumbfounded… and slightly dangerous Jedi.
“You’re out of credits,” Plutt repeated. “These six portions are your last.”

Luke scowled at Plutt. “That’s impossible. I gave you enough for five years of rations and it’s only been four.”

“Five if you used the money for nothing but rations,” Plutt corrected. “But as I recall it you’ve purchased from me a speeder, a cot, a power generator, two sets of basic scavenging supplies, four commlinks so you and your friends can always communicate, a welding torch and mask, a ration cooker when Tinadar broke yours-”


“A couple sets of dishes,” Plutt continued, “some water canisters, a translation guide to Teedospeak, a tool belt-”

“I get it.” Luke held up his hand. “Fine, but I want to see our log to ensure no numbers have been fudged.”

Plutt sighed noisily and muttered into his comm, “Roke, take over trade. I have to talk to Erso in private.”

“Here you go!”

The transaction log fell to the table with a heavy thud. Seated at the same table in the same room he had threatened Plutt years ago, Luke began flipping through the book.

Luke could already tell by the way Plutt was seated across the table grinning at him that he would find no error in the record. Yet still Luke sat for hours calculating each and every transaction and triple checking each entry to find some source of fraud.

Three hours later, Luke conceded there was none to be found.

“Fine,” Luke shut the book and pushed it aside. “I accept that you were honest. But why didn’t you inform me we were near the end of our credits?”

Plutt grinned, “I thought the look on your face would be hilarious.”


“Come on, Skywalker,” Plutt chuckled and playfully elbowed him. Due to his size, Plutt nearly knocked Luke out of his chair, “Just a little joke. I thought it might make you happy. It’s exactly the kind of joke that looker of a wife of yours would have made. You know, I never complimented you on your taste in women. You should have seen her when she was twenty-one; quite the good-looking thing. I remember when she and her friend first came to me, I offered a different kind of job for her. Sadly, she wasn’t having any of that and her male companion was a little too trigger-happy for me, even if he did have a messed-up hand.”


Plutt grinned at Luke, “You know, I never would have left your wife and child out to dry even if you hadn’t made our deal. Your wife was as pleasing at age forty something as she was twenty-one. And she was desperate enough that I’m sure we would have agreed to something.”
The temperature seemed to instantly drop in the room as Luke fixed Plutt with a terrifying glare.

“I assure you Mister Plutt that making sexual comments about a Jedi Grandmaster’s dead wife isn’t going to get you anywhere good,” Luke warned. “Though by all means, continue if you wish.”

Plutt had enough sense to change the subject, “Our bargain is complete. You’ve run out of credits, Skywalker. Now, I am open to extending our agreement… for an additional payment, of course.”

Luke raised an eyebrow, “Oh really? And how much are we talking about?”

“Maybe a little more than our original bargain… Just in case.”

Luke scowled, “I honestly don’t get it. You live on Jakku, trading rations. What do you even need all this money for?”

“Do we have a deal or not, Skywalker?”

“It’s not that easy to give you that many credits.”

“Why not? Aren’t you rich?”

“Yes, technically,” Luke always hated to admit his wealth since it was all inherited from his father’s evil works as Darth Vader. “But I’ve also been MIA for four years. I can’t just call up the bank and ask them to transfer a large sum of money no questions asked. It’s too risky, and I’m not jeopardizing Rey.”

“You know if you insist on staying on Jakku that I’m your only source of food,” Plutt pointed out. “If you don’t renew our agreement then you’ll just have to scavenge like the rest of them. And Jedi powers or not, even you can’t bring in enough haul on a daily basis to get you and your daughter three meals a day. Just give in, Skywalker. Get me the money, and your daughter will be fine.”

Luke looked down at the floor and clenched his fists. He was upset at the situation he had put himself and Rey in. Why wasn’t he more careful about tracking the withdrawals, and why hadn’t he come up with a more long-term plan?

“So you’re telling me that if I don’t call the bank and risk our exposure,” Luke said slowly, “then you’re going to let Rey starve.”

“You’re going to let her starve,” Plutt corrected. “I’ll give you as fair a price on haul as everyone else. It’s up to you to ensure she eats enough from what you obtain.”

Luke took a deep breath.

“You have to decide, Skywalker,” Plutt urged.

Luke couldn’t help but think of the people around Niima Outpost; how much they were nothing but skin and bones. He thought about how hard Quom and Aletha tried to hide from Rey that they didn’t have enough food to silence the rumble in their stomachs every day. Sure, Quom had gotten a higher income since he started working with Luke, and Aletha had a higher income as the only doctor in town, but it wasn’t enough.

He thought of Felicity and that long trek she had taken with Rey. It hurt Luke to think that she had been forced to tell Rey she couldn’t eat when she was hungry. And now here he was in that very same position. The only difference was he had a way to ensure her stomach was full.
But there was a catch, and it was an important one; he had to risk exposure. Of course, he did have a bank that had rules and planetary laws about confidentiality – you had to when you had the celebrity status of Luke Skywalker – but there was still the threat.

After so many years of disappearance, control of his accounts would have been given to Leia. If he made a transaction, there was a very good chance that Leia would find out. And if Leia found out… well, he was back to square one of the “why don’t we tell Leia that Rey is alive” question.

Was it worth the risk? What was the worse that could happen if he was exposed?

Simple, the First Order would take Rey from him. He couldn’t let that happen. He would never again let them take her from him.

“No,” Luke decided, “the risk of exposure is too great. I can’t risk Rey.”

Plutt surprised Luke when he just folded his arms and chuckled.

“We’ll see about that, Skywalker,” Plutt grinned at Luke. “We’ll see.”

“Absolutely not,” Luke declared to Quom and Aletha as he got ready to head home that night. “I won’t let you do it.”

“Luke, you don’t actually think this is up for debate?” Aletha raised an eyebrow.

“Yeah, you really think we’re going to let Rey starve?” Quom shot, equally annoyed with Luke.

“I can’t ask you two to sacrifice your portions so that Rey can eat three of them a day,” Luke shook his head. “It’s my responsibility to take care of her. I’m not going to ask you to make up the difference.”

“Luke, let’s make one thing clear,” Quom said. “You’re not asking, we’re not offering, we’re telling you this is what’s going to happen. You really think that after all we’ve been through, after everything we’ve overcome, and done for Rey that this isn’t our responsibility? Yes, you’re her dad, but we’re all her family.”

“And family doesn’t abandon each other in time of need,” Aletha’s voice had an odd, distant tone to it.

Luke looked away from her; Aletha couldn’t possibly understand how deep her words cut him.

“The two of you don’t get enough rations to feed yourselves,” Luke tried to argue.

“It’s Jakku,” Aletha dismissed, “we’re never going to have enough to feed ourselves. But come on, Luke, you’re forty-three, I’m forty-nine, and Quom’s-”

“Don’t say it!” Quom exclaimed.

“106,” Aletha finished.

Quom sighed.

Luke shook his head, “I hardly see how pointing out our ages is relevant, but thank you for that.”

“Because Rey is nine, Luke,” Aletha continued. “It’s important that she’s getting enough food for her growing body. Do you know what some of the consequences of malnutrition in childhood are?
Growth deficiency. Gastrointestinal infections. Compromised immune system. Limited total bone growth. Delays in motor and cognitive development. Memory deficiency. Kidney failure. Delayed sexual development. She might never get a period. She could get scurvy. She could get night blindness. She could get rickets or anaemia—"


Aletha just looked at him for a silent moment, then shook her head.

“And you’re asking me to just let that happen?” Aletha scoffed. “Well, I’m telling you as a doctor, as a friend, and as someone who loves Rey almost more than anything else in the Galaxy, I am not letting that happen.”

“Neither of us are,” Quom crossed his arms. “And if you won’t let us openly give rations to Rey, then we’ll do it in secret. I’ve seen Rey dead, Luke, and I’m never seeing that again.”

Luke turned away so they couldn’t see the tears in his eyes. This wasn’t what he wanted. He didn’t want to have to choose between Rey’s health and her exposure. Luke wasn’t even sure he was making the right choice, but what was the right choice? Was there even one in this situation? What would Felicity choose? Or Leia, or Han?

Then again, considering how badly they had messed up raising Ben, maybe the four of them weren’t the best people to base parenting decisions on. Maybe he should have been wondering what good parents – parents like Chewbacca and Malla, or Zena and Gavyn – would choose to do in that situation. It was hard to know what any of those four would pick – they all had such different personalities – but there was one thing they had in common. All four of those people had a habit of putting others’ needs first.

The answer was clear to Luke; he was making the right decision to not risk Rey’s exposure. Starvation would be bad for Rey, but Rey getting turned into a Sith wannabe, brainwashed, killing machine would be bad for the Galaxy. She was the Heir to the Skywalker legacy, and had great power; power that could not be allowed to be corrupted.

Yes, Luke was doing the right thing by choosing not to make another withdrawal… but he wasn’t making the right decision to refuse Aletha and Quom’s generosity. After four years together, he knew nothing was going to stop them from helping Rey, and to deny easy access to that would only break apart their relationship. That would be good for no one.

“Alright,” Luke conceded. “But you can only top up her portions if she doesn’t have three already.”

Quom frowned, “What if you only get three in total for the day? What are you supposed to eat?”

Luke sighed, “I… don’t know.”

As the sun started to set on the horizon, blanketing the three of them in the first shadows of darkness, no one knew quite what to say.

And none of them noticed the new ship about to land in Niima.

The folks I wonder about most in Niima are the visitors.

- Rey’s Survival Guide
Luke couldn’t help the look of annoyance on his face as Rey stared at the new strangers haggling in the market.

“It’s not polite to stare, Rey,” Luke chided as they scrubbed their haul at a wash station.

“What are they?” Rey continued to ogle the aliens.

“Rey,” Luke warned. “Time is money and we don’t have either to spare right now. Plutt takes wash table time out of his final calculation, and now that we don’t have extra portions to fall back on, I need all the help I can get.”

“Sorry, Dad,” Rey gave him a sheepish smile and picked up a piece of metal and a scrub brush.

“Better,” Luke looked back at the piston he was polishing. His hands stilled as something clicked in his mind, “Rey… what did you just call me?”

Rey frowned, “What do you mean?”

“What did you just call me?”

“Nothing. Just Dad.”

Luke blinked, "You called me… Dad?"

"Yeah," Rey nodded.

"Dad?"

"Yes," Rey started getting exasperated.

"Dad?"

"Yes!"

“… Dad?”

“Dad!” Rey exclaimed.

“Sorry,” Luke scowled, looking down as he rubbed his temples. “It’s just… when did you stop calling me Daddy?”

Rey sighed and shrugged, “Couple of weeks?”

“Why?”

“I don’t know. Daddy just started sounding… juvenile.”

Luke raised an eyebrow, “Where did you learn that word?”

“Aletha,” Rey answered. “Oh, what’s the big deal? So, I call you Dad.”


“Why?”

Luke sighed, “I don’t know… Maybe it reminds me that you’re growing up. That someday you’re not going to need me anymore.”
Rey smiled, set down her equipment and wrapped her arms around her father.

“I’m always going to need you, Daddy,” Rey promised. “Even if I call you something different.”

Luke beamed as he held her tight, “I know, Sweetheart. And I’m always going to be there. I promise.”

There was another reason Luke wanted to be called Daddy. To Luke, the label a child gave their parent was important. It was a testament of the state of their relationship.

Papa, Mama, and other such terms had always made Luke think of an older age. It was the kind of term he expected a young Obi-Wan Kenobi to use.

Father and Mother were formal and distant, terms you used for a parent you feared or didn’t know. Those were the terms Luke and Felicity had used for their own parents. Luke didn’t want to be a father like Anakin Skywalker or Alaric Rhiaon, fearful, distant, and dangerous to his own child. Neither did he want Rey to call Felicity “Mother” like the deceased mothers Padmé Amidala and Dinah Andromias Luke and Felicity never knew.

(Also, what was up with the A names in this family? He really had to stop fraternizing with people who had names starting with A… Aletha was not going to be happy with him.)

Dad and Mom were close, loving terms that Luke could handle, but they weren’t as precious as the terms Daddy and Mommy. Daddy and Mommy represented that earliest time of Rey’s life when she needed them for everything. But as she grew up and gained more experience and independence, she no longer needed Luke to the extent she had as an infant.

Rey could walk, talk, feed herself, read, even bandage her own wounds. She wasn’t his baby anymore, and a part of Luke struggled to let that go. After losing Felicity, and abandoning the rest of his family, Rey was the only real thing he had in his life anymore. Sure, Quom and Aletha were there too, but it was different. Aletha didn’t know who Luke was, and Quom had been on Jakku too long to understand what being Luke Skywalker meant.

She was his little ray of light; his hope in the darkness. Yes, she would always need him, but every passing day made him realise just how much he needed her.

So if he had to give up the term “Daddy” to keep her close to him, then so be it.

“But I’m disowning you if you call me Father,” Luke joked.

Rey chuckled, “Deal.”

“Hey, Erso!” Someone in the queue of people waiting for the wash tables yelled. “Little less hugging, a little more scrubbing!”

The father and daughter laughed as they went back to work.

“Three portions,” Unkar Plutt pushed the rations out to them. “Tough luck, Erso. Just renew our contract, and let’s finish this little song and dance.”

Luke snatched the portions, “It’s nice doing business with you, Plutt. Come, Rey.”

“Come on, Erso!” Plutt called after them as Luke grabbed Rey’s hand and they marched away from the window. “You really going to feed yourself and your daughter with that few portions?”
Rey stopped and looked back at Plutt, “Don’t worry, Mister Plutt. I’m not that hungry anyway.”

“Thanks, Sweetheart,” Luke chuckled and slung an arm around her shoulders, pulling her forward. “And don’t worry, we’ve got some extra portions back at the walker. You won’t go hungry tonight.”

“I mean it, Dad,” Rey replied, “I don’t think I even need that much food. What bad could possibly happen if I don’t eat three portions a day?”

“Aletha could give you a list.” Luke’s grin fell as they walked past the new strangers that had so captivated Rey earlier. He gently urged Rey forward again, “Come on, Sweetheart. Quom is waiting for us.”

“Dad, what are they?” Rey whispered as they walked past the strangers. “They look kind of familiar…”

Luke scowled, “Familiar?”

“Yeah. Have I seen that species before?”

Luke sighed; there was no point in lying to Rey.

“Yes, you have seen one before,” Luke confessed. “It was a very long time ago.”

“From before we got here?” Rey asked.


It had been a few years since Rey stopped recalling the people she once loved so dearly.

“What are they, Dad?”

“Those creatures, Sweetheart, are called Wookiees.”

“A hand drawn picture of a teenaged Rey hauling salvage in her net fills the bottom of the page]

Another self-portrait

- Rey’s Survival Guide

“Wrench,” Quom called, sticking a hand out from under the speeder they were working on.

Rey looked up from her stool in the corner.

Her hands were covered in pencil lead from the drawing she was working on. Though she hadn’t been using the notebook Quom gave her for her survival guide as a guide book yet, she did use it as a sketchbook.

Rey always liked to draw, especially since it made her father smile. Apparently, her mother was a little bit of an artist, preferring to draw buildings. Her mother’s mother had also been an artist; a painter more specifically. According to Luke, they used to have a few of Grandmother Di’s paintings hung on the walls of their old house.

She particularly loved hearing Luke describe the painting in the living room of a sunrise over a lake and how the sun’s rays glittered over the water. Rey could almost feel the dew of the grass under her
feet, and smell the crisp, fresh morning air of the mountains in the distance. Someday she would find that lake and lay on the grass, watching the sun rise above her.

When Quom called for her, Rey was working on a picture of the crashed Star Destroyer called the *Inflictor*. She mostly drew random things from Jakku in the corner of the pages, but she would later in life add a few self-portraits.

Rey never drew pictures of Aletha, Quom, or her father at the request of Luke who thought it was too dangerous to connect themselves on paper to Rey. Even a simple notebook stashed in their walker might fall into the wrong hands some day, and he didn’t want to drag his friends into his mess, or make it public knowledge that he was with Rey.

She looked over at her father to see if Quom had been calling for him.

Luke had the hood of the vehicle popped up and was fixing the sparkplug. Sweat poured down his face, already tired from the morning scavenging. Grease and oil marked random spots on his skin; the trademark of a mechanic.

“Rey!” Quom called, his hand twiddling in a grabby motion, trying to grasp the tool not being offered to him.

“Right,” Rey set the book aside and grabbed Quom his tool.

As Quom accepted the wrench, Luke’s comm started beeping in the corner.

“Rey, can you get that please?” Luke’s voice was muffled from holding a pair of pliers with his teeth as he fiddled with a pair of wires.

Luke’s comm was one of a set of four, the other three belonging to Quom, Aletha, and Rey so that they also could communicate with each other. Since only one of the four owners weren’t present in the mechanic tent, it was easy to guess who was calling.

“Hey, Doctor Ally,” Rey greeted. “What’s up?”

“Hello, Rey,” Aletha’s voice crackled back. “Is your father free?”

Luke yelped and jerked his hand back as something sparked.

“Uh… sort of,” Rey replied awkwardly. “What do you need?”

“Okay, this is going to be a sort of odd question,” Aletha said, “but I’ve got a pair of travelers in my tent, and one of them got hurt.”

“Well, you are the doctor,” Rey pointed out.

“Aw, look at that,” Quom chuckled from under the speeder. “She’s taking after her Mommy. She’ll be threatening to shoot us all in no time.”


“Shutting up.”

Luke sighed and walked over to the comm, “What is it you need me to do, Aletha?”

“Well, you’re pretty good with languages, right?” Aletha asked.
“I have a predilection for them.”

“I’m having troubles talking to these merchants. You wouldn’t happen to know Shyriiwook?”

The clattering of Quom’s tools stopped.

Luke stared at the comm for a long moment, “You’re asking if I… speak Wookie?”

“Not speak,” Aletha corrected. “Humans don’t have the vocal cords capable of vocalizing Shyriiwook. But maybe you might… understand a little?”

Luke looked over at Quom, who had pulled himself out from under the speeder. There weren’t a great many of humans who really understood Shyriiwook, and it was massively suspicious to encounter a man who knew it who happened to share Luke Skywalker’s extremely unique first name – seriously, what kind of name was Luke? Couldn’t he have been named something mundane like Sarco or Antar?

“I know it’s a long shot,” Aletha continued. “But I’m not the most knowledgeable about Wookiee biology and I don’t want to do anything that would cause complications-”


“Oh my goodness, thank you, Luke!” Aletha exclaimed.

That reaction was why Luke admitted it. While it wouldn’t be “a man named Luke deciding to raise his daughter named Rey on the Lars homestead” level of suspicious, it was risky to come forward as speaking Shyriiwook. But the joy in Aletha’s voice was worth it. There was a part of Luke that yearned to make her smile, to make her happy, to make her existence on this terrible planet a little bit better.

And oddly enough, he didn’t really feel the same way about Quom.

“I’ll be there in a few minutes,” Luke promised.

“Dad, can I come, please?” Rey asked. “I think it would be exciting to meet a Wookiee.”

Luke sighed; if there was one person on Jakku who Luke desired to make happier than Aletha, it was Rey.


It turned out the Wookiees were stranded in Niima Outpost. They had been sabotaged by some pirates they had fought off and nearly crashed on Jakku. It was impossible with the funds the Wookiees had to buy the replacement parts from Plutt, so Luke had offered to find them in the Graveyard with a team of others.

Since Luke had what the locals called “the magic touch” at identifying wrecks that yielded good results, he had many volunteers for his team. Ultimately, he chose Quom, Ivano, Binz Scoty, Varé Malago, Dione Aldan, Nyla Renarus, and Zexter.

Of course, life on Jakku remained as difficult and tragic as ever. Luke’s team squared off daily with other teams to stake their claims on the sites they wanted. Food was scarce and sometimes other scavengers would loot their supplies while they worked. Injuries were abundant: bones broke, skin burnt, flesh cut open, and all the usual things that kept Aletha in business. And of course, like always
on Jakku, there were a few fatal accidents.

Binz insisted on staying at one of the sites too long and ran out of water. His speeder shorted out halfway back to Niima and he had to walk the rest of the way. A sandstorm hit two hours later that lasted for three days.

Quom found him half buried in the sand a day after the storm, and Aletha diagnosed the cause of death as heatstroke. It never was clear exactly what day he died on, but it was clear that he suffered in those last hours.

Varé’s death was worse.

Varé Malago died when he stepped on the loose end of some TIE bomber power trunking – it was beneath a couple of centimeters of sand but left him burning like a torch.

- Rey’s Survival Guide

Death was a common tragedy on Jakku, but Luke still had to hold Rey as she cried the nights Binz and Varé died.

Luke originally had also picked Mashra to help, but on the first day, she had coughed herself unconscious and Quom rushed her to Aletha.

At the time, Aletha had been treating one of the Wookiees, checking on his cast – an injury he had obtained during the pirate scuffle. Aletha had been struggling to communicate without Luke. To her surprise, once Mashra had gained consciousness, Mashra revealed that she knew Shyriiwook, having lived on Kashyyyk for a year, fleeing the Imperial occupation of her home. This led to Mashra staying with Aletha, Rey, and the Wookiees all day as a translator.

The Wookiees had run out of money. Most of it had been taken by the pirates, and the rest went to Unkar Plutt for rations. They traded work for Aletha to give them medical treatment, and Rey spent every day with Aletha, completely fascinated by the creatures.

Luke was fine with the arrangement… until the day they mentioned Chewbacca to her.

I’d heard of Chewbacca from some Wookiee traders who’d stopped off at Jakku. They said he was an amazing hyperspace scout and smart smuggler, with a reckless human first mate who was always getting him in trouble.

- Rey’s Survival Guide

Luke was exhausted. He had spent nine hours hauling salvage, and it had only amounted to four portions. It had been weeks since he had a full day’s worth of meals.

He was pushing the flap of Aletha’s tent open when he heard something that made him stop dead in his tracks.

“And then what did Han Solo do?” Rey’s voice was eager.

Han Solo?

Luke flew into the tent as the Wookiees roared, continuing their story. Rey and Mashra sat on the
medical cot together, Mashra’s arm around Rey, while Aletha sat on her personal cot supervising the situation.

The Wookiees – named Tvruuvv and Wrushk – were cleaning Aletha’s various equipment. Wrushk was silent, focused intently on meticulously cleaning the small equipment like scalpels and shears. Tvruuvv was standing and working on the few machines that crowded the tent – Aletha was the only non-trader in Niima Outpost that Unkar Plutt allowed to hook up equipment to his power grids. He was the one telling the story as usual, and had found great joy in entertaining Rey over the past few weeks.

Of course, most people who met Rey seemed to fall in love with her immediately. There were exceptions – Roke in particular seemed ready to punt her off a cliff at any given moment – but Luke understood why she was so loved easily. It mostly stemmed from the fact that Rey was really the only child on Jakku, and most people felt sympathetic to her situation. Indeed, as Rey grew into adulthood, she would encounter a lot fewer people who were fond of her. But for now, she could still use her cuteness to her advantage.

Tvruuvv started growling again, and Luke could vaguely understand that the story was about the time he had gone missing on Hoth. Of course, Tvruuvv didn’t use the same name for Luke and Han as Chewbacca had – as previously mentioned, there was no direct Shyriiwook translations of their names. Instead, Tvruuvv referred to them as “The Solo One” and “Sky Walking” and if Luke had to guess, Aletha had probably supplied the correct names because who in the Rebellion hadn’t heard of Luke Skywalker and Han Solo?

“Han Solo was so worried about his friend that he decided it was time for a rescue mission,” Mashra translated. Her narration skill was very dramatic and both Rey and Aletha were absolutely engrossed in the story. “So he asked if the speeders were ready and when he was told no, he told the other Rebels that they would have to go out on Tauntauns. A Rebel objected. The weather was dropping too rapidly. Surely someone would die if they went out into the snow.”

Rey gasped, “I don’t want Luke to get hurt.”

“Oh, Sweetheart, I’ll be fine,” Luke joked, bringing everyone’s attention to him.

“Dad!” Rey rolled her eyes, teasing her father. “I was talking about Luke Skywalker.”


Rey just shook her head. The others in the tent clearly thought he was just being funny, unsuspecting that he was in fact Luke Skywalker.

“Welcome back, Luke,” Aletha greeted. She asked her usual question of, “Find any X-Wings today?”

“You know, I’m actually going to find one someday, and you’ll have no idea what to do,” Luke teased.

“I think I’ll make do.” Aletha patted the empty spot on the cot next to her, “Have a seat. Tvruuvv was just telling some stories about a few Rebel heroes.”

“Yeah… I heard,” Luke reluctantly sat down next to Aletha. He wanted nothing more than to tell them all to knock it off in case the story triggered Rey’s memory that she was related to the subjects of the story. However, there was no way he could reasonably object without revealing his true self. “Han Solo, huh? Are you liking the stories, Rey?”
“So much!” Rey exclaimed. “Did you know that Han Solo actually took a shot at Darth Vader when they got captured in Cloud City? And that he made the Kessel Run in 14 parsecs?”

A tiny voice in the back of Luke’s head that sounded a lot like Han shouted the correction.

“Actually, I think it was 12,” Luke tried to say as casually as possible.

Rey shook her head, “Tvruuvv said 14.”

Luke hesitated, “I might be mistaken.”

The whole subject was a minefield. Rey absolutely could not be allowed to remember that Han was her uncle until an appropriate time. As for the rest of the people in the room, Luke was only comfortable with Aletha ascertaining his identity… and even that thought terrified him. He did not want Aletha to ever be at the same risk Felicity had been.

Er… He meant Leia. Or Han. No, maybe more like Reine. A very close female friend, but not his be all end all, his heart would be utterly broken without her like Felicity had been.

Why would his mind automatically put Aletha into the level of Felicity?

Luke was suddenly very aware of the fact that Aletha was sitting awfully close to him.

“So, what happened to Han Solo next?” Rey eagerly asked.


“No, the story’s about Han Solo.”


Rey shrugged, “Not really, no.”

“Excuse me?” Luke’s voice was a pitch higher than he wanted.

“Well, he’s going to survive,” Rey pointed out. “This takes place before the whole Cloud City thing. He’s gotta live till then.”

“Oh…” Luke looked down. It seemed that everyone was staring at him with an amused grin. “My mistake.”

“Oh, Luke,” Aletha laughed, clapping his bicep and tilting her head against his shoulder. She didn’t notice how Luke stiffened, then relaxed at her touch. Aletha barely noticed then Luke’s head shifted fractionally towards being atop hers. “Don’t you worry one bit. We all know why you’re worked up about this.”


He was in so much trouble.

“Of course,” Aletha grinned. “And don’t worry, your secret’s safe with us.”

Luke’s mouth was suddenly very dry, “Aletha, I can explain-”

“There’s nothing to explain,” Aletha shook her head. “Everyone knows that all the Rebel pilots were huge Luke Skywalker fanboys.”
Wait, what?


“It’s nothing to be ashamed of,” Aletha chuckled. “All the Rebel skyhoppers were Pro-Luke, while the grounders were Pro-Han.”

“What were the medics, Doctor Ally?” Rey asked. “Han or Luke?”

“We were neutral,” Aletha replied. “Had to be. Though if you put a blaster to my head, I’d probably pick Skywalker. Always had a thing for pilots.”

Luke couldn’t deny that Aletha’s head was full on resting on his chest at this point.

“You know, I met him once,” Aletha said.


“No. Han Solo.”

“You did?” Rey’s eyes lit up. “When? Was he as cool as he sounds?”

“He was as cranky as he sounds,” Aletha grinned. “I was one of the doctors who looked him over after he was freed from carbonite. Didn’t really get an opportunity to talk much. His girlfriend would barely leave him be for five minutes. Chewbacca actually had to remove her from the room at one point she was so all over him.”

Luke held back a laugh. He remembered how affectionate Leia had been with Han after his carbon freezing. It made sense since he had been frozen right as their romance started and they hadn’t really had much time to explore their physical relationship.

Luke had been slightly jealous on Tatooine… then found out she was his twin sister a day later. After that, he was quite fine with Han and Leia being affectionate in front of him, and only told them not to go too far.

And then Han got his sister pregnant in an Ewok village a few days later.

“So what happened with Han Solo?” Rey asked. “Can you tell me the rest of the story?”

Mashra gave Luke a mysterious look, “I can... Unless your father wishes for me to stop.”

“No, it’s fine,” Luke frowned. Why was Mashra looking at him like that?

“Allright,” Mashra nodded to Tvuuvv to continue the story. “So, Han Solo said ‘My friend’s out there.’”

As Mashra told the familiar story, Luke couldn’t help but wonder what that look had been about.

For a month, Mashra and Tvuuvv told Rey story upon story of Han Solo and Chewbacca’s adventures. Aletha liked to supplement Rey’s knowledge with her own stories that she had heard over the years. Most were things that had been passed around the Rebellion rumour mill and were highly dramatized. It killed Luke a little on the inside not to correct them when Rey would relay her fantastical stories at the end of the night, but for the most part they were harmless.

Aletha would also tell Rey stories of her own adventures in the Rebellion. There were many new
stories, but every now and then he would be faced with a very familiar one. Luke would always be shocked when a friend of his turned up in one of her stories.

As it turned out, Aletha had crossed paths with many of his friends.

She had served on the medical ship the same day Luke had gotten his new hand. She had been one of the operating doctors for Reine Agim when she had been shot above the pelvis, leading to the emergency hysterectomy that left her infertile and self-conscious about dating for years. Aletha had been one of the doctors Shara Bey had seen during her pregnancy with Poe. She had given Biggs Darklighter (who had come in on the same recruitment group as Antar) his initial physical. She had once stitched up Nils Arlos after he was caught recruiting and was beaten horribly by the Imperials before he managed to escape.

Aletha had once even fixed Lando Calrissian’s arm after it had been dislocated in a fight. Lando then proceeded to hit on Aletha, which annoyed her greatly because Antar was literally standing in the same room. Aletha had run a little over the end of her shift, and he was waiting for her to finish with Lando so they could go to dinner.

It wasn’t completely unexpected for Aletha to cross paths with that many friends of Luke’s. The actual number of people who actively served in the Rebellion was much lower than you would expect. Luke had once heard that it ended up being roughly 30,000 over a span of twelve years. That included all the people who left, died, or worked as informants. The highest number of soldiers the Rebellion had at one time was 10,000 shortly after the Battle of Yavin. It had been said that with the amount of times soldiers were relocated between bases, a soldier encountered at least one in five Rebellion soldiers.

The recruitment and medical teams were a different story. There was only about one hundred fully trained doctors in the Alliance at their peak. A Rebellion doctor saw at least 1,000 patients a year, and in total ended up working on about one in three Rebellion soldiers.

The recruitment department was no better. According to Felicity, in the twelve years of the war, the recruitment team only ever had a grand total of twenty-two full time recruiters who actually went out and brought people to the Rebellion. The Rebels called them “Ambassadors,” and Felicity worked with a core team of thirteen of them over nine years. Twelve of the thirteen Ambassadors had ended up becoming the Republic Emissaries, which was how she got her job.

There were others who worked in the recruitment department, but most were “the Selection Committee” who identified marks, ran background checks, created fake documentation for the aliases of the Ambassadors, piloted the collected groups of recruits called “Batches,” and did other technical know-how.

Ambassadors would also often make their Batch pick ups in groups of three or four. As a result, Ambassadors knew about one out of every four Rebellion soldiers. In fact, a lot of Rebels would relate to each other and make their friend groups based on who their Ambassador was. It wasn’t uncommon to hear a soldier tell someone “I’m one of Rhiaon’s,” or “I threw my lot in with Arlos,” or “I’m a Kenu girl.”

And as Luke was very surprised to find out, Aletha was a Kenu girl.

“You were recruited by Obik Kenu?” Luke repeated in shock. He was having lunch with Rey, Quom, and Aletha on a day when the Wookiees were working on repairing their ship.

“Yep,” Aletha confirmed. “I was in one of his very first Batches. Nice man, but smoked like a chimney. I always gave him an earful about it whenever he brought a new Batch in. I don’t know if
he ever quit though, always just said in a war a man needed a vice. I don’t see why you need to destroy your lungs if you need to let off a little steam. Hope he did quit.”

Luke held back a smile. He so wanted to tell Aletha that Obik had quit smoking, and was extremely embarrassed by his former bad habit.

Reine always liked to tease Obik that it was one of the reasons that she refused to date him while they were in the Rebellion, though it had really been over her embarrassment of her infertility. She was convinced Obik won’t want her if he knew she couldn’t have kids, and it wasn’t until six years after the war ended that Reine fessed up.

Obik’s response?

“Are you kidding me? I could have been dating you for ten years? Dang it, Reine! If we want kids that bad, we’ll adopt! I’m picking you up for dinner tonight at eight. End of story!”

They married ten months later.

Obik liked to say that Reine was the reason he gave up smoking; that it was a grand gesture to win her over. But that wasn’t the truth; the truth was actually pretty hilarious. Even though Reine refused to date him, even though Aletha lectured him, even though Kalonia threatened to fail his physicals, and even though Nils Arlos warned that he would have Obik kicked off the Ambassador team, Obik refused to quit smoking during the war.

It wasn’t until Luke came into the picture that Obik decided to quit. Obik decided to do it after learning of his Force Sensitivity and approaching Luke to become a Jedi. But it wasn’t some moral decision made in the name of being a model Jedi.

No, Obik Kenu quit smoking because Luke wouldn’t give him a lightsaber until he did.

“Who is Obik Kenu?” Rey asked, sitting next to Quom who was poking at his food in disinterest.

“He was a recruiter for the Rebel Alliance,” Aletha replied. “One of their best. He had the knack for being able to identify people’s true intentions and sense who would be the best candidate. Everyone liked to joke he had some sort of magic touch… which he did, because we later found out he was a Force Sensitive.”

“Force Sensitive?” Rey frowned. “Is that another Vrogem thing, Uncle Quom?”

“Nah,” Quom shook his head. “A Force Sensitive is a Jedi thing. It’s kind of like… I don’t really know how to explain it. Luke?”

“A person with an especially strong connection with the Force,” Luke explained, wishing Quom hadn’t singled him out.

“Usually it’s dictated by the level of Midichlorians in your blood,” Aletha added. She saw Rey’s expression, “Microscopic beings in your cells that speak to the Force.”

Luke tried not to glare at Aletha, “Don’t you start throwing that nonsense around. Connection to the Force isn’t just some scientific phenomena; it’s a spiritual connection. Anyone can connect to the Force, just some more than others.”

“Yes, and those beings can use the Force better because of the Midichlorians,” Aletha shot.

“Ok, if you two are going to start being all woman of science vs man of faith, I’m leaving,” Quom
started to stand up.

“We’ll stop,” Luke promised. He then muttered, “But Midichlorians are mostly nonsense.”

Aletha glared at Luke, “You know, without the Midichlorians, Obik Kenu would have never learned he was Force Sensitive. Now there’s a good story.”

“What happened?” Rey asked, as eager as ever to hear a story about the Rebellion.

“After the Rebellion, all the Rebellion Ambassadors were offered Senate positions called Emissaries,” Aletha explained. “All thirteen accepted, including Obik. At the time, they were stationed in a small building on Yavin IV. The Battle of Jakku was a few days away from being fought, but the Rebellion was confident enough that people were freely discussing the location of bases. However, not everyone wanted the Rebels to win, and Rebels were being attacked. The Ambassadors were packing up their office when a group of pro-Imperials threw a dozen thermal detonators into the building. All thirteen of the Ambassadors were injured, but luckily no one was killed. I was stationed in the nearest Rebellion Medic Center, so I helped treat the injuries. Obik Kenu by far had sustained the worst injuries.”

“Why was that?” Rey asked.

“There was one Ambassador – a close friend of Obik’s – that had a bomb land almost on top of her foot,” Aletha answered. “Obik sensed the attack before it happened, though he didn’t understand why at the time. He was close to her, but not quite next to her. He charged and threw himself over her, tackling her to the ground. Obik got them far away enough to not be killed, but he was severely hurt.”

Luke was very silent. He knew this story all too well; he had heard it many times. But that was not what made him go silent; he was silent because of who Obik had thrown himself over.

It had been Felicity.

Obik had been Felicity’s Ambassador, and they had been very close friends during the war. Obik had recommended Felicity for her job on the recruitment team after their Batch on their way to join the Rebellion had been boarded by two Stormtroopers.

The sixteen-year-old Felicity impressed Obik when she managed to talk the Stormtroopers into not only letting them go, but joining the Rebellion themselves. One of the Stormtroopers had lost a loved one in the Bombing of Faclov – where Brendan had died – and Felicity used that to win him over.

The other Stormtrooper was a new cadet, fresh out of the Academy who was just itching to join the Rebellion. It was a good thing he met Felicity, because he became an excellent pilot for the Rebellion and gave his life in the Battle of Yavin.

His name was Biggs Darklighter.

“We immediately knew Obik needed a blood transfusion,” Aletha continued her story. “But we couldn’t get a hold of his medical file. I think there were Imperial hackers messing with our system. So, we ran a blood analysis for his blood type, and then discovered that he had a high Midichlorian level.”

“Was he okay?” Rey questioned. She felt oddly worried at the thought of Obik Kenu being hurt.

“We fixed him up just fine,” Aletha assured Rey. “Told him that he was a Force Sensitive. He was so excited. Obik immediately jumped out of his hospital bed, ran over Nils Arlos three beds down,
told him he was resigning his position as an Emissary and ran out the door… only to immediately collapse in the hallway.’

Rey looked a mix of confusion and horror.

“He had just had a blood transfusion,” Aletha reminded. “Wasn’t really in a state to run out the room.”

“Oh,” Rey nodded. “So, what happened to him?”

“I’m not certain,” Aletha looked away awkwardly. Her voice was the same distant tone is always turned to when she started speaking about what happened to her at the end of the war, “I, uh… Came to Jakku shortly after. Never heard about him again.”


He tried to keep the horror off his face as his mind flashed back to the ultimate fate of Obik Kenu. Luke remembered how he stayed there frozen, kneeling on the training field as Diego Nalto and Wedge Antilles collected the bodies of his Jedi.

Luke had put Reine down next to himself, so Wedge and Diego ensured that they placed Obik next to her. Luke remembered how Wedge struggled to carry the charred body of Obik over to his peaceful wife. Reine was one of the lucky ones who had a relatively painless death – a lightsaber slash across the chest.

Obik was not so lucky.

He was found buried under the rubble of the Skywalker residence, the only body pulled from the site. The only comfort Luke had in the situation was from Wedge telling him that he had found Obik in what remained of Rey’s bedroom. Both Obik and Reine had given their lives to protect Luke’s precious little girl. If they had to die in a horrific way, it almost seemed right to have Obik and Reine laying together on that battlefield.

Luke remembered how Obik’s corpse had been burnt almost as badly as Uncle Owen and Aunt Beru. It would have been totally agony to burn to death… but it was clear that wasn’t how Obik died.

It would take Diego Nalto three hours of digging through the rubble to find Obik Kenu’s missing head.

“Dad?”

Luke felt something tug on his arm.

“Uh,” Luke hastily wiped away the tears threatening to fall from his eyes. “What is it Rey?”

Rey just looked at her father with concern, “Is something wrong?”

“It’s nothing, I just… Obik Kenu died in a pretty horrible way a few years ago.”

“Oh my goodness!” Aletha gasped. Rebels tended to have strong feelings about their Ambassador.

“How?”

“Oh,” Luke thought over his words. “Obik became a Jedi, and there was an attack on the Jedi Temple. He died in a fire.”
“Luke,” Obi-Wan Kenobi’s voice sounded cautious, “did you just answer her question from a certain point of view?”


“Maybe,” Luke answered through the Force. “Well, what was I supposed to say? He was beheaded saving Rey? This isn’t lying someone is dead when they’re not, just being vague about circumstances. Obik Kenu isn’t secretly Kylo Ren, and also Aletha’s father.”

“How would that timeline even work?” Anakin Skywalker questioned.

“Oh my goodness,” Aletha looked blank. She had a hand over her gaping mouth, “Poor Obik.”

“Yeah,” Luke sighed. “It was pretty bad.”

Rey just stared at her father; there seemed something off about how upset he was.

“Did you know Obik Kenu?” Rey suddenly asked.

Luke blinked, “Uh…”

Oh no, he had been caught.

He looked over at Quom, but the Vrogem just shrugged. Quom had no clue how Luke was supposed to get out of this one.

“I…” Luke sighed. He had promised never to lie to Rey, so he only had one option left. The truth. “Yes, I did.”

Rey blinked, startled that her father was willing to admit something about their past.

“And did…” Rey whispered, afraid to push her luck and ask the question nagging in her mind. “…Did I know him too?”

Luke smiled and rested a hand atop Rey’s, “Far too briefly, Sweetheart. Far too briefly.”

Rey smiled back, and silence fell over the room. She wanted so badly to ask more questions about her past, but she could sense that she would receive no more answers today.

“You know, I actually really like the story of how Obik learned he was Force Sensitive,” Aletha knew they needed to move the conversation forward from people burning to death. “It’s sort of a fun twist of fate for me.”

“Why’s that?” Quom asked.

“The girl, Obik saved?” Aletha replied. “She recruited Antar.”

Luke dropped his spoon, “Excuse me?”

“She recruited Antar,” Aletha repeated.

Luke just stared at Aletha in shock. He knew that there was a one in twenty-two chance of it happening, but he had honestly not expected to hear that Felicity had recruited Aletha’s husband.

Oh no… did Aletha know the connection between Antar’s recruiter and Luke’s wife?
“What… what was her name?” Luke tried to sound casual. He could see Quom’s confused look out of the corner of his eye.

“Oh, I have no idea,” Aletha waved off.

Luke gave a sigh of relief.

“But I do remember she became quite famous,” Aletha added.

“Why’s that?” Rey asked.

“She was Rogue One,” Aletha replied. “I remember Antar was so proud to be recruited by her. Poor man was extremely disappointed when he didn’t make the Rogue Squadron named after her.”

Luke was surprised once more. Very few people had remembered Felicity’s role as Rogue One unless there was an asterisk involved. But there was no time to contemplate why Aletha had remembered Rogue One, because what Rey said next horrified him.

“Who’s Rogue One?”

Felicity was so going to kick his ass in the afterlife.

“Who’s Rogue One?” Aletha too sounded shocked. “Rogue One was one of the bravest women-No, bravest soldiers in the entire Rebellion. And her accomplishments were completely forgotten in favor of what a couple of men did.”

“You know you’re blushing, right?” Quom whispered to Luke.

Luke just swatted Quom away.

“She sounds kind of cool,” Rey set her plate aside, finished her lunch at last. “What did she do?”

“Oh, Sunshine, settle in,” Aletha looked very eager. “I’ve got a good story for you.”

Unkar has power because he controls the food supplies on Jakku, which consist almost completely of survival rations his goons took out of the Graveyard. If you want to eat, you have to find junk to bring to Unkar in exchange for food.

- Rey’s Survival Guide

“And then Rogue One shot Darth Vader right in the chest!” Rey told her story enthusiastically several weeks later. “Isn’t that awesome?”

“She does sound pretty epic,” Luke couldn’t stop smiling. He set their dinner plates on the small table they had made from repurposing a storage crate. “Eat up.”

Rey grabbed her fork and was about to dig in when she stopped.

“Dad?” Rey frowned, noticing the significant proportion difference between their plates. “How much are you eating?”

“It doesn’t matter, Rey,” Luke waved off. “You have a full portion.”

“Dad.”
Luke sighed, “Alright… I have a third of a portion.”

“Dad!”

“I didn’t bring in a big haul today, Rey. I haven’t been finding as much since the Wookiees left last week and my team disbanded. But it doesn’t matter, as long as you have enough.”

“No,” Rey shook her head. “That’s not how we’re doing this.”

“Rey,” Luke chastised as she started scraping some of her food onto his plate. “Stop. You’re a growing girl.”

“And you need your strength to scavenge and get us more food,” Rey countered.

“I’m not eating this.”

“Fine, let it go to waste.”

Luke narrowed his eyes, “Have I ever told you that you sound *exactly* like your mother when you have this attitude?”

“Could she get you to give in?”

Luke picked up his fork and began to eat.

Rey grinned and glanced up, “Thanks, Mom.”

Luke just shook his head.

For a while they sat and ate in silence.

“I miss them, Dad,” Rey suddenly said.


“Tvruuvv and Wrushk. I think I was starting to get a hang of their language.”

“Maybe, but Shyriwook is a hard language that takes many years to learn.”

“Well, I at least know a few phrases. ‘Can you hand me that?’ ‘What story would you like next?’ ‘Darth Vader killed them all.’ ‘He wanted to come back for you.’”

“When is that phrase ever going to be useful?” Luke raised an eyebrow.

Rey shrugged, “You never know. I will miss their stories, though. Han Solo and Chewbacca led such fascinating lives. You know that Solo married Princess Leia? And Luke Skywalker married Rogue One?”

Luke chuckled, “That sounds like a very interesting family tree.”

“Tell me about it,” Rey grinned. Her smile lowered as she paused to consider something. “Dad?”

“Yes, Rey?”

“Do you think… you could tell me more stories about the heroes of the Rebellion? Like Luke Skywalker, Han Solo, Obik Kenu, Dosmit Raeh, and Rogue One? Aletha’s run out of stories and I wonder if you knew any more?”
“I’m sure I could think of a few,” Luke smiled at his daughter. His grin was probably far too large, but he didn’t care. It felt so good to have Rey interested in their family. “So, Rey, you’ve heard quite a few stories of the Rebellion and its heroes by now. Tell me, who’s your favorite?”

Rey shrugged, “I really like Rogue One, but I don’t know much more about her, so I don’t think I can call her my favorite yet.”

“Well, maybe I’ll try to find a few more stories about her for you,” Luke beamed. His heart swelled to hear that Rey so loved her mother, even if she didn’t know it was her mother. He may yet avoid that afterlife ass kicking from Felicity. “So, if you can’t pick Rogue One, who would be your favorite?”

“I guess it would have to be the greatest one of all. The one who made it possible to defeat the Death Star! The best pilot in the Rebellion!”


“No. Han Solo!”

Silence.

Rey frowned, “Dad?”

“Rey,” Luke said slowly, “are you saying you like Han Solo more than Luke Skywalker?”

“Yeah. I mean Luke Skywalker’s great and all, but do you think Luke Skywalker would have attacked a Star Destroyer and used its own shields to cloak himself in said Star Destroyer’s shadow?”

“But you said the one who made it possible to destroy the Death Star.”

“Yeah, both of them. I mean, sure other people fired the shots that exploded them, but those shots wouldn’t have been taken without Han Solo. He helped destroy the first one by shooting Vader, and the second by blowing up the reactor shield.”

“I see,” Luke had gone very quiet.

“Just admit it, Dad,” Rey grinned. “Han Solo is ten times better than Luke Skywalker.”

Luke set his plate down and strode out of the walker.

“Dad? … Dad?”

Rey couldn’t figure out why her father refused to speak to her for the rest of the night.

Luke was so hungry. He had only had a quarter portion for breakfast and that was twelve hours ago. He knew he shouldn’t do this; not on days when he was scavenging the Inflictor.

The Inflictor was a hot spot – pun not intended – in the Graveyard. Even almost twenty years after the Battle of Jakku, scavengers were still finding things to strip from the ship.

On that day, Luke had decided to use his grappling hook to get up high in the Star Destroyer. Very few people risked going that high, but his Jedi powers made it easy not only to reach there, but sense any unstable spots that would lead to a fall.

He was climbing back down the rope with his bag of haul over his shoulder. His stomach was
growling as noisily as it had the past few weeks since his rations had run out. It was this day that the
physical side effects had started to kick in.

As he moved hand under hand down the rope, his hands started to shake. That was nothing new as
climbing down a rope to the ground positioned probably about one hundred feet below was a nerve-
wracking action. It was when his hands started shaking more than Diego Nalto having one of his
hand spasms – Diego had a permanent hand injury from Vader slashing the underside of his forearm
during Operation Citadel – that Luke knew he was in trouble.

Luke had just moved his right hand off the rope, when the left spasmed and he lost grip.

He was falling. He was falling hard and falling fast down, down towards the ground below. Just
seconds, and he would be nothing more than a splat in the sand, neck broken and leaving behind a
gory mess.

As with any near-death experience, his mind went to his loved ones. To Rey. To Felicity. To Han
and Leia. To Quom and Aletha.

But Luke Skywalker wasn’t a stranger to near-death experiences. Heck, he wasn’t even a stranger to
falling. If hanging off the antenna of Cloud City hadn’t killed Luke, this fall wasn’t about to.

His Jedi instincts kicked in automatically. Luke was only glad that no one else was around to notice
how he slowed his descent to a speed that wouldn’t kill him. But he had to still keep an eye out for
anyone who might suddenly emerge from one of the dozens of pathways in the ship. The Inflictor
was never empty of scavengers, except maybe at night. Even then there was usually one person who
didn’t leave earlier enough and had to camp out overnight.

He was so focused on keeping an eye out for other people that he didn’t notice he started to drift.
Closer and closer he moved towards the wall, and then suddenly a sharp pain ripped through his
body. A piece of jagged metal sticking out from the wall sliced Luke’s left side clean open.

Luke screamed and his concentration broke. In a display not unlike the time he had done a one hand
handstand on Dagobah, Luke lost control and he went crashing to the ground. At that point he was
only a few feet away, but those couple of feet hurt when he made impact.

Luke cried out as he landed on his arm. His full weight centered on it as his body hit the ground, and
his likely had bruised himself badly.

He grabbed the wound on his left side, and rolled onto his back. Luke moaned in pain as his hand
gripped the bleeding wound on his side, keeping pressure on it to prevent it from becoming worse. It
didn’t feel like it had cut too deeply, and had probably missed all the important parts of his body, but
it was quickly staining his shirt crimson, and he was in utter agony. Luke would definitely have to
see Aletha very quickly… if he could ever manage to move from that spot.

For a long while, he laid there alone in the Star Destroyer. His pack was still hanging from his
shoulders, but he was too paralyzed from the pain to get the first aid kit from inside. The longer he
laid still, the more dangerous it got to remove the pressure from his wound.

Panic began to flood Luke’s senses. The impact hadn’t killed Luke, but he very well could die if he
didn’t get himself patched up and moving. But how could he move and patch himself up when he
was in such unbearable pain.

“Is there anyone there?” Luke called out. He hoped his voice would echo down the passages to one
of the other scavengers working on the ship. “Somebody, please help me!”
Of course, even if it did carry to someone there was no guarantee they would help him.

“Help! Somebody, help me!”

As the minutes passed and he got no answers to his calls, Luke’s mind started going horrible places. What if he couldn’t move? What if he died? Would anyone find him? How long before people notice he was gone?

What would happen to Rey? He knew that Quom and Aletha would help her, but raise her? And Aletha didn’t know the truth about his identity and the danger that came with raising Rey. Would Quom tell her? Would they know what to do?

What about Han and Leia? Would they ever know that he was dead? They thought he was on Ahch-to, what if someday they went there and he was nowhere to be found?

And what did happen after death? What he end up a Force Ghost like his mentors? Was there an afterlife where Felicity, Biggs, Uncle Owen, Aunt Beru, and his mother waited for him? What happened in that afterlife? Would his Force Ghostness stop him from going to said afterlife? Was that why his mentors hung around him so much? Because they were bored?

There was one thing Luke knew for sure, and that was if there was an afterlife where Felicity waited… She was so going to smack him upside the head for dying in such a lame way. Luke could already hear her voice – well, not literally, but you get the idea – chastising his method of death.

“Seriously? You fight Sith Lords, and that’s how you died? You couldn’t have at least had a cool death like mine?”

Alright, he really needed to get out of the heat.

“Help!” Luke continued to call. “Can somebody help me?”

Then, an answer to his prayers.

“Erso?” Somebody called back.

Luke didn’t need to see them to know who it was; the horrible coughs following her cry easily identified her.


He heard the clang of footsteps against metal, and then the Aqualish appeared from the shadows.


“What happened to you?” Mashra dug out her well-stocked First Aid kit. Aletha had been personally filling Mashra’s kit for years so Mashra would have the supplies she needed in case she had another episode.

“Fell and cut myself. How bad is it?”

Mashra had pulled up his shirt to inspect the wound, “Looks like it missed anything vital. But Aletha would need to look at it.”

“She’s not going to be happy with me,” Luke groaned.
“Just do what I do and remind her that at least you’re not dead.”

Luke chuckled, “I suppose. You wouldn’t mind helping me out and giving me a few stitches so I can get out of here?”

“Of course. What am I supposed to do? Tell your daughter I left you to die? You know Tinadar would try to attack me, and Kymeri would stop treating me. I’ll bring you back to Niima, Erso, don’t you worry. Now, hold still, this might hurt a little.”

Luke grunted as her needle pierced his flesh and Mashra began sewing his wound together. He gritted his teeth, fondly remembering the days when he had access to desensitizing sprays to numb the area getting stitched.

“Thank you, Mashra,” Luke laid his head back on the ground and endured the pain.

“It’s no problem,” Mashra assured him. “Besides, I don’t like seeing your little girl cry.”

“I appreciate it. She’s very fond of you too, especially since you started telling her stories.”

“I loved telling them.” Mashra finished off the stitching. “There.”

“Thank you, Mashra,” Luke started to sit up. “I-”

She placed a hand on Luke’s chest and shook her head at him.

“Bandages,” Mashra simply said.

Luke nodded and laid back down, letting his wound adjust to the stitches as she dug through her pack.

“Luke…” Mashra’s voice was hesitant as she pulled a roll of bandages from her bag. “My apologies if those stories made you uncomfortable.”

Luke frowned, as he stared up at the ceiling, “Why would they make me uncomfortable?”

“I just thought you feared they would make Rey realize you are Luke Skywalker.”

Luke shot up straight, “Excuse me?”

“Luke, your stitches,” Mashra chastised. “And it’s no great secret. I’ve known for years who you were.”

“How?”

“When the First Order came, a shiny Stormtrooper was looking for a Felicity Rhiaon Skywalker, and her daughter, Rey. A few months later, Felicity Skywalker’s husband, Luke arrives and Plutt does whatever he can to butter him up. The conclusion was easy to come to. Why else would a man choose to raise his daughter on Jakku.”

“Mashra,” Luke’s voice was desperate. “You can’t tell anyone about this. Not even Aletha.”

Mashra gave him an odd look, “Luke, if I have not told anyone your secret yet, why would I do it now?”

Luke opened his mouth and paused, “… Fair point.”
“Luke, your business is your business, not mine,” Mashra sighed and began winding the bandage around Luke’s torso to protect the wound and absorb the blood. “If you want to keep your identity secret, that’s your prerogative and I will not interfere. The same goes if you want to raise your daughter on Jakku. I will not question it.”

Luke smiled, “Thank you, Mashra.”

“But I will question why you have chosen not to renew your deal with the Blobfish,” Mashra continued. In towns like Niima Outpost, everyone knew everyone’s business, and Luke’s refusal to renew with Plutt was the gossip of the month. “If you want to raise Rey on Jakku, fine, but don’t let her starve.”

“It’s not that easy, Mashra. You saw what it was like when the First Order was hunting for Felicity. If they found out Rey was alive—”

“Are you saying that they’ll never learn she is?”

Mashra’s question made Luke pause.


Mashra cut him off with a loud sigh.

“Luke,” Mashra said sternly, “you must come to accept that there are some things in life we cannot change. I’m going to die, Luke. It will be very soon, and very painful. Doctor Kymeri will do everything in her power to save me, but I will inevitably waste a good deal of her resources, and die on her medical cot, breaking both her, and your daughter’s hearts. I have accepted that this is going to happen, so I will not waste a moment of the time I have left making myself suffer. I will suffer—suffering is as inevitable as war and death—but I will minimize the amount I endure, and not put myself in a situation where I suffer when I don’t have to.”

Luke sighed, “I understand where you’re going with this. Someday the First Order is going to find Rey, it’s inevitable. So I shouldn’t make her suffer to prevent something that will happen anyways.”

“Exactly,” Mashra nodded. “I know giving in to the Blobfish is something none of us wants to do… but for Rey it’s worth it.”

Luke smiled and thought of his little girl, “Yeah… it is.”

“Master Skywalker,” Nova Zethiel, Luke’s account manager watched the blue hologram of Luke Skywalker on her desk, “are you sure you wish to make this large a transfer to this… Unkar Plutt?”


“Yep, signature, retina scan, blood sample, mother’s maiden name— which was strangely complicated in your case—everything checks out.”

“Good,” Luke smiled. “Now, I trust that you understand the need for discretion? I am in a very delicate situation, and there are people who would love to find me. Since I do have a rather large account with you, I think it would be very bad for business if I found you didn’t uphold your standards of confidentiality and I had to move my money elsewhere.”

“Of course, Master Skywalker,” Nova nodded.
“So, no one will be told of this?”

“My lips are sealed, Master Skywalker.”

“It’s been a pleasure doing business with you.”

“As with you, Master Skywalker. Once more, I thank you for choosing the First Galactic Bank of Coruscant for all your financial needs.”

Luke’s image flicked away, and Nova sighed. She knew that when it came to their clients, confidentiality was of that utmost importance. Even if it was Luke Skywalker, she couldn’t tell anyone who she had just been talking to.

And yet her stomach couldn’t settle.

Nova remembered the despite pleas of Leia Organa throughout the years. She remembered the tears Leia had shed when the bank had forced her to come deal with the paperwork of closing Felicity Rhiaon’s accounts, transferring power of attorney of Luke’s funds to herself, and dissolving Rey Rhiaon Skywalker’s college funds. Nova remembered the awkward time she had walked into her office to find Leia Organa crying in Han Solo’s arms that “Luke should be here. He should be the one to do this. Not me. Why me? Why is it always me?”

Not even Han Solo could give Leia an answer to that one.

Taking a deep breath, Nova made up her mind.

It was a little after two in the morning when the call came in on Leia Organa’s comm. The insistent beeping uncomfortably roused both her and her equally annoyed husband from their sleep.

“It’s two in the morning,” Han groaned as Leia untangled herself from his arms. “Tell whoever it is that we’re not home, and will be home at a more reasonable time. Like at least when the sun has bothered to rise.”

Leia just yawned and rubbed her eyes. She leaned over Han to grab her comm from his bedside table. Han had once again scolded her for bringing her work comm into bed, and decided to force her into calling it a night by stealing the comm out of her hands and locking it in his bedside table. The ensuing playful scuffle to get it back had led to the events that finished with Leia falling asleep in his arms, soothed by the sound of his heartbeat as her head rested against his bare chest.

Han grunted as Leia fumbled over him, trying to get the bedside table open in her sleep-addled mind.

“Leave it, Leia,” Han insisted. “It’s the middle of the night. Whatever it is, can wait.”

“Well, isn’t that why we keep Goldenrod around? To answer calls at two in the morning, translate languages, and occasionally pretend to be a deity to stop Ewoks from eating us?”

Leia resisted the urge to swat her husband and flicked on the comm, “General Leia Organa.”

The blue image of a semi-familiar woman projected up from the comm, “General, I am so sorry to interrupt, but I have urgent news. My name is Nova Zethiel. I work for the First Galactic Bank of Coruscant handling your brother, Luke Skywalker’s assets.”

“Ms. Zethiel,” Leia said shortly. “I know that Coruscant and Hosnian Prime do not have similar
hours of daylight, but it is two in the morning our time. Whatever this is about, I would kindly ask you to reschedule for a more agreeable time.”

“But General, it’s about Master Skywalker’s bank account. There was a transfer request and it needed authorization—”

“I assure you, Ms. Zethiel, I am up-to-date on managing my brother’s account in his absence. So, whatever investment or bond that is making a transfer request—”

“General Organa, Master Skywalker is the one who has made the transfer request.”

“What?” Han and Leia exclaimed, sitting straight up in bed. 

That woke them up.

“What do you mean Luke has made a transfer request?” Leia demanded. “Has he contacted you?”

“About an hour ago,” Nova confessed.

“Where is he? I’m getting him right now,” Han was already pulling on his boots and shirt.

“Unfortunately, I am not allowed to disclose that,” Nova replied awkwardly.

“Excuse me?” Han’s voice was dangerous.

“It’s a confidentiality issue,” Nova explained. “Not only is it bank policy – something we pride ourselves on since typically our customers are people of the celebrity calibre of Luke Skywalker – but Master Skywalker himself specifically requested to keep this information between ourselves. I’m not even supposed to be telling you he contacted us.”

“And I suppose you can’t tell us why he requested a funds transfer? Or to whom?” Leia’s voice was rather formal. Part of her was wondering why Luke needed money when he was on Ahch-to of all places.

“No, I cannot,” Nova confirmed.

“Then why did you even call?” Han was frustrated. “What’s the point of knowing Luke has contacted your bank if you can’t disclose where Luke did it or why?”

“Because I’ve seen your pleas for him to come home, and I thought you deserved some peace of mind,” Nova answered. “I’m sorry I couldn’t be of more help. I just thought you would like to know he contacted us.”

“Thank you, Ms. Zethiel,” Leia smiled. “Have a good night.”

With that she flicked off the comm.

“The nerve of Luke,” Han wretched off his boots and threw them across the room. “Who does he think he is, pulling this crap? Disappearing for four years without so much as a goodbye? Then mysteriously pulling out money and refusing to let the bank tell us where he is or why he needs the money. I swear, I love that kid, but when I find him the first thing I’m going to do is smack his upside the head and give him an earful. You know, sometimes I think Luke—”

That was when Han noticed Leia was crying.

“Hey, whoa, what’s wrong?” Han’s rant instantly switched into comforting husband mode.
“Han,” Leia choked, unable to hold back the tears.

“Come here,” Han pulled her into his arms. He held her close making soothing hushing sounds as he stroked her hair, “What’s going on?”

“He’s alive, Han,” Leia let the tears of joy fall from her face. “Luke’s alive.”

Han smiled, something warming in his heart, “Yeah, he is.”

It didn’t matter what Luke had done. As rage inducing as it all was, Luke was their brother and they loved him dearly. There would be a time for anger later; all that mattered in that moment was that Luke Skywalker was indeed alive.

Chapter End Notes

Coming Up Next Chapter…

The Strength to Let Go

When Luke realises he has a growing attraction to Aletha, he struggles to let Felicity go. But before he can get closure, he allows himself to remember their story one last time.

Looking at my plans for next chapter… It’s definitely going to be a long one.
The Strength to Let Go

Chapter Summary

When Luke realises he has a growing attraction to Aletha, he struggles to let Felicity go.

Chapter Notes

OH GOD, WHAT HAVE I DONE? THIS CHAPTER GOT SUPER LONG AND IT WAS EITHER GOING TO KILL MY DRIVE TO WRITE THIS STORY OR FLAT OUT KILL ME. I WANTED TO BASICALLY RECAP THE RELATIONSHIP OF LUKE AND FELICITY AND THINGS GOT OUT OF HAND.

So, yeah, this is my way of saying that I had enough content that this chapter is going split into – I kid you not – five chapters. Since most of the other parts have already been written, I’m not going to do any riddles or coming up next chapter bits until we get to the end of this section. Also, just be prepared that the three chapters following this one will be exclusively flashbacks.

SOMEBODY PLEASE STOP ME!

For those who don’t know, I cross post this story to both ao3 and fanfictiondotnet. Up to this point, they have been identical, but that’s going to change next chapter. You see, net and ao3 have different standards on sexual content. Net automatically filters out M rated stories, and will even take down stories if content is too explicit. Ao3 on the other hand… well, let’s be honest, it’s basically got a 3 to 1, porn to normal fic ratio.

On net, this story is rated T so that it is not filtered out with default search parameters and I can reach a wider audience. On ao3 however, it holds a M rating, which starts to kick in next chapter. Now, I have no plans to write full on porn. Most of the love scenes will be the build up and aftermath with the exception of a few scenes that will probably be not very descriptive and use quite a few euphemisms. However, there will be a difference in most scenes between ao3 and net. For example, in the upcoming chapters there’s a flashback to the events surrounding the first time Luke and Felicity made love – which does go pretty far at a few points, and the night Rey was conceived. The ao3 version is going to go more into the actual act, but again will be vague and not the full scene.

So, what does this mean for you? It means you can choose how much adult content you wish to see. Google either The Long Way Home Star Wars Fanfiction AO3, or replace AO3 with fanfictiondotnet (net filters out link names in stories so please put in an actual period in the place of dot) to find either story. If you want the more adult version, go to AO3, and if you want the tamer (though not entirely chaste) version, go to net.
Some were running from something – the law, or a troubled past, or their own failure to become what they wanted to be.

- *Rey’s Survival Guide*

Four years after losing Felicity Rhiaon, Luke Skywalker still wore his wedding ring. Granted, he did not wear it 24/7; Luke always took it off while sleeping, doing fine work, or before his hands were to get wet as his fingers tended to swell during those activities. But every morning, Luke woke up and grabbed his wedding ring from atop the small storage crate that served as his bedside table, and once his fingers had gone back down to their normal size, on went the ring.

Life remained the same in Niima. Every day, Luke and Rey woke up, had breakfast, went into town, dropped Rey off with either Quom or Aletha, Luke scavenged in the desert until lunch, traded haul with Plutt, collected his rations, the foursome had lunch, worked with Quom the rest of the day, went home, had dinner, scratched another day onto the wall, and went to sleep.

The sun went up, the sun went down, Jakku’s two moons waxed and waned, storms shifted the sand, and the only change that occurred was Rey outgrowing her clothes every few months.

Much like Luke, Rey clung onto the memory of her mother, though they did not speak of Felicity as much. Though she had – for the moment – accepted the death of her mother, Rey continued to retain the same hairstyle and outfit Felicity gave her all those years ago. Perhaps it was unhealthy not to force her to move on, but Luke wasn’t about to be a hypocrite.

Neither Luke nor Rey had any interest in letting Felicity go, and Luke revelled in his nightly meetings with Felicity in his dreams. Yes, Felicity was gone from them physically, but she still endured, and frankly, Luke found there was absolutely no reason to move on.

Until the day that changed everything.

Despite the lack of calendars on Jakku, Luke was pretty good at keeping track of the days. He could always remember birthdays and anniversaries, so he knew that it was the day before his tenth wedding anniversary.

Had you asked Luke several years before what he would do on his tenth wedding anniversary, he probably would have answered something along the lines of “Taking Felicity on a trip, and figuring out what one is supposed to give on the ‘tin’ anniversary.”

Luke liked to give Felicity her anniversary present based on the traditional theme, and Felicity really liked seeing Luke get creative with the theme.

The first year – paper – saw Luke tracking down some of Dinah Andromias’ artwork that had been sold to a few collectors (the fact they were painted by Luke Skywalker’s mother-in-law had really increased their value.) Felicity had burst into tears, though that may have partially been from the pregnancy hormones.
The second year – cotton – resulted in the most luxurious bed linens (sheets, blankets, pillow cases, etc.) that Luke could find. Luke had many fond memories of using those sheets.

Year three – leather – was probably Felicity’s favorite gifts. New leather boots, belt, wrist cuffs, and a pretty badass looking vest. It was the perfect outfit for Resistance missions, and Luke had gotten it because he probably found her most attractive when she was actually kicking ass, and not just threatening to do so.

The fourth year – fruit and flowers – saw the only time Felicity was disappointed in a gift. Luke had their front yard professionally landscaped and a magnificent garden planted. Felicity thanked Luke, but admitted she never was that into flowers and lamented at the type of upkeep it would take to maintain the garden. Luke conceded she had a point, and ended up paying his Jedi Shar’vida – caretaker of the Meditation Gardens – to tend their garden for them.

Year five – wood – saw a period of time where Luke decided to get into woodworking. Felicity liked to see her husband get into something she could understand better than mechanics, and she adored the bedframe he ended up building for them… even if it was a little wonky. Luke loved the look on her face when he unveiled it to her… but could have done without Felicity telling him every time she saw him woodworking that he had to be careful or he might lose another hand.

Luke was so over hand jokes by the time he was thirty-eight.

On their sixth anniversary, Ben Solo told Luke he had murdered Felicity.

… The gifts came to a stop after that.

Luke was trying not to think of his anniversary as he worked in Quom’s shop while Quom was off scavenging with Rey. Luke had been stuck on shop duty after his accident in the Inflictor, and had to wait out the weeks until his stitches got better.

Luke was rolled under Quom’s speeder which was broken again – Quom and Rey were borrowing Luke’s – and not really paying attention to his bodily position. He was reaching for his tool kit when pain shot through his body. Luke screamed and slammed his wrist against the speeder as his stitches tore.

He cried out in pain as he scrambled to get out from under the speeder and put pressure on his wound. It took a few minutes, and he didn’t notice the light on his commlink blinking.

Luke moaned as he sat on the ground, holding his stitches, trying to breathe through the pain. Several minutes passed, and soon the stinging subsided. Through gritted teeth, he looked down at his shirt and saw the fabric stained with blood. Luke cursed under his breath and moved his hand away to pull up his shirt so he could examine his wound.

“Luke?” Aletha’s voice was panicked as she ran into the tent. “Are you okay?”

“Aletha,” Luke groaned, looking up at her in shock. He tried to get to his feet, “What are you doing here?”

“I heard you yelling in pain through my commlink,” Aletha darted across the room. Without asking, she pulled his arm around her shoulders and helped him up, “I tried to comm you back, but you weren’t answering me.”

Luke looked down at his comm. Sure enough, the on button had been pressed, as well as the speaker off button, and “LINE TWO – Aletha” glowed up from the miniature screen.
“Sorry, I must have triggered it when I hit my hand,” Luke smiled, and Aletha took the hint to release him so he could stand on his own.

“What happened?” Aletha asked, her eyes going to the blood stain on his shirt.

“Tore my stitches, I think. Doesn’t hurt so much now.”

“Doesn’t matter; you could have done some serious damage to them. Let me see them.”

Luke dutifully pulled up his shirt and Aletha went into doctor mode.

“Yeah, I’m going to need to redo these stitches,” Aletha shook her head. She ordered, “Take off your shirt so I can get to them easier, Luke.”

Luke grinned, unable to resist teasing her, “Are you sure you’re not using this as an excuse to see me shirtless?”

Aletha rolled her eyes, “Luke, I’m a doctor. I’ll be completely professional.”

Luke shrugged and pulled off his shirt. Despite their many years together, Luke didn’t actually think Aletha had ever seen him fully shirtless.

Aletha was silent for a moment as she took in the sight of his strong arms and bare, muscled chest. Despite being in his forties, Luke still looked like he belonged on the cover of a men’s fitness HoloMag. Luke of course, worked hard to maintain his physique… but there truly was a reason he held the record for longest running HoloNet’s Most Attractive Bachelor title holder.

“Okay… maybe not completely professional,” Aletha bit her lip as her eyes roamed over Luke’s form.

Luke burst out laughing, “Yeah, I get that a lot. The first time Felicity saw me shirtless she just said, ‘Damn. I must have really done something right to deserve this.’ Well… not exactly the first time, but let’s just say the first time she saw me shirtless is part of a really interesting story.”

“You know, I hate it when you tease me about all these stories from your past,” Aletha set about stitching Luke back up. “Why hint at them if you’ll never tell me them?”

“Oh, you’re not better. You have just as much a mysterious past as I do.”

“I do not.”

“Oh, really?” Luke raised an eyebrow. “Ok, why did you decide to stay on Jakku?”

“None of your business.”

“Why did you come to Jakku in the first place?”

“None of your business.”

“How did Antar die?”

“Ok, you’ve made your point.”

“When did he die?”

“Luke-”
“Why do you say you’re bad with children? Why do you always ask if I found an X-Wing? Where were you born? Do you have family? Are they still alive? Why don’t you talk to them? How do you know Dosmit Raeh?”

“Enough!” Aletha pressed two fingers to his lips.

Luke grinned at her, “Annoying, isn’t it?”

“Well, why don’t I make you a deal?” Aletha rested her free hand on his bicep. She made no attempt to move her fingers from his lips. “How about I answer one of your questions, and you answer one of mine?”


“I’ll tell you how I knew Dosmit, if you tell me… who did you leave behind?”

Luke frowned at her, “What do you mean?”

“I was here, Luke when Felicity left behind Rey. I remember her speaking of family, and I know that look in your eye. It was a look so many Rebels had, the look of regretting walking away from someone they loved. I know that look, Luke, oh so well, because I’ve never had it. There’s no one left waiting for me, Luke… but there’s someone waiting for you, isn’t there?”

Luke sighed and looked away. Gently Aletha was rubbing his arm, and he found the gesture quite soothing. There was no question of if he could trust Aletha to keep his secret… the only question was if he could admit it.

“Well…” Luke hesitated. “I don’t want to get into it too much but… my sister.”

“Twin,” Luke sighed. “Plus her husband was my best friend. They… didn’t know I was leaving, and I’ve regretted not saying goodbye.”

“I’m sorry.”


“She was the Captain of the Tierfon Yellow Aces,” Aletha answered. “Antar… was Yellow-4.”

Luke watched as something changed in her face, that look that always came across when she spoke of Antar. That longing, that regret, the flash of anger, the tears that threatened to fall, but the part Luke hated most was the feeling that would surge in the Force. It was oddly the same surge that would happen when Felicity spoke of Alaric.

The feeling of wondering why she hadn’t been good enough.

“Am I interrupting something?” Quom’s voice suddenly ripped through the tent.

Luke and Aletha turned their heads to see Quom and Rey staring at them with very confused expressions. It wasn’t hard to imagine why, Luke was shirtless, Aletha was rubbing his arm, and had her fingers against his lips. They were standing very close, and the intimate tone of the room made the display look extremely suspicious.

“Luke tore his stitches,” Aletha immediately stepped away from Luke and began packing up. “Luke, see how those hold and let me know if you have any issues. You should probably hold back some
scavenging another one week, in addition to the two you were already abstaining. Come, Rey. You’re with me this afternoon.”

“Bye, Dad!” Rey waved as she followed Aletha out of the tent. She was confused by the sight of her father with Aletha, but still young enough to not be suspicious of anything.

“Have fun,” Luke called back as the girl disappeared.

Quom on the other hand, was not too young.

“Had a fun morning?” Quom asked very shortly.

Luke shrugged, pulling his shirt back on, “Making good progress on your speeder. Good haul?”


Luke frowned, watching Quom, “Are you upset about something?”

“What make you think that?” Quom replied in an annoyed tone that made it clear the answer was yes.

“I sense it through the Force,” Luke answered, still not getting what the problem was.

“Well, good for you! Thank the Force you have those special beings in your blood to help you figure it out. It’s not like you could use basic reasoning.”

Luke said nothing but watched as his friend sorted through the haul in silence. Long minutes stretched on as Quom sat with his back to Luke, digging through his toolbox and cleaning supplies to fix the odds and ends he collected.

It had to have been a good thirty minutes before Luke decided to leave Quom to it, and grabbed one of their on-going projects to work on. It was Ivano’s engine, which was giving him troubles with running smoothly. Luke dare not slide back under Quom’s speeder, instead opting to observe Quom from the other work table.

Finally, Quom snapped.

Quom violently threw his screwdriver down on the workbench.

“Oh, for the love of the Force!” Quom exclaimed. “Would you just make out with Aletha already? This unresolved sexual tension is getting old, Luke!”

“Excuse me?” Luke put down his tools.

“Aletha!” Quom spun around his chair. “Look, I don’t mind being the awkward third wheel of the group, but could we at least break the tension and acknowledge the fact that you two are clearly attracted each other. Seriously, Luke, make out with her before my hair starts going grey.”

“I am not attracted to Aletha, Quom!”

“Oh great,” Quom rolled his eyes. “I was really hoping all those stories about you being completely oblivious to the fact Felicity was in love with you, were exaggerated. You really are telling me that you don’t see the sexual tension between the two of you?”

“There’s nothing going on between us, Quom!” Luke exclaimed.
“YOU WERE JUST SHIRTLESS WHILE SHE STROKED YOUR RIDICULOUSLY ATTRACTIVE, TONED, MUSCULAR BODY! YOU WANT TO TELL ME THAT WAS NOTHING?”

Luke opened his mouth to yell, but suddenly stopped, “You think I’m attractive?”

“I’m straight, Luke, not blind,” Quom said flatly. “I assure you, both Aletha and I find you very attractive. She’s just more willing to pursue things.”

“Quom, stop,” Luke snapped. “I am not attracted to Aletha, and Aletha is not attracted to me.”

“Luke, stop,” Quom used the exact same tone. “Just think, for minute, please reflect on your relationship with Aletha. Think about the things you do, the things you’ve done, the way you feel about her, the way she makes you feel about yourself. How soon in the day after you wake do you want to see her? How much of the day would you spend with her if you had unlimited time? Who do you talk to when things get rough? When you want a second opinion on health, on Jakku, on parenting, on anything, who do you go to? Because I’ve watched you two over the past few years, and I’m telling you, Luke, whatever you feel, Aletha feels the same way.”

“Quom-”

“No, seriously, Luke. Stop… Think… Tell me what you feel.”

So Luke did.

He thought about his history with Aletha. How Aletha gave his Felicity’s strange final message, and ensured he understood the meaning behind it, even if she didn’t understand it. How she held him while he cried after making his deal with Plutt, allowing him to selfishly mourn Felicity for the first time. How she had been there every day for both himself and Rey. How she always had his back. How she smiled when their eyes met, and he couldn’t resist returning that joyful grin, so unlike Felicity’s sardonic smirk. How she had helped him through the Jarex fiasco. Refused to let alone during the Plutt credit shortage. How her first thoughts were always the health and safety of Rey, of himself, and of Quom.

How he counted the minutes until he could see her each day.

Luke found it hard to breathe, “Oh my God… I think I’m…”

Quom stared at Luke for a long time, waiting for him to finish the sentence. But Luke just sat there with mouth agape and a shocked look on his face.

“In love with Aletha,” Quom hurriedly supplied the ending. “Yeah, we all know. Can we hurry this up, this whole you finally catching on to the obvious? Because I have things to do.”

“I just can’t believe it. How have I never seen this before?”


“And you’re sure Aletha returns my feelings?” Luke asked.

“She and I have literally had conversations on the subject,” Quom replied. “So, please, I am begging you, go profess your love for Aletha and resolve this whole unacknowledged sexual tension before I have an aneurysm. You probably still have a few more years left if the two of you want to have kids together. I’m not exactly privy to Aletha’s menstrual cycles, but she’s probably still young enough to-”

Quom frowned, “Why? She likes you, and you like her. What’s stopping you?”

Luke rolled his eyes, “I’m married, Quom.”

Quom smirked, “Last time I checked, wasn’t your Dearly Beloved also your Dearly Departed?”

He barely dodged the screwdriver Luke aimed at his head.

“Ok,” Quom pulled himself back off the ground, “as a Vrogem, which will actually attack you if I’m near enough Dark Side of the Force, I beg you not to give in to the Dark Side for both of our safeties.”

“Sorry,” Luke sighed, “I just can’t stand you talking about Felicity like that.”

“Doesn’t mean you have to throw a screwdriver at my head. And it’s the truth, Luke. Face it: Felicity is dead. She has been for four years, she will continue to be for the next four years, and every increment of four that comes to pass. I know you love Felicity… but she’s not here, Luke, and she’s not going to make some miraculous return. She’s dead. Don’t throw away something good, over the ghost of something great.”

Luke sighed and looked down at the wedding ring on his finger.

“For as long you both shall live,” the ghostly words of their wedding officiant rang in Luke’s ears.

“We'll see each other again! I promise, Felicity. I promise!” His own words echoed.

"Allowing yourself to let her go is not the same as ceasing to love her," The advice of Anakin Skywalker whispered in his son's ear. "It took me too long to learn that. Do not make my mistake of accepting it when it was too late. In letting her go, you are not asking yourself to permit things to end. You are asking her to live… Even if it means doing it without you."

“So?” Quom asked. “Are you going to give it a shot?”

Luke felt tears sting his eyes.

“Tell Luke I love him, and that I'm counting the minutes until I see him again,” Felicity’s comm message repeated in his head.

“I’ll…” Luke stared at his wedding ring. “…I’ll think about it.”

There was a light knocking on Aletha’s tent pegs.


“Hey, Dad,” Rey jumped up from her chair and hugged him.

“I’m better,” Luke looked very distracted as he gave Rey a one-armed hug. “Rey, can you, uh…”
Can you go outside for a few minutes? I have to talk to Aletha.”

“Ok.” Rey waved at Aletha, “See you tomorrow, Doctor Ally.”


“Let’s sit.” Luke lead them to the chairs. He set his across from Aletha so they were staring straight at each other.

“Are you okay?” Aletha frowned and put a hand on his forehead. “Your hands are shaking and your skin is a little pale and clammy.”

“I’m fine,” Luke removed her hand. “Listen, Aletha… I have to talk to you about something.”

Aletha nodded, folded her hands in her lap, and waited for him to speak.

“Ok, I can do this,” Luke took a deep breath, mustering all his courage. “I’m attracted to you, Aletha.”

Aletha smiled.

“I know,” Aletha’s reply was simple.


He hadn’t expected that answer. Sure, Quom said they had had conversations about Aletha liking Luke, but he didn’t realize that it meant she knew he returned those feelings.

“Of course,” Aletha looked like she wanted to chuckle, but recognized the seriousness of the situation. “It’s very obvious, Luke. For goodness sake, we walk around the market with our arms wrapped around each other’s waist.”

“Oh, right,” Luke looked down at the ground.

He had always perceived that as the gesture between two friends, but after Aletha bringing it up as proof of his attraction to him, and Han once bringing it up as proof of Luke’s attraction to Felicity, he might as well give up all notions of friendship with that gesture.

Aletha swallowed and gently touched his arm, “I’m attracted to you too, Luke.”


“But…”


Aletha looked to the ground, “I’m not going to do anything about it.”


Aletha took a deep breath and grasped his left hand. She brought it up to eye-level to showcase the gold band gleaming in the sunlight.

“Because you’re still wearing this,” Aletha whispered.
It felt like a blade went through his heart. Here he was disappointed that Aletha Kymeri didn’t want a relationship with him, while he still wore the band of his marriage to Felicity Rhiaon.

“You’re married, Luke,” Aletha said. “Maybe not legally anymore, but your heart still calls her your wife. And I won’t be your mistress. Not legally, not emotionally, not physically.”

“You wouldn’t be my mistress,” Luke objected.

“Yes, I would.” Aletha sighed, “Look, I know it’s hard. It took a long time before I gave up Antar, but I won’t do this, Luke… Not again.”

Luke frowned, “Again?”

Aletha looked away, “There are things I haven’t told you about myself, Luke.”

“Things like you were someone’s mistress?”

“Not legally, but… emotionally. I’ve been with someone who wouldn’t let their past love go, and I’ve never felt more worthless in my life. I’m never doing that again.”

He said nothing, but stared at her, his heart aching. The thought of someone hurting Aletha that way broke his heart, and he wanted nothing more than to make her feel better. As he looked at her, he could see her in a new light. He had been through this before, this revelation and acceptance of loving someone, and knowing that he couldn’t pretend to be friends anymore.


Aletha looked like she was about to cry, “I want to love you, Luke Erso. I really do. But I’m not going to compete with a woman with whom your heart so clearly belongs.”

“Then how do I prove to you that this isn’t going to be a competition?”

Aletha took his hand, “Let her go, Luke. Truly let her go. Take off this ring, take a few months to discover who you are without her… then let me know. I’m willing to wait for you, Luke, because I know you’re worth it.”

Luke smiled, “You are too.”

“Then, please… take the first step and let her go.”

“I will,” Luke promised. As Aletha was holding his hand, looking at him with such joy and hope in her eyes, it seemed so easy to let Felicity go.

It was once he had walked away from her, that the terror overtook him.

He would have to let Felicity Rhiaon go.

Luke didn’t leave the walker the next day.

Rey didn’t question why her father didn’t get out of bed in the morning; he would have these days every now and then. She didn’t know it was the days Luke was weighed down by the fates of the people he loved: those who lived, those who died, and all of them he had disappointed. Rey knew just to make her own breakfast and call Quom for a ride. They never spoke about those days, at least not to Luke himself.
Luke spent the day reflecting, looking at the single Holo of Felicity he still possessed. He kept it private, even from Rey. Sometimes it was too painful to see Felicity’s face and think of how he let her down.

He had loved her more than he thought it was possible to love another person. And through that love, they had performed the greatest miracle of all and created a new life. Luke would have given anything to have her back, but part of him struggled to realize the hopelessness of that situation. It felt like maybe a part of him thought there was still a chance she would walk through the door.

But he knew it would never happen. He knew, he would never sit in that walker and hold her, talking, reflecting, counting the tallies on the wall, and try to figure out how they could still have happily ever after.

He wanted those years stole from him. Watching their hair turn silver, debating to what extent they were allowed to let themselves go with age, reaching the plateau point of their love life and trying to figure out how to put the spark back in it.

Luke wanted it all, the good, the bad, even the ugly. Arguing over how to raise Rey. Clashing from their opposite – yet oddly similar – upbringings. Her threats to kick his ass for whatever was bugging her at the moment. His pretending he was locked in a deep state of meditation when really he was just ignoring Felicity. The times they would scream at each other until they were red in the face.

How they would fall back into each other’s arms with the sincerest of apologies. How no matter how upset she got with him, the Force around her always brightened when she saw him. Her arms wrapped around him, savoring his embrace. Those lazy mornings in bed when they just spoke about anything and everything curled up in the blankets and each other.

There wasn’t a single moment good or bad Luke wouldn’t give up anything – except Rey – to have again.

And yet there he sat on their tenth anniversary in the shell of an AT-AT walker on Jakku, completely alone.

There was something warm on his shoulder.

“I am so sorry, My Son,” Anakin sat next to Luke. If there was one person who could understand Luke’s pain, it truly was Anakin.

“Am I responsible?” Luke asked. “Did she die because I told her to go? Because I didn’t leave a comm line open? Because I didn’t get there in time? Did she die because of me?”

“Absolutely not.”

“You say that so confidently.”

“Trust me, Luke. You didn’t kill Felicity Rhiaon. Have I ever lied to you?”

Luke sighed, “No.”


“No,” Luke chuckled. “She’d probably want me to go storm the First Order and kill everyone who held her hostage.”
Anakin looked away, “*Probably something along those lines. You did marry an interesting woman.*”

“Didn’t she shoot you?”

“That doesn’t mean she isn’t interesting.”


Anakin hesitated, he knew the real question Luke was asking.

“Luke…” Anakin thought over his words, “*I don’t think you should do this. Felicity is who you are meant to be with, there’s no reason to start up with someone else.*”

Luke couldn’t help the anger that flashed across his face, “Excuse me?”

“*Things will just get complicated and I think you’ll regret it.*”

“Oh, well if you say I’ll regret it, I suppose it’s true. After all, I am talking to the expert of regrets.”


But Luke was beyond upset, “You don’t get it. You never even looked at someone after my mother. You didn’t feel this way after feeling that way.”

“What does that even mean?”


“But what about Felicity? What happens when…” Anakin trailed off.

“I’m not going to stop loving Felicity, Father… but I need to move on. I can’t throw away something good, over the ghost of something great. So, please, if you’re not going to give me advice on how to let her go, then go away.”

Luke was little surprised when Anakin did just that.

His father didn’t understand; Anakin Skywalker spent his life afraid of losing the ones he loved. Luke wouldn’t be that way, he would let Felicity go. He sighed and looked at the Holo in his hands, of the image of Felicity, the absolute love of his life.

Yes, he would finally let her go.

But maybe one last time, he would let himself remember their story…
Part One: Friendship

Chapter Summary

Luke remembers how he met Felicity Rhiaon and developed a friendship.

Chapter Notes

Please note that the first chunk of these flashbacks are directly from my story Definitions of Home. If you have already read these parts and don’t feel like rereading what you’ve mostly read before (there were a few tweaks due to these being flashbacks solely in Luke’s perspective) please skip to “3 Months, 12 Days” where the new content starts. So don’t be intimidated by the word count of 12k, because more than 5k of those words are old material.

…Starting to understand why I split this into five parts? (Actually, it's now going to be six parts because the DoH material took up so much space.)

The Long Way Home

Chapter Twenty-Three

Part One: Friendship

TEN YEARS AFTER THE BATTLE OF YAVIN

YAVIN IV

Museum of Rebellion History – AKA Former Yavin IV Rebel Base

Tenth Anniversary Celebration of the Destruction of the Death Star

Day 1

Luke had been busy chatting with Wedge when Leia came whizzing by, leading a woman towards them.

"We'll have you stand next to Luke. It'll be a great photo op," Leia hurriedly said to the woman. "Have you met my brother yet?"

"Uh, no," the woman replied taking a glance at Luke – who was desperately restraining an amused smirk at Leia working herself up over nothing. The woman extended her hand to Luke, "Felicity Rhiaon."
"Luke Skywalker," Luke shook her hand as Leia dashed off to check for the eighth time that they had enough medals.

"Pleasure to meet you, Luke. It's nice to finally meet the man who destroyed the Death Star."

"The pleasure's all mine," Luke gave her an overly large grin that didn't reach his eyes.

"You have no idea who I am, do you?"


"I'm Rogue One," Felicity returned the chuckle.

"Who?"

Wedge elbowed Luke, "Leader of the team who stole the plans to the Death Star."

"Oh," Luke said. "Well, it's definitely a pleasure to meet you."

Felicity was rather attractive. Pale skin, brown hair in an elegant updo, slender figure though not very curvy, her face had sharp angles, and her brown eyes seemed to assess even the smallest of details as she too took him in.

Luke opened his mouth to say something more when he was suddenly cut off.

"PLACES PEOPLE!" Leia called out.

"See you around," Felicity gave a smile before heading off.


"You never have been good with women, Luke."

"Let's get one of Skywalker and Rhiaon together!"

Luke blinked, trying to clear the bright flashes of the cameras from his eyes as the reporters crowded around the photoshoot. No doubt the pictures would be on every screen the next day.

People shuffled awkwardly as Luke suddenly found Felicity Rhiaon pushed next to him.

"Hello, again," Felicity smiled at him.


"Master Skywalker, put your arm around her!" someone ordered.

Luke looked at Felicity, "May I?"

"Go ahead."

Though he didn't think much of it at the time, Luke found there was something to how perfectly his arm fit wrapped around her waist. Felicity placed her hand on his shoulder and they silently paused for the cameras for a few minutes.

"I bet this will be the star photo tomorrow," Felicity muttered, trying not to mess up the shots.
"Rogue One and Rogue Leader. The woman who stole the plans to the Death Star, and the man who blew it up."

"We do make a sensible match," Luke nodded. "I liked your speech during the ceremony."

"I'm just glad I was allowed to make it. Very few people ever talk about my team, and we suffered very heavy losses."

"Well, thank you. Without you stealing the plans in the first place, none of this would have been possible."

"Thank you," Felicity said. "It's nice to see someone appreciate my team's accomplishments for once."


Luke found Felicity at his side once more during the tribute to the fallen. A large pyre had been built and lit in memory of those who had lost their lives. Leia, Felicity, and Luke stood at the head of the assembly and took turns saying the names of the fallen. Felicity listed the members of her team, Luke the pilots, and Leia the rest. Leia even took a few moments to mention Obi-Wan Kenobi, and Owen and Beru Lars, who merited recognition for their part in refusing to expose Luke, Obi-Wan, and the droids.

As the flames burned bright, Luke’s voice quavered as he listed his set of names. Luke hadn’t known any of the men who spoke of, yet his voice was filled with heartbreak.

"Biggs Darklighter," Luke's voice broke on the last name. "Biggs was my best friend, and we had just been reunited. I was going to tell him all about the adventures I had had, but…"

Luke couldn't bring himself to finish the sentence.

Felicity looked up at him. Luke was staring into the flames, tears shining in his eyes. As if it was the most natural thing in the world, Felicity gently touched his arm. Luke visibly relaxed at the gesture of comfort.


Felicity smiled, "Anytime."

1 Month, 21 Days

"So, you knew Shara?" Luke asked Felicity at the reception of the funeral of Shara Bey. It had been the first time he had seen Felicity since the celebration on Yavin IV.

"She was the one who retrieved Diego and I after we stole the plans to the Death Star," Felicity explained. "We became friends, and she piloted me to a lot of my recruitment missions."

"You needed a pilot?"

Felicity looked away awkwardly, "I… Can't fly ships. At least not well."

Luke frowned, "I thought it was a requirement of all Rebels."

"It's a long and rather personal story, but Bail Organa made an exception when he recruited me."
Besides, I do know the bare minimum, just don't ask me to land a ship unless you want flames and extensive property damage."

"I'll keep that in mind."

"So, you knew Shara too? Or are you here because you're well… Luke freaking Skywalker and can pretty much freely attend any Rebellion affiliated event you want?"

Luke chuckled, "As true as that may be, I actually did know Shara. In fact, her last mission with the Rebellion was helping me track down a Force Sensitive tree."

Felicity raised a brow, "A Force Sensitive tree? You're joking right?"

"Why would I joke about that?"

"Come on!" Felicity laughed. "It's hard enough to believe in the Force on its own, but now you're asking me to believe there are trees that are 'one with the Force?'"

Luke then recalled Felicity's speech at the Celebration of the Battle of Yavin, "You don't believe in the Force?"

"I believe it to an extent," Felicity admitted. "I believe you personally can sense people's emotions and move things with your mind, but the whole destiny aspect is where you lose me. There's no mystical force that decides my fate, and if there is – after everything its taken from me – I want nothing to do with it."

Luke sensed the pain behind her words, but as she was still barely more than a stranger to him, he felt it inappropriate to push any further.

"I respect your opinion," Luke replied. "You're not the first person to say that to me, and you certainly won't be the last. In fact, even my brother-in-law, Han, used to believe that."

"Speaking of your family, do you have any idea what Leia's going to say at the Senate meeting? She won't answer my questions, and I want my office to be prepared."

"You're a Senator?"

"Senate Emissary," Felicity corrected. "Hence why I'm not exactly in the loop to Leia's plans. A lot of planets have been contacting us because of this incident. They want to be protected from the First Order."

"That's good," Luke was glad that some good was going to come from the First Order's senseless murder of Shara Bey. Though he did not know it at the time, it would indeed be the catalyst for the creation of the Resistance.

"It is, but I just wish that they had come to us for different reasons," Felicity sighed. "More for, you know, actually believing in the good of the New Republic?"

Luke smiled, "And I wish most of my students didn't come to me because they want to play with lightsabers. If only the universe was perfect."

The pair laughed together only to be stopped short when they noticed the dirty looks they were getting.

"Sorry," Felicity playfully winced as she and Luke withheld smiles and sent apologetic looks to the
people around them. "We probably shouldn't laugh at a funeral."

"I'm sure Shara wouldn't have minded." Luke's face suddenly grew serious, "Felicity? I don't mean to pry but… did you see the Holo?"

Felicity looked guilty, "The first part. I shut it off when the Troopers readied to fire. What about you?"


"It's not that I didn't want to respect her," Felicity insisted. "I just… I sort of have a thing about last words. I always hope that a person is allowed to make their peace if their life is taken unfairly. I wanted to see if she got that dignity."

"And did she?"

Felicity grinned, "She did. Rather good final words too."

"What were they?"

"The troops told her 'any resistance will be met with proper force' and she told them 'any force will be met with proper resistance.' Then she took out about five troopers before they overwhelmed her. I… didn't watch anymore after that."

"Any force will be met with proper resistance," Luke smiled, gently shaking his head. "Pretty good final words. But to answer your earlier question, I don't know what Leia is planning on doing. Truth be told, I'm not sure that even Leia knows what she'll do."

"Well, she's pretty good at winging that sort of thing," Felicity said with a shrug.

Luke looked a little confused, "Are you… close to Leia? You keep calling her casually by her name. I know you transmitted the Death Star plans to her, but I don't remember Leia ever talking about you."

Felicity smirked, "Well, that's a wonderful thing to hear that she doesn't ever discuss our friendship. No, we're not close, but we used to be before the First Death Star. Bail Organa hired me to be what he called her personal assistant when she first started working in politics at thirteen. Though, to be honest I wasn't so much a personal assistant. Senator Bail Organa described the position as something like the Handmaiden of a Queen of Naboo. Leia was really obsessed with this one politician at the time – someone called Amidala – and Bail thought it might be handy to have someone roughly her age around."

"So what exactly was your job then?"

"I like to describe it as one third bodyguard, one third babysitter, and one third salaried friend. Of course, I found out years later that Bail hired me specifically because he knew my father was a technician on the Death Star and was using me as a way to keep on eye him. But bygones."

Luke grinned at Felicity and couldn't help but wonder why Leia had never mentioned Felicity to him. He understood that people drifted apart and got too busy to socialize, but there was something about the beautiful, charming woman before him that made Luke resent Leia not introducing them sooner. Felicity seemed like she could be a nice friend to have around.

"Oh," Felicity's eyes caught something over Luke's shoulder. "Looks like my ride is waving me down. I think I have to go."
"Really?" Luke looked back to see Diego Nalto waving to Felicity. "That's too bad. It was nice talking to you."


"That'd be nice."

Felicity's smile faltered as she looked back at Diego, and she rolled her eyes.

"Alright, I'm coming!" Felicity called across the room, completely forgetting she was in the middle of a wake. She turned back to Luke, "Can you tell Leia to contact me? It'd be nice to catch up. And if you guys need anything to deal with this First Order situation, she has my number. I'd love to help."

"I'll be sure to let her know."

"Thank you."

"Anytime," Luke smiled, remembering the phrase they had exchanged at the celebration they had met at.

"Likewise," Felicity grinned, clearly recalling the memory. "Well, since I'm so fond of last words, let mine be this: it's always a pleasure to bump into you, Luke. Even if the circumstances aren't the best."

"I find the same joy in meeting you," Luke grinned. She gestured behind Felicity toward the exasperated Diego, "Now, I think you better go before Nalto has an aneurysm."

"I told him to put more money in the parking meter," Felicity laughed as she walked away.

Luke couldn't help but watch as she left. He couldn't put his finger on it, but there was something about that strange, beautiful girl with the affinity for final words.

---

2 Months, 2 Days

"Thanks," Luke smiled at his sister as she handed him the stack of dishes while he and Ben set the table for dinner. He was halfway to the table when he noticed that he was holding five plates, "Uh, Leia? I think you grabbed one too many."

"Oh, didn't I tell you?" Leia said as she pulled a dish from the oven. "We're having a guest."

Luke and Ben shared an apprehensive look and Artoo let out a beep from the corner. "Guest" usually meant foreign dignitary leading to an awkward dinner involving a lot of political talk and Han causing some sort of incident when his best behaviour turned cynical. Thankfully, Han was out at the hanger that hosted the Falcon doing some last minute repairs before dinner (which the family was always grateful to allow him to do because it meant he got clean up duty after dinner.) If Han had been in the room for Leia's announcement it would have been nothing but complaining and attempted bartering until the guest arrived.

"Knock it off," Leia shot the boys a look as she checked over Threepio's work on dessert. "There's no need for looking like you dread some impending doom. It's a friendly visit, not a political meeting."

Luke nudged Ben to prompt him to resume setting the table, "Who did you invite?"
As if on cue the apartment door buzzed.

Leia wiped her hands on a dish table, and tapped Threepio's back to signal she was passing him. She crossed to the door and opened it with a grin to reveal a brunette woman clutching a bottle of wine.

"Fliss," Leia greeted her friend with a hug. "It's been far too long."

"It's good to see you too, Leia." Felicity held up the bottle she was clutching, "I brought wine. It's Alderiaan and a pretty good vintage… I think."

"Thank you." Leia took the bottle and peered at the label. "Wait a minute. Did my father and I give this to you for your twenty-first birthday?"

"Maybe," Felicity smirked. "Sorry, I'm not a wine drinker. But don't worry, I looked into it, a ten-year-old bottle of wine from that vineyard isn't poisonous. Doesn't age that well, but it won't kill you."

"Well, I can always give it to Lando," Leia shrugged, urging Felicity into the apartment. "He'll drink anything. Boys, this is Felicity Rhiaon. Fliss, this is my son, Ben and you know my brother, Luke?"

"We've run into each other a few times," Felicity grinned, shaking Luke's hand. "Luke, it's always good to see you."

"Likewise," Luke replied looking over Felicity. She was wearing a simple black dress and heels, and for the first time, Luke saw what her hair looked like down. Her straight brown hair fell a little past her shoulders and appeared to be very soft. As nice as her hair looked up, Luke definitely favored it down. "You look great this evening."

"Thank you," Felicity replied.


Felicity grinned at him, "So are you all ready for tomorrow?"


"Felicity's one of the volunteers for the first Resistance mission," Leia explained as she and Ben began to carry the dishes to the table. Threepio had taken Felicity's coat to the closet while Artoo had wheeled himself over to plug into a charge port. "As capable as you and Han are, I thought the two of you could use a little backup."

"Oh right, the mission," Luke remembered.

Leia had already secured a lead on one of the facilities where the kidnapped children were, and Han was taking the *Falcon* there first thing in the morning. Leia wanted to prove to the Senate as quickly as possible how effective her taskforce would be.

"Yeah, I meant to ask you," Felicity said, "I know that people have promised equipment, but considering we haven't been approved for even twenty-four hours yet, do I have to bring anything?"

"Just proper clothes and maybe some extra weapons," Leia took her usual seat leaving a spot on each side of her for Han and Luke. "I've got everything else handled. Han's just checking over the Falcon as we speak. Maybe if he would hurry up, we could finally have dinner."

"Here," Luke pulled out the chair of his usual spot. "Have my seat."
"Thanks," Felicity smiled as Luke pushed her in and took the seat next to her. "Been a while since a 
man pushed in my chair for me. So how many weapons would you recommend? I haven't been on a 
military mission for a while. I mean that's not to say I haven't gotten in trouble every once in a while, 
but I'm sort of rusty on the planning area."

"Well, I usually take maybe two blasters and my lightsaber," Luke used the Force to put back down 
the bread roll Ben was floating towards him as they waited for Han to join them. "It all depends on 
how you use your weapons I suppose."

"Gunner taught me the best thing in this case would be drop and fire. No use in fiddling with your 
gas cartridge or power cell when you could just pull out another weapon. He usually said ten would 
do the trick… though I don't actually own ten blasters."

"How many do you have?"

"Uh…" Felicity thought hard. "Leia this is a governmental operation, correct?"

"Correct," Leia nodded.

"Ok, I can probably use my work blaster in that case, but better check with my boss," Felicity 
thought aloud. "Let's see, personal, work issue, the one in my bedside drawer…"


"I'm a single female who lives alone on Coruscant," Felicity hastily explained. "Better safe than 
sorry. So, that's three, though I could probably borrow two from my coworkers who are here on 
Hosnian Prime right now. The rest are on Coruscant or some mission. I guess I could scrounge up 
maybe five."

"You could borrow the four I own if you wanted to drop and fire," Luke offered. "Though please 
don't actually drop them."

"You own four? And you looked at me funny for keeping one in my bedside drawer," Felicity 
told. "Wait, if I take all of your blasters, won't that leave you weaponless?"

"I'll have my lightsaber to protect myself."

Felicity raised an eyebrow, "In other words, you're dead."

"You might want to ask everyone on Jabba's sail barge how ineffective I am with a lightsaber."

"You do know I have no idea who Jabba is or what happened on his sail barge? Do you get 
completely overtaken? Or did you get lucky with your laser sword and kill everyone on board?"

Luke narrowed his eyes slightly unsure if she was mocking him or just teasing him, "It's not a laser 
sword, it's a lightsaber. An elegant weapon from a more civilized age."

Something in Felicity's face changed. If Luke struggled to tell if there was humor behind her words 
before, he could tell they were now gone completely.

"There's nothing civilized about a lightsaber," Felicity muttered looking down.

Luke could feel the difference in the Force. The shields in the back of Felicity's mind had shot up, 
and the aura around her had darkened. Something about lightsabers had set off her defenses.

They sat for a minute in silence, Felicity staring at her plate to avoid eye contact with everyone. The
tension in the room was so thick that nobody noticed when Han walked through the door.

Felicity finally spoke, "If you're still offering those blasters, Skywalker, I'll take them. You can enjoy your little glow stick of death all you want, but to me there's nothing better than a good blaster at my side."

"A good blaster at your side?" Han's eyebrows lifted at the girl as he recalled once saying something similar. "Sweetheart, I have no idea who you are, or what you're doing in my house, but I think I like you."

"Thanks," Felicity dryly said.


"Finally! We can eat!" Ben exclaimed as Han took the seat next to him. With a challenging smirk, Ben made eye contact with Luke and deliberately used the Force to call the bread roll back to his plate.

Luke shook his head.

"Since we're on the topic," Han said as everyone began piling food on their plates. "Who are you and what are you doing in my house?"

"Han, this is Felicity Rhiaon," Leia introduced. "She's an old friend of mine who will be joining you on your trip tomorrow. We've been meaning to catch up for a while so I invited her to dinner."

"Oh, good," Han replied. "I thought she was another one of Luke's girlfriends."

Luke choked on his glass of water.

"Han!" Leia swatted his arm.

"What? He goes through them so quickly, I can't keep track sometimes."

"I don't go through girlfriends quickly!" Luke objected.

"Luke, we've had cans of soup in our cupboard longer than some of your relationships."

Felicity snickered, covering her mouth with the back of her hand. She cleared her throat and put on her best false innocence look as she caught Luke's scowling glare.

"Yep, definitely like her. Good sense of humour," Han raised his glass at Felicity. "And I'm definitely stealing that glow stick of death thing."

---

2 Months, 3 Days

As Han walked into the cockpit of the Millennium Falcon, Luke was sitting in the co-pilot's seat deep in conversation with Felicity, who standing behind him.

"It just gets everywhere," Luke was in the middle of saying to Felicity.

"I know," Felicity laughed. "I swear, it's been ten years and I'm still finding it in my clothing. But you know, that's not even the worst part about desert living-"

"I'm sorry," Han loudly interrupted. "Are you two talking about sand?"
"Not sand," Luke quickly corrected as his face reddened. "Desert living. Apparently Felicity actually lived on a desert planet called Jakku for about a month. I was just comparing it to Tatooine."

"Jakku?" Han raised an eyebrow. "That junkyard?"

"It wasn't exactly by choice," Felicity answered. "Anyways, what I was saying was that sand isn't the worst part of desert living: it's the hunger. Water wasn't too bad an issue on Jakku, but food portions were the literal currency."

"That's so odd. On Tatooine it was the opposite, enough food but no water."

"Okay, if you two are done being… strange," Han took a long pause as he shot a judgemental look at each of them, "there's some kids we're going to go rescue. Fliss, can I call you Fliss?"

"Sure," Felicity shrugged.

"Fliss, you better go strap in in the back with the others," Han ordered. "Luke, you're my co-pilot. We're going to go pick up Chewie on Kashyyyk and then head to the Meridian System. And, Fliss? Leia told me about your… luck with ships… Don't touch anything."

"Aye, aye, Captain. Let me know when we can move about freely. Skywalker here thinks he can beat me at dejarik," Felicity winked at Luke and exited the cockpit.

"Hey, do you know how many times I've played?" Luke got out of his seat and called after her from the door. "Your credit chip is mine, Rhiaon!"

Luke grinned to himself and turned back to his seat. He was surprised to see Han staring at him with an eyebrow raised.


"Nothing," Han said. "Help me put in the coordinates."

"Kashyyyk's number one on the list of favorite routes, right?" Luke sat down in the co-pilot seat and started working.

"That's right," Han pressed a few buttons.

The men sat in silence as they readied the ship for takeoff.

"Hey, Luke?"

"Yeah, Han?"

"Marry that girl."

Luke just looked at Han like he was crazy.

---

3 Months, 7 Days

"Luke, I cannot thank you enough for agreeing to come with me to Zygerria," Felicity repeated for the umpteenth time as Luke piloted their ship to Zygerria.

Felicity had been struggling to get Queen Thali – who liked to refer to Felicity as Miss Rayon – to allow Zygerria to join the Republic, but discovered that Thali was very interested in meeting Luke
Skywalker. Luke had agreed to accompany Felicity on her Emissary planet visit, unaware of the danger they were about to wander into.

"I really owe you one," Felicity continued.

"Don't think anything of it," Luke replied. "It's my duty as a Jedi to act as keeper of the peace."

"Yeah, well this isn't so much peacekeeping as it is desperately trying to break Zygerrian from a mindset of brutality and subjugation."

Luke looked at Felicity.

"I tend to use ostentatious language while I'm on the clock," Felicity quickly explained. "Sort of picked it up from Leia and her father when I was younger."

"Leia does have an extensive vocabulary when she's being professional… and insulting Han." Luke paused, "I'm sorry, this is probably going to be the strangest segue you've ever heard, but speaking of Han, can I ask you why Queen Thali keeps calling you Miss Rayon?"

Felicity frowned, "That is the strangest segue I've ever heard."

"Well, I thought your name was pronounced Ree-On. Or is it like Han, and everyone pronounces it differently without there be a correct way of saying it?"

Felicity smiled, "No, it's pronounced just the one way: Ree-On."

"Then why don't you correct Thali when she says Rayon?"

"It's a mind game," Felicity explained. "She knows it's pronounced Ree-On, but she's using Master/Slave mentality. Thali chooses to call me Rayon because it sends the message that I'm so beneath her that I'm not important enough for her to remember my name. If I call her out on it and correct her, she wins. We're going to get a lot of that type of thing during this visit, so be aware and don't give in."

"I'll stay on alert." Luke glanced at the navi computer, "One hour until arrival."

"Well, if we haven't killed each other in the last sixteen hours, I don't think we're about to start," Felicity spun in the co-pilot seat.

She and Luke were the only people aboard the small Emissary vessel. Technically the Emissary in charge was supposed to fly, but Nils had insisted Luke pilot instead. He had informed Luke that Felicity was so terrible at landings that she had a black mark against her name and was forbidden from flying any government owned craft.

"So," Felicity said. "We got time to kill. You want to tell me what you were doing on Coruscant at the office when Thali visited? Don't you live with your sister on Hosnian Prime?"

"No," Luke quickly answered. "Well… okay, yes I live with my sister… sort of. She's got a place on Coruscant too, being the Senator and all. I sort of move around a lot, so it's never really made sense for me to get my own place."

"Hey, I'm not judging you for living with your sister. I'd love to live with my brother if he wasn't… dead," Felicity became quiet.

Luke watched her, waiting for a signal of what to do next. He could see her walls go up in the same
way they had when discussing lightsabers.

Felicity cleared her throat, "Uh, Nils said your case was ongoing, and ergo confidential. I can't ask him for details, but I'm allowed to ask you."

"Oh, I'm just having some issues with the base planet of my Jedi Order," Luke explained pushing forward the change of conversation. At his response he could already see Felicity relaxing. "I've been permitted to build the temple – which should be opening next month – but I've run into some roadblocks when it came to building any residences."

"Why's that?"

"I picked a planet called Rornian that is strong with the Force, but also unclaimed, uninhabited, and undeveloped planet. There's no pre-existing authority of any kind on Rornian, no sentient species, and it's the only planet in its system. However, it is in Republic controlled space, so the Republic is in charge of the matter."

"Ouch! No pre-existing authority whatsoever?" Felicity winced, "That's a lot of paperwork."

"Nils said it would probably be minimum a year before we settled everything," Luke sighed. "You'll probably see me around your office a lot."

"You bet I will. Luke, that's only going to be a year if every person in the office stops what they're doing and devotes twelve hours a day, seven days a week to your case. And no offense, you're a nice guy, but I like my weekends off."

Luke frowned, "How long will it be then?"

Felicity thought hard, "Well, the Republic has to set up a body of Government on Rornian. In order to do that, you have to have residents, some of which can't be a part of your organization – say one person for every thirty you have – and you'll need a place for them to live. You have to buy the property for them to build on, and in order to do that, the land needs to be claimed. With your temple residing there, you have a good case for claiming it yourself, but that will need to be approved. Honestly, I'd say this is easily three to four years of paperwork."

Luke's jaw dropped, "Four years?"

"You might want one of your Jedi to buy a place on Coruscant. Otherwise that'll be a hell of a commute."

Luke couldn't believe it, "You know, maybe I had my information wrong. I'll talk to Nils when we get back. That can't truly be four years of work."

"Whatever you say," Felicity shook her head. "Well, I suppose since we're getting close to Zygerria, now would be a good time to go over the rules again. As I've said before you are here as an agent of the Emissary Office, not as a Jedi or a private citizen. Everything you do directly reflects myself and this office. Don't screw it up, Skywalker."

"I'll try not to," Luke laughed. "You really don't have to go over the rules again. You made them pretty clear when you refused to let me bring Artoo along."

"Personal products such as droids can be used to collect confidential information, hence why they are forbidden. Just be glad I talked Nils into letting you bring your lightsaber, and trust me, I really did not want to."
"Someday I'm going to convince you to tell me why you hate lightsabers so much."

"If thinking that helps you sleep at night," Felicity shrugged. She then became very serious, "Luke, this last part is the most important. While we're in Zygerria, as Senate Emissaries we will be bound by both the laws of Zygerria and the Republic. That means the Republic won't allow us to participate in slavery whatever the capacity, and Zygerria will not allow us to interfere with anyone else attempting to participate. I know that this is a lot to ask you, but I don't have a choice-"

"I understand, Felicity," Luke assured her. "But hopefully we can convince Zygerria to end this and save even more people. And perhaps if any runaway slaves might just happen to sneak aboard this ship-"

"We'd return them immediately to Zygerria," Felicity interrupted. She shot Luke a hard look, "Luke, I know this is a horrible situation, but I need you to promise me that you will not help any slave escape this planet."

Luke took a deep breath, "I promise."

It was a promise Luke would be forced to break.

But then… so would Felicity.

---

3 Months, 12 Days

“Alright,” Felicity announced as she walked into the Organa-Solo living room where Luke was sitting on the couch. She had just returned from the Senate building after giving her report on the mission gone massively wrong. “So the good news is that we got Zygerria to join the New Republic, slavery is now illegal on that planet, and you found a bunch of new Jedi for your order.”

Luke raised a brow at Felicity, “And the bad news?”

Felicity gave a sheepish smile, “We got captured and sold into slavery because Thali didn’t like me and she thought your father killed her mother… And we also may have just started a civil war between Thali and her sister.”

Luke sighed, “You know, this is probably at least the third war my family accidentally started.”

“I haven’t even gotten to the worst part for you.”

“Oh?”

“I spoke with Nils, and there’s a little problem with the Rornian case. It’s now been given the status of a refugee camp until everything gets sorted out with the legal statuses of Gavyn, Alyla, and the rest of the former slaves. Nils is going to tell you tomorrow that you must cease construction on your Jedi Temple until it loses its refugee camp status because there are laws against undue religious influences in refugee havens.”

Luke groaned, “Perfect. How long will the delays be?”

“Probably four to six months,” Felicity plopped down on the couch next to Luke. “Sorry. I know halting construction will be expensive.”

Luke shook his head, “At least we now have time to sort through the collection of Jedi artifacts Coria managed to hoard. Finally, we’ll end our lightsaber shortage.”
Felicity barked a laugh, “I have no idea how you even managed to only have three lightsabers in your Order for six years. I get that you only had about six people, but come on, Luke!”

“It has been interesting,” Luke chuckled, leaning back against the couch.

Felicity followed suit, leaning back against the couch cushions. She was sitting close enough to him that her leg was brushing against his. It was an intimate distance, and was about to get much more personal.

“Hey, Luke,” Felicity casually grabbed his thigh, “you never mentioned Obik was in your Order.”

Luke shrugged, unthinking as he rested his arm on the back of the couch behind Felicity, “Didn’t know to mention it. He’s never told me you knew each other.”

Felicity scowled, “I’m going to kill him.”

“Please don’t. It would make Reine very unhappy. They only finally went out last night.”

“About time. He’s had the biggest crush on her since before I even met him.”

Luke chuckled and the pair fell into a comfortable silence. There was no pressure for conversation, just the desire to enjoy each other’s company was they sat there and dwelled on their deepest thoughts. It was a marvel to Luke how relaxed he felt around her.

As he sat in the quiet, Luke thought about Felicity and her actions over the past several weeks. How desperate she was to complete her Emissary mission to Zygerria, and how happy she was when Zygerria finally outlawed slavery. Something deep down nagged at Luke; there was something off about the situation.

“Felicity?” Luke finally asked. “I hope I’m not overstepping my bounds, but… was there something personal about your actions on Zygerria? You seemed very… tense.”

Felicity’s hand moved off Luke’s thigh.

“No,” Felicity said shortly, looking away from him. Her body had gone very rigid. “Nothing at all.”

Luke frowned. He started to open his mouth to respond when he froze. Felicity watched the look on his face as he put it all together and realized what was so important about the number two billion.


Felicity looked down at the ground and tears gathered in her eyes. She looked so sad and innocent in that moment. A part of Luke wanted to do nothing more than pull her into his arms and hold her until
the sorrow was gone.

“It’s my fault, Luke,” Felicity’s voice broke. “I could have held onto the plans until Shara Bey picked up Diego and I. But I decided it would be better to transmit them to Leia.”

“Felicity, the Empire was hunting you down. Transferring it was the safest route.”

“But it wasn’t!” Felicity snapped. “Leia got caught and I didn’t. Because of that, Alderaan was destroyed. And it’s all my fault!”

For the first time Luke had known her, Felicity Rhiaon broke down into tears in front of him. Up to that moment Luke had mostly seen the smirking, sarcastic, snarky side of her. He had seen her happy and he had seen her angry, but he had never seen her at the deep, dark sorrow she fought so hard to hide from everyone. Luke didn’t understand at the time truly how important it was that she felt comfortable enough to do that in front of him.

In that moment, all Luke knew was he wanted to make her pain go away.

“Felicity,” Luke whispered, daring to wrap his arms around her. To his surprise, she instantly threw her arms around him and buried her face into his chest.

He held her, stroking her hair and trying to comfort her through the Force. Luke didn’t outright ask Felicity to go into her mind, but he did it in a very obvious way. When Felicity didn’t say anything, and he felt her barriers relax, Luke pushed in further. It wasn’t far; he merely dipped his toe into the pond.

Images flashed through her mind. A man he would later learn to be Brendan. One he would learn to be Riz. One who would be Alaric. A man he did know to be Bail Organa. An explosion in a town square, and Felicity falling to her knees in the hallway of the old Senate building. A tattoo forced on her arm. Mon Mothma delivering the news of another Death Star. The breath of Darth Vader. His imposing mask. A young Felicity laying in pain on the floor of a hallway while Vader stood over her with his lightsaber. On her back there was-

“Stop,” Felicity suddenly said.

Luke pulled back and looked at her, “I’m sorry.”

Felicity gently smiled, “It’s okay, you just went a little too far.”

“It won’t happen again.”

Luke and Felicity stared at each other in silence for a long stretch of time. Luke could feel her pain, her fear, and yet there still was still a lightness in her heart. She still had hope and she still had love, even if she didn’t believe she deserved it.


“Yes, I am,” Felicity insisted. “I have hurt so many people… and they’ve hurt me. I think about it all the time, what happened on the Death Star. What happened to Alderaan. When we were on Jakku, Diego asked me why we were the ones who survived. All of them – Riz, Ji-Dan, Gunner – they all had children. They had families. Ji-Dan and Gunner had their wives, and Riz had his parents. Diego and I had nothing. They were the ones who deserved to live. I remember Diego saying that we didn’t deserve it. And I told him that we had to prove we were worthy, and deserved to survive. That’s
why I’m a Senate Emissary rather than an architect.”


“My dream job since I was a little girl,” Felicity shrugged. “I took some classes at the universities when I was recruiting people for the Rebellion. My professors said I had a natural talent for it. I even have these plans to my perfect home I’ve been designing and refining since I was a child. But I chose not to pursue my dream, because I need to make up for the deaths I caused. I thought if I freed all those slaves, maybe I could forgive myself for Alderaan… but I can’t, because at the end of the day I am so broken that I will never be worth anything.”

Luke gave no words of comfort; he just stared at her with a serious look on his face.

“Stay here,” Luke ordered. He stood and went to his room, emerging a few minutes later with something in his hand. He sat back on the couch, just as close to Felicity as before and held up the object, “Do you know what this is?”

Felicity frowned, “A rock?”

“This is a kyber crystal,” Luke looked down and fiddled with it. His fingers ran over a prominent crack in the crystal, “I got this in my most recent collection of Jedi artifacts Lando procured for me. Ben has asked if he can have it, but I’ve told him no. I never want something like this in his hands.”

“Why?”

“This crystal has been corrupted with the Dark Side. It’s been forced to perform evil things, and when a kyber crystal is used for the Dark Side, it bleeds. That’s why if you put it in a lightsaber, it will project a red blade.”

Felicity gave a sharp intake of breath, “A Sith crystal.”

“Lightsaber crystals are a high value black market item,” Luke continued. “Your average crystal will run you somewhere between five and six thousand credits. A Sith crystal is even rarer and more valuable. It’ll run between ten and twelve thousand. But this one here is cracked. If you put it in a saber without proper ventilation, something like a cross guard – which would run the risk of cutting off your hand – the saber would explode. How much do you think this crystal costs?”

Felicity sniffed and wiped her eyes on her sleeve, “I don’t know… three thousand?”

Luke looked her straight in the eyes, “Seven thousand.”

Felicity frowned.

Luke carefully reached forward with his left hand and took Felicity’s. With his right hand, he raised up the crystal and held her gaze as he spoke.

“This is still a Sith crystal, Felicity,” Luke spoke slowly. “Yes, it is damaged and very few people would want to bother with it. But someone out there will believe this is the greatest thing they could have in their life, and for them it would be an insult to even consider putting a price on it. Just because something is broken, Felicity, doesn’t mean it’s worthless.”

Luke placed the crystal in Felicity’s palm.

“I want you to have this,” Luke said.

“You can,” Luke closed her hand over it. “And every time you look at this, I want you to remember that even though you think you’re broken… you’re still worth something. To me. To Diego. To Leia. To the two billion slaves you just freed. And to the trillions you saved by defeating the Death Star.”

“Don’t you mean the trillions you saved?”

“No. I just fired a shot. You were the one who showed me where to aim. You made sure that Ji-Dan, Riz, Gunner, Bail Organa, and everyone on Alderaan didn’t die for nothing.”

Felicity smiled, “You really believe that?”

“Absolutely. Your team died knowing that their leader was someone worth dying for. You are worthy of surviving, Felicity Rhiaon,” Luke whispered. He used his thumb to wipe a tear rolling down he cheek, “And I swear to you, Felicity. I will never hurt you.”

Felicity reached up and placed a hand on Luke’s cheek, “Thank you.”


3 Months, 20 Days

“Hey, Leia,” Felicity opened the door to her apartment to find Leia and Luke standing at the entrance. “You ready to go to lunch?”


“Of course not,” Felicity waved off. “Always good to see my favorite Jedi. But don’t tell Obik I called you that.”

Luke chuckled, “My lips are sealed.”

“Come in,” Felicity ushered them in. “I just have to send a quick message to Arlos about one of my cases. Make yourselves comfortable.”

As Felicity went over to her computer and Leia settled on the couch, Luke observed the small apartment with interest. It looked like it had been professionally decorated with its trendy colours and clean looks. The kitchen was spacious and modern; granite countertops and the appliances looked barely touched. Luke would later learn that they were barely touched because Felicity couldn’t cook anything that wasn’t “put in the oven for 20 minutes at 350 degrees.”

The walls were mostly decorated with personal Holos, although a few paintings hung among them.

Luke observed one painting in particular of a sun rising over a lake. Signed in the corner was a signature that looked to say D Andromias.

“Dinah Andromias,” Leia’s voice sounded behind Luke. “Felicity’s mother. Died when Felicity was young but was a very talented painter from what I’ve seen of her work. I remember seeing this in the hallway of the Rhiaon family apartment.”

“I wonder how she managed to get this,” Luke sometimes forgot that Leia had been childhood friends with Felicity. “If her father died on the Death Star, I doubt his possessions would go to his known Rebel daughter.”
“Felicity has her ways,” Leia shrugged. Her eyes then locked on a Holo, “Now there’s a face I haven’t seen in a long time. Brendan Rhiaon – Felicity’s brother. I had such a crush on him.”

Luke studied the picture of the handsome young man, “Her brother? …He’s dead, right?”

Leia sighed, “Such a waste. Good soldier and great man. Went in a pretty tragic way that really messed up Felicity. I don’t think she would be the same woman she is today if he hadn’t died. But I don’t think I should tell you anything else without Felicity’s permission.”

“Your suspicions are correct,” Felicity looked up from her computer on the dining table. “So, why are we stuck with Luke today?”

“We’ve been looking at apartments for him all morning,” Leia answered.


“I took your advice about how to deal with the Emissary office on such a regular basis,” Luke replied. “You were right: it’s going to be at least four years and I think permanently taking over Leia’s Coruscanti apartment is abusing her hospitality too much.”

“Does a farmboy like you have the money for an apartment on Coruscant?”

Luke and Leia exchanged a look.


Felicity raised an eyebrow, “And the long answer?”


“Yeah,” Luke looked at the ground.

“Have you found anything?” Felicity quickly changed the subject.


“I’m not being picky, Leia,” Luke rolled his eyes. “It’s just that there are some very specific features I need to survive.”

“Luke, I know for a fact that you once lived in your X-Wing, stranded on an asteroid for three months. Tell me again that you need two bathrooms.”

“Alright, I’m ready to go,” Felicity went over to the closet to grab her jacket. “Leia can regale me with tales of your pickiness on our way to the restaurant. Oh, and you’ve got to try the roast leek soup at this place, Luke. I would literally kill a man for a bowl of it. No hyperbole. I mean it.”

Felicity was just about to grab her purse when there was a knock at the door.

“I’ve got it,” Leia offered.

She opened the door to reveal a short, middle-aged, balding man with salt and pepper hair, a dark complexion, and round spectacles that sat on the end of his nose.

“Hey, Osto,” Felicity greeted. “Guys, this is my landlord and the building manager, Osto Foss. He
lives just downstairs. Osto, these are my friends Luke and Leia.”


“A pleasure,” Leia said at the same time, looking as regal as ever.

“The pleasure’s all mine,” Osto smiled warmly at them. “Miss Rhiaon, pardon for interrupting, but… did you get kidnapped again?”

“A couple weeks ago,” Felicity shrugged. “Did my banks freeze my accounts again?”

“Unfortunately.”

“Dang it! Nils said he would stop telling them when I get kidnapped. It always messes up my bills when that happens.”

Luke stared at Felicity, “This happens often?”

“Kidnapping occurs in at least 20% of Emissary missions,” Felicity shrugged. “My bank freezes my accounts to prevent impersonation or ransom, but it happens often enough that things like my rent payments end up bouncing, despite having the money. I’m sorry, Osto. I’ll send you the transfer by tonight.”

“I know you will,” Osto nodded. “You’ve never let me down yet. I would have just called, but I also wanted to give you a head’s up. Do the owners of the penthouse still let you access the roof?”

“Yeah,” Felicity nodded. She looked over at Luke and Leia and explained, “The building has this really nice roof space where I like to stargaze and workout. Technically it’s off limits as it’s the property of the owners of the penthouse, but they never use it and let me have access.”

“Unfortunately, it looks like that is coming to an end. The owners are selling. They’re staging the first open house today.”

“Oh, that’s too bad,” Felicity moaned. “I really like that roof. Now I’m going to have to find a gym.”

Felicity paused, a thought occurring to her.

“Hey, Osto?” Felicity furrowed her brow in a thinking face, “You said they had an open house… Would you mind if I took a look at the apartment? I’ve always wondered what it looked like, and plus I’d like to have one last moment on the roof.”

“I can take you there now,” Osto offered.

“You guys wouldn’t mind?” Felicity asked the twins. “I know our reservations are in twenty minutes—”

“Felicity,” Leia laughed, “I’m the Senator of Coruscant… they’ll push back the time.”

“That apartment was amazing,” Luke declared as they got off the private elevator to the roof. “Three bedrooms, state of the art appliances, comes furnished!”

“We had the tour too, Luke,” Felicity chuckled as they stepped onto the roof.

It was a large greenspace with lots of room to move, and a few nice patio chairs placed near the edge of the roof.
“There’s the private elevator that accesses the ground floor, the roof, and the penthouse,” Osto had been showing off all the features of the penthouse to the group. The group told him it wasn’t necessary, but he insisted it was a chance for practice when the real tours came. “There’s also a set of stairs in case of emergency, and fire escapes on the side.”

“I run the staircase twice, every morning,” Felicity added. “Oh, and tell them about the roof edge.”

“We have the market’s best force field generator on the rim,” Osto declared. “You can’t hear it or see it, but if you bump into it, it’ll stop you from falling to your death, plus it’s got the gentlest touch. No burning sensation at all.”

“Wow,” Luke looked around the roof in amazement, “I could just see my Jedi training out here, and the generator would make it safe. I can’t believe how perfect this place is. See, Leia, why couldn’t you get the realtor to show me something like this? This is exactly what I—”


“Osto… How much are they asking?” Luke inquired.

Osto pulled out his datapad and showed Luke the listing.


Very slowly his eyes flicked over to Felicity, who was staring out at the gorgeous view of the city below.

“Felicity…” Luke said leisurely. “Would it be… weird if I put an offer on this place?”

“This place?” Felicity looked surprised. “To own?”

“It’s the perfect place for me.”

“He’s right,” Leia agreed. “It’s the best place we’ve seen.”

“Would you be okay with me living here?” Luke asked, looking very eager.

“Well… I guess that depends,” Felicity thought about it. “Could I still use the roof?”

“Yes.”

“Can you give me a ride when we have mutual Resistance missions?”

“Sure.”

“Can you get my mail when I’m off-planet?”

“Only if you get mine.”


4 Months, 23 Days

“Twenty-seven… twenty-eight… twenty-nine…” Luke was in the middle of working out the first morning after he had moved into his penthouse apartment.
It was about six in the morning, but the sun was already high in the sky. It was warm enough for Luke to be working out shirtless, sweat glistening off him as he did a series of sit-ups. He was so focused on his routine that he didn’t notice he was no longer alone until he heard the all too familiar, teasing tone.

“Damn. I must have really done something right to deserve this.”

Luke sat up to see Felicity watching him by the door to the staircase. Her hair was pulled back in a ponytail and she wore workout gear. Her arms were folded, her signature one corner smirk was plastered across her face, and she made absolutely no attempt to hide that she was checking him out.

“You know my birthday was a few months ago?” Felicity bit her lip and let her eyes drift over Luke’s sculpted chest, “But I am all for the belated present.”

“Good morning, Felicity,” Luke shook his head as he rose to his feet and tried to remember where he had put his shirt. “How are you this morning?”

“Regretful that this is the first time I’ve been able to see you shirtless.”

Luke frowned, “You saw me shirtless on Zygerria.”

“Yeah, but we were captured and enslaved. I didn’t get the chance to appreciate the view… and my, what a stunning view.”

“Okay, the shirt’s going back on,” Luke used the Force to summon it. “You look like you’re about ready to jump me, and if we continue like this, you might do something we’d regret.”

Felicity barked a laugh, “Oh, Luke… Not to brag, but if I were to have my wicked way with you, it would certainly not be something you regret.”

“Noted,” Luke said flatly. “So, I assume you’re up here to run the stairs? Or have I become your new target of mockery?”

“New target of mockery? You think I would go out of my way to have a specific person to mock?”

“Felicity, you do know I’m friends with Diego, Obi, and Leia?”

“Dang it,” Felicity muttered. “I’m going to have to pick a new target. You think I’ll get a lot of material with Han?”

“I am washing my hands of this,” Luke held up his hands defensively.

“Noted,” Felicity chuckled. “And yes, I’m here to run the stairs. Or at least I was going to.”

“What’s stopping you.” Luke paused, “Is this about me shirtless?”

“No, that was just an early morning bonus,” Felicity smirked. “I just don’t see a point in running these stairs. I’ve been doing it every day for a couple years now. There’s no challenge anymore.”

“I get it. I had the same feeling training on Dagobah. You can only run around a swamp with a… whatever Yoda was on your back so many times.”


“I have so many questions about that sentence I don’t even know where to start.”

Luke couldn’t help but smile, “Some questions are better not answered.”

“Agreed.”

“So why don’t you change your workout routine? Maybe go for a run around the neighborhood? We’re in a pretty safe sector. I don’t see the harm.”

“I’m not sure I have the brain power to come up with a new running route until I’ve had breakfast, and unfortunately my oven’s currently broken.”


Felicity frowned, “What? Together?”

“Why not?” Luke shrugged. “I’m new in town… or planet. I don’t know the area very well, and I could use a little bit of a tour. It’d be my treat.”

“Well, there is this diner that just opened. Or reopened. It was closed either by the Empire, or the owner closed it out of fear of the Empire.”

“Sounds possibly dangerous.”

“No, actually the reason the owner was threatened by the Empire was apparently he’s pretty pro-Jedi. Maybe even had a close friend in the Jedi Order.”

Felicity saw the ecstatic look on Luke’s face.

“We’re going to the diner, aren’t we?” Felicity asked flatly.

“I’ll grab my credit chip.”

“Here we are, Dex’s Diner,” Felicity announced as they entered the restaurant.

It was on the smaller side, and not very busy. It looked just like any typical diner that served the best cup of coffee you’d ever tasted and food that was half its weight in grease.

Luke instantly liked the place because when he walked in, the conversations didn’t stop as every eye fell on him. It had been a while since he walked into a restaurant on Coruscant without being recognized.

“Seems like a decent place,” Luke said, looking around. “Do we just sit, or-?”

“You and your little lady grab a booth, Hon!” A WA-7 waitress droid suddenly answered his question from across the room. “I’ll be with you in a sec.”

“Little lady?” Felicity scowled as she and Luke crawled into opposite seats of a nearby booth. “I’m not sure if that’s supposed to be unintentionally sexist or a quip about my height. Either way, I’m pissed.”

“It’s just a droid,” Luke laughed. “And in its defence, they’re not programmed to discriminate… and you are pretty short.”

“You wanna start this, Skywalker? Because step ladders are not exactly redundant to you, are they?”
“Sorry about the wait, Kids,” the waitress droid wheeled over to them and put down a couple of menus on the table. “I’m FLO, and welcome to Dex’s. Can I start you with anything? Juice? Tea? Blue milk?”

“I’ll just have a cup of caf,” Felicity replied. “Luke, same?”

“Not a big caf person,” Luke scanned the menu. “Wait, you have Jawa juice?”

“Best you can find on Coruscant,” FLO answered. “I’ll get you a cup, Honey. You’ll think you’re on Tatooine.”

“Jawa juice?” Felicity scowled. “Where does the juice of a Jawa come from?”

“You don’t want to know,” Luke shuddered.

“I’ll get right on that, Hon,” FLO whizzed away.

Felicity scooted out of the booth, “I’m going to run to the fresher.”

Luke nodded, and went back to scanning the menu. A few minutes later, FLO returned with their drinks.

“Thank you, FLO,” Luke always made it a habit to use a droid’s name. It helped them know he thought of them as more than machines made to serve his needs.

“No problem, Hon,” FLO answered. “Any questions about the menu?”

“Not about the menu, but I heard that the owner of this diner is very pro-Jedi?”

“Oh, absolutely! Dex had a good buddy that was a Jedi.”

“May I ask who that Jedi was?”


Felicity stopped in front of a picture of two very handsome men in Jedi robes. The one on the left was a bearded ginger with a serious look, and the other on the right had blonde hair, blue eyes, and a teasing look with a touch of darkness lurking underneath.

Luke knew that the blonde man was his father, but the man on the left was identified with a caption on the Holo frame.

**OBI-WAN KENOBI**


“Oh yeah,” FLO had followed the pair to the picture. “That’s Dex’s old friend. Used to come in here at least three times a month when he got tired of the food they served at the Temple.”

“Oh my goodness,” Luke looked around the diner in excitement. “Obi-Wan Kenobi used to come to this diner?”

“All the time,” FLO confirmed. “Dex has such a plethora of stories about him.”

“Would you mind if I speak to him? I would love to meet a friend of Obi-Wan’s and hear the
stories.”

“Sorry, Hon, but no. Dex doesn’t really like to share them with just anyone. You never know who to trust and Old Republic Jedi have a bit of a mixed reputation. Doesn’t want to sully the memory or be questioned on it.”

“Oh, I think Dex would be more than happy to speak to this one,” Felicity playfully bumped her hip against Luke. She imitated the droid’s voice, “Tell him who you are, Hon.”

FLO’s head swerved to look at Luke.

Luke looked around to make sure no one was listening, and then sighed, “My name is Luke Skywalker. My father was Anakin Skywalker, and I was trained to be a Jedi by Master Yoda, and Obi-Wan Kenobi.”

FLO was silent for a long minute, and then said, “I’ll be right back.”

“I just can’t believe it,” Luke turned to look back at the picture of Obi-Wan and Anakin. They could hear FLO yelling for Dex in the kitchen. “I get to hear more stories about Obi-Wan.”

Felicity chuckled, “You are just a essentially an Obi-Wan Kenobi fan at heart, aren’t you? Though I can see why… This is weird to say, but if that’s what Obi-Wan Kenobi looked like… I must say he looks pretty good.”

Luke raised an eyebrow, “You… You do?”

“Come on, Luke. Look at him. Chiselled features, but with that hint of softness rather than that sort of sharp angular look. Confident, but easy going, kind blue eyes. That curly blonde hair-”

Wait. What?

“And the scar over the eye really pulls it all together,” Felicity finished with a sort of dreamy look.

“The scar?” Luke repeated, his jaw hanging open. “Felicity, which man are you talking about?”

“The one on the right,” Felicity answered, oblivious to her error. “I must say, he looks a little younger than I thought he would be, but, hey, if I were thirty years older, or he was thirty years younger, I’d go for it.”

“You would?”

“Absolutely,” Felicity grinned, looking at the picture.

“I see,” Luke crossed his arms. He stared silently at the picture for a long moment before saying, “Felicity… Obi-Wan is the one on the left.”

Felicity frowned, “Then who’s the one on the right?”

Luke tried to hold back his smile.

“Dex will be at your booth in a second, Hon,” FLO returned to them. “You wanna sit back down and I’ll get you two some breakfast? Dex says if you are who you say you are, it’s on the house, Honey.”

“Just a minute,” Felicity stopped them. “FLO, who is the other man in this Holo? You only labeled one.”

“Oh, we used to have both names up, but we got too many complaints, and it drove off business. That’s why Dex doesn’t like telling stories; people don’t like the association Dex has with him.”

“But who is he?” Felicity looked back at the picture for clues. “Who could Dex have known that people would-”

Then it clicked.

“No,” Felicity whispered.


“Luke,” Felicity’s voice was serious. “Did I just say that I was attracted to… Darth Vader?”

“I don’t know what’s more strange about it,” Luke answered. “That you said you were attracted to the man you despise most in the Galaxy… or that you said you would take a shot at my father… and I’m not talking about the time you actually shot him.”

“Luke!” Felicity exclaimed. “You let me go on about how hot I thought Vader was! I mean, sure, okay, fine, he’s a very attractive man. He would have to be considering how attractive you are, and you are so attractive that say the word and I’ll be all over that in a hot second, but come on, Skywalker!”

“Wait, what was that about me?”


Luke turned and found himself suddenly trapped in the hug of a four arm bulbous creature. Luke was caught off guard, not expecting the sudden affection, but returned the hug when he sensed Dex’s good intentions.

“Sorry, Kid,” Dex pulled back. “I’m a pretty friendly guy.”


“Wow, would you look at you,” Dex gave Luke the once over. “You don’t have his height, but you look every bit like your father. May he rest in peace.”

“Well, you don’t hear that very often for Darth Vader,” Felicity muttered.

“And who’s your little lady?” Dex asked.

Luke watched as Felicity bristled, “A friend, Dex. This is Felicity Rhiaon.”

“Nice to meet you,” Felicity shook Dex’s hand. “And he’s right. We’re friends, nothing more.”

“Typical Skywalker,” Dex chuckled. “You know your father was quite the ladies’ man. It seemed every time he came in, he was talking about some girl or other. Got him in a lot of trouble sometimes. I remember the time the Queen of Zygerria herself wanted to keep Anakin as basically her pet. Ani was not happy about that.”

Felicity burst out laughing, “I’m sorry… Ani?”

Felicity couldn’t stop laughing, “Darth Vader was called Ani?”

Luke narrowed his eyes at Felicity, “Do you need a moment?”

“Nah, I’m good,” Felicity was still chuckling but managed to compose herself. “And to clarify, do you mean that Queen Miraj tried to make him her pet?”

“Yeah,” Dex nodded. “How’d you know that?”


“We… ran into some troubles with her daughter, Thali,” Luke quickly answered.

Dex’s face turned, “Look, here. Anakin Skywalker was a complicated man. I’m not going to pretend I was extremely surprised to learn he was Vader. The kid was messed up. He was far too old and attached to his mother to give in to the Jedi’s views on non-attachment. It didn’t help that the Council didn’t trust him, and didn’t want him to be trained in the first place. Even Obi-Wan only gave in because it was Qui-Gon’s dying wish. But Anakin Skywalker didn’t kill Miraj. Yes, Queen Miraj was a slaver, and Anakin was born into slavery, but he didn’t kill her. I said it when the Jedi Council dragged him into an investigation or the matter, I said it when Miraj’s daughter spread that rumour, and I’ll say it on my deathbed.”

“Wait, what?” Luke interrupted. “Anakin… was a slave?”

Dex blinked, “…I think there’s a few stories I need to tell you. Why don’t we sit?”

“Of course.”

Luke held out his arm and Dex headed for the booth. FLO was flagged down by another customer, and the waitress droid rolled over to them. However, Felicity didn’t move.


Felicity crossed her arms, “I didn’t really want to spend my Saturday morning hearing stories about Darth Vader.”

“Not Vader. Anakin.”

“It’s the same thing to me, Luke. Even if it isn’t for you.”

“You can go if you want, Felicity,” Luke offered. “I just… I’d like you to stay.”

Felicity frowned, her features softening, “You do?”

“I might need some emotional support, and I… I know I can trust you to support me. I know it sounds strange, but the Force is telling me to trust you. And I do.”

Felicity smiled, and rubbed his arm, “Alright. If you need me, I’ll stay,”

“Thank you,” Luke grinned that goofy grin she loved so much.

“Anytime,” Felicity promised. “Besides… I guess there had to be some good in Vader. He begot you.”

“Don’t ruin the moment, Skywalker,” Felicity linked her arm in his. “But, you owe me an Anakin Skywalker-free breakfast after a run at this diner.”

“How about we have a morning run and come here again tomorrow?” Luke suggested.

“Alright,” Felicity agreed. “But don’t think this is going to become a habit, Skywalker.”

For the next ten years, Luke and Felicity would go for a run and have breakfast at Dex’s Diner every single morning they were both on Coruscant.

5 Months, 28 Days

“Would you just ask Fliss out already?” Han rolled his eyes. He and Luke were busy working on the Falcon and Luke had once again spoken of nothing but Felicity.


“Don’t you Han me. You’re clearly attracted to her. You constantly talk about her, go running and have breakfast with her every morning, and you spend every single Saturday at her place teaching her how to cook.”

“That’s only because she doesn’t know how, and she’s teaching me how to do laundry in exchange.”

“How are you almost thirty and not know how to do laundry?”

“I grew up on Tatooine. We didn’t have enough water for a washing machine. After that, the Alliance dealt with all my laundry and housekeeping needs.”

“Then you freeloaded off us after the war,” Han added.

“Hey, I offered to pay rent,” Luke reminded. “It was Leia who refused.”

“Whatever. That doesn’t invalidate the fact that ever since Felicity Rhiaon walked into your life, your mind has been on nothing but her. Be honest, do you find her attractive? And I’m not just talking about physical attributes.”

Luke sighed, “If we’re being honest… Yes. I’m very much attracted to her. She’s beautiful, intelligent, athletic, witty-”

“I think sarcastic as hell is the term you’re looking for.”

“And definitely gives me a run for my money,” Luke chuckled.

“So, what’s holding you back? You think she doesn’t like you?”

“She wouldn’t spend every morning with me if she didn’t. And we have talked about maybe getting drinks or dinner sometime.”

“Then go for it,” Han encouraged. “If I have to see you date one more dime a dozen girl, can of soup girl, I’m going to do something I’ll regret.”

“Would you please stop calling my dates cans of soup?”
“Look Felicity may not be someone I can see throwing her life away for her friends like your ultimate goal is, but there’s something about that girl that’s pretty perfect for you. Go for it, Luke. I’m sure you won’t regret it.”


5 Months, 29 Days

“And that’s how you make bread,” Luke declared as they observed the misshapen loaf on Felicity’s kitchen counter. “A little time consuming, but a good staple.”

“Wow,” Felicity looked at the loaf in amazement, “if you told me weeks ago that I would be making bread today, I’d laugh in your face.”

“Well, you laugh in my face about so many things, I don’t think it would be much of a difference,” Luke chuckled as they started to load up the dishwasher.

He watched her for a moment, savoring the joyous look of pride on her face. A warm feeling spread through his body. Luke wanted to make her feel that way always.

“Go for it, Luke,” Han’s voice rang in his head. “I’m sure you won’t regret it.”

Luke took a deep breath. Here went nothing.


“Yeah, Luke?” Felicity was setting the dishwasher to run.

“I was thinking,” Luke began as Felicity turned to face him. He tried to lean casually against the stove, pretending the still cooling oven wasn’t hurting his skin. “Maybe you and I might-”

“Oh my gosh, is that the time?” Felicity exclaimed as her eyes fell on the oven display’s clock. “Dang it! I’ve got to go get ready! My boyfriend’s going to be here in an hour.”


“Drystan,” Felicity frantically pulled her hair out of her ponytail and untied her apron. “We’ve been going out for a few weeks now. Podracer. Really handsome. Plus he doesn’t mind me constantly going off on Emissary and Resistance missions.”

Luke just stared at Felicity, “Huh.”

“I’m sorry. I’ve got to start getting ready, but what were you going to say?”

“Oh, I, uh,” Luke searched his brain for an out, “I was thinking maybe you’d be interested in making an entire meal next week. Maybe invite Han and Leia?”

“Oh, that would be perfect. I love the idea! Maybe we should invite Obik and Reine. Oh! And you can meet Drystan!”

“Perfect,” Luke tried to sound enthusiastic.

“How’d it go?” Han asked later that night over the comm.
Luke frowned at the Holo of his brother-in-law, “Went great. Not only does she have a boyfriend, but we’re having dinner with him next week.”

“When you say we-”

“Oh, I am so dragging you down with me on this one, Han.” Luke sighed, “What was I even thinking? Of course she would have a boyfriend.”

“I’m sorry it didn’t work out, Kid,” Han was sincere. “Are things going to awkward with you two now?”

Luke took a deep breath.

“No,” Luke said confidently. “No, Felicity is my friend, and that’s good enough. I liked her as a friend before, and I’ll like her that way now. So, I don’t date her; it’s not the end of the world. Felicity Rhiaon’s friendship is more than enough for me.”

But as Luke would discover… it truly wasn’t.
Part Two: Love

Chapter Summary

Luke continues his reflection on the past with memories of how he fell in love with Felicity.

Chapter Notes

A short continuity note for the future. In this chapter, I feature a flashback that shows Zev Senesca (Rogue Two, who finds Han and Luke on Hoth) alive and well in 10 ABY… however, upon researching the members of Rogue Squadron, I discovered that Zev actually died during the Battle of Hoth.

As a result, I have made the decision to retcon that, and say that when Zev got shot down, he was able to eject and survive. This is because I have actually already written material in TFA where Zev appears. I really feel that he could only be replaced by Wedge, who I want to keep out of TFA because I couldn’t really set him aside the way I do Zev when Luke returns. Zev and Luke can have a quick chat and be done with things, but Wedge has a more meaningful relationship with Luke.

So, yeah, don’t tell me that Zev is dead because I know, but I don’t really actually care.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

The Long Way Home

Chapter Twenty-Four

Part Two: Love

6 Months, 27 Days

“You seriously don’t know who your mother is?” Felicity asked in amazement. They were in Dex’s Diner after their early morning run.

“No, I do not,” Luke absentmindedly stirred his hot chocolate. “My father did a good job of destroying most records of Anakin Skywalker, and Jedi weren’t allowed to have relationships, so there’s no evidence he ever had an intimate interaction with a woman.”

“I think there’s a pretty big piece of evidence sitting across this table,” Felicity smirked. She bit her lip as another possibility came to her mind, “Luke, this is awkward to bring up, but have you considered that there… wasn’t a relationship? Maybe it was a brief hookup… or maybe… you know? He was pretty bad as Vader.”

Luke sighed, “I’ve entertained the possibility, but I don’t think Leia and I are the by-product of rape… or even a casual encounter. The evidence doesn’t add up for that.”
“How so?”

“First of all, Obi-Wan was sent to watch over me while I lived with my paternal Uncle and Aunt. Leia was sent away for her own safety. It’s highly unlikely that Yoda and Obi-Wan tracked down a random woman and convinced her of this. They would have had to know about us. Not to mention because of the timeline. Leia and I were born two days after the formation of the Empire-”

“Or so you’ve been told,” Felicity pointed out.

“Regardless,” Luke answered. “The math at least puts our birth around that time. Order 66 took place the day before the Empire formed. Obi-Wan and Yoda couldn’t have tracked down a random woman within two days as there are articles that were published announcing Bail Organa’s adoption of Leia three days after the Empire formed. Additionally, my father sustained his injuries that put him in the suit the day after the Empire formed, and they would have made it impossible for him to produce a child after that.”

“At least not without a load of painkillers and getting pretty creative.”

“Please don’t make me picture such things about my father.”

“Too late,” Felicity grinned. “Alright, what about the possibility of it happening when you were actually conceived?”

“And there’s the images again.”

“Luke!”

“Alright,” Luke conceded. “It could have been a one night stand, but not a rape. I don’t believe that he would do that, but if he would, it would have been after his turn.”

“I’ll accept that,” Felicity poked at her eggs. “You know, I didn’t know my mom either. She died when I was very young.”


“Dream sores. They were these terrible sores that develop while you sleep. A really bad case of them spread like wildfire on Coruscant when I was three. The Empire didn’t provide the medication needed to cure them until one million people were already dead. My mother didn’t survive.”

“I’m sorry.”

“It’s okay. I don’t really remember her, so there’s nothing to miss. It’s not like how I lost Brendan.”

“And your father?” Luke asked, carefully avoiding the fact he had killed Alaric Rhiaon. “Did you mourn when he died?”

Felicity took a measured sip of her caf. “I mourned my father the day he shamed me at the Imperial Ball for wearing a slightly low cut dress. My father had been dead to me long before his body was destroyed. When my father died, I shed a single tear and no more. He made that evil machine and deserved what he got.”

“But he was your father.”

“He never chose to be,” Felicity said shortly. “Did Diego ever tell you what happened when Riz died?”
Luke shook his head.

“We were in the middle of stealing the plans from his office when my father walked in and saw what we were doing. Diego and Gunner wanted to shoot him, but I refused. I begged my father to come with me, to be a family again. To choose me over the Empire. Do you understand what that’s like?”

Luke could feel Palpatine’s jolts of electricity shoot through his body and desperate pleas of “Father” filled the air.


Felicity got him a hard look, “I begged him, Luke. I begged him to choose me. And you know what he did?”

Luke shook his head.

Tears swelled in Felicity’s eyes, “He took me in his arms to hold me like a father should hold his daughter. Tears fell down my face and he wiped them away. He smiled at me and said, ‘Oh my little girl. My sweet little Felicity… I’m so sorry.’ Then he pulled out his comlink and sounded the alarm. He gave us away to the Empire. He chose them over me.”


“Then he killed Riz,” Felicity continued. “I don’t care if it was an accident. He killed my best friend, a man he knew had a small child waiting at home for him. You know he sent Riz’s body home to his parents? The parents who were watching Riz’s daughter? That’s how the Rebellion found out things had gone wrong with Operation Citadel. My father didn’t rescue the bodies of Ji-Dan or Gunner, but for some reason he decided to send home Riz’s body.”


“It’s why I don’t tend to give second chances. Because I gave my father chance after chance and he threw it in my face. You know, I have family still? My mother had like six brothers and sisters, all these super anti-establishment, all natural, we should reject any form of technology or advancement, even if it could save your life type of people. As for the Rhiaon side, my father has an older brother. Oh boy, Garvan Rhiaon. Pray you never meet him. He makes Tarkin look like a wild child. Neither side of the family wants me as I am. The only person who ever did was Brendan, and that got him…”

Felicity sighed.

“I wonder about my mother sometimes,” Felicity moved on. “Would she have liked me? Approved of me? Given me a better life?”

“I wonder the same things,” Luke said. He looked down at the table, “I wonder if she knew who my father became? What happened to Leia and I? Why wasn’t she there? Sometimes I even wonder if my mother’s alive. Is she out there, and just… doesn’t want me?”

Luke started to draw back his hand, but Felicity clutched it, and put her other atop his, trapping his hand in her grasp.

“Anyone who doesn’t want you in their life is an idiot,” Felicity was dead serious. “You are kind, and loyal, and generous, and always put other people first. You are the definition of selflessness to the point of annoyance, and if there is a woman out there stupid enough to not want to be your mother, I’m going to track her down and kick her ass.”
Luke smiled, “You know she would probably be in her fifties?”

“I’ll still throw down with her.”

Luke chuckled, “Too bad you don’t know where to look for her.”

Felicity’s eyes flicked over Luke shoulder, “No… But we know someone who might.”

Luke frowned and opened his mouth to speak but stopped when Felicity waved a familiar face over.

“Well, if it isn’t my two favorite customers,” Dex Jettster greeted. “What can I do for you, Fliss?”

“Dex, of course,” Luke threw his had back on the cushion of the booth seat. “Why didn’t I think of that?”

“Leia got the brains, you got the whole spiritual thing,” Felicity laughed over the rim of her caf cup.


“You’re not actually suggesting Leia can’t kick ass just as much as you? In fact, I think she could probably take you if you didn’t do anything Force related.”

“Did you want me to come back later?” Dex asked.

“No, we need you, Dex,” Felicity sat down her cup. “It turns out that Skywalker here doesn’t know who his mommy is. I know you’ve said that his dad was a bit of a flirt, but do you know anything about the X to his Y chromosome?”

Luke frowned, “I don’t think that’s how chromosomes work.”

“Sorry, I forgot about your top-notch education of homeschooling on Tatooine. Aunt Beru give you a gold star on the DNA unit?”

“I’m sorry we couldn’t all be indoctrinated by Imperial public school, then have personal professors paid by the royal family of Alderaan. Then again, I didn’t drop out of school like you.”

“Low blow, Skywalker. And I did finish my schooling… eventually.”

“Seriously, Kids,” Dex said awkwardly. “I have tables to clean.”

“Sorry,” Felicity flashed him a smile. “Any thoughts?”

Dex scratched his chin, “Well… Anakin had strong attachment issues, so he wasn’t the type for a one night stand. I can’t imagine him being with a woman he didn’t have a relationship with. Probably a serious girlfriend, or more likely because of how…. Colourful Anakin was, I’d put my money on secret marriage.”


“I’m certain of it,” Dex nodded.


“I’m sure you’ll come up with something else,” Luke said flatly.

“So, who would be the unlucky Mrs. Skywalker?” Felicity asked.
Dex replied, “Well, you say woman Anakin Skywalker is close with, only one name comes to mind.”


Dex paused, “… Okay two names.”

“So, my father’s padawan is for sure not my mother?” Luke asked. “She’s been my biggest lead, I just haven’t found the resources to pursue what happened to her. She left the Jedi Order about seven months before I was born. Maybe she went to have my sister and I?”

“With all due respect, Luke,” Dex said kindly, “you don’t look half Togruta to me. Besides, Ahsoka was only sixteen when she left, and she left because the Jedi Order accused her of bombing the temple.”

Luke looked at Dex in horror.

“Long story,” Dex waved off. “No, you say woman Anakin Skywalker is close with, you think Padmé Amidala.”

Felicity choked on her drink.

“What?” Felicity exclaimed. “No, no, no, no, no, no, no. Padmé Amidala would never even let Darth Vader look at her, much less knock her up.”

“Are you kidding?” Dex laughed. “Anakin and Padmé were extremely close. Always a little too close. In fact, up until now, I thought her being your mother was a forego conclusion.”

“But why are you so sure?” Luke dare not get excited. He had been down this path with many potential mothers before and it always ended in disappointment.

“Let’s start with the fact he was completely in love with her from the day they met,” Dex replied. So Dex told them everything. How Anakin and Padmé met, how Anakin never stopped talking about her in their ten years apart, how Obi-Wan told him that Anakin had completely embarrassed himself upon their reunion. Dex told them about the assassination attempts, the fleeing to the super romantic lake country of Naboo, of the dreams Anakin suffered from concerning his mother, of how Anakin and Padmé ended up on Tatooine where they failed to save his mother, how they ended up in the battle arena with Obi-Wan – that certainly was Felicity’s favorite part of the story – of Anakin arguing with Obi-Wan to go back for Padmé, of Anakin losing his hand where Padmé comforted him, of how Anakin escorted her back to Naboo.

He told them stories of Anakin and Padmé’s associations during the Clone War, and how they were significantly closer during it. They heard of Anakin and Obi-Wan rescuing Padmé from the Malevolence, of the Blue Shadow Virus, of the Hostage Crisis – which completely threw Felicity for a loop when she realized her father missed her birth because of Luke’s parents – of the whole Rush Clovis fiasco, of how they had worked together to help defend Ahsoka during her false accusations.

“That does sound like a lot of stories of their interactions,” Felicity finally conceded. “But that doesn’t mean they had a relationship. Honestly, from what you’ve described… Anakin sounded like a stalker that couldn’t take no for an answer.”

Dex shifted uncomfortably, “Well…”

Amidala, is she still alive?”

“Oh no, died years ago,” Dex answered. “Right around the start of the Empire.”

Luke scowled, “The timing might not be right then. If she died before I was born… Do you remember exactly when she died?”


“Two days after the founding of the Empire,” Felicity suddenly remembered.

Luke turned to her, “Are you sure?”

“Yes!” Felicity exclaimed. “Leia was always so excited about the fact she shared a connection with Padmé, having been born the same day Padmé Amidala died. I even used to tease her that maybe she was reincarnation of her. And…”

Felicity stopped.

“Oh my god,” Felicity whispered.

“What?” Luke urged, something eager shining in his eyes. What was she onto?

“Vader…” Felicity’s jaw was hanging open slightly, her eyes distant as her mind struggled to put long forgotten pieces together. “The day I met Vader, he said that Leia reminded him of someone. Some passionate woman with a love of politics… Luke… he said he killed her.”

Luke went silent.

“He killed her?” Luke whispered. “…Why would he kill her? This doesn’t make sense.”

“Actually it makes a lot of sense when you think about it,” Felicity still had her thinking face on.

“What do you mean?”

“Luke, think about it. Vader was terrifying, but he wasn’t an idiot. He wouldn’t believe the random appearance of his supposed child he’d never knew existed, who randomly showed up twenty years after his wife’s death. He had to have known you were a potential at some point. He probably thought that his child had died with his wife.”

“He knew she was pregnant and still attacked her? Felicity, he wanted me to be with him. To rule the Galaxy as father and son. Why would it make sense to you that he wanted that, but killed his pregnant wife?”

“Because, Luke, Bail Organa was the one who ‘discovered’ Padmé Amidala’s body when she died,” Felicity answered. “Or so it was claimed.”

Luke frowned, “I don’t follow.”

“Bail Organa was with Padmé Amidala when she died. That’s how he got Leia.”

“And?”

“You told me yourself, Luke; Owen and Beru never left Tatooine once in their lives. So it stands to reason, that Obi-Wan Kenobi knew to come to Tatooine to watch over you… because he was the one that brought you to them. Which means-”
“He was there when I was born and my mother died.”

“...There’s one more thing, Kids,” Dex had nearly been forgotten in the conversation. “Vader was put in his suit two days after the founding of the Empire.”

Luke mouth hung open, “No... I don’t believe it.”

But the conclusion was clear: Vader must have attacked Padmé for being with the fugitive Obi-Wan Kenobi, forcing Obi-Wan to attack Anakin and put him in that horrible suit.

“I don’t believe it,” Luke put his head in his hands and struggled not to cry. “I don’t believe any of it. I can’t.”

Felicity’s hand was automatically on his shoulder, rubbing it, trying to soothe him.

“It’s okay,” Felicity whispered. “Shh, it’s okay.”

“No, it’s not,” Luke’s voice was not harsh with her. “My father killed my mother, and not only did Obi-Wan lie about Vader killing my father, but he was the one who put him in that suit.”

Dex watched as Felicity gently pulled Luke into her arms, and Luke began to cry on her shoulder. Such an intimate gesture for two people each dating someone else, but it looked so natural to see them together. Dex wanted to do something similar to comfort Luke, but what gesture could he possibly make?

“I’ll be back in a sec,” Dex whispered to Felicity as she held Luke.

Felicity nodded, and went back to stroking Luke’s hair, much like he had done to her the day he gave her the kyber crystal.

True to his word, Dex returned a few minutes later holding a Holo.

“Luke, I’m sorry about what happened between Obi-Wan and Anakin,” Dex sat back down. “I truly am. I watched those two grow from awkward strangers thrown together by fate, to the absolute best of friends. I swear to you, Luke, whatever happened at the end – whether Obi-Wan put your father in a suit, or... Anakin killed Obi-Wan – they were brothers, and they did love each other. If Obi-Wan did try to kill Anakin, I swear that he would have done anything to get out of it.”

Luke sniffed and sat up.

“I know things went bad,” Dex continued, “but I also have to doubt that those two worked out things in whatever after all awaits us. I would put good money on them being the best of friends once again.”

Luke chuckled, remembering all the times Obi-Wan and Anakin had bantered in his head, “I think you’d be right, Dex. Thank you.”

Luke looked to Felicity.


Felicity smiled gently.

“Here,” Dex slid the Holo across the table. “I found this a while back and have been meaning to get it to you.”
Frowning, Luke flipped it on. Both he and Felicity gasped.

It was a Holo much like the one hanging by the fresher: a simple shot of some people sitting in a booth in the restaurant. This booth however was one of the ones in the corner with a semi-circle seat. Anakin and Obi-Wan were in it again, but there were more figures they recognized.

“Oh my god,” Felicity whispered, “is that Bail Organa?”

“Yep.” Dex pointed to each figure and named them, “That’s Ahsoka Tano, Anakin’s next to her, he’s got his arm around Padmé Amidala – I told you they were always really close-”

Luke objected, “Hey, just because he puts his arm around her doesn’t mean they’re romantically attracted to each other. I do it to Felicity, and we’re not romantically attracted to each other.”

“Yes,” Felicity agreed, “I mean Good Gods is Luke hot, and I am absolutely attracted to him a physical manner – frankly I think fooling around with a Jedi would be interesting enough to try at least once. Doesn’t mean we’re in love with each other.”

Dex chose not to say anything.

“Next to Padmé is Obi-Wan,” Dex continued to name the figures. “Then next to Obi-Wan is Bail Organa. It was the very first time Organa had come to my diner, but it certainly wasn’t the last. If you could convince your sister to come in, I’d love to serve her the Alderaanian breakfast pastries Senator Organa loved so much.”

“They are pretty spot on,” Felicity sipped her caf.

Luke gave her an odd look.

“You forget that I spent almost three years traveling around with the Organa family,” Felicity reminded. “Yeah, I know what Bail Organa liked for breakfast.”

“So what’s the circumstance that brought this picture about?” Luke asked. “I can’t imagine Bail Organa sharing breakfast with a bunch of Jedi very often.”

“It was to celebrate a successful mission,” Dex answered. “A few months before that Hostage Crisis that made Fliss have an identity crisis-”

“Skywalkers have literally been screwing with me from the date of my birth! You try not having an identity crisis!”

“Ahsoka was having some visions about Padmé Amidala getting assassinated at a peace conference on Alderaan,” Dex continued. “They were able to stop the assassination attempt and figure out that Ziro the Hutt was behind it all. They all decided to have breakfast together to celebrate and Anakin asked for a Holo of his Padawan’s first successful solo mission… Though I don’t think it was actually Tano’s first successful solo mission. To be honest, I think it was an excuse for him to have a picture where he was allowed to have his arm around Padmé.”

“This is amazing,” Luke stared at the Holo. “This could be the only Holo containing Obi-Wan, my parents, and Bail Organa… It’s a nice gesture if that’s true.”

“You don’t think it’s true?” Dex asked.

“I’ve been let down so many times before,” Luke admitted. “I don’t want to get my hopes up that I’ve found my mother until I have proof.”
“Well, let’s take a look.” Felicity picked up the Holo and zoomed in the picture until it was only Padmé and Anakin in the picture. She lifted the Holo up beside Luke’s face and said, “Hold still. Let’s take a look here.”


“I’d say a match,” Dex declared.

“Yep,” Felicity set it down on the table. “You’ve got her face shape, eye shape, and your nose is the perfect blend of Anakin and Padmé.”

Luke raised an eyebrow, “Is that the first time you’ve called him Anakin?”

“Luke, I’ve never seen Vader sans helmet,” Felicity shot, “but I’m going to assume he didn’t look like that underneath.”

“No, he certain did not.” Luke sighed as he looked down at the Holo. He ghosted his fingers over the image of Padmé Amidala, “I just wish I knew for sure. I want to know who my mother is so badly… but there’s no proof.”

“Well, you might want to ask your droids about getting some proof,” Dex suggested.

Luke frowned, “Why would they be helpful?”

“Really? Your droids are R2-D2 and C-3PO, right?” Dex asked.


“Well, then they would definitely have some stories, considering they used to belong to Anakin and Padmé.”

Luke, who had been about to take a sip of his hot chocolate, dropped his mug, “Excuse me?”

“Luke!” Felicity exclaimed, grabbing for the napkin to wipe the hot chocolate stains off her shirt. “Come on, this is new.”

“Apologies,” Luke floated some more napkins over to her. “What do you mean they belonged to Anakin and Padmé?”

“It’s the biggest evidence at all,” Dex replied. “R2-D2 was Anakin Skywalker’s Astro Droid during the Clone Wars, and C-3PO belonged to Padmé Amidala. But they ended up with those droids when they traded at the beginning of the war. Artoo was Amidala’s during the Invasion of Naboo, and was given to Padmé as a thank you after her service as Queen.”


“Owned?” Dex chuckled. “He built Threepio!”

As Luke sat, shell-shocked at the declaration… Felicity did not stop laughing for five minutes straight.

After a while, Luke’s shock faded away to annoyance as he sat with crossed arms, glaring at the hysterical Felicity.

“You done?” Luke asked shortly when Felicity’s laughing started to subside.
“I’m good,” Felicity wiped tears from her eyes. “I’m sorry, but Threepio being built by Darth Vader is probably the best thing I have ever heard in my life.”

“Well, if you’re done, I think I have some work to do.”

“We have work to do,” Felicity corrected. “You’re not getting rid of me that easily. I’m seeing this through with you.”

“You sure you don’t want to spend the day with your boyfriend?”

“Drystan will be fine. What about your girl? You think Calla would appreciate you spending the day with me getting to the bottom of this?”

“Let me deal with Calla. She can be a little-”

“Possessive? Territorial? Absolutely obsessed with you, which is kind of why you like her, because growing up as a poor farm boy on Tatooine, deep down you quite like the idea of someone who worships the ground you walk on?”

“You want to really get into this whole psychological analysis of each other’s current romantic partner?” Luke challenged. “Because I’m more than happy to discuss again that Drystan looks frighteningly similar to Brendan, and the implications of that.”

“You want to play the incest card? You’ve literally made out with your twin sister!”


“Right,” Luke returned to the topic at hand. “I’m going to find out if Padmé Amidala is my mother.”

“I can get a hold of Pooja Naberrie if you want.”

“For sure, but first… we have some droids to talk to.”

7 Months, 16 Days

“So, the mystery is solved,” Lando declared as he lounged on the couch of Luke’s apartment. “Padmé Amidala is your mother.”

“DNA tests with the Naberrie family have confirmed it,” Leia replied. “I can’t believe I’ve worked so many years with Pooja, and she was my cousin this entire time.”

“Well, it explains so many of those odd moments Bail Organa had around her,” Felicity smirked. “That and why he basically had a conniption every time Leia and Vader were in the same room.”

Luke’s apartment was filled that Saturday afternoon. Drystan was racing in the big Coruscanti podrace, and Luke was hosting a viewing party in his apartment.

It had been Leia’s idea, in fact, saying something about how Felicity shouldn’t be all alone down at the track. Initially the plan was for the group to get a private box at the track, but Felicity had taken Han, Leia, and Ben down to the track before. Ben had ended up being asked to leave and kindly never return – the track wasn’t about to outright ban a child, but the implication was clear – after Ben had semi-accidentally wrecked a bathroom with the Force. Luke then decided to offer to host a viewing party at his place, and Drystan was planning to join the group that night for dinner.

The group consisted of Luke, Felicity, Han, Leia, Ben, Chewbacca, the Droids, Lando, Calla, and
Alyla. Alyla had recently decided she wanted to see more of the world and asked Luke to stay at his apartment for a few days while she saw the sights of Coruscant. At first it had been a little awkward, considering it was the first time she had been on a different planet from Gavyn, but Alyla was having the time of her life.

“I’m still hung up on the fact that Vader made Threepio,” Han chuckled. He was sharing the couch with Leia on one side and Lando on the other. “I don’t know if I buy it.”

“I’m not sure that I’m convinced of the idea either, Captain Solo,” Threepio replied as he worked in the kitchen, helping Alyla and Felicity – who wanted to show off her new cooking skills – make refreshments. “How could I have possibly been built by Master Luke’s father? There’s nothing in my memory banks about it. Nor about serving Senator Amidala.”

But Artoo had an answer.

*Beep, bop, hoop, bup.*

“Of course Senator Organa wouldn’t order my mind wiped and not yours,” Threepio chided. “How ridiculous it is for you to even suggest that.”

*Bop, hoop, beep.*

“What do you mean you have footage of it?”

Artoo projected an image into the room that caused Leia and Felicity to gasp. Most of the people in the room had seen images of people in the recording, or familiar with setting, but it was them who could remember those long, bright white hallways, and the men dressed in regal Alderaanian garb. The *Tantive IV* was a welcome sight to Leia and Felicity, but the faces they saw made their hearts lift.

There was a man in his late thirties or early forties walking down the hallway with Threepio and Artoo – though they could only guess at Artoo’s presence since the footage was from his point of view. The man was tall and broad, had dark skin, and his raven hair both on his head and face was immaculately styled and trimmed. A man with a kindness in his eyes, but hard face that would stare down any opponent. He was strong, wise, intelligent, and had been fiercely protective of both Leia and Felicity.

“Father,” Leia whispered, a smile spreading on her face.

Han glanced at her and said nothing. There was a hint of a smile at the corners of his mouth as he wrapped an arm around Leia. He would not ruin this moment of melancholy joy as Leia got to see new footage of the man she called Father.

“Bail,” Felicity smiled. “And look, it’s Captain Antilles.”

*The figure of Bail approached the young Raymus Antilles, with the droids following close behind.*

“Captain Antilles,” Bail said.

*Raymus turned to face him, “Yes, Your Highness.”*

*Bail’s next words were short, sweet, and had no trace of hesitation, “I’m placing these droids in your care. Treat them well. Clean them up. Have the Protocol Droid’s mind wiped.”*
“What?” Threepio’s head snapped to the side.

But Bail Organa said nothing to comfort the droid, merely walking away without a glance backward.

Artoo made some chittering laughing noises at Threepio’s plight.

“Oh, no!” Threepio sounded utterly distraught.

The image faded away and everyone just stared at R2-D2.

Beep, beep, bop.

Threepio gave Artoo’s dome a thud, “There’s no need to say I told you so!”

“Whoa,” Lando finally spoke. “So, he’s known everything this whole time?”

“It appears so,” Luke took a swing of his drink.

“Wow,” Lando shook his head. “So he knew Vader was your father, and Amidala was your mother? …Does that mean he also knew Leia was your sister? …Even on Hoth?”

Horror filled Luke, Han, and Leia’s faces as everyone exchanged awkward looks. Everyone’s eyes fell back to the eerily silent R2-D2. Silence stretched in the room as they waited for some sort of explanation or excuse.

Instead, Artoo just rolled out of the room.

“R2-D2, you get back here!” Threepio went after them. “You have a lot of explaining to do!”

“You know, it’s actually kind of sweet,” Alyla said after a minute. “Even when one of them had their minds wiped, they still stayed the best of friends.”

“If them constantly insulting each other and dragging the other into danger from their antics is what you call friendship,” Leia shook her head.

“Sweetheart, that’s literally the basis of every friendship in this room,” Han chuckled.

“It’s a wonder any of you are still friends,” Calla returned from the hall where she had been putting the empty drink bottles and cans in the recycling.

She scanned the living room and saw that there were open spaces on the various couches in Luke’s living room. Then she glanced, not so subtly at Felicity and Alyla, and plopped right down into Luke’s lap. He let out a loud “Oof!” as Calla dropped on him hard and wrapped her arms tightly around his neck. There was definitely not enough room on the chair to hold both of them.

Both Alyla and Felicity rolled their eyes at the possessive display.

“Luke, Sweetie,” Calla asked in a sickly-sweet tone, clearly trying to establish her romantic entitlement over Luke to the others. “What was that whole thing about Hoth?”

“Oh, uh,” Luke grunted as he tried to shift into a comfortable position. “Leia and I had a sort of embarrassing moment on Hoth.”

“Ah, yes, one of my favorite moments of all time,” Han chuckled.
“You weren’t too enthusiastic about it at the time, Nerfherder,” Leia nudged her husband.

“What happened?” Ben asked from the loveseat he was sharing with Chewbacca. “Wait, is this the kiss story?”

“I still can’t believe you told him that,” Luke exclaimed at the smirking Han.

“Wait, what kiss?” Calla asked innocently, but the way her grip tightened around Luke’s neck showed her displeasure.”

“Oh, before Leia and I found out we were twins… I had a bit of a crush on her,” Luke awkwardly admitted. “… And once on Hoth, Leia kissed me to make Han jealous.”

Calla’s grip tightened even more.

“It was nothing,” Luke dismissed. “We misinterpreted our innate bond as twins as something romantic.”

“I get that,” Alyla said. “If Gavyn and I had been separated at birth and then reintroduced as adults, I probably would have had the exact same feelings.”

“Anybody getting really uncomfortable with this conversation?” Felicity asked.

“Excuse me,” Han interrupted, “but doesn’t your boyfriend look like your brother?”

Felicity’s face went white, and beside Han, Leia went stiff.

“I don’t want to talk about Brendan,” Felicity turned her back on everyone, using washes dishes as a pretext to do so.

Leia glanced at Han for a second. Then she stood and crossed to the kitchen, where she gently touched Felicity’s arm.

Luke frowned, tuning out the subsequent conversation of the group as he watched Leia with Felicity.

“Are you okay?” Leia’s voice could barely be heard.

“I’m fine,” Felicity muttered.

“I know today’s a hard day-”

“I really don’t want to talk about it.”

“Alright.” Leia looked at Alyla, “Pass me the vegetables. I’ll help you two start prepping dinner.”

Alyla used the Force to float the vegetables, cutting board, and knife over to Leia.

Leia scowled at her, “Did you really need to do it like that?”

Alyla frowned, “What? What’s wrong with that?”

Leia stuck a thumb behind her at Ben.

As if on cue, Ben suddenly exclaimed, “That’s so cool! Mom, why do I get in trouble when I do that at home?”

“Oh,” Alyla gave a sheepish smile. “Sorry, I’ll talk to him.”
“Good,” Leia sighed. “He actually listens to you.”

It was true; after Luke, if there was one Jedi Ben probably called his favorite, it would be Alyla. She was tough, but nice, had some really interesting stories she wouldn’t censor for Ben, and he always thought the scars that lined almost every inch of her skin were awesome. There was even a running joke in Temple Village that only Alyla was allowed to teach Ben lightsaber moves, because she was the only person they trusted that Ben wasn’t going to run through with a lightsaber.

If only they knew how far from the truth that was.

“Alright, everyone be quiet!” Han announced. “It’s Drystan’s final race.”

The group happily watched as Drystan piloted his pod impressively through the track.

“That’s a pretty difficult course,” Leia said.

“It’s not that bad,” Luke was pretending his leg hadn’t fallen asleep under Calla’s weight. “You should see the one on Tatooine.”

“Oh Gods,” Felicity rolled her eyes. “If I have to hear about Beggar’s Canyon one more time, Luke-”

“I meant in Mos Espa,” Luke interrupted. “Always wanted to go see a podrace, but Uncle Owen refused to let me go… Considering my father’s history there, I now understand why.”

“Whoa,” Lando cringed as one of the racers crashed into the side of a wall. “These men are certainly brave. You never could get me in one of these races.”

“I don’t know,” Han shrugged. “I’ve always kind of wanted to try a swoop bike race.”

“Literally, over my dead body, Han,” Leia warned.

“You just say that because the last time you were on a swoop bike, you ended up the prisoner of an Ewok.”

“I wasn’t Wicket’s prisoner.”

“Whatever. I just want know where you got that brown dress.”

Luke winced, “Considering that Ewoks initially wanted to eat us… I don’t want to know where that dress came from.”

“This is so exciting!” Alyla became distracted by the race on the screen. She casually crossed from the kitchen to stand behind the couch. She rested her arms on the back of it and leaned forward, standing very close to Lando, he noted with pleasure. “It’s so nice to see a competition I’m not a part of.”

“You played a sport?” Lando asked in interest.

An awkward look crossed Alyla’s face, “Sort of… My first slave owner used to make Gavyn and I fight other slave pairs in the Fighting Pits for the entertainment of others.”

Lando’s eyes widened, “You fought in the Pits?”

“It’s not like how it sounds,” Alyla waved off. “We weren’t in the death matches. We just fought until the other team was unconscious. I mean, sure, it was ugly, and brutal, and we may have
accidentally killed seven guys, but it wasn’t that bad.”

Lando stared at Alyla, “I’m not sure if I’m terrified of you… Or extremely attracted.”

Alyla shrugged, “It could be both.”

Lando grinned, “I think it is.”

Luke and Han exchanged a look.

“Oh look, it’s the final lap,” Han drew everyone’s attention back to the screen.

Everyone waited with bated breath, then burst into celebration when Drystan crossed the finish, not only winning the match, but the championship.

“You make sure you congratulate that boy very well tonight, Rhiaon,” Lando winked at Felicity.

She rolled her eyes, “And you wonder why I don’t like spending time with you.”

“Alright,” Leia declared, “the race is over. Let’s get started on dinner. Luke, the roast is in the fridge?”


Leia open the fridge, and then stopped.

“Luke, where are the calfa roots?” Leia asked.


“The purple vegetable I put in the bottom of the pan with the roast? Tell me you didn’t forget to buy them.”

“Alright, I won’t tell you then.”

“Luke!”

“It’s alright,” Lando stood up. “I can run to the grocery store and get some. It’s just down the street, right Luke?”

“Take a left at the intersection, it’s not very far,” Luke replied.

“How many do you need, Leia?” Lando asked.

“Seventeen should do it,” Leia answered.

“Then I’ll be right back.”

“Wait, you’re going to a grocery store?” Alyla asked, her eyes lit up. “Can I go with you?”

Lando looked amused, “I have never heard such excitement over a trip to the grocery store.”

“Well, I’ve never actually been to one,” Alyla looked shyly at the floor. “You know… slave and all. I think seeing a grocery store would be quite novel to me.”

“Well, then,” Lando grinned and waved his hand towards the door. “This way, Milady.”
Lando took a few steps before he realized Alyla hadn’t moved.

“Something wrong?” Lando asked.

Alyla winced as she realized what she was doing, “Oh sorry. Slaves have to walk five steps behind their masters. It’s a habit I’ve found very hard to break.”

“I guess there’s only one way to break it then.” Lando held out his arm for her, “Shall we?”

Alyla smiled and wrapped her arm around his, “We shall.”

They were smiling brightly as they exited the apartment.

Luke and Han were not.

“We should probably keep an eye on that,” Han said flatly.

“Agreed,” Luke nodded, vaguely wondering if Gavyn Kene was the type of brother to murder any man wanting to flirt with his sister. Considering Alyla’s past interaction with men… Luke would absolutely put money on the answer being yes.

“Ugh,” Ben groaned, his eyes fixed on the HoloVision set. “The news is on now. Uncle Luke, do we have to watch it? Mom makes us do it everyday at home.”

“Leave it on,” Luke answered. “I think Wedge told me he had some sort of interview tonight.”

“Wasn’t that tomorrow?” Han asked.


The Newscaster on the set began their broadcast, “Our top story today is one of remembrance. Fifteen years ago today, the Galaxy was shaken by the Bombing of Faclov.”

In Luke’s peripheral, Felicity stiffened. He noticed Leia’s hands stopped their knifework, and her eyes turned on Felicity.

“We can change the channel,” Leia’s voice was barely audible to Luke.

He could feel the shift in the Force; the tension, the fear, and the heartbreaking grief. Intrigued, Luke turned his head to watch Felicity and Leia.

“I’m fine,” Felicity muttered. “I’ll be fine.”

Leia touched Felicity’s arm, “If you need anything—”

“I know,” Felicity interrupted. She smiled at Leia, “I know.”

Luke frowned and looked to Han. Han was oblivious to the strange conversation occurring in the kitchen.

“Luke, Sweetie,” Calla pressed a kiss to his cheek, “I’m just going to run to the fresher. I’ll be right back.”

Luke nodded and Calla hopped off his lap, disappearing down the hall. He tried not to look too happy as he rubbed his stiff legs, finally free of her weight. Calla was surprisingly bony.
When she was gone, Luke debated standing and going to talk to the girls to figure out what was going on. Something dark and desperate had entered the Force, and he wanted to get to the bottom of it.

Luke was about to stand, when Felicity exited the kitchen. She carried a tray of snacks and set it down on the coffee table. As Felicity was standing back up, the Newscaster continued to speak.

“And in the spirit of Remembrance we at TRX5 Holo Action News would like to share with you the footage that changed the Galaxy.”

Felicity froze in place.

With her back to him, Luke couldn’t see the look on Felicity’s face, but he could tell she had gone perfectly stiff. A small tap would have probably pushed her to the ground with a thud. Felicity just stared at the screen, while the Newscaster warned about the graphicness of the footage about to be shown.

On the screen, security footage of a Stormtrooper played. He was helmetless and handsome. The Stormtrooper looked slightly familiar to Luke, though at the moment he couldn’t place from where.

The Stormtrooper was talking with a feuding pair of civilians. Luke semi-recognized the footage. He vaguely knew about the Bombing of Faclov that had killed thousands of innocent people. It was done by the Empire, but the Rebels had been framed as the culprits to garner support for the Empire. A few months later, the plot with uncovered and thousands of people joined the Rebel Alliance in protest.

Such news made it to Tatooine, but only in pieces. Luke didn’t know the names of the specific people involved… but he was about to learn them.

“Leia,” Felicity suddenly whispered.


The next thirty seconds were a mad scramble.

“Luke, turn off the HoloSet!” Leia yelled at him.


“Turn off the set now! Now, Luke!” Leia screeched. “Ben, close your eyes! Don’t you dare watch!”

“Leia, what is going on?” Han demanded.

“Yeah, why do I have to turn off the set?” Luke asked.

“JUST DO AS I SAY!” Leia screamed. “BEN, CLOSE YOUR EYES!”

“Leia,” Felicity whimpered again, her voice louder and more desperate this time. She was pale and still frozen.

Leia was at her side, pulling Felicity into her arms in an instant.

“It’s okay, Felicity,” Leia whispered, stroking Felicity’s hair as she sobbed into Leia’s shoulder. “It’s okay. Luke! Han! Turn off the set! BEN, CLOSE YOUR EYES! I’M NOT SAYING IT
Luke got to his feet. He was utterly confused, but heartbroken as Felicity whimpered incomprehensible words nonsensically. He thought he heard maybe the words “bomb” or “make it stop.”

He didn’t notice that Chewbacca had strung into action until a massive furry paw shoved him towards the HoloVision set.

As Chewbacca roared at Luke and Han, he grabbed Ben and held him firmly against his body. Ben struggled to break free, but Chewbacca would not allow him to break free and see.

Luke looked back at Felicity, and then felt it. That horrible, desperate, heartbreaking sorrow in the Force was coming from her. It was a sickening desperation and emptiness, the most horrible display of grief he had ever seen. It was a display he would only witness from her one more time after that; when she finally confessed her postpartum depression after the horrifying incident they never spoke of.

Luke knew he had to put a stop to this.

“Turn it off, Luke!” Leia yelled again.

Luke was so overwhelmed by the confusion of the room, it didn’t occur to him to use the Force to turn off the set. Instead he stumbled forward to do it physically, praying that he could reach the set in time.

But he was too slow.

The Stormtrooper on the screen said, "Gentleman, at the end of the day I think we all can agree we just want peace."

Then everything blew up.

Felicity gave the most bloodcurdling scream Luke had ever heard in his life.

She fell to her knees, bringing Leia down with her as she screamed and cried hysterically. Leia was holding her, trying to calm her, and give her reassuring words as tears streamed down her own face.

In the memory of that moment, Luke couldn’t remember what was said or by who. He only remembered next being on his knees, with his arms around Felicity, trying to calm her like Leia. Felicity might have try to push him away, but Luke couldn’t remember if that was real or simply something he imagined.

He didn’t remember when Felicity was boosted back to her feet, or by who, or how they managed it. He couldn’t remember Han’s confused words as he tried to understand what was going on. He didn’t remember when Calla came back in the room, confused by the display, and startled by the scream she had heard in the fresher. He didn’t remember helping Leia lead Felicity to his guest bedroom, while trying to ward off their well-intentioned pursuers, who just wanted to know what was going on.

All Luke remembered was how brokenhearted and desperate Felicity had been.

They got her in the bedroom, and Leia held her as Felicity cried in her arms.

Slowly, Luke backed out of the bedroom, while ignoring that pit in his stomach that yearned to be the one holding Felicity in her grief.

After closing the door, Luke stared at it, stunned by the events of the past two minutes. What had just happened? And why had it happened?

“I don’t understand,” Luke said, as he entered back into the living room. His words weren’t really for anyone but himself, and his eyes were far away as he tried to figure out the mystery before him.

“What happened to Felicity? Why was she acting that way?”

“It looked like PTSD to me,” Calla suggested. “Or at least something close to that.”

Calla was actually a licensed psychiatrist, which was ironic considering the mental problems she would eventually have. Calla would become Luke’s infamous crazy ex, who had nearly had Leia killed out of jealousy.

When she learned that Luke and Felicity were dating, she decided to get revenge by tipping off the Hutts that Leia had been the one who killed Jabba the Hutt. Luke eventually had to put that whole bounty against Leia from the Hutt Clan to rest by calling on the life debt Rotta the Hutt – Jabba’s son – owed the Skywalker family from that time Anakin Skywalker had saved his life.

Leia was so not happy that she was ultimately saved by a good act performed by the biological father she so hated.

“But what could have brought that on?” Luke asked.

“The explosion probably triggered a war memory,” Calla suggested. “Probably a battlefield flashback.”

“No, she was affected from the start the footage. Long before the explosion.”

“Guys,” Han suddenly spoke, his eyes locked on the HoloVision screen. “I think that might be it.”

The camera was back on the Newscaster, an image of the Stormtrooper, a handsome brunette man in the corner. And under his picture was his name.

Brendan Rhiaon


The room was filled with silence for a long time.

“Well, that certainly explains a few things,” Han declared.

It was over an hour later when Leia came out of the guest bedroom. Luke was already waiting for her.

“How is she?” Luke asked.

Leia sighed, “She’s calmed down… Luke, I’m sorry, I should have warned you what today is.”

“The anniversary of Brendan’s death?”

Leia looked away; she was about ready to cry, “He died because of me, Luke. He figured out I was part of the Rebellion and asked to join. An Inquisitor, Third Sister overheard us and they orchestrated
his death. The Bombing of Faclov wasn’t just to set up the Rebellion, but it was specifically targeted to kill Brendan.”


“Yeah. Why?”


He had never revealed to anyone the dark secret Tyla Kinall had confessed to him: that she used to be Vader’s favorite assassin, called Third Sister. That Tyla had been spared by Vader when he slaughtered the Inquisitors after he believed all Jedi had been stamped out. That Vader had kept Tyla as his personal assassin, and groomed her into the role of his son’s future spouse to ensure their family dynasty lived on. It was why Tyla had always insisted that she and Luke were destined to be together – she had been brainwashed into the idea – and why Luke, even if he ever had remotely been attracted to her, would never let romance bloom between them.

There would be time later for Luke to confront the former Inquisitor about her role in the Bombing of Faclov. For now, all that mattered to Luke was Felicity.

“Can I see her?” Luke asked.

“If she’s willing,” Leia stepped away from the door. “Just be careful… and prepared to dodge any lamps thrown at your head.”

“That is my default mode while dealing with Felicity Rhiaon, anyway.” Luke touched his sister’s shoulder, “Thank you.”

Leia frowned, “For what?”

Luke glanced at the door, “I… I’m not sure. But thank you.”

Leia smiled and touched his arm, “Anytime.”

Luke gave the door frame a gentle knock as he stepped into the room.

Felicity was sitting on the bed, red faced, and tears still shining in her eyes. Her long brown hair was dishevelled as it tumbled down her shoulders.

Luke felt guilty at how Felicity was utterly heartbroken… and yet he found her breathtakingly beautiful.

At the knock, Felicity looked up at him.


Felicity nodded, fidgeting with something on her wrist.

Slowly, Luke crossed the room and sat next to her. He wanted nothing more than to pull her into his arms as she had when he had cried over the revelation that Obi-Wan had put Vader in his suit. But he respected her boundaries and did not touch her.

They said nothing, just sitting next to each other, letting the heavy silence overwhelm the room.

Luke frowned at her, “Say what?”

“Say what you told me when you gave me this,” Felicity held up the wrist she had been playing with.

Luke hadn’t noticed the bracelet she had been wearing that day: three black cords woven together holding a cracked crystal.


“Of course, I kept it,” Felicity said, no annoyance in her voice. She looked down at it and ran two fingers over the crack in the crystal, “I don’t wear it often but I like to keep it around for when I need strength. So I can remember what you said.”

“Just because something is broken, doesn’t mean it’s worthless.”

“I’m broken, Luke,” Felicity repeated her words from months before. “I like to say that my father destroyed me, or that it was Vader, or the deaths of Ji-Dan, Gunner, and Riz… But that’s not what broke me. Brendan’s death was what broke me. Before he died… I was an idiot. A simpering, stupid, stuck up, selfish idiot, who couldn’t open her eyes wide enough to see the world around her actually mattered. All I cared about was impressing my Father, the Empire, the Emperor, and all the evils of the world. Who cared if people were dying and starving? I was living it up with Royalty, eating fine food and wearing beautiful clothing. I hate the person I used to be. I despise her.”

“She couldn’t have been that bad,” Luke said. His voice was measured to not show any strong emotion. He had known Felicity long enough to understand the balancing act required when Felicity was in this state.

“She was,” Felicity insisted.

Luke looked at her, “No… she wasn’t. Is she who you are now? Of course not. I’m not the same person I was at sixteen, you aren’t either. But I know that the girl you were before had the same qualities I adore in you. Passionate… brave… selfless. A hero.”

“No,” Felicity shook her head. “You didn’t know me then, Luke. How can you be so sure I was anything like that?”

“Because I know that the first time you met Darth Vader… you stepped between him and Leia when he was going to hurt her. Leia, a girl you had known for what, two hours? You were terrified of him… but were still willing to give your life to protect her. If your brother was anything like how you claim him to be, he would have been so proud of that.”

Felicity wiped her nose on her sleeve and gave a small laugh, “He was. I remember telling him that story, and he was so proud… He was always so proud of me, even when I didn’t deserve it.”

Luke dared to wrap his arm around her shoulders, “And I know he would be proud of the woman you’ve become, and all you’ve achieved.”

Felicity automatically leaned into his embrace, “I miss him so much, Luke. It isn’t fair. Why did he have to die? He shouldn’t have died.”


“No, it doesn’t,” Felicity said stiffly. “You want to know why I don’t believe in destiny? I don’t
believe in destiny, because I refuse to believe that my brother had to die an excruciating death so, what? I could have character development? It’s true, there’s things that have happened to me because he died… but I’m not sure if it was all worth it… Was it worth it, Luke?”

Luke took a deep breath, “I don’t know. I suppose the only way to know is asking yourself… would you be willing to give it all up to have had him live?”

Felicity was very quiet.

“I don’t know,” Felicity’s confession was barely a whisper.

Luke held her tight, “I don’t know either… but if there is such thing as destiny… I’m glad it brought me to you.”

Neither of them kept track of the time after that. They simply held each other and reflected on it all. Sometimes they spoke – Felicity telling the story of Brendan and how it led to Operation Citadel or Luke telling Felicity about that horrid day he found the charred skeletons of the couple who had loved him and raised him – sometimes one held the other as they cried, and sometimes they just sat in silent.

It must have been two or three hours later, when a jubilant voice came yelling down the hallway.

“Fliss! Fliss! Did you see?” Drystan called. “Did you see my race!”

Drystan stopped dead in his tracks as he entered the room and saw Luke holding Felicity.


As Felicity hugged Drystan, he was staring in confusion at the awkward looking Luke.

“Uh, yeah,” Drystan said. “Sorry… is something going on here?”

“Oh, it’s nothing,” Felicity waved.

“Doesn’t look like nothing,” Drystan tried to keep the edge from his voice.

“Unfortunately today is the anniversary of Felicity’s brother’s passing,” Luke stood up. “Felicity was feeling a little down, and since you weren’t here to comfort her, I thought I’d do so.”

“Oh,” Drystan frowned. He looked at Felicity, “Your brother died today?”

Felicity nodded.

“Why didn’t you tell me?”

Felicity shrugged, “I just didn’t want to put that on you. I’m sorry.”

“That’s okay,” Drystan’s tone made it clear it wasn’t. “I just wish you would tell me these things. You’re always so closed off.”

“I’m not closed off,” Felicity objected.

“I should go,” Luke declared. “You two must have things to discuss.”


As the door shut behind him, Luke leaned against it and sighed.


Calla was grinning as she approached him. She wrapped her arms around his neck, his arms wrapping automatically around her waist.

“I’m so proud of you,” Calla kissed Luke. “You’re such a good friend comforting Felicity.”

“Really?” Luke teased, “You’re not jealous that I was alone with another woman for several hours?”

Something dark flashed across Calla’s face, “Should I be jealous?”

“Of course not,” Luke kissed Calla. “I’m sorry we didn’t spend a lot of time together today.”

Calla grinned, “Well you can always make it up to me when everyone has gone home tonight.”

“Alright, but may I remind you that Alyla is currently staying in my guest room?”

“Is that something I should be worried about?”

“Of course not,” Luke laughed. “Come on, let’s see how soon dinner will be ready.”

And as they walked back to the living room, Luke couldn’t help but think how much better it had felt to hold Felicity than it had been to hold Calla.

8 Months, 15 Days

“So, I heard that Calla finally dumped you,” Felicity smirked at Luke over breakfast at Dex’s.


“Finally saw how crazy she was?”

“I resent that you and Han insisted on calling her crazy. It was through the entire relationship, and that was simply not fair to her!”

Felicity raised an eyebrow.

“But yeah, she was insane,” Luke weakly admitted, poking at his eggs.

Felicity chuckled, “Knew it. What did she do?”

“Doesn’t matter.”

“Come on, Luke. You know I’ll hear it from Han if you don’t tell me.”

“Alright, she may have… accused me of cheating on her.”

“And you obviously didn’t,” Felicity knew Luke’s character enough to know the claim was baseless. “Then again, I wasn’t involved, so for all I know you count have cheated.”
“Well, actually,” Luke awkwardly scratched his chin. “She accused me of cheating on her… with you.”

Felicity choked on her caf, “With me?”

“Yep.”

“Is this because of the wedding?”

About a week ago, Felicity had begged Luke to attend a wedding with her as her plus one. It had been the wedding of Riz Drayson’s daughter, Ayessa and Gunner’s youngest son, Koran. Drystan had dumped Felicity a week before citing that she was too “emotionally unavailable” and Felicity had begged Luke to be her plus one.

Normally, Felicity was fine going stag, especially since she would be surrounded by Diego and the families of her Rogue team, with whom she was close friends. However, Ayessa was very close with a former Rebel soldier named Pax and had invited him and his wife to her wedding.

Pax just so happened to be Felicity’s ex-fiancé whom she had dated for four years before breaking up with him. The breakup was amicable, but Felicity still didn’t want to show up to the wedding and face Pax and his wife still alone at age thirty-one. (Or was it thirty-two? Luke couldn’t remember if Felicity’s birthday had passed yet.)

Ultimately, Pax ended up not attending the wedding when his wife had to rush to the hospital to get her appendix removed. But Luke and Felicity had had fun at the wedding.

Calla had been very uncomfortable with the whole notion to begin with. It was an off-world, overnight trip, and Calla made it very clear that despite them having each other own hotel room, she didn’t trust Luke alone with Felicity.

Luke had objected, and thought he successfully talked her into letting him go with Felicity. But when he returned home, Calla had absolutely lost it on him.

“She accused you of sleeping with me?” Felicity shook her head. “She actually thinks Luke Skywalker is the kind of guy who would cheat?”

“Oh, it gets worse than that,” Luke looked down at the table.

Felicity grinned like a child on life day, “What did she do?”

“She sort of, um… accused me of cheating on her with more than just you.”

“Let me guess. Alyla? She never did like Alyla staying at your apartment.”

“Yes, Alyla… but there was more.”

Felicity frowned, “Who? What did she think you finally gave in to all of Tyla’s advances?”


Luke sighed, “She sort of… accuse me of using the Jedi Order as a front for some sort of polyamorous society.”

“Oh my Gods, so she thought you were cheating on her with-”
“You, Alyla, Tyla, Reine, Zena, Obik, Gavyn…” Luke took a deep breath, “…And Leia.”

Felicity burst out laughing, “She accused you of cheating on her with your own twin sister?”

“She said that hiding what happened on Hoth clearly meant that something was still going on. Like I was actually hiding that fact from her. I’m sorry if ‘I kissed my own twin sister’ doesn’t come up in conversation that often.”

“So be honest, which accusation made you call it quits? The infidelity? The polyamory? The homosexuality? Or the incest?”

“All except the homosexuality.”

Felicity raised an eyebrow.

Luke looked away, “I don’t think I’ve ever told you, but I am… interested in both genders.”

“Oh,” Felicity looked surprised. “So you’re… bi?”

“Is that a problem?”

“No, of course not,” Felicity shook her head. “I just didn’t expect that. So is it more a theoretical thing, or have you had boyfriends before?”

“A few,” Luke admitted. “Mostly during the war. Actually, my very first crush was my childhood best friend, Biggs Darklighter.”

“Biggs, huh?” Felicity chuckled. “I don’t blame you. He was a looker.”


“I recruited him. We got to know each other quite well.”

“When you say you knew him…”

“It happened every once in a while,” Felicity admitted. “Nothing serious. Just a way to blow off steam between friends. Every Rebel had their vice… mine was of a more carnal nature.”

Luke shook his head, “Of all the Rebels you could have had a friends with benefits arrangement, it had to be my childhood best friend.”

“Hey, of all the Rebels you could have had a fling with, not only was it my childhood best friend, but it also turned out to be your twin sister.”

“For the last time, it was just one kiss.” Luke sighed, “And I wonder why I’m thirty and still single.”

“Join the club,” Felicity shrugged. “I couldn’t tell you why I’m still single.”

“Severe emotional brother and father issues that tamper with your view on relationships with men?”

“That’s rich coming from a man whose relationships are marred by only ever dealing with motherly figures, or women who worship the ground he walks on.”

“Don’t forget that whenever I do find a woman who doesn’t fall under those categories, she ends up rejecting my romantic advances.”
“Or dead.”

Luke raised an eyebrow.

“Leia told me about Nakari Kelen... my condolences.” Felicity sipped her caf, “Face it, Skywalker, we are so massively screwed up, the only people who could possibly tolerate a long-term relationship with us would have to be equally screwed up.”


“He wanted me to forget the pain in my past. Do I need to move on from my brother’s murder and my father’s betrayal? Of course. But those things also moulded me into the woman I am today, and I wouldn’t change it.”

“I know exactly what you mean.” Luke sighed, “Maybe that’s a sign that we’re both too far gone, that there’s no one in the Galaxy left for us.”

“Then we’ll spend our days growing grey and infinitely more insane and emotionally damaged together,” Felicity raised her mug in a cheers motion. “Maybe we should just make one of those ‘if we’re both still single at fifty, we’ll get together’ pacts.”

“I’m game,” Luke shrugged. “So, what are you doing tonight?”

“Nils is keeping me late. We’re switching to a new computer system and have to transfer and reorganize literally hundreds of thousands of documents.”

“Sounds rough.”

“Well, I get tomorrow off in exchange. Of course, I have absolutely no plans, so I’ll probably spend the night staring glassy eyed at the HoloNet until my brain starts to leak out of my ear.”

“Well, if you’re free, you should come out with me tomorrow night,” Luke offered. “The remaining members of Rogue Squadron are coming in for a night of drinking. You should join us. Nalto will be there.”

“Nah, I don’t belong with Rogue Squadron.”

“Are you kidding? You’re Rogue One! You belong to this squad more than any of them.” Luke reached across the table and took Felicity’s hand, “Come on. Let’s go out, have a few drinks, and forget we ever met Drystan or Calla.”

Felicity grinned, “Alright, Skywalker. Let’s go drink some Rogues under the table.”

8 Months, 16 Days

“Gentlemen, correct me if I’m wrong, but we are all in our thirties, are we not?” Felicity scowled as the waitress droid set the shots on the table.

“Look, if you’re scared, you don’t have to do this,” Wedge Antilles teased.

“I’m not scared, I’m just confused as to why of all the drinking games out there, we, fully grown adults are going to play truth or dare?”

“Actually, truth, dare, or I never,” corrected Deena Kopos, the former Rogue Eight. She was the only surviving female of the Squadron and had been most happy for Felicity to join them. “You pick
a person and they get to pick from the three options.”

“Standard rules, Gentlemen?” Zev Senesca, former Rogue Two asked.


“What are the standard rules?” Felicity asked.

Derek “Hobbie” Klivian, former Rogue Seven answered, “Nothing illegal, immoral, and if you do any ‘I never’ to specifically target one person, you’re buying everyone’s drinks.”

“What do you mean by targeting someone?” Felicity inquired.

“It means pulling something you know for a fact only one person in the Squad has done or had,” Diego responded. “For example, I could say ‘I never had a father who was a significant Imperial Officer’ and that would be fine because that applies to both you and Luke.”

“But if you say ‘I never had a Sith Lord for a father’ then you have to pay,” added Wes Janson, Rogue Ten.

“Now, for the questions where we discuss Rogue Squadron,” Nala Hetsime, Rogue Five began, “do we count Rhiaon?”

“I think adding her and her group is fair,” agreed Tarrin Datch, Rogue Four.

“Perfect,” Nala grinned.

“Alright, boys!” Deena grinned. “Let’s drink!”

“I say the guest of honor should go first,” Diego grinned at Felicity.

“Good idea, Nalto,” Wedge nodded. “Rhiaon, truth, dare, or I never?”

Felicity thought, “I never.”

“Alright,” Wedge grinned. “I never kissed another member of Rogue Squadron. And if you drink, you have to tell us who.”

“Wait, are we talking on the lips?” Zev clarified. “Because Jek Pugilio used to kiss everyone on the cheek when he got drunk.”

“Lips,” Wedge confirmed.

Luke, Diego, Tarrin, and Felicity all drank.

“Alright, Skywalker, you first,” Wes grinned. “Fess up. Who was it?”


“I knew it!” Wedge exclaimed, clapping Luke on the back. “I knew Rogue Nine was into you. Alright, Nalto. Who was it?”

“Uh…” Diego’s eyes flicked over at Felicity.


“Actually, she’s mine too,” Tarrin confessed.
“Thanks, Tarrin,” Felicity rolled her eyes. “Yeah, I’ve kissed Diego… and Tarrin… and Jek.”

“Someone’s certainly working their way through our ranks,” Hobbie chuckled.

“It’s not like that,” Felicity insisted. “Okay, fine once upon a time, after one of our victories, yes, I had a one night stand with Tarrin. I also had a drunken kiss Jek once. But Diego was different.”

“I always knew you two dated,” Wedge shook his head.

“We never dated!” Diego exclaimed. “Look… once on Jakku when were cooped up in this tent during a sandstorm… We were having a very heart to heart conversation about Ji-Dan, Gunner, and Riz, and… we had a… moment of weakness.”

Luke couldn’t wipe the scowl from his face, “You slept with Diego?”

“No!” Felicity burst out laughing. “Oh Gods, no. What happened was the conversation was getting all deep, and we were both really sad. Then Diego kissed me-”

“No, you kissed me!” Diego exclaimed.

“Why would I ever kiss you?” Felicity shot.

“Fine, someone kissed the other,” Wedge exclaimed. “What happened next?”

“We sort of got into it a little bit,” Diego confessed. “And I laid her on her back, and it certainly looked like it was going to head that way, but…”

“But?” Luke’s voice had an odd edge to it.

Why did the images of Felicity with Diego disgust him so much? In fact, it was the feeling he got every time he had seen Drystan leave Felicity’s apartment in the morning, and he unwillingly imagined what had happened the previous night. The truth was, he absolutely hated the idea of Felicity being intimate with someone.

Of course, what person wanted to picture one of their best friends like that?

…Right?

“But…” Felicity shared a smirk with Diego. “When we broke off the kiss to catch our breath, we paused to take in the situation. My arms wrapped around his neck, him hovering over me about to put his hands on my body…”

Luke’s fist tightened under the table.

“And we burst out laughing,” Diego did just that.

“It was just so ridiculous!” Felicity laughed hysterically. “We had just barely stopped hating each other and what? We were going to have sex?”

“God, and the kiss,” Diego shook his head. “There was nothing behind that. No connection, no spark, no nothing. I could probably kiss the men’s room wall and get more out of it.”

“Seriously, I’ve had more romantic chemistry with my own brother than I did Diego,” Felicity shook her head.

Luke found himself relaxing.
“Although it did lead to something good,” Felicity voluntarily took a swing of her drink. “Since I know I have so little physical chemistry with Diego, I use him for my boyfriend gambit.”

“Boyfriend gambit?” Hobbie asked.

“If a guy simply won’t take no for an answer, and I’ve done literally all I can to get him off my back but he won’t go, I’ll pretend Nalto’s my boyfriend. He’s kissed me, like, seven times under that façade.”


Felicity grinned, “With pleasure.”

Far too many shots to count later, the group was absolutely wasted. It was enough that none of them would be able to fly themselves home, and more than enough for Wes to know that his wife was going to be pissed.

“Tesha is so going to make you sleep on the couch tonight,” Wedge chuckled as Wes stumbled back to the table from the fresher.

Wedge wasn’t in much better shape, basically only holding himself up by leaning all his weight against Zev on his left. Zev was displacing some of the weight by leaning on Felicity, who was sitting on his left. On Wedge’s right was Diego, who was targeting Luke on his right with his “touchy, feely, buddy-buddy” level of drunk where he kept clapping him on the arm, and rubbing his arm, and throwing an arm around his shoulder, and basically just pawing at Luke.

“On the couch?” Wes took his seat next to Felicity. “I’m going to be lucky if she doesn’t throw me out of the house. Oh Gods, I just remembered that I’m supposed to take my daughters to gymnastics in the morning… Tesha’s going to kill me.”

“I am so happy Ceren knows to expect nothing from me after drinking nights,” Wedge chuckled. “That’s my advice to you, Rhiaon. Get a husband who’s okay with drinking nights with the boys.”

“Alright, but someone’s going to have to catch him for me first,” Felicity chuckled. “I am so bad at picking men.”

“Well, it’s your turn to pick something else,” Hobbie smiled. He leaned back a little too far back on his stool, and caught Deena’s shoulder at the last minute to keep him upright. “Truth, dare, or I never?”

“Truth,” Felicity picked. “I don’t know if we could all handle another I never.”

The squad grumbled in agreement.

“Alright.” A wicked look sparked in Hobbie’s eye, “Since we established that you are working your way through our ranks… who’s your next victim?”

“Excuse me?” Felicity frowned.

“If you had to kiss any member of Rogue Squadron you haven’t done something with yet, who would it be?”

Felicity looked around the table, “Well… If I had to kiss someone… Luke.”

Luke choked on his drink.
“Called it!” Diego raised his drink.

“Me?” Luke gaped at her.

Felicity giggled – which was something Luke had learned she only did when she was out of her mind drunk – and leaned back in her seat, “I think you’d be a good kisser. Alright, let’s see. Wedge, your turn.”

“I never,” Wedge chose.

“You should do ‘I never held the highest test score for incoming pilots in the Rebellion,’” Luke suggested.

“Alright, let’s do that,” Felicity grinned.

Wedge scowled as he and Luke took a drink, “Not fair, Skywalker! You only said that because you like bragging about how you beat my score.”

“You just won’t admit that I’m a better pilot than you.”

“Alright, fine, Skywalker. Truth, dare, or I never?”

“I never.”

“Good!” Wedge exclaimed. “How about this, Mister Best Pilot in the Rebellion? I never made out with my own sister!”

The table fell silent as all eyes turned on either Wedge or Luke.

Luke just smirked and raised his drink, “Alright, I’ll drink… And thank you so much for paying for all of our drinks tonight.”

Wedge went white as the table burst out laughing, everybody remembering the rule.

“Damn it,” Wedge muttered as Nala waved over the waitress droid and told her of Wedge’s generosity.


“I never,” Diego chose.


“You are such a liar, Skywalker,” Diego shook his head as a number of people, Diego and Luke included took a drink. “I’m going to invoke the rule that if you do an I never that you have done, I’m allowed to turn the choice back on you.”

“We’ll allow,” Tarrin said.

“Truth, dare, or I never, Skywalker?” Diego asked.

Luke paused to think, “I don’t think I can drink anymore. Let’s going with dare.”

Diego grinned, “Alright… I dare you to kiss, Fliss.”

“You heard me.” Diego jerked his head towards his friend, “Kiss Felicity.”

“I’m not doing that,” Luke refused.

“You have to,” Hobbie insisted.

“Come on, guys, we’re not thirteen!”

“What are you, scared?” Diego teased. “I may have had no chemistry with her, but she’s a pretty good kisser.”

“I’ll drink to that,” Tarrin raised his cup.


“I don’t see the big deal,” Felicity shrugged. “It’s just a kiss… Unless I repulse you.”

“Oh, you definitely don’t repulse me,” Luke swallowed.

“Then let’s do it,” Felicity laughed. “Come on, it’s just some friends messing around. It doesn’t mean anything.”

“Sir?” The waitress droid rolled over to Wedge. “We need your credit chip for your table’s tab.”


“No, it’s okay,” Felicity said as Luke started to stand. She got out of her chair and stumbled towards him, “I’ll come to you.”

“Okay,” Wedge shook his head at the droid, “I’m coming.”

It happened in a second. Wedge backed out his chair just as Felicity stepped behind it. It banged into her, knocking her over and the next thing anyone knew, Felicity’s head cracked against the corner of the table behind them, and she was on the floor, knocked out cold.

A flurry swears from a dozen different languages flew out of the Rogues’ mouths, and everyone leapt out of their chairs, racing to her side, ensuring Felicity was okay.

The drinking game had come to an end.

---

8 Months, 17 Days

“How did ‘let’s go for a few quiet drinks’ turn into ‘that time Wedge put Felicity in the hospital?’” Luke glared at Wedge as the Rogues sat in the waiting room.

Wedge shrugged, “You were the one trying to kiss her, Skywalker.”

The Rogues filled the waiting room, all groaning as the first rays on morning light filtered in.

“Felicity is going to kill me,” Diego had his head in his hands. “What if she has serious brain damage?”

“She hit her head against a table,” Deena rolled her eyes. “They’re just doing all the tests for liabilities’ sake. She’ll be fine.”

“But did you see how much blood there was?” Tarrin shuddered. “That was a lot.”
“Come on, man!” Nala scolded. “We were in a war! You call that an injury?”

“Skywalker, Nalto,” Wes winced as he glanced at the clock, “I really don’t want to look like the bad guy here... but I gotta get home. My wife’s already pretty mad at me, but I’ve got to be up in four hours to take my daughters to gymnastics.”

“It’s okay,” Luke assured him. “Go home. I’ll tell you how she is when we get news. That goes for everyone. If you need to go, go. No one will blame you.”

Slowly each of the Rogues got to their feet, saying apologies and how they’ll do the same drinking get together the next year. They cleared the room, and soon it was only Luke and Diego waiting.

“I should call my work,” Diego sighed. “I’m supposed to leave for Hosnian Prime in a few hours and teach a class at the Academy tomorrow morning. I’ll have to reschedule.”

“No, Diego, it’s fine,” Luke said. “You should go. Felicity will understand. You know she wouldn’t want a big fuss over her.”

“But who’s going to be here for her?”

Luke raised an eyebrow.

Diego smiled and patted Luke on the leg, “You’re a good kid, Skywalker.”


“Look, I’m sorry about putting you up to the kiss. You’re right, we’re not thirteen. We shouldn’t act that way.”

“No, it’s okay. Truth be told... I actually kind of liked the idea of the kiss.”

Diego grinned knowingly, “I wasn’t lying when I said she was a good kisser. We just don’t have chemistry. But I bet if you kissed her... Maybe you’ll find out someday.”

Luke didn’t know why he smiled, “Maybe I will.”

He watched as Diego clapped his shoulder once more and exited the room. But even after Diego was gone, Luke was still smiling.

Kissing Felicity Rhiaon. Why did such a thought bring a smile to his face? It gave him that same feeling he got when he held her in his arms.

Kissing Felicity Rhiaon. He had never considered the idea before, and yet as he mused over the idea, there was one conclusion he was certain of...

He absolutely wanted to.

An hour later, a nurse came into the waiting room and called, “Felicity Rhiaon?”

Luke stood up, “Is she alright?”

“She’s doing fine,” the nurse assured him. “Her tests are clear and the doctor is ready to discuss the results. Are you family?”

“Uh... No. I’m a friend... and neighbour.”
“Oh, well perhaps you can help me then. We’ve been looking in her records to find an emergency contact, and I’ve been unable to come up with one.”


“Yes, we contacted Mr. Arlos and it turns out she does not have an emergency contact registered with him.”

It hit Luke like a bag of bricks.

“What?” Luke whispered. “She doesn’t have an emergency contact?”

“Mr. Arlos was very upset to learn she hadn’t registered one,” the Nurse replied. “But perhaps you can help me find one. Our records say that she was born to an Alaric Rhiaon? Might we contact him?”

“Oh, no, he died when she was twenty-one.”

“Alright. What about Dinah Rhiaon?”

“Died when she was three.”

The Nurse looked through the file she was holding, “It says Dinah also gave birth to a Brendan Rhiaon?”

“Her brother… died when she was sixteen.”

Luke hadn’t ever really thought about it. Who did Felicity have in her life? He couldn’t really recall any other friends. Sure, there was Diego, but Diego lived on Hosnian Prime, and Felicity had more than enough of the people at her office during work hours.

…Was he really the only person Felicity hung out with?

“Well…” The Nurse flipped through he file, trying not to look desperate. “We do have it down that she used to be entrusted to a Bail Organa and occasionally a Raymus Antilles.”

Luke gave her an awkward smile.

“Alright, they’re dead too,” The Nurse shook her head. “I suppose I will have to go back into the records of her family. Did her parents have any siblings?”


“We have no reason to trust you from a legal standpoint. Now, there is another possibility… The file says that Organa had a daughter Miss Rhiaon is associated with. A Leia Organa?”


“Absolutely, Sir. Have a seat and you can see Miss Rhiaon once Ms Organa verifies you.”

“Thank you.” Luke paused, “Um, Nurse?”

“Yes, Mr. Skywalker?” The Nurse asked.

“If Felicity didn’t have an emergency contact and you couldn’t get a hold of Leia or her family, what
would happen?"

“Miss Rhiaon would have to deal with all of this herself.”

“But what if she was in a coma, or found… dead in a ditch?” Luke’s stomach dropped at the thought. “What would happen?”

The Nurse sighed, “She would be registered with the police as a Jayne Antilles case, and they would seek to identify someone to notify. If there was no one to notify, she would retain her Jayne Antilles status.”

Luke swallowed, “… And if she were dead?”

“The hospital would put her in a simple, unmarked plot.”

Luke felt like his legs were about to buckle from underneath him.

“I’m sorry, Sir,” The Nurse smiled.

“No,” Luke sat down in a chair. “… It’s okay.”

But as the Nurse walked away, Luke knew it wasn’t.

It was almost noon when Felicity finally woke up. Luke was sitting at her side, waiting for Leia – who had been delayed in a meeting – to arrive.

Luke’s face was white and blank as he obsessed over the horrifying thought that Felicity could have be lost to an unmarked burial plot.

“Well, don’t you look terrible,” Felicity’s voice weakly jolted Luke from his thoughts.

He grinned at her and took her hand, “I’m not the one in the hospital bed.”

“Yeah, why am I here? Last I remember we were drinking… and I think I was trying to kiss you.”

“You were.”

“Did I succeed?”

“No.”

“Not surprised,” Felicity shrugged. “If we kissed, I’m sure I would remember it. So why am I in the hospital?”

“Wedge hit you with his chair and you knocked yourself out on the table beside us,” Luke explained. “The doctors say you’ll be fine, but you’ll have to wear the head bandage for a while.”

Felicity sighed, gently touching the cotton wrapped around her head, “It’s a good thing I have a fashion whizz to help me make this work. I’m sure Leia will help me pick out a few outfits.”

“I’m sure she will,” Luke chuckled. “Leia’s on her way.”

“Why?”

“I had the hospital use her as your emergency contact. It was either that or one of your aunts or uncles.”

Luke’s smile fell, “I recently learned the answer to that question.”

Felicity frowned and cocked her head.

Luke gathered his courage to speak, taking both of her hands in his, “Felicity… you don’t have an emergency contact.”

Felicity looked away, “I know… but I didn’t have anyone I could count on. I don’t really have any friends, and those I do are on Hosnian Prime or Rornian… or dead.”

“Felicity,” Luke whispered. Tears were gathering in his eyes, “They told me that if you were found dead in a ditch, they would have no one to contact. No one to tell. No one would know.”

“I’m sure they would figure it out eventually.”

“You don’t get it!” Luke exclaimed.

Felicity winced at the volume, her injured head throbbing.

“I’m sorry,” Luke calmed himself. “But you have to understand, Felicity, the thought of you dead in a ditch somewhere and me not knowing, terrifies me. I have lost so many people I care about, Felicity. I care about you. I couldn’t stand the thought of me not knowing what happened to you.”

Felicity smiled and placed a hand on his face, “I’d be lying if I said I didn’t feel the same about you. Luke… I don’t have an emergency contact because there was no one on Coruscant I could depend on. But now…”


Felicity took a deep breath, “I know I can depend on you. Luke… I trust you. I trust that you’d be here for me… like you’re here now. I trust you would make the decisions I would chose for myself, and I know that you would be here to support me through any of them.”

“Felicity… what are you saying?”

Felicity grinned, “What I’m saying is… Luke Skywalker, will you be my emergency contact?”

Luke gave that goofy grin Felicity liked so much and clasped his hand over hers, “Of course.”

“Perfect.” Felicity lowered her hand and readjusted her position in the bed, “Now, head injuries take a lot out of you. I think I’m going to have a little nap.”

“Of course,” Luke pulled the blanket back over her. “Sweet dreams, Felicity.”

“Thank you.”

“Anytime.”

Silence filled the room for a few moments as Luke watched Felicity turn on her side and close her eyes.

Then Felicity, with her eyes still close, whispered, “Luke?”

“Yes, Felicity?”
“Promise me you’ll be here when I wake up?”

“I promise.”

“Thank you.”

“Anytime.”

“… And Luke?”

“Yes, Felicity?”

“You really would have enjoyed kissing me.”

Luke chuckled, “I’m sure I would have.”

He watched her as she fell asleep. Luke smiled as her body relaxing, drifting into the vulnerable state of sleep, but he knew he would be there to protect her. He would always be there to protect her.

“You really would have enjoyed kissing me.”

Luke couldn’t help but think of her words. He wished he had done it, press those beautiful lips to his own. He wondered how it would taste, how it would feel. Would they have the same easy chemistry they had in everything else? Or would they be like Felicity and Diego, no spark at all?

He should have kissed. He wanted to kiss her.

… He could kiss her.

She was laying there, unaware of the actions around her. If he wanted to kiss her, just try it once without the possibility of her laughing him off… he could do it.

Of course, he wouldn’t actually kiss her. Not taking advantage of her while she slept off a head injury. If he was going to kiss her on the lips, it would be with her full knowledge and enthusiastic consent.

But he wanted to kiss her.

Luke sighed and thought about the situation. No, he shouldn’t do it, not like this. Why did he even want to kiss her so badly? She was his friend. His best friend. Her had such perfect chemistry, such a natural connection.

He had to kiss her.

Luke took a deep breath; okay, he would do it. But not her lips, not taking advantage of her. It would have to be innocent, for that’s all it was: an innocent kiss. Much like one he would give Leia.

…Okay, maybe Leia was a bad example.

Felicity gave a soft moan, and a turned over in her sleep. She was lying on her back and had a small on her face. Luke couldn’t deny how beautiful she looked. Soft, pale skin, petite, delicate features, sharp, angular lines. Her hazel eyes with the teasing twinkle were shut, but her long, brown hair fanned out on the bed. And a sight that made him smile: on her right wrist was her kyber crystal bracelet.

She was simply breathtaking.
Luke made his decision. He stood and leaned over her. He paused for a minute, ensuring that he hadn’t woken her.

Felicity made no movement.

He took a deep breath, and gently stroked her cheek. Her skin was so soft – he would absolutely have to ask her what moisturizer she used – and to his luck, Felicity didn’t stir.


Felicity didn’t move.

Luke took another deep breath, and then leaned forward and kissed her on the forehead.

Felicity smiled in her sleep, but did not wake.

A jolt seemed to go through Luke’s body when his lips touched her skin. There was something odd about it, something so right. His heart pounded faster as he pulled away from her and looked down at her beautiful sleeping form.

He wanted to do it again.

And again. And again. And again. And again.

Inside him, a dam had just burst open. Yes, he always knew he was physically attracted to her, but now that he had kissed her, he wanted more.

Luke wanted to kiss her. Her forehead, her lips, her neck, and so much more. He wanted to hold her in his arms the way he craved the night he learned how Brendan died. He wanted his arm around her waist the same way it had been during the very first picture they had taken together. He wanted her close to him, her skin soft and warm, pressed against him like the time they had danced at Ayessa and Koran’s wedding.

He wanted her body to make him feel just as wonderful as everything else about her did. The way her laugh brightened his life, or her courage gave him strength. He wanted her touch and her taste to fill his heart and make it beat faster the way it did anytime she entered the room.

Wait… *His heart?*

And then Luke finally realized it. He didn’t just want to hold Felicity or kiss her… he wanted to be with her.

Everyday he woke up and his first thought was counting the minutes until he saw her face. He looked forward to those breakfasts, those cooking lessons, those Resistance missions, and any moment where he was lucky enough to have Felicity Rhiaon grace his life.

It wasn’t just her beauty, but her smirk, her sarcasm, her passion, her courage, or how she found hope in the darkness. It was those moments of vulnerability, or kindness, or sorrow, of hatred, of conviction, and everything in between. He didn’t agree with every opinion she had, or every aspect of her, but he adored her flaws and all.

She was broken, but still whole. She fought for what she believed in, and protected that which she loved. Felicity certainly had her flaws, but then again, so did he.
Felicity was just as messed up as him, as insane, and as fearless. She in every way she was either his match or his opposite. Their chemistry was effortless, and their connection deep. They balanced each other perfectly, making each other not only a better person, but wanting to be a better person in process. A person worthy of the other’s affection.

And Luke wanted to wake up every morning to her face beside his.

Looking upon her peaceful face, that day in the hospital, Luke Skywalker’s love forever changed. There was a truth he no longer could deny, nor did he want to fight it.

Luke Skywalker was in love with Felicity Rhiaon.

“I love you,” Luke whispered again, though she still did not stir. His words were a reverent prayer that he was terrified to utter. But now he had said them, and now he had made them true. Gently, he stroked a thumb over her cheek, stunned at his revelation. He was looking upon the face of the woman he loved, “I love you, Felicity Rhiaon.”

He knew this time was different; Felicity was more than just some run of the mill, can of soup girl. No, this time it was true love, epic love, unending love.

Felicity Rhiaon was his soulmate.

And he was never going to let her go.

11 Months, 4 Days

Han Solo was starting to get annoyed. For the past eight months, Luke Skywalker and Felicity Rhiaon had been making eyes at each other in the back of Han’s ship, and it was getting on his nerves. And he was not afraid of letting Luke know it.

Not that the idea of them as a couple irritated Han; in fact he was quite on board with the idea of Luke dating Felicity. She was a nice girl with just enough of an edge to her to make things interesting. Besides, she liked blasters better than lightsabers, and could exchange snarky banter with Han for hours… which actually happened on their last mission until Leia literally threw something at Han to shut them up.

What bugged Han was that the kid would never make his move.

It didn’t surprise Han. Back when Luke didn’t know Leia was his sister, he harbored an unspoken crush on her for three years without taking the next step.

Thank the Force for small miracles.

Luke refused to make his move though, hiding behind excuses of “it has to be the perfect moment” or “what if she rejects me?”

But it wasn’t like Luke had anything to be afraid of; the girl was clearly into him. They spent all the time possible together on mutual assignments, and they hung out regularly outside of the Resistance too. Felicity and Luke would find any excuse to spend time together. Luke would contact her constantly asking her opinion on one subject or another, or needing to share some exciting new fact or adventure. They would always ask the other to join them on off-planet trips, whether it be Luke recruiting a new Jedi, or Felicity’s work as a Senate emissary. Not to mention they had breakfast at Dex’s diner every single morning.
There was also the small fact that a few months ago, Leia and Felicity had a little misadventure on Endor where Felicity finally actually figured out that Luke was in love with her. Felicity had subsequently on a recent Resistance mission openly admitted to Han that she was in love with Luke.

… And started calling Han “Loud Mouth Solo,” after he had almost gotten them killed.

Of course, Han knew the reason why Luke had backed out from confessing his feelings. The whole FN-2187 incident had shaken Felicity, and Luke didn’t want to make his move until she had recovered from it. But that had been two months ago, and frankly, it was ridiculous that Luke and Felicity weren’t together yet.

They laughed, joked, talked, worked, played, worked out, and generally spent as much time together possible. They took long walks together, and spent late nights telling each other their life stories. Hell, Felicity had even bought herself a broken speeder to have Luke fix up to her place, and Felicity didn’t even know how to pilot one of Ben’s toy ships.

But Han finally drew the line when Felicity and Luke developed a new habit: finding any reason to touch one another. Felicity would fix the collar of Luke’s shirt, and Luke would grab her arm whenever they went into hyperspace. They had even taken to walking together arm in arm. Han didn’t walk arm in arm with Leia, and they had an eight-year-old kid together.

So, as the Falcon flew into hyperspeed once more – and Luke gently used an arm to hold Felicity back in her seat – Han snapped.

“Hey Fliss?” Han said.

“Yeah, Han?”

“You think Luke’s a good-looking kid, right?”

Luke’s head shot up, “What?”

“She thinks you’re cute. Right?”


Chewie growled something to Han, clearly trying to get him to back off the subject.

“Don’t worry, Chewie, I got this,” Han waved off the Wookiee before looking back at Felicity. “Got any plans tomorrow?”

“No.”


Luke – now crimson red – opened and shut his mouth a few times, struggling to overcome his embarrassment. Finally, Luke settled on a small nod.

“Good, it’s a date,” Han declared.

“Just one more question, Loud Mouth Solo,” Felicity shot him a look. “Do I get to talk to Luke on this date, or will you be doing that too?”
Han just laughed as he and Chewie exited the cockpit.

“I’m sorry about him,” Luke apologized as they were left alone together. “You don’t have to go through with this if you don’t want.”

Felicity grinned, “Are you kidding? I’ve had a dress sitting in my closet for three months that I bought for when you would finally cave and ask me out.”

“You- You do?”

“Honestly, Luke, it wasn’t some big secret. I’ve known since Leia and I’s little misadventure on Endor. I was going to wait another week before asking you out myself. Pick me up at six?”

“Uh… yeah. Six.”

“Great, see you tomorrow,” Felicity kissed Luke on the cheek and made her exit.

With a grin and a nod, Luke thought to himself, “Well, that turned out better than I thought it would.”

11 Months, 5 Days

They sat on the roof, staring up at the stars. Dinner had been nice enough, albeit a little odd. What were you supposed to say on a first date when you had already been friends for nearly a year? But the best part of the evening had to be when Luke suggested they go to the rooftop to stargaze and chat.

It had been Felicity’s request that Luke wear the outfit he had been wearing the day they met. The black shirt, brown pants, and gold jacket Leia had replicated from the medal ceremony after the Battle of Yavin.

The gold jacket was around Felicity’s shoulders, as was Luke’s arm. She rested her hand against his chest, soothed by the beating of his heart as they spoke in low voices. Felicity wore a dark red dress, low cut in the front with a sort of scooped slit on the short skirt. It was a dress that made Luke’s breath stop when he first saw her in it, and would permanently stay in Felicity’s closet as her de facto “I want to drive Luke wild” dress.

“Did you ever stargaze as a child?” Felicity asked.

“Sometimes,” Luke answered resting his head atop hers. “It wasn’t that safe to go outside with the Tusken Raiders, but I liked to look out at the distance and imagine the places I’d see when I finally got off Tatooine.”

“Oh, I bet you did.” Felicity chuckled, “I can see it now: you posed dramatically as you stare at the setting twin suns of Tatooine. An epic orchestra swelling in the background as you crave the life you wish you had, but accept you never will.”

Luke playfully nudged her, “You’re really lecturing me on being dramatic? Who’s the one who literally made a vow of revenge against Captain Phasma?”

“I will get her one day. I’ll make her pay for taking FN-2187 from me. Then I’ll find him and save him.”

“I know you will,” Luke chuckled. He pulled her in close, “What about you? Did you stargaze as a
child?"

“My brother and I,” Felicity answered. “We would go up to the roof and make up our own constellations. That’s why this roof means so much to me. It helps remind me of the good times with Brendan… I miss him so much.”

“I wish I could have met him.”

Felicity smiled at Luke, “He would have loved you. …Given you a hard time about wanting to date me, but you would have gotten along so well. Father on the other hand, would have hated you.”

“In all fairness, I did kill him,” Luke pointed out. “I’m not sure what my aunt and uncle would have thought of you. They’d definitely be very wary of you, and beg me to reevaluate my life decisions. But Aunt Beru would have liked how you make me feel, and you probably would have really bugged Uncle Owen.”

“And I would have enjoyed bugging him.” Felicity paused, thinking over Luke’s words, “Your Aunt Beru would like how I make you feel?”

“Absolutely.”

“…How do I make you feel?”

Silence clung to the air.

Luke turned to face Felicity. Expectation riddled her face, coupled with fear; the fear of rejection, the fear of anticipation, and the fear of the strong feelings neither of them could deny. They both knew exactly how they felt about the other, and it was unspoken that those feelings were returned. But they needed to be spoken, to break the spell holding them back, and freeing them to move forward into that scary epic love story they knew was awaiting them.

The chance of happily ever after was staring them straight in the face… and it was up to them to take the chance.


She reached up and stilled his hand, “Luke.”

Luke’s heart felt like it was about to explode. He was so afraid, and yet had never been more excited in his life. The world felt right, the Force balanced. The universe was flawless when he held her in his arms.

He wasn’t going to let this opportunity pass him by.

“Felicity,” Luke took a long breath. “This might be too soon to say, but-”

“Say it,” Felicity whispered.

Luke looked deep into her eyes, “I love you.”

Felicity smiled, not that teasing smirk that constantly graced her face, but a true smile filled with utter joy, “I love you too, Luke Skywalker.”

She released his hand and placed hers on the side of his face. Felicity stroked his cheek with her thumb, and he let out a soft moan at the feeling.
Neither one could deny anymore how right it felt to have her skin against his. Her hazel eyes gazing into his sky-blue orbs. Her heart beating in harmony with his.

Luke wondered how it would feel to taste his lips against her.

“Felicity,” Luke whispered, tilting his head forward to rest against hers. The moment was perfect, desire and intimacy clung to the air. It felt all so right, like the millions of decisions they had made throughout their lives had all been leading to this one perfect moment.

“Luke,” Felicity breathed. “…Kiss me.”

He didn’t need to be asked twice. Luke placed his hand behind her head and pulled her lips to his.

It was perfection. Not the best kiss he had ever had – it would take some time for them to adjust to the other’s kissing pattern – but he had never had a kiss that felt so right. This was where he had always belonged, in Felicity Rhiaon’s arms and his lips against hers. Her lips were addicting; the taste intoxicating as he desperately scrapped to got more and more of her kiss.

She was enjoying it as much as him, her hands weaving in his hair, pulling him as hard against her as possible. Felicity moaned and pulled away, arching her neck. He trailed his mouth against her soft, supple neck, kissing, sucking – even gently biting a little – but made his way back up to her intoxicating lips.

For nearly an hour, they didn’t speak; they just reveled in each other’s touch and taste.

And as he enjoyed every single second of that landmark moment – the moment he first kissed his soulmate – Luke knew that he would never want to kiss anyone else.

Chapter End Notes

So the first flashback to Luke and Felicity discovering who Luke’s mother is is actually a bit of a longer story in which the Naberrie family resists the idea of officially verifying that Padmé is Luke and Leia’s mother. Basically, Pooja Naberrie asks that they keep it a family secret because they don’t want Padmé’s legacy to be "Vader’s wife" and she’s already remembered negatively as the woman who put Palpatine into power and the catalyst for the Clone Wars. Leia, of course does not take this idea sitting down and tells Pooja that if they don’t consent to a DNA test, she and Luke will sue them for the inheritance of their mother’s estate (which went to Padmé’s family) and the court will force a DNA test. The family argues a bit before Artoo finally reveals footage that proves that Padmé is their mother (as well as the fact that Artoo’s memory is intact) and Pooja agrees to arrange the DNA test.

If you would like to see that in a full version, let me know as I’m considering making it a short story of its own. It would be what I described to you, as well as probably a little addition of Luke and Leia meeting the Naberries, Luke struggling with the newfound information about Obi-Wan's role in Vader's suit, and Luke's conflicted feelings about suddenly having a new aunt and uncle, and having no memory of his mother and how much he really wants a connection to Padmé, plus his guilt over Anakin's role in Padmé’s death.

No guarantees I'll actually write it, but I'd like to hear if there's interest.
Part Three: Intimacy

Chapter Summary

Luke remembers the first time he and Felicity made love.

Chapter Notes

Welcome to the chapter where the more adult stuff starts kicking in. If you prefer a cleaner version, read the net version. If you want the smut, read the AO3 version. I highly recommend the AO3 version as I consider that the canon version, and things make more sense tone-wise if you understand what really went down in some of these cases (no pun intended.) Also, it’s my first time really writing smut and I’m rather proud of myself, so I want to share it.

Plus, this chapter is probably not going to make a lot of sense if you read the clean version.

And for those worried that this story is going to suddenly become all smut, all the time, this chapter with be the one with the most love scenes as it is the period of time where Luke and Felicity’s physical relationship develops. There will be other smut scenes in future chapters, but not as many as this chapter.

I’m just going to stop making promises about chapter lengths but surprise surprise, I had to split this one also in half… Actually, technically thirds as the love scenes took up so much space it made more sense to do one chapter that was about them becoming lovers, one about them dating, and one about them getting married. Why? Because the dirty version of this chapter is over 35k words aka over 80 pages long. Does this make up for not updating in a month?

Because, seriously, I have devoted over 50 hours to these three chapters, and they were just not getting done. Writing smut is surprisingly hard… pun not intended.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

The Long Way Home

Chapter Twenty-Five

Part Three: Intimacy

Dedicated to my wonderful Emily, who has been my absolute rock throughout the story, especially through writing this chapter. Thank you for your support, feedback, and helping me accept that it’s okay to write some really naughty scenes.

11 Months, 19 Days
“You’re really okay with taking a couple weeks off work?” Luke asked Felicity as they gathered their bags from the ship. “I’m sure Nils isn’t too happy about it.”


“And how happy was he when you told him you went to Temple Village ten days early to help your boyfriend with preparations?” Luke teased.

Felicity smirked, “His exact words were ‘It’s about time you dated Skywalker. I’ve been calling this ever since you made him your emergency contact.’ And then Ceilara said ‘Seriously, what took you so long? If I had a shot with Luke Skywalker, I would have hopped at that right away.’”

“I think the same could be said the other way around,” a voice interrupted.

The pair turned to see Lando emerging from the cockpit to grab his own luggage.

It was Lando’s ship and he had accompanied them to Rornian since Luke’s X-Wing only – at the time – sat one. He had decided to join them because he claimed it made no sense to make Luke go from Coruscant to Cloud City, pick up the ship, return to Coruscant, pick up Felicity (she had work and couldn’t go to Cloud City with Luke), then go to Temple Village, when Lando was going to be on Rornian ten days later.

And no – he kept insisting – it had nothing to do with Alyla Kene. Okay, yes maybe that blue morning glory he has been caring for so delicately in his bag he brought to give to her, but that was only because they had talked one time about how they grew in the greenhouses of Cloud City, and Alyla wanted to see one, and why are you looking in my bag anyway?

“Honestly, Luke,” Lando chuckled, “what took you so long to take a shot with this fine, sophisticated, beautiful woman right here?”

“Normally I would be annoyed with Lando flirting with me like how he always does even when I’ve asked him to stop,” Felicity glared at Lando. “But I have to admit he has a point. Why did it take you so long to ask me out, Luke? You know I’ve made it no secret that I have been physically attracted to you from the moment we met, and the mental and emotional connection came so easily… Look, I’m just saying, we probably should have been sleeping together for at least seven months by now. Heck, we even used to talk about getting dinner or drinks when we first started hanging out. Why didn’t you ever decide to make your move then?”

“I did try,” Luke smirked, trying not to get distracted by Felicity’s flippant comment about them making love. “I was going to do it, Felicity. I was prepared to ask you out, and even began the sentence to do so.”

Felicity frowned, “Why did you stop?”

“Because your boyfriend you never told me about was going to be at your apartment in an hour.”

Felicity’s eyes widened, “Oh my God. You were going to ask me out then?”

“Had a whole speech prepared.”

“Why didn’t you give it?”

“You don’t actually think I’m the kind of guy who would declare my attraction to a woman in a relationship?”
“I’d only been dating him, what? Three weeks?”

Lando looked between the pair, “I’ll let you two work this out and see if anyone’s come to greet the ship.”

Lando knew when to make a quick exit.

“I can’t believe it!” Felicity’s arms were crossed and she was shaking her head. If Felicity was mad, Luke knew it was directed at her own self, “You let me waste my time with some airheaded podracer!”


“Well, I didn’t date him for his brains. He was just a handsome piece of arm candy who let me run off and do my own thing whenever I wanted. I’m not even sure we were in an exclusive relationship.”

Luke paused, “So… Is that what you’re looking for in this relationship? A nice face and someone you can drop and pick up again as easily as a book?”

Felicity’s eyes widened, and Luke was surprised at the flash of fear that surged in the Force.

“No,” Felicity shook her head quickly. She had gone very rigid, “No, Luke, I-”

“I’m not looking for a fling,” Luke said plainly. “I love you, Felicity Rhiaon. I have fallen desperately, hopelessly in love with you… but I’m not some… pull out couch to be used when the occasion arises. I’ve had my fun, but now I’m looking for something serious, and if that’s not what you’re looking for-”

“It is,” Felicity grabbed his arm. Shining hazel eyes stared out into his own blue orbs, something more than love reflected in them, “I didn’t know it when I met you, or even know that I was searching, but you are exactly what I’ve been looking for. You’re handsome, brave, kind, like my sardonic nature, but call me out when I step over the line. You have my back, and trust me to have yours. And your love is fathomless, for me, for your family, for everyone. I don’t even come within an inch of deserving you.”

“No,” Luke placed a hand on her cheek. “I’m the one who doesn’t deserve you. You’re Rogue One. You were kicking ass and risking your life for a greater cause for years before I even got my act together. While you were shooting Sith Lords in the chest on the Death Star, I was home playing with model ships and worrying about power convertors. Everything I am is because of you, and nothing more than a pale imitation of your greatness. Even my elite squadron of pilots was named to honour your accomplishments.”

Felicity laughed, “Did Diego have anything to do with the naming of your Squad?”

“No, actually… Mon Mothma named it. She told me that the Council had selected the name for our greatest pilots to honour our greatest soldiers… and like the fool I am, I never thought to look into it further.”

“Well, in your defense, you were juggling Jedi studies without a teacher and being the Commander of the Rebellion’s most elite squadron of pilots at the time.” She reached up and played with a lock of his hair, “And you’re no fool.”

Luke pressed his forehead against hers and whispered, “I’m a fool for not making you mine the second I laid eyes on you.”
“Oh Luke,” Felicity chuckled, “Yes you were. But I think you’ll soon find that it’s not me who belongs to you… rather that it’s you who belongs to me.”

“I can be yours,” Luke ghosted his lips over hers.

“Don’t be a tease.”

“I’m not.”

Felicity gasped as her back suddenly hit the wall. Luke’s hands were in her hair, his lips on her own, and his tongue in her mouth. She moaned and arched her back, rubbing her small breasts against his broad chest, stimulating herself. Her hands wove into his hair, pulling him in as closely to her as possible.

“Luke!” Felicity gasped as his mouth moved from her lips down to suckle her neck.

“Felicity,” Luke breathed into her neck, finding a particularly sensitive spot on Felicity’s body: the skin perpendicularly beneath her earlobe. He gave a dark chuckle, as she whimpered under his touch, “I’m yours, Felicity. My heart, my soul… yours. But you’ll soon find that there are certain cases-”

Felicity yelped as Luke yanked down the straps of her top and bra. His lips caressed the newly bared skin and begin trailing down towards the breast threatening exposure.

“Where you’re mine,” Luke grinned as Felicity panted heavily. He could feel the buzz of emotions in her mind, and the dull throb of lust that threatened to take charge. “With your consent, of course.”

“Yes, yes,” Felicity panted. “A thousand times yes. Just please don’t stop.”

Luke chuckled, “Then who am I to disappoint you?”

His hands were on her, touching her, tasting her, memorizing every inch of her skin and mapping it in his mind. She was warm and her skin soft, though athletically muscular. While not muscular to the extent of himself – you had to have pretty good biceps if part of Jedi training involved one armed handstands – her arms and thighs were strong. Luke wondered what it would feel like to have those thighs wrapped around his hips.

It was what he had been imagining for the past two weeks since they had started to date… or maybe it was slightly longer than when they started dating. Maybe there were a few occasions he had thought of it before.

Like the middle of the night when his bed was cold, and he knew she was only a few floors below him in her own bed. When he wondered if she was having the same thoughts about him, and doing the same things to herself with those thoughts that he was doing to himself. Only he wished it was her hands in place of his, tangled in the sheets beside him where he would gladly return the favor.

Or like those mornings on the rooftop before their run when Felicity would stretch. The way she arched her back, her breasts thrusting into the air. Or when she would bend over right in front of him wearing those tight, black spandex workout pants that hugged her curves just right. Those pants that just made him want to grab her hips and-

“Someone’s getting excited,” Felicity chuckled, her laugh breaking his thoughts. Seductively, she ran her hands over his hips, slightly down into his pants and pulled out his shirt. She slid her hands underneath the fabric and watched Luke throw his head back as her hands traced the lines of his abs. Felicity tilted her head to the side and coyly asked, “Am I doing that to you? Making you hard
against me?”

“It’s not the first time,” Luke grinned. He leaned in and whispered in her ear, “And it won’t be the last.”

He gripped her hips and pulled them forward, grinding her most sensitive spot against his.

Felicity gave that throaty moan again, and then growled, “Get your lips back on me now, Skywalker.”

Luke didn’t need to be asked twice.

“What in the Seven Corellian Hells!” Obik Kenu suddenly exclaimed behind them.


Luke and Felicity froze. Their lips were on each other, and their bodies tangled in a rather inappropriate display.

“Please tell me you just sense two people behind us,” Felicity whispered.


Quickly, Luke and Felicity untangled themselves, and turned to see their audience. Luke had to tuck his shirt back in his pants, while Felicity pulled back up her bra and shirt straps.

Standing in the ship, absolutely dumbstruck was their greeting party: a shocked Obik Kenu, a fuming Reine Agim, a grinning Gavyn Kene, a raised browed Zena Halcorr, a rather jealous looking Tyla Kinall, and a barely holding back a giggle Alyla Kene, who was standing rather close to a very proud looking Lando Calrissian.


“I’m sorry about the display, everyone,” Luke hurriedly smoothed out his clothing. “I got a little carried away.”

“Carried away?” Reine exclaimed. “Luke, what the hell was that?”

Gavyn chuckled, “Yeah, I mean, I know you two are friends, but don’t you think you’re getting a little too friendly?”

“I’m just happy we decided not to bring Miri,” Zena shook her head. “I wasn’t planning on giving her that talk anytime soon.”

“Yeah, and considering our whole cross species thing, that’s a long talk,” Gavyn added.


Luke sighed and looked at Felicity.

“I take it you didn’t tell them?” Felicity asked.

Luke shrugged, “I didn’t think it was going to be this big a deal.”

“Tell us what?” Tyla demanded.
Luke glanced at Tyla, then took a subtle, protective step in front of Felicity. Tyla couldn’t Force Choke Felicity if Luke was standing in the way. And considering Tyla had been taught to choke people from Vader himself, better safe than sorry.

“I didn’t want to make this into a big deal so close to the wedding,” Luke began, “but… Felicity and I have started to date.”

Silence filled the ship for a long moment as all eyes turned on Felicity.

And then all at the same time:

“Called it!” Obik yelled.

“It’s about damn time!” Gavyn exclaimed.

“ Took you long enough!” Alyla laughed.

“They do make a lovely couple,” Lando playfully nudged Alyla.

“I’m never going to have a shot with you, am I?” Tyla groaned.

“Wait, you weren’t already dating?” Zena frowned.

But Reine still remained silent… and angry.

Luke frowned, “Reine, what’s wrong?”

The look on Reine’s face was deadly, and her arms were crossed.

“You’ve started to date Felicity?” Reine’s voice was cold. “When?”

“Reine—”

“When?” Reine demanded.

Luke sighed and glanced back at Felicity. Of all the people he expected to object to his relationship with Felicity, Reine had never even been a mile close to the list.


“Damn it,” Reine whispered as Obik took a cautious step towards her. She yelled as Obik gently grasped her wrist, ready to pull her away from Luke and Felicity, “DAMN IT, LUKE!”

Luke scowled, trying not to let his anger flare up, “Reine, what is the problem? I thought you liked Felicity.”

“I do,” Reine replied. “The problem is…”

Reine exchanged a look with Obik. Some understanding rippled through the group as a series of looks were shot between various people.


Reine sighed, “…I had next week in the pool.”

Luke’s jaw dropped, “You had a betting pool on when I would date Felicity?”
“Of course we did,” Reine dismissed. “We always have pools like this. We’ve got another going on what’s going to happen with those two.”

Reine pointed back at Alyla and Lando. They exchanged an awkward look, and then took a step away from each other. Unfortunately, Lando’s step made him bump right into Gavyn, who had a none too pleased look on his face on the topic of a betting pool concerning the love life of his formerly enslaved and abused twin sister.

“I can’t believe it,” Reine shook her head. “Three weeks. You couldn’t have waited three more weeks? What even prompted this?”

“You are not going to believe it,” Felicity laughed. “Han actually asked me out for Luke.”

At the same time, jaws dropped, eyes went wide, and faces went pale.

“Han?” Reine exclaimed. “Han asked out Felicity for you?”


“That cheating bastard,” Gavyn shook his head. “I can’t believe that guy would sink so low.”

“What are you talking about?” Felicity asked.

Reine sighed, “Han had two weeks ago in the pool… He just won himself a hundred credits.”


“So, Han didn’t ask me out for you to help kick start our relationship because we were so in love with each other and just needed a push?” Felicity exclaimed, “He did it to win a hundred credits?”

“Yes,” Zena nodded.

Luke gritted his teeth, “I am going to kill him.”

That night was the first time Luke and Felicity shared a bed… as a couple anyway. There had been a night several weeks ago where they had been forced to share a bed. It was the typical mission gone wrong and we have to spend the night on a strange planet waiting for rescue in the morning, and what do you mean there’s only one room with one bed left available in this inn, and good Gods, no I’m not going to sleep on the floor, do you see the state of it, so I guess we have to share this bed, and no this isn’t awkward at all with our unspoken sexual tension.

Han had actually been so annoyed at Luke that he didn’t try anything – Luke wanted his relationship to start with Felicity in a romantic way and not with a hookup – that the next morning, Han had asked out Felicity for Luke.

The plan was as always for Luke to stay in Reine’s spare bedroom – which was basically Luke’s bedroom at this point – in the days leading up to the wedding. Originally Felicity was going to stay at Obik’s place – Lando was staying with Alyla and Gavyn was quite unamused – and then on the wedding night, Obik and Reine would spend the night at Obik’s house, and Felicity would come sleep in Reine’s room at her house.

After walking in on Luke and Felicity’s make out session, it was quickly decided that it just made sense for Felicity to stay in Luke’s room for the duration of the visit.
“You don’t mind?” Felicity asked as she and Luke unpacked their bags into a small dresser.

“Hey, if I can share a bed with you as just friends, I can do it as your boyfriend.”

“As I recall it, we didn’t really share that bed as just friends. You were pressed up pretty close to me.”

“It was cold,” Luke blushed. “We decided to sleep close for the body heat.”

“It wasn’t that cold,” Felicity gave him that one corner smirk he loved.

Luke grinned, then pointed to each dresser drawer, “From top to bottom, the drawers are tops, bottoms, pyjamas, then underwear, socks, belts and other such miscellaneous. You can put shoes, dresses, coats, and anything that needs to be hung in the closet. And if you’re not comfortable with putting your underwear in a place I can see, I’m sure Reine can find a hat in her closet or something.”

Felicity paused from unpacking her dress for the wedding out of her bag on the bed, “I’m sorry?”

“Nothing,” Luke winced, not meaning to have made a big deal out of it. “Just, you know, comfort levels and all.”

Felicity hung her dress up in the closet, and crossed back to her suitcase, “Luke, you just dry humped me against a wall in front of your Jedi friends-”

“They walking in wasn’t planned.”

“But it stands; you just dry humped me against a wall… What makes you think I’m afraid of you seeing my underwear?”

Luke dug his fingernails into his palms, trying to control himself as Felicity mischievously laid out two weeks worth of bras and panties on the bed. They were all matching… and lacy… and cut seductively… and…

And he was going to need a fresher very soon if she kept this up.

Not only did she unpack two week’s worth of sexy undergarments, but she also unpacked four silky, almost transparent night gowns, and one black get up that was definitely for the bedroom, but absolutely not for sleeping.

“Does any of this make you uncomfortable?” Felicity challenged. He could sense that she was testing the waters.

“Yes,” Luke confessed stiffly, “but in a very different way.”

Felicity smirked and let her eyes drift down, “I can see that.”

His mouth felt dry. He took a step forward, his arms outstretched slightly, lust pulsing in the air.

“Felicity-”

“LUKE!” Reine’s voice called from the hall. “Doctor Kalonia’s here! She needs to go over inventory with you!”

“Coming,” Luke called. He looked back at Felicity and apologized, “I’m so sorry.”
“It’s okay,” Felicity nodded. “Duty calls. Do you want me to finish all the packing?”


Felicity laughed as he made a quick exit.

“I love this,” Felicity moaned that night as they laid in bed together, Luke’s arms wrapped around her in the way that would become so familiar. “I could lie in your arms forever.”

“I don’t know how I’ve ever slept without you in them,” Luke sighed, nuzzling her neck. He wanted to trail a hand across her bare shoulder, but Felicity had chosen to wear a long-sleeved pyjama top and pants rather than one of her nightdresses. “Nothing has ever felt so right in my life.”

The moment was perfect as they held each other, sleep slowly creeping upon them. Silence filled the room, not out of awkwardness but simply that nothing needed to be said.

“I love you,” Felicity whispered, darkness casting shadows over them. She was snuggled into his side, always sleeping on her side, while Luke was the kind of man who slept flat on his back. It allowed for a nice bit of intimacy.

“I love you too,” Luke murmured, his eyes feeling heavy. “Now close your eyes and sleep.”

“I’m not tired.”


For a long time, there was silence, and Luke figured that Felicity must have followed his instructions. After what must have been nearly an hour, Luke felt Felicity shift next to him. It roused him slightly, having not yet fallen into deep sleep, but Luke was so tired that he felt no need to open his eyes. Felicity was probably just shifting in her sleep.


Okay, maybe she was awake. But there was no need to reply; she was just probably checking to see if she woke him. Felicity made no further inquiry, and Luke was certain that was the end of it.

Then a few minutes later, he heard the panting. It was rhythmic and throaty. Occasionally, Felicity would let out a small moan. Then he could hear something wet, a sort of familiar squelching noise, and the panting picked up in pace.

Confused, Luke cracked an eye open. It was enough that Luke could see, but indiscernible enough that Felicity shouldn’t be able to see he was watching her.


She was lying on her back, her head thrown back on the pillow. One hand was pawing at her clothing clad breasts, and Luke could barely make out their pointed tips through the darkness. The blanket was pulled up to the end of her ribcage, and it was oddly tented in two perpendicular spots. Her knees, Luke realized. Her legs were spread wide… and something was moving frantically under the blanket between them.

It hit Luke at the same time the wet, heated smell did.

Felicity was touching herself… and thinking about him as she did so.
He was iron hard in an instant.

Luke considered revealing that he was awake; maybe he could join her. Yes, that’s what he wanted so much, to be on top of her, his hips making that movement under the blanket, his cock replacing the finger sliding in and out of her wet passage. To peel that shirt off her body and show those pert breasts some real attention. To see just how pointed her nipples could get as his tongue and teeth ran over them.

But it was too risky. What if she stopped when he revealed he was awake? What if she was embarrassed about masturbating next to Luke as he slept, his name on her lips? Reaching in the Force, he could sense how close she was to climax, and he didn’t want to take that from her.

It took all of Luke’s strength not to wake her, or even reach down to his pulsing cock, and stroke himself to the seductive image of Felicity pleasing herself. But he did watch her; he couldn’t tear his eyes from the incredibly sexy sight of Felicity Rhiaon, skin flushed, breath ragged, eyes squeezed shut, furiously pumping her fingers – how many did she have in her? One? Two? Three? – into her wet passage.

She was given over to passion, and there was no doubt that she was thinking of Luke. Not only was she softly panting his name, but every now and then she would look over at him. Felicity would gently bite her bottom lip, her eyes roaming over his bare chest – he wore no shirt that night – and the squelching would get louder as her fingers pumped herself faster.

Was she also thumbing her clit? Circling it? Teasing it with every pump? Luke wished he could just pull back the blanket at see. Yet, the mystery of the unseen turned on Luke even more. No doubt there was another tent in the blanket; this one between his own thighs.

But the best part was when she would touch him. They were brief, hesitant touches; ones Felicity knew she shouldn’t make. Yet she couldn’t seem to help it as occasionally she would risk a touch. Ghosting a hand down his abs, twining her legs with his, and his absolute favorite move of all.

Emboldened by the proximity of her orgasm, Felicity pulled her fingers out of her heated tenderness. She had a wicked look in her eyes, and drew her glistening fingers gently across his lips.

Luke almost came then and there.

“There,” Felicity grinned, her fingers diving back under the covers and back into her passage. “Now, you’re going to wake with the taste of me on your lips. I taste good, don’t I?”

She did. So good that it took all of Luke’s strength not to pin her to the bed and dive his tongue into her throbbing quim until her legs were locked around his head and she was screaming his name.

“I bet your tongue would feel great between my legs,” Felicity whimpered as her hand furiously thrust under the sheet. “You would lick me, and taste me, and curl inside of me, and thrust faster than my fingers, and show me what a real man’s tongue can do. OH, FUCK! LUKE!”

Felicity hunched forward, her body clenching and clasping around the hand inside of her, holding it in place as she rode out her orgasm, his name on her lips.

When the last aftershocks subsided, she just sat there panting, fingers still buried inside of her. After a minute, she fell back onto the mattress and pulled her fingers out of her cunt. Then she started the laugh.

“I know you’re awake, Luke.”
Luke reluctantly opened his eyes and found her staring at him and laughing.

“Oh, Luke,” Felicity rolled onto her side and stroked her fingers across his chest. He couldn’t ignore the wet trail a few of them were leaving behind. “Did you enjoy the show?”

“You are going to be the death of me,” Luke said simply.

“Good.” Felicity grinned and kissed him. Before he could grab her head to pull her in closer, Felicity had pulled back and was climbing out of bed, “Now, if you’ll excuse me, I have to run to the fresher. Masturbating under the covers in front of your boyfriend is sexy, but getting a UTI is certainly not. Oh. Before I forget.”

Luke frowned as Felicity slid back under the sheet. She wriggled for a moment, then pulled something out. A moment later her pyjama bottoms were on the floor, and panties were lying on his chest. They were purple, lacy, and damp, infused with the musky feminine scent of sex. Luke stared at them in amazement, and then his eyes flicked up at Felicity.

She was of course giving that one corner smirk, hands on hips, and eyes filled with mischief. Her pyjama top was just barely covering her quim from sight, but he could see something wet, shining on her thighs in the moonlight.

“You can use my panties if you need a little help getting that under control,” Felicity openly stared at his erection tenting the covers. “And yes, I am not wearing anything under this top, so my cunt is completely unprotected from any potential intrusion. Yes, I am extremely wet, horny, and turned on by the sight of your shirtless torso. And yes, I am quite turned on by the image of you sneaking into the fresher after me, bending me over the sink, and having your way with me… But somehow, I think Reine might not be too happy if we did that. Shame really. We’ll have to do that sometime after we get back to Coruscant. My sink’s at a pretty good height for that, but I supposed we can do it at your place too.”

Luke just stared at Felicity, “What have I gotten myself into with you?”

Felicity grinned, “You have no idea.”

And with that, she sauntered out of the room.

Luke’s head hit the pillow and he stared up at the roof. The scent of Felicity’s slick desire staining the panties on his chest, overwhelmed his nostrils.

What was this woman doing? She was driving him insane. First grinding against him on the ship, then displaying not only her sexy underwear to him – forcing him to imagine how they would look on her – but revealing she had brought lingerie with herself to Rornian, and now masturbating in front of him, giving him her wet panties, and teasing him with images of fucking her over a sink?

The answer was very clear.

Before this visit to Rornian was over, Luke Skywalker was going to have sex with Felicity Rhiaon.

11 Months, 29 Days

“…and from that first day when we joined the Rebellion and got paired together in fight training orientation… and you totally kicked my ass, I knew you were the one,” Obik grinned as he recited his vows to Reine in the Meditation Gardens, surrounded by their friends and family (even if that family only consisted of Reine’s sister.) “I only dreamed of this day when you would have some
impossible moment of stupidity where you thought marrying me would actually be a good idea.”

Reine raised a brow at him, “You know the marriage isn’t finalized yet, Obik? I could still back out.”

“Love you,” Obik said quickly, flashing his most charming grin.

Reine smiled and shook her head.

“Reine Agim,” Obik continued, “I vow that until the day I die, I will love you, and will always have your back. I will be there in good times and bad, there to support you through any challenge the Force makes us face, whether it be death, disagreement, or even the Dark Side. Reine Agim, you kicked my ass seventeen years ago, you kick my ass to this day, and I look forward to you kicking my ass for the rest of my life.”

Luke, who had been granted the honor of officiating the ceremony, smiled at the pair, “Now that Obik and Reine have declared their vows to this marriage, they will exchange rings as a token of their love and symbol of their eternal bond.”

Obik and Reine’s wedding was the first legal one between two members of the Jedi Order (two years later, Gavyn and Zena accidentally discovered that their marriage hadn’t been legal, leading to a hasty re-dedication ceremony.) As such, the Order had to come up with their own version of a ceremony.

One aspect of the ceremony had all the members stand on either side of the bride and groom. The rings were held by the two people at the end of each line – Shar’vida and Davarl in this case – and it would be passed down from member to member, each Jedi blessing whichever ring was passed to them, until the rings were handed to Luke in the center.

The “blessing” of the ring was simply saying “May the Force Bless This Bond” and shifting some of the Force around the ring into it, so that the rings were imbued heavily with it when they reached the bride and groom. When the rings got to Luke, he too “blessed” the rings, then used the Force to bond the rings together in the same way a Jedi bonded with their lightsaber upon its completion.

As the rings were passed down the line, Luke let his eyes drift among the guests. Ben was up on the raised platform with Luke and the other Jedi, standing in Obik’s line. Han, Leia, Chewie, and Lando had all been invited (though Reine had threatened to kick Han out after the betting pool revelation,) but chose not to sit too close to the front. While they all were friendly to Luke’s second and third in commands, the only time they spent together with the couple sans Luke was Han, Lando, Chewie, and Reine’s monthly Sabacc game (which Alyla had been recently tagging along to even though she played so terribly that she insisted Lando help her every time… Though Han and Reine had a theory about that.)

But it wasn’t his family Luke was looking for in the crowd, but rather the woman who had stolen his heart.

Felicity was sitting closer to the front, among the groom’s guests. She was sitting next to Nils Arlos and the other former Recruiters Obik had worked with in his Rebel days.

She looked stunning; wide smile, simple makeup, a sleek black dress that fell just past her knees and had a golden zipper partway down her front to just underneath her breasts, and her brown hair was elegantly styled in an intricate updo resembling a bun. Honestly, Felicity Rhiaon spent at least 70% of her existence wearing a bun, so it didn’t surprise Luke.

Felicity looked so beautiful, and Luke was ecstatic that she was here with him. The last time she had
been to a celebration on Rornian, Luke had been with Calla, and Felicity with Drystan. Luke wished he could go back to the day of the Jedi Temple’s official opening and share it with her, rather than with her… plus two significant others they were forced to be with while subconsciously longing for each other.

It no longer mattered; Luke Skywalker was in love with Felicity Rhiaon, and he didn’t care what anyone thought.

But that didn’t mean he didn’t feel the eyes on him. They weren’t of an audience member watching him officiate the ceremony, they were angry eyes, burning with rage as he watched Felicity.

Those eyes belonged to one of the Jedi standing on the platform, named Cade Ren.

Cade was nineteen and had joined Luke’s Order when he was sixteen. Cade had very much the mindset of the ends justify the means, and vaguely Luke wondered if Cade had some sort of connection to the Empire in his past. Cade would often clash with Luke over his ideas of right and wrong, and Cade definitely took a more grey approach to the whole Jedi thing.

Honestly, Luke was even reluctant to take on Cade in the first place, but Luke had a policy that anyone who wanted to learn was welcome in Temple Village. If he hadn’t turned away Tyla Kinall who still didn’t exactly agree that the Sith had been a bad thing – undoing her brainwashing was slow going for Luke – he wasn’t about to turn away Cade.

There were three things about Cade that made him particularly dangerous: first was his view that using the Dark Side wasn’t actually a bad thing. Second was how skilled he was in lightsaber combat. Luke had actually barred him from building his own saber until Cade proved to him that he wouldn’t be dangerous to the other Jedi with it.

But the third thing was that Cade could be quite charming when he wanted too. As such, he had gathered himself a little posse of the younger students in Temple Village.

Bakura Tarven was his second in command, equally as dangerous with a lightsaber, and there to agree with anything Cade said. Bakura had strong notions of who deserved Force powers, and been very much against accepting Zena’s group of freed slaves into the Order.

Zhane Varss was definitely the group’s muscle, and was one of the few in Temple Village who could take on Luke in practice combat. Zhane didn’t play fair, and often Luke had to chew him out for using dirty tricks like distractions and feigning surrender only to deal a last-minute blow. But Zhane also didn’t blindly agree with Cade, and often would call out his stupidity or arrogance.

Jake Comarila was a small, skinny kid with no mind of his own. Scared to death of the other boys, and unable to make decisions for himself, Jake blindly followed whatever Cade wanted. Even if it meant defying Luke, Jake always did what Cade demanded of him.

Luke glanced over at Cade who had sternly passed Obik’s ring to Ben for blessing. Luke never liked Cade influencing Ben, and wondered why they had been placed together in line. He met Cade’s burning gaze, and could feel the anger in the Force.

Discretely, Luke shook his head at Cade, and sent his thought through the Force.

Not now.

But Cade wasn’t about to let it go.

I’ve heard the rumours, Master Skywalker. Have you really taken up with Rhiaon?
Now is not the time, Cade.

Are you sleeping with Rhiaon?

... No, at the moment I am not *sleeping* with Felicity Rhiaon. We are dating.

That's even worse. You can’t take up with a woman like her. A faithless, non-sensitive. Do us all a favor, Skywalker, sleep with her a few times, use up the pleasure you desire of her, and then drop her. You're too powerful to waste your blood on mating with the likes of her. Take up with Tyla Kinall or Brinna Tharen, and forget this road of folly.

This discussion is over, Cade.

For now?

Forever.

“May the Force Bless This Bond,” a pair of female voices – those of Tyla and Brinna who stood closest to Obik and Reine respectively – came from either side of Luke. He suddenly found the rings being offered to him, which reinforced Luke’s ending of conversation with Cade as the attention of the ceremony turned back to Luke.

Shaking off the hostile words about his relationship with Felicity, Luke was overjoyed to complete the marriage ceremony of his closest and oldest students.

“Obik Kenu,” Luke turned to the groom, “do you vow to take this woman as your wife? To remain loyal, respectful, her partner and equal in all things? Keep her first and foremost in your heart, and vow to love, support, and protect her until your dying breath?”

“I do,” Obik’s words had no hesitation.

“Reine Agim,” Luke repeated his query, “do you vow to take this man as your husband? To remain loyal, respectful, his partner and equal in all things? Keep him first and foremost in your heart, and vow to love, support, and protect him until your dying breath?”


There was a sense of relief among all those gathered to watch the ceremony. Obik and Reine’s marriage was a long time coming, and all were happy to see them finally give in to the love that had been just out of their reach for so long.

And as Luke observed the absolute love and joy in the eyes of his friends, all he could think was how happy he was that he decided to allow attachment, marriage, and overall love in his Jedi Order.

Luke smiled, “Obik, please place your ring on Reine’s finger and repeat these words: With this ring, I, Obik Kenu bond my life to yours as it is bonded to the Force. For this day, for all days, and for beyond my end day.”

“With this ring, I, Obik Kenu,” Obik slid the ring onto Reine’s finger, “bond my life to yours as it is bonded to the Force. For this day, for all days, and for beyond my end day.”

Luke turned to Reine, “Reine, please place your ring on Obik’s finger and repeat these words: With this ring, I, Reine Agim bond my life to yours as it is bonded to the Force. For this day, for all days, and for beyond my end day.”
“With this ring, I, Reine Agim,” Reine’s hand shook as she slid the ring onto Obik’s finger, “bond my life to yours as it is bonded to the Force. For this day, for all days, and for beyond my end day.”

“Still sure you don’t want to back out?” Obik winked at her.

Reine grinned and clasped her left hand with his, “Never.”

“Then, by the power vested in me by the choosing of this Jedi Order, and the Government of the New Republic, I now pronounce you husband and wife.” Luke grinned at Reine, “Reine, you may kiss the groom.”

And the hall laughed and cheered as Reine did just that.

“To Obik Kenu!” Felicity raised her glass to toast Obik at the reception with the rest of the former Rebellion Recruiters. “You finally wore her down!”

“To Obik!” Everyone cheered and clinked glasses.

“Thanks, Everyone,” Obik just shook his head and took a drink.

“You Rebel Recruiters sure are an interesting bunch,” Luke was at Felicity’s side, his arm lovingly wrapped around her waist.

“You don’t know the half of it,” Felicity smirked that one corner, upturned smirk Luke loved so much.

Luke grinned at Felicity, “You know, I’m really glad we’re dating now.”

“Why’s that?”

“Because now I can kiss that smirk right off your face,” Luke gave a husky whisper.

Felicity yelped in surprise when Luke suddenly grabbed the back of her head and crushed his lips against hers. It wasn’t the soft, tender kisses they had been sharing as of late, but rather that hungering kiss he had given her ten days previous as he had slammed her against the wall of the ship.

Luke and Felicity had not yet consummated their relationship, but the sexual tension that clung to the air was abundant. They had spent nearly a year developing their emotional and mental relationship. Now it was time to explore their physical one. There was no doubt in Luke’s mind that it would have the same sort of instant chemistry that had accompanied their friendship and romance, but he had yet to find an opportunity to prove that theory.

“Get a room,” Drexel Orunitia laughed causing Luke and Felicity to come back to reality and break apart. “But truly, Kenu, it’s been a long time coming for you and Reine.”

“Well, that’s why Kenu was such a good recruiter,” Nils Arlos said, “he never did give up on a good thing. That’s why he had the best success rate of any of you.”

“I thought it was because he had the Force,” Talanis Leentro rested her arm on his shoulder. “Gave him that extra edge.”

“Whatever helps you sleep at night, Leentro,” Gren Roscoe smirked over the rim of his champagne. “It’s not Kenu’s fault your numbers were so low.”
“If I was so bad at recruiting, why did Arlos keep me on the team?” Talanis challenged.

“We needed someone to pilot our ships,” Ceilara Keseg teased.

“Didn’t stop us from getting boarded,” Obik said in a voice that sounded like he was trying to pretend it was a mutter, but really wanted everyone to hear exactly what he had said.

“Oh, God no,” Drexel shook his head, “we’re not telling the ‘sixteen-year-old Felicity Rhiaon talked two Stormtroopers into joining us instead of arresting the Batch she was picked up in’ story again.”


“I’ll tell you later,” Felicity promised.

“Besides, we’ve got other things to talk about.” Sarli Kahn nudged Felicity, “When’s your wedding? Think you and Skywalker are going to also have it here?”

Felicity choked on her champagne.

“Oh, for the love of—” Felicity rolled her eyes, “I’ve been dating Luke for a month. Let’s not start picking out wedding presents just yet.”

“Speaking of,” Gren looked around, “can I go in on a gift with someone? I’m really drawing a blank as to what to get them.”

“Really?” Obik asked. “Reine and I figured it out months ago.”

Luke groaned, dropping his head into his hands.

“That’s it!” Felicity threw her hands in the air. “I’m going to go talk to Leia! Somebody sensible, who hasn’t already started planning my future wedding.”

The group chuckled as Felicity stormed off, but Luke had an uneasy expression on his face.

Luke looked at Obik, “Has Leia—”

“Already looking at florists,” Obik smirked. “I think she’s fond of the one we used.”

“Of course she is,” Luke shook his head and took another sip of his drink.

He turned his focus to the dance floor for a moment. Zena and Gavyn were awkwardly stepping to the music, more out of obligation to dance than actual desire to do so. Lando was twirling Reine across the room in an impressive display Obik could never dream of doing (Obik had never been the greatest dancer.) But Lando’s eyes weren’t on the bride; they kept trailing over to the scarred beauty that had somehow managed to convince Ben to dance with her.

“I can’t believe how tall that kid is,” Obik raised a brow as he and Luke watched Alyla and Ben.

“You’re positive he’s only seven?”

“Last time I checked,” Luke shrugged. “So, have we gotten a read on the whole Lando/Alyla situation and if I should be afraid of Gavyn murdering Lando?”

“No on both counts,” Obik replied. “I don’t even think Alyla and Lando know what’s going on with them. All I know is that Alyla keeps making those trips to Bespin to be his plus one to various formal dinners. She says she likes doing it to see more of the world and experience the things she never could before… But let’s not pretend there isn’t something going on after dinner ends.”
“And Gavyn?”

“He says as long as Calrissian treats Alyla with respect and she gives full consent, it’s not his place to interfere. Considering he’s married to a woman who once legally owned him, Gavyn doesn’t really have a leg to stand on objecting to Alyla’s interest in Lando. Nor does he seem to have the desire to interfere with Alyla’s love life… or whatever they have.”

“Wish I had a twin like that,” Luke sighed. “You know that Leia originally thought that Felicity was only going to be interested in a fling with me, and actually tried to warn her off when they ended up stranded on Endor together a few months back?”

“No kidding,” Obik said.

“Ended up actually making Felicity realize she was in love with me.”

Obik smiled, “You know… I’m really happy you and Fliss got together. I’ve known her since she was sixteen, and boy has that girl gone through some messed up things.”

“Yeah, she told me about her mother dying, and her father betraying her, and the whole Brendan thing.”

“Oh, what happened with Brendan was awful. I was actually the one scheduled to pick him up, but… Well, you know what happened. I swear, if I ever meet that Third Sister Inquisitor, I’m not sure I can be responsible for my actions. I saw so many people destroyed by that bombing, and not just the ones who died.”

Luke’s eyes couldn’t help but flick over to Tyla Kinall; he was the only person she had confessed her former identity to. Of course, both Felicity and Diego knew she was a former Imperial and close with Vader, having actually encountered her during Operation Citadel, but they didn’t know her former Inquisitor role.

“Why Third Sister specifically?” Luke asked, carefully looking away from Tyla before Obik caught on that something was wrong.

“She’s the only person living who was involved in the conspiracy,” Obik explained. “Apparently after the last few Jedi died about a year before Yavin, Vader killed all the Inquisitors, but spared Third Sister because she was so obedient. Became his personal assassin or something. Last I heard she was alive, probably biding her time to kill us all. Just pray that Felicity is never in the same room as her, or Felicity might actually kill her.”

Luke shifted uncomfortably, “I never really realised how close you were with Felicity.”

Obik sighed, “After Riz died she was very lost. I stepped in with Nalto to fill the void Riz’s death left. I always did sort of regret phasing her out after I joined the Jedi, but by then she was with Pax and it didn’t seem like she needed me anymore. But I still remember the day I met her. She was so young and scared, yet strong and brave. She ran away from home at sixteen to join a war she barely believed in. I know that she would have been a very different person if Brendan hadn’t died. But the amazing thing is that despite everything she’s been through, there’s been one thing no one could take from her.”

“What’s that?”

“Her passion. For romance, for fighting in what she believes in. Even her passion for architecture endured.”
“She mentioned that to me,” Luke said. “Was it a big hobby of hers?”

“Hobby?” Nils interrupted. “It wasn’t her hobby; it was her dream job. Rhiaon’s mode of recruitment was going into universities, being a student, and talking other students into joining us. Every single time when we asked her, what courses do you want us to enroll you in this time – because you actually had to do your studies undercover – it was the same answer; architecture.”


“Yeah, she’s actually gotten a lot of credits in architecture study,” Nils replied. “She could have gotten a degree with another year of study. She still could.”

“I’m surprised she didn’t,” Obik said. “She always said that’s what she was going to do after the war.”

“Well, after the bombing while we were packing up the office,” Nils said, “she felt a responsibility to the Republic and chose to take the job offer of Senate Emissary. I’ve encouraged her to pursue a degree, but she says there’s no point.”

Luke was silent; he wasn’t sure if it was from his displeasure at hearing Felicity never achieved her dream job… or the low thrum of alcohol buzzing through his system. He wasn’t drunk, but he certainly wasn’t sober.

“Hey, Luke, I’m sorry to bring it up,” Nils said, “but I’ve been meaning to ask. Did you manage to submit your T93847 form to the Senate yet?”

“It’s almost done,” Luke promised. “I’ve just been busy with the wedding and we’ve started construction on a new batch of houses. I’ll submit it next week.”

“Luke, you have to submit it tonight.”

“Tonight?”

“The cut off for this quarter is tonight. We went over this. If you don’t submit by midnight, your case won’t go before the Senate until next quarter. That’s a three-month delay, and we’re talking about getting permission and funding to build your medical center. That’s a vital piece of your claiming process. You could get delayed years if things don’t move quickly.”

“Alright,” Luke groaned, “I can head to my office now and finish it.”

“Fine,” Nils shrugged. “But if anyone asks me if you did your paperwork under the influence of alcohol, I’m not going to lie.”

Luke looked at Obik, “I’m sorry for running out. I’ll be back as quickly as possible.”

“Don’t worry,” Obik waved off. “I’ll explain to Reine. She’ll understand.”

“Thanks.”

“Just try to hurry. We’re cutting the cake soon.”

Luke shook his head in amusement, “I promise I won’t miss the cake.”

Luke was busy typing at his computer when he sensed the presence in the doorway.
“What are you doing here?” Luke asked, a grin across his face.

Felicity was standing at the doorway with a tray and a coy smile, “You missed the cake.”

Felicity set down the tray on a side table. It held two plates of cake and two glasses of champagne. She sauntered across the room, swinging her hips, and if Luke didn’t know better it looked like she was sticking out her chest slightly, that irresistible smirk on her face.

Reaching him, Felicity placed a hand on his right arm, and slowly glided it across his arm, shoulder, neck, and other shoulder as she passed behind him. Her touch was with just the right pressure to be seductive, yet at the same time look innocent.

She clearly had an agenda.

“Mmm,” Felicity gave a small satisfied moan as she ran her hand from his shoulder, across his chest, and back to his right shoulder. It was the kind of moan that set every nerve in Luke’s body on fire.

Luke groaned and leaned back in his chair as her fingers glided over his chest, dipping down ever so slightly under his collar to brush against his bare skin.

Felicity smirked and wrapped her arms around Luke’s shoulders, pressing herself against him ever so gently, nuzzling her nose just barely against the sensitive skin of his neck.

Luke couldn’t ignore how tight his pants were getting.


Luke gave a short, strangled cry as she gave his earlobe a sudden quick nip. That minx smile ripped across her face as Luke struggled to control himself.

“Felicity,” Luke whispered, weaving a hand through her hair to pull her in closer as her lips and tongue ran wild with deliberate motions across his neck. “Felicity, I want you so much.”

She smiled, dislodging herself from his neck, and whispered in his ear, “I want you so much too.”

Her hand trailed down his body, down his muscled chest and cut abs. She moved lower and lower, and Luke’s breath came out in ragged pants.

“I want you so much, Luke Skywalker,” Felicity continued to murmur in his ear, nuzzling it. “I want your hands on my body, your mouth on my breasts, and this…”

Felicity’s hand rested just above the pronounced bulge in his pants.

She giggled naughtily, “Well, I think you know where I want that.”

“Felicity,” Luke’s eyes were dark with lust. His mind was filled with images of fulfilling her desires in a thousand different ways.

“But…” Felicity smirked. Luke could feel her breath on his ear as she whispered, “You have work to do.”

Suddenly she was across the room casually arranging the forks on the cake plates, leaving a completely dumbfounded Luke.

“You are the most evil person I have ever met,” Luke stared at her with his jaw agape. “And I’ve
met Palpatine.”

“I’m sorry, Luke,” Felicity laughed, carrying the tray over to the desk and setting it down. “I just couldn’t resist.”

“You are going to make that up to me.”

“Oh, don’t worry,” Felicity rubbed his bicep, “I will.”

Luke sighed, and shook his head, “I should have known what I was getting into when I decided to get involved with a woman who takes pleasure out of constantly messing with people.”

“What did you seriously expect?” Felicity grinned.

“Was it just an act then?” Luke asked. “What you said about my hands and my lips and my…”

Felicity raised an eyebrow.

“Were you just teasing about that?”

Felicity gently ran a hand over the short hairs of his neck. She was standing so close to him, and his nostrils were filled with the light floral scent of her perfume.

“I can be yours,” Felicity ghosted her lips over his.

“Don’t be a tease.”

“I’m not.”

Felicity pulled his head forward, crushing her lips to his. Luke’s arms locked around her waist, pulling her in as close to his body as possible.

“But,” Felicity breathed as Luke’s lips trailed down her neck to the scoop of her dress’s neckline. She gave a ragged gasp as Luke rolled his hips, grinding the bulge in his pants against her sensitive apex which was only protected by the fabric of her underwear. Felicity moaned, her hands brushing through his hair as his tongue teased the tops of her breasts. She found it hard to break away while he gently nibbled her collarbone, but she managed. “You really have to submit that form.”

Luke groaned, pulling himself away before he couldn’t stop himself from shoving her down on that desk and having his way with her, “Fine, but if this is how visits while I’m working are going to happen from now on, you’re banned from my office if I need to get work done.”

“Deal,” Felicity hopped up to sit on Luke’s desk, her smooth, soft legs crossed mere inches from his face. It was impossible not to notice that her legs were bare; Felicity had forgone any hosiery.

“You are really going to be distracting, aren’t you?” Luke sighed, his eyes locked on her legs. He wanted nothing more than to trail his lips up those thighs.

“Yep,” Felicity grinned. She picked up the plate and said, “Cake?”

They spent a while in the office, casually chatting as Luke completed his paperwork. The mood had simmered down, but the sexual tension still clung heavily to the air. Just when Luke thought Felicity had finally stopped teasing him, she would cross her legs or brush her hand against his arm and set him off all over again.

“Good job,” Felicity smiled. “Nils will be so happy we don’t have to delay your progress another three months. Although I wouldn’t mind having you on Coruscant more often.”

“I’ll make an effort to be there more,” Luke promised. His hand absentmindedly trailed down her leg. “Nils seems like a nice guy.”

“Best boss you could ask for.”

“He was telling me that he’s encouraged you to study architecture.”

Felicity looked away from him, “It’s merely a hobby.”

“Really? Because I recall you saying it was your dream job.”

Felicity sighed, “Alright, fine, maybe I would be interested in taking some night courses and finishing my degree. You know, casually, maybe stretch it out over a few years. It would be fun.”

“But?” Luke didn’t need to be a Jedi to sense there was something more.

“But it’s pointless,” Felicity said flatly. “I’m too old to make a career change.”

“You’re only thirty-two. That’s not old.”

“It’s old enough that my doctor recommends that if I do plan on having kids, to get on that as quickly as possible.” When she saw Luke’s expression, Felicity deadpanned, “I’m not joking. She told me that last week at my yearly physical.”

“Wow,” Luke just shook his head. “What did you even say to that?”

“That I’d get on you as quickly as possible,” Felicity grinned.

A silence clung to the room as Felicity slowly realized the implication of her words.


“You want to have children with… me?” Luke said slowly.

“It… was just a joke,” Felicity laughed, but Luke knew what genuine laughter from Felicity sounded like and that wasn’t it.

“You want to have children with me,” Luke repeated.

Felicity sighed, “Great, I’ve completely scared you off. Good going Rhiaon, you held onto him, for what? Three weeks?”

“Felicity-”

“Luke, the only reason I’m so comfortable with the idea is that, okay yes we’ve only been dating for a few weeks, but we’ve been getting to know each other and develop our bond for almost a year.”

“Felicity-”

“Look, can we just forget I said anything?”

“Felicity!” Luke put two fingers over her mouth. “I want to have children with you.”

It was Felicity’s turn to be shocked, “What?”
“I want to have children with you,” Luke repeated, not a trace of hesitation in his voice. “I’ve wanted that for quite a while now.”

“When did you-”

He grabbed her left wrist and trailed a thumb over the tattoo, “When I saw you with FN-2187 that day, and how motherly and devoted you were to him, when I saw how hard you fought to safe him, and when I actually had to physically drag you away to leave him behind… I knew. I knew that was the mother I wanted for my children.”

Luke took a deep breath as Felicity stared at him saying nothing.

“I’m not saying I want a baby in my arms nine months from now,” Luke assured her. “But I want you to know… I’m not afraid of the idea of us having children someday… and it’s not going to make me run. In fact, knowing that you do want that too…”

Luke gently pulled a loose strand of hair over her ear.

“It makes me want to stay all that much more,” Luke said softly.

“Well…” Felicity coyly cocked her head to the side and played with the fastenings of his tunic. “It would be a lie to say it wouldn’t make me stay as well.”

Luke smiled brightly, “I want you to promise me something, Felicity.”

“Luke, we’ve been only dating for a few weeks. I’m not promising marriage or kids or even being roommates at this point.”

“Noted,” Luke chuckled. “What I want is for you to promise me that you will pursue your architecture degree.”

Felicity opened her mouth.

“It doesn’t have to be now,” Luke cut her off. “But someday. Please… you can’t waste your life at a job you don’t really want just because you feel regret for what happened to Alderaan. Yes, we lost billions, but through your work as an Emissary, you’ve saved trillions. Your debt has been repaid, and now it’s time to pursue your dreams.”

Felicity smiled, running her hands over his chest, her thumbs trailing across the bared skin at his collar, “How do you always know exactly what to say?”

“I practice speeches in my head before giving them. You wouldn’t believe how many incarnations of I am a Jedi, like my father before me I went through.”

Felicity laughed and bowed her forehead against his.

“Promise me, Felicity,” Luke whispered. “Promise you’ll pursue your degree.”

Felicity gently nodded, “Alright… I’ll do it.”

They stayed in that position for a while, heads bowed together while Felicity sat on Luke’s desk, and he in his chair. The moment started off sweet, but as they stared at each other, lips millimetres apart – and maybe a little too much alcohol in their systems – something heavy set in their gazes.

He needed no other urging, pulling her head toward him in a soft, tender kiss. Felicity’s breath was heavy as they pulled apart, and Luke needed to taste her lips again. They kissed over and over for several minutes, their pulses rising higher with each tender touch.

At some point, Luke’s hand found its way onto Felicity’s bare calf. He gently stroked the soft, smooth skin, and massaged the tense muscle.

“That feels wonderful,” Felicity murmured, her eyes drifting closed.


“You know, Luke,” Felicity’s tone was heavily laden, “when you started saying you wanted me to promise something… I thought you were going to make me vow to have children with you.”

“That would be ridiculous. After all,” Luke’s hand began to slowly drift up her leg. His eyes locked her gaze, a strong cloud of lust darkening his blue irises, “we haven’t even made love yet.”

Felicity smirked as his hands moved higher, passing above her knee getting very close to the hem of her dress. Her chest moved up and down with heavy breaths, trying to contain her desire, but Luke could sense its strong pulse in the Force.

“Well, maybe I’m saving myself for marriage,” Felicity teased.

Luke raised an eyebrow, “Felicity… I was at your apartment enough times in the morning finding Drystan still there.”

“I don’t want to think about Drystan right now,” Felicity whispered. “Only us… Only you… You touching me… the warmth of your arms… the taste of your lips… the feeling of your hand – ah – sliding up and – uh – under my dress.”

Luke noted that the skin of her thighs seemed to be particularly sensitive.

“Felicity,” Luke leaned forward and gave her ear a kiss. His hot breath tickled against her, “Do you want me?”

Felicity looked at him directly and then placed a hand on the back of his neck to retain the intimate distance.

“Yes,” she breathed.

Luke kissed her, long and passionately, worshiping the lips that danced atop his. Kissing her soft lips felt like tiny shocks of electricity, like popping sparks of passion, like the sweetest water from the galaxy’s most beautiful stream.

He wanted her; and he wanted her now.

His fingers stroked the delicate skin of her thighs, continuing to rise, edging closer to the touch that would sate her pleasure as well as his. Felicity’s breath made strong, even pants in anticipation. She squirmed, rubbing her legs together one time, then subtly spread them open. A shiver went through her as his hand inched higher and higher, her breathing getting faster and faster.


His fingers stopped moving, lingering at the hem of her silk, lace panties.

She closed her eyes and arched her head back, “Luke… Please.”

He looked up at her with dark eyes, his own breathing as loud and heavy as hers. She whimpered as he moved his hand away. His lips were on her shoulder now, kissing and caressing her bare skin. Felicity whimpered again as both hands – flesh and mechanical – settled on either hip. Luke’s mouth trailed up her neck as his thumbs hooked underneath the sides of her panties.

With an agonizing slowness, he inched them down her legs. Felicity writhed under him, further teased by the lips on her neck. Luke wasn’t just kissing her or suckling the delicate skin. Every so often there would be a tiny jolt of pain as he suddenly nipped at her neck. She would give a small cry as the pain and pleasure dueled in her body, and his tongue would tenderly balm the mark.

Her underwear hit the floor.

Luke pulled his mouth from her, and they stood there staring at each other, their breath panting in harmony with the collective beating of their hearts. They were on the brink of the next step.

Lust crackled through Luke’s body like electricity – and he of all people knew how that felt. Felicity was reclining on his desk, prone to his body and the way he would touch her. She was still clothed, yet intimately bared to him at the same time. He stood between her spread legs, his heart thudding as he thought about how there was no barrier to her intimate heat beneath the skirt of her dress.

From her thighs, he had felt the dampness of her desire, and he could smell it in the air. He could see it on her face, the way her eyes were hooded, dark, and locked on him. Her arm, placed behind her body, holding her upright was shaking, her chest heaving with heavy breaths, and her thighs trembling on either side of his hips.

She wanted him… and he wanted her.

“Luke,” Felicity’s voice was low but not quiet. She wanted the intimacy of silence, but she needed him to hear her words. “Luke… please.”

Felicity Rhiaon was not the type of woman who begged, so it made him erect when he heard the desperation of her desire.

“Felicity,” Luke whispered reverently. He reached out and cupped her face, “Not yet. I want to remember this. Every sound, every scent…”

His natural hand trailed down her jaw, her neck, and to the top of her breast.

“Every inch of your skin,” Luke looked her straight in the eyes as he caressed all of her breast he could reach.

Felicity let him touch her for minute, a low moan humming in the base of her throat. Then she grabbed his hand and slowly moved it away. She left it against the curve of her neck and shoulder, and let her fingers glide down to the zipper of her dress. Wasting no time, Felicity yanked it down, exposing the lacy black bra underneath which matched the panties lying forgotten on the floor by Luke’s feet.

The zipper’s track was far enough down that it exposed Felicity’s chest completely without having to pull down the straps of her dress. Luke had the perfect view of the start of her toned stomach – those morning workouts were for something after all – and the soft breasts being contained by that seductive black lace bra which Luke noted with pleasure, was fastened from the front.

Felicity’s breasts wouldn’t ever be considered large, but they also certainly weren’t non-existent.
They looked to be about the size of a handful, which Luke would like nothing more than to test that theory.

“You can touch them,” Felicity smirked that irresistible one corner smirk. “I wouldn’t mind.”

“Are you sure?” Luke asked. He always wanted to establish clear consent before going ahead with anything.

Felicity laughed, “Luke, I unzipped my top and let you take my underwear off. I’m positive I’m okay with you touching my chest. Although if you need more encouragement…”

Felicity watched his face with glee as she reached down and unclasped her bra. Luke’s breath hitched as he finally saw Felicity’s bare breasts for the first time. They were pert, pale, and beautiful, crowned with small, brown tips that were hard with desire. He wanted to touch those breasts, feel their weight and the softness of her intimate skin. He wanted to taste them, running his lips all over them, grazing his tongue and teeth over her erect nipples. He wanted to find how he could give her pleasure through those beautiful breasts.

“Like what you see?” Felicity grinned at him. She had a hand on her hip and a cocky twinkle in her eyes, but she couldn’t disguise her true feelings. Not from Luke, the Jedi Grandmaster who better than anyone could sense a person’s true emotions in the Force.

Felicity had always been very confident in both her body and sexuality, so Luke was surprised when he sensed her anxiety in the Force. She was genuinely afraid of Luke finding something about her unattractive, of him judging something about her…and yet, Luke didn’t quite think it was her breasts.

“You are so beautiful,” Luke was sure to look her in the eyes as he made the declaration. He could ogle her chest later, but as he called her naked body—or at least a part of her naked body—beautiful for the first time, he wanted her to know it was from his heart, and not something else calling the shots.

“You’re not too bad yourself,” Felicity replied with a smirk. A sense of relief shot through the Force. “Now, let me get the rest of this out of the way.”

Felicity struggled for a minute trying to take off her bra. She was trying to do it, but still keep up her dress straps. As she laboured to pull her bra strap underneath the dress strap, Luke grasped the obstructing fabric.

Instantly Felicity stiffened.

“No, it’s okay, Sweetheart,” Felicity moved Luke’s hand away from her dress strap. “I’ve got this.”

“Alright,” Luke scowled as she fought with her bra. That moment had been quite odd.

After a few minutes, Felicity had wrenched the bra off, and dropped it onto the floor next to her underwear.

Luke gazed at the beautiful sight of her unobscured breasts, “Felicity, you are the most beautiful woman I have ever seen.”

She looked at him with dark eyes, “And you are the sexiest man I have ever seen. Damn it, Skywalker, kiss me.”

Felicity grabbed the fabric of his shirt and roughly yanked him forward. Her lips crushed his, and a
hand buried itself in Luke’s hair, pulling him in desperately. Felicity kissed him passionately, her tongue ramming into his open mouth at the first opportunity.

Luke grunted as she pressed against him, her naked chest rubbing against the fabric of his black tunic. She hooked a leg over one of his hips and undulated her pelvis against his. Luke moaned as a wet heat drew over him; he had forgotten she wasn’t wearing any panties.


“I’ve thought about it too,” Felicity whispered. “Ever since I saw you shirtless on the roof that first time.”

Luke pulled away in surprise, “Really? Even when we were dating other people you thought about doing this with me?”

“At the time it was more a passing thought.”

“I see.”


Felicity grabbed Luke’s left hand and without ceremony put it onto one of her shapely breasts. His hand instantly went to work exploring the tender flesh. She felt so soft. Luke had been right; they were the perfect handful.

“Do you like them?” Felicity arched her back, pressing herself more into his pleasure giving hand. “Not too small?”

“No,” Luke chuckled darkly, his thumb circling her nipple. “Just right.”

Felicity moaned as his thumb ran over her sensitive nub, “Oh, Luke.”

Luke raised a brow in mock surprise but also held a very cocky look, “Did you like that?”

“So much,” Felicity’s head was tilted back and her eyes closed.

“Then you might like this too.”

Felicity cried out as Luke’s mouth latched onto her nipple. Teasing her, tasting her, dragging his teeth across. She wove her hand into his hair and pulled him in close.

Luke felt so satisfied as he heard the moans Felicity couldn’t hold back. There was nothing more erotic to him than the noises of a satisfied lover. He explored her different reactions, each new moan music to his ears. Every action had its own specific noise. The moan she gave as he sucked on her nipple, the grunt she made as his teeth pressed gently down on it, the breathless “ah” that she uttered as his tongue licked the underside of her breast.

She was rolling her hips against him, the one leg still hooked around him. Felicity was seeking further satisfaction; she needed something to sate that throbbing heat between her legs.


She pulled his head back up to her lips and they spent a few minutes just kissing each other. It was a step somewhere between eroticism and romance. They had both had sex before, but this was different, something they had only experienced a few times before. This action, those kisses was what could only be classified as lovemaking. No, Luke wasn’t inside her body, but this was what he
would come to consider as the first moment he had made love to Felicity Rhiaon.


“I love you too,” Felicity whispered, bowing her forehead against his. “Oh, Luke… I know this isn’t the time or place, but please… I need you. I need you so much. Please, please touch me.”

“Well,” his mechanical hand trailed up her thigh, “you did say please.”

Luke moved to bury his face and lips in her neck, when Felicity suddenly put out a hand to stop him.

“Wait, Luke,” she was hesitant, “can you… I just…”

“What?” his voice was loving.

Felicity took a deep breath, “Please don’t take this the wrong way, but this time… could you use your left hand?”

The implication was impossible to escape.

“You… you don’t like my mechanical hand?” Luke drew back, but Felicity caught him.

“It’s not like that,” she insisted. “Trust me, I feel horrible for asking this, but I have to. I love you, every part of you: flesh or metal. But when I think of that hand… I think of Vader.”

Luke’s face shifted in understanding. Felicity pressed her forehead to his and brushed her nose against his own, their lips hovering an inch apart.

“And right now, I only want to think of you,” she whispered. “Please, Luke, just this time.”

“Well, I’m not exactly going to say I want you thinking of my father,” he chuckled and switched hands.

“Oh, yes,” Felicity threw her head back as his fingers moved closer and closer to her throbbing anticipation. “Please, Luke, please.”

“Please what?” His hands were centimeters away.

“Please… touch me.”

Her body almost jolted off the desk when his thumb found her clit.


“Felicity,” Luke gritted his teeth as his fingers explored her quim. “Felicity, you’re so wet.”

“Oh, god, Luke,” Felicity’s breathing was sporadic as he teased her clit. He circled it, and occasionally would swipe a finger across all too briefly. “Please, Luke! Please!”

Luke’s mechanical hand was on her hip, not caressing her, but holding her down on the desk. Her hips were jerking wildly, trying to seek the pleasure he was teasing. Luke was actually surprised how strong Felicity was as she tried to fight against his impediment. She was completely at his mercy.

“Felicity, calm down,” Luke instructed between kisses. “Let’s take this slow.”

“No, Luke, no,” Felicity shook her head. “I don’t want slow; I’ve waited long enough. Please, I need
you. I need your hands, your fingers, on me, in me. I don’t care! Just please! I need it!”

He pulled away from her lips and grinned, “Well, you did say in me.”

Felicity shrieked as he thrust a finger inside of her.

“Oh God, Luke!” Felicity clutched his shoulders tightly, her body writhing against his, trying to pull him in as close as possible as his fingers worked her quim.

She panted heavily, moaning his name over and over as his hands gave her the ultimate pleasure. His thumb played furiously with her clit and his fingers pumped forcefully in and out of her.

“Oh, Luke!” Felicity moaned. “Don’t stop! Don’t stop! Please, don’t stop!”

So it was very dangerous when Luke decided to stop.

“Oh?!” Felicity looked confused as his fingers withdrew from her, but her words were stopped by a kiss crushed to her mouth.

“Shh, shh, calm down, it’s okay,” Luke tried to soothe Felicity as she thrashed against him, trying to reobtain the pleasure she had just been given. “It’s okay, calm down. You were too close.”

“Too close?” Felicity moaned. “Luke, I wanted to go all the way to the end.”

“And you will,” he promised, “but that’s not how you’re going to finish. Not our first time.”

“Then how do you want me to finish?”

“Spread your legs,” Luke ordered, a dark dominant look casting over his eyes.

A shiver ran down Felicity’s spine, and she slowly spread her thighs for him. She yelped when Luke suddenly hooked her legs under his arms and pulled her right to the edge of the desk. He wasted no time, grabbing the hem of her skirt, and yanking it up. There was no grace in the movement, only the actions of a man on the edge of giving in to uninhibited lust.

Felicity shuddered and closed her eyes as Luke’s hand began stroking her inner thigh, getting close to her damp heat. She could feel the cool air on her lower half and the skirt of her dress bunched at her waist. Though the skirt blocked her own view on the space between her thighs, Felicity knew he had exposed her body fully to him.

Luke watched the realization fall over her face, but his eyes did not drift down… yet. Instead he watched her accept the fact that she was practically naked in front of him. Yes, her dress was still on her, but both her breasts and cunt were completely exposed to him. He could see those fleshy pink lips, that hard nub begging for attention, and the warm, tight entrance that was gushing wet for him. While she may not have felt naked, she might as well have been.

He watched her slowly bite her bottom lip, and wished it was himself doing that. Luke wanted to touch her, feel her, just glance down, but he abstained. He could sense that she wasn’t ready… but she was close.

Felicity took another deep breath and opened her eyes. She found Luke’s blue orbs intently locked on hers. The amount of love radiating in his eyes was almost painful. He could sense her thought; that she didn’t deserve this.

“I love you,” Luke said, his voice shaking. “I don’t care if you don’t deserve it, or I don’t deserve
your love, or any other excuse people could come up with to keep us apart. I love you, for now and for always.”

Felicity didn’t say anything for a few minutes, something odd going across her face. Then she took a final deep breath and spoke.


“Not yet,” Luke’s left hand trailed up her thigh, “there’s still one more thing I want to do first.”

“And what’s that?”

Luke’s mouth was in a hard line, he was staring deep into Felicity’s gaze as he dropped to his knees. Felicity gasped as she realized what was about to come next.

“Luke,” Felicity moaned, running a hand through his soft, blonde hair, “yes, please do it.”

“Felicity Rhiaon,” Luke looked up at her darkly, placing gentle kisses on her inner thighs, getting closer to her wet desire. He hooked an arm around each leg and pulled her in closer. He could feel her emanating heat and smell that lustful scent of desire. “I’m going to taste and touch you until all you remember is my name on your lips.”

“And I’ll scream it to the high heavens,” Felicity promised. “But damn it, Luke…”

Luke raised an eyebrow at her.

“I am done with your teasing.”

She tightened her grasp on his hair and pulled him right onto her begging cunt. Felicity shrieked and threw back her head as Luke went to work, licking her length, and teasing her lower lips.

He swirled random patterns across her tenderness. He very gently bit and pulled at her lips. He pointed his tongue and made very short, deliberate licks in the spots that really sent her wild, but avoided her clit like the plague. It wasn’t time for that yet.

Luke slid his tongue between her outer and inner lips, and then gently blew around the area of her clit, getting her ready. He flattened his tongue and lapped at her like an animal at a stream. She seemed to really like that move as she shuddered and moaned at the sensation.

“Oh, God, yes!” Felicity grunted pulling him in as close as possible. “Oh, fuck, Luke that’s so good.”

Luke chuckled, sensing her extreme pleasure in the Force, “You really like this.”

“So much,” Felicity moaned. “If there’s one thing that will always get me off, it’s oral. Oh, you’re so good at that. Oh, Luke.”

Luke smiled as Felicity rambled on, moaning his name and instructions for better pleasure. Though she was finding him to be pretty talented sans guidance, and wasn’t afraid to let him know.

“Oh, Gods, Luke, yes!”

Huh, Felicity Rhiaon was a talker during sex. Luke hadn’t expected that.

As he slid his tongue up her length, Luke loved feeling her legs clamp around him. She was trying to draw him into her slick passage, but he avoided it.
That delicious, sweet and salty liquid her quim produced in anticipation of his cock hit his tongue. Luke’s mind was drawn back to the show she had put on for him ten nights ago, and the taste of her juices that she had spread across his lips. It tasted good then, but it was heavenly coming from the source.

Luke stayed lapping at her, knowing that changing position could reset her track to orgasm. Besides, he really liked just going to town, lapping roughly at her juices as she squirmed beneath him. Felicity tasted so good; he could do this for hours.

He wanted to delve into the source of her juices and lap that nectar leaking out of her passage, but Luke restrained. Not yet; they weren’t ready for the next step yet. There was still something he had to do.

Slowly he moved up and around, teasing her as he got ever closer to her clit hood. Felicity squirmed underneath him in anticipation and made little shoves up with her pelvis to guide him to her sweet spot as he circled around it.

Then his tongue gently stroked the hood covering her most sensitive spot. He could already see her engorged clit peeking out, begging to be exposed and pleasured.

A groan came from Felicity, “Oh that’s a good spot! Just maybe move a little to the-”

Felicity’s words cut off as his tongue hit her clit. When Luke looked up at her it looked like she was screaming out, her face contorting with pleasure, yet no sound could escape her mouth.

“Yeah, that’s the spot,” Felicity squeaked out.

Luke held a secret smile. Sometimes a man didn’t need to be told where the perfect spot on his lover was. Sometimes a man just knew how to please a woman.

…And other times, a man had a mythical Force that let him tap into his lover’s emotions to guide him to those spots.

But Felicity didn’t need to know that.

“Is that good?” Luke’s voice was husky. “Does that make you feel fantastic?”

“Yes!” Felicity groaned. “Oh, yes!”

“I bet I can make it better… how about I do this?”

Luke pushed his tongue into her wet passage.

“Luke!” Felicity yelled as he curled it in a dozen directions, each seasoning her cunt with a new brand of pleasure.

Her back hit the desk as she gave in to his control, surrendering herself to the ministrations of his tongue. Felicity moaned and screamed and writhed wildly on the desk, not caring as she knocked things to the floor.

Though the champagne glasses that broke and stained the floor, Luke would later have to explain to Gavyn when he asked Luke a few days later why the carpet smelled like alcohol. In that moment, Luke was happy his office was located in the Jedi Temple and not the Meditation Gardens where the reception was taking place. No one would overhear them or interrupt.
“Oh, Imar, Itar, Djun, Ethys, Koena, and Ipgyn!” Felicity cried out the names of the pantheon of Gods and Goddesses of her father’s birth planet, the religion in which she had been raised. “Oh, fuck! Fuck! *Fuck, that’s so good*! Luke!”

She panted like a dog as Luke feasted upon her. Her hips rocked against his face as his tongue delved deep inside of her and curled, lapping up every drop of wetness she could make.


He began thrusting his tongue inside of her like it was his cock. Felicity rode his face, moaning out nonsense, just a jumble of names and swears as she lost herself completely. Luke could sense her desire building and building until finally…

“LUKE!”

Felicity’s legs clamped down on his head, holding him in place as she climaxed. She screamed out his name as her cunt convulsed from the first orgasm Luke Skywalker had ever given her.

Her breaths came steady and hard as she rode out the last twinges of her orgasm. She couldn’t move a muscle; Felicity was absolutely sated with pleasure.

But Luke was not.

“Felicity,” Luke pulled her back up into a sitting position, and kissed her hard. “Felicity, I need you, right here, right now.”

Without a second thought, Felicity started undoing the fastenings of Luke’s tunic. He buried his face in her neck, and trailed across it hard, bruising kisses – which Felicity would awkwardly have to explain away to Leia the next morning. Luke lifted his arms, and helped Felicity pull his tunic off, throwing it to the floor next to her bra and underwear.

“Oh, God, these arms and abs,” Felicity ran her hands over Luke’s athletic form. “I’ve been wanting to run my hands over these since the first time I saw you shirtless. When you were all sweaty and sexy, I wanted these bulging arms that can pin me down.”

“And you said I wouldn’t regret it if I let you have your wicked way with me,” Luke recalled, unbuckling his belt and pulling his pants – though not yet his underwear – to his ankles.

Felicity grinned, “I would rake my nails across your back and lick *every* inch of your body. *Especially* these arms.”

“You have a thing for athletic arms, don’t you?”

“Little bit.”

“Felicity,” Luke groaned as she sensually licked up the crevice of his abs. “I’m going to make love to you, right here, right now, on this desk.”

“Do it, Luke,” Felicity’s voice was husky as she ran her hands up and down his abs. “Take me here and now. I want your cock inside of me.”

Luke was kissing her neck again, Felicity moaning wildly beneath him as she arched her neck for better access. This was it, the moment they would finally consummate their love. Luke just needed to pull down her dress straps, then he would drive himself into her core, thrusting frantically as she wrapped her legs around his hips and arms around his neck, giving into pleasure.

“I’m on the pill,” Felicity answered. “And I got tested a few weeks after Drystan dumped me. I haven’t been with anyone else since. You?”

“Had my routine physical two weeks ago. I’m clean. Are you sure you’re comfortable going bare?”

“It would be my first time bare since Pax,” Felicity confessed. “But if it’s you… I’m willing to take the risk.”


Luke immediately stepped back and held up his hands to show he wasn’t going to touch her.


Luke frowned, “If this is about protection, I can run over to Kalonia’s office and get some.”

“No, it’s not that. It’s…” Felicity unconsciously rubbed her shoulder. “Look, I just changed my mind, okay?”

“Okay. That’s fine. I understand and respect you’re withdrawing your consent,” Luke immediately began redressing himself. “I’m just… a little confused as to what suddenly happened. You said you wanted it and… now you don’t. Did I do something wrong?”

“No, look it’s just…” Felicity sighed. She grabbed Luke’s hand and pulled him to her. Felicity wrapped her arms around his neck and said, “I do want to make love to you. I want that more than almost anything… But the first time we make love… It’s not going to be on a desk, in your office, during Obik and Reine’s wedding reception.”


As they slowly got dressed, Luke didn’t tell her that he knew she was lying, that there was something else holding her back. But Luke had no clue what that was and what had happened that triggered the sudden change.

“There,” Felicity smoothed out her dress. “We don’t look too bad. Maybe no one will notice.”

“Felicity, we’ve been gone from the wedding for at least an hour and we’re a little drunk and our clothing and hair are a mess,” Luke pointed out. “People are going to notice.”

“Fine, but if Han and Leia ask questions, you have to be the one to talk to Leia. I am so not having to tell her that her twin brother went down on me… Though, seriously Luke, you are absolutely doing that again to me very soon.”

“As often as you wish,” Luke smiled.

Felicity grinned and grabbed his hand, “Come on. Let’s go.”

“What’s wrong?” Felicity frowned as she noticed the pained expression on his face.


Felicity grinned as her eyes fell on the still erect tent in his pants, “Are you going to calm yourself by meditating? Or are you going to… Maybe calm yourself by pulling that out and stroking it as you think about my naked body and how it felt and tasted… and how you want your cock to feel one more place. One more hot… tight… wet place.”

Luke groaned, shifting his erection into a less painful position, “Felicity, please don’t start something you’re not going to finish. Or at least leave me your underwear again.”

“Who said I wasn’t going to finish?”

Felicity walked over to Luke in the chair and kissed him deeply. As Luke kissed her, Felicity slipped her tongue into his mouth, gently stroking the sensitive palate. Her hands drifted down, across his chest and abs before settling on his belt buckle. She pulled back from the kiss, and with a coy smile, unbuckled his belt.

“Oh, fuck!” Luke groaned, raking his hand through her hair, encouraging her to take him deeper and deeper. “Felicity, God, your mouth feels so good.”

The next several minutes were utter ecstasy. Luke’s mechanical hand gripped the arm of his chair tightly as he struggled to last as long as possible. Her tight, wet mouth around his stiff shaft was absolute heaven. His left hand was buried in her hair the same way hers had been when he had performed oral sex on her. He guided her head in a rhythmic bob up and down, letting out sporadic grunts as she worked him masterfully. As her swollen, wet lips slid across his shaft, inside her mouth, her tongue dragged across his cock in wild, random patterns.

“Oh, fuck Felicity, that feels so good,” Luke panted, his hips involuntarily bucking to get deeper in her mouth. “Don’t stop, Felicity. I’m so close. I’m so close.”


“Felicity,” Luke moaned as her lips wrapped back around him. She picked up the pace, her head
bobbing faster and faster over him. His thighs clenched as he struggled to hold back, until he could do it no longer. “Yes, Felicity. Felicity! Oh, fuck Felicity, I’m going to- Do you want me to pull out?”

“No,” Felicity whispered.

The look in her eyes set him off, “FELICITY!”

He tightened his grip on her head and wrenched Felicity forward, making her take him as deep as possible without choking her. Luke collapsed as he let go of everything. His hand held her in place as he released himself down her throat. Luke might have been a little rough with her, but the moans she was emitting made it clear that she certainly did not mind.

Luke let out a heavy groan when he finished, slightly disappointed when Felicity pulled off him to deal with the aftermath. His eyes were closed and his body had slumped forward. He took a deep breath, returning his heart rate back to normal.

When he opened his eyes, he found Felicity casually pulling back on her discarded undergarments.

“Better?” Felicity grinned at him innocently as if he hadn’t just climaxed in her mouth after she had orgasmed on his own.

Luke chuckled, “I am so happy you decided to keep me company.”

1 Year

Tonight was the night, Luke was sure of it. One year from the day he had met Felicity Rhiaon, he was finally going to make love to her.

He had set the scene just right; no detail had been left behind in his apartment. The lights had been dimmed and some easy going instrumental music was being pumped from the various speakers throughout the apartment. The dining room table had been set by the droids with Luke’s finest dishes, cutlery, tablecloth, matching cloth napkins and placemats.

In the center of the table, a pair of candles burned, held by some rather remarkable silver candlesticks that had been bequeathed by the Naberries to Luke. They had been given to Padmé from Bail Organa as a thank you for her participation in the peace summit held on Alderaan… even if she had almost been assassinated halfway through it. The same candlesticks had also been given to Mon Mothma for her participation in the same summit, and Luke had seen them used during dinner parties held by Mothma in honour of the memories of Bail and Padmé.

Luke had decided on the candlesticks not only because of the fondness Felicity had for Bail and Padmé, but it had been at Mothma’s last dinner party that Luke and Felicity had made their first public appearance as a couple… To absolutely no one’s surprise. In fact, more people were surprised to learn that Luke and Felicity hadn’t been a couple up to that point.

General Madine even thought that they were married.

The bedroom had been thoroughly prepared too. Windows washed, furniture dusted and polished, carpet vacuumed and even shampooed. The nearby fresher had been scrubbed just as thoroughly, and some sweet-smelling incense had been burned in all the rooms. Luke’s bed had been made with his nicest, silk bedsheets, freshly washed. The pillows had been fluffed and the cases had been replaced with the ones that matched the bedsheets.
He knew not to put any candles in the bedroom. During one of their romantic evenings in, Luke thought to inspire the mood by lighting a few candles. Several minutes later Felicity asked him to put them out as she always could never focus when candles were lit during a makeout session. She always was too worried one would get knocked over or something would happen while they were unsupervised and the apartment would burn down.

The mood had fallen apart shortly after that.

To be honest, while it was romantic to choose this day to make love to Felicity… it hadn’t exactly been Luke’s first choice. He had attempted several times since their encounter in his office to initiate physical intimacy.

While Luke had succeeded on getting Felicity to repeat bouts of foreplay – good Lord was that woman a Goddess with her mouth – he had been very unsuccessful in the department of getting his hard cock inside of her dripping cunt.

And she had been keeping him very hard.

Luke was putting the finishing touches on a romantic dinner that he had cooked special for her. The meal was a simple dish: pasta with cream sauce and roast nuna legs. It had been the first dish Luke ever taught Felicity how to make, an extremely easy dish that anyone could make. And yet, Felicity still had managed to get oil on the top of the pasta water… which she somehow managed to set aflame.

Only Felicity Rhiaon could set water on fire.

While easy, Luke pulled out all the stops to jazz up the dish as much as possible and show off his cooking skills. He marinated the nuna legs in a complicated marinade overnight, the pasta was homemade, and the sauce was made with the freshest ingredients.

Luke had literally done nothing that day but cook and clean in preparation for that night. In the past year, he had fallen hopelessly in love with this woman, loving her with a depth he never imagined possible. Her presence had been the gaping hole in his life up to that point, and with her finally in his arms, his life was perfect. Luke loved Felicity Rhiaon with all his heart and wanted to show her that. He just wanted to give her the greatest, most romantic night of her entire life.

…And if she rewarded him by deciding to spread her legs for him, naked on his bed, who was he to argue?

He too had been cleaned up extensively. Luke had gone for a hair cut the previous day, that morning he had showered, scrubbing, shaving, and smoothing almost every inch of his body. His face had undergone an extensive skincare routine… though that was actually just an everyday thing for Luke.

Skincare is very important, alright? Why was it a bad thing if Luke took pride in his appearance?

Luke could almost hear Han’s constant teasing about his complicated morning routine.

His hair was perfectly styled (as always), his teeth brushed, flossed, and rinsed with mouthwash, his brows tweezed, and his nails clipped, which Felicity would be grateful for. Finally, he was dressed in that black Jedi outfit he knew drove Felicity absolutely wild. He had briefly considered wearing his workout gear, which was another favorite outfit of hers, but he felt like it was a little too informal for a candlelit dinner.

Luke was just pulling the nuna legs out of the oven when the doorbell rang.
“Master Luke!” Threepio called from the dining room where he was putting the final touches on the table. “I believe Miss Rhiaon has arrived!”

“Thank you, Threepio. I’ll get it,” Luke called back. He looked over at Artoo, who was sparking up his lighting torch, “Thank you, Artoo, but not until dessert, remember?”

*Beep bop boup boop.*

“Yes, I know you’re not a culinary droid. Just put them on the warming center on the stovetop until dessert.”

*Bop bee bop boo.*

“Come on, you’re not actually going to make me say it.”

*Boop.*

Luke sighed, “Fine. R2-D2, you make the best crème brûlée in the Galaxy. Now would you put them on the warming center? I’ll let you make a whole show about finishing the tops for Felicity.”

*Beep beep!*

Luke shook his head as Artoo happily set the desserts on the warming center, “Of all the droids in the Galaxy, it’s you I end up with.”

The doorbell rang again, and Luke wiped his hands on a dish towel before exiting the kitchen. Reaching the door, he smoothed down his hair once more, righted his shoulders, and took a deep breath.

“Here we go,” Luke muttered, and then hit the button to open the door.

Felicity was standing in front of him looking like an absolute vision. Every detail of her appearance that night had been seared into his mind.

Simple makeup with an earthy reddish-brown eyeshadow, a touch of black eyeliner and mascara, and bright scarlet lipstick. Her hair was styled up into a beautiful bun, though had no flair to it, like she was expecting to take it down that night.

The fragrant perfume of a flowery meadow danced off her neck. It was the same perfume he remembered smelling as he kissed her shoulder that night in his office as he tried the pull down the straps of her dress.

Felicity’s only jewelry that night was her kyber crystal bracelet and a small silver necklace with a red starbird pendant. No doubt a tribute to it being the anniversary of the Battle of Yavin.

Her legs were covered with short nylon stockings that looked to come up just above the knee, but as the ends were under her dress, Luke would love to see just how far up they went. Black strappy, open toed heels covered her small feet. Luke couldn’t wait to pull them off as he kissed his way up her legs.

But the sight Luke could never forget is what she wore that night: a black leather jacket and that amazing dark red dress, that was low cut in the front, zipped up the back, and had a sort of scooped slit on the short skirt that barely reached past her knee.

“When you pick your jaw up off the floor, I’d love to kiss you,” Felicity smirked that one corner
smirk he loved so much.

Luke grinned that goofy grin she adored and said, “Come here.”

He wrapped his arms around her waist and pulled her in for a deliciously passionate kiss.

“You look wonderful tonight,” Luke murmured when they broke the kiss, still not releasing her from his arms.

“You don’t look half bad yourself,” Felicity gave an appreciative look up and down his form. “Have I ever told you that you look sexy in black?”

Luke’s mind couldn’t help but flash back to the image of Felicity, prone on his desk wearing a tight black dress, and a matching set of lacy black bra and panties lying on the floor.

“Not as sexy as you in black,” Luke replied stiffly, quickly pushing her forward out of his embrace.

Felicity raised an eyebrow, “Getting a little too excited?”

“You know the influence you have over me,” Luke played with her necklace. “I like this. Where did you get it?”

“Leia, actually. She gave it to me before the Imperial Ball when I was sixteen. She gave it to me as a symbol of our friendship or some other lie.”


“Giving me that gift was probably one of the most despicable things Leia ever did to me. Sure, I now cherish said necklace as a symbol of our friendship and my history with the Alliance. But Leia gave me that gift before I had joined the cause. She had effectively marked her territory, claiming me for the Rebellion without my consent.”

“Ouch,” Luke winced. “Tell me you didn’t wear it to the Imperial Ball.”

“This is why I do not doubt Leia is the spawn of Darth Vader,” Felicity teased. “I walked into the biggest Imperial event of the year wearing a necklace that screamed “I’m a member of the Rebel Alliance.” And I had no freaking clue.”

“Maybe it’s a good thing I was the one trained to be a Jedi,” Luke chuckled. “I don’t trust Leia wouldn’t have turned to the Dark Side.”

“Look at the bright side; at least it would have been against Vader and Palpatine. You know she would have ripped them to shreds and then forcibly changed the Empire into the Republic.”

“Tyrannical democracy.”

“Isn’t all democracy tyrannical?” Felicity grinned. It faltered when Luke started to take off her coat, “Oh, hold on a second. I have something here for you.”

“For me?” Luke looked surprised.

“A small gift. I’m not exactly sure where we keep track of anniversaries in regard to our relationship, but I figured a year from the day we met counts for something.” Felicity pulled a pair of black and white gloves out of her jacket pocket, “Here. I want you to have these.”

Luke frowned as he took them, “Stormtrooper gloves? That’s… interesting. Is it supposed to be a
reference to Han and I pretending to be Stormtroopers on the Death Star?”

“Actually… no.” Felicity was very quiet as she hung her jacket up in the closet. She took a deep breath, mentally readying herself before revealing the meaning behind the gloves, “They… were Brendan’s.”

Luke couldn’t stop the stunned look on her face, “Brendan’s? No, Felicity, I couldn’t-”

“I want you to have them,” Felicity put her hands over Luke’s, clasping his over Brendan’s gloves. “His death changed my life entirely… and it changed yours.”


“If he hadn’t died… I wouldn’t have been a Rebel… then I wouldn’t have stolen the Death Star plans… and Leia would never have been given them… and then Artoo wouldn’t have had them… then he wouldn’t have met you… then everything that happened to you with the Death Star and Yavin and the Rebels… it wouldn’t have happened.”

“What are you saying? That it was destiny?”

“I don’t believe in destiny, Luke, and certainly not one that says my brother died so you could get your sorry butt off Tatooine. But I do acknowledge the series of events that led to the intertwining of our lives, and while I do wish it didn’t require the death of Brendan… I’m glad that it brought me to you. He meant everything to me, Luke… and now you mean everything to me too.”

Luke placed a hand under Felicity’s jaw and stroked a thumb under her cheek, “You still don’t have to give me the gloves to prove that.”

“I know, but I want to. I have my mementos of Brendan, Luke… I want you to have these.” Felicity took a deep breath and looked down, “Luke, I wanted to tell you this the day you helped me in your guest bedroom mourn Brendan’s death. But Luke… the way I feel with you, the trust, the loyalty, the safety… I haven’t felt this safe with someone since Brendan died. Not with Leia. Not with Diego. Not with Riz, Ji-Dan, or even Pax. When I’m with you… I’m not afraid to be afraid. I trust you. I feel safe with you… I finally feel home.”

Luke kissed her deeply as the tears fell from their eyes, “I’m home with you too.”

They kissed over and over, tears and smiles mixing with laughter and sobs. The moment was perfect. The moment was complete.

“Master Luke! Dinner is ready!” Threepio called.

The moment was ruined.

“Thank you,” Luke couldn’t help but laugh with Felicity as they broke apart. He set Brendan’s gloves on the ottoman sitting by the door, “I’ll find a special spot for these. I promise.”

“Thank you,” Felicity smiled, running her fingers down his cheek. “I’m sorry for all that. This wasn’t really the mood we were hoping for tonight.”

“It wasn’t?” Luke asked carefully. He may have been all set on consummating his relationship with Felicity, but he wasn’t certain on her own designs for that night.

“Of course not,” Felicity’s eyes darkened, her fingers playfully trailing down his neck and torso. Her hips were pressing against his pelvis suggestively, and no doubt she felt the beginnings of his
erection against her thigh. “I thought we were going for romantic and maybe a little bit… more.”


“You think I would dress like this if we were just going to order in and watch HoloNet? …Unless you don’t want more?”

“I am all for more,” Luke bit his lip, his eyes roaming over her figure. “Felicity—”


“Thank you, Threepio,” Felicity chuckled.

“Dinner is served if you two are ready,” Threepio announced.

“Yes, we heard, Threepio,” Felicity said.

“Forgive me, Miss Rhiaon. I was not sure if you heard me,” Threepio continued. “Master Luke can get quite distracted when you are in the room.”


Threepio turned to Felicity in confusion, “Have I done something wrong, Miss Rhiaon?”

“No, Threepio,” Felicity shook her head. “But you don’t have to call me Miss Rhiaon. We’ve known each other since I was fourteen. We have to be friends by now.”

“I suppose we are,” Threepio replied. “How do your friends address you?”

“As Felicity.” She paused, “Well, actually I guess most of them call me Fliss.”

“Then that is what I shall call you, Miss Fliss.”

Felicity was silent for a minute, “Never mind. Rhiaon’s fine.”

“No, it isn’t,” Luke wrapped his arm around her waist. “You can call her Felicity, Threepio.”


“Oh, did he?” Felicity twined her arm around Luke’s waist and rested her free hand against his chest. “Aren’t I a lucky woman?”

“Just one of the perks of dating a romantic like myself,” Luke smiled. “Though… I’d like to apologize in advance for dessert.”

“Why’s that?”

“Artoo is doing crème brûlée… and I promised that he could make a show of finishing the tops.”

“You own a fire extinguisher?”

“Cannot own R2-D2 without one.”
Felicity laughed as she and Luke followed Threepio into the dining room.

“That was simply delicious, Luke,” Felicity declared as Artoo and Threepio cleared the plates away.

“I’m glad you liked it,” Luke watched the droids head into the kitchen. Usually they didn’t play wait staff for Luke, but he had bargained his way into the deal with a few promises of oil baths, replacing old wiring, and giving Artoo a dozen new memory chips.

The astro-droid knew how to drive a hard bargain.

“So, I meant to tell you before dinner, but I also got you a present.” Luke used the Force to float in a small disc from the living room. He presented it to Felicity, “It’s a Holo from the photoshoot we had last year at the ceremony on Yavin IV.”

“The first Holo we ever took together,” Felicity examined their small figures. “Damn, how did we look this good together and not decide to date from the get go?”

“As I recall, Leia dragged me off to meet someone important,” Luke answered. “I really should have asked for your number.”

“Well, you have me now,” Felicity rested her head on his shoulder.

“Yes, I do,” Luke chuckled, kissing the top of her head.

They sat peacefully there, enjoying the moment of contentment.

“But if you ever tell anyone you have me or own me or possess me in any way, I will break your nose.”

“I believe you will,” Luke said plainly. He looked down at Felicity curled up underneath him. From his angle, he had the perfect view down her dress, “I can’t get over how beautiful your breasts are. They’re just the perfect size and shape.”

Felicity smirked, “Someone’s being rather forward.”

“And someone’s rather flattered,” Luke watched as she subconsciously thrust her cleavage higher in the air, “I know what I want tonight, Felicity. I’ve thought about it so many times this week.”

But there was a hesitation on her face, and Luke could sense that uneasy feeling in the Force that had always preceded Felicity’s withdrawal. She was playing with her starbird pendant and biting her lip. Luke could sense she wanted him… but something held her back.

“Felicity,” Luke lifted her chin to look in her eyes. There was something so unnaturally fragile in those beautiful hazel orbs, “I want this… I want you. Now and forever. Mentally, emotionally… physically.”

“I want you too,” Felicity whispered. “I… I want you so much.”

“But every time we try to do this, you pull away. Felicity, am I fooling myself? Are we going to make love tonight?”

Felicity opened her mouth to respond when Threepio entered the room.

“We have started the dishwasher, Master Luke,” Threepio announced. “Do you require anything else of us at the moment?”
“Actually, Threepio,” Luke’s eyes didn’t move from Felicity, “you and Artoo can power off for the evening.”

“Are you sure, Master Luke?”

Luke simply looked at Felicity to make the choice.

“He’s right, Threepio,” Felicity said. “We would like not to be interrupted of the rest of the night.”

“As you wish, Miss Felicity,” Threepio bowed his head and exited the room.

Luke couldn’t wipe the grin off his face, “Are you sure?”

Felicity smiled, “Positive.”

Luke outstretched his hand to Felicity, and she took it. He pulled her into his embrace and once more kissed her passionately. His mechanical hand was buried in her hair, his flesh one lovingly rested against her neck. Felicity’s hands grasped his waist, settling above his lightsaber belt – with the life he lived, Luke always kept his trusty weapon on hand – stroking his sides.

Emboldened by her moans, Luke took a step, forcing her backwards against the table, almost in a sitting position atop it.

“Do you have a thing about having me sit up while you paw at me?” Felicity teased as Luke trailed his lips against the familiar paths of her neck.

“Not intentionally,” Luke’s breathing was heavily. “But if we’re talking about the sitting position in general, I do find it to be the most intimate of all positions as that’s when you’re physically closest, on the same level to look each other in the eyes, and the partners are in mutual control. Personally, I think both partners sitting up is the ultimate lovemaking position.”

“Well, that’s good to know,” Felicity chuckled, and then moaned as his flesh hand slipped down her top and found her nipple. “Oh god, I love you playing with my breasts.”

“Then let’s go to the bedroom and get a little more comfortable.”

Felicity put a hand on his chest to stop Luke, “The living room. Let’s go to the couch for now, and… we’ll work our way to the bedroom.”

Luke pressed his forehead against hers and whispered, “I love you, Felicity.”


They started by kissing; just standing in front of the couch and kissing. Loving kisses, tender kisses, passionate kisses, rough kisses, kisses.

He kissed all the spots that were home to him now: her lips, her neck, her jaw, under her earlobe, her collarbone, the exposed tops of her breasts. Felicity was doing similar work to him, but his memory was not of how Felicity Rhiaon explored him, but rather how he burned the image of her taste and touch into his mind. He could recall her body perfectly, the shape, size, and feel. How many times had he made love to her, played her body expertly in a symphony of lust? It had to be hundreds of times, thousands even maybe.

Felicity was the one to progress things that night. When she had decided they had kissed enough, her lips left his neck, and she pulled open the flap of his tunic. He lifted his arms and helped her make
quick work of his shirt.

His torso bared, Felicity smirked and slowly got on one knee, her lips trailing down his body over his collar, pectorals, and licking right down the middle of his hard abs. Luke groaned, burying his hand in her hair – her bun was a mess by that point – urging her lips towards the hardened cock that was tenting his pants. But Felicity just trailed her lips back up, getting back onto her feet, and kissing him once more on the mouth.


Felicity gasped as Luke suddenly picked her up and tossed her down on the couch. He knelt before her and grasped her right leg. Hands ran over it, and unclasped the buckle fastening the black heel around Felicity’s foot. He eased it off and carelessly threw the shoe over his shoulder. His hand slid up her leg, across the nylon, reaching higher and higher and then underneath her skirt.


But his fingers hooked under the ends of her nylon stocking and pulled it down off her foot. He began kissing his way up the soft skin of her leg, his hands massaging her calf.

“Your legs are so smooth,” Luke murmured into her skin.

“They better be,” Felicity chuckled, her head lying back on the couch, her eyes squeezed shut with pleasure. “I just got them waxed yesterday.”

“Really?”

“Yep. Them… and another place.”

Luke groaned as his cock hardened even more, “Please tell me it’s where I’m thinking.”

“You’ll have to explore and find out.” Felicity’s grin fell slightly, “Luke… I’m sorry if during the wedding I wasn’t as… groomed as usual. I wasn’t exactly expecting us to get naked that night.”

“My God, if that’s the underwear you put on when you aren’t expecting sex, I don’t think I’m going to be able to handle the stuff you wear when you do expect it.”

“Luke, you saw the entire collection I brought to Rornian. I didn’t have much choice,” Felicity replied as Luke started to do the same ritual with her shoes and stockings on the other leg. “So… you didn’t mind that I was a little…”

“That you have hair in a place hair naturally grows?” Luke raised a brow. “Felicity, three times since the wedding I have tongued and/or fingered you, all in varying states of bareness. I don’t care how you choose to keep your own body: whatever makes you happy and comfortable. If it’s too much work, by all means, grow it out. I know what five o’clock shadow on my face feels like… I imagine it’s pretty annoying down there.”

“Come on, Luke! Even my kindest previous lover has had preferences.”

“Oh, I have a preference. It just doesn’t matter what that is. And please… let’s not talk about any previous lovers tonight.”

“I’ll try my best.” Felicity moaned as he ran a tongue up her leg. “How the hell did I manage to get a
“Secretly I think it may have just been that I was lazy,” Luke joked as Felicity hooked a leg over his shoulder. “I mean who wouldn’t fall for the incredibly sexy downstairs neighbor who happens to be close friends with some of my friends, works at the office I have to go to on a regular basis, and has breakfast with me every morning? Frankly, I don’t have the energy to put that much effort into another relationship, so I figured why not?”

“I think I had the same mentality. Wow, there’s a hot guy living upstairs that can drive me places and holds down my feet while I do sit ups. I should bang him.”


“It’s a literal work in progress, Luke,” Felicity groaned as he began lifting the hem of her dress. “You know, maybe it’s good thing we didn’t kiss that night we went drinking.”

“Why’s that?”

Felicity blushed a little which surprised Luke greatly. Had he ever seen her blush?

“I was really horny that night and kind of lonely,” Felicity admitted, “and if you had kissed me as masterfully as you always do… I would have fucked you that night. Not made love; just had carnal, meaningless sex with you.”

Luke froze, “You… you would have?”

“Or at least tried. I don’t know how you would have reacted.”

Luke suddenly imagined what would have happened that night. Luke bringing her back to her apartment where they kissed passionately at the door. Felicity pulling him into her place, unzipping his fly, getting to her knees, and sucking his cock against the door. Luke throwing her down on the couch and ripping off her panties. Shoving his head up her skirt and eating out her hot, wet cunt. Pulling down the top of her dress and throwing her bra across the room, his mouth sloppily feasting on her breasts. Spreading her legs and slamming his hard cock into her and thrusting hard until he came.

“I’m sure I would have been very accommodating,” Luke cleared his throat. “But that probably would have wrecked our friendship.”

“Screw friendship,” Felicity kissed along his jaw. “I like this arrangement much better.”

“I concur,” Luke started to ease up the hem of her dress.


“Take a look,” Felicity pulled up her skirt to reveal familiar black panties. “I thought we should finish what we started.”

Luke stared at her for a minute, then stood up and pulled off his belt and pants. He set his lightsaber belt on the table, dropped his pants to the floor, and chucked his boots across the room in the general direction of Felicity’s heels.

He tried to climb on top of her, but Felicity shoved him down on the couch.

“Now, now, Master Skywalker,” Felicity threw a leg over his, mounting and straddling him. She rested her soaked panties atop the hard erection tenting his underwear. “Who said you got to be on top?”

“You are going to be the death of me,” Luke threw his head back as Felicity started to grind against him. Oh God, he was so close to being inside of her that the pleasure of simulating the act he wanted most was unbearable. Felicity was so hot and wet as she dragged her sex across his erection.

“You’re so hard,” Felicity moaned, planting her hands on the back of the couch for a better grip as she rode him. “I want you so much.”

Luke gripped her hips and started to pull her faster across him, but keep a careful eye on the angle to make sure it wasn’t self-serving. He wanted for them to have mutual pleasure, and this was the first act that really could give it to them.

“That feels amazing,” Felicity started to pant. She was probably getting very close to orgasm. “You are going to feel incredible inside of me.”

Luke peppered a series of kisses across the bared skin of her cleavage, then nimble fingers unclasped her necklace.

“I want to see you naked, Felicity,” Luke deposited the necklace on a side table and then pulled off his black glove and Felicity’s kyber crystal bracelet. “No jewelry, no semi-long pyjama shirts that cover up the good bits, no dress bunched at your waist. Completely naked.”

“Then what are you waiting for?” Felicity smirked. She took her hands off the back of the couch and pulled her hair out of its bun. Felicity sensually shook out her hair, making a show of her long brown waves falling down her shoulders.

“And you call me dramatic,” Luke said flatly.

“Just kiss me,” Felicity captured his lips.

His hands ran up her back and for a split second, she tensed. Then his hands went to the hem of her dress and pulled it up from where it was bunched at her hips.

“How do you pull this thing over your head?” Luke frowned as he tried to do just that.

“You don’t,” Felicity said. “You unzip the back and step out of it. But we don’t have to go that fast.”

“You don’t want to take your dress off?”

“No, I do,” Felicity said quickly. There was something odd in her tone, “But… is there anything else you want to do first? This is our first time making love. It should be as memorable and romantic as possible, so if there’s anything you want-”


Felicity gave what oddly sounded like a breath of relief, “And what’s that?”

“Felicity… I want to see your mind.”
Silence filled the room.

“I’m sorry?” Felicity asked blankly.

“It’s a Force Ability,” Luke explained. “The most intimate thing you could do to a person: see inside their mind. What they see, what they remember, what they know. I would never do it without consent, but if you want… I think it would be the ultimate piece of intimacy while we made love.”

Felicity didn’t say anything for a long time, and Luke let her work it out in her mind.

“You want… to see what I see… and think and feel?”


“Would it hurt?”

“Not if it’s consensual. Think of your mind like a house. There are dozens of rooms in the house and each room is a memory or emotion. Each room has a door that only you can operate. You can close and lock it to others, but Force Sensitives can get in the house and try to get in the rooms.”

“Could someone force their way in?” Felicity asked.


“I know…” Felicity frowned. “So… you want into the room?”

“Only if you wish to unlock the door.”

She took a deep breath, “Alright… if it won’t hurt-”

“It won’t,” he promised.

“Okay, so how do I do it?”

“Just take a deep breath and close your eyes,” Luke instructed.

Felicity did just that. Luke watched her for a second and could feel her trust in the Force. He focused on her Force Signature, examining it deeply for the first time. Her colour surprised him: crimson, like the blade of a Sith. Perhaps her life had always been destined for Darkness if her family had red signatures.

Luke took a deep breath and leaned his forehead against hers. She flinched for a second on contact, but then relaxed.

“You’re going to feel a slight pressure on your mind in a minute, Felicity,” Luke continued. “It won’t feel physical weight, but like a tapping against your mental barriers. If you want me to do this, take a deep breath, relax, and lower the barrier.”

He watched her take the deep breath and relax. Luke felt the shift, and then he was pouring into the unfamiliar terrain of her mind.


“Are you in?” Felicity whispered, cracking open an eye uncertainly.
Luke chuckled, “That’s a phrase I didn’t want to hear tonight, but yes, I’m in. I can see your thoughts. Thank you for letting me into your mind.”

Felicity opened her eyes and smiled, “Anytime.”

They kissed for a while, holding each other as Luke explored Felicity’s mind. Memories of them filled it. Their first meeting. Laughing at Shara’s funeral. Comparing Jakku and Tatooine in the cockpit of the Falcon. Working out together. Felicity sitting on Luke’s feet as he did sit ups. Cooking together. Felicity playfully smearing icing on his face as he taught her to bake a cake. Having breakfast together at Dex’s. Kissing Luke passionately in the booth to Dex’s utter surprise, which was how they revealed to him they were dating. Drinking with Rogue Squadron. Dancing at Ayessa and Koran’s wedding. Screwing around at Reine and Obik’s wedding.

Love, that was the emotion that filled Felicity’s mind, and there was no doubt that what she wanted most of all in that moment was to make love to Luke Skywalker.

“You have to step out of this dress, right?” Luke murmured, his hand trailing up the zipper.

Something flared in Felicity’s mind. Something vague and distant. A yell? And a… crackle? Whatever it was, Felicity was fighting it.

“Yes, I do,” Felicity tried to sound normal, but Luke could feel something struggling to take over.

“Are you okay?”

“I’m fine,” Felicity said shortly.

She shifted on his lap and her leg knocked something off the coffee table. It landed on the carpet with a thud. Instinctively, Felicity and Luke turned to look at it: it was Luke’s lightsaber.

All of a sudden, a flurry of images flooded Felicity’s mind.

A scream, feminine and spine tingling.

A man lying dead on the floor.

Immense pain ripping down her spine.

A mechanical breath.

Another scream, male and familiar to Luke.

A kick to the ribs.

A blaster.

A control panel.

A scream of grief.

A-

“No! No! No!” Felicity suddenly shoved Luke away, and her mind was sealed to him.

Luke blinked, utterly baffled as Felicity sat with her head in her hands trying not to cry.
“Felicity?” Luke placed a hand on her back.

“No!” she instantly slapped it away.

It wasn’t the playful sort of smack she might given his arm, or the sort of semi-violent way she would always threaten to kick people’s asses but never actually doing so. It was a violent smack, instant and mindless like a reflex.

Felicity’s eyes widened as she realized what she had done.

“Oh my God, Luke, I’m sorry,” Felicity exclaimed. “Oh, Gods what’s wrong with me? I can do this. I can do this!”


“I can do this. I can do this,” Felicity desperately chanted to herself, her head in her hands. “I can do this.”

Luke sighed, “We don’t have to do this.”

“Yes, we do!” Felicity snapped. Then she realized her words, “I mean… we can. I want to.”

Luke looked away at a loss of what to say or do, “This isn’t meant to be a chore, Felicity. It’s just a way to express our love, and if you can’t do this, that’s alright. I still love you and want to be with you.”

“It’s not-” But Felicity didn’t even know how to end that sentence. “I just… I can do this!”

“Felicity, do you usually have this problem with sex?”

“No. Never.”

“Then why me?” Luke boldly asked. “What’s so wrong with me? Why is it so hard for you to do this?”

Felicity looked away, nervously rubbing her shoulder.

Luke frowned. Hadn’t she rubbed her shoulder the exact same way after turning him down at the wedding?

And then it clicked.

Felicity had rubbed her shoulder after turning him down at the wedding.

She had packed several flimsy nightgowns for their stay on Rornian, yet wore the same pyjama shirt every night after it had been decided they would share a bed.

She had stopped things in his office when he had started pulling down her dress strap.

She had gone through a huge amount of effort to pull her bra off while keeping her dress strap up.

She had tensed and stopped him when he tried to help her with her bra by grasping her dress strap.

When they went swimming on Rornian that one time, Felicity wore that extremely conservative one
When they had been enslaved on Zygerria, she had been given a special shoulder and back covering that no other slave had.

She had hit him when he touched her back.

“Felicity…” Luke said slowly. “What’s wrong with your back?”

Fear flooded Felicity’s eyes, “What did you just say?”

“You’re afraid of me seeing your back,” Luke stated plainly. “That’s why you keep stopping things. That’s why you were willing to sex on my desk during Reine and Obik’s wedding until I tried pulling your dress down. That’s why you just slapped me. You don’t want me to see your back.”

Felicity looked away and said nothing.

“Why?” Luke demanded. “What’s so wrong that you don’t want me to see it?”

She still said nothing.

“Come on,” Luke took her hands in his, “you know me. I’m not going to judge you. There’s no scar, no tattoo, no brand, no birth defect, no traumatic injury that’s going to make me find you unattractive.”

Felicity looked him in the eyes, “I’m not afraid of you finding me unattractive, Luke.”

Luke frowned, “Then what is it?”

Felicity took a deep breath, turned around, and pulled down her zipper.

At first Luke didn’t see the problem; there was some subtle red mark near the top of her back. But as her zipper dragged further down, and the mark became clearer, Luke’s heart stopped. His mouth was dry and eyes wide when Felicity’s zipper reached the bottom of the track.

Splashed vividly against the pale skin of her back, an angry red scar ran the full length of her spine.

“I don’t think I need to tell you what kind of scar this is,” Felicity whispered. She was too afraid to turn back and look at him.

Luke felt like he was going to be sick. It all made sense now, why she didn’t want him to see her back… and why she was so afraid of the weapon he proudly wielded everyday.

“There’s nothing civilized about a lightsaber, Luke,” Felicity said darkly. “Not when a man in a mask has dragged one down your spine.”


Felicity turned to look at him, a challenge in her eyes. “You want to know why I hate people using lightsabers? Why I didn’t want you to see my back? Why I will never forgive Vader? Go ahead, look in my mind and find the answer.”

Luke took a deep breath, and looked.

_The walls were familiar to Luke; eleven years later, he could still remember the halls of the Death_
Star, and so could Felicity.

Four figures ran down the hallway: three men and a woman. He recognized the younger Felicity Rhiaon and Diego Nalto, and he could figure out the bulky man loaded with weapons was Gunner and the slender one carrying a staff on his back was Ji-Dan. Gunner was holding Felicity in his arms, dragging her along. Felicity was hysterically shouting and squirming, trying to escape Gunner’s grasp.

“We have to go back! We have to go back!” Felicity was screaming. “We can’t leave him! I can’t leave Riz!”

“Get a hold of yourself, Rhiaon!” Diego snapped, his tone far more aggressive than Luke had ever heard. This was the ‘still had a stick stuck up his ass and an ego bigger than the Death Star’ Diego Nalto Luke had heard so much about. “Drayson is dead! There’s nothing we can do!”

“We still have to go back!” Felicity yelled. “I won’t leave him!”

“Rhiaon, get it together or I swear to God, I will slap you!”

Gunner cuff ed Diego upside the head, “Enough! Have you no heart? Were you not the same when you lost your first friend in battle?”

“It doesn’t matter what I did,” Diego exclaimed. “We have Death Star plans to get to the base! We can’t go back for a corpse!”

“Felicity,” a kindly voice said.

She felt a hand on her arm, and found Ji-Dan at her side. Felicity looked into those eyes, blind yet could deeper into a soul than anyone else.

“My child, he is gone,” Ji-Dan said softly. “Mourn not, but rejoice that he has passed into a better world than this. He died a hero, and his memory will live on.”

“It’s my fault,” the pouch around Felicity’s neck felt like a ton. “How can I not be sad?”

“Because he’s with people who will care for him, and he will never feel pain again.”

“Who is he with?” Felicity shot. “His parents are alive. His daughter is alive. His friends are alive. The only person who’s dead is his bitch ex-girlfriend who didn’t even tell him they had a daughter until she was four… and that was only through her Death in the Line of Duty Action Plan. Who is there to watch over him? Because she sure as hell won’t!”

“If he has no one, then I suppose he’ll just have to borrow someone from you,” Ji-Dan smiled softly. “I think Brendan wouldn’t mind watching him for a while.”

That brought a smile to Felicity’s face, “He’s with Brendan?”

Ji-Dan nodded, “He’s with Brendan. The Force will care for them both, and they will care for and watch over you, as they always have, as I always have, and we always will.”

Felicity grabbed and clasped his hand, “Alright, boys. Let’s get these plans the hell out of here!”

“Yeah!” Gunner cheered.

Diego rolled his eyes, “Oh sure. Listen to the motivation speech we definitely did not have time for.”
“One more comment, Nalto, and I’m reporting you for insubordination during the mission debrief,” Ji-Dan warned.

“Besame el culo,” Diego muttered.

“And no swearing in your homeworld language,” Ji-Dan chided.

“Alright, let’s go,” Felicity wiped the tears from her eyes and broke into a run.

They raced down the hallway, weapons at the ready for the Stormtroopers that were trying to track them. Surely word would have gotten out by now of the group of Rogues who had stolen the Death Star plans. The directive would be clear; the Imperials would not let them leave that station alive.

Things were oddly quiet… too quiet. Felicity had just come to the end of the hallway and was about to direct their next move, having been the one to memorize the layout of the Death Star.

“The ship hanger is just one floor down,” Felicity instructed, turning her back to face the men. “There’s an elevator lift just down this hallway, so we should-”

Pain ripped open her spine, and Felicity screamed louder more painfully than ever before in her life as she fell to the floor. The world was dark as her face crushed against the floor. She was blinded and paralysed by the pain burning down her spine.

How wasn’t she dead?

She could hear what was happening around her. Diego’s screams and a thud to the floor. Had they killed him? God, she hoped they didn’t. She may hate the man but she didn’t actually want him dead.

There was a blast, a crackle, a zing, followed by Gunner’s grunt and a thud as he hit the ground. What had been done to her team? What had been done to her? Where was Ji-Dan? And who had done it?

She got her final question answered a moment later when she heard an iconic noise.

Koo-pah.

A mechanical breath.

A black boot gave her a sharp kick in the ribs, turning her over to face him. Towering above her was Darth Vader himself.

“Organa’s Handmaiden,” Vader said. “I should have guessed.”

“Did you hold your breath to sneak up on us?” Felicity moaned. She hissed in pain as Vader kicked her in the ribs again.

“This makes perfect sense,” Vader began. “Alaric Rhiannon’s known Rebel daughter showed up out of nowhere with another Rebel begging for a job on the Death Star, and when she arrives, three other Rebels manage to find their way onto the station. I told them not to trust you, but Tarkin and Rhiannon refused to listen. Why do you think I sent for Major Kinall? To keep an eye on you. And now here we are: exactly where we’ve been destined to end up ever since you stepped between the Princess and I all those years ago. And to think I stood up for you during the conflict over dealing with your brother’s body.”
“Oh yeah, I don’t think I ever thanked you,” Felicity glanced over at her companions. “Thanks for that. The lightsaber down my spine? Not so much.”

“You’ve certainly gotten mouthy over the years,” Vader kicked her again.

As sassy as her words were, there was no denying the fear burning in her heart and mind. Ji-Dan was nowhere to be found, but probably had ducked into a nearby hall. Gunner was not far behind Felicity, groaning in pain on the ground. She didn’t know at the time that his legs had been slashed by Vader’s lightsaber. Diego was lying next to Felicity, clutching his arm, moaning loudly as his lifelong hand injury was freshly planted in his body. Between Felicity and Diego, just out of her reach and not far from Diego’s feet was Brendan’s blaster, the weapon she would never abandon.

“I can make this easy on you, Rhiaon,” Vader said. “Give me the plans and I may let you and your friends live.”

“Do you think I’m an idiot?” Felicity challenged. She knew her words were a death sentence, having seen far too many times what this man in a mask could do in his fury. But still, Felicity grasped the pouch around her neck in a death grip and declared, “I’ll never give them to you, Vader!”

“Then you have decided to die,” Vader raised his lightsaber above Felicity.

She shut her eyes and waited for the blow. Her only comfort as she heard the zing of the saber swinging down was that when she next opened her eyes, she would see Brendan and Riz.

The blow never landed.

After a minute of confusion, Felicity opened her eyes. Standing over her, his staff blocking Vader’s saber, was Ji-Dan.

“The Force is with this woman,” Ji-Dan said boldly. “She will not die today, and not by your blade or corrupt ideology.”

“You know nothing of the Force!” Vader snarled and struck at Ji-Dan.

They engaged in the duel that would end with Ji-Dan’s death. He fought bravely against the Sith Lord wielding staff against saber, but all knew how this encounter would end.

As Vader’s saber slashed and clashed with Ji-Dan’s staff, it was clear that the Sith Lord wasn’t putting his full effort in the fight. He was toying with the man, forcing his friends to watch helplessly as Ji-Dan edged ever closer to certain death.

Felicity watched in horror: Ji-Dan was the only one left standing. If he fell, none of them had a chance of escape. To their advantage, Vader had been proud enough to not believe he needed any Stormtroopers to back him up, and indeed Felicity, Diego, and Gunner were incapacitated enough to make that true. The battle station readouts hung from Felicity’s neck like lead. It was her responsibility one way or another to get this into the hands of the Rebel Alliance. They had to find a way out of this, to escape Vader or the Galaxy was doomed.

But how?

Behind her, Gunner was struggling to get to his feet. He was unsteadied, and if he were to fight, it wouldn’t take much to finish him off. To the side, not far from her brother’s blaster, Diego was desperately clutching his arm, moaning in pain as he fought to stay conscious. It would take more of an attack to finish off Diego, and that was good as Felicity would need the help of a pilot... though
with a bum arm like that, any more injury to it would mean a prosthetic.

It was bitterly cruel that Diego would be given a metal limb by a monster whose body was nothing but metal.

Words from the past suddenly flooded into Felicity’s mind.

"As unbelievable as it may sound," Vader's voice boomed down the hallway to the young Felicity Rhiaon and Leia Organa, "my body is the flesh and blood of a human, with all its unfortunate limitations. But do not think I am not a very powerful man. I wield more power than you can possibly imagine."

The younger Felicity Rhiaon blurted out, "If you're so powerful, why are you in a life support suit?"

"FELICITY!" Leia, a mere thirteen-year-old screeched.

"What? I'm curious. How often do you get to ask Darth Vader what's up with the suit?" Felicity knew she had messed up but damn it, she was standing her ground. "It is life support, right?"

Vader was silent for a few moments before deciding he might as well answer Felicity’s question.

"Yes, it is a life support suit," Vader replied. "When I was younger and more naïve, I suffered injuries from a nefarious, despicable man who sought to corrupt those I may have cared about."

The eyes of the twenty-one-year-old Felicity narrowed in on the control panel over Vader’s chest. A life support suit: Vader’s one weakness. Felicity’s eyes flicked over to Brendan’s blaster. If she could take out the suit, she could take out Vader.

Of course, that would require moving, and that was no easy feat. She tried to reach for her brother’s blaster, and it took all of her strength not to cry out and alert Vader to her actions.

Felicity was still in immense pain from Vader’s attack. Every time she moved, her spine felt on fire and she struggled not to vomit from searing pain screaming from her spine. Her limbs didn’t want to cooperate, taking all of her willpower to move them before they would obey.

Then a swipe from Vader’s blade got too close to Ji-Dan.


Diego frowned and glanced at the blaster near his feet, “What are you going to do? Shoot Vader?”

“It’s our only chance.”

“It’ll never work. He’s too powerful to be taken down by a single blaster bolt.”

“We have to try.”

“It’s suicide, Rhiaon!”

“We can’t give up on the Galaxy, Nalto!” Felicity’s eyes burned with passion. “You and I may have no one left to fight for, but that’s not why we fight. We fight so that everyone else doesn’t have to endure the pain that we have suffered. Do I expect either of us to make it out alive today? Absolutely not, but the Alliance is getting these plans. And if we can’t get out of this alive, Nalto, then damn it,
they’ll remember that we went down fighting! Now, Rogue Two… Kick. Me. The. Blaster!”

Something sparked in Diego Nalto’s eyes, igniting the flame of hope and rebellion inside of him. With one firm kick, Diego kicked over Felicity’s blaster.

Felicity’s hands enclosed upon it just as Vader’s saber went through Ji-Dan’s chest.

“NO!” Felicity screamed as Vader extinguished his saber and Ji-Dan fell dead to the ground.

Adrenaline surged through her body. Without thinking, Felicity lifted her brother’s blaster, and barely aiming, took a shot at Vader.

She hit him right in the control panel.

It was almost comical how hard Vader went down; wheezing and crackling as his electronics were fried.

“GO! GO! RUN NOW!” Felicity screamed as she, Diego, and Gunner shot to their feet and made a run for it.

“Nice blast, Rhiaon!” Diego laughed, something light in his tone Felicity had never heard before. It would be the turning point in their relationship.

“Come on, you two!” Gunner egged on, not acknowledging he was actually lagging behind the other two. He was moving in a sort of limping run, “We’re not out of here yet!”

And as Felicity reached the end of the hall – her spine still aflame – she paused for a moment to look back. She shivered like a cube of ice had been shoved down her throat as she saw Vader slowly – extremely slowly – rising to his feet. He couldn’t give them chase, but he was still dangerous as he summoned his lightsaber back to his hand.

Then her eyes set on Ji-Dan’s body. Felicity thought of Ji-Dan’s wife and two grown children. She wondered how she could ever tell them what happened. But then she saw something that lifted her heart ever so slightly: Ji-Dan had died with a smile on his face.

He would always be with her.

Luke pulled out of the memory.


“Uh huh,” Felicity nodded. “Also, you agree with me, Battle of Yavin era Diego Nalto was an asshole.”

“Undoubtedly. So that’s it then? That’s why you’ll never forgive my father. That’s why you hate lightsabers.”

“I don’t hate lightsabers.”

Luke blinked, “I’m sorry?”

“I don’t hate lightsabers,” Felicity repeated. “I hate when they’re wielded for evil. I have seen them and what they can do. I saw Vader put one through Ji-Dan’s chest, I saw Tyla Kinall put another through Gunner’s chest.”
“She has renounced that life, Felicity.”

“I know that, but that doesn’t mean I’ll ever be comfortable with her using one around me. That doesn’t mean I’ll be comfortable with anyone using one around me. Not Obik, not Reine, not even you.” Felicity took a deep breath, “I have felt them, Luke, that horrible pain dragging down my spine. Burning and ripping my flesh. Scarring it forever. You know what’s the worst part? He intentionally toyed with us; incapacitating us, but not killing us. He wanted to know who we were before he killed us. Diego and I weren’t able to access real medical aide for a month, and as such we have permanent scars and injuries from that. That’s why Diego’s hand shakes and has its spasms. They told us that one more slice to Diego’s arm and he would lose all muscle control in that hand. As for me, the doctors told me that if Vader had really been going for it, when he slashed me down the spine with a lightsaber it would have put me in a coma. It would have been so easy to kill me after that.”

“Felicity…”

But Luke couldn’t find the words to continue.

Felicity looked his deep in the eyes, “I am not afraid of lightsabers, Luke. What I’m afraid of… is you turning to the Dark Side.”

Luke’s eyes went wide, shock coursing through his body, “Felicity, no. I would never.”

“You can’t say never.”

“Yes, I can. I’ve been tempted and tested. I’ve been to the edge, and I’ve walked away from it.”

“You think that’s the only time you’ll ever be tested? You think you’ll never tempted again?”

“I know better than that. I know how to walk away without losing myself.”

“Said every single person who ever gave in to the Dark Side,” Felicity snapped. “Your father himself probably once said something along those lines. I know you’re strong, but what happens if that strength gets turned against you? Against me? I will not be Padmé Amidala, Luke.”

“I know you won’t,” Luke sighed. “… And I know you would literally kick my ass if I ever Force Choked you.”

“Well, without my permission.”

Luke raised an eyebrow.

Felicity grinned, “Why don’t we get the normal sex out of the way, and then we can talk about kinks?”

“I’m all for that,” Luke leaned in to kiss her but was stopped by a finger on the lips.

“We’re not done talking yet,” Felicity said.

Luke sighed, “Alright, fine, I will admit that I will likely be tested in the future, but I swear to you I will never give in.”

“I accept that, but you need to understand that if you ever do give in, we’re done. I’m not going to come beg you to return to the Light Side. If you make the choice to forsake the Light Side, knowing all you do about the Dark Side, then that is a bed you need to lie in. If you turn to the Dark Side, I
“am leaving you, and if we have any children, I’m taking them with me and you will never see them again. We’re not going to have a third fricking Skywalker with a mechanical hand. And if we do, I’m going to find who cuts off my child’s hand, and cut off far more than just their hand.”

“Agreed,” Luke chuckled. Carefully, he lifted his mechanical hand, and trailed the fingers down the scar on Felicity’s spine. He was testing her, and though she shivered, she did not push him away. “Is that why you don’t like this hand touching you?”

“Yes,” Felicity breathed. “I see that hand and not only do I remember what he did to you, but I remember what he did to me… I wish this was like a normal relationship, Luke. That we could come in with a blank slate, but we can’t. We have a long, complicated history that started decades before we ever crossed paths. I wish we could just pretend that none of it happened, or at least that it doesn’t matter. But it does. I will always hate your father, or at least be antagonistic about him. He tried to kill me, Luke, and I shot him in the chest. And you…”

Felicity sighed.

“You killed my father, Luke.”

Luke frowned as he felt something dark and tragic pulse in the Force. He was surprised at the amount of sorrow that suddenly came off of Felicity. Usually she spoke of Alaric Rhiaon with such hatred and distaste; Luke hadn’t expected Felicity to associate Alaric with grief.

Felicity took a deep breath, and it seemed that she knew the thoughts in his head, “My father did a lot of terrible things to me, Luke… but he wasn’t all bad. I do have affectionate memories of him. You know the house I’ve been designing since I was a child?”

“Uh huh.”

“When I was eight, he took the current design and had it made into a dollhouse for my birthday,” Felicity had on a bittersweet smile. “It was exactly like my drawing, and he rigged the house himself to have lights that turned on and off, and doors that slid open… I did love my father, Luke. As much as I try to fight it, I did love him. I did want him to turn to the good side and reunite with me and we could be a family. The last time I saw him, he betrayed me, but I’ve always wondered if after the destruction of Alderaan he regretted anything. Maybe he changed his mind? What if I had one more chance to try to get through to him?”

Felicity sighed heavily.

“And I killed him before you had that chance,” Luke said the words Felicity could not.

“When my father died, I shed a tear for him. A single tear, but a tear nonetheless,” Felicity’s eyes did not move from Luke’s. “I know that it was his own doing, his own choices that put him on the Death Star… But I can’t deny the facts. I can’t deny that you played a role in my father’s death. I can’t deny that I did love my father. I can’t deny that I have fallen hopelessly in love with the man who killed my father. I can’t deny that I want to make love to my father’s killer.”

Felicity reached up and ran a hand through Luke’s soft blonde hair.

“And I can’t deny that… I’m perfectly okay with that.”

“Felicity,” Luke whispered trying to seek her lips, but Felicity stopped him again with a finger to his lips.

“I know I’m irresistible, but you are going to have to be strong for just a little longer,” Felicity teased.
“How much longer?” Luke chuckled, always a little turned on by her self-confidence, especially with how she was never afraid to admit she thought she was attractive. Sure, Felicity sometimes had the usual slips of thinking maybe she could drop a few pounds, or thought her thighs were too large, but generally Felicity Rhiaon was confident in her body and not afraid to flaunt that confidence.

“I am going to make love to you tonight, Luke Skywalker,” Felicity promised. “And it’s going to be so hot and good, you’re going to say, Calla who?”


“But first,” Felicity went back to being serious, “I need you to promise me three things. If we’re going to have a relationship and move on from the scars of the past, I need you to promise me three things.”

“Anything.”

“First… you will never treat me as my father did: like his possession. I was his doll; dressing me how he wanted, putting me in pretend scenarios where I was this perfect, simpering daughter that he could use to better his position in life and prove to everyone he was worth something. I am not Luke Skywalker’s Significant Other or some piece of arm candy or trophy for you to flaunt. I am Felicity Rhiaon, a woman with her own heroics and accomplishments, who just happens to also be bedding Luke Skywalker.”

“I promise that,” Luke took her hands in his, his mechanical thumb running over her knuckles. “But you have to promise to make that last part true.”

“Patience, My Love,” Felicity chuckled.

Luke pulled a face.

“What?”

“… Calla used to call me ‘My Love.’”

Felicity frowned, “… How about Sweetheart?”


“No Dark Side,” Felicity said. “You have to promise me that you will never turn to the Dark Side. I saw that holo of your parents on Mustafar. I’m actually going to kill you if you try to pull that crap on me, and I’ll get Han and Leia to help.”

“I promise,” Luke played with a strand of her hair. “What’s the last thing?”

“Swear to me you’ll never lie to me.”

“Felicity, I-”

“I’m not finished. By never lying to me, I mean the big stuff. If you’re planning a surprise party for me and lie, telling me instead we’re going out for dinner, I don’t give a shit… But if you’ve had sex with Tyla Kinall, I want to know.”

“I can honestly say that I have never had sex with Tyla Kinall,” Luke smiled, but his mind flicked over to Tyla for a moment.

No, he had never slept with Tyla, but he did know something that Felicity didn’t: that Tyla was
responsible for Brendan’s death. It was Tyla’s darkest secret that she used to be an Inquisitor, and it wasn’t Luke’s place to share it. But not telling Felicity Tyla’s secret wasn’t exactly a lie; she had never asked him if he knew anything about Brendan’s death or Third Sister.

“Good,” Felicity smiled and ran a hand through Luke’s hair.

Luke was careful to make his tone just right, “Now, in this no lying rule… do you count lies by omission?”

Felicity raised an eyebrow, “Of course I do. You know better than anyone know how much that can mess up a person. Don’t you ever do that to me.”

“Alright, that’s good to know,” Luke looked away. He would absolutely have to talk to Tyla the next time he went to Temple Village.

When Luke looked back at Felicity, she was watching him with narrowed eyes.

“Is there something I should know about, Luke?”

Non-Force Sensitive as she was, Felicity Rhiaon could read Luke just as well as he could read her.


“There’s just something I have to do first before I tell you. It’s not exactly my secret to tell, but I will ensure you learn it. I just want to respect the person whose secret it is, and let them come forward with it themselves. Can you accept that?”

“I’m not going to be mad at you for respecting someone’s feelings,” Felicity conceded. “Just… promise me there won’t be lies.”

“I promise you, and will make you a fourth promise on top of that.” Luke summoned his lightsaber and held it out to her. He took one of her hands and put it atop the saber so they were holding it together. He looked her deep into her eyes, blue locking on hazel, “Felicity Rhiaon, I swear to you that this lightsaber will never be used to harm you. I will use it to defend and protect you until my dying day. I vow that, and I vow to spend as long as you’re willing to tolerate me, loving you as fiercely and passionately as I can manage.”

“I make you that same vow,” Felicity smiled and stroked his cheek. “Now, with all of that out of the way, I guess this is the part where we have a perfectly normal relationship.”

“Felicity,” Luke set down the lightsaber and lifted a hand under her chin, “as far as I’m concerned, a normal relationship… sounds frightfully boring.”

She laughed, “Kiss me, you idiot.”

“Finally.”

Luke captured her lips in a heady kiss. It was a kiss to end all others as they poured the depth of their love and connection into that intimate touch. When they broke for air, their parting was short lived. Luke’s lips were once more against Felicity’s neck, while hers suckled upon his collarbone, teasing it with gentle nibbles.
“Felicity,” Luke whispered her name against her skin.

Her hands stroked down his chest, trailing down his abs, and reaching down until they settled upon the bulge between his legs. With practiced hands, they started running over the fabric of his briefs, working the erection that had calmed down during their conversation, but that was reawakening under her touch.

Luke’s fingers played with her short neck hairs as she stroked him through his underwear, and his tongue dragged up her thin skin. Felicity moaned at his touch, arching her neck for better access. The thumb of her hand working his shaft slid down and began stroking the outline of his balls that were getting heavier as he hardened. Luke grunted and eagerly shoved a hand under her dress going straight for her panty-clad sex.

She was already so wet.

Then the thought crossed his mind, the one that made his cock hard as iron, he was about to make love to Felicity Rhiaon. For real this time; he was going to join with her as one flesh and perform the most intimate act of love possible.

He couldn’t wait another moment.

“Felicity,” Luke whispered, his hands on the shoulders of her dress. “Please, let me make love to you.”

She smiled coyly and pressed one more tender kiss to his eager lips. Luke moved forward to shove a hand in her hair and pull her lips in closer to him, but Felicity drew away. She watched with that one corner smirk as he jerked forward to kiss her again, but she leaned away. Felicity placed a hand on his chest to stop him from moving forward, and shook her head.

“Luke, please…” Felicity bowed her head against his and whispered just barely above his lips, “undress me.”

Slowly, she turned her back to him and pulled her hair away with one hand. Luke was treated to a simply stunning view of her unzipped dress splayed open to present the pale skin of her back, the band of her black lacy bra, and the exposed, red, angry scar.

With tender hands, Luke reached forward, his mechanical hand taking hold of the right shoulder strap. His flesh hand gently caressed the length of her scar.


His hands moved to the bared skin next to the shoulder straps, and he gripped the skin, massaging the tension coiled in her joints. Felicity gave a sharp breath and bit her lip. Her desire for him with churning boldly in the Force.

Luke bent down and started to feather kisses along the length of Felicity’s lightsaber scar, one of their most intimate acts from that day forward. She shivered again, as she would always do when he kissed her scars. When Luke reached the spot above her tailbone where the scar ended, he dragged his tongue back up.

Leisurely, Luke repeated the action of kissing and licking the other handful of scars that lined her back. He frowned at one scar that had almost completely faded away: the scar made by the whip she was struck with when they got captured on Zygerria. He could still remember that first time he had ever heard her scream in pain. How dare anyone do that to this amazing woman in his arms?
A moan from Felicity brought his mind back to the present. His hands ventured down for a moment to circle the tender flesh of her heaving breasts, his fingertips teasing her erect nipples, and the hands immediately withdrew back to their original position on her shoulders.

“Luke,” Felicity’s head lolled back. Her eyes were squeezed shut, and Luke almost stumbled back when an extreme wave of pleasure crashed against him through the Force like a wave against a rock. “Luke, please, undress me.”

He smiled and pressed one more kiss to the back of her neck. His thumbs hooked under the fabric of her shoulder straps, and with an almost painful lethargy, he pulled down her dress.

“You said you had to step out of the dress,” Luke whispered in her ear as his hand ran over the muscles of her toned stomach. “I am so happy we focused on ab workout routines.”

“Wait until you see what the flexibility ones made me able to do,” Felicity teased as she stood and pulled the dress off her. She chucked it carelessly across the room like their other clothes.

Felicity stood before him in a simply stunning set of black lacy bra and panties, and Luke sat on the couch admiring her in his briefs. That which was unspoken clung to the air: there was no turning back from this… and both were perfectly happy with that.

“Enjoying the view?” Felicity placed a hand on her hip, which she popped to the side, modeling her body to him. As with any body, it did have its flaws, but for Luke in his memory of that night she looked like an absolute Goddess.

“Yes,” Luke’s answer was barely more than a puff of air as everything tensed in his body. Tonight, he would make that body his: touching, tasting, teasing, and making her cum.

“Well, I guess this is it,” Felicity climbed upon his lap, spreading her legs to straddle his throbbing erection. She deliberately shifted her pelvis across him, and Luke struggled to hold himself together, “I guess tonight, I finally learn if your saber skills-”

“I swear to God, Felicity, do not make a lightsaber pun right now,” Luke gripped her hips, gently pulling to encourage her to rock against him. Her panties were sopping, and with every stroke the fabric pulled a little to the side. Had he not been covered by briefs, he would have slid right inside her.

Felicity seemed to melt in his arms; bare skin against bare skin. Heat burned in their bodies as they touched each other without restraint. Only one garment remained between them each. One year of sexual tension was finally bubbling to the surface, and with a surge of electricity, it was about to come to a head.

“Fine, I’ll abstain,” Felicity’s lips found his ear as she rocked against him.

“I sincerely hope that is our only abstinence tonight.” Luke’s chest was already damp with sweat. “I think it would actually kill me if you stopped things now.”

“Far from it. Oh, Gods, Luke!” Felicity jolted as his fabric-clad head found her clit. Felicity panted heavily, her arms gripping his shoulders as she struggled to find purchase on him, “Luke, please! I’m ready. Take me to the bedroom! Let me make love to you!”

“Who am I to disappoint you?” Luke moved her legs to wrap around his hips, holding her upright as he stood. While Felicity gripped at him tightly so she wouldn’t fall, he felt the rest of her relax when the pleasurable pressure of his erect cock against her hot sex between her legs was relieved.
“Good, that was getting a little much for now,” Felicity rested her head against his shoulder. “Thank you for that, though.”


With Felicity’s legs locked around his hips and his lips on hers, Luke carried Felicity to the bedroom.

“Droids won’t bother us?” Felicity asked between passionate kisses as Luke carried her over the threshold.

“I bribed Artoo to keep Threepio out of the way,” Luke set her down on the ground and turned to close the door. When he looked back at her, he couldn’t help but chuckle.

“What?” Felicity grinned with a hand on her hip.

“You’ve got lipstick smeared all over your face.”

“Oh really? You should see your face and neck with all that red all over it.”

Luke wrapped his arms around her waist and kissed her, “There’s some tissues in my bedside table. I’ll get the makeup remover from the fresher.”

“Why do you own makeup remover?”

“I don’t. Alyla left it here after last visit. I don’t think she’ll mind us using a little.”

“I won’t tell her if you won’t.”

“Deal.”

When Luke returned from the fresher with the bottle, he found Felicity sitting on his bed, waiting for him. His bedside drawer was open, revealing that he had stocked it properly for that night: condoms, lotion, lubrication, breath mints, and one item that Felicity was holding up with a smirk on her face.

“I’ve been looking for these, Master Skywalker,” Felicity dangled the lacy purple panties in front of her. “Is there a fetish I should know about?”

Luke chuckled and sat on the bed, his free hand going to rest on her thigh where he stroked small circles with his thumb.

“No fetish, but I do like a nice set of lingerie on a beautiful woman,” Luke’s hand slid up her leg to the hem of her panties.

“Enough that you steal women’s underwear?” Felicity asked as Luke poured the makeup remover on a tissue.

“Hey, you said to use them. You didn’t say I had to give them back,” Luke started to wipe the lipstick smears from Felicity’s face, “We’re really doing this.”

“We are,” Felicity took her turn to wipe the lipstick Luke’s face. “Any hesitations?”

“None. You?”

“None,” Felicity put the makeup remover and panties in the drawer and shut it as Luke used the Force to put the tissues in the wastebasket across the room. Their hands found each other’s bodies in a second.
“So, birth control,” Luke asked, “I have condoms this time.”

“I’m still on the pill, and unless something’s happened in the past few weeks that you need to tell me, I believe we’re both clean.”

“Bare it is then,” Luke’s hand ran slowly up and down her sides. “Just wanted to make sure we’re safe.”

“I’m not going to fault you for that,” Felicity kissed Luke. They kissed for a while, savoring each other’s lips, and letting their hands explore each other’s bare skin. Luke didn’t call her on it, but there was no denying Felicity had goosebumps as he touched her. She felt so good, so soft but strong, smooth but had her scars as any soldier did.

He wanted to do so many things to her that night, just push her down and have his way with her, but tonight wasn’t for that. Tonight he would make love to her as tenderly and passionately as possible.

“Felicity,” Luke breathed, his lips trailing down her jaw, her neck, her collarbone, and to the tops of her breasts. He kissed there for a while at the edge of the fabric, his lips and tongue teasing the tops of her exposed skin.

Her hand was in his hair, urging him on, his own hands running up and down the length of her spine scar. Every time they reached her bra strap, he teased her a little, playing with the clasp and feigning release, but then continuing to run down her scar.


With lust burning in his eyes, Luke reached behind Felicity and unclipped her bra. Something flashed in his eyes – confidence and dominance – and roughly he yanked down her bra, throwing it on the floor. Felicity yelped as pushed her down on the soft bed, but moaned as he began suckling at her breasts. Tongue and teeth teased her pointed nipples as his erection pressed into her thigh. His hands skilfully kneaded the soft flesh of her breasts. God, she was so soft and responsive. She writhed under him as he expertly worked her sensitive breasts.

While Felicity had only let him touch her bare quim three times since that first time in the office, her breasts had been free game and Luke had seen them over a dozen times since. Luke worshiped Felicity’s cleavage, and since her breast size had been one of only two things she was sensitive about her body – her height being the other – Felicity had glowed over the attention Luke paid to them. In fact, yesterday morning, before they had gone on their morning run, Luke had pulled her breasts out of her athletic bra and sucked on them, rocking a knee between her legs until she came. They had shared a secret smile when they got to Dex’s and he asked them why the two of them looked so happy.

To him they were perfect; perfectly sized, perfectly soft, perfectly round, perfectly sensitive. Her brown nipples adored his attentions, and one touch of them would get Felicity sopping in an instant. Someday Luke would try his hardest to see if he could get her off simply through her breasts, but for tonight he would use it to prepare her quim for his pulsing cock.

Speaking of…

Felicity yelped as Luke reached down and shoved a finger into her cunt.

“Just as I thought,” Luke chuckled, pumping his finger in and out of her heated passage. “You’re so wet, and yet… So tight. I can only get one finger in you right now.”
“I guess you’ll just have to do something to change that,” Felicity panted. “Because I’ve seen your cock, and there’s no way you’re going to be able to get that into me now.”

“No,” Luke withdrew his finger and knelt down. “But this will.”

Felicity threw her head back onto the mattress as Luke shoved his tongue into her. She panted frantically in time with the thrusts – in, out, in, out – how Luke loved to make her moan with his mouth. He feasted on her hungrily, licking up every bit of that salty sweet nectar, digging hard into her passage to get the last of it, and lapping it from the length of her sex with a quick, flat tongue. When his tongue hit her clit, her pelvis raised off the mattress, smothering her cunt against his face for grander feeling. Luke didn’t even mind that she was slightly suffocating him.

But he did mind the panties digging into the side of his cheek.

“Sorry, Felicity,” Luke answered her whimper as he tore away his tongue from her gushing pussy. He hooked fingers under her panties, “But I have to get these off you.”

He went to pull, but found her hand blocking him.

“Wait,” Felicity looked up at him. “Luke… this is the first time I’m going to be fully naked in front of you.”

Luke smiled, “Yes… it is.”

“I want to see you too. Can I?”

Luke pressed a kiss to her lips, “Of course.”

Then, never breaking the kiss, he slowly eased the panties off of her. He held the panties for a moment, focusing his attentions to it. Sexual effusions clung to the damp fabric. It smelled of her desire for him, and that was a smell Luke would never forget.

But of course, that wasn’t the sight Luke wanted. He dropped the panties to the floor and then got up, standing next to the bed to enjoy the view.

What a glorious view, pale skin smattered with scars; a toned, athletic form; heaving breasts with perky nipples; sweat glistening across her skin; and a bare, sopping pussy, just waiting for him to bury his way to the hilt.

This body was his to do as he pleased.

He didn’t get to enjoy the view for very long. Felicity jumped off the bed and knelt before him. With no ceremony, she yanked down his briefs, his hard cock springing toward her eagerly. His erection knew its final destination and wanted to reach it as soon as possible.

Felicity was very compliant with that, for the second Luke had kicked his underwear from around his feet, her mouth was around his cock. Her mouth was so tight and wet as she bobbed up and down his shaft. He wanted more, so much more. He wanted to explode again down her throat. Felicity was skilled in a great many things, and this was definitely one of them.

“Stop,” Luke pushed her head away from him. He panted, trying to regain control, “I’m not going to last if you keep this up. Please, I just want to look at you.”
“Alright,” Felicity laid down on the bed, spreading her legs slightly, presenting her naked body to him as he stood before her fully nude and hard for her. “Do you enjoy the view? I’m certainly enjoying mine.”

“You are truly a piece of art,” Luke’s eyes roamed over her naked form, his breaths slow and heavy. Felicity smirked that one corner smirk that had been driving him wild for a year.

“Well, I have some good news for you, Master Skywalker,” Felicity’s hands trailed down her body teasingly as Luke crawled onto the bed over her. She teased her lips over his when they came into reach, “This isn’t a museum. You are more than welcome to touch the art.”

And he did.

Half an hour later, they laid nude in Luke’s bed, their skin illuminated only by the ever-present lights of Coruscant that filtered through the window.

Luke was reclining on his side, his right arm supporting his torso upright to look upon Felicity lying next to him. She looked like a Goddess, bathed in pale blue light, panting gently. His left hand caressed her soft skin in random patterns as she rested from the orgasm his mouth had just given her.


They had already gone through the prerequisite motions of making each other hard, wet, and ready. Their hands and mouths had passionately refamiliarized themselves with the foreign territory of each other’s bodies. They had explored and found the tender spots that would drive and enhance future lovemaking. That spot on Luke’s left shoulder blade, the pit of Felicity’s right knee, the one rib close to Felicity’s heart, and even that one spot on Luke’s left elbow that had surprised them both.

They had discovered every odd or unnatural mark the other carried on their skin. Every tattoo – at the time, Felicity had three – every birth mark – Luke had one on his left thigh, and Felicity had one a few inches above her right hip that Luke would develop the tendency to kiss during lovemaking – and every scar, though there were too many of those to count. Later they would lounge in the bed and tell the story of each mark, but in that moment, nothing mattered but looking deep into each other’s eyes and basking in the love that pulsed through the air.

Luke’s hand traced the lines of one of Felicity’s scars. That one she had gotten in a shoot-out on Onderon.

Felicity watched him with a smile on her face. It was intense how much love and trust filled her eyes in that moment.

Slowly, Felicity sat up, and pressed a tender kiss to his lips. Luke sighed into the kiss, once again enjoying how right her lips felt upon his. His left hand reached up into her hair, and held her head close to him.

No blanket shielded their modesty, but they needed no coverings. They were not embarrassed to lay nude together, it felt easy and natural. Luke even briefly thought that he could see them doing it in a completely non-sexual manner.

Breaking the kiss, Felicity bowed her head. Luke pressed his lips to her forehead and she trailed a hand across his broad chest.

“This moment feels so perfect,” Felicity murmured. “I don’t deserve this.”
Luke lifted her chin and let his sapphire orbs stare into those large hazel rings.


Felicity reached up and stroked his cheek.

Luke gave a small frown and whispered, “You’re trembling.”

Felicity took a deep breath, she couldn’t deny the jittering of the hand against Luke’s cheek, “I’m frightened.”

Luke gently grasped her shaking wrist, and her arm stilled. His eyes bore into her own.


She swallowed.

“This moment,” Felicity admitted. “Of it not being perfect. Of it being something you regret. Of it not at all being right. But most of all, I’m terrified… of it being the most right thing in my life.”

“This isn’t a death sentence,” Luke said.

“No… It’s a life sentence.”

She wrapped her arms around his neck, and they kissed passionately for a several minutes. His lips were upon her own, her cheek, her neck, and her lips graced his forehead and suckled on his jawbone.

When they finally broke, it wasn’t just Felicity who was trembling.

“I love you, Luke Skywalker,” Felicity pressed her forehead to his again – it was a gesture Luke would learn to be her sign of utmost trust and intimacy. His name was like a prayer on her lips.

“I love you, Felicity Rhiaon,” Luke whispered back, her own name just as tender upon his lips.

Felicity took a deep breath, and then threw her leg over his to straddle him. She sat raised on her knees, hovering over his erect shaft, not yet joined as one. Lust crackled in the air from the tease of proximity.

“If we do this,” Felicity’s lips ghosted over his, “…that’s it. Game over. We both know there’s no going back. If we make love…”

She sighed happily as Luke pressed phantom kisses to her breast. Felicity moaned in appreciation, but removed his mouth from her skin. She guided him to look at her.

“If we make love…” Felicity did not break eye contact, “I’ll be yours… forever.”

He placed a hand on her cheek, “And I, yours.”

“Promise?” There was no teasing in her tone, quite uncharacteristic for Felicity. No, this was Felicity Rhiaon at her absolute most vulnerable, opening her heart fully to someone for the first time since her brother had died.

“I swear it,” Luke vowed. “For the rest of my days, from this night forward, there will be no other. No man. No woman. Just you. Only you.”
“And if I die?” Felicity couldn’t look him in the eye as she asked the question.

“Only you,” Luke promised. “Force Forbid you leave this world before I do… I will be faithful, not one other into my heart, life, or bed.”

“No,” Felicity said firmly. “Love me forever, Luke… But don’t let our love shut you off. I will love you beyond my dying days, and I know you will love me too. But don’t be afraid to move on… if you find another who can keep your heart full until we meet again, take that chance.”

“Alright,” Luke said. “But I should let you know that I absolutely plan on going before you. Yes, I look good in black, but I am so not working out what to put on your tombstone.”

“Rogue One. Fighter. Lover… Maybe throw in Mother if I have kids by then, because I am so going to be the best mom.”

“You will, will you?” Luke chuckled.

“Yes, you do appear so,” Felicity glanced down with a teasing smile. She gave a sigh of contentment as he held her arms and traced circles with his thumbs into her skin. Felicity looked back up at Luke, a serious expression overtaking her face. She brushed some of the hair groomed neatly behind his ear, and staring deep into his eyes, said, “Luke… I’m ready.”

His breath hitched, “Are you sure? Because if you need anything else… Oral, fingers, kissing, a glass of water, a bathroom break-”


He furrowed his brow ever so slightly, then testing her, he reached out and stroked the lightsaber scar down her spine.


Felicity didn’t flinch, “Positive… Luke Skywalker… I want to make love to you.”

Then without another word, Felicity leaned forward and kissed him deeply. Luke’s hand automatically wove into her hair, pulling her in close. His tongue danced with her own in perfect harmony as they poured the unfathomable depth of their love into the insatiable kiss.


Luke frowned slightly, “You don’t want to remain in this position? With you on top? You can control the depth and speed much better.”
“I’m not a frigid virgin, Luke,” Felicity teased. “I can handle you just fine.”


“Now, that’s not very sexy talk.”

“No, but this is,” Luke grabbed her by the waist and gently flipped them over so she was lying on the mattress, completely prone as he hovered over her. He leaned in close and in a tone a little above a whisper, ordered Felicity, “Spread your legs.”

Felicity swallowed, her eyes heated as Luke triggered something basely lustful about her.

“Yes, Sir,” Felicity spread her legs apart obediently.

Luke’s breath caught; Felicity was submissive in bed?

Looking at Luke, one wouldn’t expect him to enjoy a very dominant role, but in the bedroom, he was very much the one in charge. He had always had a flair for the dramatic and he loved the sensation of taking complete control of his partner’s body and the pleasure it received.

With Felicity, he had expected a fight for control; two alphas scrapping over dominance. To see Felicity presenting herself to him without a mocking look or sarcastic quip made Luke hard as a rock.

“So, this is what turns off the snark,” Luke kissed the valley between her breasts. “I daresay, I might miss it.”

“Worry not, Master Skywalker,” Felicity arched her neck as he nibbled at her collarbone, “I have other methods of torment in the bedroom.”

Luke groaned as she grasped his cock. She jerked it a few times, letting her hand run up and down the entire length. Reaching his base, her fingernails ever so lightly dragged across his engorged balls. Felicity stroked back up, then unsheathed his head, and circled the exposed crown.

He moaned in pleasure and trailed soft kisses down her middle, starting at her collarbone, between her breasts, and stopping at her waist. Luke then grabbed her wrist and moved her hand from his hardened cock. He kissed his way back up to her lips, and held her face as he lovingly kissed her for several minutes.

Their kiss was tender and sweet, only with a touch of sensuality. It wasn’t until Felicity slid her tongue into Luke’s mouth and caressed the roof, stimulating his sensitive palate that Luke was drawn back to his ultimate goal.

Caressing her sides, Luke shifted his legs and hers into position. It took a few tries for Luke and Felicity to figure out which limb went where, but soon they were settled in position: Luke’s legs between her thighs as her legs hooked over his hips. Just a few more movements and his cock would be propped against her aching entrance.

Luke reached down and grasped his cock. He pumped it a few times, making certain it was hard, then positioned it at her entrance. Felicity lifted her pelvis in anticipation, but moaned when Luke started gliding the head across her wet sex.

“Luke,” Felicity moaned as his cock rubbed against her clit. “Oh, that’s so not fair. That feels so good, but I want you inside of me.”

“Patience, Sweetheart,” Luke assured her. He angled his cock back towards her entrance and rubbed
against it, coating himself in her juices. “I just need to make sure we’re both properly lubricated. Just enjoy.”

“Oh, I am. Don’t you worry about that.”

He stimulated her for a while, enjoying her moans and the feeling of his cock gliding across her quim. The quim he was about to take, and claim as his forever. No more distractions, no more interruptions, no more pulling away at the last second. It was time.

Luke Skywalker going to make love to Felicity Rhiaon.

He hunched over her and settled his cock against her entrance. Felicity moaned, her hips twitching as she sensed what was about to happen.

Luke peppered kisses up her neck, and then whispered in her ear, “I love you, Felicity Rhiaon.”

“I love you too, Luke Skywalker,” Felicity whispered back, wrapping her arms around his neck and looking deep into his eyes.

Luke bent down and kissed her passionately. They poured all of their love and devotion into that one earth shattering kiss.

Then he pushed inside of her.

Felicity cried out as his cock filled her for the first time. It was Luke’s favorite moment of sex to hear the noise she made when he entered her. Every time it happened, whether it was passionate lovemaking, a primal fuck, or a quickie at lunchtime on his desk, Felicity always moaned when he entered her.

Oh, God, Luke couldn’t stand it. Felicity felt amazing; wet and tight, her walls gripping his stiff shaft as he slid in deeper and deeper. Her cunt was so warm, so good. Oh, fuck, if he had known this is what it felt like to be buried inside of Felicity Rhiaon, he would have shoved her against a wall, pulled down her panties, and drove himself into her in front of everyone on Yavin IV a year ago.

“All the way, please,” Felicity begged. “I want to feel you all the way inside of me.”

Luke kissed her deeply again and pushed himself hard into her. He was pushing so hard that Luke wasn’t paying enough attention and slammed into her cervix.

Felicity shrieked.

“I am so sorry,” Luke hastily pulled back out. “I didn’t mean to hurt you.”

“Stop,” Felicity grabbed his hips again, “you didn’t hurt me.”


“Depends on the woman,” Felicity eased his hips forward, Luke sliding his shaft back into her. Her eyes closed in pleasure, “For some it’s the worst pain imaginable… For others- Oh Gods, yes!”
Luke grinned, gently swirling his hips to churn his cock inside of her, “I assume you’re in the other category.”

“Oh, yes, Luke, just like that,” Felicity panted as he didn’t withdraw. He allowed her to adjust to the feeling of his cock inside of her. Her arms and legs were clutching him tightly, her face buried in his neck as she moaned in pleasure at him filling her and stretching her out. “Oh Gods, you’re bigger than you look.”

“Is it too much?”

“No, you’re big but not to a point where it’s unmanageable. I’m just going to have to reposition myself a little,” Felicity wriggled until settling into a better position. “There we go. That’s right.”

“It is, isn’t it?” Luke grinned, kissing her shoulders. “You feel so good around me. So hot and tight and wet. It’s like you were molded to fit around my cock.”

“Well, technically,” Felicity moaned as she gently rolled her hips. “Your cock was molded to fit my cunt. I am older than you, after all. I came first.”

“And you always will,” Luke made his first thrust out and then back in her. “Oh, I could get used to doing this.”

“I have no objections to that,” Felicity groaned as he steadily thrusted in and out of her. “Oh, yes, Luke. Faster. Push that big cock in me. Don’t stop, Sweetheart. Don’t you dare stop this time!”

And so he made love to her, his cock thrusting in and out of her heat at a steady pace. The wet slapping of their flesh filled the room, accented by moans and cries of pleasure, and Felicity’s increasingly profane utterings.

Luke held her body down, his cock pounding her into the mattress. Felicity clutched at him; scratching and biting his shoulders and back. Mouths burned kisses across tender flesh, hands stroked and grasped sensitive spots. Felicity’s juices seeped out of her cunt, staining the sheet below while Luke’s pre-cum dripped into her tender passage.

The room smelt musky and hot, filled with the undeniable scent of sex. Their bodies and mouths tasted a mixture of sweet, and salt, and the metallic taste of blood (during a particularly rough kiss, Felicity ended up biting Luke’s lip a little too hard.) Their tongues danced with each other, and ran the length of each other’s skin.

Hands pulled at hair, and took turns sliding down to the blazing juncture where Luke’s cock drove in and out of Felicity’s cunt, to tease her begging clit. During one of Luke’s ventures down, Felicity got the idea to join him down there and tease his heavy balls as they slapped against her. She could feel them tightening, ready to explode.

“You’re getting close,” Felicity whimpered, not wanting the glorious feeling of his cock driving in and out of her to end.

“Oh, yes, Luke. Faster. Push that big cock in me. Don’t stop, Sweetheart. Don’t you dare stop this time!”

And then, a miracle.
Felicity’s breath started hitching, and Luke felt the tremors in her legs.

“You’re about to come, aren’t you?” Luke whispered in her ear, driving into her like no tomorrow.

“Yes,” Felicity panted, thrusting up against him. “Oh, I don’t want this to stop. You feel so good inside of me. Like it’s right. Like this is the most right thing in my life here with you. Oh Gods, oh LUKE!”

Felicity climaxed violently around him, screaming his name. He tapped into her mental shields, which she lowered to him, and felt the mental euphoria she experienced spasming around his hard cock, which was still thrusting into her. Luke wished he could physically feel the pleasure she was experiencing, but was satisfied by the knowledge that he was the one giving it to her… and he was giving it good.

He stopped his thrusting as Felicity came off the end of her orgasm. She panted beneath him, his hard cock still wedged inside of her.

Felicity looked him in the eyes and with a lazy smile, ran her fingers through his hair and said, “Thank you.”

He smiled, bent down, and kissed her. He gently pumped into her quivering passage a few times, savouring the feeling of being inside her the first time. Luke enjoyed watching her face as she gave into the pleasure he made tingle between her legs.


And then he emptied inside of her. It was like electricity crackling through his body as his climax exploded in him. He shot into her a few times, her sensitive quim gripping him tightly, milking him for all he had.

Even more arousing was the fact that he was actually climaxing inside of a woman, something he had not done for a very long time. Condoms had been his go-to for years, but knowing Felicity was on the pill and they were both clean, Luke didn’t want any barrier between them. In that moment, he knew this would be the last cunt he ever entered, the last woman whose legs would wrap around his hips, the last partner he ever climaxed inside of. While he wasn’t worried about pregnancy, a small part of him was smug about how he was shooting into her, marking her, and trying to stake a claim on her womb. Not to mention there was the extremely sensual fact that as he pulled his deflated cock out of her wet cunt, his essence dripped out of her onto the sheets below.

“I hope you didn’t have plans for tomorrow,” Luke whispered huskily, hands caressing patterns into her skin as he laid down on the bed next to her. “Because you are not leaving this bed anytime soon.”

“Agreed,” Felicity grinned. Suddenly, Felicity got out of the bed, “I’ll be right back.”

Luke frowned, sitting up, “Where are you going?”

“To the fresher,” She answered. “Luke, we’ve already established that I don’t want to get a UTI. Plus as sexy as it is to have you dripping down my leg, when this stuff dries it starts to get uncomfortable, and I would like to get a few of these in before we call it a night. I’m just going to go clean up a little.”

“And you’re not going to dress?” Luke watched her walk naked across the room.

“Is there a point to me getting dressed?” Felicity smirked, pausing at the door.
“Well, is this when I get to bend you over the sink in the fresher?”

“Maybe after round two… or three.”

“I suggest you get moving, or round two is going to be against that door.”

“I’ll be right back.”

No more than ten minutes later, Felicity was crawling back into the bed and into Luke’s awaiting embrace. Felicity couldn’t wipe the grin off her face as she lay nude, staring up at the ceiling, tangled in the sheets with Luke. They were sweaty and breathless, basking in the aftermath euphoria of their lovemaking.

“So, you were absolutely right,” Luke said between pants, still in something of a daze. “Letting you – how did you put it – have your wicked way with me is something I definitely don’t regret. How was it for you? Your emotions were pretty… well, let’s just say I was getting a lot of positive feedback.”

“That was… Oh, my God, that was amazing,” Felicity struggled to focus on forming words. She’d much rather use her brainpower to memorize the images of their bodies pressed together, and the feeling of his gentle, yet commanding touch.


Felicity chuckled, rolling over onto her side to face him. Slowly she ran her fingers over his chest, tracing lazy patterns onto his skin.

“Well,” Felicity tried to sound coy. “It wasn’t the best I’ve ever had, but we need more time to learn each other.”

“I am definitely up for that,” Luke nibbled at her earlobe.

“Oh, Luke,” Felicity moaned as his tongue and teeth played with the sensitive spot under her earlobe. She whimpered when he eventually pulled away. “All that said, it was by far the best first time I’ve ever had with a new partner. The way you can just sense-”

Felicity stopped short. Luke knew she had figured out his secret.

“You know,” Felicity propped her head onto her hand, her elbow resting on the mattress. “I don’t think you’re allowed to use the Force for that.”

Luke grinned at her, reaching out to run a hand through her soft brown hair, “I’m the Jedi Grandmaster.”

Catching her lips in a heated kiss, Luke shifted his body so that he was hovering over top of her. Slowly, he pulled out of their kiss and began trailing his lips down her body, nipping, kissing, and licking.

“And if I say I am allowed to use the Force to know to do this.”

Felicity gasped as his tongue thrust into her. She buried her hand in his blonde hair as his mouth worked magic between her thighs. Her hips bucked and she threw her head back against the mattress, moaning wildly at the pleasure he gave her.

Luke broke from her and Felicity let out a pathetic whimper. She gripped his hair tightly by the roots,
and tried to pull his mouth back onto her, but he just smiled up at Felicity.

“Then I’m allowed to use the Force for that.” A thought occurred to Luke and he paused. Luke looked so innocent with his sparkling blue eyes, and he could sense the look was driving Felicity wild, “Unless… you don’t want me to do that?”

Felicity grinned down at Luke, staring into his loving eyes, “Luke, if you don’t do that to me again right now, I’m leaving you.”

Luke smirked, pulling himself up to kiss her, “I have a better idea. Something else we can do, regarding a small fact you may have forgotten.”

“Oh?” Felicity arched an eyebrow, mischief dancing in her eyes. “We’ve done quite a bit. Hands… Mouths… Something else.”

Luke grunted as she quickly lifted her hips and rolled against him.

“What could I have forgotten?” Felicity smirked, watching in amusement as he struggled to recover from the sudden bit of pleasure.

Luke pulled her face to his, kissing her fervently. Felicity was quick to return the gesture. As their kisses became heated, Luke pressed Felicity against the bed and his mechanical hand drifted lower.

Kissing his way across her jaw, Luke leaned in close and whispered, “I’m ambidextrous.”

She yelped again as not one, but two mechanical fingers slid into her, his oral performance having made her more than ready to receive them. He revelled in the small gasps he was causing her to emit as her arm wrapped around his shoulders pressing his body close to her.

“And you said you didn’t like my hand,” Luke chuckled. The heel of his palm pressing down hard on her clit as his fingers worked her deftly.

“Never mind, you win, that hand is amazing,” Felicity’s words came out a mile a minute. She writhed, her hips arching off the mattress, “Just don’t stop what you’re doing to me.”

Luke didn’t stop.
Part Four: Courtship

Chapter Summary

Luke recalls the trials and triumphs during the years leading up to his decision to propose to Felicity.

Chapter Notes

So, there are more sex scenes planned in the future, mostly between Luke and Felicity, but I’m curious to hear feedback on whether or not you guys want to see more of them in the story (sex scenes, I mean. I know you guys love Rhiwalker.) It wouldn’t just be Luke and Felicity, but (as you probably have guessed) Luke and Aletha, Lando and Alyla, and then a few more ones involving people I can’t reveal at the moment because of spoilers. Considering how this is tagged on AO3, I will say, no there’s not going to be any love scenes between Finn and Rey in this story (we’ll see how things develop in The Last Jedi for their relationship) but there may be at least a foreplay scene with Rey and Teng Malar, who yes, is a canon character, but no, you’re not allowed to look him up yet.

Please let me know what you think. I’ll also continue to inform you in the author’s notes if there is a dirtier version on AO3 for that chapter, which for this and all the Luke flashing back to Felicity chapters on, there will be.

Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

The Long Way Home

Chapter Twenty-Six

Part Four: Courtship

1 Year, 1 Day

When Luke woke in the morning, he was relieved to find that the previous night had not been a dream. Felicity Rhiaon was lying nude in his bed, peacefully sleeping next to him, her legs splayed apart obscenely as the remains of his cum leaked out of her cunt.

Luke smiled to himself at the sight. He wanted nothing more than to dive between her legs, and have her for breakfast. It would be so sexy to wake her up by eating her out, but it would have to wait for another time. First there would have to be a conversation where he gained her consent to such an action. It was like that day in the hospital: if he wasn’t going to kiss Felicity without her permission while she slept, he certainly wasn’t about to perform oral sex.
He admired the sight for a while; waking up to Felicity Rhiaon in his bed, snuggled up against him, her hair splayed across the pillows, her chest heaving up and down was steady breaths, and her bare skin pressed against his, sending warm feelings of love and intimacy through his body. The act of sleeping next to a person was so profoundly intimate; it was the state in which a person was most vulnerable, and one was placing absolute trust in their partner to protect them.

Luke would protect her: from anything and everyone, from this day forward until the day he died. He would spend every morning for the rest of his life with Felicity having her to hold, and love, and kiss, and laugh, talk about the painful past, talk about the terrifying future. … And to take care of his hard on that had risen with the sun.

He couldn’t wait any longer; he needed Felicity awake.

Luke leaned over her, and with a hand stroking her thigh, whispered lovingly, “Felicity. It’s time to wake up, Sweetheart.”

Felicity groaned negatively and shifted slightly. Her neck arched as she turned her face away, trying to capture a little more sleep than her lover would allow. Luke couldn’t help but grin when he saw the series of dark marks on her neck. Hickeys were scattered about her pale skin, mostly concentrated on her neck – he had kissed that quite a bit last night, now that he thought about it – but there were also a few marks on her breasts and thighs.

“Felicity,” Luke murmured into her skin as he tenderly kissed the marks on her neck. He couldn’t help but touch her, his hands stroking up her sides. “Felicity, please wake up.”


Felicity cried out as a knuckle bared down on her clit. Now that she was awake, Luke felt at ease to start touching her again.

“Oh, I have to wake up next to you more often,” Felicity moaned. “Kiss me, Master Skywalker.”

He needed no further instruction. Shifting himself to hover over her, Luke pressed his lips to hers hungrily, his tongue slipping into her mouth, and his knuckle bared down on her clit. It was one from his natural hand, as a mechanical knuckle would have seriously bruised Felicity at that pressure, putting her out of commission for a while. And after a night like last night, he wasn’t going to take a break from making love to her for a very long time.

“Easy, easy,” Felicity moved his hand away from her clit and rested it on her hip. “Give me a second to actually wake up before we get to the main event.”

“Sorry,” Luke chuckled. “I was just so eager. How can I not be when I have a naked Felicity Rhiaon in my bed?”

“You say that as if it’s an accomplishment. Let’s not forget that I am the vixen who miraculously got the legendary Luke Skywalker into her bed. I should get a medal for that, or at least a discount at restaurants.”

Luke frowned, “I’m not a legend.”

“You are after last night,” Felicity pushed the topic away. She knew how self-conscious Luke could get about his hero reputation. “You know, after Reine and Obik’s wedding, I had a hypothesis, and I had tested it a few times since, but after last night I can safely say that you are an absolute God with your mouth.”
“Well, if you need to test that theory any further, I’m more than happy to oblige,” Luke lined kisses down the length of her neck, then gave a long flat lick back up to her jaw. “And if I’m a God, then you must be my Goddess. You’re so… beautiful.”

Felicity smiled as Luke worked his way across her jaw, “Only because I’m so in love.”

Luke laughed and pulled back, “No, no, it’s because I’m so in love with-”

“Wait,” Felicity put a finger on his lips.

“What is it?”

“Nothing,” She had an odd expression. “I just feel like if we continue this train of dialogue, we’re going to end up saying something completely sappy that, while I may not particularly mind the words, a lot of other people would find it something to mock.”

Luke frowned, “Felicity… who is going to even know we said this?”

“I just feel like we shouldn’t risk it.”

Luke sighed, “Fine. Can we just get back to kissing?”

Felicity chuckled, “Wow… four times last night and you’re still eager for more? I severely underestimated you. I don’t know if I’ll be able to keep up with that on a regular basis.”

“Actually, I’m quite proud I managed four times in one night. That’s not an everyday thing.”

“I’m glad I can inspire you.” Felicity moaned as his erection pressed against her thigh, “And it looks like you’re already inspired this morning too.”

“Ready for round five?”

“I think I’m going to need a little inspiration first. It’s a pity you didn’t wake me up a different way this morning,” Felicity’s thumb ran over Luke’s lips.

“Thought about it,” Luke confessed, “but wanted to run the idea by you first. How horrifying would it be for you to wake up to my tongue in your quim and you not wanting it?”

“Yes, thank you for not raping me. I do appreciate it.”

“Anytime.”

The pair of them laughed. The heat of the mood was simmering, but neither seemed too inclined to progress things at the moment. They enjoyed just lying together, sharing lazy touches, kissing, and loving each other.


“And I made love to Luke Skywalker, scars and all,” Felicity stroked her hands across his broad chest. “Luke Skywalker kissed me, and touched me, undressed me in his living room, carried me to his bedroom, peeled off my underwear, and threw it-”

Felicity looked over the edge of the bed as if she was going to say it as she looked upon the location of her undergarments. But her words died when she saw they weren’t there.

“Luke?” Felicity frowned, her voice completely serious as she looked around the room. “Where did
my underwear go? And my bra… and your underwear?”

Luke scowled and looked about in confusion. His eyes fell on the hamper in the corner, and he gave a heavy sigh, “Threepio.”

“Excuse me?”

“It was Threepio. Look, the sheets and blankets are neatly folded, sitting on top of my hamper. He must have come in at some point this morning and… cleaned up our mess.”

Felicity stared at Luke, “Threepio came in the room?”

“Oh huh.”

“While we were sleeping?”

“Yep.”

“And we… slept naked.”

“I see where this is going, Felicity, and there’s no need to freak out,” Luke said calmly.

“No need to freak out?” Felicity’s tone was the opposite of calm. “LUKE! C-3PO saw me naked!”

“Felicity, Threepio saw Leia and I come out of our mother. If he doesn’t talk about that on a regular basis, he’s not going to talk about this.”

“Luke!”

“Felicity,” Luke chided. “C-3PO is an etiquette droid. He may be a little oblivious when it comes to interrupting romantic encounters, but it is literally against his programming to discuss someone’s sex life with an outside party.”

Felicity sighed, “Are you sure? The last thing I need is Han Solo winking at me and telling you ‘Atta boy.’”

“You say that as if I’m not going to tell Han everything already.”

“No fair,” Felicity playfully smacked his chest. “I don’t get to discuss this with anyone. Diego tells me to stop anytime I bring up my sex life, and Leia’s your sister. I’m so not going to look her in the eye and tell her ‘Guess what? I screwed your twin brother last night. Four times! High five!’”

“Try Zena,” Luke suggested. “She’s surprisingly open about that kind of conversation. And I’m sure Gavyn would be happy to provide a high five. Though he might only give you it if you manage to bed me five times.”

“Well, we’ll have to get to work on that, won’t we?” Felicity smirked. Casually, she glanced back at Luke’s hamper. “Luke… didn’t we fall asleep under the sheets last night?”

“After round three, yes. But we ended up pushing them on the floor when you misbehaved.”

“Misbehaved?” Felicity arched a brow. She slowly ran a hand down her body and caressed her breast, her middle finger ringing around her hardening nipple, “How did I misbehave?”

Luke grinned, recalling the events of the previous night, “You pulled a Romian.”
“A Rornian?”

“You lied next to me, my body pressed against yours, waited until I was seconds from sleep, and then started touching yourself.”

“You mean like this?” Felicity slipped a hand between her legs and started stroking herself in front of Luke.

“Yes,” Luke breathed, something dark flashing in him. “While I was right next to you, ready to give you pleasure, you touched yourself. Your hands teased your nipples…”

Luke knocked Felicity’s playful hand from her breast, his mechanical hand replacing it with carefully calculated – rough touches.

“And your other teasing your clit…”

Luke pushed away the fingers on her sex and replaced it with the knuckle action he had tried earlier. Felicity was moaning wildly as he pleasured her.

“While I was next to you,” Luke whispered in her ear. “Do you know how hard it was for me to let you do that on Rornian, and not do anything about it? Do you know how much I wanted to follow you into the fresher and bend you over the sink, Reine be damned? Do you know how hard you made me that night? How frantically I jerked myself stimulated by the images and underwear you had given me? Do you know how hard I climaxed while you were in the fresher?”

Felicity’s hips bucked, jerking her clit against his hand.

“I wasn’t going to let it slide this time,” Luke’s voice was husky.

“So what did you do?” Felicity begged him to further the pleasure. To take her the same way he had last night.

But that wasn’t his plan this time. At least… not exactly.

“So, I ripped off the sheets and threw them to the floor to watch you touch yourself,” Luke’s fingers dipped down to her entrance to spread her forming wetness across her aroused sex. “Then I shoved you onto your side.”

Luke did just that.

“Your back was pressed against my chest,” Luke pressed firmly against her. His hands readjusting the angle of their play as kissed down the scar on her spine. “Then I made you hold up your leg…”

Luke hooked Felicity’s own hand around the leg on top, and guided her to raise it. He had her bend at the knee and readjust the grip, opening her wet cunt wider to him for a deeper angle. When Felicity was holding her leg up herself, Luke swirled his fore and middle fingers in her juices, getting them well lubricated. His hard cock was against the thigh of the leg lying on the bed, and he gently bucked his hips against her.

“And then I fucked you,” Luke’s words were sharp in her ear as he slammed his fingers into her.

The previous night, Felicity had told him that she loved when kindly, soft-spoken Luke Skywalker suddenly said the most vulgar things about how she made him feel and what he would do to her. It felt like he was losing control to her, but in reality, it was the opposite.
That was the signal that Luke was taking control.

“I fucked you so hard,” Luke hissed in Felicity ear as she moaned wildly, his fingers crudely slamming in and out of her. “I fucked that sopping cunt until you cried. Do you remember that? How you buried your face into the pillow, tears staining it as you begged me never to stop?”

“Oh Gods, Luke!” Felicity squeezed her eyes shut as he curled his fingers and rubbed the coarse walls of her G-spot.

“That was after the first orgasm, right? You were crying because your cunt was so tender from that orgasm, but I kept pumping into you, rubbing your clit and nipples until you came undone, screaming my name again. Was it the first orgasm that made you sensitive? Or had you not calmed down from the previous times? How many times did I make you cum last night? Did you count?”

“Seven,” Felicity gasped as he withdrew one finger and the remaining started stroking her cervix. It wasn’t a move made for every woman but it was literally making Felicity’s toes curl as her legs tensed at the pleasure. “You made me cum seven times last night.”

“Seven?” Luke chuckled, swirling his finger around her walls. “That sounds like a lot. Are you sure?”

“Positive.”

“Count them for me.”

Felicity gasped as he started pumping his finger in her again. Desperately, she reached back, her hand rubbing cluelessly against him as she searched for his cock. Luke rocked his hips to remind her his shaft was still resting on her thigh. Immediately she reached down and grabbed it.

After the first pump, she paused and then let go. Luke frowned and was about to direct her hand back when he felt her fingers join him. Her fingers swirled around the exterior of her sex, and she shuddered as their fingers met, her fingers playing around as his pumped in and out of her sex.

Luke realized that she was trying to gather up her own natural lubrication to smear against his cock and pump him easier. Eagerly, Luke removed his hand and let Felicity’s fingers enter her passage in search of her slippery effusions. He reached down to his hard cock and spread Felicity’s juices that clung to his fingers across it. Watching her pleasure herself as he rubbed his shaft, Luke was tempted to stay that way, and get himself off to the live performance of Felicity pumping her fingers in and out of that tender sex he had claimed over and over again the previous night. But that very action was what had started this whole thing.

“No,” Luke pulled her hand out of her cunt and wrapped it around his cock. His hand over hers, he guided her to pump him, spreading her wetness the length, “No, that’s what got you in trouble in the first place. That’s why I’m punishing you.”

“If this is what you call punishment,” Felicity panted as he bent down and sucked sharply on her nipple, “bring it on.”

“That’s not your punishment.”

“Oh? What is?”

“This cock,” Luke rubbed it against her one agonisingly slow time. He whispered in to her ear, “Is not going in your cunt this time.”

“Beg all you want, but the answer is no. That’s your punishment for not inviting me to join you on Rornian. Tease me all you want, Miss Rhiaon, but actions have consequences.”

Felicity’s hand paused and her face scrunched together as the wheels turned in her head.

“Huh… Luke, that’s… huh.”


“Luke, what exactly do you like in the bedroom, because that’s getting kinky. It almost sounds like… it’s very dominant.”

“Is it?” Luke softly kissed her neck, a hand gently kneading her breast. “Is that a problem?”

“No, I’m fine with that, but maybe save that sort of thing for another time. Right now, we’re just learning what to do with each other,” Felicity stroked one of his bulky arms.

“I see.”

“I would like an answer, though.”

“An answer to what?”

“Luke, are you in to domination?” Felicity asked plainly.

He chuckled and tenderly kissed her lips, “Ask me again sometime. Right now, we’re just learning what to do with each other.”

Felicity pressed her body back against him as his hand trailed back down.

“Now,” Luke’s voice dropped darkly. He thrust his fingers back into her passage, “I told you to count. One?”

Felicity gasped as his fingers withdrew and violently slammed into her, “Your mouth! After taking off my panties, you laid on the bed and had me kneel over your mouth. Your tongue licked me and ate me and fucked me as I gripped the headboard and rode your face to orgasm.”

“Two?” Luke slammed his fingers into her again.

“Making love. You made love to me so passionately and tenderly, and I came to you pumping me and rubbing my clit.”

“What position did I do that in?”

“On my back. I lay on your bed, naked, dripping, my legs spread for you, Master Skywalker.”

Luke pulled her hand off his cock. He was too close.

“Three?” Luke tried not to sound on edge as his slammed him fingers in and out of Felicity again.

“We were getting ready for round two,” Felicity laid her head back on his shoulder. “You fingered me with your mechanical hand, hovering over me, watching my face as my eyes rolled back into my head and I came so hard we worried all that liquid might ruin your mechanics. You had to actually leave the room for a moment to get your hand kit from your office and clean your hand and check
“Four?” The pattern of slamming into her with every number continued.

“You came back into the room and I was on my hands and knees, offering myself to you like a nexu in heat. You mounted me and fucked me until I screamed your name. You bit and scratched my back, kisses trailing along my scar. Then you gripped my hips and slammed me back into you as your hips slammed forward into me.”

“And when you came?” Luke prompted.

Felicity moaned, “You tried to keep going but I begged you to stop because I couldn’t take it anymore.”

“Five?”

“I went into the fresher for a while, wearing one of your tunics so the droids didn’t see me naked. I needed to clean up and get away from temptation for a minute.”

“And when you returned to the room?”

“You were waiting for me at the door,” Felicity gasped as his fingers moved ever faster inside of her. “You shut the door, slammed me against it, and thrust into me like there was no tomorrow.”

“And you wrapped your legs around my hips,” Luke grunted as his cock yearned for attention. One touch and it’d all be over. “I drove so deep into you, your walls clinging against me. I could feel my other deposits in you, and tasted them when I ate you out. You remember that, right? How my tongue tasted your cunt against the door before my cock claimed you?”


“Six?” Luke’s hand slammed into her. Needing to up the pleasure, he slid another finger into Felicity, stretching her out three fingers wide.

“On my side, as you said before,” Felicity rocked her hands back against him. “You fucked me in this position until I came. It didn’t take long.”

“No, that was a quick one,” Luke chuckled. He gently pressed her face into the pillow, “In fact it was so quick that it led to seven.”

“You fucking me as I cried into my pillow,” Felicity’s voice was muffled in the pillow as she got closer and closer, “Just one more, Felicity, you said. Just one more, Sweetheart. You whispered that as you thrust in and out, in and out, until…. OH FUCK, LUKE!”

He shoved his fingers in hard and held them there as her cunt climaxed violently against them. His lips were on hers the whole time as she whimpered beneath him. When she finished, he withdrew his hands and held her in his arms tenderly, calming her down from her high.

“Please tell me we’re not leaving this bed today,” Luke panted heavily, the dark dominance fading away having been satisfied by Felicity’s satisfaction.

Felicity let go of her leg, nuzzled his neck, and snuggled up in his arms, “I will have to make one detour down to my apartment in about an hour to take my pill, or else we’re going to have to start using that box of condoms in your bedside table.”
“Well, I did pay good money for them.”

“Alright, we have a plan for this weekend,” Felicity had that eager, confident look in her eyes that always came with a challenge. “Today is Saturday morning, and by Sunday night, we’re going to have fucked our way through an entire box of condoms.”

“Thank the Force I did away with the no attachment rule.” Luke started to turn Felicity over onto her back, “But first, I need to finish this round.”

“Wait,” Felicity stopped his hands. “No, not right now. I’m still really tender and you’re probably only going to last one pump. If you’re going in me, I don’t want you out for a while.”

Luke frowned, “What do you want me to do then? Wait for it to go down?”

“No, you can finish yourself off.”

“I would like to literally request a hand with that then.”

“I have a better idea.” Felicity spread her legs, “How about you rub yourself between my thighs?”

The idea thrilled Luke. He immediately lifted her leg, wedged his cock between her thighs, and closed her legs to a tight but comfortable squeeze. Luke thrust into her frantically, delighting in the new sensation of his cock gliding between her smooth thighs.


“I thought we established that last night. It was laziness.”

It didn’t take long before Luke came between her thighs. After he did, the two decided to take a little break. They casually chatted for about fifteen minutes as they cleaned each other off with the tissues from Luke’s bedside table. Several minutes were then devoted to examining each other in the light of day, taking time to inspect each other the way the previous night’s frantic lovemaking hadn’t allowed. The examination eventually led to Luke giving Felicity a back rub, which somehow devolved into him once more rubbing and sucking on her breasts.

“You really love doing this, don’t you?” Felicity teased, her hand buried in his hair as he was latched onto her nipple.

“I’ve always been into breasts,” Luke replied when he broke for air. “I don’t care about size, just as long as they’re perky, sensitive, and real.”

“Oh, so when I’m old and my boobs aren’t perky anymore, it’s game over?”

“Absolutely,” Luke teased. “Having a great set of breasts is a very important factor in my choice of sexual partner. God, these breasts are so perfect. So round, so perky, oh God, I could suck these forever.”

“I’ve never gotten the obsession with breasts. My mind just always goes to it being some subconscious thing about feeding from your mother as a baby.”

“In my defense, I don’t think I was nursed as a babe.”

“Maybe that’s why you like them so much,” Felicity joked. “You have a subconscious yearning to suckle as you never got to as a child.”

“Felicity, I thought we agreed not to talk about my parents during sex.”
“Technically we only agreed on your father.” Felicity grabbed his head, and pulled him to her lips. She kissed him deeply, and then asked, “Are you getting hard again?”

“A little,” Luke confessed. “I’m still a little spent from having climaxed so many times last night, but I should be up and running soon.”

“Then let me help you with that,” Felicity smirked.

“Felicity?” Luke grinned as she slid down his body, “What exactly are you doing?”

Her head was between his legs, and her hands rubbed his flexing thighs, “Consider this my apology for that first night on Rornian.”

Luke’s head hit the pillow as she took as much of his cock into her mouth as possible.

Pleasure; it was ultimate pleasure as Felicity’s head bounced up and down his straining cock, guided by his hand in her hair that fine Saturday morning. Her mouth so tight and hot then that unique bit of suction blowjobs provided. If Felicity thought he was a God with his mouth, she was certainly his Goddess Consort with hers. She knew how to lick him, touch him, and suck him in just the right ways.

He held her hair out of her face so he could watch his thick cock disappear between those delectable lips. Luke knew that the ultimate goal was to get hard enough to dive back into her quim, but as she sucked him hard, sloppy saliva getting everywhere, he wanted nothing more than to climax down her throat like he did that night in his office.

Oh God, next time they were on Rornian, he absolutely was going to fuck her on his desk… and over Reine’s sink.

“Felicity,” Luke’s voice was reverent. He stroked her cheek tenderly, and she pulled off his cock, switching to licking the length and fondling his balls.

God, she was exquisite. At 32, Felicity had long passed any thoughts of being self-conscious during sex. Yes, there were times, usually when trying something new or that she wasn’t 100% into that Felicity could get shy, but otherwise Felicity loved to flaunt her body and the pleasure she was given. Perhaps if he had been disparaging about her breast size, she might have been a little more reserved as she had been with her scar, but once Felicity realized that there wasn’t an inch of her body Luke didn’t adore, she was all for the ego trip he would give her during sex.

It was the perfect morning for Luke, this beautiful woman having him for breakfast. He never wanted the moment to end.


The pair froze.

“You have got to be kidding me,” Luke seethed as Felicity pulled her mouth off him.

“Where’s that tunic I wore last night?” Felicity looked around wildly as the metallic clang of footsteps came towards the door.

“Master Luke?” Threepio called again. “Forgive me, sir, but it is almost noon and you are still abed.”

Suddenly, they heard a series of angry beeps.
“Beep boop beep!”

“Yes, Artoo, I know Miss Felicity is in there.”

“Bop boop beep.”

“What else would they be doing but sleeping? They coupled last night. Why would they couple again this morning?”

“Beep bop bee bop.”

“Well, I’m glad you’re proud of him, but I am unclear as to what you are proud of. I must admit, I am happy that Master Luke has chosen Miss Felicity for his reproductive partner. Their genetics would create wonderful offspring.”

Luke’s head was in his hands. He could barely look at Felicity out of embarrassment.

Felicity, to her credit, looked rather unphased by Threepio’s comment.

“Hey, we’ve already agreed we’d be up to making some kids together,” Felicity shrugged. “And with our combined look, our kids would be gorgeous.”


“Master Luke, is that you?”

“Damn it,” Luke muttered. He collected himself, and called to the droids in as light a tone as possible, “Yes, Threepio. We’re awake. Please don’t come in at the moment.”

The footsteps halted, “Oh, forgive me, Sir. I didn’t think you were busy at the moment.”

Luke glanced at Felicity waiting between his legs to resume things, “Uh… little busy. I think we’re going to have a late morning.”

“Of course, sir. I was just going to inform you that I have put Miss Felicity’s clothing from last night in the laundry. Miss Felicity, might I suggest you invest in a cleaning droid for your personal use? You seemed to have made quite a mess of your laundry last night, all scattered about. I know it’s not my place to pry, but your habits seem to be rubbing off on Master Luke. His clothing was quite scattered last night as well.”

Felicity chuckled, “I’ll look into it, Threepio.”

Luke frowned at Felicity; there was a mischievous look in her eye that worried him.

“Uh, Threepio?” Luke cautiously watched as Felicity started to stroke his thighs. “Were you in my room this morning?”

“Of course,” Threepio replied. “I folded your sheets for you and set them on the hamper. Was the temperature too warm in your room for them?”


“I don’t know,” Felicity whispered. “I thought things got pretty hot last night.”

Suddenly her mouth was back on his cock.
“What are you doing?” Luke tried to stay quiet as he pushed Felicity’s head off him.


“Why?”

“I’m bored and horny. I thought doing this while you talk to Threepio would be entertaining to watch.”

“It’s not happening!”

“So you’re saying you don’t want my mouth on your cock?” Felicity raised a coy eyebrow. “Bobbing up and down, sucking, licking, making you feel so good that your empty yourself down my throat as I swallow every last drop?”

There was a beat.


“Yes, sir,” Felicity smirked.

It was a miracle he didn’t cum right then.


“Uh… yeah, fine,” Luke’s voice was strained. Was he actually doing this? Carrying on a conversation with the droids while a beautiful woman sucked his shaft. Good Lord, what kind of witchcraft did this woman use on him. He tried to carry on the conversation as normal, but would mutter every so often words the droids couldn’t hear. “The room temperature was – uh – fine. Felicity was just – ah – a little self-conscious about you being in the room while she was – yeah, like that – not clothed. God, faster Felicity.”

“Oh, fear not, Miss Felicity,” Threepio said, “I am a droid of etiquette. It’s against my programming to discuss your sexual relationship with Master Luke to an outside party.”


Luke smirked; now it was time to turn the tables.

“Master Luke, will Miss Felicity be joining you at lunch today?” Threepio asked.

“I should think so.” Luke looked at Felicity, “You want to have lunch with me?”

“I’d be honored,” Felicity chuckled. She added in a low voice, “Besides, I’m already having my appetizer.”

“Then I guess it’s time for me to have mine,” Luke whispered.

He yanked up Felicity so her sex was inches from his mouth. Instantly, he spun her around so her mouth was back at his cock and his mouth was at her wet quim. Luke pushed her mouth back on his cock, muffling her surprised gasp. Before she could even grasp what had just happened, he thrust his tongue into her cunt and started eating her out as quietly as possible.

“Miss Felicity, I put all of your garments in the laundry,” Threepio said. “Would you like me to go down to your apartment and gather you some clothing for today?”
Luke groaned; would the droids just go away already? He and Felicity had much better things to do.

Felicity pulled off Luke sloppily and rolled her hips against Luke as he defended his title as God of Oral Sex.

“Sure, Threepio,” Felicity answered as politely as she could in the situation. “My apartment code is 2736326.”

“Of course, Miss Felicity. I… Miss Felicity, 2736326 translates to Brendan on a keypad. I highly recommend changing that as relative names are not a secure passcode.”

“I’ll think about it, Threepio,” Felicity started to shake as Luke curled his tongue inside of her and stroked her cervix. Her face pressed against his thigh as she fought not to cry out in pleasure, Luke sensing the struggle in the Force. She muttered, “By the Gods, Luke your tongue is so long.”

“I could suggest some alternate passcodes, Miss Felicity,” Threepio obliviously continued. “I do have the ability to generate easy to remember but random series of num-

“No, Artoo, I’m sure Master Luke didn’t forget.”

Beep boop beep beep beep beep.

“Interrupting? I didn’t interrupt anything.”

Bop bop beep bop.

“Master Luke would never do that while carrying out a conversation with me!”

Boop bop.

“Watch your language R2-D2!”

And with that the droids were finally gone.
“Wow, looks like R2-D2 is the ultimate wingman.” Felicity laughed at her joke, “Get it? Wingman? Because he sits in the wing of your ship, and-”

That’s when Felicity noticed the dark look in Luke’s eyes. She yelped as Luke suddenly flipped her on her back.

“You think that was funny?” Luke’s dark tone was simply erotic as his eyes burned. “You think teasing me while I’m having a conversation is entertaining?”

“And what if I do?” Felicity challenged, her eyes filled with lust as she placed her hands on his chest.

“You have let your mouth run a little too much, Miss Rhiaon,” Luke kissed his way down her neck. “I’m afraid I’m going to have to punish you again.”

“Punish away,” Felicity’s voice was husky. Suddenly she shoved him back, so he was the one lying down on the mattress, his head pointed right at the door. She straddled him, her slick sex hovering right over his hard cock, “But who said you got to be on top?”


“We tried a lot of positions last night, Luke,” Felicity positioned his cock at her entrance, “but we didn’t manage to get this one in.”

“Then by all means, get it in.”

She slammed down and Luke was back in the ultimate pleasure of her hot, tight, wet cunt. Felicity riding him was frantic and erotic, her head thrown back, her breasts bouncing freely as she bounded up and down on him. They moaned wildly, their hips jerking in harmony, Luke thrusting up into her and she slammed down onto him.

“You’re in so deep,” Felicity moaned as his hands of course went to tweak the nipples of her bouncing breasts.

“And you’re so wet,” Luke groaned. “If you weren’t on top, I’d slip right out. How are you this wet?”

“I get off on the thought of getting caught.”

“That explains a lot.”

A while later, there was the distant sound of the apartment door opening.

“Is that Threepio?” Felicity asked breathlessly. Her stamina was impressive as though she was starting to get tired, she continued to bounce up and down on Luke’s cock as energetically as ever.

“Probably. I could use the Force to find out,” Luke grabbed her arms and planted them on his chest. He pushed on her back so that she was bending down slightly, and he resumed playing with her breasts. Luke sat up for a moment to run a long lick between the valley of her breasts, “Or I can focus all my attentions on making sure my cock is stroking into you at just the right angle.”

“Focus on your cock, please,” Felicity pushed Luke back down, her thrusts picking up in pace.

Luke could sense she was getting close, and the sight of her was making him close too. Felicity may have been hunched over slightly, but it was just the right angle that a person could see everything that was happening. Luke and Felicity’s faces contorted in pleasure, Luke’s hands frantically rubbing
her gently bouncing breasts and stroking her erect nipples, and Luke’s cock disappearing in and out of Felicity’s shining wet passage.

The sight was utterly erotic, and there was nothing that could stop it.

“Come on, Kid, time to get out of bed. It’s almost noon!” Han called as the door flew open and he walked in with Leia.


“Luke!” Leia gasped, instantly turning her head away from the explicit sight of her brother having sex with her childhood best friend.

“Whoa!” Han just looked amused as Felicity tried to cover herself with a pillow and Luke lay on the bed frozen.

Leia’s face had drained of all blood, and she looked absolutely beside herself, “I’m just- I…”

Finally snapping out of it, Luke sat up, grabbing a pillow to shield himself, “Leia, we were just-”

“No!” Leia shook her head. “No, I don’t want to hear it! Just… no.”

“Leia, I’m sorry,” Felicity was curled around a pillow, her head bowed so her long hair was covering her face from view. He glanced at Luke and hit his leg, “Luke!”

“Sorry,” Luke muttered. Using the Force to summon the blankets on top of his hamper. They quickly moved so they were lying with their heads to the headboard, the blankets pulled up to their armpits, and reclining slightly so they were mildly sociable but not uncovering themselves. “Leia, I’m sorry to you too.”

“There’s nothing to be sorry about,” Leia was looking fixedly at the wall beside her. Ever the politician she politely said, “You’re grown adults in a committed relationship. You have absolutely nothing to be sorry about. But as your sister… I just don’t want to see that. Especially not when I have… Oh no.”

“What?” Luke asked, glaring at Han who was doing his best to suppress his laughter.

“Han, where’s Ben?” Leia looked to her husband. “He was following us, right?”

Han glanced behind them, but Ben wasn’t there, “I think he ducked into Luke’s office to get into those boxes of Anakin Skywalker stuff. BEN, ARE YOU IN LUKE’S OFFICE?”

“YEAH!” Ben’s voice called back.

“DO YOU SEE ANYTHING IN LUKE’S BEDROOM?”

“NO. WHAT WAS I SUPPOSED TO SEE?”

“NOTHING!” Han answered quickly. “ARE YOU TOUCHING YOUR UNCLE’S STUFF AGAIN?”

“…MAYBE.”

“PUT EVERYTHING BACK WHEN YOU’RE DONE! NO SOUVENIRS WITHOUT
LUKE’S PERMISSION! AND DON’T BREAK ANYTHING! ...UNLESS IT BELONGED TO VADER! FEEL FREE TO BREAK THAT STUFF!”

“Han!” Luke snapped.

“BEN, DON’T BREAK YOUR UNCLE’S THINGS!” Leia called, swatting Han’s arm. She sighed, “I’ll go check on him. Han, care to join?”

“No, I’m good here,” Han chuckled at the flustered couple on the bed. “This is quite entertaining.”

Luke had never given a dirtier look in his life. Felicity was surprisingly quiet in her embarrassed state. Leia was just happy to make a quick exit.

“So, you finally did it, Luke,” Han said slowly, grinning wide as he crossed his arms. He winked at Felicity, “He bedded the illusive Felicity Rhiaon. Atta boy.”

“I will kill you, Solo,” Felicity growled. “If you even think about telling anyone-”

“Funny, I never pictured you as being ashamed in this department,” Han chuckled. “And of course I’m going to tell others. Your involvement or not, I just walked in on Luke having sex. I can’t wait to tell the others at our Sabacc game.”

Luke glared at Han, “I swear to the Force, if Reine has a betting pool on this-”

“Relax, she doesn’t have a pool on when you and Felicity are going to have sex… at least I think she doesn’t.”


“I must say, congratulations, Fliss,” Han winked at her. “That was some impressive work. You’ve got to tell me your secret to having such a toned stomach.”


“I’m just teasing, Kid.”

“Good God, Solo,” Felicity shook her head. “The one time you’re not a Loud Mouth. You couldn’t have announced your presence entering the apartment?”

“Keep calling me Loud Mouth Solo all you want, Fliss,” Han said. “You’re the only one who calls me that. It’s not going to catch on.”

“What are you even doing here, Han?” Luke groaned. He couldn’t believe that his family had walked in on him having sex.

Han frowned, “Kid, it’s the day after the Battle of Yavin.”

“So?”

Han shot Luke a look.


“How could you forget? We do this every year!”

“Do what?” Felicity asked.
Every year on the day after the anniversary of the Battle of Yavin, Han, Leia, Chewie, the Droids, and myself go out for lunch,” Luke explained. “We do it every year because lunch after the medal ceremony was the first time the six of us sat down and shared a meal together.”

Han added, “It’s to remember that first time we sat together as the weird pseudo family we were, and later became on a legal scale… except Chewie. He’s not legally related to us.”

“That must be why Threepio asked if you were joining us for lunch,” Luke sighed, rubbing his face as Felicity rubbed his back. “I’m sorry about this, Han. I had… other things on my mind this morning.”

Han raised an eyebrow and looked directly at Felicity, “Kid, you had something on you this morning, but it certainly wasn’t on your mind. Come on, Fliss, no need to be bashful. Is the Kid any good?”

But Felicity wasn’t going to back down and let him make her feel uncomfortable.

“Oh, Luke’s fantastic in bed,” Felicity said bluntly. “He’s amazing at oral sex, plays my nipples just right, has a perfectly shaped and sized cock, has a short rest period between rounds, and gave me several amazing orgasms last night.”

As embarrassed as Luke was, part of him was glad to see Han suddenly so uncomfortable.

“Well, it’s good to hear a friend is being taken care of so well,” Han weakly offered. “So, Fliss, do you want to join us for lunch?”

“You mean spend the next two hours in awkward silence as I avoid making eye contact with Leia?” Felicity shrugged, “I guess.”

“Are you sure about inviting her, Han?” Luke asked. “I’d love it, but if you guys aren’t comfortable—”

“You act as if this is the first time I’ve seen you naked.”


“Long story,” Luke waved off. “No, I meant that this is usually more a family thing. I don’t want to make assumptions—”

“You’re not. She’s family,” Han said flatly. He grinned at Felicity, “Besides, if last night was anything like I just walked in on, I bet you have some Skywalker in you right now.”


Felicity rolled her eyes, “I’m going to ignore that last part and just say, Han, I’m flattered you see me as family.”

“Hey, after what happened on Takodana, you earned your spot.”

Luke frowned, “Takodana?”

“The whole Loud Mouth Solo origin story,” Felicity reminded.

“Right.”

“Well, I’m going to check on Leia and make sure she isn’t too traumatized,” Han announced. “We
were thinking about going to that Dex’s Diner place you won’t shut up about.”


“Alright, well, get some pants on, Kid,” Han teased. “I don’t think you want me to see a repeat show of what I just got. Though I would love to see again the looks on your faces when you got caught. Maybe I’ll start not announcing I’m about to walk into your bedroom.”

Felicity narrowed her eyes and warned, “Han Loud Mouth Solo, I swear to the Gods if you intentionally walk in on us having sex—”

“Yeah, I know, you’ll kill me,” Han finished flippantly.

“No.” Felicity flashed Han a very evil grin, “If you intentionally walk in on me having sex with Luke, when I see you… I’m not going to stop.”

Both Han and Luke’s faces went white as they stared at Felicity.

“Do I have a say in this matter?” Luke raised his hand.

“No,” Felicity said simply.

“Alright then.”

Han raised an eyebrow, “That… is not the kind of woman I thought you’d end up with, Kid.”

“Neither did I,” Luke wrapped an arm around Felicity’s shoulder, and pulled her in to kiss her forehead. “But I’m glad I did.”

Felicity leaned in to Luke’s ear and whispered, “May I remind you that we’re having a casual conversation with your brother-in-law, completely naked?”

Luke shrugged, “We have a sheet.”

Felicity glared at him.

Luke sighed, “Han, would you mind grabbing something for Felicity to cover herself in? Threepio put her clothing from last night in the washer.”

“Sure thing,” Han riffled through Luke’s closet and tossed Felicity a long tunic.

“Well, it’s been fun and awkward, but I’m going to go nip into the fresher until Threepio gets here with my clothes,” Felicity pulled on the tunic and climbed out of bed. The tunic was black, a little bulky on her, and fell to just above her knees. She leaned over and kissed Luke’s cheek. “You were amazing. Now, let’s hope I don’t run into Leia and Ben in the hallway.”


“Love you too,” Felicity said as she slipped past Han and out the door.

“So…” Han stared after Felicity, it now just being him and a naked Luke, covered only by a sheet, “That was eventful.”

“Could have been worse,” Luke shrugged. “It could have been Felicity and I walking in on you and Leia. Imagine that my best friend and my twin.”
“You realize that is exactly what happened here but just the other best friend and the other twin?”

“I meant worse for me. At least I got to make love to a beautiful woman for a little while first.”

“Yeah, about that. I have to ask Luke… Not that I was intentionally looking, or focusing on that area, but… Are you guys using protection? Because that didn’t look like it.”

“We’re covered, Han, don’t worry.”

Han gave a sigh of relief, “Good.”

Luke raised a brow.

“Look, I love Ben. He’s the best thing that I’ve ever done in my life. Having an amazing kid like that is far more than a lowly smuggler like me has ever deserved, and I wouldn’t give him up for anything,” Han was beaming with pride as he spoke of his son. Then his face fell, “But I’m serious about forgoing protection, Luke. Not even once.”

“Did someone call for clothing and a side of birth control?” Luke asked, carrying the aforementioned items into the fresher with him. He was fully clothed in a casual, yet every sexy black pants and boots, an ash gray tunic, and a grey lightsaber belt – Luke had five custom made lightsaber belts to go with various outfits, proving he was in fact, the son of Padmé Amidala. His cybernetic hand had its signature black glove on, and his hair already was neatly styled. “Threepio also brought your makeup bag.”

Felicity turned to face him, quickly wiping her hands on a towel. She was pretending she had been in the fresher to wash her hands, and not that she had been cowering in it for twenty minutes, hiding from Leia.

“Thank you so much,” Felicity said as Luke set the pile down on the sink top. She unzipped her makeup bag, “Hopefuly I can cover up some of these marks you left on me. Someone was a little overzealous with me.”


“No, I wasn’t,” Felicity gave him that one corner smirk he loved so much.

He watched her as Felicity filled a cup of water and dispensed her daily birth control. God, she just looked so sexy, and it thrilled Luke to know he had just made love to Felicity last night, making her scream his name in pleasure, over and over, in position after position. Rough sex, tender sex, Luke had made this gorgeous woman his last night, and he wasn’t going to ever let her go. Felicity Rhiaon was his and he looked forward to reasserting his claim over and over again.

Maybe it was that smirk Luke couldn’t resist, maybe it was the act of preparing to take birth control so she could fuck him without consequence, or maybe it was that their early morning coupling had been interrupted, but Luke was hard again.

“So,” Luke casually walked behind Felicity and wrapped his arms around her waist. “That was… interesting?”

“Luke,” Felicity took a swig of water and knocked back her birth control pill, “your brother-in-law, and twin sister, who was my childhood best friend, just saw an unobstructed view of me passionately fucking you… Interesting is not the appropriate word for what just happened.
Pressing his body against her, Luke started to kiss the hickeys up her neck. Felicity moaned as he pressed his budding erection into her thigh, Luke remembering how good it felt to cum between them.

“Well, I wish they hadn’t walked in. It felt so good to fuck you,” Luke hoarsely whispered in her ear, holding her tight, and rocking his hips against her. His gloved hand reached down and stroked up her bare leg, getting closer to her uncovered quim, “To be encased in your hot, tight cunt. You were so wet. So ready to take my cock. Are you still wet for me, Sweetheart?”

Felicity gasped as his fingers found her sex.

“Yes, you are,” Luke grinned, his fingers swirling around her folds. He avoided her clit, but teased the proximity, “You’re so wet.”

Felicity panted as she gripped the edge of the sink, “What… do you think… you’re doing, Skywalker?”

“Nothing,” Luke sounded innocent, but there was a dark smirk on his face. He watched Felicity look up at the mirror and see it in his reflection. Her desire flared in the Force, and he pushed the heel of his palm against her clit.

“Oh!” Felicity groaned, her eyes slamming shut at the sensation of the coarse fabric of his glove against her aching sex. “That doesn’t feel like nothing.”

“I guess it is something,” his gloved fingers rubbed her with an increasing speed. His natural hand clutched her hip to hold Felicity firmly against his solid body. “I was just thinking how… familiar this scenario sounds.”

“Familiar?”

“Think about it…” Luke’s natural hand drifted up her body, along the fabric of his overly long tunic, teasing over her fabric clad breasts. “Yes, you are not wearing anything under this top, so your cunt is completely unprotected from any potential intrusion. Yes, you are extremely wet, horny, and turned on by the fact that we just got walked in on.”

“Luke-”

“Didn’t you say that?” Luke whispered in her ear. His fingers on one hand found her clit, while the fingers of his other hand found her nipples. Both dug deep into her most sensitive spots; nipples hardening at the stimulation while her pussy flooded with fresh juices. “That you’re turned on by getting caught? Part of you wants to go through with your threat to Han. You want him to walk into the room and catch us fucking, and just keep going, keep taking my cock until you tighten around it in the ultimate pleasure.”

“Luke,” Felicity moaned, her hips jerking to rub her tender sex across his expert fingers.

He had never really been an exhibitionist, but he was turned on by how much the idea thrilled Felicity. Luke could see in her mind what she was thinking, the scenarios she was picturing. He may not be particularly turned on by the images, but he certainly wanted to be the one whose cock was sliding into her in them.

“The scenario is familiar, isn’t it?” Luke panted as Felicity thrashed against him. “Yes, you are quite turned on by the image of me sneaking into the fresher after you – kind of like I’ve done – and then bending you over the sink, and having my way with you, Han be damned. He’s in the living room right now, you know? Waiting for us. We’d have to be very quiet if I were to fuck you right here,
right now. Do you want that, Sweetheart? For me to bend you over this sink and fuck you until I empty my balls inside of you? We said we’d have to do that sometime after we get back to Coruscant. My sink’s at a pretty good height for that, but I supposed we can do it at your place too.”

“Luke,” Felicity moaned as his leg pushed in between hers and started to ease them apart. He knew she thought his hand felt exquisite on her, especially the new sensation of his gloved finger pushing into her wet entrance, still marked by the precum of their previous encounter. “Luke, we can’t do this. Not here. Not now.”

“Yes, here,” Luke gently pushed her forward. Her hands gripped the counter automatically as he bent her over the sink. “Yes, now.”

“Luke…” Felicity moaned as she heard the unmistakable sound of Luke unzipping his fly. A jolt of electricity went through her body as Luke’s bare cock was suddenly resting against her thigh. “Oh, I want to, but-”

“Felicity,” he said her name like a prayer. Luke grasped his bulging cock and rubbed it against her tender folds, circling it around her aching bud, “Please. I’ve been picturing this every day since that night you teased me. Do you remember that? When you lay next to me, your fingers in your cunt, the cunt that burned for this cock? This cock that buried itself inside of you so many times last night? Don’t you want it, Sweetheart? To make that fantasy inside of your head a reality? Don’t you want me to fuck you right here, right now?”

“Damn it,” Felicity growled and bent over the sink. She lifted her hip, presenting her wet cunt it him like a nexu in heat, ready to be mounted, “Just be quiet.”

Luke grabbed her hips and drove himself into her. The angle was so perfect, so deep. He thrust in and out of her, their voices moaning in harmony as his balls slapped against her wet flesh over and over.

In and out, he pinned her hips against the porcelain sink, her pelvis slamming against it over and over. The coupling was so hot and primal: the position of traditional mating was animalistic, the scenario of trying not to be discovered was thrilling, and the sensory overload of wetness, heat, musk, salt, and moans was downright elysian.


Luke’s face was buried in Felicity’s shoulder as he slammed in and out of her, his teeth digging gently into her neck. One of Felicity’s hands was steadying herself on the sink, while the other was behind her, wrapped around Luke’s hip, holding his body against her. His natural hand was groping her breast, and the gloved hand was pinned between Felicity and the sink, frantically rubbing her clit, the fabric of his glove soaking with her juices.

It was exactly like Luke had imagined that night on Rornian as he stroked his cock, clutching her damp underwear. In retrospect, he was okay with the fact that his wasn’t the first way he had made love to Felicity Rhiaon, but he was also certainly glad he got to do it now.


Luke glanced up at the mirror and saw Felicity’s face: the ultimate pleasure, mouth twisted, eyes squeezed shut, her skin flushed and sweaty. It was too much for Luke. He grabbed her hips and slammed deep into her one last time, burying himself to the root, and then emptied himself into her.

He panted and dropped his head back to her shoulder, “You took the birth control, right?”
“Thank the Gods for a non-puritanical health care system,” Felicity chuckled. “So what are you going to do next? Finger me? Eat me out? See if your cock can hold out a little longer?”

“What I’m going to do next is… Go into the living room and wait with Han for you to get dressed.”

“Wait, what?” Felicity exclaimed as Luke pulled his cock out of her, sorted himself out, and then did up his fly. “What do you mean you’re going to leave?”

Luke raised an eyebrow, “What part of my sentence was confusing?”

Felicity looked completely lost, the lust still pulsing in her body, “You promised me I would always cum first. I didn’t cum.”

“Yes, you did,” Luke chuckled and pressed a kiss to her lips. “You did that night on Rornian.”

Felicity’s jaw dropped, and Luke couldn’t help but give her an imitation of her trademark smirk.

“Consider us even, Miss Rhiaon,” Luke said darkly.

“I don’t believe it,” Felicity shook her head. He couldn’t quite pin her emotion: she was either incredibly pissed off at him, incredibly turned on, or most likely both. “Revenge is not the Old Jedi way.”

“No, and neither is this.”

Felicity gasped as shoved his glove fingers inside of her. Luke lowered his mouth to her nipple, and pumped this fingers in and out of her three times, coating the glove with their combined fluids. He then pulled out of her and took off the glove.

“You can use my glove if you need a little help getting that under control,” Luke set it on sink. “And yes, I am quite turned on by the image of dragging you into as many different rooms as possible and having my way with you on all different pieces of furniture… But somehow, I think Han might not be too happy if we did that. Shame really. We’ll have to do that sometime after we get back from lunch. My apartment’s a pretty good location for that, but I supposed we can do it at your place too.”

Felicity just stared at Luke, “What have I gotten myself into with you?”

Luke grinned, “You have no idea.”

And with that, he sauntered out of the room.

“Felicity’s just going to be a few more minutes,” Luke announced as he entered the living room.

“Good. The Droids already headed out,” Han lounged on the couch. “Everyone’s waiting for us at Dex’s. This place better be good, Kid. You have no idea how much convincing I’ve had to do to get Leia to agree to eat at a place Daddy Vader frequented.”


“So…” Han shifted in his seat. “I gotta ask. Fliss… she any good?”

“To be blunt, she’s the best sex I’ve ever had, and when we get home from lunch I’m going to have sex with her again. Multiple times.”

“Well… good for you.” Han playfully punched Luke’s arm, “Just don’t chaff the girl, Kid.”

There was no denying the cocky tone in Luke’s voice, or the smirk he couldn’t wipe from his face. Silence hung in the air as Han watched Luke and his head held high cockiness. The conclusion was inevitable.

Han squinted at Luke, “You know… you were in the fresher with Fliss for a while.”

“Yes, I was.”

“… You two had sex, didn’t you?”


Han slung an arm around Luke’s shoulder, “Atta boy!”

1 Year, 1 Month, 1 Day

“To Felicity Rhiaon!” Wedge led the rest of Rogue Squadron in a toast during their twice annual drinking night out. “She finally slept her way to the top!”

“And to Wedge Antilles!” Felicity laughed, Luke’s arm lovingly wrapped around her. “Let’s pray he doesn’t put anyone in the hospital this time.”

“Speaking of,” Hobbie leaned over in his chair to examine Felicity. Her dress had some suggestive cutouts down the sides exposing the bare flesh underneath, “Is that a hand shaped bruise on your hip?”

“What can I say, boys?” Felicity chuckled, sipping her drink. “Sex gets rough when a Jedi with a mechanical hand and a taste for dominance gets involved.”

The Squadron hooted and teased Luke as his face turned red.

“I always had a feeling about you being into that, Luke!” Wedge punched his arm.

“Could we please change the subject?” Diego groaned. “I don’t want to picture Skywalker and Rhiaon humping.”

Felicity smirked, “Oh you’re just jealous because the only real action you’ve gotten in the past three years is from your war wound.”

“Classy, Rhiaon,” Diego smacked her playfully with the aforementioned messed up hand, “making fun of a man’s disability!”

“It’s what I do,” Felicity giggled. “Boys, I have come to discover that I was put in this world to do three things: steal Death Star plans, make fun of Diego Nalto, and screw Luke Skywalker until he can’t walk straight. Hey! Bar attendant person! Another round for me!”

Luke lowered her hand that was hoisting up her empty glass, “Okay, you’re giggling, which means you’ve had way too much to drink. I’m cutting you off.”

“Or,” Felicity giggled, pressing her body against his, “you could give me another drink, and when we get home, we’ll have a little fun tonight, and I’ll do that thing you’ve been trying to get me to do.”
Luke swallowed, very aware of the eyes on them, “No, Felicity. We’re not doing that without proper – aka sober – consent.”

“Oh, good, then I didn’t record this for nothing,” Felicity pressed a button on her wrist comm.

A small recording of Felicity’s voice played, “Hey, Luke, this is Sober Felicity. Just wanted to record this because I know you’re getting back from Rornian today and we won’t have a chance to speak and get this on the record until we meet tonight at the bar with the other Rogues. I would like to state on the record in my sober state of mind that I have finally decided I’m okay with trying that thing you’ve been attempting to get me to do. I consent to having that act performed on me in either a sober state of mind, or an intoxicated state of mind. I also consent to, should we so choose, engage in sexual intercourse with you tonight, even if we are drunk. I consent to this on the understanding that it will be you and only you whom I have sex with tonight, and that we will honour our pre-established boundaries while doing so. Have fun tonight, and I look forward to our sex.”

Luke looked at Felicity in amazement, “You know it’s sexy how organized you can be sometimes.”

“So am I doing that thing tonight, or am I cut off from alcohol?”

“Waitress! One more round!”

The other Rogues laughed at the pair of them.

“Nalto, you should have set these two up years ago,” Zev shook his head.

“They would have so many smirking, trigger happy, Jedi kids by now,” Wedge shook his head.

“Actually, I did try to set them up once,” Diego recalled.

Luke frowned, “Excuse me?”

“Remember on Hoth? I tried to set you up with my friend that one night.”

“That was Felicity?” Luke’s jaw dropped, having forgotten about the time Diego had seen Luke watching Han and Leia forlornly, and suggested Luke go to dinner with his female friend who was coming in for one night. Luke had agreed, but the plans had gone a little off the rails.

“I thought you knew,” Diego said.

“No, I completely forgot about that.”

“Wait, you’re the jerk who stood me up?” Felicity narrowed her eyes at Luke, which would look a lot more threatening if she wasn’t struggling so hard to just sit upright. She poked his chest, “You better have a good reason for that, Skywalker.”

“I was attacked by a Wampa.”

“That’s a good reason.”

“Wow, I can’t believe it,” Luke shook his head. “You almost went to Tatooine to track down the Death Star plans… You were almost assigned to go with the mission to Endor until they decided you were too invested personally… We almost went on a date on Hoth. So many times we almost got together, years before we actually did. It’s almost like this was—”

“If you say destiny, we’re not having sex tonight.”

“Good save,” Felicity groaned, plonking her face right onto Luke’s chest. “Sweetheart, I don’t feel so good.”

“Here, Fliss,” Deena Kopos got out of her chair. “Let’s get you to the fresher. I think you’ve had a little too much to drink.”

Luke kissed Felicity on the forehead and helped ease her into Deena’s arms, “Make sure she drinks some water.”

“Will do,” Deena started to lead Felicity to the fresher.

“Did I ever tell you the story of how I stole the plans to the Death Star?” Felicity slurred as she stumbled along with Deena.

“Can’t say you have.”

“It all started with the day of my birth…”

Luke laughed as he watched the girls walk away.

“That girl’s certainly a handful,” Wes chuckled. “Makes me glad that Tesha’s bark is worse than her bite.”

“Fliss has always been a lively one,” Diego shook his head. “I’m glad she found someone like you, Skywalker. I think this could go the distance.”

Luke smiled as he watched Felicity stumble towards the fresher, “Yeah… me too.”

Diego took a swig of his drink, “Hey, Luke?”

“Yeah, Nalto?”

“Since all the other male figures in her life have passed on, I feel it’s my duty to tell you that if you ever hurt Felicity, I’ll kill you and make it look like an accident.”

Luke raised an eyebrow, “I have absolutely no intention of hurting Felicity Rhiaon mentally, emotionally, physically, sexually, intellectually or any other allys.”

“Good.”

“But you do know I’m the Jedi Grandmaster? You really going to go up against me?”

“Luke Skywalker, you hurt Felicity Rhiaon or any woman I love, I will absolutely kick your ass.”


---

1 Year, 3 Months, 27 Days

“I’m Third Sister,” Tyla’s declaration was simple, straight to the point, and without any excusing or handwaving away the magnitude of her crimes.

It was also probably one of the stupidest things Luke ever decided to do.

When Luke started hanging out with Felicity, Tyla had come to him expressing the fear that someone
was going to finally figure out the truth about her past. When Luke started dating Felicity, that fear intensified. And when Luke came to Tyla, telling her of his no lies by omission agreement with Felicity, begging Tyla to come forward with the truth or else he would be forced to tell Felicity himself, Tyla finally agreed.

Tyla had very complicated feelings and a very long history with the Empire. She hadn’t come to Luke’s Order initially out of the goodness of her heart and desire to be a better person.

It was a whole different kind of desire that led her to Luke.

Tyla had been Vader’s favorite Inquisitor, and later his right-hand assassin, sending in Major Kinall to strike fear into the hearts and deal with any insurgents when the issue was too insignificant for Vader to be bothered with. Vader had strongly bonded with Tyla and left her wanting for nothing. But they were careful of her position, ensuring Palpatine didn’t think she was Vader’s potential Sith Apprentice and that Vader was plotting to overthrow him.

…At least, she wasn’t at first.

Shortly after the Battle of Yavin, Vader discovered that Palpatine had been training a whole horde of possible replacements for him because he was useless in his life support suit.

To say Vader was unhappy about that was putting it mild.

For about a week, Vader formulated the plan. He would overthrow Palpatine and take Tyla as his Sith Apprentice. And then came the news that changed his life: the news that the pilot who blew up the Death Star was named Luke Skywalker.

Vader’s son was alive.

His plans changed. He couldn’t possibly give the spot of Apprentice to some girl over his own son, but he knew that Tyla was faithful to him, and she would be a valuable asset to the throne if he became Emperor. So, Vader told Tyla of Palpatine’s betrayal and the revelation of his son (Tyla was smart enough not to ask about Luke’s mother.) Tyla swore her fidelity and loyalty to Vader’s grand designs and agreed to step aside for Vader’s son. Luke was a handsome young man only a few years younger than her and surely wielded far greater power than Tyla.

She agreed to step aside for Luke because Vader had promised her that when he died, she would gain the role of Empress… Empress Consort to the Emperor Luke Skywalker.

The plan was simple, Vader would lure Luke to the Dark Side, and Tyla would seduce him into staying. Luke and Tyla would wed, and Tyla would have the honour of bearing the next generation of the Skywalker line, which would no doubt be extremely powerful with their combined power through the Force.

They just didn’t expect that Luke wanted nothing to do with the Dark Side.

But Tyla was patient, and she waited through the years for Vader to find and turn his son.

…But then Luke rejected Vader in Cloud City.

…And rejected him again on Endor.

…And defeated Vader, becoming a full Jedi in the process.

…And then the Emperor died.
…And then Vader.

…And then the Second Death Star.

…And then the Empire in general.

When the dust had all settled, Tyla had nothing. No job, no money, no purpose. She wandered for a while; killed and stole as needed, and struggled to survive in a world without a place for her. The only thing that kept her going was the one thought Vader had hammered into her head over and over for four years:

Luke Skywalker is your destiny.

So, when Tyla heard that Luke Skywalker had opened a Jedi Order and that anyone was welcome to come live and learn, she knew she was on the right path. She would go there, meet Luke, be accepted in the Order, train as a Jedi and give her own insights to the Dark Side, maybe seeing what all this fuss was about the Light Side, and she and Luke would fall madly, hopelessly in love as was their destiny.

And all that happened… Except Luke rejected her advances. He wanted nothing to do with her in a romantic and even sexual context. Not only did he find her personality abrasive and unattractive, but he worried that pursuing a relationship with Tyla would only lead them both down the path to the Dark Side. Her so-called “love” of Luke was rooted so firmly in her history with the Dark Side, that Tyla could never detach one from the other.

So, to see Luke fall in love with a woman who not only hated Darth Vader, but barely believed in the Force, led Tyla to an antagonistic relationship with Felicity. But there was one part to their relationship that was hidden away in the shadows, and the longer it stayed there, the more explosive the reaction would be once uncovered.

Though both parties were reluctant, Tyla and Luke agreed that it was time for Tyla to come clean to everyone about her past. Luke gathered the Order, as well as Han, Ben, Leia, and Felicity in the Meditation Gardens on Romanian, and had Tyla go before them and confess the truth.

For the declaration, Luke had Obik, Felicity, and Leia – the three people who had actually been connected to the death of Brendan Rhiaon – stand closest to Tyla. It would be good for them to be close so that if they wanted to break off from the group and have a quiet chat they could.

Luke couldn’t say he wasn’t disappointed with the reactions of Tyla’s confession.

Leia immediately grabbed Ben, and shoved him behind her, towards Alyla – who frankly didn’t understand what was going on but just went with it. Leia of all people had the most reason to hate Third Sister. Yes, Tyla had orchestrated the death of Brendan Rhiaon which was life-changing for Felicity, but Tyla had killed him because of Leia. Brendan had confessed his desire to join the Rebellion twice. Each time it had been in the vicinity of Third Sister, and each time that confession had been to Leia.

Leia would never trust Tyla again after learning her identity, and she made sure to never discuss classified information around Tyla again.

Luke was also disappointed in Obik’s reaction. Obik knew the history of Third Sister’s crimes with Brendan Rhiaon all too well, and he had made some pretty strong implications of what he would do to Tyla. But Obik didn’t attack her; what he did was much worse in Luke’s eyes.

Obik stared at Tyla for a long minute, then turned and looked back at Felicity. Felicity, who was
stunned and blank, her body shaking with a mixture of rage and sorrow. There was only one person standing between Felicity and Tyla, and that person was Obik.

After another minute, Obik turned back to Tyla, and a hard, dark look set on his face. Luke could sense the Force shifting with a touch of Darkness around him. Reine – who was standing next to her husband – sensed it too, and grasped his arm.

Obik gently shook Reine’s arm away, and he took a step forward. He locked eyes with Tyla, waiting until she looked at him. When he had caught her attention, he made a show of looking back at Felicity, and back at Tyla.

And then he stepped out of the way.

He didn’t say a word, but his eyes were dark as he made a show of walking not only out of Felicity’s path, but to the edge of the glass wall of the garden’s greenhouse enclosure. He leaned upon it and crossed his arms, an angry scowl upon his face.

His message was clear: whatever Felicity did to Tyla… he wasn’t going to stop it.

Luke didn’t quite know what to expect Felicity’s reaction to be. He thought maybe some screams and swears and probably at least an attempt at a slap. But he wasn’t expecting what she did.

Hearing that her brother’s last remaining killer – and the only one Felicity ever had the opportunity to face – was standing before her… Felicity said *nothing*. She did nothing. She just stood there in stunned silence as the rage built up in her.

For a few minutes, everyone was distracted by Leia and Obik’s reaction, but make no mistake, it was Felicity’s reaction they truly waited for. No one dared to move or speak until Felicity did.

Then she did.

Slowly, wordlessly, Felicity walked towards Tyla.

Luke and Reine exchanged a look and readied themselves to jump into action. They didn’t know what was about to happen, but they could sense the Darkness building around Felicity.

Tyla, to her credit, stood her ground. She knew that admitting her identity meant facing Felicity Rhiaon, and she would do it with dignity. If Felicity wanted to scream, she would not argue. If Felicity wanted answers, she would give them. If Felicity wanted to slap her so hard that Tyla would fall unconscious, she would not flinch.

But Felicity didn’t do that.

Luke had always known Felicity liked to talk the talk about beating someone up, or threatening to kill Han over leaving the toilet seat up. He also knew that Felicity had in fact ended lives during the war. But he knew deep in his heart that Felicity Rhiaon was not the type of person who would commit cold blooded murder. Luke was certain that Felicity would never kill but in self defense.

So, he was greatly surprised when she grabbed Tyla by the throat, slammed her against a tree, and actually tried to choke her to death.

“Felicity!” Luke yelled as he and Reine sprung into action.

Felicity screamed nonsensically about her brother’s murder and that she was going to kill Tyla as she strangled her. Tyla desperately tried to gasp out an apology and pry Felicity’s hands from her throat.
Reine got to Felicity first. She locked her arms around Felicity and wrenched her away from Tyla. Luke was at Tyla’s side, checking that she was okay as Reine wrestled the thrashing Felicity.

Felicity smashed her elbow backwards, hitting Reine right in the nose. Reine yelled and grabbed her bloody, possibly broken nose. Felicity took advantage of moment to escape Reine’s grasp.

Tyla saw Felicity coming for her, and not wanting to put Luke in a position where he might have to hurt one of them to protect the other, used the Force to push him back.

The next few moments were utter chaos.

It wasn’t clear who struck first, but the next thing anyone knew, Tyla and Felicity were desperately scrapping. Felicity was actually trying to kill Tyla, while Tyla perhaps went a little overboard with self defense.

A group converged to pull the women apart: Han and Gavyn got a hold of Felicity while Cade and Zena tried to get Tyla to back down. All parties got quite a few injuries for their efforts. Leia, on the other hand, much like Obik didn’t seem too inclined to stop Felicity from hurting Tyla.

Ben would learn a magnitude of new curse words from the brawl that day, but he didn’t get to stay for it. Luke nodded at Alyla, and she made to remove Ben and the other children from the Gardens with the help of Eline and Jafan.

Luke watched from the side as he held Reine’s shoulder while her nose bled fiercely. He was trying to inch her over to Doctor Kalonia – who was only a few months on the job and seriously re-evaluating her decision to come work for the Jedi – where Reine could get her nose looked at.

“Luke, you have to do something!” Reine snapped.

“I…” Luke frowned. “I don’t know if I can.”

“Luke!”

He felt so helpless in that moment. Luke could absolutely walk into that brawl and shut it down in three seconds flat, but doing so would be very costly. He didn’t want to hurt either women, certainly not emotionally and absolutely not physically. Luke Skywalker would never put himself in a situation where he might strike Felicity Rhiaon.

But he couldn’t just let Tyla become victim to Felicity’s fury. Temple Village was not governed by the will of a lynch mob, but there was more to it than that. If Tyla was pushed too far, not only would she overpower Felicity easily with her Force abilities, but it might trigger a return to the Dark Side.

At the same time, he couldn’t just step in and defend Tyla. She had orchestrated the death of Brendan Rhiaon, the defining moment in Felicity’s life. Was he really going to say her feelings of anger were unjustified? Was he really going to step in and side with Tyla? Not only was it morally gray, Luke worried the effect it could have on his relationship with Felicity. He could lose her.

Luke sighed and looked over at Leia. His sister had the same confliction in her heart, and possibly even more so than Luke. She had known Brendan, and probably a small part of her had genuinely loved him (though not the way she loved Han, despite her crush on Brendan. It was more the casual friendship type love Leia had for Lando.)

But, as conflicted as Leia was, her decision was clear. She wasn’t going to be the one who stepped between the woman, but they couldn’t let this happen. Yes, what Tyla did was wrong, but they
couldn’t let Felicity kill her. And yes, losing Felicity was a risk of standing up for Tyla … But if she killed Tyla, the Felicity Luke loved would be lost anyway.

Luke took a deep breath, and then a step forward.

Felicity was on top of Tyla, though Luke couldn’t quite see what she was doing, but whatever it was, based on Tyla’s shrieks it clearly hurt. Tyla smashed an elbow into Felicity’s face, and Felicity jerked back. Catching Felicity off-guard, Tyla made a movement with the lower half of her body that seemed to be some combination of a kick and twisting her pelvis. It managed to get Felicity off of her.

Seizing the opportunity, Han ran up behind Felicity, hooked his arms under her armpits and clasping his hands behind her neck. No matter how hard Felicity tried fighting him off, Han had incapacitated her… but that certainly didn’t mean Felicity wasn’t trying to fight him.

“Let me go! Let me go right now, Solo!” Felicity screamed as Han dragged her back.

“Not a chance, Rhiaon,” Han struggled to hold Felicity up as she thrashed in his arms.

“LUKE!” Anakin Skywalker’s voice was sudden and urgent in Luke’s mind. “Look into Tyla!”

Anakin had the habit of getting involved where Dark Side Tyla Kinall was concerned. Considering he was responsible for Tyla’s difficult life, and for a very long stretch of time, she was the closest thing Vader had to a kid, he felt it his duty to help Luke guide her onto the right path.

“Son of a-” Han yelled as Felicity suddenly bit his arm. As childish as the move was, it was effective because he dropped his hold on her, and Felicity managed to sprint towards Tyla.

Tyla likewise had escaped the hold of Zena and Cade. She could see Felicity heading straight for her, and Darkness pulsed in the Force around her.

Luke knew Tyla’s mental barriers were vulnerable and he pushed into her mind. Tyla didn’t push him out, allowing him to see the memory playing in her mind.

_Tyla was standing next to Vader on the bridge of a Star Destroyer. She was clothed in her all black Imperial gear, her straight, ice blonde hair falling down her back, and her ice blue irises had changed to yellow. Based on her attire and age, Luke knew this was after the other Inquisitors had been killed and Vader had taken her on personally._

_She stood with a vindictive grin, her arm outstretched, her black gloved hand contorted in a clutching motion. A few feet away in front of her, an Imperial officer clutched his throat, choking on air as the rest of the crew looked on in fear._

“Good,” Vader praised Tyla. “The Force Choke is always the best line of defense. No need to get bloody or personal, except for those who are worth it. And a Non-Force Sensitive is almost never worth it.”

Luke’s eyes widened; he knew Tyla’s next move.

“No!” Luke ran forward to stop it.

But it was too late; Tyla’s eyes narrowed at Felicity, and Luke could have sworn they flashed yellow. She threw her hand forward and made an all too familiar motion. Felicity stopped in her
tracks, gasping, her hands flying to her throat. There was no denying what had happened.

Tyla was Force Choking Felicity.


He threw out his hands, and everyone but him found themselves knocked to the ground. Bewilderment pulsed through the building as everyone tried to collect themselves and get back to their feet. Tyla and Felicity had been thrown the furthest, which had successfully ended the choking, but immediately they shot back to their feet. Both women went to charge back at each other, but suddenly found they could not move a muscle.

After a moment of confusion, all heads slowly turned to Luke. He stood before the assembly, arms outstretched towards Felicity and Tyla, his face red and shaking with rage.

It took a while for the group to figure out that Luke was holding Felicity and Tyla in place, preventing them from hurting each other. No one had ever seen that Force Ability before, and frankly it just felt… wrong.

Luke Skywalker was furious. His eyes were dark as he looked upon Felicity and Tyla, not knowing who he was angrier with.

“I DON’T WANT TO USE THIS POWER!” Luke yelled, struggling not to let the Dark Side overtake him. Most people in that building had never heard Luke raise his voice in anger before. It would be a lie to say there wasn’t genuine fear pulsing through that building. “THIS IS THE MOST DISGUSTING FORCE ABILITY I HAVE EVER ENCOUNTERED, AND I’VE BEEN HIT WITH LIGHTNING!”

He looked at Tyla and saw both fear and shame in her eyes, but when he looked at Felicity, he didn’t see fear… he saw anger.

“To take away someone’s agency over their own body is reprehensible,” Luke lowered his voice, but his tone was no less stern. “But I will use this ability if it’s the only way I can you two from killing each other!”

Slowly, Tyla and Felicity stopped trying to fight off their restraint, but Luke still did not lower his control.

“You two are grown women!” Luke snapped. “And I thought you two were a lot smarter and more mature than this display. You are acting like children. You think this is going to solve anything? Change the past? Bring back the dead?”

Tyla looked to the ground, and Felicity’s eyes narrowed.

Luke looked to the former, “Tyla… you know better than this. You know you cannot give in to those urges. You know that Force Choking someone is never acceptable.”

“Hypocrite,” Cade Ren disguised in a cough.

Luke gritted his teeth, “Cade, not now!”

Han walked up behind Cade and grabbed the back of his robes, ready to put the kid in line if he acted out again.

Jake asked Doctor Kalonia if she had a cough drop for Cade.
“You cannot give in like that, Tyla,” Luke warned. “I am trying to help you, but I cannot fight this battle for you. And I cannot have you attacking anyone in this village. Do you understand me?”

Tyla bowed her head, “Yes, Master Skywalker.”

“Felicity,” Luke tried not to let his voice shake as he faced the woman he loved, “I am so sorry for what happened with Brendan. If I could go back and change what happened, I would. But this isn’t the way to settle it, and it certainly isn’t what Brendan would want you to do.”

The look Felicity was giving him was downright lethal.

“Do not speak of my brother as if you knew him, Luke,” Felicity growled. “You don’t get to tell me what Brendan would have wanted!”

“You’re right, I don’t,” Luke conceded. “But this isn’t what I want. And I don’t think this is what Han wants, or Leia, or anyone who is alive and cares about you.”

“She killed my brother, Luke.”

“I know, and how to deal with that fact is something I’ve been struggling to figure out for months.”

Felicity’s eyes widened.

“But you can’t do this, Felicity,” Luke continued. “You can’t kill Tyla for arranging Brendan’s death. This isn’t war! If you killed her here and now for this, you would be arrested for murder. Do you honestly think Brendan would want you to waste the rest of your life in a prison cell?”

“Felicity,” Tyla quietly said. “I am truly sorry for what I did… to you, and to everyone who was affected by that bombing.”

“And yet you chose to continue to be an Imperial,” Brinna Tharen muttered.

“Brinna,” Reine warned.

“Come on, she has a point,” Coria said. “Do we really want an Inquisitor among our ranks?”

“I’m not an Inquisitor anymore,” Tyla dismissed.

“Once an Imperial, always an Imperial,” Davarl sneered.

“So, being a former Imperial automatically makes you bad?” Zhane snapped. “Nice to know where you lot stand on my role in this Order.”

“If we have issues with you being in the Order, Zhane, it’s not over your Imperial past,” Obik glared.

“You have something to say to me, Kenu?” Zhane growled.

“Nothing he doesn’t have a point about,” Zena said coolly.

Bakura scoffed, “That’s rich coming from a slaver.”

“And that’s rich coming from a murderer,” Gavyn shot.

“You would know, Kene.”

“Yeah, well at least I didn’t lie about my murder, blaming it on a ‘surge of uncontrolled Force
Powers,’ and called it an accident. How many years of prison did you avoid in exchange for joining this Order?”

“Probably the same number of years you let slavers use your sister, till she ran dry and tried to kill herself.”

“STOP!” Luke yelled. “We can’t keep doing this, people! We can’t continue all this in-fighting, or it’s going to destroy us just like the Old Jedi Order. It doesn’t matter! It doesn’t matter if Tyla was an Inquisitor! It doesn’t matter if Zhane was an Imperial! It doesn’t matter if Zena was a slave owner! It doesn’t matter if Gavyn once murdered a man for hurting Alyla! It doesn’t matter if Bakura exchanged a murder prison sentence for service to the Order! It doesn’t matter if Alyla once decided to disfigure herself! It doesn’t matter if I’m the son of a Sith Lord! We all have sins in our past. All that matters is how we live our lives now! Who we choose to be now! It doesn’t matter if Tyla was an Inquisitor! It doesn’t matter if Zhane was an Imperial! It doesn’t matter if Zena was a slave owner! It doesn’t matter if Gavyn once murdered a man for hurting Alyla! It doesn’t matter if Bakura exchanged a murder prison sentence for service to the Order! It doesn’t matter if Alyla once decided to disfigure herself! It doesn’t matter if I’m the son of a Sith Lord! We all have sins in our past. All that matters is how we live our lives now! Who we choose to be now! So, Tyla… Felicity… I’m going to let you go in a second. If you move to strike anyone in this building, I’ll put you back under my hold until you can behave like an adult.”

Taking a deep breath, Luke released the women. To his relief, Felicity and Tyla behaved themselves… but Felicity’s face was dark with pure rage.

“Now,” Luke looked at the women, “can you two choose to be the better person? I’m not asking anyone to forgive or excuse the other. All I ask is that we can live our lives without you two trying to murder each other. That’s all I want! Is that too much to ask?”

Tyla sighed, “No, it isn’t.”

Luke smiled, “And Felicity?”

He was shocked at the fury in her face.


“You knew,” Felicity whispered. “…You knew that she killed my brother. You knew she was Third Sister, and you didn’t tell me?”

“Felicity,” Luke cautiously walked towards her. “This was that lie by omission I promised to eventually reveal to you.”

She looked like Luke had just hit her.

“How long have you known?” Felicity demanded.

“How long?”

Luke took a deep breath as he came to a stop in front of her, “I’ve known since that day in my apartment when you told me that Third Sister was involved with Brendan’s death.”


“You son of a bitch!” Felicity screamed. “You’ve known this entire time, and you didn’t tell me! You swore to me you wouldn’t hide anything from me. You looked me in the God damn eye and lied!”

“I told you I had one secret that wasn’t mine to tell!” Luke snapped. “I had to give Tyla the chance to
“Oh, screw you! We both damn well know the only reason you didn’t tell me that night was because you wanted to *fuck* me, and that would have ruined the mood!”

Luke took a deep breath, unable to face any of the eyes on him after that declaration.

“Felicity, please,” Luke said calmly, closing a hand over her arm, “let’s go somewhere private and discuss-”

“No! Don’t you touch me!” Felicity wretched her arm out of his grasp. “Don’t you dare touch me!”

Luke took a step back and held up his hands to show he was going to honour her request. He could see Felicity struggle not to completely break down in tears in front of the audience. She felt that he had betrayed her and broken her heart.

Diego Nalto was so going to kick his ass.

Felicity took a deep breath and turned to Tyla, “I hate you. I hate you more than I’ve ever hated someone in my life. I hate you more than Phasma… I hate you more than Vader. But maybe… maybe that will pass with time. Maybe you won’t be my end all, epitome of hatred someday. I will *never* like you, but I’ll be the person that Brendan would want me to be. I won’t kill you. *That* is the only mercy I will ever grant you. Do you understand?”

Tyla nodded.

Felicity looked back at Luke, tears falling from her eyes, “I love you, Luke. I truly do… but I can’t forgive this. How can I ever trust you after this?”

“Felicity,” he begged, reaching for her, “please, just-”

“No,” she moved her arm away again. Felicity looked into his eyes – her own so vulnerable – and firmly said, “No, Luke. You… will never touch me again.”

“Felicity-”

“We’re done, Luke.” She took a ragged breath and pushed past him, “This is over.”

“Felicity, please!” Luke called after her.

But Felicity marched straight into the arms of Leia, who comforted Felicity as she led them out of the Gardens. Han and Obi-k were quick to follow.

Luke looked to the ground, trying not to break down into tears. He could hear the judgemental and disapproving whispers around him, and struggled not to let the others see him cry. Felicity’s leaving had fractured his heart, and it would fully break later that night when Han informed Luke that neither Felicity nor Leia wanted him on the Falcon when they went home.

One by one, the Jedi silently left the Meditation Gardens, and Luke to his misery. He didn’t need to look up to know when just he and Tyla remained.

That was when he let himself cry. He had just lost the best thing that had ever happened to him. This wasn’t supposed to happen, he was supposed to live happily ever after with Felicity, not lose her after four months.

To Tyla’s credit, she didn’t approach Luke; she got stood in the spot he had frozen her and watched
as he cried.

“I’m sorry, Luke,” Tyla said, a foreign vulnerability in her tone. “I should have come clean to her the first time she came to Temple Village. Keeping this secret was holding me back from the path of healing.”

“No,” Luke shook his head, “this is my fault. I shouldn’t have kept this secret from her.”

“It wasn’t your secret to tell… and I appreciate it.”

“I don’t,” he admitted.

“I’m sorry for that. Look on the bright side, if she wasn’t going to stay with you through thick and thin, at least you found out early on. You deserve someone who will stay with you no matter what. You know, if there’s anything I can do—”

“Please, Tyla, stop,” Luke said firmly. “I cannot deal with this right now. Please, just… leave me alone.”

Tyla looked at the ground, “Yes, Master Skywalker.”

She took a few steps and then paused.

“Luke?”

“What, Tyla?”

“If there’s one thing I know for certain about Skywalker men it’s that, good or evil, a Skywalker never gives up without a fight.”

And with that she was gone.

Luke’s hands shook as he struggled to figure out his next move. This had been one of the worst days of his life. Almost everyone he cared about had turned on him, and he had betrayed them all. The Jedi and his family would be forced to eventually move on with their continued interactions, but Felicity… Felicity was about to slip through his fingers.

A Skywalker never gives up without a fight.

Tyla was right; he had could fight against all odds and redeem Anakin Skywalker, if he could destroy a Death Star, and save Han from carbonite, he could somehow, someway win back Felicity Rhiaon.

With new resolve, Luke turned around, ready to formulate some game plan. But he froze when he saw the sight behind him.

Crouched in the greenery, hidden quite cleverly, having somehow broken off from the group of children, was Ben Solo.

Luke’s mouth went dry as his heart dropped to his stomach. He had performed the most atrocious Force Power he knew, to hold someone against their will… And he had shown his nephew exactly how to do it.

He had a bad feeling about this.
Luke knocked incessantly on the apartment door, just as he had been doing for nearly two hours.

“Felicity, please, open up,” Luke called, sensing her presence inside. “I know you’re in there. Please, can we just talk about this?”

There was no reply.

“Felicity, please, come on, it’s been two weeks,” Luke started up his knocking again. He was honestly surprised that no neighbour had come to see what was going on. “I miss you and I love you. Please, just let me talk.”

Nothing.

Luke took a deep breath and pounded on the door more firmly, “Come on, Felicity. I’m not going anywhere. If I have to knock non-stop for the rest of the day, sleep on the floor, and then spend all of tomorrow knocking on your door, I will.”

Finally, footsteps thudded towards the entrance, and the door slid open to reveal Felicity.


“I’m only opening this door to tell you that if you don’t vacate my property in the next sixty seconds, I am calling the police,” Felicity said sternly.

But based on how she looked, Luke knew that wasn’t true. She had clearly spent the two hours he had knocked, putting herself together so that every part of her was specifically tailored to be a way that drove Luke wild.

The casual way her hair was down on her shoulders that looked natural, but Luke knew she used extensive products to get that slight curl, that airy hold, and the perfect volume. Her simple makeup that was made to look like she wasn’t wearing any, except for the expertly executed smoky eye look, and the crimson lipstick that Luke had told her was the exact shade of her Force Signature which she wore whenever she was trying to seduce Luke. The starbird necklace strung around her neck, sitting right in the valley of her cleavage. The casual cranberry tank top, covering a bra that was lifting her breasts just right. The tight black leather pants Luke had picked out for her one time they had gone shopping together, which she had worn out of the store, and then Luke had eagerly peeled off her when they got home. And those brown, knee high, heeled boots that drove Luke wild, which cemented the fact that Felicity was intentionally putting herself together for Luke.

Because Felicity didn’t wear shoes in her apartment.

Luke looked Felicity up and down, and he knew the way she was casually shifting her body was to subtly show it off to him. Whether this display was to seduce Luke or flaunt what he was missing, Luke didn’t know.

But he could definitely work with this.

“Well, it’s nice to see you haven’t been too devastated during this unfortunate turn of events,” Luke grinned appreciatively at the outfit. “I know it must be hard for you to be apart from me.”

Felicity crossed her arms and leaned against the doorframe, “Aren’t you arrogant this afternoon?”

“No, I said that because I know our separation has been unbearable for me. Arrogance would be
saying that if we weren’t in a fight and you greeted me wearing that, I’d be having you against the
door right now.”

“It’s no one’s fault but your own that you’re not. I bet you’ve been touching yourself in bed to the
image of us even more than I have.”

“So, you admit you still want me. That’s a relief,” Luke struggled to stay on task and not think of
Felicity sprawled nude on the sheets, her breasts heaving with steady pants, sweat dripping down her
body as her fingers frantically pumped her tender sex, wishing it was instead his cock working
between her thighs.

Felicity scowled, unhappy how he had turned things around on her, “Get out of my doorway, Luke.”

“No, I’m not leaving,” Luke replied confidently. His eyes drifted to her overexposed cleavage; those
breasts that he adored to suck. He struggled to keep the image out of his head of his tongue licking
up the crevice between those two perfect globes. Luke had to resist the urge to shove her against the
apartment wall, yanking off her tank top and having his mouth reclaim those delicious brown
nipples. That was when he noticed her nipples were pointed, straining for his attention. “And I don’t
think you want me to leave either.”

Felicity raised an eyebrow. Luke looked up to meet her gaze, and then let his eyes very obviously go
to her erect nipples. Felicity’s eyes darkened and she threw an arm over her chest, concealing her
arousal. Luke wondered if there was a damp spot starting in her panties. He too had made sure to fix
up his appearance to its most alluring.

Scowling, Felicity pushed a button on her side of the wall, and the door quickly slid shut. Luke
shoved his right arm in the doorway at the last second, and the heavy metal pinned it against the
doorframe.

Luke smiled as the door recognized the obstruction and quickly slid back open, releasing his arm. He
stood there, grinning at Felicity as she glowered at him.

“You turned the sensors on your prosthetic to zero, didn’t you?”

“I’m not ready for this conversation to be over,” Luke lowered his arm. “If speaking to you means I
have to shove my hand between a few doors, then so be it.”

“You know, the sentiment would be more flattering if you had turned your pain sensors to 100 rather
than nothing.”

Luke flipped open his wrist control panel, cranked the sensor dial to maximum, and held his arm
back in the doorway.


Felicity rolled her eyes, “This isn’t mating season, Luke. You’re not going to wow me with a show
of strength, then drag me back to your apartment where I present myself for breeding.”

Luke shifted, “Felicity, after two weeks without even a hello… I’m not sure I can handle that sort of
image.”

Wrong move.

Fury burned in Felicity’s eyes as she suddenly gripped Luke’s tunic, and wretched him forward with
a strength that actually surprised Luke. He stumbled into her apartment, struggling to gather his
bearings as Felicity slammed the door button to shut.

“This isn’t a game, Luke!” Felicity roared when the door was closed. “I’m not one of your bimbos who you can flash a few smiles at and their panties hit the floor! By the Gods, Luke! Do you even get why I’m so mad?”

“Of course, I get it,” Luke said calmly, bowing his head. This conversation had to be serious; no more eyes roaming lustfully over Felicity’s body. “And you’re right, this struggle over sexual dominance is inappropriate for this conversation. I understand why you’re mad at me. I shouldn’t have withheld the truth from you, and I’m sorry.”

“Oh, you’re sorry? Well, that changes everything!”

“What do you want from me, Felicity? I can’t bring your brother back from the dead.”

“I’m not expecting you to.”

“Then tell me what you want!”


Felicity grabbed Luke’s arm and dragged him to her living room where three things sat neatly on her coffee table: a bracelet, a blaster, and an urn. She had definitely planned on letting him in.

“First, I want you to take this stupid bracelet back!” Felicity chuckled the kyber crystal bracelet at Luke, whose Force Sensitive relaxes ensured he caught it no problem. “I mean, are you serious, Luke? Your dad slices my back with a saber, and you give me that? Give it to Ben! He wants it!”

“I’m not giving Ben a Sith crystal,” Luke didn’t acknowledge the fact he learned about her scar nearly a year after giving her the crystal. “Felicity, please-”

“Two, I want you to look at this,” Felicity picked up the blaster off the table. It was the blaster she always carried on her, no matter how many times she needed to repair it. “An Imperial issue, NN-14 blaster presented to Brendan Rhiaon and bequeathed to me upon his death per his request. The day he gave me this, he changed my life. In that moment, he turned me from a simpleton to a soldier, he chose my path for me… and Tyla chose his.”

“Felicity-”

“Third,” Felicity didn’t pick up the urn on the table. She had too much respect for it to wave it around carelessly… though hadn’t been bothered by waving around a blaster in Luke’s face. “Look at that urn… That tiny urn, barely bigger than a travel shampoo bottle. You know why it’s so small? Because he stood right above the most powerful bomb, the one that had been designated to kill him specifically to become a symbol of the Empire’s cause. Have you ever heard the details of the Bombing of Faclov? How the blood literally ran in the streets and the air smelled of roasted flesh… Like… barbeque puffer pig. You know, I throw up anytime I smell cooked swine?”

Luke wanted to mention that he didn’t partake in any swine based food after watching the Rancor eat that Gamorrean. He abstained from the comment.

“You want to know what they found of Brendan?” Felicity asked. “Guess.”

“I’m not going to play that game, Felicity,” Luke said calmly.

“His comlink was found three blocks away, smashed beyond repair. His weapons belt with his
blaster – this blaster – was found hanging from a tree next to Antilles Fine Imports. His dog tags were found lying on top of Sergeant Myec – the man who set off the bombs – who was so horribly mangled they had to match him to his dental records.

Luke found he had nothing to say.

Still Felicity continued, “Brendan’s arm was found in a nearby alley, identified as him by a tattoo of the word Felicity, which was followed by my date of birth. I didn’t even know he had that tattoo.”

“That’s why you got one of his name?” Luke asked.

Felicity nodded and looked away. Luke could feel the shift in her mind; something dark, stormy, and painful was left.

“You don’t have to say it,” Luke said gently. What he wouldn’t give to just take her in his arms at the moment and make her sorrow go away.

She looked up at him with tears in her eyes, “Yes, I do.”

A tender look on his face, Luke took a step forward and placed a hand on her shoulder.

“It’s okay, Sweetheart,” Luke fought the urge to wipe away the tears in her eyes. “You can tell me.”

“What they found…” Felicity’s voice shook as she struggled to get the words out. She cleared her throat and tried again, “Two feet away from the X he stood on… The X that set his death sentence, Brendan’s helmet was found… With his head still inside.”


“His head and his arm is all they could recover,” Felicity’s breath hitched. “They made his most precious features something sickening. Those arms that held me when I cried, those loving eyes, the carefree smile, the hair he was way too proud to maintain… I’ll never hear his voice again, calling me Shortstack as pulls me into a headlock during the most inappropriate occasions. I’ll never hear his laugh, hold him in my arms, introduce him to the man I choose to spend my life with, have him give me away at my wedding, put my newborn in his arms. He was more than my brother, he was my father and my best friend. And Tyla took him from me.”

“I understand exactly how you feel, Felicity.”

“No, you don’t,” Felicity sneered. She pointed at urn, “That’s all that left of him, Luke. All that’s left of my brother. Look at it. Look at it and imagine that was all you had left of Leia. Can you imagine the pain I went through? To see the person who raised you murdered in a horrifying display?”

Luke looked her straight in the eyes and said, “When I was nineteen, I came home to find my Aunt and Uncle – the people who loved and raised me – as charred skeletons on my front door.”

Felicity fell silent.

“You forgot that story, didn’t you?”

Felicity nodded.

“They tried to escape, you know?” Luke continued. “One of them was on their hands and knees, trying to crawl away. The other on their back, having made it to freedom, but could not escape the flames. Spread eagle but in agony… So, yes, Felicity, I know what it’s like.”
Felicity chewed her lip, pondering his words. Then she took a deep breath and looked him in the eyes.

“I am truly sorry for your loss, Luke… But do you remember the first time you told me that story?”

Luke winced, “When you told me about Brendan’s death.”

“That’s when you should have told me,” Felicity said. “I’ll concede that I kind of understand you not telling me the night we made love… that night already had enough soul bearing confessions, and the two of us were so aroused, you could smell the pheromones. But you didn’t tell me when you should have.”

“Felicity, I will not apologize for not being the one to tell you. Tyla’s past as an Inquisitor isn’t my secret to reveal. Don’t you understand? If the Republic discovers who she is, she’ll be executed, likely without a trial. No one got to execute Darth Vader or the Emperor… An Inquisitor is the next best thing.”

“Maybe she should be executed for her crimes.”


“Tyla killed 2,147 people in 2.38 seconds.”

“And I killed 1,148,309 people in 5.94 seconds,” Luke snapped. “What makes my action good and hers evil? We both killed without distinction. Innocents died by both our hands… yet the history books will call me a hero and her a villain. I won’t stand for that. She was forced into that role without choice as a child. Now that she’s an adult who knows better, she deserves to get a second chance at life.”

“Second chances,” Felicity scoffed. “No one deserves a second chance. You are who you are, and what choices you make is because of that. You don’t get a do over for being that person.”

“I don’t believe that. Han Solo can turn from a smuggler to a war hero. Lando Calrissian betrayed his friends, then fought to the death for them. Zena Halcorr was a slave owner and became one of the most successful underground slave liberators in the Galaxy. Anakin Skywalker became Darth Vader and back to Anakin. Even you went from an Imperial stooge to shooting Vader in the chest. Everyone can change.”

“So, that’s how you think I should live life? Forgetting the horrible crimes people commit? Because, what? They thought they were doing good? My father thought he was doing good. So did Vader. So did Tyla. But still what they did was evil.”

Luke sighed, “I’m not asking you to forget, but simply decide that you’re strong enough to stand up and say, ‘I forgive you.’”

“So, now I’m weak?” Felicity shot.

“That’s not what I’m saying!”

“Then what are you saying?”

“I’m saying that Tyla is being the bigger person and saying she’s sorry.

“I can’t do it, Luke. I won’t do it!”
Luke put his head in his hands, trying to keep his temper, “Why do you find it so hard to forgive people?”

“Why do you find it so easy?” Felicity shot.

“It’s never been easy!” Luke roared.

Something had finally broken inside of him, and Luke found himself fully angry with Felicity Rhiaon for the first time. Fear flashed in Felicity’s eyes, and she took a step back from him. Even she could feel the Dark Side crackling in the air as Luke lost it.

The couple stood there, staring at each other, burning blue irises battling with teary hazel orbs. Their heavy breathing was in harmony as Felicity watched Luke like he was an animal about to strike. He knew he needed to relax, to back down, and not give into the Dark Side. But this was a rage that had been building for years as he took abuse after abuse over his decisions to stand by Vader and Tyla and even the troublemaking Cade Ren.

“You think it’s been easy to forgive?” Luke snapped. “You think it’s been easy to step back and say I can move on from this? To reach out to my father with love and trust? He cut off my hand!”

Luke held up his artificial appendage.

“Do you know what it’s like to have your hand cut off?” he shot. “It’s like what happened to your back… but worse. A blinding white-hot pain shooting through your body. The laser going through your bone, the cauterizing of the wound, that severing of your nerves and sudden loss of feeling. That’s even not considering the aftermath and recovery. The look on Leia’s face when she first saw my hand was just gone. The horror on Han’s when he learned why I wear this glove. The meetings I had to attend in the Rebellion to make sure that I could still fly… that moment when I had to give up my command to Wedge. The awkwardness between Nalto and I when he tried to bond over the fact that Vader had ruined both our hands. The well-intentioned but still painful time they sent this other pilot to talk to me about it… Andar or something, who also had a false hand that he had been forced to amputate himself.”

Luke clenched his metal fist tightly.

“Then there’s the prosthetic… those fittings I went through. The times I heard the other Rebels whispering that if I wasn’t the poster boy for the Rebellion, they wouldn’t have paid for this, and Force knows the poor farmboy I was, would never have been able to afford the prosthetic. Then there’s the whole Phantom Limb Phenomenon, or whatever it’s called. I don’t like to talk about, but there are times where I wake up and I think I feel my real hand attached to my wrist. And there’s the shame of having this hand… I remember the first time I put on this glove, after my hand had been shot saving Han from Jabba. It was only supposed to be on my hand until I could get my hand fixed… but it became a part of my identity, hiding this piece of metal that isn’t me.”

Felicity suddenly grabbed his hand, clasping both of her own around it, “It is you, Luke. I don’t care if it’s metal instead of flesh, it’s still you.”

“But you do care,” Luke shot. “In my office, you didn’t want me to touch you with that hand. For the first few months we knew each other, you avoided my hand as much as possible. And every time we make love, I have to be careful not to hurt you… I did that once with a partner. It wasn’t even anything kinky, just fingering, and I bruised her clitoris and vaginal passage. Recovery would be a few months, but I never saw exactly how long because she broke up with me over it. I apologized many times, but she never wanted to risk it again.”
Felicity closed her eyes but said nothing.

“I have my left hand,” Luke shrugged, “and yes, it’s my dominant hand, but… my hand’s gone, Felicity. Gone.”

She took a deep breath and released his hand. Immediately, he brought it to her face and stroked her cheek.

“I’ll never get to use that hand, Felicity, to stroke your cheek… run a thumb over these beautiful lips,” Luke did the actions with his mechanical hand as he described them. “Feel the curve of your neck… the sensitivity of your collarbone… the beating of your heart.”

His hand drifted down to the center of her left breast where her heart thrummed a steady beat against her ribcage.

Luke’s eyes burned as he looked down at Felicity, desire sizzling in the air. His hand on her soft breast, Luke couldn’t stop his mind from recalling the image of her naked body and the things he had done to give it pleasure.

“The swell of your breasts,” Luke stroked the tender flesh and Felicity shivered. His fingers circled the point in the center, straining the fabric of her tank top, “The hardness of your nipples under my fingers…”

He dragged his fingers across her soft breast and ran them down the valley parting the identical mound.

“The firmness of your stomach… the perfect resting place of your hips… the silkiness of your thighs…”

Felicity gasped as his hand stroked her tender thigh, teasing trail to the core of her pleasure. She bit her lip tightly, struggling to fight off her lustful desires to let him do what he wanted to her body.

“The heat of your eager cunt,” Luke stroked her pant covered sex. He grinned as he felt the touch of wetness staining the fabric of her crotch. Felicity was always extremely turned on by his dominant side.


He sighed and removed his hand, bringing it back to her face, “There’s so many things I’ll never get to touch… I’ll never ruffle Ben’s hair… I’ll never hold my newborn with natural hands. My father took that all from me, and you know what the worst part of it was? He knew I was his son and he still did it.”

“Then why did you forgive him?” Felicity asked. “Why do you put yourself through so much turmoil and choose to forgive him? To forgive everyone?”

“Because, frankly… it’s exhausting to hate someone, and this world has enough darkness in it… I don’t need to add to that pain.”

Felicity lowered her head. Luke could sense the turmoil in her mind, the battle that was struggling to tear her apart.

“You can’t do this, Luke,” Felicity shook her head and pushed him back from her. “Stop trying to win me back.”
“Never,” Luke said firmly. “I believe in destiny, Felicity. I believe in it to cope with the idea that these pains I’ve endured have all been for something. And I know that you are my destiny.”

“No!” Felicity snapped. “You can’t just come in here, spew some pretty words, and think I’m going to fall at your feet. This isn’t about me forgiving Tyla, Luke. I’ve made my peace with her. This is about you lying to me after you promised not to.”

“I know,” Luke sighed. “Felicity, please… I’m sorry. I made a mistake and I regret it, not because I lose you, but because it hurt you. I don’t want to hurt you, I never intended to hurt you. That’s why I didn’t tell you, because you were in so much pain and I didn’t want to cause you more.”

“That’s not an excuse.”

“Nor do I want it to be… Please, Felicity.” Luke took her hands in his, “I know the stories they tell of me, the way the Galaxy views me, like the character of a myth… but I’m not a myth. I’m not a God. I’m a man. A man desperately in love with you, who is going to make some stupid mistakes in his life. Believe me, I’ve made horrible mistakes, removing Artoo’s restraining bolt, letting Ben Kenobi go off alone on the Death Star, running off to Cloud City unprepared, and so many more. I’m going to make mistakes in the future, Felicity, and some of them will involve you… but I swear to you, I will spend every waking moment making up for those mistakes and proving to you the depth of my love. Please, Felicity, let me spend my life loving you.”

Tears swelled in Felicity’s eyes, and Luke could sense her turmoil, how much she wanted to say yes, and yet…

“No,” Felicity released his hands and turned her head away from him. “No… We need to stop this, before it’s too late, before…”

And then Luke saw it in her mind, a flash of faces: Brendan, Alaric, Riz, Ji-Dan, Gunner, Diego, Bail, Obik, Biggs, and Leia.

“Before what?” Luke puzzled over the images. “What’s going to happen if we continue this?”

Felicity sighed but still did not look at him, “The same thing that’s happened to everyone I’ve cared about… Sooner or later, one of three things happen to the people I love. They die… they betray me… or they abandon me…”

Luke’s jaw dropped slightly, his brows knitted together as Felicity crossed her arms and took a seat on the couch.

“I wasn’t meant to be loved, Luke,” Felicity said bitterly. “My mother died, so did my brother, so did my father, so did Riz and Ji-Dan and Gunner and Bail and Biggs. Losing them hurt, but it didn’t hurt as much as my father’s betrayal… Over and over again he hurt me and betrayed me and made me feel worthless. He showed me that I wasn’t worthy of love, and everyone else in my life has reinforced that point. Literally, the only person who has stayed with me this whole time has been Nils Arlos, and even then that’s probably only because he would have to pay me severance. Everyone else abandoned me.”

“No one abandoned you,” Luke stared at Felicity from across the coffee table as she stroked the top of Brendan’s urn.

“Pax abandoned me… four years together and then he told me that either I needed to move on from Brendan’s death or call off the wedding. Drystan abandoned me… he sided with the track during that whole Ben fiasco, and then dumped me for being emotionally unavailable since I wouldn’t tell
him all of the painful things in my life when he demanded it. Obik abandoned me... He saved my
freaking life, found out he was a Jedi, and ran off to Rornian without so much as a goodbye, then
didn’t speak to me for six years. Diego abandoned me... He was offered a position on Coruscant,
you know? Better pay even, but he liked the military base on Hosnian Prime better and chose to
move there instead of going in on a Coruscant apartment like we promised. Leia abandoned me...
once you and Han came into the picture, that was it for our friendship.”

“That’s not true. You and Leia just grew apart.”

Felicity’s eyes narrowed, “Is that what she told you? Well, let me paint a picture of ‘us’ growing
apart. I learn that the Empire killed my brother and Leia offers to get me into the Rebellion. I go off,
but not before we promise to see each other as often as possible... The next time I see Leia is five
years later via hologram on Jakku. Fair enough, she needed to keep a low profile as it couldn’t be
public knowledge that she was a rebel. I give her the plans, and we promise to meet up as soon as
possible... Six months later, we run into each other in the hallway on a Rebel Base and are happy to
see each other. Okay, sure, Leia was dealing with a lot during the aftermath, but now’s my chance to
see Leia and comfort each other over the death of Bail... except Han Solo comes up to her two
minutes into our conversation and says that he and ‘the Kid’ – whom I assume was you – are waiting
for her. Leia excuses herself, and promises we’ll catch up in no less than two months.”

Felicity sighed heavily, and Luke had an uneasy feeling.

“Two and a half years later,” Felicity continued, “I hear Leia’s in the control room on the Hoth
Base, which I am passing through for the night. I go to see her immediately and we’re happy, and
Leia asks permission to leave her station to catch up with me. It’s granted but first I have to check in
with my commanding officer. I tell her to wait right here and I’ll be right back. I return, and Leia’s in
the hallway screaming at Han Solo that she’d rather kiss a Wookiee. Han Solo storms away, and I
timidly approach her making some joke about Solo to break the tension. Leia tells me that she’s sorry
but she needs to go rant at Luke for a few minutes as he’s the only person who understands how
frustrating Han Solo is. She promises to come hang out with me a little later, so I go to my assigned
bunk, unpack, and wait.”

“This was the night we were supposed to go to dinner together, right?” Luke recalled Diego’s story.

“I met with Diego when I got off the transport. I totally planned on blowing off my blind date to
hang out with Leia.”

“And you got mad about me not showing up,” Luke teased.

Felicity smiled, then immediately dropped it as if her lips were betraying her face, “Pretty soon, I
hear what’s happened to you and Han, and I go to see Leia. She tries to act strong, but I remind her
of how she comforted me with Brendan. She breaks down and cries in my arms. Then she says
words that I will never forget, ‘Felicity, I can’t lose Han and Luke... I don’t have anyone else in the
Galaxy but them,’ ...And that was the moment I knew that Leia viewed our friendship as over...
She had traded me in for a Jedi and a Smuggler, and Felicity Rhiaon was nothing more than a
memory.”

Luke didn’t know what to say; he had never questioned the odd friendship between Leia and
Felicity. And he had never imagined that forming their little family of Rebels during the war had
involved Leia abandoning her childhood best friend.


He hesitated and placed a hand on her back. Felicity closed her eyes, but made no move to stop him.
Gently using his real hand, he traced his fingertips along her spine scar.

“That wasn’t the last time I saw Leia, but I never fooled myself when I did,” Felicity said. “I found out about the whole twin and Vader thing via the press conference you inexplicably held. Luke… why the Hell did you hold a press conference to announce that?”

“Leia said we had to tell the public before someone else figured it out,” Luke shook his head in mild amusement. “Then we could publicly acknowledge we were siblings, and explain where my sudden inheritance came from.”

“Makes sense. At first, I feared the whole Leia is the secret spawn of Vader thing… but I got used to it because I knew what kind of relationship they had had. I ran into Leia a month after the announcement, and we had awkward discussions about how we were both now engaged… and Leia was pregnant out of wedlock. I remember teasing her that Bail would have been so proud. At the end of our discussion, we promised to catch up some time, and promised to invite each other to our weddings… Except I never received an invitation.”

“Felicity, they only had about twenty people at the wedding,” Luke said. “It was more a Han had to marry Leia as quickly as possible before he ruined her campaign for Senator… and I killed him for impregnating my sister in an Ewok village.”

“Wait, is that where it happened?”

“I would rather not discuss my best friend impregnating my sister.”

“Sorry.”

“So, did you and Pax invite Leia to your wedding?” Luke asked.

“She declined the invitation in favor of some conference she easily could have skipped,” Felicity shrugged. “…I didn’t even bother to tell her when I broke off my engagement. We saw each other a few more times after that, but we weren’t friends anymore. Slowly, I watched my life fall apart: Diego moved, Pax and I broke up, and slowly my Rebel friends dropped out of contact. I got an apartment, had my job, went on business trips, dated occasionally, and just went on with life. Nobody noticed I didn’t have an emergency contact. Nobody noticed that I ordered in and heated up frozen premade meals because I didn’t know how to cook. Nobody noticed that I only had sex to obtain pleasure to fill the emptiness inside of me, forgetting what it even meant to make love. I would wake up every day and just feel… nothing. I took up running to connect with the outside world, but I would run through the crowds, surrounded by people and I would just feel… so alone. Most nights, I cried myself to sleep, and repeated the empty daily cycle all over again the next morning. For six years, I existed, but I didn’t live.”

Luke’s heart broke at the confession. Felicity Rhiaon was so strong and confident; he never dreamed that she had lived such a sorrow-filled existence.

“And then…” Felicity whispered. She looked up at him with tears in her eyes, “I met you.”

Luke frowned, “Felicity…”

She lifted a hand and stroked his cheek. Her hand stilled, like she had just remembered she was still mad at him, and Felicity lowered her hand.

“Leia and I got trapped in an elevator alone for an hour,” Felicity continued. “It was the first time we had been together in years. We talked about the old times, and the day we messed up with the elevator and met Vader. We talked about her family, and all the things you lot had accomplished.
Then we got on the subject of the upcoming Tenth Anniversary of the Battle of Yavin celebration. I joked with her that I was mad I never got a medal in the original ceremony, and Leia got the idea to give the medals to Diego, Wedge, Chewbacca, myself, and the others posthumously. A few weeks later, Leia contacts my office and arranges this whole event. Then the fateful day comes, and I tease Leia that it feels like just yesterday we were promising to hook up with each other's brother, and she says she suddenly has this great idea. Then she grabs me by the arm and drags me over to you, and… the rest is history. I find the greatest man who I have ever met, and fall madly in love with him.”

Luke smiled warmly and wrapped an arm around Felicity’s waist. She relaxed slightly, and leaned into his embrace.

“You filled all those empty parts of my life,” Felicity’s voice shook as he stroked her hair. “You’re there, just a few floors above me and spend time with me every day. You noticed I didn’t have an emergency contact and you’re so upset over the thought of me being hurt that you happily take the job. You go running with me, and I no longer feel alone in the crowd. You teach me how to cook, and join me when I eat out every morning.”

“I guess that’s one habit I couldn’t break you of,” Luke teased.

Felicity gave a small smile, but that quickly fell, “And… you showed me… maybe even for the first time, what it is to make love. Slowly and tenderly, fast and furious, vanilla and boring, spicy and kinky, but no matter how or where we have sex, I feel like we’re truly making love. And I do love you, physically, emotionally, mentally, with all of my being… And I-I…”

She started to cry.

“Luke, I can’t lose you,” Felicity sobbed, burying her face into his chest. “I can’t do it, not this time, not after knowing what it’s like to truly be in love. If I had you and lost you, this time I wouldn’t survive. I couldn’t go back to that life I had before. I was on the track for either dying from the emptiness of that life or losing myself to become bitter and dark like… not quite to the extent of Vader but maybe more like… like Phasma. That’s what I would face again. If I ever lost you, Luke, I would either die or become Phasma. I can’t live either of those lives, Luke, so please, please let’s stop… because I can’t go through death, betrayal, or abandonment with you. Please, Luke, please.”

“Felicity, stop,” Luke held either side of her face and forced her to look at him. “Stop. We don’t need to do this.”

“Yes, we do.”

“No. And I’m not letting you go; not ever. Okay? I showed you what real love is, and you also showed me. I never dreamed of obtaining this depth of love, but I’ve captured my heart, Felicity Rhiaon. For now and forever.”

“But Luke-”

“No buts,” Luke placed a finger on her lips. “Okay? We don’t need to do this, to cause this pain over wanting to prevent, what? This very same pain. You love me, and I love you, and that’s the end of it.”

“Luke, please,” Felicity whispered. “Everyone I love has either died, abandoned me, or betrayed me. I couldn’t survive it if you did too.”

Felicity raised an eyebrow, “Even death?”

“…That one might be a little tricky, but maybe more the route of do whatever it is Yoda and Obi-Wan did to retain their forms. I’m not sure if Non-Force Sensitives could see a Force Ghost, but hopefully I have a long time to figure that all out.”

Felicity sighed, and shifted her head to rest against his chest, listening to the steady beat of his heart.

Luke wrapped his arms tightly around her and pressed a kiss to her forehead, “Felicity Rhiaon, I truly, deeply love you, and if you’ll have me to share in that love, I swear to you that I will never betray you.”

“I know you won’t,” Felicity murmured. “Death or betrayal isn’t what I’m worried about… It’s abandonment.”

His hand reached out and cupped her cheek. Luke eased her head up to look him in the eye.

With unbroken eye contact, and a quiver in his voice, Luke Skywalker vowed, “Felicity Rhiaon, I will never abandon you.”

Felicity took a shaky breath as the truth of his words shone through, “Promise?”

Luke bowed his forehead against her own, “Promise.”

Felicity released a breath it looked like she didn’t know she had been holding back. Luke smiled, his thumb stroking away the tears running down her cheeks. Felicity closed her eyes and took another cleansing breath. When she opened them, she leaned forward and pressed her lips to his.

Savoring the taste that had denied to them for two weeks, Luke and Felicity melted under each other’s touch. His free hand buried its way in her hair while the other continued to cup her cheek. He used both holds to pull her into him as close as possible. Felicity’s right hand gripped the same bunch of shirt she had grabbed when she had dragged him into her apartment. This time the grip wasn’t of anger, but a desperate need to draw him in as close as possible. She moaned as her left hand clasped the back of his neck, her fingers swirling around the short hairs.

Taking a chance, Luke slid his tongue into her mouth and stroked the sensitive roof. Felicity gasped, rubbing breasts against his chest, not caring that her hand was being crushed in the process. The pleasure was too much for Felicity, and she broke away. Luke groaned when he felt her lips leave his and tried to recapture them, but Felicity used her hand on his chest to firmly hold him back.

“I’m still mad at you, you know,” Felicity panted, trying her best to look angry, but it came off as rather adorably grumpy. “You don’t just get to jump back in to heavy petting and passionate sex.”

“Well, I’m more than happy to work my way back,” Luke nipped on her collar bone.

Felicity pushed him away, and Luke gave her an innocent grin.

“Down, boy,” Felicity ordered.

“I’m sorry, but you dressed specifically in a way to turn me on.”

“No, I didn’t.”

“Admit it, you did.”

“Alright, I did,” Felicity chuckled, lifting a hand to stroke his cheek. Her hand paused halfway across
his skin and she frowned, “You didn’t shave today.”

“Oh… no, I didn’t,” Luke pulled back and awkwardly rubbed his jaw.

“Don’t tell me you need a woman in your life to ensure you’re keeping proper hygiene.”


“Sorry, right. I forgot. Don’t tell me you need a partner of either gender in your life to ensure you’re keeping proper hygiene.”

“That’s not what I… Never mind,” Luke shook his head. “And no, I don’t need you to remind me to shave. In fact, I was thinking about maybe growing out a beard.”

Felicity raised an eyebrow, “You’re not growing a beard.”


“Because I say so.”

“It’s my body, Felicity.”

“Seeing as we’re in a physically intimate relationship, I think I do have some say regarding at least a few of your body parts. But don’t worry, equal opportunity, you have say in some of mine as well.”

Luke stared at her, “I’m not sure if I agree with that notion.”

“Too bad for you,” Felicity smirked.

“I don’t understand. Do you think I wouldn’t look good with a beard? Should I wait a few more years until I look a little more mature and it would suit my face better?”

“No, I’m saying that I’ve had partners in the past with facial hair, and decided I don’t like the feeling. So, if you ever want to go down on me again, you’re going to stay clean shaven. Understood?”

Luke scowled, “Okay, that’s not fair. I won’t grow a beard, if you don’t want me to, but you can’t say things like that after explicitly telling me that we aren’t going to have sex right now.”

Felicity grinned, “Come on, Luke, by this point, you know exactly what you’ve gotten yourself into with dating me.”

“Well, I can always hope that someday you won’t want to spend every waking moment messing with people.”

“Yeah, don’t hold your breath on that on.”

Luke shook his head, “I suppose, I’ll redirect my efforts back into the whole getting you to believe in destiny thing.”

Felicity sighed and pulled back from him.

“I love you, Luke,” Felicity said. “But you need to understand that I’m never going to view the idea of destiny with more than raised eyebrows. To me it’s all just a logical sequence of events, with the occasional random thing thrown it. Believe me, I’ve tried not to be this way, but I can’t do it. I can’t find it in myself to believe something like my brother’s entire purpose was to die so that I could steal the plans to the Death Star so that some farm kid could get his sorry butt off Tatooine.”
Luke replied, “And I can’t believe that all of that wasn’t part of a plan to save the Galaxy from the Empire, find Han and Leia, and led me to you.”

“And I respect that, but I can’t bring myself to agree.”

“Then where does leave us?”

Felicity smiled, “At a compromise.”

Luke frowned questioningly at her as Felicity put a hand on his cheek. As Felicity gave a happy sigh, Luke placed his hand over hers.

“Luke, we can make this work,” Felicity pressed her forehead against his. “And do you know why?”

“Why?”

“Because I will never believe in destiny… but I’ll always believe in you. I know that we love each other, and that what we have is special. So, no matter what comes our way, we’ll always be at each other’s side, keeping each other from harm.”


“Always,” Felicity whispered. “I will always believe in you.”

Gently, Luke lifted his hand and stroked her cheek. Then he pulled her in for a passionate lingering kiss.

“Oh, I have missed kissing you,” Felicity sighed in contentment when Luke finally broke away. “Even if you are all scruffy.”

“Not as much as I’ve missed kissing you, and forget about the beard for now. I’ll shave it off later, but right now I need your taste on my lips.”

Luke pulled her in for another fervent kiss.

After a minute of reacquainting each other with the lips they had missed so much, Felicity pulled back from Luke.

“But if Tyla ever makes one disparaging comment about my brother, or jokes about his death,” Felicity warned, “I am so going to kick her ass.”


They kissed frantically, over and over until their lips were wet and swollen. Luke’s tongue was dragging up Felicity’s neck when she lifted into his lap to straddle him.

“Are you positive we’re not going to have sex today?” Luke moaned, running a hand up her leg.

“You know, I considered going off birth control just to spite you,” Felicity confessed as Luke eased the straps of her top down.

“I bet if I really concentrated, I could use the Force to summon the condoms in my nightstand down here,”

“As much as I genuinely would like to see that, as well as Threepio’s confusion if that happened, I stayed on my pills.”
“Thank the Force for a non-puritanical health care system. So, is sex off the table?”

Felicity grinned and glanced at the coffee table, “I want you to give it to me good on the table.”

Luke considered it, “That’s a new location. Bit of an awkward angle, and my back and/or knees are probably going to ache so much tomorrow… But if it means being buried inside of you, then I’m game.”

His lips on hers, Luke used the Force to start clearing off the coffee table. Felicity was kissing him with her tongue in his mouth when she noticed what he was doing.


He frowned at her and Felicity gave a sheepish smile.

“Brendan,” Felicity awkwardly nodded to the urn on the coffee table.


“Yeah,” Felicity rubbed her shoulder. “Don’t really want my tragically murdered brother’s ashes right next to my head while you screw me hard on coffee table. I’m going to go put this stuff away. Don’t go anywhere.”

“Had no plans to do so.”

As Felicity exited the room, Luke prepped for what was going to happen next. He pulled his shirt over his hand, and took off his glove, boots, socks, and lightsaber belt. Luke made sure to move his lightsaber to the kitchen counter so it wouldn’t get in the way. Felicity re-entered the room just as he was smoothing down his hair and checking himself over one last time.

“All clear,” Felicity announced, pulling her tank top over her head, and dropping her bra to the floor. “You ready?”

“Almost.”

Luke walked over to the armchair and lifted up one of the arms to reveal a secret storage compartment. Technically it was meant to be a cubby for remotes, but Felicity had repurposed it for nefarious purposes to hide some of her naughtier possessions.

“Are you keeping a pair of my briefs in here?” Luke frowned at the contents of the armrest as he pulled out the bottle of lube.

“Luke, you keep a pair of my panties and a bottle of lotion in your bedside drawer. You’re really going to judge me?” Felicity noticed the item Luke had collected, “Lube? Really, Skywalker? We just had a big fight and you think for make up sex I’m going to let you do an-”

“I’m smarter than that, Felicity.” Luke assured her, using the Force to set the lube on the floor next to the coffee table. He wrapped his arms around her waist and started leading her backwards, “The lube is to help get inside you the old-fashioned way. I can’t wait another moment, Felicity. I need to be in you now.”

Felicity gasped as her legs hit the coffee table and Luke started lowering her down.

“Wait, stop,” Felicity pushed on his chest. “We’re not there yet, Luke. You know, I’m still mad at you.”
Luke chuckled and held her upright, knowing that coy tone, “Oh, really?”

“Really,” Felicity wrapped her arms around him and placed them on his ass. She grinned and gave his cheeks a small squeeze, “Have I ever told you, you have a good butt? Nice and firm.”

“Right back at you, Miss Rhiaon,” Luke squeezed her ass. “All those squats are really paying off. So, what’s this about you being mad?”

“You have to work a bit before your cock can become reacquainted with my cunt.”

“And how do I do that?”

Felicity smirked. Stepping backwards, she led Luke back to the couch. She pushed Luke down and straddled him, her tits hanging in his face, and her crotch hovering above his.

“Looks like someone’s erect,” Felicity glanced down at the bulge in Luke’s pants that was straining to reach for her.

“Someone else is too,” Luke lowered his mouth onto her nipple and started to suck on it masterfully.

“Oh, I missed that,” Felicity moaned, cradling his head against her breast. “Yeah, just like that. That’s the spot. Oh, bite my nipples, Luke. Bite them and suck them and make them yours, Master Skywalker. They missed you so much.”

Luke moaned between his sloppy sucking, “So… how… do I… reach coffee table… level… apology… *Fuck, your breasts are delicious, Felicity. Does that feel good?”

“Bloody fantastic;” Felicity groaned as Luke sucked hard on her areola, the suction no doubt feeling incredible as he swirled his tongue around her nipple. “That turns me on so much, Luke.”

“It does, does it? How good? Does it get you wet? Does my mouth on your breasts make you wet? What about when I lick up the valley of these perfect pale orbs?”

“Oh!”

“Yeah, you like that. Remember the first time I put my mouth on your breasts? When I first sucked your nipples? When you seduced me in my office, making some excuse about cake and loneliness? But that shouldn’t have been the first time. No, the first time should have been that night we went drinking. I should have kissed you, and then brought you back here and sucked your breasts. Then I should have pushed you back on this very couch, unbuckled my belt, pulled down my pants – but only past my knees – pushed up that short little skirt you couldn’t even bend over in, yanked off your panties, and drove myself to the hilt. Picture it, Felicity, your legs spread, thrashing wildly as I pumped your core, fucking you into the couch cushion. The room filled with your rhythmic moans, the steady clinking of my undone belt, and the wet slapping of my balls beating against you with every deep thrust into your hot, tight cunt. Does that image get you wet? I bet it does. I bet your panties are soaking right now.”

“It gets me wet, Luke,” Felicity groaned, “but it doesn’t make my panties damp.”

“Why not?”

“Because I’m not wearing any underwear.”

“You’re kidding,” he looked her in the eyes.

Felicity smirked and unbuttoned the fly of her tight black pants, “Feel for yourself.”

Luke reached down her pants, and sure enough, his fingers slid through her wet fleshy folds unobstructed.


Luke buried his face between her breasts as Felicity rocked against his hand, building her pleasure. She panted faster and faster as her cunt got wetter and wetter against his fingers. He circled the entrance of her slit with his middle finger and was about to push in when Felicity suddenly removed his hand.

“Not yet,” Felicity told him breathlessly. “You have to earn your way into me.”

“Would you just tell me how to do so already? I swear, I’m this close to using a Mind Trick on you.” Felicity glared at him.

“To get you to tell me,” Luke corrected his phrasing error. “Not to get you to have sex my way.”

She still glared.

“And no… I don’t think you can but fooled with a Mind Trick.”

Silence.


Felicity shook her head, “You’re lucky you’re cute.”

Before he could protest, her lips were back on his and she was easing him down.

“Lie on your back,” Felicity instructed, scooting off him.

Luke lay back and reclined on his elbows to watch her as Felicity pulled off her pants.

“All the way,” Felicity chided.

Luke obeyed, “Now who’s being dominant?”

“We’ll resume normal programming some other time. Today’s my day.” Felicity spread her legs on either side of his thigh and lowered herself. She sighed when her pussy rested on his leg, “Oh, that feels good.”

She took a deep breath and started rocking against his toned thigh. Her hands were planted on his torso, her breasts bouncing gently, and her well-lubricated cunt glided easily across him.

“Here’s how today’s going to work,” Felicity moaned as she masturbated herself on his leg. “We are going to spend the entire day fucking. We’re going to take fresher breaks and stops for meals, but you are going to spend the entire day bringing me as much pleasure as humanly possible until it’s the dark of night, we’re completely exhausted, and you’ve fucked me completely dry. Now, as I recall, the most orgasms you’ve given me in one night is seven… Today you’re going to give me an absolute minimum of eight. As for yourself…”
Felicity swatted away Luke’s hand as he tried to reach down to play with his pant-clad bulge.

“You don’t get to have any orgasms unless I allow it,” Felicity said. “You’re going to do – oh – exactly what I say, exactly when I say it, and in what position I tell you to, and for how – ah – long I tell you to. If you’re good and follow the rules – yes – I’ll let you cum. But every time you cum without my permission… I’m withholding sex for a week. So, if you cum three times without my permission – yeah, that feels so good – you don’t get to touch this body for another three weeks… and then I’ll be really mad. Oh, God, I’m getting close. And one more thing… you don’t get to cum any way except your cock in my pussy. Your hands aren’t allowed on your cock today, and I’m not touching it with my hands, mouth, breasts, or anywhere except my pussy.”

“What if I need to get hard?” Luke took a deep breath, struggling not to grab himself.

She rode his thigh harder and moaned as he flexed it, “You can rub against me, and push comes to shove I’ll use my hands, but otherwise you are not being touched. Understand? This is how you really are going to make things up to me.”

“And when will I get to have you on the coffee table?”

Felicity thought about it, “How about number four? Agreed?”

Luke smiled, enjoying the sight of her pleasuring herself, “I don’t think I have much of a choice but… agreed.”

“Good, because I can’t wait for you to be inside of me. Pounding that thick cock of yours into my tight pussy, my cunt dripping with the cum from my previous orgasms. The room filled with the scent of sex and the sound of moans and wet slapping as you thrust ever faster and… faster and… faster, until you finally- OH GOD, YES!”

Felicity’s face contorted as she rode through the pleasure of her orgasm. Luke loved how she would always scream – usually his name – whenever she climaxed. He knew he had done right when Felicity literally screamed with pleasure.

Slowly, Felicity stopped moving and she struggled to catch her breath.

“That’s one,” she whispered.

Then she collapsed against him.

Luke smiled and pulled her up into his arms. He lovingly held her close to him as she calmed down from a rather intense orgasm if the feelings in the Force had been correct. Softly, he pressed tender kisses to her shoulders, and whisper assurances of love in her ear. He used the Force to wet a washcloth in the kitchen and bring it over to them on the couch where he used it to gently clean Felicity up. He was careful to use a pressure that would clean her but not masturbate her.

“Mmm, thank you, Luke,” Felicity snuggled up in his arms.

“Anytime,” he kissed her forehead. “I love you so much… I just want you to be comfortable.”

Felicity looked up at him and smirked, “Damn it, Skywalker. Take off your pants.”

“What?”

Felicity reached down and unzipped Luke’s pants. The zipper was barely over Luke’s cockhead when his erection was already poking out. She eased down his pants and briefs, telling him to lift
when they reached his butt, and chucked them across the room.

“Can you get the lube?” Felicity asked.

Luke frowned and summoned it, “Here.”

“Thanks,” Felicity popped off the lid and squirted a fair amount into her hand. She then wrapped that hand around his cock and began to pump.

“Oh God,” Luke threw his head back. “Felicity, what are you doing?”

“Well, that whole cleaning me up thing was just so romantic that it’s only fair for me to get you off,” Felicity swirled her thumb around the head of his cock.

“But you said you weren’t going to do this today.”


“You don’t need to worry about that. Oh, that feels so good. Could you do that gentle twisting motion I like?”

“Yes, Sir.”

It only took a few minutes before Felicity had Luke spurting off in her hand.

“It’s fine, Luke, really,” Felicity waved off as he tried to wipe away a little that had landed in her hair. “This isn’t the worst mess you’ve made on me. Remember Bespin last month?”

“Oh yeah,” Luke chuckled. “Next door, Han was so mad that he decided to storm into Lando’s office to file a noise complaint.”

“Only to come back ten minutes later all awkward saying that Lando was busy… That busy being Alyla spread eagle on his desk, and that yes, her scars are everywhere on her body. Seriously, what is it with Jedi and having sex on desks?”

“That reminds me, I have to make sure the next time we’re on Rornian together, I can find the time to finally bend you over my desk without any interruptions.”

“Speaking of interruptions, this one has come to an end.” Felicity climbed over Luke, “Lay flat and shimmy a little towards the end of the couch.”

Luke chuckled as Felicity grabbed the arm of the couch his head was pointing towards, and knelt over his face.

“I should have known this was going to be your next move,” Luke hooked his arms around her thighs to anchor her. “It’s your favorite thing.”

“No, my favorite is oral in the position of a sixty-nine,” Felicity replied. “Remember the signal if you can’t breathe?”

“Three taps on your thigh.”

“Bingo. I want you to go until I cum once. If you can do it twice, that would be great, but it’s okay if one or both of us can’t handle it twice,” Felicity’s tone was very matter-of-fact. But when the smirk graced her face once more, her voice dropped to a sultry tone, “Now, Master Skywalker… it was your mouth that got you into this mess… let’s see if it can get you out.”
“My pleasure, Miss Rhiaon,” Luke gently rubbed her thighs, inhaling the scent of her slick desire.


The next thing Luke remembered was those delicious, wet folds upon his lips. His tongue immediately set to work, lapping at her cunt hungrily. Felicity moaned wildly, her thighs clamping tight as she rocked above him.

Felicity Rhiaon riding his face to a pair of orgasms was the opening act to a simply erotic day of passionate lovemaking.

It was about one in the afternoon when Luke started pleasuring Felicity. By 2 am that night when they finally drifted to sleep, he had made her orgasm nine times.

And she had given him five.

1 Year, 6 Months, 4 Days

Luke was honestly surprised he didn’t just collapse at the front door of his apartment and sleep face first on the carpet that night. It was two in the morning, and even the droids didn’t bother to come greet him. He had just returned from three and a half very busy weeks on Rornian, and was glad to finally be home. The only downside to his late arrival was that it meant he couldn’t see Felicity until the morning, but the sooner he got to sleep, the sooner he would wake up and see her again.

Of course, he wouldn’t see her until they met on the roof to stretch for their early morning run. And if Felicity was going to bend over in front of him in tight spandex shorts after three and a half weeks of sexual abstinence, he was so not going to be responsible for what happened next.

Speaking of Felicity… As he entered his bedroom, stripping off his clothes and picking out a pair of pyjama pants, he called Felicity’s message box on his comm.

“Hey, Sweetheart, I just got home,” Luke said in his recording. “I decided to go straight to your inbox so I didn’t wake you up. You know, you look so beautiful while you sleep. I’m fine, my trip went well, but I wish you had been there with me. I swear I only lived for those nights you commed me. Especially the night you wore that sexy little purple thing. I can’t wait to see that in person, and of course seeing you. I’m going to take a shower now, and then go to bed. I love you, Sweetheart. I’ll see you in the morning.”

Luke took a quick shower, jerking himself off quickly to the image of Felicity doing erotic pre-morning run stretches, then him tearing off her clothes and having his way with her on the roof. It didn’t take long before he was shooting off against the shower wall. Then he toweled off, blow dried his hair, and pulled on his pyjama pants.

He was in the middle of brushing his teeth when he sensed the presence enter his apartment. Luke was surprised at the familiar Force Signature, but not endangered. He made no attempt to hurry up his bedtime routine as his guest waited for him.

Luke had a warm smile on his exhausted face when he entered the bedroom and found Felicity Rhiaon sitting on his bed, in a nightgown.


Felicity smiled, “Hey.”
She immediately stood up and crossed the room to his waiting arms. He pulled her in for a tender kiss, and warm, loving embrace.

“I missed you so much,” Luke murmured as he leaned back in for another kiss. “Three and half weeks is too long to be apart from you. I’ve been craving the flavor of your kiss. I forgot how good it tasted.”

“Oh Luke,” Felicity sighed. “There are just some things you can’t replicate through a view screen. Not that I was complaining the nights we tried.”

“No, you certainly weren’t complaining,” Luke chuckled, finally breaking away. He wrapped her arms around her and held Felicity close, “So… you broke into my apartment.”

“You gave me the passcodes,” Felicity reminded. “Besides, I just missed you so much, and when I heard you had come home—”

“I’m sorry that my message woke you.”

“I wasn’t asleep, Luke. I’ve had trouble sleeping the last week and was wide awake when you called. Then I saw you left me a message and heard you were home, so I thought I’d come up.”

“Oh, Felicity,” Luke groaned. Why did it have to be two in the morning? “I want nothing more than to make love to you right now, but I’m sorry, Sweetheart. I’m so exhausted. I just had my flight from Rornian, and this morning I had a big thing with the contractors over the medical center when they apparently somehow mixed up the designs with a different project they’ve been hired for. Then I had Reine on me about budget overages, then Shar’vida going on about seeds and bulbs and environmental conditions about the Meditation Gardens, Zena about taking a group to Illum to build lightsabers, Gavyn debating what age Miri should be allowed to use an actual lightsaber in training, Obik talking to Lor San Tekka about opening a Church of the Force in Temple Village, Alyla asking about what ages Younglings should be made into Padawans, Brinna and Tyla had a tiff about Tyla’s Imperial past, and Cade and his lot were causing their usual trouble, dragging poor Jake into the middle of it… Plus, I just masturbated in the shower, and I really don’t think I have the energy to get it back up, or take care of you while doing so—”

“Luke!” Felicity pressed her fingers to his lips. “I’m not here to make love to you.”

He blinked, “…Oh.”

Felicity laughed and pressed her body against him, “I mean, I would love to, but you’re right, we’re both exhausted.”

“So… why are you here? Not that I don’t want you here,” Luke was quick to add. “I mean, I do. I really do. Have I mentioned I love you? I’m going to kiss you.”

Felicity laughed as he pressed a frantic kiss to her mouth, “You are such a dork when you get flustered. But it’s okay, I find it adorable.”

“Adorable and dork are not very high on the list of words I want you to call me.”

“Fine, you sexy stud,” Felicity teased. “I came up here because like I said, I’ve been having troubles falling asleep, and I thought maybe… can I sleep with you tonight? I mean actual sleep. We’ll have sex first thing in the morning, but for tonight, I just want to sleep in your arms.”

Luke smiled, took her by the wrist, and led her to the bed as he used the Force to pull back the covers.
“If it will help you sleep, then by all means, Miss Rhiaon,” Luke pulled her into bed with him, “please join me. There’s plenty of room.”

He smoothed the blankets over them and used the Force to turn out the lights. Oh yes, it felt so right to have Felicity Rhiaon back in his arms.

“Thank you, Master Skywalker,” Felicity snuggled up against him, her head resting on his chest as his arms automatically wrapped around her.

Luke pressed a kiss to her forehead, “Anytime.”

1 Year, 8 Months, 22 Days

“Luke, Sweetheart, I’m back,” Felicity’s voice yelled from the doorway. “Threepio, can you help me with the groceries?”

“Coming, Miss Felicity!” Threepio called back. He nodded at Luke, who had been tinkering with him, “Pardon me, Master Luke, but your Beloved calls.”

“Of course,” Luke chuckled, flipping closed Threepio’s control panel. He smiled at Felicity as she and Artoo – heavily laden with groceries – entered the living room, “Well, what do we have here? It appears a beautiful woman has decided to grace us with her presence. I wonder what we have done to deserve this, Threepio?”

Felicity grinned in amusement as Threepio’s head spun between herself and Luke, trying to work something out.

“Pardon me, Master Luke, but…” Threepio’s voice was positively confused as he took the groceries from Felicity, “that is Miss Felicity Rhiaon, your Beloved. You have been courting her for nine months and seventeen days, and coupling with her for eight months and twenty-two days.”


Felicity laughed as Threepio looked at them once more and then entered the kitchen with Artoo, still clearly confused as to what had just happened.

“Well, I didn’t know your droids were so informed about our sex life,” Felicity shook her head. “I didn’t realize that Threepio had been keeping track of the days.”

“Neither did I.”

“I wonder if he’s also been keeping a tally of how many times we’ve made love, because we sometimes do it more than once a day.”

“Let’s not find out,” Luke smiled, his arms still lovingly wrapped around her. “Grocery store was okay? Artoo didn’t give you any problems?”

“None. He was on his best behaviour,” Felicity replied. “But that also might be because he just finished a six month ban from that place and didn’t want to get banned immediately afterwards. You know, give him a few weeks before causing another ruckus. Actually, they were having a sale on Jawa juice, and I got an idea.”

“Oh?”

“I am going to cook us dinner tonight,” Felicity declared, “and they are all going to be recipes native
Luke looked surprised, “Felicity, wow, are you sure?”

“Of course. We got all the stuff, and Artoo has all the recipes. It’s going to be just like the food you had growing up.”

“Wow… I don’t know what to say.”

Felicity’s smile dropped, “You’re a little afraid of eating what I’m going to make.”

“Our relationship is built on honesty.”

Felicity shook her head, “I’m sure it won’t be that hard, and even if it is terrible, you won’t say a thing about it.”

“Oh really?” Luke raised an eyebrow. “And why wouldn’t I?”

“Because I’m really good at sex, and can withhold it from you.”

“You really should have been named Lysistrata.”

“Probably,” Felicity shrugged. “So, what have you been up to this afternoon?”

“Tinkering with Threepio. You know, I think I might be able to retrieve his erased memories.”

“Have you considered that might not be a good thing?”

“It’s passed my mind, but to be honest… I really just want to know why Threepio is programmed not to impersonate a deity.”

Felicity frowned, “What?”

“It’s not a standard protocol to for a droid to have, and certainly wouldn’t be something you can find in the junk to harvest as a slave,” Luke explained. “That means that Threepio was specifically given this protocol by someone, which probably means that there was an incident where he did pretend to be a God.”

“You’re right, I do need to know that,” Felicity said. “Hey, ten credits say Artoo’s the reason it happened.”


There was a knock on the door.

Luke and Felicity looked at each other.

“Expecting someone?” Felicity asked.

Luke shook his head.

“Alright, you get it and I’ll help the Droids with the groceries.” Felicity shot a look back at the kitchen, “Truth be told, I don’t trust Artoo with produce anymore.”

“Do I even want to know?”

“Probably not.”
“Alright then,” Luke quickly kissed her and headed for the door. He checked the security camera panel next to the door and found the building manager was waiting outside. Quickly he opened the door, “Hello, Osto.”

“Hello, Master Skywalker,” Osto Foss bowed his head. “Is Miss Rhiaon here?”

“Sure, why?” Luke didn’t like the idea that someone would come looking for his girlfriend at his apartment.

“I’ve been trying to get a hold of her for the past few days and she hasn’t been home,” Osto explained.

“Oh, sorry, my comm’s broken and been in the shop all week,” Felicity called from the kitchen, and Luke allowed Osto in. “What’s going on, Osto?”

“I need to know if your apartment is alright,” Osto answered as Felicity walked back into the living room.

“Uh…” Felicity frowned. “It should be fine.”

“So, it wasn’t one of the units affected by the flooding?”

“There was flooding?”

“Yeah, a couple of units on your floor flooded. There were signs posted on all the walls of your floor. Haven’t you been down there?”

“I honestly can’t say I have,” Felicity looked surprised. “Luke, do you mind if I go check?”


As Felicity and Osto exited the apartment, Luke frowned. When had Felicity last been to her apartment? Because his was so much bigger and luxurious – it was a penthouse on Coruscant – Felicity and Luke had been spending all of their time at his apartment.

But before he could ponder it any further, he heard a loud crashing from the kitchen.

“R2-D2! Look at what you have done!” Threepio exclaimed.

Luke sighed. This is why he didn’t let the droids put away groceries.

“Tah-dah!” Felicity set the serving plate down on the table. “Lablabi, Mloukhia, and Shakshouka. Just like you’re back on Tatooine, but instead of having dinner with a grouchy man yelling at you about moisture farming, you get to eat with an attractive woman wearing a certain red dress I know you like so much.”

“Felicity, you have outdone yourself,” Luke grinned taking a seat, the dishes smelling positively delicious.

“Oh, and we’re having Samsa for dessert,” Felicity added.


Felicity laughed as she took a seat next to Luke.
She had gone the whole nine yards for their dinner with candlelight, soft music, and even wine from Tatooine which was extremely rare. And as they were about to discover… there was a reason.

“Ugh!” Felicity groaned as she and Luke pushed their glasses away, trying to get the taste out of their mouths. “I will never be able to undrink that.”

“Well, at least we can say we tried it,” Luke used the Force to lift the bottle off the table and put it in the kitchen. “So how did your inspection with Osto go?”

“The apartment’s fine,” Felicity reported. “It’s weird that I didn’t notice the flooding though. How long has it been since I stayed in my own apartment?”

“I’ve been trying to work that out. I think it was when I went to Temple Village last week?”

“No, remember, I stayed here with Alyla and Lando… which reminds me, you owe me for that.”

“They both happened to be visiting at the same time and needed a place to stay, and unfortunately Han and Leia were already having Aunt Sola stay with them in their apartment.”

“Luke, they conspired!” Felicity exclaimed. “I will never be able to unhear the things I heard through that wall. Lando is apparently pretty chatty when he’s getting down to business.”

Luke frowned, “They were supposed to stay in separate rooms.”

“Didn’t mean they did, and I wasn’t about to break up that party. There is not enough bleach in the galaxy to clean the image out of my eyes of those two making the beast with two backs.”

“How poetic,” Luke said flatly. He took a bite out of the food, “Oh, wow this is good.”

“That’s two you owe me then,” Felicity smirked.

Luke grinned and ran a hand up her thigh, “I can give you two.”

Felicity rested her head against Luke’s shoulder, “So I guess that means the last time I was in my apartment was after my last Resistance mission you couldn’t make.”

“Rornian needed me, Felicity.”

She ran a hand up his shoulder and started playing with the short hairs on the back of his neck, “I missed you that night. That bed was so cold and lonely without you.”

“I think I’ve made that up by now,” Luke kissed her hand. “Apparently, you’ve been sleeping in my bed for over a month.”

“Wow… and we didn’t even have sex quite a few of those nights. I just really like falling asleep in your arms.”

Luke pressed his forehead to hers, “And I love waking up to you in them. It’s truly the highlight of my day.”

Felicity closed her eyes, enjoying the moment as she stroked Luke’s face. Then she sighed and reluctantly pulled back, “I guess we’ll have to stop doing this so much. There’s no point to me paying rent on an apartment that I don’t even use.”

Luke paused, “No… you’re right, there isn’t.”
Felicity frowned at the look on his face, “What?”

“I was just thinking,” the idea formed in Luke’s mind, “why don’t you just stay here… permanently?”

“Are you asking me to move in with you?”

“Yeah. I mean think about it. We go running every morning, have breakfast, I drive you to and from work, we spend the evenings together up here, make dinner together, you have most of your clothing, makeup, and all the important things like that up here, we share the same bed every night. You even bought groceries for this place today. We’re basically living together already.”

Felicity grinned, “You’re right. It does make sense.”

“So, is that a yes?” Luke asked eagerly.

“Absolutely,” Felicity kissed him.

Luke couldn’t wipe the grin off his face as he kissed her over and over, savoring the taste of her lips. His hand moved slowly higher and higher until her reached the hem of her underwear. He started to trail his fingers across, closer and closer to her apex where he-

“Oh, ah, ah!” Felicity shook her head, pulling his hand away. “Not yet, Skywalker. I spent too long cooking all of this only for it to get cold because you have desires. Now, eat up, and we can make love after dinner.”

Luke tried not to look to sullen as he pulled back from Felicity. They sat there and ate dinner together without exchanging a word.

“Oh screw it,” Felicity threw down her fork after several minutes. “We have a microwave.”

Luke laughed as he grabbed her hand and dragged her toward the bedroom.

2 Years, 3 Months, 14 Days

“Mmm, we have got to go on vacation more often,” Felicity moaned.

She and Luke had gone on a week-long trip to Naboo to the lake country. They were standing on the veranda, Luke’s arms wrapped around Felicity as they watched the lake. The sun was just rising, the morning rays filtering through the window, bathing them in golden light.

It was the very same lake house that Anakin Skywalker and Padmé Amidala had hidden in in the prelude of the Clone Wars. Luke and Felicity’s choice of accommodation was a testament to how far their relationship had come: that Felicity was willing to spend a romantic week away with Luke in the house Anakin Skywalker had been married in.

Of course, Felicity had been so delighted to point out to Luke that he had very likely been conceived in that very building, and if not, it was at least definitely the place Anakin Skywalker lost his virginity.

That was why they weren’t sleeping in the master bedroom.

“I love waking up to you every morning,” Luke glided his fingers across her soft skin, glowing in the golden light dancing across the lake. “I’m going to lock this memory in my mind forever: you in my arms, bathed in rays of light. I’ve always loved the first ray of the sun, bringing life and hope anew to
the world. In that precious moment, with a ray of light… everything is right in the Force.”

Felicity shivered at the sensation of his fingers one her skin and romance of his words, “Waking up with you is my favorite part of the day. I wish I could do it every morning. Between Resistance, Emissary, and Jedi missions we don’t get to do it often enough. But I could spend every morning at your side.”

“You could?”

“Mmm hmm.”

Luke took a deep breath to calm his nerves, “Felicity… there was another reason I wanted to bring you here, other than vacation.”

Felicity frowned and looked back at him carefully, “Okay…”

Luke closed his eyes and took another deep breath. He knew that the best thing to do was just lay it all out before her:

“Felicity, someday I’m going to ask you to marry me,” Luke announced. “I know we’ve thrown the ideas of marriage and children around casually, but now I’m pledging myself to the idea. I’m completely committed to this relationship, and I can no longer imagine spending my life without you. Now, I’m not proposing to you at this exact minute, but I’m letting you know that marriage is my endgame. If you don’t see that as a future possibility, I want you to tell me now so we can end things amicably.”

Felicity stared at Luke, the barrage of new information buzzing around in her mind.

“I’m sorry, what was that first part?”

“Look, I don’t want to pressure you into anything,” Luke assured her. He had known her long enough to know she used the whole I didn’t hear you excuse as a way to avoid difficult conversations. “But this shouldn’t come as that big a surprise. I’m not saying let’s get married today, but I want you to know where I’m directing this relationship. Just please, promise me that you’ll think about it.”

Felicity took a deep breath and nodded, “Okay… I’ll think about it.”

“Thank you,” Luke turned back to watch the sun slowly rise. He was quiet for a minute, and then said, “I just completely killed the mood, didn’t I?”

Felicity laughed, “Little bit.”

“Dang it.”

---

2 Years, 3 Months, 18 Days

“It’s nice they clear this place out for you when you visit,” Felicity said as Luke paid his respects to his mother’s grave.

“They have to,” Luke gave a small grin as he knelt by the closed casket of Padmé Amidala. “They can’t exactly say sorry, we can’t let you have private time with your deceased mother because this memorial is one of Naboo’s top tourist attractions.”

“It could be worse,” Felicity smiled. “They could charge you admission.”
Padmé’s casket was in the center on a platform in the circular walled gazebo type structure. The walls were black, and blue light filled the room. An image of Padmé Amidala was projected on the north wall, and as Luke knelt on the steps leading to the casket, Felicity couldn’t help but see how much Luke looked like his mother.

Felicity stood off to the side, at the entrance to give Luke some semblance of privacy. Luke had always come to visit his mother’s grave whenever he came to Naboo, but this was the first time he had brought Felicity with him. Felicity had visited the grave when she was a teenager working for Leia. It had been Leia’s request to meet the great Nubian Queen, never suspecting it was her own mother.

Luke had spent most of the visit just talking to his mother, vaguely updating her on his life. He kept one hand on the stone of her casket, as if securing his connection to her. It was his ritual. Sometimes when he spoke to her, he could feel the Force change, like somehow a part of her was in the room with him.

He wished he had known her… the least he could do was ensure she knew him.

“And that’s about everything that’s new,” Luke spoke to the grave. “You should see how well Ben is doing with his studies. He grows stronger in the Force every day.”

“You say that like it’s a good thing,” Felicity joked.

Luke looked up at her. Felicity and Ben wouldn’t truly start their rivalry until Luke proposed to Felicity, but their relationship had never been a smooth one. Even at that time, Ben had decided to give Felicity as much trouble as possible… and she was more than happy to give him just as much trouble back.

“Sorry,” Felicity smiled. “I shouldn’t interrupt.”

“No,” Luke grinned at her and held out his free hand. “Come.”

Hesitantly, Felicity walked forward and took Luke’s outstretched hand. Gently, he guided her down to kneel with him at the grave. His flesh hand remained on the casket. He would not touch his mother’s grave with the hand replaced by metal after the flesh had been stolen by his father.

Felicity clasped his false hand tightly; the days of her hesitance to be touched by it were long over. The hand may be mechanical, but to her it was just as much Luke as any other part of him. And truth be told, Felicity had long ago learned that a mechanical hand could be quite the interesting asset in the bedroom.

“Mother,” Luke spoke to the grave, clasping Felicity’s hand, “I want to introduce you to someone. This is Felicity Rhiaon. She’s the woman who protected Leia from Father the day they met. Felicity also was the one who stole the plans to the Death Star, and helped me find you… But most importantly – at least in the sense of introducing her relationship to me – Felicity Rhiaon is the love of my life.”

Felicity’s breath caught. Luke had said such things hundreds of times before, but this time was special. This time, when he was introducing her to his mother – even if it was a casket – Felicity finally felt the weight of those words.

“I spoke to Grandfather Ruwee once, and he told me something I keep close to my heart,” Luke continued speaking to his mother. “He told me that everyone gets three loves in their life. Their first love, their last love… and their true love.”
Luke looked at Felicity, fear behind his eyes.

“I didn’t get the pleasure of having her be my first love,” Luke said, “and I know I’m not hers. But I know in my heart, not only is she my true love… but I know that I will never love another woman after her. Not after having a taste of what this means. She is my true love… my last love… and with respect to Nakari Kelen… Felicity is the only love that will ever matter.”

Tears shone in Felicity’s eyes. She knew his words were not for his mother, and Felicity didn’t know how to handle it.

She didn’t deserve Luke Skywalker. She was broken, she was angry, and she was skeptical of the mysterious Force that was the center of his very being.

But she was the love of his life.

…and he was hers.

Felicity smiled, squeezed Luke’s hand, and looked at the grave.

“It’s truly an honor to meet you, Senator Amidala,” Felicity told Padmé. “You were something of an idol to me growing up. You gave me courage and strength… and now you’ve given me something even better. Love. You gave me a man who loves me fully and unequivocally, and I swear to you that I feel the same way about him.”

Felicity looked over at Luke. He was smiling brightly at her, his thumb stroking the back of her hand clasped with his.

And with his eyes filled with such utter love and trust… Felicity made her decision.

Felicity looked back at the casket, “You know, your son has been keeping something from you, Senator Amidala.”


“Luke didn’t tell you this,” Felicity continued, “but a few days ago, your son told me that one day he’s going to ask me to marry him. And I just want you to know, when that day comes…”

Felicity turned and locked eyes with Luke.

“I’m going to say yes.”

3 Years, 3 Months, 3 Days

“And so, with great pleasure, I declare the planet of Rornian to officially be a member of the New Republic,” Nils Arlos announced.

The crowd cheered and cameras flashed as Luke and Nils shook hands, posing with the datapad listing Rornian’s new certification. Among the crowd was the entire Jedi Order and Emissary department, as well as some personal friends, and of course, Luke’s family.

Luke could never forget how beautiful Felicity looked that day wearing her hair up, the kyber crystal bracelet, and a semi-formal dress. It was dark green, which Felicity later told him was a wink to Luke’s lightsaber… even if it was the wrong shade of green.

“Now that doesn’t mean we don’t still have at least another year or two of paperwork,” Nils grinned
at Luke. “You’ve still got to work out a few trade agreements and establish organic population growth. In other words, someone on this planet is going to have to give birth sometime soon. Though I think I might have an Emissary to help get that in motion.”

Everyone laughed as Nils winked at Felicity and she rolled her eyes, shaking her head for the cameras.

After Luke gave a short speech, the ceremony quickly concluded. People slowly started to make their way to the Meditation Gardens for the reception while reporters asked various Jedi and Emissaries for pictures and comments.

“Congratulations, Master Skywalker,” Felicity sauntered towards Luke as he finished speaking to a reporter. “This must be a dream come true.”

“It’s only a dream because you’re here with me,” Luke smiled, pulling her into his arms and kissing her.

To the side, a pair of cameras flashed, capturing the tender moment for history. Luke and Felicity broke apart, startled by the interruptions.

“I hate when the cameras intrude on our moments,” Luke groaned.

Felicity gave her famous one corner smirk, “Then let’s make sure it’s a moment to intrude on.”

“With pleasure.”

Felicity locked her arms around his neck, and Luke dramatically dipped her down, planting a passionate, and not quite appropriate kiss for the audience. The cameras went absolutely wild.

“All right, knock it off, you two!” Reine yelled after a minute. “You’re not leaving me to speak to all of these reporters by myself, Luke.”

“Sorry, Reine,” Luke chuckled as he brought Felicity back to her feet, but his arms were still tightly wrapped around her.

Reine rolled her eyes, “Geeze, you guys go at it worse than humanoid cats.”

“Excuse me?”

Reine turned to see that Zena, Coria, and Nerissa – all the Zygerrians in attendance – just happened to be walking past her at that exact moment.

“My apologies, Ladies,” Reine grinned, but the women didn’t seem impressed.

“Oh, don’t act so high and mighty, Hon,” Gavyn grinned at Zena from where he had been talking to a reporter with Obik. “I can give plenty of testimony advocating the truth of Reine’s words.”

Obik leaned forward and squinted, “Is that a bite mark on your neck?”

Gavyn just smirked and arched a brow at Zena.

“You have no shame, do you?” Zena shook her head.

“Must run in the family,” Felicity jerked her head towards the nearby treeline.

Lando Calrissian had pinned Alyla Kene up against a tree, and the two were passionately making out
as if they didn’t care about the dozens of reporters surrounding them.

Gavyn scowled at the sight of his sister going at it with Lando, “I need a drink.”

He grabbed the very confused Obik, and dragged him towards the reception.

“Sure, when we do that we get yelled at,” Felicity pressed suggestively against Luke.

“Well, I’m more than happy to do it again,” Luke gave a kiss to her neck.

“Miss Rhiaon, can we get a few quotes?” a reporter called.

Felicity sighed, “Sorry, Skywalker. Duty calls.”

“I’ll see you in the reception.”

Luke watched her go start the interview, which no doubt would eventually turn – as always – into an interview about dating the Jedi Grandmaster. Felicity enjoyed those because she liked to make up the most ridiculous rumours in them. People still thought he had a tattoo of Han’s name in a very inappropriate place.

“Master Skywalker.”

Luke turned and smiled when he saw an old friend make his way through the crowd.

“Lor San Tekka,” Luke shook the man’s hand and clapped him on the back. “I’m glad you made it.”

“Wouldn’t miss it for the world,” Lor San smiled. “I must say, congratulations. You’ve come very far. How do you feel?”

“Like all my dreams have just come true.”

“There’s always something so bittersweet when they do. You have everything you want: Jedi Order, a secure home, friends, family, and – if that little show was anything to believe – a very beautiful young woman to share it all with,” Lor San winked.

Luke laughed and looked back at Felicity; his heart fluttering as always at the sight of her, “I do have it all, don’t I?”

“The only question now is what comes next?”

Luke stared at the woman he so loved; sharing and supporting one of the biggest moments of his life. His heart knew there was only one answer to that question.

“Actually… I have an idea.”

3 Years, 6 Months, 10 Days

“So, can you guys come to Rornian next month?” Luke asked eagerly as Han, Leia, and Ben sat in his living room.

Han and Leia exchanged a confused look.

“Yeah, sure Kid, but… why?” Han asked.

“Han’s right,” Leia said. She held up a hand to shush Han when he opened his mouth to commentate
the rarity of those words. “We’re very proud that you’ve finally decided to build your house on Rornian, but you don’t even break ground for two months. Why do you need us to come when you tell Felicity you’re starting?”

“Maybe it’s damage control,” Ben said, the almost nine-year-old lounging across the loveseat by himself. “Rhiaon’s not going to like you breaking up with her.”

“For the last time, Ben, I’m not breaking up with her,” Luke replied calmly. “You know, I’m sure the two of you would get along very well if you just spent some alone time with her.”

“I’ll pass,” Ben rolled his eyes.

“Ben sit up, and don’t roll your eyes at your uncle,” Leia ordered. “And would it kill you to even try giving Felicity a chance?”

“It might,” Ben shrugged. “Let’s not take the risk.”

“Ben!” Han snapped.

“What?” Ben moaned. “Come on, she’s just another one of Uncle Luke’s girlfriends. Why do I have to get to know her?”

“Felicity is not going anywhere, Ben,” Luke firmly said. “Please, could you just try getting along with her?”

“She doesn’t try getting along with me!” Ben exclaimed.

“Enough!” Leia ordered. “We’re not having this conversation again. Ben stop disparaging Felicity, and I’ll talk to Felicity again about going easier on you.”

It was hard for Luke to see Ben and Felicity always fighting, but it seemed like there would never be an end to the feud. Felicity refused to back down when she felt Ben had stepped out of line, and Ben refused to give his uncle’s Non-Force Sensitive girlfriend the time of day. Luke had the feeling Ben and Felicity would be much like Han and Anakin: under different circumstances they would have gotten on like a house on fire, but due to their past they would never be anything but mortal enemies.

Why did this family always have to be so dramatic?

“Now, Luke,” Leia turned back to her brother, “why do you want us to come with you and Felicity?”

Luke took a deep breath, “Because I want all of you to be there. Han, Leia, Ben, the Droids, and Chewie’s already agreed to come. I want- I need you to be there with me when it happens.”


“When what happens?” Han asked.

“Guys… I need your help to do something important,” Luke grinned and grabbed his HoloMag reader off the table. The catalogue chip had already been inserted, and the two pages had been bookmarked. “The first step is helping me decide between this…”

Luke’s reader projected the image of an engagement ring.

“And this…”
A second ring was projected.

Luke grinned at his family, “Which do you think Felicity will like better?”

The Solos were staring at Luke with open mouthed shock.

“Kid…” Han started, but couldn’t find the words to continue. Luke could sense Han’s disbelief through the Force.

“I’m going to take Felicity to the site of our future home, and give her one of these rings,” Luke announced.

“Luke, I don’t believe it,” Leia’s eyes were filling with tears. “Are you saying that-”

“Yes,” Luke declared. “I’m going to ask Felicity to marry me.”

Han and Leia were instantly on their feet, hugging, crying, and congratulating Luke. It was a moment they had waited so long for. Not just seeing Luke proposing to Felicity, but seeing Luke finally finding someone to spend his life with. It was a truly happy moment as they celebrated their family taking on a new member, and the chance to call Felicity Rhiaon their sister… and their wife.


Ben was utterly devastated.

Chapter End Notes

So I’ve been sending out feelers to a few people on this, but I want to know the consensus. Would you guys want me to extent this group of flashbacks another chapter to delve more into Felicity’s PPD? There are plans to go over some more of the major stuff a little later on – particularly the Ben/Felicity incident, and the incident we do not speak of – but if you guys want to see it, I’ll extend the flashbacks one more chapter.
Part Five: Marriage

Chapter Summary

Luke remembers the events leading up to his marriage.

Chapter Notes

I just want to address the issue of how long it’s taking to get to TFA. Let me be clear: the intention of the story is not Luke being in TFA, but rather Luke being in Rey’s life. If you must know, the chapter in which BB-8 shows up at the walker is currently slated for Chapter 43.

Why? Because I personally feel it’s important to see how Luke’s presence changes Rey’s childhood for better, and in some cases, for worse. I don’t only want to see Luke in TFA, I want to see him in Before the Awakening. I want to see him react to her first love and first heartbreak. I want him there when she gets her staff and learns to fight. When she builds her very own speeder, when she learns to pilot, and when the freaking Millennium Falcon shows up.

At the same time, I also want to see how Luke’s life would change. How he gets new friends, lives without the Force, and maybe even falls in love. I want to see him torn between giving his daughter a better life, choosing to abstain from helping the Galaxy, and the consequences of such choices. I want to do things that will make this story more powerful and emotional. You guys wouldn’t care at all that Felicity was shot if I just summed up how Rey and Luke got separated, then reunited, and then jumped into TFA. But I made the decision to take the time to let the audience get to know Felicity, and her character, and the relationships she has with Luke, Rey, and the rest and why the removal of her from their lives was so devastating. You guys wouldn’t care about her at all, but because I did that, I had people begging me to let her live, and people asking to see more of her.

So that’s why I choose to take this time to spend on Jakku. To show these relationships with Quom, Aletha, Mashra, and others to understand how leaving Jakku later on affects Rey. To show how strong this bond between Luke and Rey is, so that later on when the truth comes out and the bond gets damaged and even at one point, broken, you understand the weight of that relationship, how at times it was all the two had, and now it’s being lost.

To me, this is a better, more complete story with that included. If I were to skip to TFA next chapter, you genuinely would not understand what was going on. You would wonder about references made, choices of characters, why Rey – having had her father in her life – might not be the same girl she is in TFA originally, and even one thing that would very much confuse you. Spoilers ahead where the heck did one of the characters go?

This is the story I want to write, and at the end of the day, that’s all that matters. This is a hobby and something I do for my own pleasure. I want to read about Luke during Rey’s childhood, and I want to write it, and that’s what I’m going to do.
So, if you don’t want to read a story where I don’t immediately jump into TFA, you have three options:

Grin and bear it until you get to the part you like, and maybe try to find some enjoyment in the literally over 130,000 words I have written since chapter 17.

Take a hiatus from reading until Chapter 43, though many things you won’t understand as a result, and I can’t guarantee 43 will absolutely be the beginning of TFA.

Stop reading. I really don’t want you to, but at the same time I’m not going advocate you wasting your life reading something you don’t enjoy. If you do stop, I thank you for your support and wish you a happy life.

To come down to it, this is the story that is being told. Take it or leave it. The choice is yours, but I’m writing the story I want to write, and nothing’s going to stop me.

…Unless The Last Jedi does something to completely screw me over. Which it probably will.

Damn it.

---

The Long Way Home

Chapter Twenty-Seven

Part Five: Marriage

3 Years, 6 Months, 28 Days

Being Luke Skywalker, his proposal didn’t go exactly to plan.

It was all because of Reine. Honestly, if she had just stayed quiet, Felicity wouldn’t have been pissed at him.

When Luke and Felicity started dating, Felicity withdrew all involvement in Rornian’s Emissary case out of conflict of interest. However, when Luke decided to propose to Felicity, Luke withdrew his own involvement and sent Reine in his place, using the excuse that Luke felt it more appropriate now that Rornian was an official member of the New Republic.

To Reine’s credit, the only people who knew about Luke’s proposal plans were Luke, Han, Leia, Ben… and the Force Ghosts who were evenly split between happy for Luke and trying to talk him out of it. Despite seeing the successes of the relationships between Gavyn and Zena, Alyla and Lando, Reine and Obik, Eline and Jafan, and Coria and Nerissa, Yoda was determined that attachments should not be allowed. Obi-Wan was on the fence, torn between traditional Jedi beliefs and his own personal desire to see Luke happy.

Meanwhile Anakin was weirdly overly excited about the woman who once shot him in the life
support suit becoming his daughter-in-law.

When Luke informed his father that he was planning on marrying Felicity, Anakin had chuckled and said, “That girl? I like her. She’s feisty. You sure know how to pick them, son. She’s absolutely gorgeous. I mean, no Padmé Amidala by any means, but Felicity’s the most attractive girl I think you’ve ever dated.”

Luke was very uncomfortable with the notion that his father found Felicity attractive.

Reine was staying at Luke and Felicity’s apartment on Coruscant for Emissary business a few weeks before Luke was to take his family and Felicity to Rornian. As far as Felicity knew, the reason for the upcoming visit was something to do with Ben’s training, hence why Han and Leia were coming, and she always joined Luke on his visits to Rornian whenever she could.

Luke was lounging on the couch of the living room, reading a historical record of the governmental funding the Old Jedi Order received. Felicity was kneeling by his feet at the coffee table, working on tweaking the hologram design of her latest university course project. He had suggested she use the dining room table, but she wanted to be near him.

He casually glanced down at Felicity and couldn’t help but smile at her scrunched up concentrating expression.


Felicity groaned and pressed a button on her design pad to bring up the calculator, “It’s the load weigh. I can’t get it just right.”

Luke set his HoloReader aside and – wrapping an arm around Felicity’s shoulders – squinted at the design, “Have you tried adding another pillar?”

“I can’t. The assignment is to use only five of them. Maybe if I reordered the spacing…” Felicity made a few adjustments to her design and then calculated the result, “Ugh! No! I swear, I’m going to throw this thing out the window.”

“I’m sure you’ll get it, Sweetheart,” Luke kissed her cheek. “But maybe you should take a break.”

“You’re right; I need to take my mind off it for a while. Maybe I’ll work on my dream house design.”

Luke froze. Felicity had no idea that he had technically stolen it from her and given it to the contractor. He really didn’t want her to discover it was gone.

“Are you sure you want to work on that now?” Luke asked as Felicity searched their office room. “We could, uh… We could do something else.”

There was a loud thud as it sounded like Felicity was moving boxes in the closet.

“Do what?” Felicity asked.

“Uh…” Luke thought hard for a good idea. “We could… We could have sex.”

I didn’t say he came up a good idea.

Felicity’s laughter echoed from down the hall, “Really, Skywalker? That’s how you’re going to seduce me? I’m bored. Let’s have sex. You actually think that’s going to work?”
“It did yesterday.”

There was a pause.

“Good point.” Felicity leaned out of the office doorway, “Hey, Luke, do you know where my house design went? It’s not here.”

“Have you checked the bedrooms?” Luke suggested, trying to buy himself some time.

Felicity went and checked, but naturally found nothing.

“It just so odd,” Felicity frowned, leaning against the wall of the hallway. “You’re sure you haven’t seen it?”

Luke needed to come up with a lie fast. He knew it would be okay in this situation. This was more surprise party secret Felicity proclaimed not to give a shit about, and less I’ve been harboring your brother’s murderer, but we’re cool right?

“I had it last on Rornian,” Felicity thought hard.

“Oh that’s right!” Luke pretended to suddenly recall. “You left it at Alyla’s place when we stayed with her. She meant to send it with Reine to give to you, but she forgot.”

Felicity frowned, “That’s weird. I’m certain I remember packing it.”

Luke just shrugged. Sure, he was willing to occasionally fib to her in the name of a surprise, but he wasn’t about to gaslight her.

“Well then, I guess there’s only one thing to say,” Felicity walked back into the living room.


Felicity smirked and shoved him against the couch back.

“I’m bored,” Felicity straddled his lap. She bent down and kissed his neck. “Let’s have sex.”

He grinned, his hands stroking her spread thighs as she started to unbutton her top. Luke grinned at the view of her black lace bra and the way it seductively presented her pale breasts. God, he wanted his mouth on them. As she dropped her top on the floor, Luke pushed on her back, bringing her closer to his embrace and drew his lips across her newly exposed skin. His hand was on the clasp of her bra when suddenly the apartment door slid open.

“Luke, I’m going to kill the contractor!” Reine shouted as she stormed into the apartment.

“Reine!” Luke exclaimed, gently pushing Felicity off his lap. “We didn’t think you’d be back so soon.”

Reine stopped in her tracks when she saw Felicity pulling on her top and hastily buttoning it. Felicity’s actions were so frantic she didn’t realize her shirt was inside out.


Luke flushed red, “I’m sorry, I… What was that about the contractor?”

Reine seemed as happy about the change of conversation as him, “Right… I’m going to kill him.”
“Please don’t,” Luke said dryly. “It wouldn’t look good for me if my first student turned to the Dark Side… though I guess technically Ben was my first student.”

Felicity smirked, “What the hell were you doing to him in-utero?”

“Luke, I’m serious, we need to fire this guy!” Reine exclaimed.


“Well, he finished the frame for his latest project… except it’s backwards.”

“Excuse me?”

“Yeah, he built the frame for your house backwards.”

Felicity frowned, “What did you just say?”

“I am not lying,” Reine said. “The house entrance is in the backyard, and the back entrance is in the front yard. Your house, Luke, is backwards. We’re going to have to tear down the frame and re-stake the area.”

“Your house,” Felicity whispered.


“Luke…” Felicity said slowly, “are you building a house?”


Reine looked at him in confusion, “You didn’t tell her?”

“It was going to be a surprise,” Luke explained, taking Felicity’s hands. “Please, don’t be mad at me. I was going to tell you when we went to Rornian. I was going to show you the house frame and explain. I didn’t mean for it to be some big secret.”

Felicity glared at him, “I am mad, Luke, but not because you kept this secret.”

“Then what are you mad about?”

Reine awkwardly glanced between the pair, “Um… I’m going to go to the roof and call Obik about… not being here while you two fight.”

She couldn’t escape the apartment fast enough.

“Why are you mad at me, Felicity?” Luke calmly asked. “You know that I’ve been planning on building a house for years.”

Felicity sighed; this wouldn’t be one of their rare screaming matches, “I know and I was expecting that, but I’m mad that you started the house without even telling me. Without discussing it first.”

“I thought you would like the surprise.”

“In theory, yes, but Luke have you stopped to consider the position this puts me in? We live together. My job is here. How is this going to work? You living on Rornian and me on Coruscant?”

“Well… I was sort of expecting you to come live with me on Rornian.”
“I can’t come live with you on Rornian and work on Coruscant. You didn’t even ask me about this, you just assumed.”

“Felicity, I’m sorry.”

“So, what am I supposed to do? Stay here and just be your Coruscant girlfriend, like a piece of furniture to be left in this apartment?” Felicity echoed his words from years before, “Is that what you’re looking for in this relationship? A nice face and someone you can drop and pick up again as easily as a book?”


“I love you, Luke Skywalker. I have fallen desperately, hopelessly in love with you… but I’m not some… pull out couch to be used when the occasion arises.”

“You aren’t, just like how I’m not either. We never have been that, and never will be.”

Her own words sunk into her mind and Felicity burst out laughing, “I’m sorry, did you actually once call yourself a pull out couch, and I didn’t mock you for it?”

Luke smirked, placing a hand on her leg, “If I recall correctly, you were too horny to mock me.”

“I suppose,” Felicity chuckled. She smiled softly at him and ran a hand through his soft blonde hair, “I love you, Luke… but I can’t move to Rornian. It’s too much to ask me to uproot my entire life for a boyfriend.”

Luke tried to keep the grin off his face.

“Let’s not make any decisions just yet, ok?” Luke said. “How about you come see my house and we’ll talk about how we’re going to make this work?”

Felicity sighed, “Alright, fine. But only because you’re cute.”

“I’ll take it,” he chuckled and kissed her.

“Oh Luke,” she moaned as he slowly pushed her to lie on the couch.

“You know, Reine isn’t probably coming back down for a while,” Luke fiddled with her shirt buttons. “How about I make things up to you by relieving some boredom?”

Felicity laughed, “Bedroom, Skywalker, or with our luck the Droids will wander in.”

“Alright, but how about we shake things up and use the guest bedroom?”

“The one Reine’s staying in?”

“No, the one I keep set up for Han to hide from Leia in when she’s mad at him and crashes with me.”

Felicity pretended to think about it, “You know what? Yeah, I could bang you in Loud Mouth Solo’s bed.”

Luke scooped her up into his arms, “Then what are we waiting for?”

They kissed the entire way to the bedroom. When they arrived inside, Luke set Felicity down, and locked the door while she started to undress.
“Luke?” Felicity’s voice called as he turned back around, pulling his shirt over his head.


“I just wanted to be clear about one thing.” Felicity moaned as he pushed her onto the bed and started teasing her stiffening nipples with his tongue. “I’m willing to move to Rornian… just not when I’m your girlfriend.”


“Good,” Felicity smiled, her hands going to his belt buckle. “Now… let’s get these pants off, Master Skywalker.”

“With pleasure, Miss Rhiaon.”

And in that moment, Luke was truly glad that Felicity wasn’t Force Sensitive. Because if she was, she could see that all he could think about while they made love was the engagement ring hidden in his sock drawer.

3 Years, 7 Months, 8 Days

Luke took a deep breath. He righted his shoulders and smoothed down his hair. He was standing in one of the two bunk rooms on the Falcon – the one that usually served as his and Chewbacca’s. In his hand was the ring box that was about to change his life.

He could do this.

“Hey, Kid?” Han stuck his head into the room. He grinned as he saw the ring in Luke’s hand, “You ready?”

Luke smiled and tucked the ring box into his pocket, “Let’s do this.”

“Could Loud Mouth Solo really make no better excuse to get out of seeing your house other than, Leia, I can’t think of an excuse?” Felicity shook her head as she climbed up the hill to the site of Luke’s future home. “I mean, at least Ben ran off with Alyla, Chewie… honestly I didn’t understand, the Droids went to get oil baths, and Leia said she wanted to see the new Church of the Force building. But really Loud Mouth Solo?”

Luke chuckled, “Are you ever going to stop calling Han that?”

“Nope,” Felicity shook her head. “So can people stop making fun of my nickname for him? Even Phasma has said she wouldn’t be caught dead using the nickname for Han. Phasma, Luke. Phasma.”

“Yes, I get it, Captain Phasma would never call Han, Loud Mouth Solo,” Luke wrapped an arm around Felicity’s waist. “Now can we focus on what I have planned? I want to tell you about the house.”

“Fine,” Felicity leaned into his embrace. “You want to tell me why you decided to build it at the top of the hill? This climb is going to be so annoying on the days you’re exhausted… but hey, at least you’ll have a great looking butt.”

Luke chuckled and shook his head, “Sometimes I wonder if you’re only with me for my looks.”
“Of course not. It’s also because you can use the Force to get things from across the room without me having to stand up.”

“How is someone as athletic as you also so lazy?”

“Genetics. My father built a Death Star but couldn’t be bothered to plug a simple leak.”

“Then thank the Force for your family being so lazy.”

As they climbed up the hill, Luke explained to Felicity the symbolism of his home looking down upon Temple Village, and how it meant he would always protect them. He explained where the pathway would lead to the house, and of the ceremonial gate. He spoke of the trees and plants he wanted to line the path and the paving material to make the road.

At no point did Felicity notice that Luke was hiding his right hand behind his back.

He led her to the top of the hill where stakes were pegged into the ground, outlining the various rooms. Luke only wished the contractor hadn’t messed up the framework. He had planned on Felicity putting the pieces together at the sight of the house, but the stakes didn’t leave a very clear picture.

“Do you like the layout of the house?” Luke asked Felicity, trying with all his might to keep his cool.

Felicity looked around with raised eyebrows, “Well... it’s a house. Hard to tell much more at this stage.”

“I suppose so,” Luke fiddled with the disk in his left hand.

“Are those the blueprints?”

“Yes.”

“Can I see?”

“Not yet.” Luke clasped her hands in his, “First I wanted to talk.”

Felicity frowned, “Luke, your hands are shaking. What’s wrong?”

He took a deep breath, “I’ve been thinking a lot lately about us and where this relationship is headed.”

Felicity’s breath caught. His words were so simple, but the weight of them so great. There was of course only one conversation that began with those words after multiple years of dating, living together, and promising to get married some day.

Of course, what was life like without having a little fun?

“Felicity, you’re right. I can’t ask my girlfriend to move to Rornian with me. I’ve been thinking long and hard about this, and I’ve come to a conclusion. Felicity Rhiaon, I love you so much... and I think we should stop dating.”

Her jaw dropped.

“WHAT?” Felicity screeched. The look on her face was priceless, “What did you just say to me?”

Okay, he had to keep it together if this was going to end well. Stick to the script, Luke reminded
himself.

“I love you, Felicity,” Luke continued, “I truly do, but as much as I love you, I can’t have you be my girlfriend. I can’t keep dating you, no matter how much I enjoy it. You understand, right?”

Felicity was breathing heavily. Her mind was a buzz of confusion, fear, and sorrow. He could sense the thought in her mind: that he was going to break his promise to never abandon her. She looked like she was going to hit him, burst into tears, or pass out. Honestly, she might do all three, so he had to talk fast before she decided between anger and sorrow.

“I know this is hard to accept, and I think it’s for the best,” Luke continued, ready any moment for her to lash out. She still hadn’t noticed he was hiding his right hand behind his back.

“I don’t- I don’t understand,” Felicity struggled to hold back her tears. “I thought… I thought you loved me. I thought I did things right.”

“You did,” Luke wiped a tear that started to roll down her cheek. He needed to turn this around right now. “That’s why this is happening. I love you, Felicity. You’re my perfect mate.”

“I…” Felicity took a step backwards. “I need to go.”

Wait, what? No, that wasn’t part of the plan. Violence and screaming he could deal with, and if things went wrong, he had several plans b, c, d, and so forth. He had everything from getting Han and Leia involved, to absolute worse come to worse using the Force to physically push the image of the ring into her mind. But Felicity running away from him was so unexpected, it wasn’t even in Plan Z.

“No,” Luke caught her arm before she could escape. He had to pull this back immediately, “Wait, I want to show you something first. The house plans.”

Felicity’s expression was absolutely heartbreaking, “Luke, no, I-”


Felicity must have been too overwhelmed by the sudden turn of events to disagree. Slowly, she nodded her head, probably hoping it bought her time to collect her thoughts.

When he flicked on the holo, her thoughts settled. She saw that the blueprints were that of her dream home… and she was pissed.

“This is where my design went?” Felicity hissed, her eyes flashing dangerously.

“I loved it so much, I knew I had to build it,” Luke smiled, but his grin was not returned.

“Luke Skywalker,” Felicity said in a deathly cool voice, “you have exactly five seconds to explain why I shouldn’t RIP YOUR THROAT OUT!”

“Felicity-”

“ONE!”

“Because the house-”

“TWO!”

“Because the house is your wedding present.”
Felicity froze, “…What?”

“It’s my wedding present to you,” Luke repeated. He flicked off the holo of the house and tucked the disk into his pocket. “I’m not breaking up with you, Felicity. Far from it. The reason I’m saying we should stop dating… is because I think we should get married. I can’t have you be my girlfriend, because I need you to be my wife.”

Felicity said nothing, frozen in shock. She was crying still, but they had changed to tears of joy.

“This isn’t happening,” Felicity whispered. “Tell me this isn’t happening.”


Then he did that most iconic of actions and went down on one knee. Felicity still don’t notice he was hiding his right hand.

“Felicity Rhiaon,” Luke’s voice was reverent as he delivered the speech he could never forget. “When I was a young man growing up on Tatooine, I was restless. Every day I woke up and knew that this was not the place I was meant to be, and this life was not the one I was meant to live. I watched the suns rise and set, days stretching on and on, yearning for something more than that. I would stare out at the horizon and know deep in my heart that there was something, somewhere out there waiting for me. A piece of me that had been displaced, and I needed to find it.”

“Luke,” Felicity had a very small smile. Yet the depth of happiness it conveyed twinned with those tears of joy made it probably the most beautiful smile Luke would ever see grace her lips.

“I made it off Tatooine, found friends, saved the day, became a Jedi, and even got a sister out of the deal… But still, part of me yearned. I had the greatest sister, and a brother who is by law in title, but of my heart in practice. I built a Jedi Order from the ground up, and I served in the military, earning titles, accomplishments, and respect. I am the center of bedtime stories, history books, and someday even myths. I have fame, fortune, family, everything one aspires for… and yet, I still watched the horizon, waiting to find that piece of me that never seemed to appear. After a while, I thought to myself that maybe there wasn’t anything more, that I had gotten everything I needed.”

Luke took a deep breath, trying to collect himself as his voice shook harder and harder. The amount of happiness and love and Light he felt in that moment was unmeasurable. He was certain that down the hill, the Jedi of Temple Village were feeling a disturbance in the Force. Heck, with the amount of Light Side filling him, Luke honestly wouldn’t have been surprised if he started to literally glow.

“And then you just waltzed right into my life,” Luke laughed, sniffing as the tears started to fall, “like it was nothing at all. Like you owned the place. You just settled right down smack dab into the middle of my life and told me to deal with it. You know, that’s one of the things I love about you so much. You may inwardly be a little self-conscious and unsure, but when you decide to do something, you put your all into it. You step forward with your strength and your heart, and you do not falter. I can be vulnerable around you, Felicity, and you’ll be my rock. You balance me, you support you, and yet you’ll call me out for the idiot with delusions of grandeur I am.”

“You’re not an idiot,” Felicity gave a small laugh. “You’re the kindest, bravest, most loving man I have ever met.”

“And you… how could I possibly name your attributes? Books upon books could be filled with your amazing qualities, but there are not enough pages in the galaxy to list them all. Courageous, intelligent, passionate, loving, and of course beautiful. Not just of body but mind and soul and heart. That said, don’t you dare think for a moment that you are not the most gorgeous woman I have ever
laid eyes on.”

“And hands,” Felicity smirked.


There was a pause for a few seconds, the two just allowing the memory of this moment to lock permanently in their minds. This turning point that would change their lives forever. This goal they had worked so long for. No fight mattered anymore, no conflict of belief. When it all came down to it, all that mattered how perfectly those two hearts fit together.

“I know you don’t believe in destiny,” Luke finally continued, looking up at the beautiful visage of Felicity Rhiaon’s face… One that he would only get for a far too brief period in his life. “But I believe in this. Felicity Rhiaon, we were meant to be together. You are my soul’s mate, who else could ever match me in the ways you do? Who else could balance me? Who else could possibly be as messed up in the same bizarre fashion as me?”

She laughed.

He sighed, “I’m never going to find another person as perfect as you.”

Felicity closed her eyes, “I’m not perfect, Luke.”

“You are to me,” Luke whispered.

Her eyes reopened and enflamed blue orbs locked upon her joyous hazel gaze.

“You are the reason for the stars in the sky, for the suns to rise and set, and for flowers to bloom,” Luke’s words were barely audible. “You are perfect to me, flaws and all. I’ll never find another person as perfect as you, and frankly, I don’t want to look. My brain may not have known it, but my heart did. It looked at you and said, ‘done. There she is, the thing we’ve always been waiting for.’ The piece of me that had been missing had been found, and next thing I knew, you had stolen my heart. These past three years with you have been the greatest of my life, and I pray that they’ve been as wonderful for you.”

Felicity nodded, “They have.”

Luke took her left hand, “Felicity Rhiaon, I love you more than I thought it was physically possible to love another person. I want to spend my life you, from this day, and every day, until the day I die, and even beyond that. I offer you this ring as a symbol of my love for you and my vow to you.”

In his hand, she intertwined her fingers with his own. This wasn’t just an offer of marriage, but a vow for forever partnership.

“Felicity Rhiaon, I vow to spend the rest of my life making you feel as happy as you make me. I do not vow to try, for there is no try, there is only to do or do not, and I choose to do. If I can even make you feel a tenth of the love I have for you, I know that not you will never go wanting, for my love is unending. I want to spend the rest of my life with you. I want to marry you, have children with you, and spend our days growing older and only ever more in love.”


“Felicity Rhiaon… will you let me marry you?”

“Yes.”
He was on his feet, in her arms in an instant.

“Yes, yes, yes Luke, yes,” Felicity repeated as he kissed her passionately over and over.

Their tears and laughter mingled as they held each other, laughed, kissed, and cried. Still, Luke kept his right hand behind his back.


Felicity laughed, “Anytime.”

Luke pulled her in for one more passionate kiss.

Suddenly, mid-way through the kiss Felicity pulled back and smacked Luke on the chest in a very unplayful manner.

“You asshole!” Felicity scolded. “I think we should stop dating. I can’t have you be my girlfriend. You made me think you were breaking up with me, and you had stolen my house design!”

Luke burst out laughing, “I am so sorry, but you should have seen the look on your face.”

“You are such a telano!”

“Have I ever told you that I love when you use Huttese… even if you only use the swear words.”

“Luke,” Felicity smacked his chest again, but this time it was a playful hit. “Seriously, why would you propose like that?”

“Well, I thought long and hard about how to do this, and I felt that when one proposes to their partner, they should do it in a way that says something about their partner,” Luke explained. “Bring in that personal element that is so uniquely that person. If they love flowers, do it in a garden. If they’re family centered, have their family be an audience… Or maybe if you’re that person’s former slave master, do what Zena did when she proposed to Gavyn and… give him a broken shackle… I suppose.”

“When you sit down and think about it, Gavyn and Zena are a very weird couple.”

“Agreed.”

“I still don’t understand your proposal,” Felicity said. “Why do I merit cruel and unusual punishment?”

Luke grinned, “Because when you think of Felicity Rhiaon, there’s one very specific thing you think of. So, I knew the only way I could truly propose to you was bringing you to the site of our future home, the house you designed… and completely messing with you.”

“Luke!” Felicity scolded, playfully hitting him again. “You thought the perfectly unique way to propose to me was by messing with me?”

“Yep.”

“I...” Felicity paused. “Yeah, actually, you know that does check out.”

“It was either that or bring you to Yavin IV,” Luke shrugged. “I did also find a way to incorporate Brendan into this, though.”
“Oh? How so?”

Luke brought forward his right arm to reveal that he had actually been wearing Brendan’s stormtrooper glove instead of his own black glove.

“Please don’t think this is weird,” he quickly said as Felicity stared at him in shock. “I just figured the three main things about you were Brendan, architecture, and messing with people. This was the best I could come up with that didn’t involve also stealing your brother’s urn.”

“Luke, I…” Felicity didn’t seem like she knew what to say. It was a little bit of an odd gesture, but the intent behind it was the main thing to focus on. Gently she smiled and grasped Luke’s glove-clad hand, “Thank you.”

“You’re not weirded out by it, then?”

“Oh, I am a little, but when you sit down and think about it, you and I are a very weird couple.”

“Agreed,” Luke chuckled, pulling out the ring box. “So, do you want to try on the ring?”

“Sounds fun,” Felicity laughed. When she saw it, her eyes nearly popped out of her head, “Holy crap, Skywalker! How much do you pay for that ring?”

“Let’s just say my insurance has gone up significantly,” Luke reddened slightly. “Sorry, Felicity, but I still want to keep the grand total of my finances private – even from you – until absolutely necessary… You’ll understand when you hear the amount.”

She shrugged, “As long as you understand I’m keeping my job. I don’t care to be a kept woman.”

“Wouldn’t dream of it.”

Felicity frowned as she inspected the engagement ring closely, “Luke… did you engrave ‘Thank you. Anytime’ on this?”

“…Maybe. Are you mad?”

Felicity shook her head, “No, but you’re getting it engraved in your wedding ring.”


“We’re getting married,” Felicity beamed.

“You’re going to be Mrs. Felicity… Did you want to take Skywalker?”

“Luke, we got engaged three minutes ago. Let’s talk about it later.” Felicity slid on the ring, “It fits perfectly. How did you know my ring size?”

“I may have… measured you in your sleep.”

Felicity raised an eyebrow.

“Isn’t it pretty?” Luke quickly said.

She shook her head, “This is the man I chose to spend my life with.”

“No takebacks.”
Felicity laughed, “So, who do we tell first? It’s nice and convenient that your family and most of our friends are already here… You totally planned that, didn’t you?”

“Why else would I bring everyone here to look at wooden stakes planted in the ground?”

“That explains Han’s pathetic exit. I’m surprised the Loud Mouth could keep quiet about you planning on proposing to me.”

“Honestly, I’m more surprised that you didn’t catch any of the hints he’s been dropping for the past two months. I was certain he was going to ruin this somehow. Thank goodness I had Leia to enforce the ‘please do not interrupt this moment’ rule I told them. Shall we go down and tell them?”

Felicity smiled, “Not yet. I want a few more minutes with you, just basking in this moment… this beautiful moment I’ll never forget.”

“Promise?”

“Promise.”

Luke took her in his arms once more to hold her and kiss her and celebrate their newly made promise. And in that moment, it seemed like nothing could ruin their happiness.

…Except for Ben Solo.

3 Years, 7 Months, 9 Days

“Please, Uncle Luke, don’t marry Felicity!” Ben begged.

Luke stared at his from the other side of his desk, “I don’t believe what I’m hearing. Ben, do you understand what you’re saying?”

“I understand fully. Please, you can’t marry her, Uncle Luke. She just ruins everything!”

“Ben, stop,” Luke said firmly. “This feud between you and Felicity has gone too far. Bickering is one thing, but asking me to break off our engagement is crossing the line, and I will not stand for it.”

“But you can’t marry her, and not just because I don’t like her!”

“Oh? Then why can’t I?”

“Because she’s not… pure.”

Luke raised an eyebrow, “That’s very dangerous vocabulary, Ben. What exactly is ‘unpure’ about her?”

“She doesn’t have the Force!” Ben exclaimed.

“Neither does your father.”

“But he believes in the Force! She doesn’t!”

“She doesn’t believe in destiny, Ben. Not the Force. Trust me, she knows all about the Force existing. You can’t live with a Jedi for two years and not know.”

“But she needs to believe in all of it!” Ben objected. “If you marry her, then you’ll have kids with
her, and you shouldn’t wasting your genetics on someone like her! You’re the son of Darth Vader! You have a responsibility for the producing an acceptable heir… If I’m being replaced, it better be with someone worthy.”

Luke scowled, “Alright, first off, you are not being replaced in any capacity. You will still be trained as a Jedi, and you will remain my nephew.”

“But who’s going to take over the Order when you pass?” Ben shot.

“As it currently states, that would be Reine Agim. Now that might change when your generation grows up, but you have never been promised leadership of the Order, Ben. If you are the strongest and best person for the job when I pass on, the Order could very well pass to you. Then again it might go to Reine, or Obik, or Miri, or Genko, or this non-existent child of mine you’re getting worked up over.”

“But-”


“Uncle Luke-”

“Third, you are getting into extremely dangerous territory with this purity nonsense. Let me remind you that for most of history, Jedi did not have Force Sensitive parents. Your own power is not negated based on who your parents are, and if they are, our family has a very power case. I’m only half Jedi. My mother wasn’t Force Sensitive. Your father isn’t. Felicity isn’t.”

“Felicity isn’t my family!” Ben snapped.

“But she will be,” Luke shot, “because none of this matters. This wedding is happening, Ben. I’m marrying Felicity. She will be your Aunt. End of story.”

“I’m never calling her my Aunt,” Ben’s eyes were dark.

Luke took a deep breath, “That’s your decision, but Ben-”

A knock came from the open door.

“Am I interrupting?” Alyla asked.

Luke looked over at Ben and saw that he had relaxed a little bit, “No, of course, come in.”

“I was just wondering if Ben was free to practice blocking remote bolts,” Alyla stepped into the room. “He’s getting really good and I want to keep him going. I think we might be able to do two remotes soon.”

Luke looked at Alyla and curiously tapped her mind in the Force. Sure enough, his suspicion was correct: Alyla had sensed Ben’s distress and came to calm him down.

“I think we’re done here.” Luke looked to Ben, “You want to go practice with Alyla?”

“Sure,” Ben hopped out of his chair. He mumbled, “I need to blow off some steam.”

As Alyla wrapped an arm around Ben’s shoulders, she looked at Luke and mouthed, “Fliss?”

“Come on, Killer,” Alyla led Ben to the door. “Hey, did I ever tell you about how mad I got at Gavyn when he started dating Zena?”

Luke smiled as the pair exited the room, talking easily with each other. Alyla always could defuse Ben, now if only Luke could figure out her secret.

Felicity wasn’t pure. Where in the Galaxy had Ben heard that nonsense? Luke would need to have a very serious talk with the members of the Order about this whole blood purity thing.

Luke was free to marry whomever he wanted, and he wanted to marry Felicity. End of story.

But unfortunately, that was not the end of the story.

As Luke looked back on his time with Felicity that night on Jakku, he chose not to remember what had happened next.

How Tyla Kinall had confronted Felicity with the same diatribe to the point that Felicity was in tears. How she had fled to Luke’s arms in tears for love and reassurance that she was worthy of him. How Reine discovered that Cade Ren was responsible for the whole purity nonsense going around. How Luke called the entire Order to the Meditation Gardens for a very explosive meeting where the group’s conflicts finally came to a head. A meeting that ended with Cade Ren abandoning the Jedi Order, taking Bakura, Zhane, and Jake with him to later become the Knights of Ren named Baku, Zhan, and Jaek respectively. How Luke’s decision to marry Felicity would be the catalyst for the Burning of Rornian.

But worry not, we will revisit that story.

3 Years, 10 Months, 17 Days

“We’re back!” Luke called as he and Han entered the living room.

Leia and Felicity looked up from the couch where dozens of wedding materials were spread across the coffee tables.

“How did the fitting go?” Leia asked. “The suits look fine?”

“They look great,” Han answered. “Luke, thanks again for not picking formal Jedi attire for the wedding party. I don’t think I can exactly pull off robes.”

“Alright, new life goal, get Loud Mouth Solo in a robe at some point,” Felicity smirked as she read through a catalogue. “Luke, can you look at the cake design mock ups? I’m thinking either design 4 or 17.”

Luke frowned as he approached the couch and noticed the myriad of cake drawings, “How many of these do we have?”

“Uh, last time I checked, I think it was 37,” Felicity absentmindedly scrolled through the pages on her tablet screen.

“Wow, I really didn’t picture you as the kind of girl who couldn’t settle on a cake,” Han took a seat on the couch next to Leia. He picked up a few of the sheets to inspect them himself, “Then again, I guess it is a whole design thing and you have a liking for that stuff with your architecture degree.”

“Actually, a bunch of bakeries have sent their designs unsolicited,” Felicity informed Han.
“Apparently, it’s a pretty high honour to bake a cake for Luke Skywalker’s wedding. Not that we’re really going to advertise who did it. How they got our address is beyond me, though.”

“Speaking of your degree,” Leia said, “have you got a set date for your graduation? I want to book it off so we can be there with you.”

“Oh, thank you, Leia,” Felicity was flattered. “You really don’t have to.”

“Of course, I do,” Leia smiled, placing a hand on Felicity’s leg. “We’ve been friends for so long, sisters practically. I know your actual family isn’t here anymore, and I know we did drift apart for several years, but you are my sister, and I will be there for you.”

“You’re my sister too,” Felicity smiled and hugged Leia. “I’m just so happy you ended up having an incredibly sexy twin brother to make us legally so.”

“Ugh!” Leia shuddered and pushed Felicity away. “Come on, Felicity, we’ve talked about you calling Luke sexy in front of me. It creeps me out.”

“I know. That’s why I do it,” Felicity smirked. “Besides you thought he was hot first.”

“So anyways!” Luke loudly interrupted, not wanting to go over the topic of incest yet again. “Felicity have you heard back from your family yet?”

“You invited your family?” Leia was surprised.

“The Andromias side,” Felicity admitted. “They’re not that bad, but we’re having a firm discussion of rules they must follow if they are to attend this wedding.”

“And Zena’s going to make sure they stay in line,” Luke added.

“What about your dad’s brother?” Han asked. “I’m sure your uncle must be absolutely thrilled that you’re marrying your father’s killer. God, that guy was an ass. I’m still trying to scrub that awkward dinner the four of us had with him out of my mind.”

“Oh, Garvan Rhiaon can go to hell,” Felicity said simply. “I would much rather have Darth Vader – and I mean actual Vader, not redeemed Anakin – at my wedding, than my uncle. Hell, I’d gladly accept Palpatine over Garvan.”

“Felicity?” Luke frowned, picking up a pamphlet, “What’s this? ‘What You Need to Know About Name Changes.’”

“Just an information brochure on the process of name change after marriage,” Felicity flipped through a flower catalogue. “Do you think we should try to find some Tatooine flowers for my bouquet?”

“I didn’t know you were changing your name,” Han said. “I thought you would take Leia’s route and keep your surname.”

“For the last time, Han,” Leia sighed, “it was because I had established a professional life behind the name Organa, and I was still really clinging onto the whole Bail Organa is my father, not Anakin Skywalker notion.”

“Still, I think Leia Organa Solo would have been just fine,” Han shrugged.

“Excuse me, but I let you name our son, Ben Solo. Not Ben Organa Solo.”
“Hey, where is Ben?” Luke frowned, awkwardly noticing the absence of his nephew for the first time.

“Sent him off with the Droids to do errands,” Leia shook her head. “Told them to bring him back when he can treat Felicity with respect.”

“So, he’s never coming back,” Felicity smirked.

Han groaned, “What did he do now?”

“Keep trying to find a legal loophole that would bar me from marrying Luke,” Felicity rolled her eyes. “I swear that kid’s getting more antagonistic to me everyday. If he keeps this up, I’m literally going to take the name Skywalker simply to spite him.”


“Your dad blew up a trade blockade when he was nine,” Felicity pointed out. “I’m not underestimating the power of a Skywalker. Can’t wait to see the look on his face when he’s told he has to start calling me Aunt Felicity now.”

“You know, he’s never going to give in,” Leia shook her head.

“So, you have settled on Skywalker, Fliss?” Han asked. He tried out the name, “Felicity Skywalker… Very sibilant.”

“I haven’t fully settled on it yet,” Felicity answered. “And honestly, I don’t think I’m going to call myself Skywalker.”


“The cons outweigh the pros,” Felicity sighed. “Luke, I really do want to share your name, but let’s look at the facts. In addition to an excessive S noise in City being followed by Sky… There’s a few issues I have with taking your name.”

“Like what?”

“Well, there’s the fact that everyone already simply looks at me as Luke Skywalker’s girlfriend. So, in addition to being known as Luke Skywalker’s wife, I’m going to be reduced to simply Mrs. Skywalker… which kind of sounds like what people should call Padmé Amidala… and given the fact I do look a tad bit like her, that just raises a bunch of questions about you that I don’t really want to answer.”

“I see.”

“Not to mention it’s going to get really expensive to have to keep using a lawyer to fight off all my assault charges, when I keep punching everyone in the throat who calls me Mrs. Skywalker.”

“Fair enough,” Luke nodded, not really wanting to get into Felicity’s violent tendencies. As long as he wasn’t on the receiving end of those punches, it was none of his business. Felicity was a grown-up woman who could make her own decisions… even if sometimes they ended in her getting charged with war crimes.

“And of course, there’s the Bantha in the room,” Felicity said through gritted teeth.

Luke raised an eyebrow.
“I’m not taking Darth Vader’s surname,” Felicity said simply. “I don’t care if I associate the name Skywalker with the man I love, Skywalker Senior sliced a freaking lightsaber down my back.”


“Well…” Felicity hesitated, “I’m not willing to take Skywalker outright, but I am open to adding it to my name.”


“Or you could combine them,” Han suggested. “Rhiwalker sounds pretty nice.”

“Noted,” Felicity nodded at Han. “The truth is… I don’t know if I want to be Rhiaon outright. Yes, it’s my name and has been for thirty-four years, but it’s also the name of the man who designed the Death Star, and the name of a man who was murdered in a senseless act of violence. People hear the name Rhiaon and they think of pain and misery.”

“In all fairness, Fliss,” Han smirked, “you do cause plenty of pain and misery yourself. OW!”

“Shut it, Loud Mouth Solo,” Felicity warned. “Besides, there’s another reason I don’t want to be simply Rhiaon.”

Her eyes awkwardly flicked over to Leia, and then she turned her head to look at Luke.

“We want kids, right?” Felicity asked.

Luke blinked in shock, “Of course. We’ve always talked about that.”

“Well…” Felicity sighed, “when we do have kids, what are we going to call them? If I’m Rhiaon and you’re Skywalker… it’s probably going to be Skywalker. And no offense to you Leia, but I do want to share a surname with my child.”

“That’s fair,” Leia nodded.

“We could call our children Rhiaon,” Luke offered.

Felicity laughed, “That’s sweet, Luke, but let’s be realistic. The mythical Luke Skywalker is going to call his kids Skywalker. Even if we don’t do it legally, everyone else will. That’s not a battle I’m going to fight. At least if we do the combination name, then I’ll share part of their name.”

“No,” Luke shook his head. “If you don’t want to call our children Rhiaon, that’s fine. But if you’re going to take the name Rhiaon Skywalker or Skywalker Rhiaon, our child will share the same name.”

“And then there’s the problem that bothers me most.” Felicity grabbed Luke’s hand, “Luke, I want our family to have a common name.”

Luke sighed, “Felicity, it doesn’t matter if we all share the same name.”

“Yes, it does! Luke, look at your family. Your father was Skywalker, sure, and maybe that’s why you always wanted to have a connection to him, because look at the rest of your family. Your mother was both Naberrie and Amidala, your nephew is Solo, your Uncle was Lars, your Aunt was Whitesun Lars, your other Aunt and her family are Naberrie, even your own twin sister is Organa, and now we’re going to add Rhiaon into the mix? No, Luke. No. One thing that I’ve always liked
about my family is that we have a common name, a thread that ties us together, and connects us. That way anytime someone says Rhiaon, I can say, yes, that’s my father, that’s my brother, that’s my mother.”

Han frowned, “Don’t people call your mother, Andromia? Ow! Quit it, Fliss!”

“I want that for us, Luke,” Felicity continued as if she hadn’t just smacked Han. “I want to feel like a family in every way. Name and all.”

Felicity sighed and looked down at the pamphlet. Luke could feel her pain in the Force as she made a decision.

“I guess I have no choice then,” Felicity muttered, defeat written across her face. “I don’t want it to be two Skywalkers and a Rhiaon Skywalker. I want that harmony. So, if it means having that connection in our family… I’ll take the name Skywalker, and leave Rhiaon behind.”

Luke wanted to be happy in that moment, but he couldn’t when he saw the heartbroken expression on Felicity’s face. He could feel her pain in the Force, how she felt like she was abandoning not only her family, not only Brendan in particular, but she was abandoning a part of herself. Yes, not many knew the name Felicity Rhiaon, but that was who she was, who she would always be. How could he take that away from her?

He gently took Felicity’s hand, and glanced down at the pamphlet.

And then the idea hit him.

“No,” Luke murmured. “No, I won’t let this happen. You don’t want to be Felicity Skywalker, and I’m not going to make you.”

“It’s my name,” Felicity shook her head. “The choice is mine alone.”

“No, it isn’t, not if it’s going to affect our children.”

“I need that commonality, Luke.”

“And we’ll have it. With Rhiaon Skywalker, or Skywalker Rhiaon, or even Rhiwalker. Whatever you want.”


“And it will,” Luke said. “Because I’m going to change my name too.”

The room was silent.

“I’m sorry what?” Felicity stared at him as if he had just suggested water wasn’t wet.

“I’m going to change my name to Rhiaon Skywalker or Skywalker Rhiaon or Rhiwalker,” Luke repeated. “Whichever one you want.”

Han looked at Leia, “Can he do that?”

Leia just stared at her husband, “Han… both my father and Aunt Sola’s husband took their wives’ surnames. Yes, Luke can do that.”

“Oh right,” Han said. “I forgot that Bail was originally Prestor.”
“You’re going to give up the name Luke Skywalker?” Felicity said slowly, clearly not believing him.

“Yes,” Luke nodded. “At least legally. Think about it, if we both change our names we have a common legal name, and yet both keep our original surnames for our professional lives. It doesn’t matter what name the tabloids call me, or what’s the name on the plaque on our desks. All that matters is which name we sign our marriage certificate with… and what name we put on our child’s birth certificate. You want to be Rhiaon? You want to be Skywalker? You could be both… and so can I.”

Felicity smiled in absolute disbelief, “You would really do that? You would take the name of the man who designed the Death Star? Whom you killed.”

“And you would take the name of a man whom you once shot in the chest.” Luke clasped her hands, “We’re making a family, Felicity. A new one with a blank slate where all that matters is how much we love each other. Forget Alaric. Forget Anakin. Forget everything.”

“You know I never really noticed how similar our fathers’ names are when you put them next to each other.”

“Focus, Felicity.”

“Sorry.”

Luke smiled, “Felicity Rhiaon, I want to take your name and give you mine. And whatever form you wish, that will be what we choose.”

Felicity reached up and stroked his cheek, “Luke Skywalker, I would be honoured to give you my name and take yours.”

“And how should we present those names?”

“How about… Rhiaon Skywalker?”

“Felicity Rhiaon Skywalker,” Luke tasted the name on his lips for the first time. “I like the sound of that.”

“Luke Rhiaon Skywalker,” Felicity tried out his new name. “The media is going to have a field day with this one.”


Leia smiled as she watched her childhood best friend and her brother. She felt Han’s arm wrap around her shoulders and she laid back onto his chest.

“I never even thought men could take the woman’s name,” Han murmured to Leia, not wanting to ruin the other couple’s moment. “But I think that’s the perfect thing for those two.”

“Maybe that’s what we should have done,” Leia said. “Leia Organa Solo doesn’t sound that bad. I’m sure Organa Solo would fit you too just fine.”

“Han Organa Solo,” Han tried out the name. “…Kind of sounds like a health food store.”

Leia shook her head, grinning, “Forget it, Nerfherder.”

3 Years, 11 Months, 5 Days
Luke hadn’t even been in the apartment for five minutes when Felicity had shoved him down on the couch and started kissing him.

“I’ve got to go on month long trips more often if this is what I come home to,” Luke chuckled as Felicity pulled off his shirt and threw it across the room.

“I’m just glad you were able to get home for our anniversary,” Felicity managed between kisses as she sucked on his neck and unbuttoned his belt.

“Three years already. I can’t believe it,” Luke pulled her silky tank top over her head and dropped it to the floor. He ran his hands up her smooth sides when he noticed the bandage on her arm. “What happened here? Did you get hurt?”

“No,” Felicity grinned. “It’s a little surprise for you, for our anniversary.”

Luke scowled, “Felicity, you really don’t have to maim yourself as a present for me. In fact, I’d prefer you don’t.”

Felicity chuckled, “Luke, doesn’t the location look familiar?”

It took him a minute to get it, “Felicity… you didn’t cut off your tattoo?”

She shook her head and sat up. Luke moved to follow, but Felicity pinned his wrists to the couch. Smiling like a minx, Felicity leaned forward, pressing her body against him in all the right ways. It was dangerous how much control her body held over him, and even worse was that she knew exactly how much power she had. Yes, he loved her for her mind, soul, and heart… but good God if her body and the ways she used it wasn’t as equally as important a factor.

“Stay down,” Felicity whispered in his ear. When she was satisfied that he wasn’t going to move, she began to unwrap her tattoo. “You remember the story of how I got my starbird tattoo, right?”

“It was forced on you by Imperials to identify you as a Rebel when you were arrested?”

“Exactly. Since then I’ve worn it as a symbol of my pride and history of fighting in the Rebellion. But lately… it’s taken on a new meaning. Now whenever I see the starbird, I think of the people I fought the war for. I think of Rogue Squadron, I think of Han and Leia… I think of you. I think of the happiness you brought me, a happiness beyond that I ever knew possible, and a love of an infinite magnitude. Who is Felicity Rhiaon the Rebel Recruiter? She is a woman who brought hope to millions, helped people join the Rebellion, stole the plans to the Death Star, somehow managed to get Diego Nalto to pull the stick out of his ass, and got Luke Skywalker’s scrawny butt both off Tatooine and into my bed, but managed to do all those things in my own unique way.”

“That’s funny,” Luke chuckled. “You weren’t calling any part of me scrawny when we commed two nights ago.”

Felicity smiled, and stopped unraveling the bandage. Just one more tug and her tattoo would be exposed.

Of course, it was hard for Luke to focus on her tattoo when the warmth between her thighs had decided to rest on his sprouting erection. Thirty days was far too long to be without making love to Felicity Rhiaon.

“Who is Felicity Rhiaon the Rebel Recruiter?” Felicity repeated. “She’s two simple words: Rogue One.”
Felicity pulled off the bandage to reveal her crude starbird tattoo had been altered into the symbol of Luke’s Rogue Squadron.

“And it’s time I take my rightful place as the originating member of Rogue Squadron,” Felicity smirked. “Any objections to that, Commander Skywalker?”

“None,” Luke sat up and examined the tattoo. “How long ago did you do this?”

“About a week after you and Reine left for Dagobah,” Felicity answered. “Why you thought it was a good idea to camp out in a swamp for a month is beyond me, but hey, at least Obik was around sometimes to hang out with. And I do have Dex in the mornings. So, what do you think of the tattoo?”

“It’s beautiful,” Luke smiled at the image on her arm. “And it looks quite healed.”

“Oh, the bandage was only so I could do a big reveal.”

“You are so over dramatic sometimes.”

“And that’s why you love me, because frankly I’m nothing compared to you.”

Luke shook his head and looked at the tattoo closer. The Rogue Squadron symbol was a starbird with twelve X-wings ringing it, each ejecting a line of fire from their engine. To Luke’s surprise he noticed tiny letters – two or three at most – on each ship.

“What are these?” Luke trailed his thumb across the tattoo, playing absentmindedly with her bra strap.

“The initials of the twelve people who were most important to me in my role as Rogue One.” Felicity pointed to the top ship in the crest, “LS – Luke Skywalker.”

“I’m your first ship?”

“Well, this is more than just a tattoo about me being Rogue One, it’s also to honour this relationship. Our love. I mean, we’re getting married. I thought if we’re going to mark our commitment in ink, I might as well mark it on my skin.”

Luke played with a strand of her hair, “I thought you hated being known as simply the woman Luke Skywalker loves.”

“Yes, I hate it when others reduce me to that… but I’m than happy to declare our love myself.”

Luke leaned in and pressed a tender kiss to her lips.

Felicity sighed in happiness but forced herself to pull back, “Let’s put a pin in that for a second. I still have to tell you about the other initials.”

“Well, then,” Luke pulled Felicity into his lap and she automatically wrapped her arms around his neck. He nuzzled the bare skin of her shoulders and back, “Do tell.”


“I’m not surprised at that group.”

“BO – Bail Organa. SB – Shara Bey.”
“Shara, really?”

“She’s the one who picked Diego and I up from Jakku,” Felicity reminded. She pointed to the next ship, “BD – Biggs Darklighter. He was the one who got me my job as a recruiter which led to my father finding me and making me that promise that got us into the Death Star. Not to mention he was going to help me track down the droids on Tatooine if I had stolen that ship, and he gave his life in the Battle of Yavin.”

“Sounds like he earned his spot,” Luke gave her a quick squeeze of a hug. He never had really gotten comfortable with the whole idea that his soulmate had lost her virginity to his childhood best friend and first crush. Luke was very thankful that it hadn’t been a factor into the tattoo. “Now, I know what these last four are going to be.”

“Take a guess,” Felicity offered.

“HS – Han Solo,” Luke proclaimed. “LO – Leia Organa. BR – Brendan Rhiaon, of course. I would be genuinely shocked if he wasn’t factored into this somehow.”

Felicity playfully smacked his chest.


“Absolutely,” Felicity nuzzled her nose against his. “100%.”

“Ooh, that’s a good mark.” Luke’s voice dropped to a throaty, more seductive tone. “Do I get a prize?”

“How about this?” Felicity unclasped her bra and threw it over the back of the couch. His hands were on her, playing with her breasts and thumbing her nipples before the bra had even hit the ground. Felicity arched her head back, basking in the pleasure for a few minutes, before finally asking, “Luke, Sweetheart, it’s been a month since we shared a bed, and today is our three-year anniversary. Can we please have sex now?”

“Of course, we can,” Luke laughed and scooped her up into his arms.

“Thank you,” Felicity pecked his cheek with a kiss.


Felicity laughed and ducked her head to avoid the door frame as Luke carried her bridal style into the bedroom.

“So, what would you like for our reunion/anniversary sex?” Luke hit the button to close and lock the door behind them in case any droids decided to interrupt. “Passionate, slow, tender lovemaking or take me now, I haven’t been fucked in a month sex?”


“Your wish is my command,” Luke threw her onto the bed with very little ceremony.

As Felicity landed on her hands and knees, Luke stripped off what little clothing he had on left. He crawled onto the bed behind her, and yanked off her pants and underwear in a single movement, throwing them carelessly over the edge of the bed. She tried to shift onto her back to take him missionary, but Luke pushed her down back to her hands and knees.
“I think taking you from behind will work just fine,” Luke chuckled darkly at the moan she emitted as his fingers expertly stroked the delicate folds of her sex. “You’re already so wet… So ready for me. You’ve been waiting for this, haven’t you?”

“I’ve been ready for a month.” Felicity pressed her face into the mattress as his fingers slid inside her, “Oh, yes! Yes! Luke! Oh, there’s just some things you can’t replicate via hologram communications and a view screen.”

“Is that so?” Luke used his free hand to rub her clit. She was practically dripping on the sheets. “Not even when I use the Force?”

Felicity moaned as she felt the familiar sensation of invisible hands caressing her body as Luke’s physical hands continued their assault on her sex. She writhed on the bed, clambering towards the precipice of her orgasm.

“I seriously can’t believe it took you so long to figure out you could do this,” Felicity gasped as the invisible hands teased her stiff nipples. “And over view screens too. I mean seriously, why did it take so long for you to make the connection that if Vader could choke people over a view screen, you could do a few other things over one?”

“Please don’t talk about my father during sex,” Luke whispered, picking up the pace on rubbing her clit fiercely. His fingers pistoned in and out of her frantically, curling up to stimulate the coarse area of her g-spot. “Come on, Felicity. I can sense you’re close. Let go, Sweetheart. Let go.”

“Oh, Luke!” Felicity squirmed against his fingers. Her legs tried to clamp shut, but whether it was to trap the pleasure between her legs or fend it off, Luke held steady. His fingers were slick with her juices as he pumped in and out of her, and his other hand pressed ever harder down on her clit with every stroke. He could sense her edging ever closer to her precipice, until, “LUKE!”

Luke grinned as he felt the familiar clenching of her quim around his fingers, and she lost control of her senses. He could tell how strong the orgasm was since she was doing the thing where his name was on her lips, yet she was so overcome with pleasure no sound came from her voice. It always turned him on so much when she did that. At the sight of Felicity surrendering completely to the pleasure he gave her, Luke lost concentration, and therefore control, of the Force playing with her breasts. But that was alright as he continued to pump his fingers and rub her clit through her orgasm.

Felicity fell to the mattress when the last aftershock of her orgasm subsided. She panted hard and let out a little moan as he withdrew his fingers from her smouldering sex.

“Just as I remember.” Luke grinned as he saw how slick she had made his fingers, “Now let’s see if this is the same.”

His tongue delved into her folds, and Felicity gasped, throwing her head back as pleasure was renewed on her still sensitive quim. She mewled as he explored the familiar landscape of her lower lips and throbbing clit, but he knew that wasn’t what Felicity craved. He knew the sure-fire way to claim control over Felicity’s body in an instant.

Ever so slowly, Luke slid his tongue into her heated passage and with the frantic begging moans she uttered as he slid into her deeper and deeper, he knew she had surrendered to his ministrations. She clenched the bedsheet tightly in her fists as Luke slowly withdrew his tongue from her passage.

“Oh, fuck, don’t tease me, Luke,” Felicity begged as her hips wriggled when his tongue moved too slowly back into her.
“I’m not teasing you,” Luke removed his tongue from her tender sex, causing Felicity to whine pathetically. His natural hand thumbed her clit and dipped briefly into her entrance as he spoke, “I’m doing exactly what you want, and tasting this delectable pussy.”

Felicity moaned as he shoved his tongue back into her, this time a little harder and faster.

“Isn’t that what you want?” Luke asked when he withdrew.

“Harder,” Felicity ordered as he entered her again, this time with a steadier pace, but still teasing her with not giving her quite what she wanted. She panted in time with his thrusts and begged Luke, “ Faster, please. Harder, faster, deeper. That’s what I want.”

“No,” Luke chuckled. “This is what you want.”

She screamed as he thrust his tongue inside her hard, and curled it, stroking the walls of her dripping quim, shooting intense pleasurable sensations through her body. Each new angle brought a different pleasure to her body, all of which he could sense in the Force. He tried shifting his head down to get in the absolute best angle: the one achieved in a 69 when she would lose complete control over herself and ride his face to ultimate pleasure.

Luke briefly considered moving them into that position – it would be wonderful to feel her lips around his cock and her soft hands playing with his balls – but he knew if he let himself into the tight, wet cavern of her mouth, Felicity would milk him dry. And Luke was much more interested in his first climax home taking place in a different tight, wet cavern. But he was absolutely going to get her on her knees, servicing him when he could gain interest for the second round.

Of course, first he had to finish with round one.

Felicity wantonly reached behind herself and pulled at his head, trying to get him in as close and deep as possible. She arched her hips and desperately gripped his head as he hungrily lapped at her sweet sex.

Unknown to her, she wasn’t the only one being pleasured. Luke was discretely taking care of himself, preparing for the main event with as little preamble as possible. In fact, he had fun playing with himself as she was obliviously pleasured by him. He would change the pace of the curling and plunging of his tongue inside of her, moving in harmony with the hand wrapped around his cock, lubricated with the dampness Felicity had left on his fingers.


Luke wished he could see her in that moment; completely abandoned to lust. Were her eyes closed? Was her face twisted in pleasure? It was one of his favorite things while making love to Felicity, seeing the pleasure he gave her. She had never been self-conscious about the faces she made in the bedroom, and in fact greatly enjoyed Luke watching her ecstasy.

It was why he didn’t take her from behind very often; he almost couldn’t climax without seeing her expression. If only he could see her now.

That was when Luke spotted the full-length mirror in the corner of the room by Felicity’s dresser. He released his erection and held up his hand, moving the mirror with the Force to the end of the bed.

“What?” Felicity frowned as she heard the commotion. “Luke, why did you move my mirror?”

Luke reluctantly pulled his tongue out of her cunt, and sat up, “I want to see you.”
He jerked his cock a few times and shifted himself and Felicity into position. Because of their sizes, he had to lift her hips and crouch himself down a little to align his shaft to her entrance. He stalled a minute to rub his head across her quim, coating himself in her juices and arousing her further.

“Oh, Felicity,” Luke moaned, squeezing his eyes shut as he enjoyed her slick folds. “I’m so ready.”

“I think I’m even more ready than you,” Felicity groaned, sliding herself against his head. “Please, Luke. I need you.”

“Patience, Sweetheart,” Luke chuckled, teasing her entrance but not pushing in. “I’m going to take you so hard.”

“Really? Should we use the safewords then?”

“No, if you want me to stop or slow, just tell me.”

“Good,” Felicity smirked. She moaned and tried to push herself back so he would enter her, but he resisted. “Luke, please.”

“Please what?”

“Don’t play this game. Just do it.”

“Not until you tell me what you want.”

Felicity groaned in defeat, “Fine! Luke Skywalker, please, please, please, take me now. Take me hard and deep like a nexu in heat. Make me and mark me yours, and shove that shaft inside my tight, dripping, hot cunt, and just take me already!”

He slammed inside of her.

Felicity shrieked and panted as her body adjusted to the not so foreign entity stretching her out. Luke chuckled and leaned over her, taking the time to feather brief kisses over her back and down her scar.

“Your wish is my command,” Luke whispered in her ear.

And then he started to thrust.

It wasn’t tender, passionate lovemaking, but a primal, animalistic fuck. He slammed into her over and over, Felicity screaming out in pleasure as he grasped her breasts tightly, his fingers tweaking her nipples. She thrust back at him, trying to pull him in deeper and deeper, tilting her pelvis until she found the position where he was hitting her right in the a-spot. Felicity gave a strangled cry, and reached down to play with her clit. Luke seemed to like it as he began to piston inside of her tight walls even harder.

His pelvis slamming against her hips, it took all of Luke’s control not to empty himself immediately into Felicity’s quim. She was so tight and wet, her slick walls clutching his cock as he thrust in and out of her. Being inside of Felicity Rhiaon’s cunt was the most pleasurable thing Luke Skywalker had ever experienced, the way his cock would slide through that familiar passage, that delectable wet heat. How her body would grip him and so eagerly guide him deep into her core, showing Luke just how badly she wanted him inside of her.

Something chemical and primal would overtake his mind as he felt her clench around him. His mechanical hand released her breast and grabbed her shoulder for a better hold to thrust into her. Luke’s hand clutching her shoulder was tight enough that she would have to awkwardly explain to
several people that “no, that bruise is not from Luke abusing me. Sex can just get a little rough sometimes when a metal hand is involved.” But Felicity didn’t mind the pain, and in fact, it quite turned her on.

“Oh, yes!” Felicity cried out. “Clutch me harder, Luke!”

“You like that?” Luke whispered in her ear. “You do, don’t you? You like when I mix a little pain with your pleasure. You like it when I dominate you and take you as mine. You like when I claim, and punish your body… and I know when we’re in this position, you also like this.”

Felicity yelped as his natural hand slapped one of her pert ass cheeks. His hand immediately lovingly rubbed over the forming red area of her pale cheek. Luke was always careful when they started drifting into playing with kinks, especially whenever BDSM was a factor, no matter how mild. Her would never use his metal hand to strike her unless to was specifically agreed upon beforehand as his metal hand could cause serious damage if used improperly. Luke also made sure that any blow struck when they went into sex without planning BDSM elements beforehand, it would immediately be followed with aftercare and reassurances of love. As he spanked her again, his hand would immediately rub the wound, then go back to playing with her breasts as he would lean forward to whisper utterances of love in her ear. When she had calmed down, Luke would begin the cycle again.

“That’s enough spanking,” Felicity said after a while, and Luke immediately stopped. “Felt wonderful, but damn it, I just want you to fuck me into this mattress until I’m sore and filled with your cum.”

“As you wish,” Luke tenderly kissed down her the length of the scar on her spine. He repositioned himself to have his right hand on her shoulder, left hand on her breast, Force on her clit, and cock in her cunt, and went to town.

Luke thrusted frantically harder and harder into her, losing himself to his primordial instincts. Something was triggered in the back of his mind; she was wet, and tight, and his. His chosen mate, his vessel for child bearing – someday, but Luke’s mind was narrowly focused on the animalistic level of sex and mating, causing the thought. He was the one Felicity had chosen to spread her legs for, and assumed the most traditional position for mating. Her moans and slickness urged him on, and he could feel her emotions in the Force; she wanted him. She wanted him thrusting hard inside her, stretching her, claiming her, dominating her, and filling her, marking that she belonged to him.

She was his mate, and he was hers.

As Luke thrust into her as hard and fast as humanly possible, Felicity turned over complete control to him. Their bodies were slick with sweat, and Luke stopped playing with her breasts, both hands gripping her shoulder because now he legitimately feared he would lose his grip on her.

For a moment, in the franticness of their fucking, Luke’s cock slid out of her, her vaginal muscles clenching just a little too tightly as his cock pulled out too far. Felicity moaned, and rubbed herself desperately on Luke’s cock as he grabbed a hold of it. He closed his eyes, basking in the pleasure of her clit sliding on the head of his shaft, her most pleasurable spot stimulating his most pleasurable spot.

“You like that?” Luke panted, using his hand to rub her clit with his cock harder. “Do you like my head teasing your clit?”

“Oh, yes,” Felicity moaned.
“I know you do. You’re dowsing me with your wetness. Do you want it back in you? Do you want my thick shaft in your tight little cunt? Do you want me to thrust my big cock inside your tight, wet walls?”

“Yes!”

Luke slammed his cock back into her.

Words were a lost concept to Felicity Rhiaon; primal grunts and moans were the only language she knew. She glanced up and remembered the mirror positioned in front of the bed. Luke was observing her through it, watching himself powerfully thrust into her over and over as she played with her clitoris, one of his hands was back working her bouncing breasts, and the other gripped her shoulder painfully. He was watching her enraptured expressions giving herself over to their wild frenzy of lust. Luke was taking pleasure from the sight of her own unending pleasure and their carnality as he rutted with her like an animal in the spring.

It was too much for Felicity.

“LUKE!” Felicity screamed out, climaxing hard on his thrusting cock.

Her arms buckled out from under her, and her torso fell onto the bed. But Luke moved his hand from her shoulder to a take a firm grip of her hip. He held her upright still frantically slamming into her.

“Luke!” Felicity breathlessly gasped, her body slumped down on the bed, the pleasure of his hard shaft shoving in and out of her tight, wet walls overwhelming her. It felt so good that it was almost painful, and her own body was trying to jerk away from his touch, but Luke held fast.

“Come on, Felicity,” Luke panted, his chest covered in sweat as he desperately held off his own climax. “Let’s try one more. Can you handle that? I want to give you one more.”

“I can handle one more,” Felicity moaned, her face buried in the mattress. “Just don’t expect me to do any of the work.”

“Tell me if you want me to stop.”

“No, don’t stop, never stop.”

After that Felicity’s moans became nonsensical as she writhed on the mattress. He could feel her blinding pleasure in the Force, and the way her quim gave small jerks trying to reject his cock from entering her, but Felicity begged him to go on. Her skin was slick with perspiration, and he struggled to maintain a good grip on her.

Luke released her breasts, and locked an arm underneath her hips holding her close to his rocking pelvis, as a wet slap filled the room with every thrust. His free hand returned to their habitual territory of her hard clitoris. He unsheathed it and stroked the bare head, causing her to shriek even louder. The musky scent of sex assailed his nostrils, and her skin tasted of salt as he kissed and bit her shoulders, marking his claim on her to any man who might try to steal her from him.

She was close, he could sense it in the Force, but he was even closer. Two times already had Felicity gotten her release, but Luke was still hard as a rock. He needed to release, to let go inside that trembling warmth, but he had promised her one more orgasm, and with the way she was moaning his name, he wasn’t about to disappoint her.

All at the same time, he converged the Force upon her most sensitive areas. Around her breasts and nipples, across her clit, inside her slick channel, and even simple spots like the tender area underneath
her earlobe.

Felicity screamed out absolute bloody murder as she came harder than she had ever in her life.

Luke watched in satisfaction at the pleasure he had given her… and thanked the Force once again that the apartment was soundproof and their downstairs neighbors couldn’t hear Felicity’s literal screams of pleasure. Though, truth be told, that wasn’t a citation he minded getting from the building manager. In fact, Felicity would probably frame it and hang it on the wall.

Pathetic moans came from Felicity beneath him as she rode out the tremors of her orgasm, and Luke couldn’t hold himself back anymore. He wrapped his arms around her torso and pulled her upright into a sitting position against him. Luke was holding her tightly, hugging her and kissing her neck and shoulders as he finally allowed his own orgasm, emptying shot after shot inside of her.

They panted hard, not moving from their position as they caught their breath. Felicity smiled and gave a small, satisfied moan as she pressed back against his cock, though deflated, still buried inside of her. His cum was too much for her quim to contain, and the excess started dripping out of her quim, and down her thighs. She then started chuckling, which Luke joined as he eased them down onto their stomachs as he tenderly trailed kisses across the scars on her back.

“Welcome home, Master Skywalker,” Felicity purred as he gently thrust against her, not pleasing her with his unerect shaft, but forcing her hips to roll against the bed, the fabric dragging across her clitoris just right. Their combined juices, mixed together in Felicity’s dripping cunt, smeared across the bedsheets with their movements.

Luke chuckled as he kissed his way up her back and her neck to her ear where he whispered, “It’s so good to be home.”

4 Years, 6 Months, 10 Days

The two things Luke was aware of when he opened his eyes were pain… and Han and Ben Solo smirking at him.

“Han? Ben?” Luke groaned as he started to shift. His muscles felt sore from the night they had spent sleeping upright on the couch of Han and Leia’s Hosnian Prime apartment, “What’s going on?”

“Careful, Kid,” Han cautioned. “Don’t want to wake Sleeping Beauty.”

He was suddenly aware of something in his arms. He looked down and found Felicity in them… and her face covered in black marker ink.

“Honestly, I’d classify her as Sleeping Average at Best,” Ben grinned. “Brunettes like Rhiaon are a dime a dozen around here.”

“Watch it, Ben,” Han shot his son a look.

“Well, what would you classify her as? Do you think she’s attractive?”

“Ben, I am not answering the question, do you think your wife’s brother’s fiancée is attractive.”

“Han,” Luke narrowed his eyes, “did you let Ben draw on Felicity’s face while she slept?”

“Of course not,” Han replied. “Seriously, Kid, what kind of parent do you think I am that I would let my son draw on his uncle’s future wife’s face, whom he has openly declared a hatred for said
woman? ...I drew on her face. Ben drew on yours.”


“Luke?” Felicity moaned, his yell having woken her. She groaned as she straightened out her stiff body and her eyes focused in the morning light. “What’s going-”

She stopped dead at the sight of Luke.

“Luke, why are there whiskers drawn on your face?”

He sighed and rubbed the side of his nose, “Same reason there’s a beard drawn on yours. Solos.”

Felicity glared at Han and Ben who were still smirking at each other.

“Alright, fess up,” Felicity snapped. “Was this Loud Mouth Senior, or Loud Mouth Junior?”


“I swear to the Gods, Loud Mouth Solo!” Felicity growled. “This better come off before the wedding, or I’m going to play artist on your face, and it won’t be with ink!”

“And you wonder why I don’t like her,” Ben muttered. “She does spark to violence so quickly, doesn’t she?”

“Can it,” Han ordered. “And don’t worry, Fliss, we made sure it’ll wash off... in a few days.”

“That’s it!”

Felicity tried to launch herself at Han, but Luke grabbed her and pulled her back down into his lap.


“I’m sorry, I didn’t realize Han was so juvenile,” Felicity snapped. She looked to Han, “Seriously, Loud Mouth Solo, your ten-year-old, I would expect this from, but you’re forty-three.”

“Hey, I needed to enact a little revenge and Ben’s idea sounded good to me.”

“Han, please,” Luke groaned. “You know how dangerous teaching Ben the idea that revenge is acceptable could possibly be.”

“I’m standing right here, Uncle Luke,” Ben scowled.

“What did you need revenge for?” Felicity asked.

“Luke,” Han glared at his brother-in-law. “I spend a month putting together the perfect bachelor party for him. Nothing that Luke wouldn’t love or be uncomfortable with. I spend God knows how much time tracking down all his male friends, arranging schedules, and booking reservations... then two hours in, Luke says he has to use the fresher and completely disappears. An hour later, Lando and I are about to call the police because being who you are, there’s a huge possibility Luke has been kidnapped. Then I get a comm from Leia saying that he’s decided to escape his bachelor party, and is back at the apartment, opting to spend the night playing cards with his sister, nephew, and fiancée instead.”

“If it makes you feel better, Dad, I won most of Uncle Luke’s money.”
“It does, Ben. It does.”

“So you decided to come here and draw on our faces?” Luke raised an eyebrow.

“No, Lando, myself, and the rest of your guests decided to spend the night going absolutely wild – though doing nothing that would give Leia the grounds to divorce and/or kill me – and charging it all to your bank account, which Obik has access to via Reine. It wasn’t until I got home and found you two all lovely-dovey, having fallen asleep on the couch in each other’s arms that I wanted to be sick.”

Ben frowned at Han, “You said you threw up because you drank too much, and I shouldn’t follow your life choices in this regard.”

“It’s a little of both.”

“How did you get involved in this?” Felicity asked Ben.

Ben shrugged, “I wasn’t sleeping well last night, and sensed Dad come home. Then I sensed him getting sick in the fresher and went to check on him. You know, make sure he didn’t choke on his vomit or pass out and hit his head on something. I don’t want my Dad dead. I agreed to help him sober down… after he bribed me because Mom would so kill him if he stumbled home that drunk.”

Felicity raised an eyebrow at Han, “You don’t go on benders often, Solo, but when you do, you go hard.”

“Says the woman who once ended up in the hospital.”

Luke groaned, “Can we just cut to the part where you decided drawing on us was a good idea?”

“Well, Ben and I saw you two and decided we’d have some good old-fashioned father-son bonding time,” Han wrapped an arm around Ben. “Thank you for facilitating that special moment.”

“And that’s why if I ever die, custody of Ben goes to Chewbacca,” Leia’s voice came from the hallway, everyone’s heads turning to see that she had watched the entire exchange.

“Come on, Sweetheart,” Han said, “I’m not that bad a dad.”

Leia raised an eyebrow, “You bribed our son to hide the fact you were drunk.”

“I didn’t say I was a good dad.”

Leia just shook her head and looked at Felicity, “Seriously, Fliss, this is a typical day in this family. The wedding’s in two weeks. If you want to get out of this, now’s the time to do it. No one would blame you for not wanting to attach yourself to these doofuses.”

Felicity smiled and wrapped her arms around Luke’s neck, “No, Leia. I’m fine right here. I’ve never been happier than I am with this doofus.”

“I love you too,” Luke leaned forward and kissed her tenderly.

The moment was so perfect and at peace.

“Ugh!” Ben groaned loudly, causing Luke and Felicity to break apart. “If anyone needs me, I’m going to go throw myself out a window.”

“Have fun,” Han sarcastically called.
Leia sighed as Ben stomped towards his bedroom, “I’m sorry about him, Felicity.”

“Don’t worry, he’s just going through a phase,” Felicity waved off. “Hey, how pissed would Ben be if I started insisting he called me Aunt Felicity?”

“Felicity, we’ve discussed this,” Luke groaned. “You agreed to stop antagonising Ben.”

“We discussed it. I agreed to nothing.”

Luke dropped his head into his hands.

“I just don’t know what to do anymore,” Leia shook her head. She had recently confided in Luke that with the wedding day getting closer, Ben was starting to act out even more. Leia was dangerously close to getting to the end of her rope.

“Don’t stress about Ben, Sweetheart,” Han said. “Like Fliss said, he’s going through a phase.”

Luke and Leia exchanged a lot. As well-intentioned Han and Felicity were, they couldn’t sense the building Darkness within Ben.

“We’ll figure it out, Leia,” Luke promised.

Leia smiled, “Don’t worry too much about it. You’ll have your own kid to worry about soon enough, I’m sure.”

“You better,” Han warned. “I should have been Uncle Han years ago.”

“Han,” Luke tried desperately to pretend he wasn’t blushing.

“Word of advice, Felicity,” Leia chuckled. “These two doofuses can be charming and do have some redeeming qualities… but seriously, be careful reproducing with one.”


Little did Luke Skywalker know that in a year from then, Felicity Rhiaon would be pregnant with his baby.

---

4 Years, 6 Months, 24 Days

"Do you, Luke Skywalker take this woman to be your partner in life and sharing your path; equal in love, a mirror for your true self, promising to honor and cherish, through good times and bad, in sickness and in health, for as long as you both shall live?"

"I do," Luke vowed, unable to wipe the adorably goofy grin off his face that made Felicity Rhiaon fall in love with him in the first place.

Felicity had that mischievous one corner of her mouth upturned smirk that Luke could never resist, “Good. I did not spend all that time getting this dress altered for you to go, ’yeah, maybe not’ at the last second."

A low laughter filled the room as Mon Mothma turned to Felicity. The Chancellor of the New Republic didn’t really perform weddings, but she was willing to make an exception for Rogue One

"Do you, Felicity Rhiaon take this man to be your partner in life and sharing your path; equal in love, a mirror for your true self, promising to honor and cherish, through good times and bad, in sickness and in health, for as long as you both shall live?"

“I do,” Felicity grinned. Luke could see that she was struggling not to let herself cry. “And I’ll fight anyone who tries to take him from me.”

That quip got even louder laughter.

“May we have the rings?” Mon Mothma requested.

Luke turned to Han standing at his side.

As he dug the rings out of his pocket, Han was beaming with pride for his brother-in-law. Behind Luke, Leia was sobbing happy tears, standing next to Felicity as her Matron of Honour. It seemed that none of them could actually believe this day had actually come.

Han held out the rings, but when Luke went to take them, Han pulled Luke into a hug. Smiling, Luke accepted it and hugged his best friend back.

“You did good, Kid,” Han said into Luke’s ear. “You picked the right one.”

“I know I did,” Luke chuckled. “… Please don’t ever point out to her that she can do better.”


Luke clapped Han on the back, “Thank you.”

Han let Luke pull away, but he still didn’t let go of his hand.


“Do you remember when I found you two in the Falcon talking about sand?” Han grinned.

If there wasn’t hundreds of people looking at him, Luke would have probably slapped his forehead.


“I remember after she left I just looked at you and said Marry that girl. Well, here on your wedding day, I have to say… Told you so.”

As Luke laughed, Han finally let go of the rings and let Luke turn back to his bride.

When he set his eyes back on Felicity there were tear tracks down her face. Her mascara had held up – that goodness for the Nabberrie women’s collective knowledge about makeup – but Felicity clearly had been getting some crying in when Luke’s back was turned.

“You okay?” Luke whispered as he gave her his ring.

“Literally, I’ve never been happier,” Felicity clasped his hand tightly.

“Luke, please present Felicity with the ring,” Mon Mothma instructed.

Luke held Felicity’s left hand and let the ring hover at the tip of her finger.
Mon Mothma continued, “Luke Skywalker, if you choose to enter into this marriage with Felicity Rhiaon of your own free will, slide your ring on her finger, and make your solemn vow.”

Luke slowly slid the ring onto her finger, “Felicity Rhiaon, I give you this ring to wear with love and joy. As a ring has no end, neither shall my love for you. I pledge to you all that I am and all that I will ever be as your husband. I choose you to be my wife this day and forevermore.”

“Luke Skywalker,” Felicity voice shook. Luke could sense that she was struggling with all her might not to cry. “I accept your oath, and will forever wear this ring as a sign of my commitment and the desire of my heart.”

“Felicity, please present Luke with the ring,” Mon Mothma instructed.

Felicity took Luke’s left hand and let the ring hover at the tip of his finger, “I am so happy this hand wasn’t the one cut off.”

The wedding party – Felicity, Leia, Reine, Alyla, Zena, Luke, Ryoo, Pooja, Han, Obik, Lando, Chewbacca, Ben, Wedge, and Diego, who was giving Felicity away – all laughed from the platform. Luke and Felicity had decided to get married on Yavin IV in the old Rebel Base as it was where they had met and had been the site of the most significant moments of their life. It only seemed natural for the woman who stole the plans and the man who blew it up to get married in the shadow of the Death Star.

Mon Mothma continued, “Felicity Rhiaon, if you choose to enter into this marriage with Luke Skywalker of your own free will, slide your ring on her finger, and make your solemn vow.”

Felicity slowly slid the ring onto his finger, “Luke Skywalker, I give you this ring to wear with love and joy. As a ring has no end, neither shall my love for you. I pledge to you all that I am and all that I will ever be as your wife. I choose you to be my husband this day and forevermore.”

“Felicity Rhiaon,” Luke couldn’t wipe the smile off his face, that adorably goofy grin that had made her fall in love with him. “I accept your oath, and will forever wear this ring as a sign of my commitment and the desire of my heart.”

Felicity smiled back, not that irresistible one corner upturned smirk, but that gloriously beautiful smile of pure joy that had been reserved for very few others before him.

“Is… Is that it?” Felicity looked at Mon Mothma.

Mon Mothma smiled, “Yes, My Dear.”

“Good, because I don’t know how much longer I can hold myself together,” Felicity gave what sounded like half a laugh and half a sob.

“Well then,” Mon Mothma declared, “by the power vested in me by the New Republic, and the Government of Yavin IV, I now pronounce you husband and wife. You may kiss the-”


They kissed and laughed and let the tears stream down their face. After all the hardships and sacrifices they had made, the road had led them to this perfect moment.

“Ladies and gentlemen, I present for the very first time, Mr. and Mrs. Luke and Felicity Rhiaon Skywalker.”
The whole hall cheered.

And for once in their life, Luke and Felicity could say there was absolutely nothing wrong.

… But years later, Ben Solo would admit that he finally learned it was Snoke’s voice in his head during that very wedding.
Part Six: Parenthood

Chapter Summary

Enter Rey: Stage Right.

Chapter Notes

I have made my decision, and I will not be devoting an additional chapter to this series of flashbacks depicting Felicity’s postpartum depression. While it is an important piece of backstory, I have decided to show it when it’s more impactful and relevant to the story. We do see a few scenes depicting the beginning and ending of that time, as it is an important part of Luke and Felicity’s history, but hey, while reflecting on a relationship that ends with being shown footage of your wife getting shot in the head, Luke’s maybe not going to focus too much on the time she almost killed their daughter.

Also, with actually dedicating to a timeline, Chapter 17’s birthday party scene ends up being way off from when Rey was actually born since I have now established when she was born in relation to when Luke and Felicity got married. (You know, I intended to keep that vague, but no, I always decide to throw in timelines that mess everything up.) Since Luke’s confrontation with Ben took place on the wedding anniversary, and that means Rey’s sixth birthday was shortly before her reunion with Luke. I have gone back to chapter 17, changed the birthday scene from six months to three months, and inserted a small paragraph to explain why they’re celebrating her birthday on the wrong day.

…And fixed a typo that said “to face his face” rather than “to face his father.”


Oops.

TRIGGER WARNING: This chapter does *very* briefly refer to Alyla and Gavyn’s pasts as slaves. This does include mentions of sexual abuse, forced medical procedures resulting in infertility, and self-harm. If any of this content triggers you, please skip the second paragraph in the section “4 Years, 8 Months, 9 Days” and the rest of the paragraph that starts with Alyla’s line, “And if I can’t give him either?”

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

The Long Way Home

Chapter Twenty-Eight
Luke tried to breathe normally as he put the final screw in the wall. Finishing this fireplace mantel was honestly the only thing keeping him calm in that moment. He just needed to focus on simple things like the whirr of the electric screwdriver filling the living room, or the paint drying in the master bedroom, or Artoo triple checking the wiring in the garage.

Or what Felicity was doing in the fresher.

No, he couldn’t think about that.

He focused on the house and its mile-long to-do list. The actual “home” part had been constructed, but Luke and Felicity still couldn’t move in. There were still rooms to be painted, comm lines to be connected, appliances to be installed, landscaping to be finished, and furniture to be assembled. Han, Leia, Chewie, Ben, and Diego would be there the next day to join the other Jedi helping Luke and Felicity cut down that to-do list.

Lando had arrived that morning, choosing to spend the extra day with Alyla. Luke thought he heard Alyla mention something about a picnic by the lake. That was exactly the sort of charming move Lando Calrissian would pull. But his visit wasn’t all Alyla centric; Lando would do his fair share of helping the others. It would be a major day of painting and putting together furniture.

And maybe a certain announcement.

No, stop thinking about it!

His turned his mind to Threepio, running over the conversation they had a week earlier. Threepio would not be coming with Luke, Felicity, and Artoo to live in Temple Village. There wasn’t much use for a protocol droid in Temple Village, and to be honest he had been nothing but a glorified housekeeping droid for years. It had been a hard conversation, but Luke had made Threepio understand why living with Leia was the better idea.

Oh, good, this line of thought was working. Yes, perfect, Luke could be calm and cool and collected and face this whole situation with a level-headedness that-

“I did it!” Felicity announced, rushing into the room with thee pregnancy test.

“Well, what does it say? Is it positive? Are you sure you did it right?” Luke frantically tried to see the result.

So much for level-headedness.

“I can pee on a stick, Skywalker. Come on, Luke, stop it,” Felicity shrugged him off and crossed back to the coffee table where the test box sat. “I just used it. The result isn’t in yet.”

“Oh,” Luke tried to calm himself down as Felicity sat on the couch and set down the test. “Sorry. How long will it be?”

“Not sure,” Felicity reread through the instructions. “I think tests usually take two to three min-”

Felicity froze.

“Of course!” she gave something that sounded like a quiet scream and threw the instructions across the room. “Of course I bought the one that takes ten freaking minutes!”


“Funny, if you hadn’t said that three weeks ago and let me go look for the condoms, we wouldn’t be in this situation!”

“Hey, you’re the one who said there’s a fifty/fifty chance I forgot to take my pill, but I think we’ll be good.”

“So this is my fault?” Felicity snapped.

Luke paused, “Wait… Are you mad about this?”

Felicity froze, “What? Luke, I… No, I mean, I want us to have a baby someday, I just wasn’t expecting it to be now. We’ve only been married for a few months.”

“Right.”

“Are you mad?”

“No,” Luke laughed, sitting down on the couch next to Felicity and wrapping an arm around her. He pressed a kiss to her forehead, “Having a child with you is a dream come true. I would love a little boy with your hair—”

“Or a little girl with your eyes?”

“Hey, considering my family history, maybe it’s twins.”

“Oh, God, don’t even joke about that. Taking care of one Skywalker baby sounds difficult. Two of them would be downright horrifying.”


Felicity glanced down at the tattoo on her wrist.

“Let’s not get too excited. You don’t want to fall in love with an idea,” Felicity stroked the ink reading FN-2187. “It makes it so much harder when you lose that possibility.”

Luke understood, “He’d be four now, wouldn’t he?”

“Something like that.” Felicity sighed, “I think the hardest part is that I could never find his family. No one ever registered his disappearance. It’s very likely that no one wanted that child… and now that the First Order has him, no one ever will.”


Felicity nodded, “Thanks. Alright, let’s talk about something else.”

“Okay. Do you think we’re having a boy or a girl?”

“Something other than the baby that may or may not exist.”

“Sorry.” Luke was quiet for a minute, “… What should we call it?”
“Luke!”

“Sorry.”

“Good,” Felicity glared at him, “… The baby’s room should be the empty one furthest from ours. Give ourselves a little buffer.”

“Agreed. What colour should we paint it?”

“I don’t want to be one of those mothers that paints it yellow to be a so called neutral colour.”

“I’m definitely making the crib’s mobile.”

“You can rig it, but I’m making the objects. Do you think we should do ships? Or maybe planets that are important to us?”

“I like the planets idea.”

For several minutes they babbled on about the baby. Names, room decorations, godparents, who it would look more like, and all sorts of arrangements to be made.

“Wait, what are we doing?” Felicity suddenly exclaimed. “We can’t talk about this stuff yet! Luke, change the subject!”


“I don’t know! Anything! What were you doing before I came into the room?”

“I was installing the fireplace mantel,” Luke got up and crossed to the fireplace. “This is where we’ll put Brendan’s urn and the Holos of our deceased family and friends. It’ll be a nice little memorial. And look.”

Luke banged the bottom of the mantel. Instantly a covering of metal shot up from the bottom and completely covered the mantel.

“Fireproof, waterproof, everything proof,” Luke announced. “In the event of an emergency – or it just plain falls off the wall – this will protect the mantel and whatever sits on it. We just can’t place anything on it that’s taller than eight inches.”

“Oh Skywalker,” Felicity shook her head. “Why are you so obsessed with making this house and its contents fireproof? You even installed a whole security system around it.”

“What can I say?” Luke shrugged, pressing a button on the side of the mantel to reset the shield. “You have one home burn down, you get a little paranoid.”

“I’d say. How many things did I have to veto getting extra fireproofing?”

“Fine, but I’ll be the one laughing when our house burns down.”

Felicity raised an eyebrow, “I don’t know what’s stupider about that sentence. The idea about you laughing if our house burns down… or the subtle implication that you might kind of want to burn our house down.”

Luke chuckled, “I didn’t mean to imply that.”

“Too late. Enjoy me joking for the next three years that you want to burn down our house.”
“I would expect nothing less.”

Felicity smiled, “I like the mantel, Luke.”

“I do too,” Luke nodded. “I promise you, Felicity, someday we’re going to gather all of our children and tell them about each and every person whose picture sits on this mantel. Brendan, Riz, Ji-Dan, Gunner, Uncle Owen, Aunt Beru, Padmé Amidala, Obi-Wan Kenobi—”

“Bail Organa, Biggs Darklighter. Dinah Andromias.” A sad smile crossed Felicity’s lips, “Alaric Rhiaon and Anakin Skywalker as well. Good or bad, our children will know exactly who their family is.”

“I’m so excited for this, Felicity.”

“Well, you should be Luke, because my watch says it’s been ten minutes, and this test says that I’m…” Felicity picked up the test. “…Not pregnant.”


“I’m… not pregnant,” Felicity’s voice was riddled with disappointment. She flipped the test around to show Luke as he approached, “See.”

There was no denying the NEGATIVE flashing across the screen.


“Only by a week,” Felicity sighed. “Besides, I’m under a lot of stress with the move and my final exams coming up. It’s probably just that.”

“Huh.”

Luke and Felicity sat on the couch in silence.

“You as disappointed as I am?” Felicity asked after a while.

“It’s strange. I knew I wanted children but… I didn’t know I wanted them this bad,” Luke answered.

“I know. There was that moment of glory and now… Nothing.”

“It’ll happen someday, Felicity.”

“When, Luke?” Felicity questioned. “We keep saying someday, but we don’t make any serious plans.”

“Well, we just got married.”

“Yeah, but we’re not getting any younger. My doctor has already told me that I’m running out of time, and she said that three years ago. The longer we wait, the riskier it gets.”

Luke looked carefully at his wife, “What are you saying? Do you want to start trying?”

“Sort of,” Felicity confessed. “Look, you’re right, we did just get married so let’s not jump straight into trying for a baby… But if one happens…”

“What exactly are you getting at?”
Felicity bit her lip, “Well, I went off birth control a few days ago when I thought I might be pregnant because I think I heard that sort of thing can hurt a baby. What if I… didn’t go back on?”

“So… we’d try for a baby?” Luke clarified.

“How about for the next year we don’t intentionally try for a baby, with all the tracking cycles and upping the number of times we have sex and using whatever strange things make a person more fertile… but we just don’t use birth control? And if nothing happens after a year, then we go for it?”

Luke smiled, “I think it’s a good plan. Sort of trying but not going all out. Whatever happens, happens. Leave it up to dest-”

“You say destiny and I’m not having sex with you for the next year,” Felicity warned.


“So you agree?”

“Yeah, let’s do it.”

“Perfect.”

Luke and Felicity sat in silence after another minute.

“Felicity…” Luke side glanced at her. “You said you stopped birth control a few days ago, right?”

“Yep.”

“Do you want to have sex right now?”

“Yep,” Felicity pulled off her shirt.

A second later Luke’s shirt joined hers on the floor, and he had pushed her down on the couch, kissing her and working the clasp of her bra.

“Come on, Skywalker,” Felicity laughed as he pulled off her bra and began kissing his way down her body. “Let’s make a baby.”

4 Years, 8 Months, 2 Days

“Felicity Rhiaon Skywalker.”

The crowd clapped as Felicity walked across the university’s stage to accept her degree.

Luke couldn’t wipe the smile from his face while he sat between Leia and Obik. Reine, Diego, and Nils Arlos were next to Obik, with Nils and Obik being particularly happy about seeing Felicity accomplish the dream she had spoken of to them since she was sixteen. Luke’s aunt, Sola, and her husband, Darred had come to attend as well. Darred himself was an architect and had been something of a casual mentor to Felicity during particularly difficult projects. Han, Ben, Chewie and Threepio were next to Leia, with Ben being as dramatic as possible about being bored and not wanting to be there. And Artoo was battling with the other droids in the aisle to get the best recording of the people walking the stage. Luke made a mental note to get Han to pull out Artoo after Felicity got off the stage before it turned into a literal battle.

Seriously, which Skywalker thought it was a good idea to equip Artoo with a blowtorch?
“Congratulations,” the Professor shook Felicity’s hand before presenting her with the diploma.

Felicity’s smile was utterly radiant as she turned to look out at the crowd, her heart probably swelling at the sight of her supporters. Though the group around him cheered, Felicity’s eyes were for Luke only.

It had been three years since that night in his office where Felicity had agreed to pursue her dream, and Luke was overjoyed to see she had accomplished that dream. It felt like everything in their life was finally falling into place.

Though she was distant from him on the stage, Luke didn’t need to see her happy tears to know they were filling her eyes. His heart glowed at the utter joy his wife projected as she finally received her architecture degree. And it never would have happened if not for him.

“Thank you,” Felicity mouthed at him from the stage.

Luke nodded, and used the Force to whisper in her ear, “Anytime.”

---

4 Years, 8 Months, 9 Days

It happened because Luke was feeling reflective. It had been another night when Alyla Kene showed up on the doorstep of the Rhiaon Skywalker household in need of Luke’s advice. She was having another moment of a crisis of faith and wondering if her on again off again relationship with Lando Calrissian was worth it.

While Felicity went upstairs to shower and get ready for bed, Luke made Alyla a cup of tea and had a long talk with her on the couch. Luke always thought his life was full of tragedy, so it was his talks with Alyla that kept things in perspective. As she recounted the horrors of her slavery, sexual abuse, self-mutilation, and their subsequent effects on her life, beliefs, and self-perception, Luke was thankful for his own life. Despite the bleakness he lived through, he still managed to have hope and faith.

“The Dark Side and Light Side will always battle, Alyla,” Luke counselled her. “But we must remember that good will always triumph.”

“It’s not that I don’t believe good will triumph, but I’m never going to have that happy ending. I… have very strong, romantic feelings for Lando,” Alyla never could bring herself to utter the word Lando, except to her brother. “But I can’t give him a happy ending. I can’t carry children and marriage feels like another form of ownership. I won’t be owned again, Luke.”

“Lando has no desire to own you,” Luke reminded. “But remember who we are speaking of. Marriage and children don’t exactly sound like Lando’s version of a happy ending.”

“I suppose not.”

“Alyla, as a friend to both yourself and Lando, I can tell you that I never see the two of you happier than when you’re together.”

“But we shouldn’t be happy. We’ve been together for almost five years and we don’t live together, we don’t spend most of our time together, we don’t even really see each other exclusively.”

Luke tried not to look surprised, “I was unaware that you have any other relationships, Alyla.”

Alyla sighed, “Well, I haven’t been with anyone other than Lando… ever. But I know he wasn’t
exactly… I- I made it clear he didn’t have to… We had an understanding that… Lando-”

“Hasn’t been with anyone else as far as I’ve seen.” Luke took a sip of his drink, “Not since he started
things with you. Of course, Lando doesn’t give me a detailed debriefing of his love life. But I know
what he was like before you, Alyla, and trust me, Lando isn’t like that anymore. Whatever it is that
goes on between the two of you, Lando respects it, and has throughout the duration of your
involvement. As far as I see it, you do have your happy ending. Lando isn’t huge on commitment,
but his involvement with and leadership of Cloud City shows he can be responsible. You don’t want
marriage, but you want someone dedicated to you, will open the world to you, who make you feel
beautiful but not like a prize at a fair. If Lando is that man and gives you the relationship you want,
then what’s the problem?”

“The problem is I shouldn’t want this.”

“Oh, forget about what you should want,” Luke waved off. “If everyone followed what they should
want rather than what they actually wanted, Leia and I never would have been born. Then where
would the Galaxy be? Still in the grasp of the Empire.”

Alyla gave a wiry smile, “Didn’t the Empire rise because of your father’s relationship with your
mother? Therefore, if he had followed what he should have wanted, sure, you may not be born, but
the Empire might never have come to be.”

Luke just shook his head, “The point is don’t put so much stock in what you think you should want.
Just because marriage and children is one person’s idea of a happy ending, doesn’t mean it’s
another’s. Look at my love life. I’m the Jedi Grandmaster who destroyed the Death Star, and my
wife is the daughter of the creator of the Death Star, as well as a woman who has serious doubts
about the extent of the Force. I shouldn’t want to have anything to do with her, and yet-

“You do unspeakable acts on my breakfast table?”


“Still doesn’t wipe the image from my mind.” Alyla cocked her head to the side, “Then again you
and Felicity aren’t exactly hard on the eyes. I suppose I could have worse images in my mind. You
know, I walked in on Gavyn and Zena once? My brother committing what could technically be
considered bestiality is an image I will never be rid of.”

Luke blinked, “I… don’t know what to say to that.”

Alyla shrugged.

“The point is Felicity is my perfect mate,” Luke continued. “I shouldn’t want anything to do with
her, yet I would give my life for her. So what if you and Lando don’t want to get married? Don’t. It’s
your life, and life is too short to live it to someone else’s standards.”

Alyla looked down, “And what about children?”

“Your life isn’t incomplete if you don’t have children.”

“Is that why you don’t have any? You don’t want them?”

“No, I want them someday, but life… hasn’t been agreeable on that point. Felicity and I may be
getting a little older, but we still plan on having them… someday.”

“So you get it. You understand that draw to raise and care for the life of a child. I want that, Luke.
I’ve talked to Lando and he’s open to the idea. He rather likes the idea of having a son…What if I can’t give him one?”

“Having a daughter is no disappointment. I know I’d be happy with one just as much as a son. So would Lando. He’d love to have a little girl to spoil.”

“And if I can’t give him either?” Alyla looked down shyly. There was no need to remind Luke that her slave masters on forced a hysterectomy on her when she was only fourteen years old.

Luke smiled, “Adoption is always a possibility. Take it from someone who was adopted. It doesn’t matter if you have a child with your genetics, or someone else’s. A child is a child no matter where it comes from. And Lando would be thrilled any way you had one… but there’s something you have to do first to get there.”

“What’s that?”

“Talk to Lando,” Luke chuckled. “Ultimately, if you want a child, he’s going to have to help get you one, not me.”

“Yeah, I think Felicity would kill me if you helped out with that,” Alyla teased. “Thank you, Luke. You’re always so easy to talk to.”

“Well, when you have a family as loud as mine, you either learn to listen or yell louder.”

“Explains Felicity,” Alyla chuckled. “So… out of curiosity, when are you and Felicity planning on filling those empty bedrooms upstairs?”


“No, silly… the current pool is on whose Padawan you’re going to make Ben.”

“Dang it, Reine!”

Alyla laughed, “Come on, Luke, she’s from Canto Bight. What did you honestly expect?”

Luke sighed, “I know. You know, this is a very surreal conversation to be having.”

“Why’s that?”

“When we were born, a Jedi even thinking about having children would probably have gotten them thrown out of the Order… Now I, the Grandmaster, am constantly fielding complaints that I haven’t had children yet.”

He fully expected Alyla to laugh, but was surprised to see her face fall.


“Promise me you won’t treat children like the Old Jedi Order did, Luke,” Alyla’s voice was very muted. “Not the way the younglings were treated: torn away from their families and a lightsaber put in their hands at five years old. Not to keep of course, but still far too young to hold a weapon. Don’t treat them like Gavyn and I were treated.”

“Never, Alyla. You know I wouldn’t.” Luke sighed, “You know, I think about it sometimes, what would have happened to Leia and I if we had been born under the Old Jedi. If my father hadn’t done something drastic and tried with all his might to keep us from the Order. What would have happened
if we were born Force Sensitive to our mother, and our father’s identity was hidden? We would have been Luke and Leia Amidala, taken from our mother, made into younglings. Maybe we would have been the Padawans of Obi-Wan and my father. Maybe we would have struggled not to let our bond lead to attachment.”

“It wouldn’t because they never would have let you know.”

Luke raised an eyebrow.

Alyla looked down at her now empty cup of tea, “What would have happened to you would be exactly what happened to Gavyn and I. They wouldn’t let you keep the name Amidala – far too recognizable – and they wouldn’t have acknowledged that you were siblings. That’s what they did to us. They named us and planned on never telling us we were brother and sister. We weren’t even given the same surname by the Order.”

“The Order named you?”

“We were abandoned at a hospital, Luke. The Order took custody and thus got naming rights, so they followed their traditions and gave us separate names. Why risk attachment when you can just not acknowledge the relationship. I didn’t start going by Kene until Gavyn and I were sold into slavery. I liked it better than the name they originally gave me.”

“How were you named? I’ve never heard of Jedi naming traditions.”

“It was simple: Clan name,” Alyla answered, referring to the practice of splitting Younglings into small classes, or ‘clans.’ “We were supposed to be in the Hawk Clan. Gavyn is a Coruscanti name meaning White Hawk.”

“And Kene? Were you two… eager?”

“We were a month old when Order 66 happened,” Alyla reminded. “Far too young to look particularly eager. No, that name came from the practice of naming children after popular Jedi of the time. Kene is a play on Kenobi.”

“No kidding. You guys are named after Obi-Wan?”

“Gavyn was. I was originally named Alyla Starkiller, after Aayla Secura and of course, Anakin Skywalker.”

“You were named after my father?”


“No thanks. I’ve already had two.”

Alyla laughed.


“I think I did too,” Luke admitted. “It’s hard to find someone I can talk so freely about children with. With everyone else there’s just so much… pressure.”

“I don’t mean to pry.”

“No, it’s alright, but I am curious about why you wonder.”
“The reason I ask, is you speak of children with such affection.” She placed a hand on his arm, “I know you want them, Luke, and you said it yourself, you and Felicity aren’t getting younger. Have you at least discussed the topic?”

“Oh course,” Luke nodded. “But we’ve been married for less than a year. We’re going to wait a little while before going on in with trying. But honestly, with my family’s track record, we have a better chance at pregnancy if we don’t want it, or it’s the absolute worse possible time to have a child. But yes, someday it’ll happen… Someday soon hopefully.”

Alyla grinned, “Well then, I’ll tell Reine to start the pool.”

Luke just laughed.

Felicity was lying in bed, reading a HoloNovel when Luke entered their bedroom. She looked beautiful as always, her soft brown hair spilling down her shoulders, wearing a simple purple nightgown, and face scrunched in concentration as she read.

Luke stood in the doorway, his right hand gripping the doorframe as he watched her with a smile on his face. His heart fluttered at the sight of her, spurred by the emotional discussion of family, fate, and children he had just had. It still took his breath away how much he loved Felicity Rhiaon.

After a few minutes, Felicity looked up, noticing him, “Hey.”

“Hey,” Luke grinned that goofy grin she loved so much.

“What’s with the grin?”

“Just…. Thinking.”

“About what?”

“How much I love you,” Luke entered the room, stripping off his shirt and casually tossing it in the hamper.

“I love you too,” Felicity smiled. She set aside her HoloReader in her bedside table drawer and watched him pick out a pair of sleep pants and take off his lightsaber belt. He sat down on the bed, and she wrapped her arms around his neck, hugging him from behind, “Anything in particular spurred these thoughts?”

“Just my conversation with Alyla,” Luke turned his head back stole a quick kiss before storing his saber in a special holder that sat on his bedside table – he slept closest to the door, so it was within reach sitting at the edge of the bed. He used the Force to stash his belt in the closet and begin unlacing his boots, feeling Felicity nuzzling her face into his back, “It just made me think about… things.”

“What kind of things?” Felicity ran her hand through his hair. She moaned as he stood and changed into his sleep pants, playfully reaching out to tease his bare skin between the time his old pants came off and new pants went on.

“Someone’s playful tonight,” Luke chuckled, turning around, ready to tend to his wife. He wrapped her in his arms and pulled her close, almost so she was sitting in his lap. Natural fingers teased the strap of her nightgown, “I love this nightgown on you.”

“You’re avoiding my question, Skywalker,” Felicity teased. “What thoughts did Alyla make you
think? Hopefully nothing that would make me kill the both of you. That would be hard to explain to Lando.”

“Let’s be honest, should Alyla ever manage to get herself murdered by an irate member of my family… Han will be the one to call Lando.” Luke buried his face into her freshly washed hair, inhaling the familiar scent, “Have you been using my conditioner again?”

“It just makes my hair so soft,” Felicity moaned as he kissed the tender spot beneath her ear.


“Sounds like a deal,” Felicity laughed as they broke apart from each other.

It was an intimate scene, that moment in bed. Luke’s arms wrapped around Felicity’s waist, absentmindedly stroking her clothed spine scar. Felicity smiling in contentment, she hands resting on his bare pectorals. Their foreheads bowed together as they stared deep into each other’s eyes, love and happiness crackled in the air around them like electricity. The image could be used in dictionaries as the definition for love. No one could look upon that moment and not understand perfectly the depth of emotion that single image conveyed. It was simply a moment of pure love.

“So,” Felicity whispered, “what was it that Alyla made you think about?”

Luke reached out with his natural hand and stroked her bottom lip with his thumb, “Just… how happy you make me feel. When I was young and dreamed of what my life would be, I never even came close to imagining this. This… moment… This love. I truly, deeply love you, Felicity Rhiaon. I always have and always will.”

“I always will too,” Felicity leaned in like she was about to kiss Luke, but stopped herself. Luke could feel the air of her exhales tickling his lips. “And part of me, maybe wonders if… maybe I was always meant to.”

Luke cocked his head but said nothing.

“I still don’t believe in destiny, Luke,” Felicity said. “But if anyone could make me… it would be you. For how could I ever find someone so perfect for me?”

“I’m not perfect.”

“Neither am I, but when we’re together…”

Luke smiled as she let the sentence linger. There was nothing more needed to be said. He just revelled in the purity and sincerity of the moment. Luke loved this woman more than anything else in the world, and he couldn’t wait to see what life brought them next.

“I love you, Felicity Rhiaon,” Luke whispered. He cupped her face and stroked a thumb along her cheek, “Thank you for letting me spend my life with you.”

Felicity did not smirk, but playful sparks danced in her eyes, “Anytime.”

She leaned forward and kissed him. It was passionate and tender; their lips moving against each other’s in slow but familiar patterns. There was nothing demanding in their kissing, just pure expression of the feelings deep in their heart. It was not a battle or demand for dominance, there was no biting or painful sucking of the bottom lip, no tongues invading foreign territory, or wandering hands. Just two souls converging between interlocked lips.
“Luke,” Felicity moaned when they were forced to break for a proper take of air. One could only take in so many small breaths from short partings. She panted, resting her forehead back against him, “Oh, Luke. I love you.”

“I love you too, Felicity,” he panted.

Felicity took a deep breath, the darkness of lust burning in her eyes, but still something in that flame kept the desire pure. Luke could see her mentally preparing for something.

“Do you really love me?” Felicity’s voice held no doubt of his affections.

“Yes,” Luke breathed, ghosting his lips over hers, but Felicity pulled back at the last second.

He watched her give an ever so slight smirk, and she leaned back into a sitting upright position. Though he desired it, Luke knew better than to make a move to follow. Felicity had a plan, and Luke knew it was not one to thwart.

Revelling in the sight of his hungry eyes on her body, Felicity slid her thumbs under the straps of her nightgown and pulled it down, exposing her breasts.

Felicity smirked as Luke’s eyes ran over her bared body. She always did enjoy seeing the effect her body had on him.

“Then make love to me,” Felicity whispered.

Luke didn’t need to be asked twice. Immediately she was on her back, Luke yanking her nightgown the rest of the way off as his lips passionately reclaimed hers.


Suddenly he reared back.

“Just to be clear,” Luke said in a serious tone that was threatening to be undercut by his passionate panting. “This wasn’t my endgame when I entered the room. I wasn’t trying to trick you. Those were honest declarations of love.”

“Oh, I know,” Felicity said simply, propping herself up on her elbows.


“Yeah. That’s why I want to make love to you.”

“Okay. Just checking.”

They both laughed as Luke lowered her back down onto the bed. And the next thing Luke knew, his pants were on the floor, and his body was on Felicity’s.

Slow, steady breaths filled the room as they tenderly made love. The impassioned moans and vulgar cries that usually echoed off their bedroom walls made no appearance that night. That night wasn’t for crazed lust, or even to experience the sexual pleasure given to them by their partner. That night was just about love: pure love and the way they could express it in a physical fashion. The tempo of their lovemaking was set by those heavy moans and the squeaking of the bedframe as their hips rocked against each other.

The sight of Felicity Rhiaon that night was one of the most erotic images Luke would ever lay eyes
on. Her hair cascading down her shoulders, her eyes squeezed shut, an almost wince on her face from magnificent pleasure, her skin pale in the moonlight, sweat glistening as she worked him hard, and her breasts gently bouncing with every thrust.

Felicity was atop Luke; he sprawled out on the bed, and her legs spread open across his hips. She was leaning forward slightly, her hands anchored flat upon his pectorals, steadying herself. Impaled upon his stiff erection, his cock glistening with her arousal, Felicity slowly rocked back and forth, stimulating them both as she set the pace of their lovemaking. Luke was buried to the hilt inside of her, and his testicles were hard and heavy, ready to burst. His body was eagerly responding to hers, building to the moment where he would empty himself inside of her womb and let nature take its course.

Felicity didn’t lift and drop herself atop him that night. While certainly athletic and flexible enough to pull it off, Felicity didn’t have the stamina to last very long in that action. She often needed Luke’s hands on her hips to guide the motion and keep her going, and even then it usually ended up with Luke thrusting up into her. So that night when Felicity had lowered herself onto Luke, she elected to keep him submersed inside her tight canal and just rock to stimulate them both. Additionally, this motion provided just the right angle to pleasure her clit, bringing her closer to climax than regular penetration could.

Luke’s hands didn’t have a set place as Felicity rode him, but he was always touching her somewhere. He refused to be the kind of lover who just took and never gave back. There was something arrogant and even insulting in the idea of his wife naked on top of him while he just lay there like some Lord and Master. Not while they were making love anyway.

He touched her: gripped her arms, clasped her hands with his own, stroked her abs, twirled a strand of hair, or palmed her breasts. For the most part, Luke elected to touch her breasts, hands resting on them in a mirror of how she rested the flats of her palms upon his chest. Of course, Luke would occasionally ring a thumb around one of the erect nipples or drag a finger across them. Fucking, having sex, or making love, Luke knew by now how much pleasure Felicity derived from her super sensitive nipples.


“I love you too, Sweetheart,” Luke’s eyes burned with love and passion as his wife rocked in the moonlight.

“Oh, Gods, I’m getting close,” Felicity groaned, throwing her head back as she rode him harder. Her panting was getting faster as she started to lose control.

“Just hang on, Sweetheart,” Luke pleaded. He could tell by the way her arm was shaking that her loss of control wasn’t her approaching climax, but rather running out of stamina. “I want to make you feel so good, Sweetheart.”


“Then hang on. Please just hang on a little longer, Felicity.”

The truth was that neither had climaxed yet that night, and with the amount of edging they had done, Luke knew he wouldn’t be able to come up with a round two. They had, of course, touched each other in different ways that night. Felicity had used her hands to prepare Luke for the main event, and Luke had spent a very long time using his mouth on her. But neither had been used to get the other person off, merely to observe their partner’s expression as they experienced the gift of pleasure.
Their actual action of coupling had also started differently with Luke and Felicity beginning in the missionary position, until Felicity had decided on a change of pace. While Luke wasn’t about to stop to glance at the clock, he had no doubt that they had been making love for nearly an hour. He was more than ready to finish off, but Felicity still needed a little push.

And if he was going to last, he was going to need to assert a little control.

“Felicity,” Luke sat up, his arm wrapping behind Felicity’s back automatically to prevent knocking her over.

She gasped and moaned as his mouth found her breasts and his natural hand wedged between their bodies to play with her clit.

“Just a little more,” he urged.

“Luke,” Felicity groaned, her arms shaking as she tried to hold herself upright.

He started to push her down back into the missionary position, but Felicity threw a hand behind herself, stopping him from forcing her down. Luke pulled his mouth away from her breasts and frowned. Felicity smiled and pressed a kiss to his swollen lips.

Then she wrapped her arms around his neck, and Luke understood. She was trying to assume the position of both of them sitting up – Felicity being seated in his lap – so they could hold each other close and look each other in the eye. It was the position Luke had always claimed to be the most romantic of all, and he gladly helped adjust her legs into a better stance.

“Oh, Luke,” Felicity whispered, looking deep into each other’s eyes as they embraced tenderly.

“Felicity,” Luke murmured her name upon her skin as he kissed and touched her tenderly. She felt so incredibly good around his cock, so tight and wet, and he never wanted the moment to end.

“Yes, Luke. Just like that,” Felicity moaned as he rocked up into her. Their bodies were glistening with sweat, making it harder to hold on to each other. “Please, Luke. Please finish me. I want it. I want it so bad. No Force powers, just touch me. I want your skin on mine as you make me cum.”


He pulled his lips away from her, and using two fingers to lift her chin, Luke looked deep into her eyes and said, “I love you, Felicity Rhiaon.”

Then he pulled her head forward, crushing her lips to his, and buried his hand between them to pleasure her enflamed clit.


“Felicity!” Luke cried out, ejaculating deep inside as her quim clenched his rod, milking him for every last drop.

They climaxed together, screaming the other’s name on their lips, as they stared deep into each other’s eyes. When the pair had calmed down, Felicity stayed upright in Luke’s lap, his softening cock still sheathed inside of her, unintentionally preventing his seed from spilling out of Felicity.
The lovers stayed in each other’s arms for a while, recovering from their passionate lovemaking and craving further intimate skin to skin contact. They smiled at each other, chuckled softly, and exchanged a few kisses as they stayed there intertwined.

Luke rested his forehead against hers, and whispered, “I love you, Felicity Rhiaon.”

Felicity smiled widely, that genuine loving smile so few got to see, “I love you too, Luke Skywalker.”

He grinned, kissed her one final time, and laid back on the bed, pulling her down with him. After withdrawing his cock from Felicity, Luke cradled her in his arms, holding her head against his chest so she could hear the soothing rhythm of his heart.

“That was amazing,” Felicity cuddled up into his embrace.

“It was,” Luke ran a lazy hand over her hips. “I don’t want this moment to ever end.”

“Who said it has to?”

“Then it won’t.”

Felicity sighed in contentment and Luke felt his eyelids getting heavier. He looked over at Felicity and saw her give a large yawn. It made Luke smile; he always thought the perfect way to fall asleep was naked, Felicity in his arms, after having made love to her. The perfect night would have the perfect ending…

Suddenly, Felicity lifted Luke’s arm off her and shifted to get out of bed.

“Where are you going?” Luke gently wrapped an arm around her waist to stop her. It was a grip she could easily get out of if she truly wanted to, and Luke would of course let her go if asked.

“To the fresher to clean up,” Felicity did not move away his hand. “We’ve had the discussion about UTI’s, Luke.”

Luke groaned and sat up, pulling Felicity into a tight hug, halting her progression out of the bed.

“Stay with me,” Luke placed gentle kisses up her neck. “I want to hold you.”

“And I want to be held,” Felicity relaxed into his embrace, “but if I stay here, I’m going to fall asleep in your arms.”

“Is that a terrible thing?” Luke pressed kisses to the back of her neck. “Come on. Just a while longer.”

“Luke,” she groaned, but there wasn’t much fight in her voice.

“Please?” he trailed his kissing down her back scar. “Worse comes to worse, you can skip the fresher. Come on, Felicity. Please? Just a few minutes.”


They lay together cuddling, desperately trying to fight off the sleep that was doing its hardest to claim them. Luke set the alarm on his bedside table while Felicity settled against him. Luke usually slept on his back, and Felicity on her left side, facing Luke, curled in to his embrace.

“But just a-” a large yawn cut off Felicity. “Little while.”
“Of course,” Luke smiled down at her, pulling the blankets over them. There was no need to dress that night. “A little while.”


“And I love you, Felicity Rhiaon Skywalker.”

Five minutes later, they were both fast asleep.

Perhaps if Luke hadn’t talked Felicity out of going to the fresher, none of it would have happened. It’s possible that if Felicity hadn’t fallen asleep in his arms that night, lives would have been saved. And maybe if Luke hadn’t been in that reflective mood, the history of the Galaxy would have gone a much different way.

But history did change as they slept together in their bed that night. They were peaceful; their naked limbs entangled lovingly with her head resting on his chest and his essence planted within her from their lovemaking. In complete bliss and utter ignorance, Luke and Felicity Rhiaon Skywalker changed the Galaxy.

For there was nothing now that could stop what happened at 2:39 AM.

---

4 Years, 8 Months, 10 Days

2:39 AM

The second the bedside clock flicked from 2:38 to 2:39, Luke shot upright in a panic.

Unfortunately, for Felicity, whose head was resting on his chest, this meant she was quite suddenly and quite violently flung off him, her head smacking into the corner of her bedside table.

“Ow! LUKE!”

“Shh!” Luke held out an arm, his eyes wide as he struggled to identify what had woke him. “Something’s going on.”

“What could possibly warrant you smacking my head against the bedside table? I’m fine, by the way. Thanks for asking.”

“Felicity, I’m truly sorry for hurting you, but please just give me a minute.”

She grumbled something about jerks named Skywalker next to him and turned onto her side so her back was to him.

Luke squeezed his eyes shut. Something had happened, something in the Force, but… what? Luke sat in the bed for a long time searching through the Force, trying to identify the problem… or whatever this was. While Felicity may have been upset at her rude awakening, Luke sensed that she was patiently waiting for him to figure it out and help him in anyway he might need her.

After a long stretch of silence, Felicity finally asked, “Luke, what’s going on?”


“A disturbance?”

“Not… quite. I don’t know, it feels… familiar. I’ve sensed something like this before.”
“Has someone entered the house?”

“No. That’s a disturbance.”

“Is it a vision?” Felicity suggested.

“No, those don’t wake me up,” Luke shook his head.

“I’m aware of that fact, Skywalker,” Felicity said pointedly. “You know, I sometimes dream I live in a better world. It’s exactly like this world, except my husband doesn’t sleep kick me when he gets visions or throw me into bedside tables because of non-disturbances in the Force. It’s a beautiful world. At least tell me I’m not bleeding, Luke.”

Luke looked at Felicity and tenderly touched the place that had hit the table, “No blood, but you might get a bump.”

“Well, that will be fun to explain to the others without making it sound like spousal abuse.”

“Don’t worry, the Jedi are used to it. Remember Obik’s broken arm last year? Reine did that to him when she had a vision and accidentally knocked him down a staircase.”

“You people really need to work on getting your visions under control before someone ends up dead. So, what the heck is this Force thing that woke you up?”


Felicity just stared at him, “Well, that’s specific.”

Luke pulled back the blankets and grabbed his sleep pants off the floor, “We should probably get up and investigate.”

“We? Luke, I may be on the Order’s payroll, but that’s for designing buildings, not Jedi sleuthing.”

“Fine, I’ll go by myself.”


“What?” Luke didn’t look back at her, too focused on the weirdness with the Force.

“Is this thing dangerous?”

“No. I don’t sense danger.”

“Is it affecting anything?”

“Not at the moment.”

“Is it going anywhere?”

“Doesn’t seem like it.”

A pillow smacked him in the face.

“Ow! Felicity!” Luke rubbed his face as Felicity put his pillow back down.
“Luke Skywalker, it is two o’clock in the Gods damned morning! Go back to sleep! We’ll figure it out later!” Felicity dramatically dropped back down on the mattress and turned her back to Luke.

He sighed and shook his head.

“Good night, Sweetheart,” Luke bent down and kissed the forming bump on her head. “I love you.”

“Love you too. Now go to sleep.”

And as Luke settled back down for sleep, he couldn’t help but wonder if he had only imagined something different in the Force.

Felicity and Luke did not know it at the time, but a change had happened in the Force. A very significant change for them. For though two people had climbed into the bed that night, in the morning three would get out.

Because at 2:39 AM, Rey Rhiaon Skywalker was conceived.

8:27 AM

“Sorry for hitting you with the pillow last night, Luke,” Felicity said in the morning as she brushed her teeth in their en suite fresher.

Luke was standing next to her, a towel wrapped around his waist, fresh from his shower as he performed his own morning routine.

“Sorry for knocking your head against the bedside table,” Luke winced as he saw the bump on his wife’s head. “Have you figured out what you’re going to say to people about it?”

“I’ll just blame it on rough sex,” Felicity spat out her toothpaste. “People honestly expect it between us at this point. And we did have sex last night.”

“Didn’t really get rough, though.”

“Luke, who is exactly going to ask for details?”

Luke opened his mouth.

“Other than Han?”

He closed it.

Felicity smirked, her eyes flicking down to the towel around his waist, “You are ridiculous, Skywalker, you know that?”


The modesty towel,” Felicity laughed. “For goodness’ sake, Luke, I saw you naked getting out of the shower before you put the towel on. I saw you naked getting into the shower. We had sex last night, during which I vividly saw and touched your nakedness. Heck, the first five days we were on Takodana for our honeymoon, we literally never put on clothing.”

“Well, if we had known Maz was going to walk in to check up on us during the fifth day, I’m sure we would have rethought that idea.”
“The point is,” Felicity wrapped her arms around his waist and fiddled with the hem of the towel, “you literally have nothing left to hide from me, Skywalker. Why hide the goods?”

Luke smirked, “Because I have the big meeting with the other Jedi today, and I can’t be late for it, so I decided to keep the towel on to fend you off from any nefarious plans.”

“Leave it to Luke Skywalker to refer to a blowjob as a nefarious plan,” Felicity shook her head. “You know calling it that only makes me want to do it more, just to mess with you?”

“Yes, I am familiar with my poor decision in choosing a wife.”

Felicity playfully smacked his chest, “I’m more than happy to withhold nefarious plans if you keep up those kinds of remarks.”

“No, you aren’t.”

“You want to play this game, Skywalker?”

“Oh, I know you’ll do it, but you won’t be happy about it. Remember the great beard disagreement?”

“I still can’t believe you managed to hold out for six weeks.”

Luke just shook his head, “So, it’s your day off today. Any plans?”

“Not really,” Felicity started to floss her teeth as Luke re-entered the bedroom. “You?”

“The meeting, some paperwork, and figuring out this whole change in the Force business.”

“You still sense it?”

“Yep.”

“That’s so weird. And you don’t know at all what it is?”

“I think I do, but I just can’t figure out how I know it,” Luke confessed as he picked up the clothing off the floor. When it came to bedtime sex, Luke and Felicity had a strip now, clean up later rule. “I’ve definitely felt this before, but not this exactly. Something like it. It’s getting to be a little clearer though. Whatever it is, it’s taking root.”

“Taking root?” Felicity frowned.

“What happened last night was this thing becoming its own thing,” Luke explained, finding it hard to put into words. He bent down and picked up his pants off the floor. “It comes from parts of the Force, but it morphed and changed into something different. I was woken by the moment the things merged into one, and now it’s solidifying itself in the Force. Oh, this is so frustrating. I know I’ve sensed this before.”

That was when he realized Felicity was staring at him, or rather the pair of pants in his grasp. Her jaw was slightly agape and her face a little paler than it had been a moment ago.

“Are you okay?” Luke frowned as he placed his pants in the hamper.

Felicity blinked, “Oh? Yeah. Uh, fine. I’m fine.”

“Are you sure?”
“Of course I am. Just remembered something that I… never mind,” Felicity turned away from him.

Luke narrowed his eyes; something was definitely up, and Felicity seemed to have figured it out. Now if only he could.

“I’ll ask the others about it after the meeting,” Luke pulled his clothing from the closet and began to dress.

“Good. You should,” Felicity’s voice had a strange tone to it. She was silent for a moment, probably trying to gather courage or debate her next words. “Hey, Luke?”

“Yes?”

“Does this change… Have a colour?”

Luke raised an eyebrow, “Colour?”

“Like we have,” Felicity explained. “You know, in the Force? You’re sky blue, Han’s yellow gold, Leia’s navy blue, I’m crimson, Ben’s forest green. Does… does this have a colour?”

Luke frowned and reached into the Force, “Actually… now that you mention it… yeah, it does.”

“Really?”

“It’s faint but it’s there.”

“What… What colour is it?”

“Give me a second…” Luke closed his eyes and focused. “It’s… lilac.”

He opened his eyes to find Felicity staring at him in utter shock.


“Lilac,” Felicity said slowly. “So, it’s… purple?”


Felicity seemed to consider something for a moment, but then decided against saying it. Luke would later learn why Felicity had gotten so mysterious. She had put the pieces together: something changing in the Force being new but coming from something pre-existing. Something “merging” and then “taking root.” How Luke picking up the clothing they had discarded during the previous night’s lovemaking had been the thing that made it all click. How the colour lilac – a combination of Luke’s sky blue signature and Felicity’s crimson one – sealed the deal in her mind.

The answer was clear to Felicity: Luke Skywalker had gotten her pregnant.

…And Luke had no freaking clue.

“Nothing,” Felicity shook her head. “Uh, you should probably finish changing and get to your meeting. Do you need breakfast?”

“No, the meeting’s being held at Gavyn and Zena’s house. You know, she’s a surprisingly good cook. Gavyn… for your own safety, I beg you never to eat his cooking.”

“Wait, why is it being held at their house?”
“The Temple is being fixed for the water damage caused by that flood Ben, Miri, and Genko somehow managed to start. I’m still trying to wrap my head around how that happened.”

Felicity shot him a look, “Luke, you gave them lightsabers and left them alone with Lando Calrissian. What did you think was going to happen?”

“That Alyla would be able to keep them in line.”

“You really do live in your own world, don’t you?”

“Sometimes it’s better than this world.” Luke finished dressing and went over to give Felicity a kiss, “Have a good day. Sweetheart. Hopefully I can figure out this whole change in the Force thing. Maybe I’ll ask Alyla or Gavyn if they’ve ever encountered something like this.”

“I think asking Gavyn would be an excellent idea,” Felicity said more to herself than Luke. She kissed Luke and gave him a smile, “Have a great day, Sweetheart.”

“You too.”

Luke would later learn that the second he left the house, Felicity had Artoo search how long conception took place after sex.

4 Years, 9 Months, 8 Days

Luke and Felicity had returned to their apartment on Coruscant together for the first time since they had moved to Rornian. Originally, it was just supposed to be Luke going to Coruscant, attending to some Emissary business – Felicity had left the employ of Nils Arlos – but Luke insisted Felicity come when a week had gone by and she still hadn’t stopped throwing up every day.

He was concerned about this stomach bug she must have, though Felicity insisted that it wasn’t a stomach bug and he shouldn’t worry. Felicity had gone to see Doctor Kalonia about it, and Kalonia assured Luke it would be okay. Kalonia and Felicity were very secretive about her visit, and Luke told Felicity that she either had to tell him what was going on, or she had to come to Coruscant where he could rush her to a full hospital should something go wrong.

Felicity chose Coruscant.

It was the second day into their visit, and Luke arranged that they have lunch with the Solo family that afternoon. But that didn’t mean they were going to get lunch together. Leia was busy at her office in the old Coruscant Senate building, which also housed the Emissary office. Luke and Leia were going to get lunch together with Ben, who was spending the day tailing Luke to get some mini Jedi lessons in.

As for Han, Luke – concerned about Felicity’s wellbeing – decided to send him to the apartment to hang out with Felicity and care for her until Luke could get home. Luke hadn’t forewarned Felicity about this, as the thought only occurred to him about an hour after he left home. However, Han and Felicity were dear friends, so he knew neither would object to the arrangement.

So Luke was very confused when he got a comm call from an extremely excited Han insisting they all go out together for lunch.

Luke would later learn the series of events that had led up to that call.

That Felicity had discussed Luke’s disturbance in the Force with Zena Halcorr, the only other person
she knew who had been pregnant with the child of a Force Sensitive. That Felicity and Zena had
gone to Doctor Kalonia with the suspicions, who told them they would have to wait until the fetus
was more than a day old before she could determine if one existed. That Kalonia didn’t keep
pregnancy tests on hand in the Temple Village Medical Center – there weren’t many Jedi having
kids in Temple Village, Rey being the very first birth among them – so she would have to add it to
the requisitions list that Luke oversaw.

That Felicity hadn’t wanted to tip off Luke until she was sure she was actually pregnant, not wanting
to get his hopes up like last time, and told Kalonia not to add the test to the list. That Felicity had held
out until Luke’s trip to Coruscant and originally planned to secretly go off-planet when he was in
Coruscant to get a pregnancy test. That she decided to take advantage of his offer to go to Coruscant
so she could get a store bought pregnancy test.

That Han had inadvertently walked in on Felicity taking said test. That Han had been there to hold
her hand as she waited for the results. That Han and Felicity hugged and celebrated when they read
the test as positive. That Han had insisted Felicity immediately tell Luke, and forced his hand by
setting up a lunch with the family when Felicity tried to get Han to shut up until Luke came home
that night. That Han had dragged Felicity to Dex’s Diner – for what other restaurant could be more
appropriate – to meet their family.

But at the time, all Luke knew as he walked into the diner with Leia and Ben was that Han was
overly excited and Felicity was grumpy. Additionally, Han refused to let Felicity move from her
spot, forcing her to sit next to him on one side of the booth while Ben, Leia, and Luke sat on the
other side. He insisted that Luke and Felicity sit on the end as *you never know when you might
suddenly need to get out of the booth.*

Throughout lunch, Han kept dropping not so subtle hints about Felicity’s condition, but Felicity
wasn’t willing to play.

“Knock it off, Loud Mouth Solo,” Felicity refused to look up from her menu even though Dex
hadn’t changed it in years.

“Come on, Fliss,” Han nudged her with his elbow. “Just tell them.”

“Don’t make me smother you with that stupid vest.”

“Hey, the vest is not stupid! And would you give it up already? Just tell Luke.”


“It’s nothing!” Felicity snapped. “I’ll tell you later. Maybe when we don’t have an audience.”

“Ow!” Leia cried. “Felicity, did you just kick me?”

“Sorry, thought it was Han,” Felicity shot Han a dirty look.

“Okay, seriously,” Leia demanded. “What’s going on? Do you have some sort of news?”

“Are you leaving Uncle Luke?” Ben’s face lit up.

Han pointed at Ben, “Wipe that grin off your face, she’s not going anywhere.”

“Ben, we’ve talked about this,” Leia chastised. “You will not deride your aunt. This is your last
warning. Do it again, and there will be consequences.”
The ten-year-old Ben crossed his arms, slumped back in his seat.

“She’s not my aunt,” Ben muttered.

Leia narrowed her eyes, “We’re having a talk when we get home.”

Ben shot Felicity a dirty look. Felicity just shot him a sickly sweet grin and shrugged.

“Don’t think we’re done with you,” Luke said to his wife. “What’s going on? Why is Han so worked up about you?”

“I’m just really glad to be fortunate to have such a wonderful family that I love so much.” Han grinned at Felicity, “The old members… and the new ones. **Ow! Stop kicking me!**”

“Stop making me kick you,” Felicity simply said.

“Oh for the love of-” Han rolled his eyes. “Fine, you know what, if you don’t tell him, I’m going to.”

Felicity scoffed, “You wouldn’t dare.”

“Alright then.” Han turned to his brother-in-law, “Luke, Fliss is pregnant.”

It was hard to tell who was more surprised: Luke at Han’s declaration… or Han, when Felicity tackled him.

Felicity let out a laugh, her features softening, tears welling in her eyes, “You were wondering about the disturbance in the Force, well…”
She rested a hand on her stomach.

“You’re pregnant,” Luke whispered, a smile plastered on his face as he processed the life changing news.

“Oh my gosh, Felicity,” Leia had a hand on her mouth and tears in her eyes. “Felicity, I don’t even know what to say… except your uterus is about six inches lower down.”

“Oh,” Felicity moved her hand lower, so it was more over her pelvis. “Thanks.”

“I’m going to be a father,” Luke’s jaw hurt from smiling wider than he had even before. Excitement filled his voice as he placed his natural hand next to Felicity’s, over the area of her uterus where a miracle was taking place. His hand shook as he realized that underneath his palm was his child. “We have a child.”

“Yes, we do,” Felicity started to cry happily.

Joy exploded in the Force. Luke didn’t even comprehend what happened next, but Felicity was in his arms as he spun her around, laughing, crying, kissing her as his heart was overwhelmed with joy.

“We’re having a baby! I’m going to be a father!” Luke cried out, not caring at all about the other diners in the restaurant. Dex would come by shortly and discover the happy news, giving them their meals on the house.

But nothing else mattered in that moment as he held Felicity. She was pregnant. His wife was pregnant. He had made a child with Felicity Rhiaon. Luke Skywalker was finally going to be a father.


“Alright, alright, I do need to breathe, Luke,” Felicity pulled back from him a little, but the joy in her eyes and voice did not leave her. She placed a hand on her stomach, and the other on Luke’s cheek, “You don’t want to crush the baby, Skywalker.”


“No need to thank me, Luke,” Felicity laughed. “After all, you did have a hand in making this baby.”

“I can’t believe this… We’re having a baby.”

“Yes, we are.”

Luke pulled her head forward and crushed another kiss to her lips. Finally, all of her dreams had come true.

“Alright, break it up,” Han called. He and Leia were getting out of the booth, “You’ve had your fun. It’s time to let Uncle Han and Aunt Leia celebrate.”

“Aunt Leia,” Leia grinned, pulling Luke in for a hug. “I can’t believe you two are having a baby. If you told me years ago that my childhood best friend would have a baby with my twin brother, I would have called you crazy.”

“I think more for the twin brother part than the best friend part,” Luke laughed as they broke apart.
“Congratulations, Kid, I was starting to think you didn’t have it in you,” Han hugged Luke as Leia hugged Felicity. Luke hadn’t noticed yet that Ben wasn’t around.

“You know me, Han, slow and steady wins the race.”

“Yeah, and that’s why Leia ended up with me and not you.”

“You say that like it’s a bad thing.” Suddenly a horrible thought occurred to Luke, “Oh no.”

“What?” Felicity asked.

“Han, promise me you won’t tell the baby about the accidental incest.”

“Why in the galaxy would I promise that?” Han asked. “I look forward to thoroughly embarrassing you to your kid, Kid.”

“Okay, if I’m a father, you can’t keep calling me Kid.”

“Watch me, Kid,” Han smirked. “Don’t worry, I won’t call your kid, Kid, so we can avoid confusion.”

“That wasn’t really my concern about that.”

“I know, Kid,” Han chuckled. “But don’t think this baby isn’t going to get a nickname. This family has a proud history of nicknames.”

Felicity narrowed her eyes, “And what exactly are you going to call my child, Loud Mouth Solo?”

Luke could have sworn for a moment he saw fear in Han’s eyes. If Felicity Rhiaon was ever going to follow through on her threat to punch someone in the throat, it would be while pregnant.


And from that day forward, Han would always call Luke “Kid” and Rey “Kiddo.”

Luke couldn’t stop kissing Felicity when they got home. Over and over he kissed her as they made their way to the couch. Their lips were only parted occasionally for a brief “thank you” or “I love you.”

When they got to the living room, and Felicity sat on the couch, immediately, with the gentlest of touches, Luke pressed her body to lay down. Hovering over her, Luke trailed kisses down her lips, neck, collarbone, the valley of her breasts, the length of her torso, and to the place of her womb. Without a word, Luke pulled up Felicity’s shirt to expose her midriff, and placed tender kisses over the spot where their child was contained.

“I love you, I love you so much,” Luke whispered, though he didn’t know whom he was addressing: Felicity or the baby. “I love you both so much.”

“I love you too,” Felicity ran a hand through Luke’s hair as he showered their child with kisses. “I’m sorry Han couldn’t let me tell you in private. He was just so excited.”

“Felicity, finding out in the company of my family, in the restaurant I fell in love with you is the perfect way to find out. How did Han know?”

“Walked in on me taking the test. I guess that’s now, what? Three important life moments he’s
performed for us?"

“I still can’t believe Han actually locked us in a closet to resolve our first real fight.”

“I still can’t believe you actually ever wanted me to learn how to fly a ship,” Felicity smirked. “And that you got that mad when I said no.”

“Yeah, when our child grows up, I’m teaching it to fly,” Luke said. He grinned at the thought of a little girl or little boy sitting in his lap, fascinated by the controls of his X-Wing. “I just can’t believe we’re having a baby. How long have you known?”

“The morning I’m pretty sure I got pregnant.”

Luke frowned, “You mean the day I started sensing the change in the Force?”


Luke scowled, “That’s… odd.”

“How so?”

“If you’re right, I’ve sensed this baby since the exact moment of conception. It’s had a presence in the Force since its conception.”

“Well, don’t bring it up during any reproductive rights debates.”

“Felicity, you don’t get it,” Luke said. “I didn’t sense Ben in the Force until Leia was three months pregnant.”

She frowned, “Actually, Zena did mention that she didn’t sense Miri until four months, and Gavyn didn’t sense her until six.”

Something heavy weighed on Luke, “That’s very unsettling.”

“Why? What does this mean?” Felicity asked.

“From what I’ve gathered, if a Force Sensitive biologically produces another Force Sensitive, they’ll sense the baby sooner from their connection, but the timing will depend on both parties’ amount of power.”

Felicity sat up and stared at him, “Luke… In Basic?”

“The baby is Force Sensitive… and very powerful.”

Luke could feel the jolt of fear that coursed through the Force from Felicity.

“How powerful are we talking?” Felicity nervously rubbed her belly. Luke’s heart fluttered at the sight of Felicity already unconsciously performing such a protective act for their baby.

“Well, I’m very powerful myself, so that sped things up, and so did our relationship of father and child,” Luke explained, “but I would wager that this baby is going to be somewhere on my level of power. Definitely stronger than Ben, if I can sense it from the moment of conception. Which means, this baby is in a lot of danger.”
“Would Snoke want—”

“I wouldn’t be surprised if he already knew and was plotting to take it.”


He clasped her hands in his and looked her straight in the eyes, “No one is going to touch our child. Not Snoke. Not the First Order. Not Cade Ren and his lackeys. No one. Alright? We’re going to fight this together. Promise?”

She smiled, “Promise. I’ll die before I let the First Order have the baby.”

Luke laughed, “Hopefully things won’t need to go to that extreme.”

“So,” Felicity sighed, her hand trailing down to stroke her belly, “I guess there goes my hopes that maybe I’d luck out and get a Non-Sensitive child. I guess Han and I don’t get a new member in our club.”

“Well, maybe the next one,” Luke chuckled. He kissed her as his hands started roaming suggestively.

Felicity playfully shoved him back, “Oh no, you don’t. You just put one baby in me. You gotta wait at least eight months to get started on the next.”

“Who knows? Maybe it’ll be twins.”

“Luke, we’ve had this discussion. Just no.” Felicity paused, “Wait… wouldn’t you have sensed if it were two? You said you only sensed one colour.”

“You’re right, I did.” Luke smiled and placed his natural hand over Felicity’s so they were both caressing their unborn child. “Lilac.”

“Lilac. Purple.”

“Sky blue and crimson mixed together,” Luke finally understood her odd question the morning the baby had been conceived.

“That was the moment I was certain,” Felicity confessed. “I knew I was carrying your child.”

Luke bent down and pressed another kiss to her stomach, “Thank you. It’s the greatest gift anyone could ever give me.”

“I would return the thanks with the typical anytime, but I think I’m going to have a very different opinion in eight months.”

“Just promise me you’ll let me live to see this child.”

“I make no such promise.”

Luke laughed, his fingers stroking her stomach, “What does it feel like? To have the baby inside of you?”

“Honestly,” Felicity shifted, “I don’t feel it yet. I feel the effects of it – whoever decided to call it ‘morning’ sickness is a liar and a bastard – but not the baby itself. But I’ll try to describe it when I do. Also, we really have to come up with another term than ‘it’ for the baby. Feels so impersonal, like we’re trying to detach.”
“Agreed.” Luke sighed, “I wish I could feel the baby like you will.”

“Can’t you through the Force?”

“Well, I see the baby’s signature, but I don’t see it.”

“What did I just say about calling our child it?”


Felicity smiled, running her hand again through Luke’s hair, “So you can’t see more? What the baby looks like? The sex? Anything?”

“Well… Let me try.”

Luke frowned in concentration and focused on the lilac signature and the body containing his progeny. His hand no longer caressed Felicity’s stomach, but rather laid firmly atop it as he focused on her womb underneath and what it therein contained. He pushed hard into Force to follow this signature into a presence that once was a part of his own.

He felt something familiar in the Force, something that had once belonged to himself, but was blended with another presence familiar and dear to him. It was a piece of Felicity’s presence mixed with his own, and yet the blending of the two felt unique, its own separate identity in the Force.

“I think I can see the baby,” Luke closed his eyes to focus more intently.

“Tell me what you see,” Felicity softly urged. Luke always adored when she asked to share in the Force with him.

“I see… Darkness.”

“Darkness?”

“Nothing to worry about,” Luke assured her. “The world is filled with Darkness, for without Darkness there is no Light.”

“Luke, I think my morning sickness is creeping up on me. Can we skip the philosophical musing and get to the point before I go make friends with the fresher again?”

“Sorry.” Luke returned his focus to the Force, “I… I see something.”

“What do you see?”

“It’s small, not much, but…”

“But?”

“In the Darkness I see it, our baby.”

Luke heard Felicity’s sharp intake of breath, “You do? What do they look like? Can you see how big they are? If we’re having a boy or a girl?”

“Nothing like that,” Luke shook his head. “In fact, it doesn’t even look like a baby at the moment. I don’t think I’m seeing into your uterus, just the baby’s image in the Force.”

Using the Force, he cautiously reached out and gently touched his own presence to the baby’s. The
baby recoiled, scared by the unfamiliar sensation in the Darkness, but after a moment of consideration it returned to its original spot. Luke reached out and again touched it ever so slightly. This time the baby embraced it, clumsily bumping back against him.

The baby didn’t know what was going on, but it could sense the safety and love it would find in Luke. It recognized its origin in Luke, and trusted him. This act Luke would perform many times throughout the pregnancy, familiarizing the baby to himself before even exiting the womb. When Rey Rhiaon Skywalker was placed in Luke Skywalker’s arms eight months later, she would already fiercely know and love her father.

“So, what does the baby look like then?” Felicity asked. “Come on, Luke, tell me.”


“A tiny light?” Felicity sounded amused.

“Yes… The baby right now is just a small light in the Darkness… a ray of hope and light.”

Luke opened his eyes and found Felicity smiling radiantly at him.

“A ray?” Felicity grinned.

He smiled and clasped her hand, “Our ray.”

“Our little ray.” She rubbed her belly, “Hello little ray.”

Luke paused, “I like that.”

“What?” Felicity looked up.


“What do you mean?”

“You didn’t want us to call our child it or the baby… Why don’t we call it Ray?”

“Isn’t it a little masculine? I don’t know about Tatooine, but on Coruscant, Ray is a boy’s name short for Raynar.”

“Well, if it’s a girl we can change the aurek to an esk,” Luke suggested. “Besides, it’s just a nickname until we figure out a proper name. What do you think?”


The baby’s presence pushed back at him insistently, though Luke doubted the baby understood what was being said. It probably was just excited to play with its new ability.

“Well?” Felicity asked.


“Then for now, we’ll call the baby Ray.”

In that beautiful moment either Luke nor Felicity dreamed how important the name Rey would soon
Luke stood in the line of family members the guests were lining up to give their condolences to. Leia and her boys stood to his left, her being the youngest grandchild and ergo at the end of the line, while Felicity was on Luke’s right.

Luke had no idea how the man had known his grandmother, but it touched him to see how many people loved Jobal Naberrie. At 92, Jobal’s death hadn’t been a surprise – she had been sick when Luke was introduced to her, and things had gone very downhill in the past five years – but it did hurt horribly.

“Thank you,” Luke clasped the man’s hands. “We appreciate it.”

A woman Luke figured must be the man’s wife said, “It must be so difficult to deal with death when you’ve been looking forward to the introduction of a new life.”

Luke clenched his jaw; he had wanted so badly for his grandmother’s death not to be overshadowed by Felicity’s newly protruding bump. She had tried her best to dress in a way that would hide her pregnancy, but with the way the media had plastered the joyful news everywhere after the news had leaked – Luke was almost positive that Ben was behind it, and had done it to get reporters to annoy Felicity – it was hard not to acknowledge the fact that Luke Skywalker was going to be a father.

Felicity touched Luke’s arm, and after sharing a meaningful look with Luke, she spoke on their behalf, “We are delighted by the news, but our baby will be here in six months… My grandmother-in-law will not, and so we have decided to let the focus be on her for today.”

“Of course,” the woman nodded.


“Wow, Fliss, nice save,” Han looked very uncomfortable in his black, formal attire. Leia hadn’t managed to get him into a suit, but even the business casual look she had talked him into appeared to be too stuffy for Han. “And here I thought Leia was the political one.”

“Must I remind you all again that I grew up in a very political environment?” Felicity shifted, looking even more uncomfortable than Han. Her morning sickness had started to phase out as she approached the second trimester, but staying on her feet for very long was getting harder. “I was Leia’s assistant, had Bail Organa as my pseudo-guardian, my father was a high-ranking Imperial official, heck Vader and Palpatine personally helped plan Brendan’s funeral.”

“Maybe don’t talk about those two today, Fliss,” Leia eyed her mother’s mausoleum nearby.

A new chamber had been constructed a few years back that was closed off to the public. It would be the future burial sites for the Naberrie family so they could be laid to rest with Padmé, as Jobal had just been.

“You know what’s weird?” Han said. “I think this is the first time one of us has actually been able to have a funeral for a family member since Fliss with Brendan.”

“Han,” Leia chided.
“No, I think he’s right,” Felicity carelessly added. “Alaric and Bail got… *Death Starred*. Owen and Beru were… well. And Padmé was… you know. I don’t think either of you attended that. Han, we don’t even know where his family is. Is there anyone in this family that got laid to rest by one of us?”

Luke’s heart lurched as he remembered the pyre he lit on Endor, “Yes… there was.”

A very heavy silence fell on the group.

“…Right,” Han eventually said.

No one pried. While the family did know that Luke had burned Anakin Skywalker, they didn’t speak of it. No one outside of the family knew that Anakin had been laid to rest, Luke having lied that Vader was destroyed with the Second Death Star. They knew if the resting place of Darth Vader was revealed to the public, it would be destroyed. Their feelings on Vader aside, Han, Leia, and Felicity loved Luke so much that they allowed him to have peace for his father.

Soon enough, the line of mourners ended and everyone had started to make their way to the reception at the Palace of Theed. Padmé and Pooja’s roles of Senator, along with Luke and Leia’s celebrity status had given Jobal a high enough profile to earn her reception at the palace.

Luke was about to make his way to the reception when his Aunt Sola stopped him.

“Dad is still inside,” Sola explained. “He’s a little… I figured he could use someone to talk to, and he’s always so open with you. Would you mind-”

“Of course,” Luke nodded. He looked to Felicity, who he was arm in arm with, “This might be a little while. Do you mind going with Aunt Sola and Uncle Darred?”

“Sure,” Felicity unhooked her arm from Luke’s. “I’ve been wanting to talk balusters with him anyway.”

“I’m always up for balusters,” Darred laughed, taking Felicity’s arm.

Luke smiled and rubbed Sola’s shoulder, “I’ll bring Granddad along shortly.”

“Thank you,” Sola had a pained smile.

She was trying so hard to keep things together, and Luke’s heart ached. It was bad enough that he couldn’t exactly relate to losing his mother – losing Beru and Owen to violent murder was much different than one parent to a long illness – but it made it so much worse when he thought about his mother’s relation to Sola.


He found his grandfather standing at Jobal Naberrie’s closed casket. Ruwee said nothing, but the tears in his eyes spoke volumes.

Slowly, Luke walked forward and settled at Ruwee’s side. He didn’t say anything, but laid a hand upon his grandfather’s shoulder.

As the only male grandchild, Ruwee had latched onto Luke immediately upon introduction. He had always said that after a wife, two daughters, three granddaughters, two granddaughters-in-law, and a great-granddaughter, it was good to finally have some male blood in the family. Darred, Han, and Ryoo’s husband, Jagrav could only do so much, and Ben had very little interest in the Naberrie side
of the family. Luke had filled that yearning for a boy to pass his legacy onto that Ruwee had craved for years – though he adored all of his girls more than life itself.

It was why Sola had asked Luke to speak to Ruwee, as well as his helpful ability to sense emotions in the Force. Peering into Ruwee, Luke felt nauseous at the overwhelming grief his grandfather felt for his grandmother. Ruwee’s heart was utterly broken.

“I’m so sorry, Granddad,” Luke finally spoke. “She was a great woman.”

“The greatest woman I’ll ever know,” Ruwee smiled, his hand running across the smooth wood of the coffin. “And that’s saying something considering our family.”

“I wish I had known her longer,” Luke’s words were honest.

“I knew her for seventy years, and somehow that doesn’t feel like enough.”

“I can’t imagine what you’re going through. If I ever lost Felicity…”

“Pray that you won’t have to find out,” Ruwee said simply. “Jobal is everything to me. It’s impossible to imagine how I’m going to live without her. Though, I suppose with my age… At 93, I won’t have to live very long without her.”

Luke swallowed hard, tears welling in his eyes. After so many years of searching, he had found his family, and just like his father, Luke was going to lose them far too soon.

“I’m glad I got to meet her,” Luke said. “She was so sick. Always in so much pain.”

“She’s a fighter,” Ruwee gave a small smile. “It’s where your mother got it. She fought so hard to hang on just a little longer, long enough to see it.”

“See what?”

“You and your sister. For the day you would come home to us.”

Luke frowned, but didn’t say anything.

“She was always certain that Padmé’s baby couldn’t have been lost. She knew out there somewhere she had a grandchild waiting to come home. I remember the day Ryoo came home and told us that Luke Skywalker had just joined the Rebellion. She wanted us to reach out to you so much, but we kept our distance. It killed her to not go to you, especially after the war.”

“I’m not mad at the family,” Luke assured him. “I understand why you worried about my mother’s relationship with my father becoming common knowledge. I don’t blame you for not coming forward.”

“It hurt Jobal so much to sit back and let it happen,” Ruwee sighed. “She would clamour to get her hands on every piece of news about you and your sister. She cried so hard when she saw Leia’s wedding photos, and Ben’s birth announcement. Jobal always said that we needed to be around for your wedding and child. To be there where Padmé couldn’t. She knew one day you would come home to us, so she fought hard and saw that through.”

Luke felt tears prick his eyes as he realized that his grandmother’s sickness had started taking a turn for the worse after meeting him. She truly had held out to meet him, to share in those firsts that her daughter should have cherished. Jobal barely made it through Luke and Felicity’s engagement, but made sure to dance with her grandson on his wedding night. And once she heard the news that her
daughter was going to be a grandmother via Luke, Jobal had finally allowed herself to give in to the inevitable and quickly passed away.

“Granddad…” Luke said slowly. “Felicity and I have been talking about something. We’re thinking about maybe naming the baby Jobal if it’s a girl.”

Ruwee smiled, but shook his head, “I’m touched by the gesture, but you don’t need to do it. If it’s a girl and you must name it after someone, give her the name of the woman who raised you, Luke. Jobal would understand.”


“My word of advice, Luke, don’t name your child after someone. It gets confusing enough when someone says Padmé and I don’t know if they’re talking about my daughter or Ryoo’s.”

“I’ll take it into consideration.”

They fell back into a comfortable silence, allowing themselves to be lost in the memory of Jobal Naberrie.

“Granddad,” Luke said after a while, “is there anything I can do for you?”

Ruwee took a deep breath, “Promise me something, Luke.”

“Anything.”

“Promise me that you’ll cherish every single second you have Felicity.”

Luke smiled, “I will Granddad. I promise I will.”

5 Years, 7 Days

“What does it feel like?” Luke asked as his hand rested on her protruding bump.

“I’m not sure,” Felicity shifted on the bed. “How does one describe the feeling of a human living inside of them?”

“I don’t know, but I can offer the reverse.”

Felicity raised an eyebrow.

“Because I was inside a tauntaun?” Luke reminded, but the joke fell flat. “Never mind.”

It was their nighttime ritual. Even though it would be a while yet before Luke could feel the baby move, Felicity had been feeling it for weeks. To compensate, Luke had started to feel the baby through the Force every night, familiarizing its presence with his. Sometimes if he tried really hard, he could see a flash of the baby. Not much but sometimes a nose, or a strand of brown hair.

“How about we discuss baby names?” Luke suggested.

“We don’t even know the sex yet, Luke,” Felicity pointed out.

“Yeah, but our little Ray of light needs a name… and besides, going by what I’ve felt in the Force… I think it’s a boy.”
“A boy?” Felicity grinned. She looked absolutely radiant, but she couldn’t help cracking a joke. “Great, Leia and I continue to be outnumbered.”

“There’s always next time,” Luke laughed, leaning over to kiss her. Lazily in the background, Luke was getting closer to the baby in the Force, “Now, I know it’s out there, but if it is a boy, I was thinking we could name it-”

“You say Anakin, and you’re never seeing this baby,” Felicity warned.

“Never mind then.” Luke paused, “You know, I’m getting a pretty clear picture tonight. Maybe I can see something more about Ray.”

“Maybe it’s because Ray knows his mommy already has the perfect name picked out. I’m surprised we even need to discuss names. Clearly we’re going to name it Brendan.”

Luke was silent.


“Look, I like the name-”

“Luke!”

“But my nephew is named Ben,” Luke pointed out.

“What does that have to do with anything?” Felicity snapped.

“Ben and Bren?”

“So, we wouldn’t call him Bren.”

“I don’t think so, Felicity.”

Subconsciously, Luke noted the baby’s picture was getting clearer. Was that hazel eyes?

“Luke, are you seriously telling me I’m not allowed to name my son after my murdered brother?” Felicity exclaimed.

“And I can’t name him after my father?” Luke shot.

“Your father sliced me down the spine! The worst thing my brother ever did to you was flirt with your sister!” Felicity winced and grabbed her stomach. “Oh great, and now he’s kicking pretty hard.”

“Settle, Ray, settle,” Luke whispered, running a hand over his wife’s bump. He could sense the little girl’s distress in the Force, “I’m sorry. She can sense in the Force that we’re arguing.”

Felicity froze, “…She?”

Luke looked up, “What?”

“You said she,” the grin was back on Felicity’s face.

Luke’s patented goofy smile split his face as he realized his own words, “Yeah… I did. I can see her more clearly now… It’s a girl, Felicity.”

“A girl,” Felicity whispered in amazement. Tears filled her eyes, “We’re having a girl.”
She started to laugh, and Luke couldn’t help but join her. With joyous tears shining in their eyes, Luke and Felicity laughed and kissed and held each other, reveling in the news of their forthcoming daughter.

“We have to call Han and Leia right now,” Felicity said after a few jubilant minutes. “We have to tell them it’s a girl!”


“No,” Felicity laughed, “because now Han owes me ten bucks.”

5 Years, 1 Month, 3 Days

The Millennium Falcon was filled with the sound of weapons being set and readied. The charging of power cells, the buzz of lightsabers, and the cocking of blasters. The Falcon was absolutely filled to the brim, the entire cavalry having been called when word got out that the First Order had kidnapped the five months pregnant Felicity Rhiaon Skywalker.

Without a second’s hesitation, the rescue party had clamoured to Rornian to go after Felicity. Luke Skywalker, Leia Organa, Han Solo, Chewbacca, Diego Nalto, Wedge Antilles, the entire remaining Rogue Squadron, Alyla Kene, Lando Calrissian, Gavyn Kene, Zena Halcorr, Reine Agim, Coria Pellis, Obik Kenu, Kes Dameron, Ryoo Naberrie and her husband Jagrav, Nils Arlos, and even Ji-Dan, Gunner, and Riz’s children had gotten in on the fun.

“You all have your instructions,” Leia addressed the crowd. “According to our information, this base is a complex arrangement with eight separate containment cell blocks. The main hallway divides in two, each of those hallways divide in two, and each of those divide in two, leaving eight blocks. Wedge will stay back and guard the ship with Rogue Squadron and the legacy Rogues.”

“Don’t let her get a scratch,” Han warned.

Leia continued, “When we get inside, Han, Chewbacca, Ryoo, Jagrav, Alyla, Lando, Coria, and Nils will go left. Zena, Gavyn, Reine, Obik, Diego, Kes, Luke, and myself will go right. Left team, split into Han, Chewbacca, Alyla, and Lando to the right, with Ryoo, Jagrav, Coria, and Nils to the left. Han and Chewie will take the next right, Alyla and Lando their left. Ryoo and Jagrav, right. Coria and Nils left.”

“Team on the right,” Diego addressed the crowd, “We’ll split into Zena, Gavyn, Reine, and Obik to the right, and Luke, Leia, Kes, and myself to the left. Zena and Gavyn, go the next right. Reine and Obik to the left. Luke and Leia, on your right. Kes and I will go left.”

“When you find her, call for backup immediately,” Han ordered. “Jedi will go on the offense, everyone else, hang back and use your blasters – or bowcaster – as a range weapon. And whatever you do, do not shoot Fliss.”

“If this devolves into a hostage situation,” Luke continued, “wait for my orders. That means both if Fliss is the hostage, or any of us here gets taken hostage. We do not want any of us to get hurt.”

“Alright, let’s show the First Order who’s boss!” Ryoo cried.

Everyone cheered and went back to making the last few adjustments. Han and Chewie ducked back into the cockpit to check on everything.

“Danka,” Luke muttered a Huttese swear as he checked over his blaster. “Does anyone have an
extra gas cartridge? I forgot to bring a backup.”


It was true. Last minute babysitting arrangements was the reason their numbers weren’t slightly higher. Ben was left at home with the Droids, Miri Halcor-Kene had been left with Tyla – who frankly was happy to have an excuse not to come as she didn’t find Felicity someone worth facing the First Order over – and Ryoo’s sister, Pooja had stayed back home with her wife Kashi to watch Ryoo’s daughter, Padmé.

“It’s okay, Poe’s with my dad,” Kes waved off. “I’m happy to come save Fliss. She had my back when we were trapped in that Imperial Work Camp, and I know what it’s like to lose your wife to the First Order.”

“Shara would be proud of all your contributions to the Resistance,” Leia placed a hand on the bulky man’s shoulder.

“Thanks,” Kes gave a bittersweet smile.

“What I don’t get is why Fliss got taken in the first place,” Diego said. “I mean, I know she’s a pain in the ass to them, especially Phasma, but… kidnapping worthy?”

“They want the baby,” Luke answered plainly, trying to keep the edge from his voice. “Snoke knows that she’s going to be extremely strong with the Force, so he wants her; to train and corrupt her to the Dark Side.”

“We’re not going to let that happen, Luke,” Lando said as he was bent down, helping Alyla strap a hidden viro knife around her thigh.

With the glare Gavyn was giving, Luke hoped for Lando’s sake that Alyla was wearing something underneath the skirt Lando clearly had full view up.

“Yeah, I’ll be dead before the First Order manages to get their hands on your little girl,” Alyla nodded.

“Five minutes to touchdown,” Han announced from the cockpit.


The rescue of Felicity Rhiao Skywalker from the First Order didn’t go quite how Luke had pictured it would happen. Sure there was the expected exchanging of blasts and violence between the group and the Stormtroopers protecting the entrance of the base. However, not even half of the rescue party had made it off the ship when Luke – who had made it almost to the entrance with Han, Leia, Diego, Chewie, and Kes – heard a sudden commotion.

Blasts and shouts came from just beyond the doorway, and Felicity shot out the entrance, blaster in hand, running with a comedic slight waddle, pursued by a legion of Stormtroopers.

“Hey, Sweetheart,” Felicity casually zipped past Luke as if it were the easiest thing in the Galaxy to break herself out of prison and outrun a legion of Stormtroopers by herself, while she was five months pregnant no less. She screamed to the stunned crowd of rescuers, “Haul ass!”
The group near the door froze in their tracks, and stared at each other in disbelief.

“Oi! Loud Mouth Solo and company!” Felicity called back as she raced past the equally confused Reine and Obik. “I’m currently outrunning all of you, and technically I’m two people right now! Move it! I would like my daughter to grow up with a father!”

That knocked Luke into his senses, and quickly he and his group were tearing back towards the ship.

“Back to the ship!” Luke ordered as the rescue party finally managed to get a move on again.

It was definitely a confusing several minutes, but after a disjointed scramble, soon enough everyone was back on the ship, flying back to safety. And everyone was just staring at Felicity as she hugged and kissed the equally confused Luke.

“What?” Felicity looked around, sounding completely unphased as she pulled out of Luke’s embrace.

“Nothing,” Reine spoke. “Just… wow.”

“Yep, that sums it up nicely,” Obik nodded.

“I’m almost disappointed,” Lando said. “I was hoping for a little more action than that.”

“Oh, I think you’ve had plenty of action with my sister today,” Gavyn muttered.

“Gavyn!” Alyla elbowed him in the ribs.

Lando just smirked.

“So… you’re okay, Fliss?” Diego awkwardly asked.

“Yeah, I’m fine,” Felicity shrugged.

“And, uh… the baby?” Leia glanced at Han.

“Our ray should be okay,” Felicity rubbed her belly.

Still the room was silent.

“What?” Felicity frowned, “You people act like I’ve never been in a battle before. Or even kidnapped.”

“But… you took on a legion of Stormtroopers by yourself,” Kes said slowly.

“So?” Felicity shrugged. “I once shot Darth Vader in the chest with a back injury. Hey, does anyone have an antacid? This kid is giving me major heartburn.”

Luke grinned and wrapped an arm around her waist, “I love you so much.”

5 Years, 3 Months, 15 Days

“I don’t know what’s more ridiculous, Kid,” Han shook his head as they walked into Maz Kanata’s bar on Takodana. “That your wife’s cravings are so insane that you travel to another planet to satisfy them… or that I agreed to fly you to Takodana for the sole purpose of finding some fruit.”

“Well, if I recall correctly, you jumped through some ridiculous hoops when Leia was pregnant,”
Luke reminded.

“That’s different, Kid. Fliss’ cravings aren’t for stuff that grew only on one planet, and said planet
was blown up. I think Leia’s still mad at me for not being able to find Telana bread. But I sort of get
why you gave into Fliss. Leia and I bicker pretty badly, but I’m more confident that Felicity would
actually smother someone in their sleep. Especially with all the hormones making her emotions out of
whack.”

“Would you two stop talking about me like I’m not standing right here?” Felicity yelled behind them.
At seven months pregnant she was moving significantly slower than the men and was only just
approaching the door. “And you two idiots could have helped me with the stairs.”

“Sorry, Sweetheart,” Luke wrapped an arm around her waist to help lead her to the door.

“Get off,” Felicity shoved him away. “I’m not an invalid.”

“My mistake,” Luke hid a grin. While he was used to seeing a snappy Felicity, there was just
something so adorable about how grumpy she was that day.

“Hey, careful everyone! Fliss is coming through the door!” Han called out as they entered the
watering hole. He smirked at Felicity, “Are you sure you’re going to fit, Rhiaon?”

“Make another joke about my weight Loud Mouth Solo, and I will sit on you.”

“Well, what do we have here?” Maz Kanata greeted, ending the conversation.

“Hello, Maz,” Luke smiled. “It’s good to see you.”

“It is, isn’t it? It’s been quite a while since you’ve come to see me, Luke,” Maz playfully nagged.

“Sorry, Maz, but we’ve been a little busy,” Luke laughed.

“I can see that,” Maz turned her eyes on Felicity’s pregnant swell. She reached out a hand but didn’t
touch, “May I?”

“Only if I can get some of that jamba fruit I had on my honeymoon,” Felicity teased. “I’ve been
craving it so badly the past few months.”

“No, seriously,” Han said in a firm voice, “that’s literally the entire reason we’re here. Give the
woman some fruit!”

Maz chuckled, “Of course.”

She then yelled something towards the kitchens in a foreign language.

“It should be quick.” Maz took Felicity’s hand, “Come, my child.”

She led them to a table, and the group took a seat. Han wisely took the seat furthest from Felicity
because as Maz helped Felicity into her chair, he had made a comment about how long it would take
for her to get back up again, and Felicity didn’t look like she received the comment well. A few
minutes later, a plate of jamba fruit and a few other things to nibble on were set on the table by a
waitress as As Felicity began devouring the fruit – it was clear to the men they were welcome to
anything on the plate but the fruit – Maz crouched down in front of Felicity and rested her hands on
the woman’s pregnant swell.

“Beautiful,” Maz smiled. “How far along are you?”
“Seven very long months,” Felicity bit into another fruit. “Oh, that hits the spot.”

Han smirked and whispered to Luke, “Exactly what she said seven months ago.”

Luke swatted at Han.

“The child will be here soon enough,” Maz chuckled. “Enjoy these last few months without the responsibilities of a parent. Do you know the child’s sex yet?”


“How fitting. The son has a daughter, and the daughter has a son.”

“She’s already very strong with the Force.”

“The Force must have grand plans for this little one.”

“Hopefully not too grand,” Han chuckled. “I think we’ve had enough excitement for a lifetime.”

“Come on, Loud Mouth Solo, you know you’d get bored without some fun even now and then,” Felicity smirked.

Luke groaned, “What is my life that getting shot at is your two’s definition of fun?”

“It’s your own fault that we stuck around,” Han reminded. “Leia tried to get rid of both of us, but you insisted on dragging us back in.”

“Your daughter certainly will have an interesting family,” Maz said. “Have you named her yet?”

“We’re thinking about Kira,” Felicity answered.

“Kira Skywalker.”

“Kira Rhiaon Skywalker,” Luke corrected, wrapping an arm around Felicity’s shoulders. “But we’re not committing to it just yet. Maybe when we meet our Ray of Light, we’ll look at her and think a completely different name fits her.”


“Thought about it, but my cousin Ryoo named her daughter Padmé, and Padmé’s already thirteen,” Luke explained. “Besides, it was Beru who raised me not Padmé.”

“Why not name her Beru then?”

“Because then we’re back to the Ben/Bren/Brenna/Brenda/Brendi/Beru debate.”

Maz frowned.

“Long story,” Felicity waved off. She rubbed her belly, “I don’t know. I really like Kira, but we’ll see what fits our Ray.”

“Well, whatever you name this little one, you must promise to bring her to meet me,” Maz insisted. “I can’t wait to see what this little one is like.”

“Me too,” Felicity smiled radiantly. “I’m so sick of being pregnant. I just want to have this baby so badly.”
5 Years, 5 Months, 1 Day

9:15 pm

“I’ve changed my mind!” Felicity sobbed. “I don’t want the baby anymore.”

“Come on, Sweetheart, you are doing so well,” Luke urged as Felicity worked her way through another excruciating contraction.

They were in the overnight room of the Rornian Medical Center. It was a decently sized room, something like a hospital room but a lot friendlier. There was less medical equipment, though there was plenty stored in the closet next door, ready at any moment to be wheeled in and used. Pale green walls, a comfortable bed, an en suite fresher with a shower, a large curtained window that looked upon the beautiful forest that surrounded Temple Village, a few cushy armchairs by said window, and a medical grade bassinet that had been brought in specially for when Felicity gave birth.

It had been very comfortable for when Felicity had first gone into labour, but far too many hours later, both Felicity and Luke were ready for this ordeal to finally be over.

“Just breathe, Felicity,” Doctor Meredyth Kalonia urged as she settled by the end of the bed, readying herself to deliver a baby for the first time. “It’s almost time.”

“I’ve said that a hundred times! Yet here I am, thirty-two fricking hours later, and still no baby!” Felicity exclaimed as Luke shushed and tried to calm her down. His arms were lovingly wrapped around her as he sat next to her, supporting her throughout the pain.

“Kalonia’s doing the best she can,” Luke pressed a kiss to Felicity’s sweat drenched forehead. “It’s not her fault this baby was inflicted with the stubbornness of a Skywalker, Amidala, and Rhiaon.”

“But I just want her out,” Felicity was in tears, exhausted and in pain. It hurt Luke to see how hopeless she was in that moment, having lost her strength to thirty-two hours of labour.

“Shh, Sweetheart, it’s okay,” Luke hugged Felicity tight. He reached into the Force and checked on the baby once more. “I can sense Ray, and she’s eager to come meet us.”

“I want the baby out, Luke. I want this over but Ray won’t come, and Kalonia keeps promising it’ll be over soon.”

“It will because I mean it this time,” Kalonia maintained her calm presence. “In a couple minutes, I’m going to have you start pushing.”

The words hit Luke hard.

“What?” he whispered.

“Really?” Felicity brightening, a new hope overtaking her.

“She’s ready to come out,” Kalonia grinned.

Luke couldn’t breathe. His daughter was ready; he was about to be a father. Was he ready? Could he do this?

He reached into the Force and touched the lilac presence. It was bigger and better formed, but still his little ray of light that loved him instinctually and unconditionally.
Luke was ready for this.

“Last call for visitors,” Kalonia said. “You’ve literally got a crowd of people in that waiting room. Anyone else by your side during this?”

Felicity smiled and clasped Luke’s hand, “No. This is special. One of the most intimate moments of our – crap, contraction. Ow! Ow! OW! DAMN IT, LUKE, WHY DID I LET YOU DO THIS TO ME! OW! – Sorry. Of our lives. I want this to just be Luke and I.”

Beep bop bop bee!

“And… Artoo in the corner because he is obsessed with recording everything in this family, and I owe him a favour,” Felicity sighed, glancing over at the droid. “Hey, tin can! I told you the corner by my head. No up-skirt shots!”

Artoo blew a raspberry at Felicity for her name calling, and wheeled himself into the opposite corner.

“Better,” Felicity said.

Artoo gave her another raspberry.

“All right then,” Kalonia said. “If there’s no one else joining us, then let’s do this. Felicity, on the next contraction, I want you to start pushing.”

“Oh Gods,” Felicity started to breathe heavily. “Luke, I don’t know if I can do this.”

Luke squeezed her hand, “You can. I know you can. You’re the strongest woman I have ever met, and you’re going to be an amazing mother.”

Tears welled in Felicity’s eyes, “You are the best father I could have asked for my child.”

“I love you, Felicity.”


“Here we go,” Kalonia declared. “Felicity… push.”

Soon the room was filled with voices: Felicity’s screams, Kalonia’s counting, and Luke’s unending encouragement. For nearly an hour, Felicity pushed with all her might, and still no baby.

“It’s alright, Felicity,” Kalonia assured her while Felicity took a short rest to regather her strength. “This is perfectly average. Pushing can be anywhere from half and hour to two hours. We’re getting very close.”

“I don’t care!” Felicity wept. It broke Luke’s heart to see her so tired and helpless. “I’m done! I’m not doing this anymore! She can stay in there, because I’m done pushing.”

“Don’t say that,” Luke lovingly kissed her forehead. Sweat had plastered a strand of hair across it, which Luke stroked away tenderly. “You can do this.”

“Oh, I’m sure I could, but I’m not going to. I’m done, Luke. I don’t even think I really want to be a mother.”

“Don’t say things like that. I know you want this baby just as much as I want her.”

“If you want her so much, then you’re going to have to get her out yourself.”
“Well…” Luke frowned, thinking it over, “I guess if you really wanted me to do it, I suppose I could maybe… reach out with the Force, grab the baby, and pull.”

“Absolutely not!” Kalonia snapped. “We are not going to start playing with Force Abilities in my delivery room! I will not have you destroy this woman’s insides because you wanted to play Magic Doctor. Now, Felicity come on, you have to push. Whether you like it or not, you’re pushing on this next contraction. Now push!”

Felicity pushed and pushed, but still it seemed like nothing happened.

“I can’t do it,” Felicity sobbed as Luke held her close. “I can’t do this, Luke. I can’t get her out.”

“Yes, you can,” Luke assured her. He was almost unsure what to do, never really having seen her so helpless and vulnerable before. “I’m sure you’ve made a lot of progress. Right, Doctor?”

Kalonia hesitated, “Well…”

Felicity burst into tears.

“Thanks for that,” Luke sighed, trying to keep the bitterness from his voice.

His wife was inconsolable; Felicity had completely given up on the idea of finishing the job of labour. Instead she just cried, mumbling things about how she didn’t even want to be a mother anyway. Artoo made a small whine from the corner and wheeled up to the bed. One of his arms extended with a rag Luke didn’t know Artoo possessed, and the droid started to wipe the sweat from his Mistress’ forehead.


Beep beep bop.

“Thank you,” Felicity gave him a slight smile through her tears.

Beep.

His job finished, Artoo wheeled himself back to the corner, out of the way. Despite the droid’s kindness, Felicity still cried, absolutely helpless to her labour.

Luke didn’t know what more he could possibly do. The baby just didn’t seem to want to come, and Felicity had expended the last of her energy. There was nothing that could give her that last little push.

… Except.

Luke took a deep breath. Several hours ago, he and Leia had spoken about the upcoming moment of delivery. As a woman who had given birth, as well as someone who had seen Felicity in some of her most desperate moments, Leia had a few suggestions. There was one suggestion in particular that might work… but could he really say it?

“I can’t do it, Luke,” Felicity cried into his chest as he hugged her tight. “I can’t do this.”

Luke sighed; he had to say it. He had no choice.

“Felicity, Sweetheart,” Luke gently moved her from his chest. “My Dearest Love, you are everything to me. You are strong and courageous, and loving and bold. I truly do love you, and I’m so excited to take this next step with you… And that’s why I’m going to say this next thing to you;
because I love you and I want your suffering to end.”

“Come on, Luke,” Felicity groaned. “What could you possibly say right now to make me think I can do this.”

Luke sighed and remembered the words Leia had given to him “…I bet your father would think you couldn’t do it.”

The change was immediate on Felicity’s face. No amount of love or encouragement could motivate her to finish the job, but getting one over on Alaric Rhiaon? That lit a fire beneath her.

“Let’s do this, Skywalker!” Felicity rallied, sitting up straight, the tears dried from her eyes.

“Right here with you, Rogue One,” Luke chuckled, rubbing her back to keep her upright.

“Felicity why don’t we try a different position?” Kalonia suggested. “I want you to bring yourself right to the edge of the bed. Feet planted on the edge, butt about level, basically a squatting position. We’re going to let gravity do most of the work here. Lock your arms around either leg to support yourself.”

Luke helped ease Felicity into the new position, but he saw her struggle to hold herself up.

“Master Skywalker, why don’t you get on the bed with her?” Kalonia suggested. “Sit behind her and let her support her weight against you? Felicity, let Luke focus on holding the two of you up. I just want you to focus on pushing, alright?”


His right arm gently wrapped around her body, beneath her breasts, but above the swell where their baby was contained. He was hugging her with the motion, but his natural hand was firmly clasped with her own.

“We’re going to do this,” Luke whispered in her ear, peppering a few kisses down her neck. “Okay? We created her together, and we’re going to bring her into the Galaxy together. Okay? I’m going to be right here.”

“Oh Luke,” Felicity sobbed, the overwhelming feeling of her love crashing against him in the Force. She put a hand on his jaw, and stroked his cheek with her thumb, “Thank you.”

“Anytime,” Luke smiled and squeezed the other hand that was clasped in his own. “Now… push.”

And she did. She pushed and she pushed, Luke there holding and kissing her and quite literally supporting her throughout it all. But this time, it was not all for naught; this time, their daughter was ready to make her escape from the womb into the world.

“Push, push, keep pushing,” Kalonia instructed as Felicity yelled in pain. “And… relax.”

Felicity let out a loud groan and threw her body back against Luke.

“This kid better be cute,” Felicity panted.

“I believe you once said with our combined looks, our kids would be gorgeous,” Luke chuckled.

“I’m holding you to that, Skywalker. I’m going to be mad if this kid is ugly.”

“I make no promises.”

Kalonia said, “Give me another big push now Felicity. She’s very close… That’s right. Just like that… That’s wonderful, Felicity! Keep going! Keep going! Keep going- I can see her head!”

“You do?” Luke moved to take a look when he felt Felicity yank him back down. “What? I want to see the baby.”

“And I want us to have sex in the future, but that might be difficult once you’ve seen a person come out of there,” Felicity glared at him.

“It’s a once in a lifetime opportunity to watch my child enter the world.”

“Just ask Artoo later. We both know he’s broken his promise to me and recorded all of this.”

Bee be bop bo.

“See,” Felicity gestured to Artoo in the corner.

“Alright, Felicity,” Kalonia said, “one last giant push and we’ll have ourselves a little baby. On the count of three. One… two…. Three. Push!”

Screams filled the room as Felicity gave her final push. Her hands gripped Luke’s like a vice, but he didn’t flinch, ever encouraging her to persevere and keep pushing. The back of his mind was focused on the lilac Force Signature that had become so familiar to him. That little ray of Light he had waited months – no, years – to meet. He tracked it, monitoring it as it came ever closer to his world as Felicity screamed and pushed with all of her might.

And then, the most beautiful noise Luke would ever hear.

His baby’s first cry.

“It’s a girl!” Kalonia announced, she covered in as much sweat and tears as Luke and Felicity. Her voice could barely be heard over the baby’s cries, “Ten fingers, ten toes, and a fine set of lungs. Congratulations, you two.”

Luke moved over from Felicity as Kalonia held up the baby. Instantly the breath was knocked out of him. Felicity’s head immediately hit the pillow, collapsing back from exhaustion, but Luke’s mind was focused on one thing alone: the lilac signature, his ray of Light in the flesh.

She was red and wrinkled, screaming her head off, and covered in goo.

It was the most beautiful thing Luke had ever seen.

“Here, Mommy,” Kalonia beamed as brightly as Luke as she started to hand the baby – his baby – to Felicity. “Hold your little girl.”

“Ah! Give me a minute!” Felicity groaned, head affixed to the pillow, her eyes slammed shut. “I am so exhausted, I don’t even want look at her at this moment.”

“You did amazingly,” Luke chuckled. He kissed her forehead, but his eyes didn’t move from his infant daughter. “She’s beautiful.”

“Here Daddy,” Kalonia grinned at Luke. “Why don’t you hold her while Felicity rests up a bit? Thirty-two hours is a long labour. Felicity give yourself a few minutes to relax. I’ll deal with the afterbirth and then check over the baby. After that, why don’t you hold her?”
“Sounds like a plan,” Felicity didn’t lift her head but stick up a thumb.


“Thank you,” Luke whispered as he held his daughter for the first time.

She was really real. He was holding her in his arms.

Luke Skywalker had a daughter.

The moment Doctor Kalonia put Rey into Luke's arms it seemed like the world paused. There was a brand new life, a life he had created, a physical proof of love, radiating with the Force, and filled with the potential to do anything. This miniscule delicate little girl who wasn't even the length of his forearm was bonded to him for life. She would grow tall, beautiful, and strong, looking to him for morals and guidance. He would show her the world and teach her everything she needed to succeed in it. He would provide and care for her: feeding her when she was hungry, warming her when she was cold, holding her when she was sad, healing her when she was injured, and protecting her when she scared.

Luke stared at his little girl in wonder, amazed that he could love someone so much and so quickly. He looked into those large eyes – which at the time were blue – eyes that stared up at him in echoed wonder and love. She had calmed down and was staring at him in as much rapture as he stared upon her. Through the Force, he felt her reaching out to his familiar presence. She understood who was holding her. She knew who he was and what he meant to her, just as he had known her from the exact moment of her conception.


The yet-to-be-named Rey gurgled happily at her father's words.

Daddy. He was a father. He wouldn’t believe it if this tiny ball of flesh wasn’t warming his arms.

The depth of his overpowering love made Luke want to embrace his beautiful little girl with all of his might. On the other hand, he didn't want to hurt her, so he held her gently in his arms taking in the magnificence that was this miracle. He held her close to his chest, resting the baby mostly in the crook of his right arm.

He wanted to touch her more; check that this was really real. Feel that soft skin and solidify her existence in the Universe. But he couldn’t just go at this willy nilly; consideration must be factored in.

Luke carefully shifted the baby so that his left hand was free to move. He brought it to her face and used two fingers to gently stroke her cheek. She squirmed a little, but Luke couldn't wipe the grin from his face. He relished the feeling of her skin against his natural flesh. The cold hard metal of his right hand would be confusing to the small girl, but his left hand provided her with the gentle, loving hand he would raise her with. He would not be like his vicious father that severed his own son's hand. Luke would never harm nor allow anyone to harm a hair on her head.

"I love you so much, Sweetheart," Luke whispered, using his daughter's pet name for the first time. "I'm going to spend the rest of my life loving, guiding, and protecting you. And someday, when I pass from this life and leave you behind, I promise that I will have learned how to preserve myself like Ben Kenobi, so that I can continue to be there when you need me. I promise that I will never leave you; not even in death."

And so at 9:37 pm, five years, five months, and one day after Luke Skywalker met Felicity Rhiaon
met, their daughter came into the world.

5 Years, 5 Months, 2 Days

6:42 am

Luke Skywalker couldn’t stop staring at his daughter. Sitting by the window in one of the comfy armchairs, Luke sat with his daughter in his arms, marvelling the miracle before him. She was so beautiful, so perfect, so pure. Brand new to the world, she was a blank slate, not knowing fear, grief, or hatred. She was a ray of light personified… and she was his.

The curtains were open, and the first rays of morning light were breaking on the horizon. His daughter was awake taking in the sight of everything with fresh eyes. Luke admired her beautiful form, trying to pick out which features of his baby had come from himself, and which had come from Felicity.

She had his eyes and his nose, but the cut of her jaw and the fuzzy mop of brown hair on her head was Felicity’s. As with the Force Signature that he had familiarized himself with for the past nine months was the perfect blend of Luke and Felicity, her features were equally as mixed. This truly was the product of their love.

“Luke?” Felicity’s small moan came from the bed where she had given birth.

Felicity had been absolutely exhausted from her ordeal. After Kalonia had run the standard newborn tests, the baby had been given to Felicity. She had only held her daughter for a couple minutes before passing the baby off to Luke.

He sensed the barrage of emotions going through Felicity’s mind: discomfort, delirium, exhaustion, and fear. Luke had tried to push in further, but felt her mental block and decided to give Felicity the privacy of experiencing holding their daughter for the first time. Of course, there was no doubt in Luke’s mind that behind that fog of fear and uncertainty, Felicity had that same overwhelming feeling of love. After all, he too was scared, and Felicity was the baby’s mother. Shouldn’t her love come as naturally as breathing?

Felicity had been forced to hold the baby again when Kalonia declared it was time for the first nursing. Kalonia had made sure to barricade the doors against the horde overtaking the waiting room, giving father, mother, and child a good several intimate hours alone. Of course, the waiting room full of Jedi had sensed the birth, and that all of the family was doing well, so that helped hold them off for a while.

Artoo had returned to the waiting room with strict instructions not to show any footage of the baby. Last Luke heard, Artoo was taunting Threepio over the fact that he had been allowed in the delivery room, and not Threepio.

The nursing was difficult. Felicity had been stiff and nervous, though Luke chalked that up to it being the first time she did it. Almost immediately after she was done, Felicity had handed the baby back off to Luke, once again citing exhaustion. It had confused Luke as he remembered how emphatic Felicity had been throughout her pregnancy about doing extensive skin to skin bonding to first few days of the baby’s life. Yet somehow he found himself being the one to do it, loosening a few buttons of his tunic to rest the baby against his bare chest.

But it made sense, didn’t it? He remembered Leia’s mood swings after Ben’s birth due to the cocktail of emotions running through her system. It must have been the same thing for Felicity.
Looking back on those first few weeks of Rey’s life, it hurt Luke to realize how many signs of Felicity’s emerging postpartum depression he had overlooked at the time.

“Good morning, Felicity,” Luke grinned at his wife, but did not get out of his chair.

“Morning,” Felicity groaned, blinking her sleep laden eyes. “What time is it?”

“Almost seven.”

“What are you doing up so early? Did you sleep last night?”

“A little,” Luke shrugged. “I put Ray in the bassinet and slept in the chair for a while, but she started to fuss and I got up to soothe her.”

“I see.”

“She’s fine,” Luke assured Felicity.

Felicity blinked, “Oh… right. Good.”

Luke’s brows tightened fractionally. Had she not even thought to wonder the result of the baby’s discomfort?

“Has anybody come in to see her yet?” Felicity asked, quickly changing the subject.

“Kalonia’s holding them off for now,” Luke replied. “Introducing our daughter to the rest of our family is something both of us should be present and conscious for. Though Kalonia says Han is starting to threaten to break down the door if he doesn’t get to see her soon. I’m fairly positive Leia would help him do it too.”

“Damn it, Loud Mouth Solo,” Felicity rolled her eyes. “Does he have to intrude on every life moment?”

Luke’s face fell, “Felicity-”

“I know. Don’t worry, I do love him, and if it wasn’t for him, we probably would still be stuck in will they, won’t they territory.”

“Actually, Felicity, that’s not the issue… You, uh… I thought we agreed not to swear in front of Ray. At least not for a while.”

Felicity looked startled, “Oh, right… Sorry. I, uh… I forgot. It slipped.”

“That’s alright,” Luke offered. “You don’t exactly have the cleanest working vocabulary. It’s hard to quit cold nuna sometimes.”

“Right,” Felicity gave a half smile, but it did not reach her eyes. “So, what are you doing awake at six in the morning? Between this, sleep kicks, and throwing me head first into bedside tables, I’m starting to suspect you hate the concept of me sleeping.”

“I was letting you sleep, and the bedside table only happened once!”

“So, what are you up to?” Felicity shook her head, smiling at him, but Luke couldn’t help notice that she had yet to even glance at the baby.

Luke turned his head back to the window, “It’s her first sunrise. I wanted to share it with her. You
know, I think about that sunset sometimes. The one I watched the night Artoo ran away. I remember looking out at it, wishing for something more. And now… I have the greatest thing I could possibly imagine… and I’m holding her in my arms.”

Something passed over Felicity’s face as he smiled at their daughter. Was it fear? Hurt? Even… jealousy? He had to have been imagining things.


“I’m fine,” Felicity said too quickly. “I… I don’t know. My emotions are running wilder than even the last nine months.”

“It has been a wild nine months. I’m honestly surprised you managed not to actually kill Han,” Luke grinned. “Here. Join us. Come watch Ray’s first sunrise.”

Felicity smiled and slowly got out of the bed. She winced as her feet hit the floor. Her eyes fell on the baby and something in her presence shifted. It felt like fear, but it could have been something else. Whatever it was, she had only made it a few steps before she stopped.

“I…” Felicity stared at the baby in Luke’s arms. Suddenly she backed up and returned to the bed, “I’m sorry, I can’t. I’m… I’m in a lot of pain.”

Luke frowned, “It’s only a few steps.”

“Well, they’re very painful steps!” Felicity snapped. “You’re well acquainted with the area I just pushed that kid out of. Yeah, I’m a little tender.”

At Felicity’s raised voice, the baby started to fuss and cry.

“Shh, it’s okay, Sweetheart,” Luke held the baby close. He rubbed her back in small circles, gently bouncing her to soothe her. “It’s okay. Daddy’s here. You’ll be fine. Daddy’s got you.”

Felicity stared in horror at the sight of Luke comforting their crying daughter, “Did I- Di I do that?”

“It’s alright. Babies cry.”

Felicity looked away; she couldn’t meet his eyes.

There was a gentle knock at the door, but it was a courtesy only, for Doctor Kalonia entered the room immediately after her knock.

“I thought I heard voices,” Kalonia smiled. “How are you three doing?”


“I’m okay,” Felicity muttered. She still couldn’t meet anyone’s eyes.

“That’s good to hear,” Kalonia said. “So, I’ve got a waiting room full of people waiting to meet this beauty, and they’re starting to threaten a mutiny. I don’t know how much longer I can hold the horde off. Are we ready to share this little one with the world?”

Luke smiled down at his daughter, “I’m never going to be ready to share her with the world… but I suppose I’m ready to share with family. What do you think, Felicity?”

“Your call.” Felicity shrugged, “I don’t really care either way.”
“Then I guess it’s time.” Luke looked to Kalonia, “I don’t want to overwhelm the baby, so just a small group.”

“Oh, of course,” Kalonia nodded. “Family only? Leia, Han, and Ben?”

“Plus Chewbacca and the Droids,” Luke added. “They’re her family just as much as the others.”

“What about Calrissian?”

“He can see her when Alyla does. I’ll need someone to pry the baby out of her arms when Alyla decides she’s never giving the baby back.”

“Alright, I’ll go grab your family,” Kalonia said. “Felicity, you should try feeding the baby again.”

“Do I have to?” Felicity asked. “I’m uh… Still tired.”

“Unfortunately, the shipment that has the emergency formula supplies isn’t coming in until the shipment in a few days. The baby decided to come a little bit too early for me. But don’t worry; if you’re having issues, we’ll figure them out. It might take her a while to latch, but she’ll get it. Just be careful that she doesn’t fall asleep while nursing. She’ll stop eating, and then not be fed enough. She falls asleep, wake her up.”

“How does it feel?” Luke asked as Felicity nursed their daughter. It once again took a lot longer than it probably should have for the baby to latch. Kalonia had promised to give them a little bit of privacy to nurse before bringing in the family.

Felicity tried to suppress some expression as she stared down at her daughter feeding, “Weird… and a little painful.”

“I’m sure it’ll get better with time,” Luke reached down and stroked the baby’s hair.

“I don’t like it,” she declared. “If it doesn’t get better I’m going to quit.”

“It’s only your second time doing it. Let’s not make any rash decisions. Besides… Isn’t it a wonderful bonding experience?”

Felicity said nothing to that.

When the babe finished feeding, Felicity was quick to hand her off to Luke for the burping. Might as well make it a team effort, Luke supposed.

“Luke?” Felicity said softly from the bed.

She watched him holding their daughter, with large, watery eyes. There was something off about the look in her eyes, but Luke didn’t notice it at the time. At the time, he thought they were tears of joy and disbelief… but in later reflection would understand the fear and sadness shining out.

“Yes, Sweetheart?” Luke had finished burping the baby, but still held her against his chest. Gently, he rocked her, basking in the physical proof that he did indeed have a daughter.

Felicity took a deep breath, “Do you… Are you… How do you feel?”

“About the baby?” he turned his body to face her.

Immediately Felicity turned away her face, “It’s just… I never imagined this… feeling.”
Luke smiled, “Me neither, and yet here it is.”

Something brightened in her eyes and she looked up at him in shock, “You… You feel the same way?”

Of all the times for Luke not to reach into the Force for her emotions…

“Of course. Just look at her,” Luke turned the baby to display her to Felicity better. “We… made this. We created a life. We mixed ourselves together and formed a human, with lungs to breath, a mind to think, and a soul to love. I knew what I was supposed to do, love her because she’s part of me, but that’s not what happened.”

“Yes! Exactly!”

Luke grinned, “Yet I looked at her and this… this is more than love. I looked at her and saw a piece of my soul, and yours. I looked at her and felt something grander than love. Love is a child’s word compared to my feelings for her. Maybe… this is what the Light Side is. I never expected to just look at her and immediately feel a love deeper than a thousand hearts could muster.”

Felicity’s smile fell, “… Oh.”

A fraction of a frown creased Luke’s face, “… Oh?”

“What?”

“I wasn’t expecting an oh.”

“Well, I wasn’t expecting a speech with the flowery language of olden days. That was… very poetic, Skywalker.”

He stared at Felicity, “You… Feel it too, right?”

“What?” Felicity scared. “Yes. Of course, I do. Took the words right out of my mouth. After all, that is what a mother is supposed to feel for the child she carried for nine months. Right?”

“Right, of course,” Luke smiled and walked over to press a kiss to her forehead. “I’m tired and probably not thinking about things clearly.”

“Me too,” Felicity laughed. Her head turned again and she said in a low, bitter voice she probably didn’t want him to hear, “Believe me… me too.”

Luke never would figure out when Felicity’s postpartum depression came upon her, whether it was from the long labour, a thing that gradually edged in during the last days of pregnancy, some inevitable result of messed up life she had had in her youth, or from the terrible thing Felicity would admit to him nearly a year later when the pain had ebbed enough to speak the truth.

That holding her baby for the first time, she looked upon Rey and felt absolutely… nothing.

There was a faint knock at the door.

“I guess it’s show time.” Luke smiled down at his baby and shifted her from against his chest to a cradle hold, “Are you ready to meet your family, Ray?”

The baby squirmed in his arms, and he felt her Force presence bump clumsily against him.

“I’ll take that as a yes,” he laughed and kissed her forehead.
She had been reaching out to his Force presence ever seen her birth. For the past nine months she had been safe, only truly knowing two things: darkness and her father’s Force presence. The other Jedi occasionally interacted with her, but she knew her father’s presence inside out. Now that the safe darkness was gone and she was in another world, her father was the only comfort she knew, and she knew she had security in him.

Luke was just about to call out to his family to come in when he felt it: Leia’s presence in the Force. She cautiously reached out to Luke, seeking his permission before pursuing her end goal. With a smile on his face, Luke responded to her request and rerouted Leia to that small lilac Signature. He didn’t intercede further, but observed in the Force how his sister reached out for his daughter. The baby was hesitant at first, but she must have recognized how much of Luke was in Leia’s presence and vice versa for the baby was soon happily entwining her presence with Leia’s.

“Hey!” Han’s voice called from behind the door. “Some of with without Force Sensitivity would like to meet her too!”

A loud Wookie roar sounded in agreement.

Felicity rolled her eyes and called back, “The door’s open, Loud Mouth Solo!”

The door hissed as it slid open, revealing Kalonia, Leia, Ben, Chewbacca, Artoo, Threepio, and a somewhat sheepish Han.

“Oh,” Han said.

“There she is,” Leia’s eyes were locked on the baby, a huge smile splitting her lips. She strode into the room, arms outstretched, “Give me that baby right now.”

“Wow, Sweetheart,” Han chuckled. “The girl hasn’t been alive for twelve hours, and you’re already bossing her around.”

“I’m not bossing her around. I’m bossing Luke around.”

“You’re still dictating where she goes.”

“It’s what Mom does,” Ben shrugged, his eyes locked on the floor. “Are you new here?”

“Come on you,” Han slung an arm around his son and took a step forward. He jerked to a stop when Ben didn’t move forward. “Ben-”

“I don’t want to go in.”

“Ben,” Leia warned. “Come meet your cousin.”

“No.”

“Come on. Move!” Han’s arm was still around his son, so he turned to gently push Ben forward.

Ben wouldn’t budge.

“Did you lock your knees?” Han exclaimed.

“Maybe,” Ben smirked.

“Don’t make me get Alyla.”
Suddenly a paw collided with his back, and Chewbacca forced Ben to stumble forward in the room. He gave a low roar and hit the door close button.


Luke chuckled and passed his daughter to his sister, “This is your Aunt Leia, Sweetheart.”

“She’s absolutely beautiful, Luke,” Leia stared down at her niece in amazement. “Congratulations to you both.”

“Mind her head,” Felicity weakly said.

Out of the corner of his eye, Luke saw Han frown slightly.

“Don’t worry, Fliss,” Leia grinned, but her eyes were locked on her tiny niece. “I’ve got plenty of practice.”

“Besides,” Luke added, “Han dropped Ben when he was a baby, and Ben turned out fine.”

“You dropped Ben?” Leia exclaimed.

“That explains a few things,” Felicity smirked at Ben, who glared at her. That smirk was the facial expression Felicity displayed with the most genuine emotion that day.

Han was giving Luke an identical glare to the one on his son’s face, “You promised never to tell her about that.”


“Master Luke. Mistress Felicity,” Threepio said joyously, shuffling to the side of the bed. “I congratulate you heartily upon the successful and healthy delivery of your progeny. Though I must say that the delivery was not the most… efficient one. Thirty-two hours of labour is a long time.”

Felicity scowled at Threepio, “Does the O in your name stand for Obvious? Or maybe Oblivious?”

Threepio cocked his head to the side, “No, Mistress Felicity. The 0 is a zero. Do you not know that.”

_Beep beep bop bop!_

“R2-D2! There is no need for that sort of language!” Threepio scolded. “Especially in front of Mistress Kira!”

Artoo blew a raspberry.

“So, Kira Rhiaon Skywalker,” Han grinned, coming up next to Leia to observe his niece. “Bit of a mouthful, but if you like it-”

“Actually…” Luke frowned and cast a hesitant look to Felicity.

Felicity wasn’t even paying attention, strumming her fingers fidgety on the mattress as she stared to the side, focusing on nothing in particular.

“What is it, Luke?” Leia caught the prompt when Felicity said nothing.

Han’s frown deepened.
Luke sighed and came up next to Leia to observe his daughter, “I don’t know…it’s going to sound stupid.”

“Kid, I’ve heard you say a lot of dumb things throughout the years,” Han said. “Try me.”

“She just doesn’t seem like a Kira to me,” Luke admitted. “Is that weird?”

“Of course not,” Leia shook her head. “We had the same thing with Ben. For months we were going to call Ben, Bail, but once he was born we changed our minds.”

“Yeah,” Han laughed. “And you were mad. I can still hear you objecting that you wanted to name your still to this day non-existent son, Ben.”

“Ben Skywalker is a good name,” Luke insisted.

“Yeah, and then you suggested for us to name our kid Anakin, which is the stupidest thing I have ever heard. Seriously, who ever would think Leia and I would decide Anakin Solo was a good thing to call our kid? Next thing I know you’ll be telling me you’ve fallen in love with some sort of pseudo Sith/assassin.”

“Han, I literally just had a baby with Felicity. Nothing’s ever happening with Tyla.”

A beat of silence followed as Han stared at Felicity. When nothing was said, Han’s frown was very clear.

“So, what do you want to call her then?” Leia asked. “Felicity managed to talk you into Brenna?”

“No offense, but I don’t think I want any version of Brendan,” Luke confessed. “Sorry, Sweetheart, but it’s not my favorite name.”

Felicity shrugged, “Whatever. I don’t really care.”

Everyone stared at Felicity in shock.

Her eyes widened, “Uh… because I don’t think she looks like a Brenna or Brenda or anything like that. What- what do you think, Luke? What should we call her?”

“Really?” Luke frowned. “That’s it? You loved the name Kira, and you’re not going to fight for it?”

“Well…” Felicity’s eyes flicked down and she gently bit her lip in what Luke recognized to be her thinking face, “It’s just… Kira’s a Tatooine name, but too close to the Coruscanti name Keira with an esk before the isk. The Tatooine Kira means light, but Coruscanti Keira means dark. Considering the whole Light Side/Dark Side thing, maybe it’s best we don’t tempt fate.”

Silence filled the room as everyone worked out exactly what Felicity had said.

“I… guess that makes sense,” Luke finally said. “So… what should we call her?”

“Luke, I’m tired, can we figure this out later?” Felicity groaned.

“Ray needs a name.”

“And she’ll have one, but can I please maybe have some recovery time from this? It’s not easy to grow, carry, and push out a person from inside of you.”

Something was making Luke uneasy, “I… I guess it makes sense. Give us a few days to get to know
her and name her later.”

“A few days?” Kalonia interrupted. “You can’t wait a few days. What about the birth certificate?”

“We can leave the name spot blank,” Luke shrugged.

“No, you can’t,” Kalonia said. “It’s literally illegal.”


“Luke…” Felicity said slowly. “You didn’t have Rornian take on the standard set of registration laws, did you?”

“Uh…” Why did that look on her face make him so nervous. “I wasn’t really… Registration isn’t exactly my area of expertise- Okay, fine. Yes, I had Arlos just go with the basic one.”

“Luke!” Felicity swatted his arm. “You were literally living with an Emissary at the time. I told you to ask me about things like this! I told you to ask me questions!”

“What’s the big deal?” Han asked. “The Kid made a mistake.”

“Yeah, he made a mistake!” Felicity exclaimed. “In the standard registration laws, we have a clause for safe haven practices. If a child is born at a medical facility registered with the New Republic – like this one is – and no name is put on the birth certificate for twenty four hours, the child is considered abandoned, and custody is surrendered to the New Republic.”

“That sounds like a very stupid default,” Han said flatly.

“It’s to combat black market adoption and underground slave trades,” Felicity explained. “Luke, how could you do this? What? Do you not want the baby?”

“Of course I do!” Luke objected. “I’m sorry. I made a mistake. We can name her now.”

“Fine, name her!”


“Yeah, just name her. I don’t care.”

He stared at Felicity, “You don’t care what we name our daughter? The title we give her for the rest of her life?”

“I don’t know if you realize this, Luke, but I’m not good with names. My first Alliance alias was Brenda Andromias… They assigned me names after that.”

“Felicity, this is important,” Luke said. “I don’t want us to rush into a name.”

“Luke, I’m tired. What part of that don’t you understand?”

Ben grinned at the fight before him, “I’m so glad I came in the room.”

Felicity glared at him.

“Look, how about this?” Leia suggested, “Just do a placeholder for now, and you can change it later if you want.”

“Sure. Let’s do that.”

“The only question is what to put for the placeholder.”

“Oh, for the love of the Gods,” Felicity rolled her eyes.

“Alright, while you two fight over that, Fun Uncle Han has to interject.” Han held his arms out for the baby, “Hand her over, Sweetheart.”

“Fine, but if you drop her, just remember that Luke can choke you with his mind,” Leia warned.

“I won’t drop her,” Han chuckled through his teeth. He leaned back to Chewbacca and whispered, “You won’t let me drop her, right?”

Chewie growled, shaking his head.

“Good.” Han smiled as he looked down at his niece, “She’s a real looker, you two. We’ll bee fending back the boys in no time.”

“Force help us all,” Leia shook her head.

“I must admit, Kid,” Han said, “your kid is pretty quiet. I remember nothing could get Ben to stop screaming.”

“He’s the son of Han Solo and Leia Organa,” Luke teased. “What did you expect? But I’m sure she’ll give us trouble in no time, won’t you Ray?”


“Ray, huh?” Han said. “Why don’t you call her that for now?”


“It’s been your placeholder so far,” Leia agreed. “What was it you guys said? Change the aurek to an esk to make it a girl’s name.”


Felicity shrugged, “I guess for now.”


“Of course, Master Skywalker,” Kalonia nodded.

“Rey,” Han chuckled, adjusting his grip on his niece. “Better than Loud Mouth Solo, at least.”

“Give it up, Han,” Felicity said. “I will call you that until the day I die.”

“Even Phasma said she wouldn’t be caught dead calling me that.”

“Well, I’m not Phasma, am I?”

“I’m sorry,” Kalonia cut in, “I have to ask. What is the whole Loud Mouth Solo thing?”
“You’ve never heard the story?” Han looked surprised.

“Maybe bits and pieces.”

“Well, listen up, Sweetheart,” Han crossed over to the chairs by the window. “Rey, your Fun Uncle Han is about to tell you your very first story. The story of Loud Mouth Solo.”

A while later, Han finally managed to convince Luke to leave the room to get something proper to eat. He had been so focused on his girls that he had neglected to take care of himself. Leia and Ben were staying with Felicity and Rey, while the Droids went to get the next horde of visitors, and Chewie commed his family to deliver the news of Luke and Felicity’s new baby.

“This is crazy,” Luke chuckled as they walked down the hall to a some dining area. “It seems like yesterday I was that farm kid whose hand you slapped away from the controls of the *Falcon*, and now… we’re parents. I… have a daughter.”

“Yeah, it’s sweet, Kid. You think something’s up with Fliss?”

Luke shrugged, “She’s tired.”

“No, I don’t think that’s it. I remember what Leia was like after Ben, and… it’s not the same. You really haven’t noticed?”

“There’s been a few things here and there, but nothing that jumps out at me. Why? Do you think there’s an issue?”

“She’s not herself. Multiple times, people said things like congratulations to the two of you, and she didn’t make *any* sarcastic comments about doing it all by herself, or mocking that you were the one who did it.”

“Lack of sarcasm in Felicity is a red flag,” Luke was serious.

“And she doesn’t care what you call your kid? Three months ago, she sat on you until you promised that if by some miracle you ended up having a boy, the two of you would call him Brendan.”

“In all fairness, the sitting was more a joke… sort of.”

“She sat on you an *hour*, Luke. Plus did you see how defensive she got about the whole, don’t you want the baby thing?”

“You’re reading too much into that, Han,” Luke warned his brother-in-law.

“Maybe,” Han admitted, “but that doesn’t change the fact that not *once* while I was in that room did Felicity *look* at her child.”

Luke looked away from Han. It was hard to deny that fact.

“Ben didn’t either,” Luke said.

“Ben is jealous of her Force potential. We’ve known this for months. That is not a surprise. *Felicity* not looking at Rey *is*. Ben is her cousin. Felicity is her *mother*. There’s something wrong, Luke.”

“Alright, maybe there is something off,” Luke admitted. “She’s not a perfect woman, but I know she loves Rey. She’ll come around. Give it a few days.”
Han sighed, “Alright, Luke, but just promise me that you’ll be careful.”


Unfortunately… Luke was wrong.

5 Years, 8 Months, 25 Days

Though the door was open, Luke still knocked on the doorframe of their bedroom. He could see Felicity, her back turned to him as she silently packed her suitcase on their bed. It was the same suitcase he had thrown on the couch next to her three days ago during his big confrontation of her illness.

“Start talking or start packing,” he had told her.

Luke loved Felicity, and he could do her little song and dance forever of not telling him something was wrong until she was ready to come forward. But when Rey’s life had been put in danger, Luke had to put his foot down. She either needed to confess to him the truth about the way she had been during the past three months, or she needed – for the sake of their daughter’s sake – to leave.

…Thankfully she had chosen to confess.

When Luke knocked, he saw Felicity’s back straighten, but she did not turn to face him.


Felicity took a beat of silence and then nodded, her back still turned to him.

He crossed the room with slow steps, giving her a wide berth as he rounded the bed and headed to the small bassinet in the corner. Perhaps he shouldn’t have carried Rey into the room with him, but after her near-death experience, Luke had been inseparable from his daughter. He wouldn’t even let Han or Leia take Rey away from him.

Luke said nothing as he laid Rey in the bassinet. Before Rey had been born he made sure every room had a bassinet, playpen, high chair, carrier seat or some sort of baby holding device in every room of the house. He felt Felicity’s eyes on them as he ran a hand over her tiny head, brushing his fingers through her unruly brown hair.

“Her irises are darkening,” Luke said, but didn’t look up at her. “Turns out she’ll have your hazel eyes after all. Little disappointed she’s going to look so much like you.”

He could feel her wince.

“Not that looking like you is a disappointment,” Luke looked up at her. “You are the most beautiful woman in the Galaxy to me. I’m proud that our daughter takes after you so much, I just wish I had left more of a mark on her.”

“Hopefully you will,” Felicity’s voice was stiff. Her face looked so tired, “I’m nothing worth emulating.”

“Felicity,” Luke’s heart broke at her words. He crossed the room to pull her into his arms, but when he reached her, Felicity took a step back from him. “Felicity, please… You are an amazing woman. A hero.”

“I’m bitter, broken, and dangerous,” her tone was the exact description of her words. “You don’t
deserve to have your child’s mother to be like me.”

“I love you,” Luke said, his voice shaking as he echoed the words he uttered the first night he had made love to her. “I don’t care if you don’t deserve it, or I don’t deserve your love, or any other excuse people could come up with to keep us apart. I love you, for now and for always.”

Felicity’s eyes squeezed shut, a tear slipping from them, “Luke.”

“Felicity,” he took the final step between him. His hands grasped the sides of her arm but he didn’t pull her into his embrace yet.

She took a deep breath and opened her eyes. She found Luke’s blue orbs intently locked on hers. The amount of love radiating in his eyes was almost painful.


“I almost killed her, Luke.”

“I know… But in case you haven’t noticed, I am quite lenient on that sort of thing. If I can forgive my father, I certainly can forgive you.”

Felicity gave something that almost sounded like a laugh, and the corner of a smile lifted her face, “Really, Skywalker? You’re going to bring up Vader now? I swear you make any excuse to bring him into conversation.”

“I guess you’re about to bring up Brendan then,” Luke teased.

That time Felicity did give a laugh: short and light, but still a laugh.

“Oh, Felicity,” Luke gently pressed a kiss to her forehead. When he pulled back, she rested her forehead against his: her sign of utmost trust and intimacy. “I love you.”

“But Luke, what about the almost dr-”

“We don’t have to talk about that,” Luke cut her off. “Okay? You don’t want to talk about it again? We never have to. We’ve already hashed it out and decided on our plan of action. You know I’m proud of you, right? It’s not easy to admit you have a problem.”

“Well, someone as handsome as you tells a girl to either admit it or get out, a girl is inclined to start talking.” Felicity rested her head against his chest, and Luke wrapped his arms around her in a hug. “Luke?”

“Yes, Felicity?”

“Did Kalonia get the records yet?”

Luke took a deep breath, “… Yes.”

Felicity closed her eyes again, “What did they say?”

“They said…” He kissed the top of her head, “…It’s true. Obik was right about your mother and Brendan.”
When Luke told Reine and Obik that Felicity had been diagnosed with postpartum depression, Obik told him that he wasn’t surprised as Brendan had depression. It had blindsided Felicity who didn’t know about her brother’s condition. Obik revealed that he knew as during Brendan’s recruitment into the Rebel Alliance, Brendan had disclosed it – as well as having PTSD, and his mother having been diagnosed with severe depression – so that the Rebels could secure a steady stream of his medication. It had been securing the medication that pushed his pickup date to after his stationing at Faclov, and resulted in Brendan’s death. Kalonia had Felicity sign a few forms and requested that Brendan and Dinah’s medical records to be sent for her review to help guide Felicity’s diagnosis.

“Did my father know?” Felicity asked.


“I can’t believe my father hid something like this from me,” Felicity shook her head. “Actually, scratch that, I can. How bad were their depression?”

“Brendan was apparently at an average level, but your mother…”

“That severe?”

“The doctors suspected it may have helped contribute to her death. She… just couldn’t bring herself to fight for her children.”

“Like me,” Felicity whispered.

“No,” Luke pulled back. “You’re fighting for her. That’s why you’re leaving. This isn’t goodbye. The facility is less than an hour’s flight from here, okay? It’s a wonderful place according to Kalonia, and I’m come see you multiple times a week. Rey too.”

“No,” Felicity said strongly. “Don’t bring her with you. Not until I can be trusted.”

“Felicity-”

“I have to pack, Luke,” she pulled out of his arms.

Felicity crossed the room to the vanity table and started to grab various objects. She didn’t even look like she was paying attention to what she was grabbing, just things at random: a few necklaces, a can of hairspray, a hairbrush, a scarf, a wedding holo, a pair of Luke’s cufflinks. Then she pulled a drawer open and froze.

“Luke,” her voice was distant as she reached in the drawer and traced her fingers over some object Luke couldn’t see. “Tell me again.”


Tears filled her eyes as she turned back to him, holding up the object, “What you told me when you gave me this.”

It was her kyber crystal bracelet.

He crossed the room and pulled her into his strong embrace. Felicity flung her arms around his neck and sobbed into his chest. He could feel the bracelet pressing into the back of his neck as she clung onto him like a lifeline.

“Just because something is broken, doesn’t mean it’s worthless,” Luke whispered into her hair. His
face was buried in it as his lips peppered her scalp with kisses. “You are not worthless. You are the greatest woman I have ever met, and I’m proud that you are fighting for this family.”

He held her there for a long time, and eventually her sobs ebbed and ended. Still he held her in his arms, the two of them clinging to each other desperately like they would lose the other if they let go. Luke gently kissed her and muttered inconsequential utterances of love to her, though they soon became white noise.

“I just… wish I could do something to prove to everyone I’m not a terrible mother,” Felicity finally confessed.


“I almost killed her.”

“She’s a Skywalker. Someone in this family was eventually going to try to kill her.”

Felicity couldn’t stop her laugh.

“But…” Luke clasped her hands, intertwining their fingers preciously. “There might be something you can do.”

“What’s that?” Felicity asked.

“Name our daughter.”

Felicity looked away.

“It’s been three months, and you still won’t let me give Rey a name,” Luke said.

“Just name her yourself, okay?” Felicity replied weakly.

“No, you need to be involved. It’s kind of like a pet,” Luke teased. “Once you name it, you’ll be attached.”

“But I’m not attached. I don’t care about her, Luke. That’s why I’m going away.”

“Then make this your first step… Look, it’s been three months… Why don’t we just call her Rey? Rey Rhiaon Skywalker is a good name.”

“I can’t call her Rey.”

“Why not?”

“Because she’s not to me,” Felicity confessed. “She’s not a ray of hope and light and goodness like she is for you. She not my ray.”

At that moment, a small cry came from the bassinet. Felicity’s head turned, and something in her face softened. Something shifted in the Force, and Luke sensed Rey reaching out for her mother. Though Felicity could not feel it directly, a part of her could almost sense it.

Carefully, she dropped Luke’s hands, and took a step forward. As she approached the bassinet, she looked upon Rey almost like with new eyes. She came to a stop beside it, and Luke was ready to spring into action any moment in case some unexpected turn endangered one of the girls.

Felicity started to reach towards Rey, but stopped. She hesitated and tried again. Luke had to admit
that when Felicity touched Rey’s cheek, he tensed. Felicity did too, but then she smiled and gently ran a finger across her cheek.

“She is kind of cute,” Felicity admitted.

Luke shrugged, “Gets it from me.”

Felicity looked up at him and smiled, “No… She gets it from me.”

Luke smiled back at her.

She looked down again at Rey, and drew back her hand. Slowly, she dropped down to one knee, kneeling beside the bassinet as Luke approached them. As he came to a stop next to them, he saw her lower something into Rey’s grasp.

The kyber crystal bracelet.

“Just because something is broken, doesn’t mean it’s worthless,” Felicity said softly, watching her daughter. There was a familiar spark in her eye: the look of building strength. “This bracelet is my promise to you. I’m going to get better, Sweetheart. I promise you. I’m… going to learn how to love you. And you know why? …Because you may not be my ray now… but you will be.”

Luke smiled and wrapped an arm around his wife’s waist, “I am so proud of you, Felicity.”

“Thank you,” Felicity said.

“Anytime.”

She smiled. It had been a long time since they exchanged their signature words.

He pressed another kiss to her forehead, and they stood in silence for a while. But unfortunately, all silences must come to an end.

“Felicity?” Luke said after a while.


He took a deep breath, “Felicity, you once asked me to make you three promises; promises I have kept that have strengthened this relationship. I have never asked you to uphold those same promises… but I am now.”

“Luke-”

“You don’t treat me like a possession the way you have the past few months. I’ve been your nanny and housekeeper, not your husband. Especially a few nights ago.”

Felicity couldn’t look him in the eye. Part of her depression had been a non-existent libido, and it had been months since they made love. The night before the incident, Felicity had initiated sex with Luke, which was the first time they coupled since before Rey’s birth – though not for lack of trying on Luke’s part. It soon became clear to Luke that not only was she not obtaining pleasure from the act, but she was merely using it – and as a result, him – as a vessel to simply feel something. Luke had quickly cut things off, which had angered Felicity and led to a big fight.


“I’m sorry. It'll never happen again,” she promised.
“Second, no lies. We can’t let things get to this extreme ever again, alright? Not when Rey is in the picture. I won’t put her at that risk.”

“Agreed.”

“And finally, no Dark Side.” Luke grinned at her, “Though I don’t think that’s a problem with you.” He was greatly surprised when he saw her face go white.

“Luke?” Leia called, entering the room before he could question Felicity.

She, Han, and Ben had come to stay with Luke and Felicity a few weeks ago when Luke reached out with the problems Felicity had been having.

“Oh, sorry, am I interrupting?” Leia looked between the two.

“Not at all,” Felicity shook her head and went to the bed where she resumed packing.


“I don’t mean to bother you, but Reine really needs you to go to the Temple to sign a few things,” Leia answered.

“Alright, I’ll be along shortly,” Luke started to pick up Rey.

“Put down the baby, Brother,” Leia warned. “I’ll keep an eye on her while you go.”

Luke glanced to Felicity, “But-”

“I’m sure Leia can find me off if I have another episode,” Felicity darkly joked. Her eyes flicked between the horrified twins, “Too soon?”


“Sorry.”


“Alright, I’m going,” Luke groaned. He bent down and kissed Rey’s forehead, then kissed both Felicity and Leia’s cheeks as he exited the room. “I’ll be back shortly. Love you all.”

“Love you too,” Leia picked up Rey out of the bassinet. “Look who’s getting to be a big girl.” Rey babbled happily and reached up to play with Leia’s hair.

Luke was just about to step out the door when suddenly a word stopped him.

“Luke?”

He turned to Felicity. Fear shone in her eyes.


She looked down at the floor, “We said no Dark Side, right?”

He nodded, crossing his arms as he leaned against the doorframe.
Felicity took a deep breath.

“I need to tell you something.” She looked over at Leia, “It’s about Ben.”

5 Years, 10 Months, 13 Days

“Everyone ready?” Pooja Naberrie asked as the group prepared themselves.

“Ready,” Luke secured the blanket over Rey’s carrier one final time. The blanket had been a gift from Leia; a special one that fit over the carrier that completely blocked out any camera flashes that might disturb the baby. “What about you?”

“Ba da me ro!” Rey flailed her little limbs. She was at the age where she was testing out saying syllables, yet still couldn’t form them into actual words.

“Sounds like it to me,” Ruwee Naberrie chuckled.

“Alright then,” Pooja announced. “Then let’s go.”

Blinding flashes flooded the walkway between the speeder containing the Naberrie family and the entrance to Padmé Amidala’s grave.

For months, media outlets had been trying to get a hold of a picture of Luke Skywalker’s daughter, but he kept her safe from the media spotlight. Luke knew he couldn’t protect her from it forever, so on his trip to Naboo he decided it would be the perfect time to release the first image of Rey to the galaxy. A picture of her in her father’s arms standing at the casket of Padmé Amidala.

Luke’s trip to Naboo had been a reluctant one. There had been some business involving the memorial to Qui-Gon Jinn – though for the life on him, Luke couldn’t remember what all those years later on Jakku. Luke had needed to go personally, but for one reason or another, all possible babysitters were unavailable. Ultimately, Luke had decided to take Rey to Naboo with him, taking the opportunity to bring his daughter to his mother’s grave.

Unfortunately, the babysitters the palace of Theed had promised for him had also dropped out at last minute, so his first day of meetings involved dignified Jedi Grandmaster Luke Skywalker… conducting negotiations while holding a fussy baby.

Pooja had made sure to share all the hilarity to their family at dinner at the Naberrie house that night.

Sola and Darred were off-world, Darred working the final steps of some great project, and Ryoo was busy at the Nubian academy training a new batch of military cadets. Her husband Jagrav was the one who ended up with babysitting duties, able to work from home from his journalist job. Technically Ruwee was the one actively watching the baby, but Jagrav was there to ensure nothing went wrong from leaving the baby with a ninety-four-year-old babysitter.

“Alright, stand right there,” Jagrav instructed, snapping the pictures of Luke and Rey at Padmé’s casket. As family, he was the one who got the exclusive first photos of Rey Rhiaon Skywalker for his HoloMag, “The light is just perfect.”

“She looks so much like her mother,” Ruwee said, something soft and mournful in his voice. He rested a hand atop his daughter’s coffin, “I miss you, Darling Padmé. I suppose I’ll see you soon enough.”

Pooja placed a hand on her grandfather’s shoulder and smiled.
“Alright, I think we’ve got it,” Jagrav announced. “I’m going to have a busy afternoon. My boss is so excited about breaking this story. And to think, all those other outlets crowded around outside to see if I would slip up and let them get the exclusive first.”

“Sometimes I wonder if you married my sister for the exclusives to photographs,” Pooja shook her head. “But I don’t envy you. I’m up to my eyeballs in paperwork this afternoon. Negotiations are going to be long today, Luke.”

“Wait, you’re both busy today?” Luke frowned. “Who’s going to watch Rey? I can’t leave her with Granddad, he’s…”

Ruwee raised an eyebrow, “Statistically likely to drop dead at any moment?”

“You said it, not us,” Jagrav grinned.


“No, she’s not coming back from her trip with Padmé to her old law school until next week.”

“Seriously Luke, thanks for the photos,” Jagrav said. “It’s the only way I’m going to be able to afford to put my daughter through law school. Stupid politically inclined family.”

Luke frowned at Ruwee, “Then who is helping you with Rey?”

“Hello, boys,” a familiar voice came.

Luke’s jaw dropped as he turned to see Felicity standing in the entrance way.

“Did you miss me?” Felicity smirked. It was so good to see that mischievous glint in her eyes.

“Felicity,” Luke crossed the room in three steps, and then she was in his arms, and he was kissing her. “I’ve missed you so much.”

“We’ll give you two some privacy,” Ruwee chuckled, and the family made an exit to go visit Jobal’s grave.

“What are you doing here?” Luke asked after the preliminaries of reunion.

“I heard you had some babysitting issues, so I came for a visit.” Felicity smiled down at her daughter, “How is my girl? She’s getting so big.”


“Gah bah nah mo re,” Rey babbled excitedly. Luke sensed that she recognized her mother’s Force Signature.

“Is she talking yet?” Felicity asked.

“Not actual words yet, but she’s getting close,” Luke replied. “Do you want to hold her?”

“May I?” Felicity’s eyes lit up.

“Mind her head,” Luke instructed, passing Rey to Felicity.
“Tee ma da be,” Rey said.

“Hello, Sweetheart,” Felicity cooed. “Are you going to be a good girl for Mommy this afternoon? Mommy is going to watch you with Great Granddad. Won’t that be fun for Mommy?”

“What are you doing?” Luke asked kindly.

“Oh, the Mommy thing?” Felicity explained, “My therapist suggested it. By referring to myself in third person, I can detach personal responsibility and focus on what Mommy should be doing than what I should be doing.”

“Should I refer to myself in the third person as well?”

“That’s sweet but unnecessary. Are you okay with me helping Ruwee watch Rey today?”

“Of course,” Luke led Felicity to the perch he had knelt at all those years ago while introducing Felicity to his mother. “The doctors said you should be doing it more and more. Did they ever get around to lowering your medication?”

“Last week.”

And so they sat at Padmé Amidala’s grave, chatting about everything and nothing. Three months into treatment, and it felt like Luke had gotten the old Felicity back.

“I dream about it sometimes,” Felicity confessed. “The incident we don’t speak of.”

“I do too,” Luke admitted. “Thank goodness Artoo was around to stop you.”

“I do owe that droid a good oil bath.”

“Oh, he’s got a list of things he expects from you when you get home.”

“Of course he does,” Felicity laughed.

“Te ma do rah,” Rey babbled, waving her arms to play with Felicity’s necklace.

“How’s Ben doing?” Felicity asked.

“Still very mad at you.”

“Isn’t he always? That’ll be fun to come home too. How long is he going to stay on Rornian with us?”

“Indefinitely at the moment. Han’s still trying to get answers out of us.”

“I don’t understand why you won’t tell him,” Felicity sighed.

“It needs to be kept between you, Leia, and I. The few people know, the safer he is. Alyla doesn’t even know.”

“Gah ma da be,” Rey said.

Luke took a deep breath as he watched Rey in Felicity’s arms, “So… when are you coming home?”

“Soon,” Felicity promised. “The doctors are saying maybe a few weeks… I’ve missed you so much. I’m so proud of how you stepped up to this whole temporary single father type thing.”
“I must say I don’t like being a single father,” Luke teased. “Promise me you won’t make me be one again.”

“I promise,” Felicity chuckled. She looked down at Rey, “Mommy’s going to be here for you, Rey. Mommy promises. You believe Mommy, right?”

“Ma-mi,” Rey said.


“Felicity, did she just say-”

“Mommy,” Felicity gasped. “Rey, say it again! Say Mommy.”

“Ma me.”

“Mommy,” Luke urged, a grin plastered on his face.

“Mo-me.”

“Mommy!” Felicity exclaimed joyously.

“Mommy!” Rey repeated, a huge smile on her face.

“Yes! That’s a good girl!” Felicity hoisted Rey in the air, hugging her tightly.


He grinned and pulled her in for a kiss, careful not to crush Rey in their tight embrace.


“Good girl,” Felicity kissed Rey’s head. She sniffed back a tear, “Hey, Luke?”

“Yes, Sweetheart?”

Felicity smiled and touched his cheek, “I don’t regret having children.”

Chapter End Notes

I will not apologize for the open mockery of the old EU. Anakin Solo was a stupid name, and you know it.

I hope you enjoyed the penultimate flashback chapter. The only reason there’s one more
after this is to set up a few threads for Poe, Ben, and BB-8 to know for the future, reveal the final step to how Ben got Felicity’s kyber crystal, and of course show those final moments of the Rhiwalker relationship and how it was forced to come to a tragic end.

Then we can jump right back into the story of Luke falling in love with another woman. You know… after seven chapters outlining his relationship with Felicity.

…I didn’t think this through, did I? Oh well, enjoy the Aluketha relationship anyway (and no, I will not call it Skymeri, because Kymeri is the name Aletha took in marriage to another man, so it would be more like pairing Luke/Antar together.)

And yes, I will finally admit doing this series of flashbacks was probably a mistake. Honestly, the goal at this point is to get to TFA by the time TLJ comes out… but don’t hold your breath.
Part Seven: Ending

Chapter Summary

The flashbacks finally end... oh and Luke learns his wife got murdered.

Chapter Notes

So it turns out I messed up the timeline and accidentally made Rey four during the first part of this story and not five. Therefore, I have to go back to chapters 27 and 28, and changed the dates of the morning after the bachelor party, the wedding, the pregnancy scare, and Felicity’s graduation. I’ve also gone back and reedited the chapter I already edited to fix the line about the birthday party for Rey. It’s the only way to make sure the whole timeline isn’t massively screwed up.

Why did I dedicate to a freaking timeline?

So, I’ve been listening to the audiobook of TFA at work to get the creative juices flowing, and wow, I cannot say my work has too much profanity for Star Wars. In the novel Finn uses the term Hell on a regular basis, and Rey actually calls Plutt a bastard.

Felicity would be so proud.

And yes, we’re finally at the final flashback chapter!

Enjoy all the murder.

The Long Way Home

Chapter Twenty-Nine

Part Seven: Ending

8 Years, 6 Months, 27 Days

“I regret having children!” Felicity exclaimed as she stormed into the kitchen.

Luke grinned as he stirred the sauce simmering on the stove top. He could hear the commotion from the living room: three-year-old Rey’s delighted squeals, the loud, excited beeping of the droids, and the bickering of the two teenaged boys.

“Having fun with the kids?” Luke teased as Felicity grumpily crossed her arms and leaned against the dishwasher.

“I swear to the Gods, Luke, I am about thirty seconds away from pushing one of them down the laundry chute, and I’m pretty sure it’s going to be Ben.”
“Sweetheart, it’s always Ben with you,” Luke chuckled. He offered her a spoonful of sauce, “Taste this. I’m not sure I got the spices right.”

Felicity tried and paused to think, “…Needs a little more oregano.”

“Thanks. Can you grab it from the spice cupboard?”

“You mean the mighty Jedi isn’t going to use the Force to get it down?” Felicity smirked.

Luke pulled a face, “I’d rather not use the Force to lift items anytime soon. We don’t want another incident.”

“Fair enough.” She glanced up towards the cupboards and groaned, “Why did we install that cupboard so high?”

“Because we had it custom-built to have the inside to hold the spice bottles in a certain way, then told Chewie to install it at an easy to reach height without specifying that it should be easy for us to reach and not him.”

“You know, I think Chewbacca might literally be the height of two of me stacked vertically.”

“He’s at least three Reys tall,” Luke conceded.

“Lesson learned then,” Felicity smirked, “don’t let Chewie do anymore construction for us.”

“Agreed.”

Felicity grabbed the stool from the corner and began rummaging through the top cupboard where they kept the spices. Even custom-built kitchens proved to be a little too tall for Felicity sometimes… though Luke certainly enjoyed the view. Her back turned to him, her muscles stretching and flexing as she moved to reach, her glutes pulling tight.

“I may not be a Jedi, but I can sense when you’re checking me out, Skywalker,” Felicity called without even looking down at him.

Luke blushed slightly and turned back to the meal cooking, “Sorry. Sometimes I just can’t ignore the view.”

“Hey, I’m not complaining,” Felicity hopped down from the stool. “Let’s not pretend I don’t drool over you in the same way when watching you at the training gym. You know, when you’re shirtless and sweaty and out of breath. Reminds me of one of my favorite activities with you.”

Luke glanced at Felicity warily. She crossed the room with a slight… zest in her step, and from the look on her face, Luke knew he was in trouble in a we’re about to do something we really shouldn’t when the kids are literally on the other side of this door way.

“Here,” Felicity handed him the oregano bottle with a sultry look in her eye. “That’ll help spice things up.”

Luke set the bottle on the counter, very aware of how close her body was to his, “Careful Miss Rhiaon. A man might get ideas about your intentions.”

“Well after a three-week dry spell, I think my intentions are quite clear,” she ran a hand down his chest and Luke struggled not to shudder. “Unless… you have reason to not want to fulfill those intentions?”
“Felicity, we have three children in the house. Finding a time and place isn’t easy.”

“Yes, I know,” Felicity looked down and bit her lip. “Especially since both Rey and Ben have been having horrible visions… but I miss you.”

Luke wanted to kiss the look right off her face, “I miss you too. It’s been so hard these past few weeks.”

Felicity smirked and pressed her hips against him, “I’m sure it has.”

“Honestly if Reine hadn’t started insisting on sitting in on all our meetings. I swear, if I just have you, twenty minutes alone in my office-“

“She’s just mad because Gavyn told her what we did during her wedding reception.”

“I should have lied about those broken glasses,” Luke stroked a thumb over her bottom lip. His eyes were locked on that delectable mouth. “Is that door locked?”

Felicity glanced coyly at the kitchen door, “It could be.”

Luke took a dominant step forward and Felicity gasped as she was suddenly forced back against the counter.

“Master Skywalker,” Felicity panted, desire burning in her eyes. “Whatever are you doing?”

“I think my intentions are quite clear,” Luke placed his hands on either side of her, gripping the edge of the counter, trapping her against it.

“Now, Master Skywalker, don’t start something you can’t finish.”

“Oh, I intend on finishing.”

“There’s food on the stove,” Felicity reminded.

“I don’t care.”

“The kids could walk in.”

“I don’t care.”

“I want it as bad as you.”


It was passionate and desperate, lips and tongues and bodies tangling together. Luke’s hand was buried in Felicity’s hair as her nails raked down his back. Felicity moaned as Luke lifted her up onto the counter, ready to have his way with her.

“You definitely have a thing for me on tables,” Felicity chuckled, breaking away.


Her hands grasped the hem of his shirt and started lifting over his body as his lips suckled at her neck.

“This isn’t fair to me!” Ben Solo’s voice rang out as the door slid open.
“Not fair to you? It’s not fair to me!” Poe Dameron objected as they entered the kitchen, both boys completely oblivious to Luke and Felicity’s frantic pulling apart.

“Are you two seriously still fighting about that?” Felicity exclaimed as she smoothed down her hair.

“Fighting about what?” Luke tucked his shirt in, pointed ignoring Poe’s raised eyebrow. Apparently the sixteen-year-old Poe was a little less oblivious than Ben was.

Thunk thunk thunk.

The sound of Ben’s crutches rang out as he hobbled through the kitchen, his left foot sporting a tightly wound cast.

“He wants to sleep in my room,” Ben cried.

Luke raised an eyebrow, “Yes. That was what was agreed.”

“Not by me.”

“As one of your legal guardians, and co-owner of this house, I’m authorized to make that decision on your behalf,” Luke shot.

When Ben had come to live on Rornian, Han and Leia had legally given Luke and Felicity partial custody in the event of medical or legal emergencies. It was a point Felicity very much liked to flaunt.

“But I don’t want him in my room, touching my things,” Ben objected.

Poe rolled his eyes, “I guarantee you, Ben, there’s nothing of yours I want to touch. But I need a bed. I’m not about to master the art of sleeping standing up.”

“Why don’t you sleep in Uncle Luke’s X-Wing?” Ben suggested. “If you want to be a pilot, you gotta learn to sleep in a cockpit.”

Luke wasn’t certain if the boy was trying to be genuine or just flat out mocking Poe.

“I’ll pass,” Poe replied.

“Ben,” Luke sighed. “You can’t get up the stairs in that cast.”

“Not my fault Rhiaon’s house design was so ableist,” Ben shot a smirk at Felicity.

She rolled her eyes, “Where did you even learn that word?”

“What he’s saying is you can’t sleep in your room because it’s upstairs,” Poe said. “Which means you have to sleep on the couch AKA the couch I’m currently sleeping on, leaving me with no bed but that free one you have vacated.”

“Then sleep on the floor,” Ben shot.

“As long as you are in that cast, Poe will be sleeping in your bed,” Luke firmly stated. He noticed in the corner of his eye that Felicity had taken up tending to the cooking. “Sweetheart, the nuna needs to be basted.”

“On it,” Felicity grabbed the oven mitts.

At that moment, the room filled with a loud squeal, and two droids and a little girl burst into the kitchen.

“Don’t let her get you, Buddy!” Poe grinned at the sight of the laughing Rey chasing a happily bleeping BB-8. He admired the previous day’s paint job, “You were right, Luke. Orange does look good on him.”

“Rey be careful!” Luke urged as she and BB-8 got too close to Ben’s injured leg. “Artoo can you please-”

Beep bop beep.

Artoo had been dutifully following around the household’s two youngest members, supervising and guiding them out of danger. Of course, he would chastise BB-8 most colorfully whenever he thought things got too risky. Luke was only glad neither Rey nor the week-old BB Unit understood such vulgar binary.

“Rey,” Luke frowned as she again got too close to Ben’s leg.

“I just don’t understand why he has to sleep in my bed.” Ben’s eyes followed Rey carefully, “Hey, Nightlight. Careful of my leg, okay?”

“Okay,” Rey nodded. “Can you play with us? I’m catching BB!”

“And doing a great job, Nightlight,” Ben grinned. “You don’t need your old cousin to play with you.”

“But I wanna play with you Ben! Please play with me? Please?”

“Sorry, Nightlight,” Ben patted his leg, “can’t with this thing.”

“Daddy, why does Ben have that on his leg?”

“It’s called a cast and it’s used to heal his broken leg,” Luke answered.

Rey frowned, “Can’t Doctor Kally heal broken bones? She made Master Gavyn’s all better last week.”

“She can but Uncle Han, Aunt Leia, Mommy, and I agreed his should be healed by a cast instead.”

“Why?”

“Because Ben was a bad boy,” Felicity cut in with a taunting tone. “He disobeyed Daddy’s instructions during Jedi lessons, lifted something with the Force that was too heavy for him to handle, dropped it on himself, and broke his leg. Loud Mouth Solo and Mommy decided Ben would learn his lesson better if he had to suffer through six weeks with a cast. And that’s why you have to always listen to your teachers during lessons.”

“I always listen in my lessons!” Rey exclaimed. “Right, Daddy?”

Luke chuckled, “Well… almost. Wouldn’t quite be my daughter if you always listened to the rules.”

Rey turned back to Ben, “Well if you can’t play catch, let’s play something else. How about hide and seek? BB-8 and I will hide and you seek. We won’t go upstairs.”
“Nah, wouldn’t be fair, Nightlight,” Ben chuckled. “True, you might be a clever hider, but playing with droids is no fun. If I tried to hunt down BB-8, I would find him no problem.”

“I think you underestimate my droid’s evasion skills,” Poe said.

“Challenge accepted Dameron.”

“Some other time, Boys,” Luke interjected. “Ben’s right, Rey. He can’t play hide and seek with his leg like that. Why don’t you just play with BB-8?”

“Okay,” Rey nodded. She turned back to BB-8, “I’m gonna get you!”

BB-8 let out a playfully squeal and shot across the kitchen. Rey followed, hot on his trail, chasing him all over the place. It was only when they got too close to Felicity bent over the oven, putting back in the freshly based nuna that Luke got concerned.


But she wasn’t paying attention. Screaming in joy and obliviousness, she and BB-8 were running straight for the open oven.


She leapt back automatically and Luke used the Force to slam shut the oven door right before Rey would hit it.

…That is, if she hadn’t suddenly frozen in her tracks, her body contorted slightly. She was mid-step, but it seemed like her muscles had just stopped and she was hovering in place.

Luke frowned, “What the-”

His heart stopped when he saw it: Ben’s hand extended, eyes locked on Rey…using the Force to hold Rey in place.


He dropped his grip on Rey and instantly she lurched forward. It was only Felicity’s quick reflexes that caught Rey’s arm before she faceplanted on the floor.

“Are you okay, Sweetheart?” Felicity whispered, dropping to a knee to examine her for injury.

“What were you thinking, Ben?” Luke scolded.

“She was about to hit the oven,” Ben defended himself.

“And your first thought was to use the Dark Side and freeze her in place?”

Poe’s eyes flicked awkwardly around the room, “Uh… Fliss, if Rey’s okay, why don’t I take her and the droids upstairs to play until dinner?”

“Sounds like a good plan,” Felicity nodded. She kissed Rey’s forehead and turned her around, “Go with Poe.”

Rey nodded and ran to Poe, who took her arm and led her out of the room.

“Look, I was using the Dark Side for a good reason,” Ben said.
Luke crossed his arms, “I’m sure my father thought the same thing the first time he used it. Heck, I said that the first time I used it.”

“Exactly! You use this power!”

“I have in the past,” Luke conceded. “But only as the last resort when there was genuine danger of someone losing their life.”

Felicity guiltily looked away from Luke.

“The problem here, Ben is your thought process,” Luke continued. “Your first thought was to physically stop Rey. Your instinct was to take away her free will and agency.”

“Should could have gotten hurt!”

“And it’s her mistake to make.”

“Careful, Skywalker,” Felicity warned. “You’re starting to sound like you wanted her to go in the oven.”

“My point is that when I acted, I had a different mindset.” Luke said. “I went to remove the danger. I closed the oven. Yes, if she hit the door, she probably would have been hurt by the heat a little. Then she learns her lesson not to play by the oven. Sometimes you have to let a kid hurt themselves in order to learn the concept of danger. Ben, you have to start thinking about things different. Don’t try to control the person. Control the environment. Using that power should be your absolute last resort.”

“That’s not what he says,” Ben muttered.

Luke’s eyes went wide, “Are you hearing Snoke again?”

“No.”

“Ben, don’t you dare lie to me about this!”

“Maybe… sometimes. I don’t listen to what he says!”

“Ben! We’ve been over this, you have to tell me when you hear him. He wants nothing good.”

“He appreciates my powers,” Ben snapped. “Unlike some people.”

Luke took a deep breath, “Ben… is this about the cast?”

“I told you I could lift that speeder! You wouldn’t even let me try!”

“Do or do not. There is no try, and clearly,” Luke gestured to Ben’s cast, “you did not. Just… Just go to your room, okay?”

“I can’t. Remember?”

“Then the living room, Ben. Just please… go.”

Ben grumbled and hobbled out of the kitchen, his crutches thudding down the hall.

Luke sighed, grasping the bridge of his nose and lowered his head. Why couldn’t Ben just understand?
A pair of arms wrapped around his waist, and her felt Felicity rest her head against his back.


“Did I?” Luke sighed, “I just don’t understand him. Why doesn’t he realize I’m only trying to help him?”

“He’s a teenager. He’s going through a phase.”

“He’s attacked you before, Felicity.”

“That wasn’t an attack… at first,” Felicity looked away, not wanting to remember that horrible day she let Ben into her mind.

“Who knows what else Snoke is teaching him? I don’t know what to do, Felicity.”

“Maybe it’s time to outsource. Miri and Genko are being assigned as Padawans soon, right?”

“You think I should make Ben a Padawan?”

“I don’t know. I’m not great at the whole Jedi thing.” Felicity came around to Luke’s front and wrapped her arms around his neck, “What I think you should do is finish making dinner, have a nice meal with the family, put our daughter to bed… let the boys fight out their sleeping arrangements, and then come to bed with me and show me what I’ve been missing for three weeks.”

Luke smiled and rested his palm on her hips, “Sounds like a plan to me.”

They leaned in for another tender kiss.

SQIUUEEEE!

A loud mechanical shriek filled the house, startling Luke and Felicity to break apart. But before they could say a word, it was instantly followed by a series of loud thuds coming from the staircase.

Thud!

Thud!

Thud!

Thud!

Thud!

Thud!

Thud!

Thud!

Thud!

Luke and Felicity cringed with each impact on the stairs, but after the silence the followed the eighth, they frowned.

“Aren’t there nine stairs?” Felicity asked.

Thud!
“There we go,” Felicity said. “What do you think-”

“Wait for it,” Luke held up his hand. “In three… two… one.”

“Uh oh,” Rey’s voice echoed through the house.


A rumble of footsteps sounded as two humans and a droid flurried down to the main level.

“Oh no,” Poe’s voice was distant and soft. He then called to Luke, “WELL… REY AND I ARE OKAY, BUT…”


Poe re-entered the kitchen with a guilty looking Rey following.

Her head was bowed and her hands were clasped, “Sorry, Daddy.”


“Rey was playing with BB near the stairs, and I was trying to get them to stop, but Rey accidentally pushed him and…” Poe looked awkwardly at the doorway.

Artoo rolled into the kitchen. Two cables trailed behind him, dragging in the detached head and body of BB-8.

“I’m sorry,” Rey said again.

“Don’t apologize to me, apologize to Poe and BB-8,” Luke instructed.

“Sorry Poe. Sorry BB.”

“It’s okay, Rey,” Poe smiled at her and ruffled her hair.

_Bwop beep bo._

BB-8’s noises were weak, but the forgiveness was clear.

“What happened?” Felicity asked.

“I think the mechanics that keep his head upright shorted out,” Poe explained. “Luke, do you think you could fix it?”

“Sure, but this won’t be the last time this type of thing happens. I’ll show you after dinner how to fix it.”

“Thanks,” Poe smiled.

“Why don’t you guys go now?” Felicity offered. “I’ll finish up dinner. You fix the droid.”


_Beep beep bop._

“See, I’ll be fine,” Felicity said. “Artoo will help me.”
“Alright then.” Luke picked Rey up with one arm. She squealed happily as he slung her over his shoulder and started tickling her stomach, “Let’s go fix a droid.”

Dinner was typical that night, the usual chatter that filled the dining room. Rey trying to sneak a toy under the table cloth, Luke finding it and chastising her as he repossessed it from her, and Poe, Ben, and Felicity bickering and bantering until Luke was certain his ears would bleed.

Luke was discussing hair products with Poe, while Ben mimed stabbing himself with his butter knife.

“Oh, that reminds me,” Felicity grabbed Rey’s knife out of her hands when she imitated the gesture. “Stop stealing my hair dye, Ben! We live on Rornian. I can’t run out to the corner store to buy more.”

This was during the year and a half where Felicity had cut her hair to shoulder length and dyed it black. She grew out bangs, and straightened it everyday, curling the ends inwards in a rather pretty look that Luke had been quite fond of. However the hassle of it all proved too much for Felicity, and she changed her hair back about six months after that night.

“I’m not using your dye,” Ben refuted.

Luke raised an eyebrow, “Really? So your hair has just randomly started turning black even though no one in this family has black hair?”

“You don’t know what my father’s family has. And didn’t Great-Grandmother Shmi have it?”

“There is no one alive who can confirm it.”

_Beep bop beep!_

Luke sighed, “Of course you have footage of it. Why did I assume otherwise?”

“Oh, and if you ruin another one of my towels with said dye,” Felicity warned, “you’ll be using _paper_ towels from here on out to dry off.”

Ben rolled his eyes and grabbed the salad from Luke, “I am truly blessed to call you Aunt.”


“Exactly.”

“So, you boys fixed BB-8?” Felicity asked.

“Good as new,” Poe proudly announced.

“Oh good. I didn’t want to tell Kes you had destroyed your really expensive birthday gift, three weeks in.”

“Kes was smart in his purchase,” Luke said. “BB Units are supposed to be nearly indestructible. You could set that thing loose in a desert, and he’d probably be okay… Sarlaacs not withstanding.”

“What’s a sarlaac?” Poe asked.

“Pray you never find out.”
“I’m still impressed,” Felicity said. “A brand-new droid, literally the eighth one of the model ever made. That’s an extravagant present.”

“Had to give me something to distract from your beauty,” Poe grinned. “What do you say, Fliss? Wanna run away together?”

“You know I have you on retainer,” Felicity chuckled.

Luke shook his head but said nothing. It was a long running joke between Felicity and Poe to run away together. It had stemmed from the day Poe had flirted with Felicity at his own mother’s funeral – a nice distraction to the eight-year-old mourning his mother – and had continued for years to come. Poe had even had the gall to flirt with Felicity at her wedding reception, though Kes had made it clear to his son beforehand not to interrupt the actual ceremony.

“So seriously,” Ben asked, “what’s with the droid?”

“I think he’s trying to make up for my mom not being around,” Poe shifted the food on his plate.

“What happened to her?” Rey looked at her father.


“That’s a story for when you’re older, Sweetheart,” Felicity said. She eyed her daughter’s plate, “Looks like someone forgot to grab vegetables tonight.”

Rey sulked as Felicity portioned out the dreaded greens.

“Of course, a droid isn’t the end of it,” Poe said. “Next year we’re going to finish fixing up Mom’s X-Wing and Dad says I can have that. And when I’m eighteen, he said I can get a tattoo of Mom’s flight squadron on my shoulder blade.”

“Left or right?” Felicity asked.

“Left.”

“Good spot. If you need, I can give you my guy’s information.”

“Nah, Dad’s got a tattoo artist all lined up already. Did his.”

“Well, good. If there’s one thing I have to say about tattoos is get a good artist… and under no circumstance do you let it be done by two Imperials – one with a boot on your back, pinning you to the dusty ground – holding you down outside an alley in the middle of the street, with a machine Gods know how old that probably was never cleaned, while your father watches in horrified helplessness.”

Poe grinned, “I really gotta sit you down one day and hear your life story.”

“It’s a long story,” Felicity shrugged.

“How many tattoos do you have?”

“Oh, let’s see. There’s the starbird/Rogue squad one on my right shoulder. Brendan on my right ankle. Rey of Light over my heart. And FN-2187 on my right wrist… I never thought about how all my tattoos but the Rey one is on the right. Next one will be on the left.”

Poe blinked, “F- What?”
“FN-2187,” Felicity repeated. “You know, the kid I lost?”

Poe’s face went white, “Oh, I didn’t know you two lost a-”

“No, the First Order child,” Luke corrected. “Rey’s our one and only.”

“So far,” Felicity added.

“I still don’t know what you’re taking about,” Poe said. “Who is FN-2394?”

“2187,” Felicity corrected. “You don’t know that story?”

Poe shook his head.

“Well, buckle in,” Felicity said. “Have I got a tearjerker for you.”

And so she told him the story of the child that was torn out of her arms.

“That’s horrible,” Poe said at the conclusion. “And you have no idea who his parents were?”

“No one’s ever come forward,” Felicity replied. “And I’ve spent a lot of time and money trying to find them. As far as the galaxy is concerned, FN-2187 has no family.”

“He has you,” Luke pointed out.

“I don’t count.”

“You’ve said numerous times that if you had saved him, you would adopt him. Admit it, Sweetheart, you are obsessed with this child.”

“Better than your obsession.”

“What’s your obsession?” Poe asked.


“Fireproofing,” Ben answered. “Uncle Luke is convinced someone is going to burn down this house. He’s even had a whole security system installed that if there’s a fire, just tell the system *Burning Homestead* and all the doors seal shut. They won’t open again.”

“It’s to trap and contain the fire,” Luke explained. “And you can open the doors.”

“You can?” Ben blinked.

“Have I never told you that? If you get locked in during the shutdown, just tell the system *Lars* and it opens the door. Tell it *Whitesun* to lock. And if you need to reset the passcodes for some reason, that code is *Beru*.”

“Not Owen?”

“Owen sounds too close to open. I didn’t want the system to open on the wrong word.”

“Lars, Whitesun, Beru, Burning Homestead,” Poe repeated. “Got it.”

“You know, it’s strange to think about FN,” Felicity admitted. “He’d be about seven these days. I wonder how long until the First Order puts a weapon in his hands.”
Luke reached over and clasped her hand, “We’ll find him, Sweetheart. I promise.”

“I don’t think I can ever be at peace until we do.”

“We’ll find him, Fliss,” Poe promised. “I swear to you, I’ll find him, save him, and give him a name other than FN whatever he’s called. I promise.”

Of course, at that time, Poe didn’t know how true those words would become.

But then again, as Luke remembered those words years later on Jakku… neither did he.

8 Years, 8 Months, 12 Days

Luke’s eyes were so heavy. It was late and the speech was completed, but still he sat at the dining table tweaking the last few lines.

He heard when Felicity entered the room, but was surprised when she didn’t say anything. Instead she just stood there, staring at him. Her arms were folded and she was in a plain blue sleeping tank and black night pants.


He didn’t look up at her, “I have to get this speech just right.”

Felicity said nothing but exited to the kitchen. He heard some rattling and several minutes later she emerged with two steaming mugs. She set them on the table and without asking, took the datapad from his hands.

“This is good,” Felicity sipped at her tea, reading his speech.

“Thanks,” Luke stirred the hot chocolate in his mug. “I’m just nervous. The last time I assigned Padawans, they ended up leaving with Cade. Reine was heartbroken about Jake.”

“I hear he goes by Jaek these days. Jaek Ren. That’ll be fun to deal with in a few years.”

“I don’t even want to think about that right now. Felicity, this is so important. What if I give the wrong Masters the wrong Padawans?”

“Who is assigned to whom?”

Luke was silent.

“You’d think sleeping with the Jedi Grandmaster would get me in on all the good tidbits,” Felicity teased, setting the datapad down. “Instead I’m left in the dark with the rest of the plebeians.”

“You are not a plebeian.”

“Do you even know what that word means?”

“…That’s beside the point.”

Felicity smiled and clasped Luke’s hands, “Come on, tell me who is assigned to whom.”

“Genko is going to Gavyn, and Miri to Obik.”

“Genko and Gavyn? Interesting match.”
“They’ll play off each other well.”

“What about Miri?” Felicity asked. “I thought one of her parents—”

“I don’t want children to be Padawans to their parents,” Luke dismissed. “I feel that this is the chance to develop a strong mentor bond but without the obligations and complications of parents with their children.”

“For example, less likely to cut off the Padawan’s hand.”

“Oh for the love of— You are never giving up on that, are you?”

“Nope,” Felicity grinned. “So, who is Ben going to?”

Luke sighed, “That’s the hard part. I can’t decide. I think she’ll be the best choice for him, but I’ve always promised he’d be my Padawan.”

“Your padawan?” Felicity’s eyes widened. “Luke, he can’t be your padawan!”

“Why not?”

“Oh, Honey,” Felicity put her head in her hands. Luke knew he had done something ridiculous when Felicity called him Honey in that utterly disappointed and pitying tone. “Sweetheart, I love you. I love you so much. I love how exuberant you are, how you want to just take care of everything and everyone. You’re a real people pleaser and an optimist. It’s one of the reason I love you… but you can’t keep taking on so many things.”

“I haven’t taken on a lot of things.”

“You’re the Jedi Grandmaster, in charge of management, resource allocation, ensuring everything is running smoothing on a practical, emotional, and spiritual level. Reine only just got you to give up financial control to her last year. You deal with the politics of making Rornian a Republic planet. You take business trips and go on expeditions with Lor San Tekka. You work with the Church of the Force and the Senate. You’re active in the Resistance and fight the First Order. You’re making buildings and gardens and tracking down Force Sensitive. You’re raising Ben and Rey, and at the moment, Poe. You’re married to me and have to maintain a physical, emotional, mental, romantic, and sexual relationship with me. If you take on anymore, you’re going to crack under the weight. Something is going to be lost or ignored, and I won’t have it be this family. You can’t take Ben as your Padawan. You’re the Grandmaster. Let the Masters do their job. You taught them to be Jedi, now let them teach others.”

Luke sighed, “I suppose you’re right.”

“I always am. Even when I’m wrong.”

“I don’t think that’s how it works.”

“It is. Just go with it.”

“Alright then,” Luke laughed. “So it’s official, Ben will be the Padawan of Tyla Kinall.”

Felicity’s jaw dropped, “Tyla Kinall? Luke, what are you thinking? We want Ben to like Vader less, not more!”

“I just think that it would be good for him to see another side of Vader. Get a personal account so he
“Luke, Tyla hasn’t even seen how flawed he is. You give Ben to Tyla for her Padawan, and I guarantee within six months there’s going to be a dead Jedi.”

“Ben’s not going to kill anyone.”

“You can’t promise that. With the crazy life this family leads, that’s no way he’s not going to end up killing someone. Even Threepio has killed people!”

Luke sighed and rested his forehead against his hand, his elbow planted on the table.

“Come on,” Felicity wrapped an arm around Luke’s shoulder and began to rub the opposite tense muscle, “why are you so afraid of this? Give him to Alyla.”

“What happens if she gets more serious with Lando? I know they’ve been discussing adoption.”

“They don’t even live together, Luke.”

“And if they move in? If they adopt a child? He’s threatened by Rey, what happens if he feels he loses Alyla to another child?”

“Ben is threatened by Rey, yes,” Felicity admitted. “But he loves her. He would never let someone lay a hand on her. It would be the same for Alyla. Luke… Ben is in a dangerous place, he needs Alyla there to guide him. She’s his only hope.”

Luke smiled and reached an arm across his chest to stroke her hand, “You know… you’re better at this Jedi thing than you think.”

Felicity clasped his hand and leaned her head against his neck, “Well… I learned from a great teacher.”

“Thank you for this, Felicity.”

She smiled, “Anytime.”

---

8 Years, 8 Months, 13 Days

“And so we pass down our knowledge to the new generation, not only so we can teach them, but so they can teach us in return,” Luke finished his speech, his hands resting on the podium.

The ceremony took place in the Meditation Gardens. Truth be told, the Jedi Temple didn’t actually have a large enough room for ceremonies, and that was on Felicity to-design list. For now, all ceremonies would take place in the Meditation Gardens until they could make such a space.

Luke stood at the head of the ceremony with the Jedi surrounding him not unlike the formation at Reine and Obik’s wedding. Standing before the group were Genko, Miri, and Ben, all dressed in their finest formal Jedi robes, hands clasped behind their backs, nervous and excited.

Han and Leia were in the crowd collected behind the future Padawans, looking absolutely filled with pride. Han was even wearing formal wear… at least as formal as Han Solo could possibly get, so clean black pants with Corellian blood stripes, shined black boots, a crisp white shirt that was actually ironed, and a brown jacket with sleeves. To Luke’s utter shock, Han wasn’t wearing a blaster belt or any sort of weapon. He had only seen Han voluntarily sans weapon three times in his life: at Han and Leia’s wedding, at Luke and Felicity’s wedding, and in the hospital room when Ben
was born – Leia had asked Luke to be in the room with her and Han to keep Han in line as well as to help if any weird Force things happened.

Leia was as elegant as ever, her hair up in an elaborate bun with braids and curls in her usual style that looked both complicated yet she bore it like it was nothing more than a pony tail. Her dress was white with gold accents, some Alderaanian and Jedi symbols embroidered in shining gold thread across the waist and down several lines of her slightly flowy skirt.

Felicity stood with them wearing a very similar outfit. Her hair was the same simple bun she always wore, though it did look odd with her bangs. The dress she wore was a near copy, though her dress was black with silver accents to match Luke’s formal black robes. Her skirt was also a little more formal fitting, and the bodice laced up in the back rather than zipped like Leia’s.

Han had confided in Luke years ago that he managed to talk Leia into switching to zippers because as fun as helping her lace up – and even more fun to unlace her, which Luke glared at Han for the comment – it was taking Leia way to long to get ready for formal events, and then she would blame him for it. He gave her an ultimatum: he either helped her with laces or with her hair, or else he was going to start leaving the house before her.

She chose hair, but was known to on occasion to rope Luke, Felicity, and even Threepio into helping her with dress laces when she insisted on them.

Felicity’s dress also had symbols on it, but it wasn’t Alderaanian ones. Instead she wore Jedi and Tatooine symbols to honour Luke. In fact, the dress design had originally been Felicity’s, having gotten the dress custom-made after deciding to marry the Jedi Grandmaster. She knew that as his wife, she would have many cases of attending ceremonies and events in that role. While she was insistent on being more than just Luke Skywalker’s wife, she also knew there were times where she would just have to concede her role. The dress was designed to reflect her role and support of Luke, but the outfit was a perfect match for Luke’s so that when they did stand next to each other it was clear the outfits were a set, and thus they were equals and a team.

Rey was with her mother, trying not to fidget as she struggled to stand still and be quiet. BB-8 was at her stand, watching the ceremony and gently nudging her anytime her detected Rey’s focus waning. Rey’s outfit wasn’t particularly formal, a nice set of grey tunic and leggings. She had little black boots that she liked to brag looked like Uncle Han’s, and Leia had done her hair up nice and fancy.

Everyone else looked the same nice, but not too formal look. Poe wore his academy outfit, Lor San Tekka wore brown robes and had trimmed his beard, and Chewie didn’t wear his ammo belt… which in Luke’s opinion looked a little weird and made it feel like Chewie was naked. But he wasn’t going to argue Chewie on the point, especially since Waroo and Malla had come to Rornian for the ceremony and were in a similar state of “undress” by human standards.

Of course, Lando Calrissian was dressed to the absolute nines, wearing a cape and everything. The man honestly made any excuse to wear a cape, but even this display was a little much for a Padawan ceremony. Upon seeing Lando, Gavyn declared that he looked like a peacock, but the outfit made Alyla smile, so Lando figured his mission was accomplished.

Everyone knew that Alyla was probably going to get either Ben or Miri as her padawan, so she had dressed up nicely herself. While the rest of the Jedi wore robes, Alyla wore a gorgeous magenta dress she had gotten the very first time Lando had asked her to attend a dinner with him. Her outfit had no other ornamentation, though a small blue morning glory had appeared in her hair shortly after Lando arrived.

Seeing Alyla, Luke was glad he had chosen her to be Ben mentor, even if it was just so that all her
outfit efforts didn’t go to waste. Besides Felicity, Luke was the only one who knew which Padawan would be matched to which Master. All the Jedi who were interested in getting a Padawan had told Luke, but he decided not to reveal assignments until the actual ceremony that way no one tried to talk him out of assignments… exactly as Felicity had done the previous night.

Speaking of assignments, it was now time to given them. Luke took a deep breath and nodded to the Jedi at his side. Tyla Kinall nodded back, and as he stepped back, she and Zena Halcorr took Luke’s spot at the head of the ceremony.

“This Order is about openness,” Tyla announced to the group. “We come from all walks of life to seek the same goal: to know the Force more intimately than we know ourselves. To study and cultivate the power within us. The Padawan/Mentor relationship is also a vessel to come to understand another person’s perspective, no matter how opposite it might be.”

Zena looked around the group, “As many of you know, Tyla and I came from dark beginnings. I was born into a family that was a cornerstone in the slave trade. Tyla… had Imperial roots. We will not get into those today, but we will acknowledge the fact that she was a familiar of Darth Vader’s.”

“Though from different backgrounds, Zena and I ended up doing a common thing: we ended up saving precious Jedi artifacts. Zena did it through her little team with Gavyn, Alyla, Coria, and the rest, and I… well, what most of you don’t know is that Vader did keep some Jedi artifacts as trophies. When he died and I ended up destitute… I broke into one of his homes and stole some of the artifacts. I wouldn’t let anyone else have them, because I couldn’t trust anyone with them. Throughout the years, I ended selling all but one piece simply to get the money to survive. As the Force would have it, all those pieces ended up with Zena. But the one I kept, I have held to this day, the day on which I finally pass it on to a worthy apprentice.”

Zena nodded, and Luke brought forth a chest he had stashed behind a large tree. He set it down on the podium and lifted the lid.

“A lightsaber is the weapon of a Jedi Knight,” Luke said. “Not as clumsy or random as a blaster. An elegant weapon... for a more civilized age. These words were once said to me by my first mentor, who gave me my first lightsaber, the lightsaber of my father. That weapon is long gone, along with a hand, which I only mention now because if I don’t, my brother-in-law and wife will never let me hear the end of it tonight.”

The crowd laughed and Han patted Felicity on the shoulder.

“That weapon served me well for many years,” Luke continued. “It is true that no lightsaber will work better than that which has a kyber crystal that calls to you… but I think it is important to have a lightsaber before you build your own. That way you come to respect it and understand its importance before you bind yourself to such a dangerous weapon. I do not give these to you lightly, but I know that you three are the future of the Jedi Order, and I trust you to wield these with respect to the past of not only the saber, but of the Order itself. They will be yours to care for until the time comes for you to build your own saber… And for the love of the Force, do not break them.”

The audience laughed again.

Luke turned and nodded to Zena and Tyla, who withdrew, both hoping that they were about to hear their names called as a Padawan’s Master.

“Alright then,” Luke took a deep breath. “Let’s get to the pairing.”

A buzz of chatter filled the room in anticipation, but Reine joined Luke at his side – she had
requested she *not* get a Padawan, still too hurt by Jake’s abandonment. She held up a hand, and the room fell silent.

“Genko,” Luke looked to the Mon Calamari boy. “You are vibrant, lively, and eager… but you are not grounded. While I commend your selflessness, you need to learn not to throw yourself into things with such reckless abandon… That’s how you lose a hand.”

The room laughed.

“What you need is a healthy dose of reality, and a little bit of cynicism to grant you perspective. You need someone who will grab you by the back of the shirt when you try to throw yourself in front of a lightsaber dealing a killing blow. And that is why I have matched you with…” Luke looked over at the tanned man to his left, “Master Gavyn Kene.”

The crowd applauded as Gavyn smiled and stepped forward to shake the hand of his Padawan. Later that night, each of the three Padawan/Master sets would have private binding ceremonies with Luke and Reine in front of the Force tree. They would recite the very same vow he and Reine had sworn, making up the words on the spot, standing before that very same tree fourteen years ago.

When the room had settled, Luke took a lightsaber out of the chest, and presented it to Genko.

“This is the lightsaber of Vonar Ghyron, Gavyn’s own Master,” Luke proclaimed. “It was recovered by Zena Halcorr many years ago, the very first piece in her collection. It is with great pride we hand this saber down to you. May you wield it with pride and honor.”

“Thank you, Master Skywalker,” Genko accepted it solemnly. He then looked up at Gavyn and asked with an excited grin, “Hey, Master, what colour is it?”

Gavyn raised a brow, “Green.”

“Awesome! That’s the colour I wanted!”

Gavyn chuckled, “I think you and I are going to have a lot of fun, Genko.”

Genko was bouncing with excitement, trying to bombard Gavyn with a million questions as his Master led him to the side.

Luke smiled and looked at the girl standing below, “Miri Halcorr-Kene. You are very much like your parents: solemn, a wonderful trait for a Jedi. But you need to learn to laugh a little more, to not take everything so seriously. You’ve shown a talent for being a healer, and are passionate about nurturing the people around you. I believe studying the Living Force would be a wonderful avenue for you. Therefore, I have assigned you to… Master Obik Kenu.”

Miri received the same sort of applause and greeting from Obik as Genko had with Gavyn. As before, Luke selected a lightsaber out of the chest and presented it to her.

“This is the lightsaber of Qui-Gon Jinn,” Luke announced. “This was saved by Darth Vader, stolen by Tyla Kinall, and sold to Zena Halcorr. It’s a special lightsaber, being one of the few used to defeat a Sith Lord. Qui-Gon believed in following his own Code and followed the ways of the Living Force. It was he who found the pathways beyond death that opened new opportunities to use. I believe he would be honoured to pass his saber on to you.”

“Thank you, Master Skywalker,” Miri bowed her head.

She and Obik joined Genko and Gavyn at the side – the latter trying to get Genko to stop talking.
Gavyn grinned at his daughter and patted her on the arm.

Luke turned his attentions to his nephew.

“Ben Solo,” Luke couldn’t wipe the grin off his face. “What can I say about you? I have known and loved you seen you were a mere speck in the Force. I have seen you grow strong with the Force, and been there to guide you at every step. And now we reach this next step, one of the most important in your education. Ben, you are powerful, in mind, spirit, and personality. There is a legacy that follows you, but also a darkness. What you need is a Master who knows you inside out, who can nurture and empower you, who understands the weight your legacy, and who can teach you to defeat the darkness within as they too once did.”

Ben made a movement that looked very much like a rooster proudly ruffling his feather. Even his dyed black hair – the sight of which Han and Leia had been upset to see more so out of the doing it without permission, and stealing the dye from Felicity – shimmed a little bit. A cocky grin consumed his face.

Luke locked eyes with his nephew, “Therefore I have decided that there is only one Jedi who could possibly be your Master… Jedi Master Alyla Kene.”

The grin fell off Ben’s face, “WHAT?”

The polite applause came to a stop.


“I’m not supposed to be with Alyla!” Ben exclaimed. “I’m supposed to be with you! I don’t want anyone but you!”

Ben looked absolutely outraged, and Luke wasn’t sure what to do. He hadn’t expected an outburst, let alone over having Alyla assigned as Ben’s Master.

The crowd muttered among themselves, unsure what to make of the display. Han and Leia exchanged a very anxious look, and as Han wrapped an arm around Leia, he looked like he half wanted to murder Ben. Felicity had her arms crossed and was chewing her bottom lip, nervous over the knowledge that this was partially her doing. Lando looked offended and moved like he was going to step into the circle with Ben and give the boy a piece of his mind, but Chewie put a hand on his shoulder, urging him to stay where he was.

But worst of all was the absolutely devastated look on Alyla’s face. She adored children, always wanting one of her own, and Ben is some ways was one to her. To be not only rejected by him, but so publicly, broke her heart.

“Ben,” Alyla weakly said, her voice starting to hitch.

Gavyn looked furious, Zena’s hand went to the hilt of her lightsaber, and Lando made the forward movement once more.

“I’m your Padawan!” Ben cried out, taking a step towards Luke.

Luke turned to Reine, and with a stiff nod from her, he understood what to do. He grabbed the final lightsaber and scaled down the few steps from the platform with the podium. Luke marched over to Ben and before he could object again, Luke thrust the lightsaber into Ben’s hands.

“This is the lightsaber of Obi-Wan Kenobi,” Luke proclaimed loudly, making it clear to Ben to be
“The man for whom you are named. He was a great friend and mentor… if not the most honest one. In many ways, he reminds me of you.”

The hard look in Luke’s eyes shut Ben right up.

“This lightsaber was saved by Vader after he killed Kenobi on the Death Star,” Luke continued. “It is the one piece of Tyla’s collection she refused to part with, until today when she agrees to pass it to you, Ben Kenobi’s namesake. I hope you learn to become as great a Jedi that he was, and that you treat it, as well as your Master with uttermost respect.”


“This conversation is over,” Luke warned, leaning in close so only Ben could hear. “Now go greet Alyla, and apologize for your outburst and how you have embarrassed her.”

Ben swallowed hard, finally noticing the look on Alyla’s face. He stiffly nodded, clutched Obi-Wan’s lightsaber tightly, and slowly walked over to Alyla as if he were approaching the executioner’s block.

As Ben apologized to Alyla, Luke returned to the podium and the very solemn Reine. They exchanged a wary look, and he turned back to the audience, who was now immensely uncomfortable.

Luke shook his head as Ben and Alyla spoke, “Reine… I have a bad feeling about this.”

“Uncle Luke!”

Luke was chatting with Felicity, Rey, and Poe after the ceremony when he heard Ben’s angry shout.

“Well, this should be fun,” Felicity said.


“What was that all about?” Ben exclaimed as he stormed towards Luke.

Luke crossed his arms, “I could say the same thing.”

“I can’t believe you would do that to me!”

Rey frowned and tugged on Luke’s pantleg, “Daddy, why is Ben mad?”

The query seemed to defuse Ben ever so slightly.

“I’m mad, Nightlight,” Ben answered, “because your Dad is supposed to be my Master, not Alyla!”

That confused Rey even further, “But I thought you liked Master Alyla?”

“I thought he did too,” Alyla said as she joined the group. “Ben, I’m very upset with how you disrespected your uncle and I today.”

Ben looked away uncomfortably. The look on her face was worse than anger… it was disappointment.

“I was very glad to been assigned as your Master,” Alyla continued. “I’m sorry if you don’t feel the same way.”
He sighed, “I’m not… unhappy, it’s just-”

“BEN!”

Han Solo was a man born to loudly bark his son’s name across a room. At the noise, Ben Solo winced and seemed to shrink down to half his size as his father approached with his equally stern looking mother.

“What. Were. You. Doing?” Han glared at his son, looking half a second away from grabbing him by the scruff of his neck.

“How dare you do that to Luke and Alyla,” Leia fixed Ben with a look that clearly read she was the daughter of Darth Vader. “You embarrassed and belittled them in front of their friends and colleagues. Would you pull something like that to me in the middle of a Senate meeting?”

Ben looked to the ground, “No, Mom.”

“I don’t see what the boy’s problem is,” Lando said. His eyes were locked on Alyla and he had on that ever-present charmer smile of his that made women either blush or roll their eyes. Luckily for him, Alyla was a blusher. “He gets to spend hour upon hour with this beautiful, sophisticated, intelligent, courageous young woman.”

Alyla blushed as Lando wrapped an arm around her waist.

“That sounds like an absolutely glorious way to spend all of my time,” Lando grinned before planting a passionate kiss on her. “You look absolutely stunning today, My Dear. Congratulations on the Padawan, My Darling… even if you did get stuck with Han’s kid.”

“Thank you, Darling,” Alyla had an embarrassed smile as she felt all eyes on Lando and his little display. “And he’s not that bad.”

“Ben, you will apologize to your uncle right now,” Leia ordered.

“Fine! Uncle Luke, I’m sorry for embarrassing you during the ceremony, but I will not apologize for being mad about my Master. It was supposed to be you! You’ve always promised that it would be you!”

“Well, I changed my mind,” Luke said firmly. “Ben, I’m the Jedi Grandmaster, I don’t have time for a personal Padawan. Besides, it’s not a good idea to make relatives be Padawans and their Masters.”

“But that’s not what you thought before!”

“It’s what I think now.”

“No, that doesn’t make sense,” Ben looked confused and frustrated. “You never had a problem with it before. It’s what you thought last year. What you thought last month. What you thought last night-”

Ben realized his mistake too late.

“Late night?” Luke repeated sternly. “What do you mean, that’s what I thought last night?”

Felicity and Leia exchanged a look of wide eyed horror, while the others just seemed confused.

“Ben…” Luke said slowly, “have you been prying into people’s minds again?”

He looked like a rat caught in a trap, “Well, I, uh…”
“Ben Solo!” Leia scolded. “We’ve been over this. This was the entire reason I sent you to Luke to begin with!”

“Wait, what?” Han frowned. “I thought you said it was because you received intel via the Resistance that Snoke was going to make a move to kidnap him.”

Leia looked awkwardly at Luke and then her husband.

“Uh…” Leia struggled for words, “we’ll talk about it later, Han.”

Han opened his mouth like he was about to object, but then he caught sight of Lando and Poe. He closed his mouth, clearly not wanting to have the discussion in front of such a crowd.

“Uncle Luke, I’m sorry,” Ben bowed his head. “I shouldn’t have been looking in your mind.”

Luke crossed his arms, “How did you do it without me knowing?”

Ben gave a sheepish look, and Luke knew the answer:

Snoke.

“We’ll continue this discussion later,” Luke said calmly. He did not want to start discussing the fact Ben heard Snoke’s voice in his head in front of Han, Poe, and Lando.

“But we will discuss this,” Leia eyed her son sternly.

“Yes, Mother,” Ben bowed his head. He clenched his fists tightly, “But Uncle Luke… I still don’t understand. It doesn’t make sense. Last night you were going to make me your Padawan, and this morning you changed your mind. It doesn’t make sense!”

“Ben, just drop it,” Luke said coolly. In the corner of his eye, he noticed how nervous Felicity was getting.

“No, it doesn’t make sense.”

“A lot of things don’t make sense in life. You just have to deal with it,” Luke refused to divulge the source of his change of heart.

“But it’s what you thought for years! You always promised! It’s not fair!”

“Ben-”

“No, you lied to me! How can I ever trust anything you say to me from now on?”


“Felicity,” Luke interjected, “you don’t have to-”

“No, it’s okay, Luke. I’ll tell him.”

Ben looked between the two, “Tell me what?”

Felicity took a deep breath, “It’s my fault. Okay? I changed his mind.”

Ben’s face scrunched in confusion, “What?”

“Luke told me that he was going to make you his Padawan, and I talked him out of it,” Felicity
explained. “Luke has so much on his plate as Jedi Grandmaster, financial provider for the Order, Senate representative for Rornian, he works with the Resistance and the Church of the Force, and he’s a father, husband, and teacher. He can’t give all of that adequate attention – he can’t give *you* adequate attention with all those burdens. It would be detrimental to your education, and after a while, something was going to give out. I had to talk him out of it. I didn’t want any of his relationships to suffer. Not the one with me, not the one with Rey, and certainly not the one with you. For your own good, I talked him out of making you his Padawan.”

Ben stared at Felicity, his face pale, his eyes wide and round, and his jaw hung open in complete, utter shock.

“You did it?” Ben whispered.

“Yes,” Felicity said simply.

He shook his head incredulously, and then uttered the eight words that would change the magnitude of their feud forever.

“Oh my God…” Ben stared at her with disbelieving fury in his eyes, “you are such a *bitch*!”

“What?”

“Hey!”

“Whoa!”

“**Ben!”**

A flurry of shouts broke out from the group as all seven adults – Poe counted among them – turned on Ben angrily for his insult.

“Whoa, whoa! Everyone calm down!” Leia ordered, holding up her hands.

And then came the six words that destroyed any possibility of Ben and Felicity ever reconciling their feud.

“Mommy?” Rey asked in an innocent tone. “Why are you a *bitch*?”

Felicity’s eyes flashed with dark anger and Ben’s face paled as he stumbled back towards his mother in fear.

“Oh, Rey, why don’t we go talk with Obik and Reine?” Poe hurriedly said, literally picking her up off the ground and racing away with her – BB-8 obediently following behind – before the scene got ugly.

“I’m gonna kill him!” Felicity roared.

She lunged for Ben, but Han caught her around the waist and yanked her back. Ben scampered behind his mother, literally hiding behind her as his hands clutched Leia’s shoulders.

A flurry of shouts overlapped each other in both reprimand and defense of Ben and Felicity’s actions. The commotion was so loud, it was impossible to tell who was saying what.

Until a loud whistle shut them all up.

“That’s better,” Leia glared around at the group. “Now, what Ben did was inappropriate, but
Felicity, you are definitely old enough to know that trying to attack a child is equally such.”

“He called me a bitch and taught Rey to do it in the process,” Felicity’s eyes were cold.

“And he should be reprimanded,” Leia agreed. “But not by a lynch mob. Ben needs one person to talk to him, not seven.”

“Technically the seventh is gone,” Lando jerked a thumb in the direction Poe exited.

A cold stare from Leia made Lando take a step submissively back behind Alyla. He wrapped his arms around Alyla trying to make it look like an affectionate gesture, but there was no denying that he had placed Alyla between Leia and himself as a buffer. Alyla just smiled at the action, and patted Lando’s arm.

“I will deal with my son alone.” Leia wrapped a strong arm around Ben’s shoulders and forced him to turn away from the group, “Come on. Let’s go have a chat.”

“But Mom,” Ben whined as his mother marched him to the exit of the Meditation Gardens.

“No buts, Benjamin. Move it.”

No one said a thing until Leia and Ben had exited the gardens.

“Okay, you know Ben’s in trouble when Leia calls him Benjamin,” Han looked a little scared.

“That’s not even his name.”

Alyla blinked in confusion.

Lando waved it off, “Skywalkers are a strange family.”

Alyla sighed and shrugged, “Can’t disagree with that. I’m really sad that this is the reaction Ben had to being assigned my Padawan. Truth be told, I’d been hoping for him to be mine for years.”

“Give him a few days and you two will be good again,” Lando promised. He kissed Alyla on the forehead, “Why don’t you go celebrate with your brother?”

“Are you coming with me?”

“I’ll pass for now. Gavyn always seems like he’s half a second away from running me through with his lightsaber whenever we’re together in front of him.”

“Oh, Darling he would never run you through.”

“That’s a relief.”

“He’d get Zena to do it.”

Lando blinked, “… You are a devious one sometimes.”

Alyla grinned mischievously, “I wouldn’t with you if I wasn’t.”

“Well, if that isn’t the truth,” Lando chuckled and kissed her. “Now, get going. And tell your brother I said congratulations.”

Alyla pecked another kiss on his lips and then went to find her brother.
Lando had a very satisfied look on his face as he turned back to the remaining trio. He froze when he saw the six eyes staring at him.

“Oh, that was adorable and you know!” Lando exclaimed. He gestured to Han still holding back Felicity, “This? Not so much.”

Felicity shoved Han away from her, “Get off, Loud Mouth Solo.”

“Jeeze, Fliss!” Han smoothed down his shirt. “I was just trying to protect my son.”

“He was out of line!” she exclaimed.

“I agree, but that doesn’t mean you need to kill him. Seriously, is this family playing an elaborate game of attempted familicide bingo I don’t know about?”

“You could probably actually get Reine to start that up,” Lando said.

“Can it, Calrissian!” Felicity snapped. “Alright, I’ll admit it, I may have been in the wrong.”


Lando slapped his forehead.


Han groaned, “Oh, for the love of—”

“Completely overreacted?” Felicity exclaimed. “Luke, I shouldn’t have tried to attack him, but he taught our daughter to swear at me!”

“Yeah, Kid,” Han agreed, “he just taught your kid her second swear word.”


Han froze, “Oh, she hasn’t said it in front of you?”

“Said what?” Felicity’s voice was threatening.

“Nothing! Nothing at all!” Han lied unconvincingly. “Hey, if Rey ever uses the f word in front of you, I definitely didn’t teach her that. I… I’m going go make sure Leia doesn’t commit filicide.”

Han could not escape the conversation fast enough.

“Well, that’s what you get when you leave Rey alone with Han while he’s fixing the Falcon,” Lando watched Han in amusement.

“We’ll definitely have to talk to Rey about appropriate language tonight,” Luke mused. He eyed Felicity, “Then again with your vocabulary, I’m surprised she hasn’t picked up worse yet.”

She glared at him, “Would you like me to get you a shovel, or are you happy to continue digging this grave with your mouth?”

“Felicity, Ben is just a child.”

“Oh, in Itar’s sweet name! Are you serious? You’re on his side.”
“He’s suffered a disappointment. You can understand his reaction.”

“He called me a bitch!” Felicity exclaimed. “That would be appropriate if he needed a kidney transplant, I was the only match in the world, and I said no. But, no, what was this? This was me calmly and politely explaining why I made the logical decision to talk you out of it. Gods, Luke, nothing I do can ever please him, and I’m sick of all this fighting!”

“I’m sick of it too.”

“And you here you stand taking his side once more.”

“I’m just sick of having to take sides to begin with!”

Felicity just scoffed, “… And I’m sick of pretending that one day you’ll take mine.”

Luke sighed, calming down, “Felicity-”

“No, I get it,” Felicity said quietly. There was rage simmering below the surface, but it was overwhelmed by a sense of defeat in her voice. “Ben’s your nephew, and no matter what he does to me… you’ll always take his side.”

“Felicity-”

“I’m going to go congratulate Obik on getting a Padawan,” Felicity pushed past Luke and walked away.

He didn’t follow.

“Wow,” Lando gave a low whistle, reminding Luke of his presence. “That was impressive how much you screwed up. I think you even gave Han a run for his money.”

Luke sighed, “What am I supposed to do?”

“Definitely not what you just did.”

“I’m sick of all this fighting, all this side taking. Why can’t they just get along?”

“Not everyone gets along. I have nothing against Felicity, and she has nothing against me, but we don’t get along well.”


Lando shrugged, “Then there’s probably a lot more to that feud than even you know. But I can tell you that the way you treat both of them, pitting them against each other, flip flopping between sides… it’s only making it worse all the time.”

He paused.

“Actually, you remind me of your father in that way.”

“Lando-”

“You messed up, Luke, and you hurt Fliss in the process.”

“She put me on the spot and asked me to pick a side!”
“And you picked wrong,” Lando said bluntly.

“I shouldn’t have to pick at all!” Luke exclaimed. “She’s being unreasonable. Ben is my nephew and Felicity is my wife. I’m not supposed to choose sides!”

“Yes, you are,” Lando said. “And you’re constantly making the wrong one.”

“What are you even talking about?”


“He’s a child.”

“And needs to learn personal responsibility. Fliss is right, Kenobi probably made these exact excuses for Vader and next thing we know, he’s forcing me to freeze Han in carbonite.”

“Forcing you?”

“It was for the good of my people. Look, we’re getting off topic. What I’m saying is that you need to start siding with Felicity over Ben.”


“When he teaches your daughter to swear at her mother, it’s not just a petty feud,” Lando shot. “Throw me all the standard excuses. He’s a kid, he’s your nephew, he’s jealous. None of that matters. He’s not always going to be a kid, and he needs to learn to get over jealousy. Do I get jealous when Alyla acts flirtatiously with other men? Of course, I do. Have I learned that I need to get over it because it’s her way of taking control of her body image, self-worth, and sexuality after years of abuse? Yes, I have. And I also know that no person owes me anything. Not their time, not their affections, not their attentions… Some people may owe me their money, but that’s a whole other issue. The point is that Ben needs to realize he’s not entitled to lay any sort of claim over you, whether as his Master, Uncle, or anything else. He’s jealous, and needs to get over it.”

“But he is my nephew,” Luke calmly spoke. “I can’t just set aside that fact.”

“Yes, you can,” Lando shot. “Ben is your nephew, but Fliss is your wife. You may be on close terms with your family, but the fact remains that you did not choose to bring him into your life. That was out of your control… Felicity was not. You looked at all the romantic partners in your life and decided that this was the one you wanted to be involved in the rest of it. You made the choice to be with her, to love her, to protect her, to have her back no matter what… And you have to live up to that. You may love Ben, but the fact remains: you picked Felicity… but you did not pick Ben.”

“So, I should just stand by and let her belittle and threaten him?” Luke said coolly.

Lando groaned, “Luke, Fliss belittles and threatens people hourly! You knew what you were getting yourself into with her. And truth be told, she’s actually pretty harmless most of the time. …But don’t you dare ever tell her I said that. I don’t want to get my ass kicked because I misjudged this.”

“She’s not harmless, Lando.”

“Fliss threatens to punch Han in the throat on a regular basis, but has she ever actually done it?”

Luke cast down his eyes, “No.”

“And when she mocks someone, isn’t it always when they’re legitimately doing something stupid?”
“Yes, but with Ben she always gets so defensive-”

“Exactly! Defensive. It’s her guard going up and trying to protect herself from an attack. It’s why she’s always so aggressive, because she’s fighting back to defend herself. I don’t know why she does it, but there’s something in Fliss that triggers her fight or flight instincts on a regular basis.”

And then it clicked. The big question that Luke had always struggled to answer: what made Felicity so aggressive? Finally, it made sense to Luke… and with that knowledge he could see the possible root to the whole rivalry with Ben.

How could he have missed it this whole time?

“You’re right,” Luke admitted. “About all of it. I’ve been too lax on the issue, and it needs to come to an end.”

“Well, you’re starting on the right path,” Lando grinned, staring at something over Luke’s shoulder.

Luke glanced backward and saw Alyla speaking with Gavyn and Miri probably congratulating each other over their Padawan assignments. Alyla looked absolutely radiant as she smiled brightly at her brother and niece. There was a grin one Lando’s face as he watched her that Luke knew Han would absolutely make fun of Lando for if he saw it.

“She’s good for him,” Luke smiled at Lando. “And good for you.”

“Better than either of us deserve,” he laughed. “She’ll teach him to a better man just as well as she taught me.”

“As well as you? I’m hoping for a little better than that.”

“Temper your expectations. He’s the son of Han Solo.”

Luke laughed, “I suppose so… Ben will be in good hands with Alyla.”

“And Alyla will be in good hands with Ben,” Lando smiled charmingly as he caught Alyla’s eye across the lawn. “If there is one thing I am certain of… it’s that Ben Solo will never let anything happen to Alyla Kene.”

Felicity was at her vanity table putting away her jewelry when Luke entered the bedroom that night. Her eyes caught his reflection in the mirror. Luke smiled at her from the door. She instantly scowled and turned her head away.

Luke chuckled at the display. He came up behind her, wrapping his arms around her waist, and kissed her neck.

“Get off,” Felicity shoved him away.

Luke put up his hands in surrender, “Sorry.”

“Whatever,” Felicity crossed the room and hit the button to close the door. She then walked over to the closet and turned her back to him, fiddling with the zipper of her dress. Felicity struggled for a moment and then let out an exasperated yell. “Fine, you want to get handsy? Come help me with my zipper.”

He made sure his movements were slow and respectful as he came over and unzipped her dress. His eyes couldn’t help but roam as the dress hit the floor and she was all soft, pale skin. Luke resisted the
urge to touch her all over and have her undergarments join the dress on the floor. He did however
give into the urge to run his natural fingers down the spine on her scar.

Felicity shuddered at his touch but quickly stepped away and gathered her dress from the floor.

“I’m still mad at you,” Felicity shot as she set about hanging her dress in the closet. She grabbed the
closest nightgown hanging up and pulled it on without ceremony. She didn’t take off her bra or
change her underwear, sending a clear message to Luke that her dressing wasn’t to get ready for bed,
but rather to just cover herself from his hungry eyes.

“As you should be,” Luke unclipped his lightsaber belt and hung it up in the closet along with his
cloak. He did not change out of his other articles of clothing, leveling the playing field. They were
going to fight this fight without letting either party use their body or the promise of sex as a weapon.
“I made the wrong decision today, and I’m sorry about that. I should have stood by you when Ben
got out of line. I’m sorry, and I promise to be at your side in all future conflicts.”

“Sure,” Felicity rolled her eyes and entered the fresher where she began removing her makeup and
letting down her hair. “And now this is the part where you say you just don’t understand why we
can’t be friends, and how I aggravate him, and he’s just a child.”

“I’m not saying any of that. I’ve realized that I’m wrong. Ben is old enough to know better than to
treat you this way, and he certainly should not be swearing at you. Especially in front of Rey.”

“Oh really? What brought you to this revelation?”

“Well, I was talking to Lando-”

“Gods help me.”

“And he made me realize something,” Luke shook his head lightly at Felicity. He took a deep breath
and said, “He made me realize why you’re so… Felicity, I love you so I say this with utter respect
and devotion, why you’re so sarcastic and violent.”

The makeup removing cloth paused on Felicity’s cheek, “Oh, you have, have you? You figured it
out, the big question that you’ve never had an answer to. What Diego, Riz, Leia, and everyone else
couldn’t solve? What only my psychiatrist at the mental health facility could figure out. You have the
answer.”

“You were emotionally abused by your father as a child, so after you escaped his hold on you, you
became snarky and violent as a defense mechanism to prevent anyone from taking control of you like
he did. The reason Ben’s hatred of you irks you so much is that not only does this trigger memories
of your father’s abuse, but it reminds you that you lost Brendan, the one person who ever protected
you from Alaric, and that’s why you hold onto his death so tightly. Losing Brendan was losing your
defense mechanism. Meanwhile, I – who as your husband, you would hope most to step into that
role of protector that Brendan once held – have been siding with your pseudo-abuser, and hence you
have to double down on your defense.”

Felicity just stared at him.


“Damn, Skywalker, you’re good,” Felicity replied. “Last time I doubt a Jedi.”

“Well, I doubt that,” Luke chuckled. “So… I’m right?”
Felicity sighed, “I think so… At least the Ben part. The Alaric part, you’re right on the money.”

“Felicity-”

“I thought I was over it,” she pushed past Luke out of the fresher. “I thought I was over my father.”

“He’s the man who raised you,” Luke followed her into the bedroom. “Like it or not, you did have several good years with him.”

“But they weren’t good. He told me how to speak, who to consort with, what to do, where to go, what to eat, how to dress… He said I looked like a whore in front of the Emperor, Vader, Tarkin, Bail, Leia, Brendan, and every important Imperial in the Empire. All for wearing a dress with a neckline cut higher than this,” Felicity gestured to her average low-cut top. “I mean, I’m not even spilling out of this, but yes, call your daughter a schutta in front of Palpatine for less than that. By the Gods, I barely even have anything to spill out.”


“Can it, Skywalker. This isn’t the time to check me out.”

“Sorry.”


Luke joined her on the bed, “Same reason I love Vader even though he cut off my hand. Because however fleeting, we know there were points they loved us… And truthfully, we crave having those moments even more.”

“Perhaps that’s why we fell in love,” Felicity leaned against Luke. “To fill the voids our fathers left in our hearts, we found someone with a similar trauma and history that we knew our partner would understand the love, but also the boundaries, we needed to cope with that scar in our hearts.”

“You know, this conversation turned a lot more analytical than I was expecting.”

“It’s us, Luke. All our conversations end up spinning out of control with nonsensical bantering and analytical thoughts about religion and our daddy issues.”

Luke smiled and let a silence fill the room. He could sense Felicity working out the conflicting feelings in her mind.

“Ben is not Alaric, Felicity,” Luke said after several minutes.

“You’re right, he’s not,” Felicity said. “My father was a weak man, but Ben is anything but. Oh, my father tried to pretend he was high and mighty, but at the end of the day he wasn’t dangerous on a personal level. He just followed orders, even when they were wrong. But Ben… Ben isn’t weak. He grows stronger everyday, not just with the Force, but physically. I’m scared, Luke.”

Luke’s heart dropped. Felicity almost never admitted to fear, so when she did, it meant business.

“I’m scared of Ben,” Felicity repeated with great difficulty. “He gets more and more aggressive towards me everyday, and I’m worried that someday it will escalate to violence. And I’m going to make it clear to you here and now, Luke… If Ben ever attacks me… If he ever throws a punch, a kick, or a Force Choke at me, I will defend myself. I will hurt him, and I will defeat him. And if he ever hurts Rey… I will do what must be done. If I have to kill him, I will.”
“He loves Rey,” Luke objected. “He would rather die than hurt her.”

Felicity looked at her husband, “And that’s the only reason I don’t sleep with one eye open. But you and I both know that could change in an instant. Anakin Skywalker loved Padmé Amidala, and he ended up strangled his pregnant wife. Obi-Wan Kenobi loved Anakin Skywalker, and he cut off all of Anakin’s limbs and left him to burn. Love is powerful, Luke… but so is hatred, so is the Dark Side. You’ve tasted it, you know how intoxicating it can be, and with Snoke in Ben’s head there is a real possibility that this could all go south really fast. I don’t want my life to end at the hands of Ben Solo, Luke.”

“It won’t.”

“I want you to promise me that. I can fight and try my hardest to protect myself, but the Force is a greater power than I. I’m not asking you to be a knight in shining armor… but I want you to promise me that you will protect me if I encounter a situation I cannot overcome. Promise me, Luke… Promise you won’t leave me behind.”

“I swear to you, Felicity,” Luke bowed his forehead against her own, “I will never leave you behind.”

But that was a promise he would one day break.

8 Years, 9 Months, 14 Days


Felicity looked up from her HoloReader, “BB-8 would love a cardboard box. Rey still devastated?”

“Only way I could get her to sleep was promising she could comm them in the morning. She’s completely enamored with Poe Dameron and his droid.”

“And she has both wrapped around her little finger.”

“Meanwhile Artoo is sulking about no longer being her favorite droid.”

“Give him a week, and he’ll be again. R2-D2 is overly dramatic.”

“Yeah, he threatened to go into Low Power Mode if she continues to call BB-8 her favorite.” Luke crossed over to the liquor cabinet in the corner of the room and punched in the code, “Might I interest you in a drink, Miss Rhiaon?”

“A drink?” Felicity smirked and set her HoloReader on the coffee table. “What’s the occasion, Master Skywalker?”

“A quiet house,” Luke poured wine into a pair of glasses and resealed the cabinet. He set the glasses on the coffee table and joined Felicity on the couch, slinging an arm around her. “Poe is home, Ben moved in with Alyla a month ago, and Rey’s going to start her first Youngling lessons next week with Reine. Sure, it’s just meditation… which I’m hoping will make bedtime easier.”

“I’m much looking forward into tricking her into going to sleep by getting her to meditate.”

“But our kids are growing up,” Luke grinned and grabbed one of the glasses. “So, I say we toast to a job well done, and see where the evening leads after that.”
“Master Skywalker,” Felicity playfully chided. “A girl might think you’re trying to lower her inhibitions. What do you have to say for yourself?”

Luke gave a dark chuckle, “I’d say… drink up.”

Felicity laughed with him as she grabbed her glass. She picked it up and raised it to toast with Luke.

“To a quiet house,” Felicity proposed.


“And to only almost killing a kid once,” Felicity grinned. She caught Luke’s horrified look, “Oh, come on. It’s been three years!”

“Fine. To only almost killing them once.”

They clinked their glasses together and took a long drink.

“Oh, breaking out the good stuff,” Felicity set her glass down. “We must really be celebrating.”

“Well, I also wanted to talk to you about something,” Luke set his glass down beside hers.

“Luke, I’m going to need a lot more wine if you want me to do that tonight.”

“No!” He paused to think for a moment, “… Well, okay, yes I want to do that tonight, but that’s not what I was talking about.”

“Then what did you want to talk about?”

Luke gently rested a hand on Felicity’s thigh, “I’ve been thinking a lot lately, ever since Ben moved out that once Poe left, Rey would get really lonely.”

Felicity shrugged, “She has Artoo.”

“It’s not the same. I want her to have someone to play with and spend time with and love.”

“Okay… So you want to hire a nanny, or-”

“Not a nanny. This wouldn’t be just for Rey, but for all of us.” Luke took a deep breath, “I want to make another addition to the family.”

Felicity frowned, “You want to get a pet?”

“No!” Luke groaned, rubbing his temples. “Felicity… I want to have another baby.”

She froze, “A what?”

“We’ve talked about this. We want two children, and I think it’s time to have our second. Everything I’ve read says that a three year age difference is best, and I think with Ben gone now’s the time. We do have an empty room upstairs now.”

“Luke, are you certain that you want a baby, or does your poverty ridden childhood make it hard for you to bear having an empty room in your house?”

“Felicity.”

“I’m kidding,” Felicity gently swatted his arm. She grinned at him, but when she looked down, her

“What is it?” Luke stroked a strand of hair out of her face.

She looked up at him, “Luke, I do want to have another baby. I truly do, but... But there’s something I should have talked to you about. I think I didn’t because no matter what you say, I’m standing by my decision, so please try not to talk me out of it.”


Felicity took another deep breath, “I’ve decided I’m not going to have another baby.”


“I’m open to adoption or surrogacy if you really want it to be from our genetics, but... I’m not getting pregnant again, and there’s nothing you can say to change my mind.”

“No, of course. I’ll support you 100% in this. Sorry, I’m just caught a little off guard. You’ve never talked about this before. Might I ask why?”

“A number of factors. I’m almost forty years old. Pregnancy at thirty-six was complicated enough, but forty and above can legitimately have dangers. Higher risk of complications, higher risk of multiple babies, it’s a risk I’m not happy to take. Plus, pregnancy wasn’t fun. The morning sickness, the back aches, and not to mention that oh so fun thirty-two-hour labour. But of course, there’s the most obvious reason... I don’t want to risk getting Postpartum Depression again.”


She took a deep breath as tears shone in the corners of her eyes, “Luke, that period in my life was horrible. The darkness and emptiness. I never want to go through it again. I know that there’s no guarantees and that you can get it when you adopt, but I’m not risking it from pregnancy. Ok? I’m not putting myself through that again. That moment when I almost killed our daughter... That was the most terrifying moment of my life. And that includes lying on the floor of the Death Star, my back ripped open and bloodied, your father standing over me with a lightsaber as he swung down to deliver a death blow.”


“Are you disappointed?” Felicity had uncertainty in her eyes.

He chuckled, “Only that I don’t get an excuse to make love to you more frequently.”

“Luke Skywalker, have you not realized it by now? I’m pretty much good to go any time, any place.”

“Yes, and that has gotten me a lot of trouble in the past, Miss Rhiaon.”

Felicity chuckled, wrapping her arms around his neck, “How much trouble?”

Luke laughed and pulled her into a heated kiss. They played for a few minutes, hands roaming and lips teasing their tastes. But when Felicity started to lift the hem of his shirt, Luke pulled away.

“And you call me a tease,” Felicity groaned, slumping back against the couch. “Alright, hit me.”

“Which do you want? Adoption or surrogacy?”

Felicity absent-mindedly rubbed her wrist tattoo, “As much as I love Rey being our genetic offspring, I think I want to adopt our second. We both know what it was like to be… sort of orphans. I think giving a misfortunate child a home would be great.”

“That’s exactly what I was thinking,” Luke smiled warmly. “But if we are going to adopt… then I think we should wait a few years before bringing another child into the house. Wait until Rey’s maybe five or six, that way she can understand what’s going on better.”

“I completely agree,” Felicity nodded. “Besides, Brendan was five years older than me. I think I like that age difference.”

“Then we have a plan.”

“In two or three years, we’ll talk to Rey and start the process of adoption… and tonight I’m going to make love to you so passionately, it’ll make up for not having trying to make a baby sex.”

Luke grinned, “Should we take this into the bedroom then?”

“Oh Master Skywalker,” Felicity chuckled. She straddled his lap and wrapped her arms around his neck, “Rey’s asleep upstairs, Artoo’s powered down for the night, there’s no more boys in the house… I think this couch will be just fine.”

He laughed and laid back on the couch, pulling Felicity down with him.

9 Years, 6 Months, 4 Days

Luke leaned against the doorframe, arms folded and a smile gracing his lips. Dressed in casual pyjamas, he silently watched his beautiful wife and daughter, not wanting to interrupt the peaceful scene.

Felicity was lying in the bed with Rey, her voice soothing the little girl to sleep as she absentmindedly stroked Rey’s hair. The kyber crystal bracelet was wrapped around Rey’s wrist from where it had almost never moved ever since it became safe for her to wear it.

Luke sensed the footsteps thudding up the stairs before he heard them.

“Good night, Ben,” Luke didn’t even turn around to look at his nephew.

Ben had a scowl on his face as he reached the landing. He had been so sullen the past few weeks when Alyla had announced she was moving to Cloud City to live with Lando. Alyla still was on Rornian most of the time, but not long enough to be able to supervise a fifteen-year-old on a regular basis. As a result, Ben had moved back in with his uncle.

“Night, Uncle Luke,” Ben headed for the door of his bedroom.

“Ben?”

He stopped at the door.

Ben sighed dramatically and then entered the room.

“Ben!” Rey sat up, her happiness and energy levels going up at the sight of her beloved cousin.

“Sweet dreams, Nightlight,” Ben gave her a hug that Rey was all too happy to return.

Felicity groaned as Ben undid all the work she had done to get Rey settled for sleep. But if that was his intent – and considering their relationship, it was very likely – Ben didn’t say anything. He just broke off the hug and started for the door.

“Ben,” Luke gently grasped his arm as he tried to pass. He shot Ben a look, “Felicity?”

“Ugh! Fine!” Ben rolled his eyes. “Goodnight, Rhiaon. Feel free to die in your sleep anytime.”

“Bed, now!” Luke used his grasp on Ben’s arm to move him out of the room. “And you’re going to lose some privileges for that comment. You are not allowed to say things like that to my wife. We’re going to have a chat in the morning about how you speak to Felicity.”

Ben grumbled some angry words in Huttese, stalking down the hallway, and dramatically slamming his hand against the button to close his bedroom door.

“I’m sorry, Felicity,” Luke apologized, turning back to his wife.

Felicity carelessly waved her hand, “It’s nothing I’m not used to.”

“Mommy, why doesn’t Ben like you?” Rey innocently asked.

Luke and Felicity shared a panicked look. That answer had a few too many things in it they weren’t ready to share with Rey… Heck, there were even a few things they hadn’t shared with Han.

“You know what, Sweetheart?” Felicity quickly said. “That’s a story for another night. Don’t you want to hear the end of the one I was already telling?”

“Yes, please!” Rey exclaimed. “Were you and Master Obik scared during the Battle of Yavin?”

“So scared. I must have been squeezing Obik’s hand so hard during that broadcast, but he never said a word,” Felicity’s voice was low as she told Rey’s favorite story: the Battle of Yavin, this time from her own perspective when she listened to the broadcast of the battle with the rest of the Rebels on the Joorvan base.

Felicity’s mind was on nothing but the sleepy little girl in her arms. It was impossible to conceive how much love Felicity held for her daughter. Those dark days of postpartum depression were long past, and the incident they did not speak of was a mere memory.

“Mommy?” Rey asked. “Did they really play the transmissions on all Rebel bases?”

“They did,” Felicity nodded. “We knew whether we won or lost, the Battle of Yavin would be something that went down in history.”

“Was flying in the battle scary, Daddy?” Rey looked to her father.


“What was that?”

Luke smiled and looked at Felicity, “Hope. The hope that was planted by your mother and her team.
Hope of victory, of peace, of freedom. Of the future…”

Felicity’s eyes met Luke’s. They stared lovingly at each other, a flood of love and Light engulfing the Force in the room.

“Of this,” Luke whispered. “I knew, I was fighting for this.”

A half hour later, when Rey was asleep and the lights were out, Luke and Felicity quietly slipped out of the bedroom and shut the door behind them.

Luke smiled at Felicity in the darkness of the hallway as she turned from the door to face him. Beaming brightly, Felicity’s arms automatically wrapped around Luke’s neck, and she pressed her lips to his.

“Thank you,” Felicity whispered when the kiss came to an end. She followed Luke’s lead, bowing her head to rest her forehead against him. “Thank you for fighting for this.”

“No,” Luke placed his natural hand upon her cheek and stroked her lips with his thumb. “Thank you for fighting for this.”

Felicity smiled, “Anytime.”

9 Years, 11 Months, 21 Days


The Holo of Felicity shrugged, “I prefer the term borrowed against his will.”

“You kidnapped Ben,” Alyla repeated, seeming to hold back a smile.

“Maybe a little bit.”

Luke groaned as Lando chuckled at his side.

Lando and Alyla had invited Luke over to Alyla’s Rornian home for breakfast that morning to go over some paperwork. The couple was in the middle of the approval phase of the adoption process, and had asked Luke to be one of their three references to vouch they had a stable home and would be good parents – the other two references were Han and Leia, and Gavyn and Zena. While Luke knew that Alyla’s brother would ensure she got a glowing reference, he could only imagine what Han and Leia would say about Lando.

Luke had actually been quite excited but the prospect. As an orphan, he always loved to see unfortunate children find a home. He had even been a reference once before when he wrote a letter on behalf of Wedge and his husband.

Lando and Alyla had Luke over for dinner the previous night to discuss Luke’s letter and the following interview process, and Felicity suggested Luke just stay the night so he could continue the work with them in the morning. At the time, Luke thought it was Felicity being thoughtful, but the following morning when Luke received a comm from Reine, he realized her deviousness.

Late last night, Reine and Obik received a comm from Felicity. According to Reine, Felicity claimed that Luke had taken Ben to an overnight bonding time camping in the woods. She then had received an emergency comm from Nils Arlos saying there was something going on with an old Emissary case of hers that could only be handled by her, and he needed her to come to Coruscant right away to
sort things out. She asked if she could drop off Rey at their home for the night to watch her until Luke could pick her up in the morning.

Reine and Obik agreed without a second thought, and Felicity dropped Rey off at about midnight promising Luke would come for her in the morning. When eleven o’clock rolled around and they still hadn’t heard anything from Luke, Reine commed him and the deception was soon discovered. Felicity was gone, Ben was gone, and Gavyn Kene’s ship was gone – Felicity having fed Gavyn some story about a family emergency and she needed to borrow it to go with Ben, Luke, and Rey to Hosnian Prime to see Leia.

One call to Gavyn’s ship later and it was clear what had happened: Felicity had gotten Luke out of the house, dropped off Rey with Reine and Obik, stole Gavyn’s ship, then got Ben out of bed spouting the same story about a family emergency, and essentially kidnapped Ben when he realized it was a trick.

“I don’t know why everyone is so mad at me,” Felicity’s Holo said. “It should be a life lesson. I lied to at least four Jedi and no one caught me out.”

“She has a point there,” Lando agreed.

“Uncle Luke, please come save me,” the Holo of Ben pleaded in the co-pilot seat of Gavyn Kene’s ship – which Felicity had also ‘borrowed against his will.’

“Felicity, you have to turn the ship around immediately,” Luke calmly ordered.


“You piloting a ship is enough to worry about.”

“Actually, she’s making me do that too,” Ben admitted.

“Well, that’s a relief,” Lando smirked as he took a drink of his hot chocolate – he having been the culprit who introduced Luke to the drink and began Luke Skywalker’s addiction to the stuff.

“What is your plan, Felicity?” Alyla asked.

“Yes, where are you going?” Luke nodded.

“Endor,” Felicity answered.


“Why?” Ben questioned.

The Holo of Felicity turned to Ben, “You want to be all obsessed about Grandpa Vader? Fine. Then it’s about time you took a field trip. We’re going to the grave of Darth Vader, and we’re having ourselves a little chat.”

Lando and Alyla exchanged a look.

“I thought Vader died on the Death Star,” Lando frowned.

“I’ll- Uh… Explain later.” Luke turned back to the Holo, “Felicity are you sure about this?”

“Relax, I know where it is. Leia showed me it the time we got trapped on Endor. And you needn’t worry about Ewoks. Wicket’s chief now; he wouldn’t dare eat Leia’s kid… I might run into some
issues, but I can always get Threepio on the Holo to translate.”

“Well, I’m sure Ben wouldn’t let you get eaten by Ewoks. Right Ben?” Alyla looked at Ben.

Ben was silent.

“…Right, Ben?” Alyla repeated with a little more of an edge to her voice.

“I’m thinking!” he exclaimed.

Luke sighed, “Felicity-”

“We agreed we had to do something about this,” Felicity reminded. “Well, I’m doing something. Please, Luke… Let me do this.”

Luke looked at Ben, “Do you want to go to Endor?”

Ben looked down shyly, “I would like to see Grandfather’s grave.”

Luke turned to Alyla.

She nodded.

“All right,” Luke conceded. “But I want you home in three days, and I’m not doing the laundry for the next three months.”

“Deal,” Felicity grinned. “Oh, cheer up, Skywalker. What bad could possibly come from this?”

10 Years, 2 Months, 17 Days

It was a lazy Saturday afternoon when their lives changed. Ben was in the living room floating some fruit for the entertainment of Rey as she tried to imitate the ability.

“Almost there,” Ben encouraged as she focused on the pear. “Almost. Almost. Little more. There! You got it, Nightlight!”

Rey giggled as the pear floated in front of her, “Daddy! Daddy! Look what I’m doing!”

Luke looked up from the couch where he was reading. He immediately beamed at the sight of his daughter first ever fruit – or anything – floating.

“Good job, Sweetheart,” Luke said proudly. “Wow, I couldn’t even do that when I was nineteen.”

“You were at a disadvantage, Uncle Luke,” Ben said. He leaned in conspiratorially to Rey, “Go along with me. Your dad can’t know we’re better than him.”

Rey nodded, “It’s okay Daddy. Everyone has their own… learning rates.”

“Okay, you two aren’t spending anymore time alone with Han.”

“But he’s my Dad,” Ben frowned.

“I don’t care.”

“Mommy! Mommy!” Rey jumped up when Felicity entered the room, a laundry basket propped on her hip. She guided the fruit to turn in her mother’s direction, “Look what I can do!”
“Good job, Sweetheart,” Felicity grinned and bent down to kiss Rey’s forehead. “Did Daddy finally teach you that?”

“No, Ben did! He’s a extra good teacher!” Rey declared. “Even better than Daddy.”


“Yeah, Uncle Luke’s only got one to spare,” Ben teased.

“I’m about to start a load of laundry,” Felicity announced. “Everyone got their laundry down the chute?”

Luke and Rey nodded, but Ben shook his head.

“Well, are you going to put it down the chute?” Felicity tried to keep it friendly.

“If it inconveniences you… nope.”

“Thank you, Ben for volunteering to fold all the laundry for the next month,” Luke said dryly. “Your mother’s generosity surely rubbed off on you.”

“Fine,” Ben grumbled, standing up, “I’ll go get it.”

“Nope, I like this arrangement better,” Felicity pushed on his shoulder, forcing him back down. “I’ll get it from your hamper.”

“Fine, but don’t touch anything in my room.”

“Why would I ever want to touch anything in your room?”

Ben sulked as Felicity went to fetch his laundry. Meanwhile Luke get down on his knees with Rey to see if he could get her to float anything bigger.

“By the Gods!” Felicity exclaimed when she returned to the living room with Ben’s laundry filling her basket. “Ben, what is with the stench in your room? It smells like something died!”

Panic filled Ben’s eyes, “You didn’t touch anything?”

“No!” Felicity snapped. “Why would I want to touch something that smells like death? But I’m warning you: you’ve got until this load of laundry is done to get rid of that smell, or I’m going in there and finding it myself.”

“Alright, I’ll do it,” Ben groaned. “I just want to help Rey with this whole floating book thing. Give me ten minutes?”

“Fine,” Felicity stormed out.

Luke narrowed his eyes, “Ben, isn’t Alyla coming to pick up you and Rey in five minutes?”

“Yep,” Ben grinned.

“Six months of folding laundry, and three months of mowing the lawn.”

“Worth it.”
“He’s ridiculous, Luke,” Felicity declared two hours later as she dumped the freshly washed laundry on the coffee table. “If he thinks I’m not following through on my threat-”

“Don’t take this specific situation so personally,” Luke shook his head. “This is him just being a teenager. Besides, you know he’s being so difficult because of the whole Alyla adoption situation. I still can’t believe that next week those two are actually going to start meeting with children to find one that suits them. This time next month, Lando Calrissian could be a father.”

“That is a terrifying thought,” Felicity said. “But Ben… I swear, Luke, at this rate either I’m going to kill him, or he’s going to kill me.”

“I would not be surprised at either of those options.” Luke caught her hand as she reached for a shirt, “I’ll fold the laundry. You go upstairs and prove to Ben you mean business. That stench is getting pretty bad.”

“I just don’t know what he could possibly have in there that smells so bad.”

“Well, scream for me if it moves and attacks you.”

“And to think, people call me the sassy one,” Felicity kissed his cheek.

Luke chuckled and set about folding the laundry. It was just a simple afternoon with his family’s usual antics. There was absolutely nothing to indicate that their lives were about to change forever. Until Luke heard Felicity’s bloodcurdling scream.


He raced up the stairs, lightsaber at the ready, rushing to defend his wife. He found Felicity on the ground, terror in her eyes, her face pale and panicked.

“Felicity!” Luke exclaimed, kneeling down next to her. “What’s going on?”

“I want it out! I want it out of my house!” Felicity screamed hysterically, pointing across the room. “I want it out NOW!”

Luke looked up at the object she was pointing to, and his heart dropped.

Lying on the floor of Ben Solo’s bedroom… was the charred mask of Darth Vader.

10 Years, 2 Months, 18 Days

“I don’t like this,” Gavyn Kene declared as he paced the length of Reine and Obik’s living room.

It was where they had gathered after their failed confrontation of Ben. The mood was miserable among Sensitives and Non-Sensitives alike. After Luke, Felicity, Leia, and Han had failed to talk sense into Ben, he had been unceremoniously banished to Obik and Reine’s guest room for the night. In the morning they would try again, but Luke wasn’t sure how successful they would be.

“Yeah, my kid running around with my dead father-in-law’s helmet isn’t exact high on the list of life events I ever want to happen,” Han said as he lounged on the couch next to Felicity and Zena Halcorr. He tried his best to sound grumpy and snarky, but there was no hiding the inner turmoil from Luke. Han was struggling not only to grasp an understanding of what was going on with his son… but how was he even supposed to deal with it.
“You have to admit, seeing the melted, decapitated head of Darth Vader is mildly satisfying,” Felicity grinned, long over her terror of the mask. She caught Luke’s dirty look and shrugged, “Sorry.”

“Ok, for the record,” Luke declared, “that is not my father’s head. It is only his helmet. His head burned to ash along with the rest of his body when I lit his funeral pyre. And he wasn’t decapitated, he died after getting electrocuted saving my life.”

“Yeah, Luke, we get it,” Obik said dryly. “He saved your life. Doesn’t mean he wasn’t an ass to the rest of us.”

“Am I the only one here who genuinely doesn’t have any harsh feelings towards Vader?” Zena asked.

A series of positive responses chorused through the living room.

“Just thought I’d ask,” Zena shrugged it off, indifferent to the response.

“How do you not hate Vader?” Han sounded genuinely curious.

“He did some wonderful things for anti-slavery regulation.”

“See,” Luke said, “he wasn’t a complete monster.”

Felicity glared at him, “Luke, it’s those freaking lectures that put us in this position in the first place. *Stop praising Vader!* Ben takes them _way_ to heart!”

“Would you all shut it about Vader?” Gavyn exclaimed. “I’m freaked out about the fact my daughter _had a vision about me dying_!”

“Relax,” Zena fixed Gavyn with a look. “You know how excitable Miri gets during meditation.”

“Yeah, I swear that kid sees death every other day,” Obik added. “Last week she foresaw me drown, and I’m fine.”

“Obik, you _did_ almost drown,” Gavyn pointed out.

“Yeah, but I didn’t die.”

“Can we please change the subject?” Felicity asked.

“Gladly,” Leia sighed. “I just don’t understand what would possess Ben to steal Vader’s helmet. What does he even do with it?”

“I genuinely don’t want to know,” Felicity shuddered. “And to think, it’s been in my house for _months_. Thank the Gods, Rey never found it. Luke, are you _sure_ she’ll be safe tonight with Miri?”

“Ben isn’t going to do anything to her,” Luke tried to keep the annoyance from his voice. “For goodness’ sake, he’s locked in the bedroom of _this_ house.”

“Yeah, did we really have to do that?” Han asked. “I’m pretty sure that breaks a few fire codes.”

“It’s for his own good,” Leia said. “We can’t be sure of his actions until we talk some sense into him. He is a member of _this_ family after all. We have the tendency to wander off and do some stupid things. That’s how Luke lost a hand… a father.”
Luke raised an eyebrow, “You weren’t exactly stopping me from leaving that night on Endor.”

“Luke, you underestimate how close I was to yelling for Han, Chewie, and a few good yards of rope.”

Han smirked, “And now I’m picturing the Battle of Endor with Luke tied to a tree in the background… It’s a good image.”

“It is,” Felicity grinned.

Luke narrowed his eyes at the duo and opened his mouth to speak when his mind suddenly filled with an image.

Ben stood in the Meditation Gardens, lightsaber in his hand and desperation on his face. A crate lay on the ground a few feet away and inside was the helmet of Darth Vader. Alyla and Reine stood between Ben and the helmet, their lightsabers in hand, ready for a fight.

“Step aside,” Ben ordered, his voice shaking as hard as his grip on the lightsaber. It was unlit but his stance was threatening.

“Ben, please don’t do this,” Alyla’s voice was peaceful and tender. It was the tone that could always calm and contain Ben, but this night it didn’t seem to work.

“You don’t understand.”

“Then help me understand,” Alyla tried to coax. She took a step forward and Ben took one back. Alyla sighed and tried again, “You don’t have to do this.”

“Yes, I do,” Ben whispered.

“No, you don’t. You’re stronger than this. Stronger than him. Don’t listen to Snoke. Don’t let him in!”

“He’s already in.” Tears shone in Ben’s eyes, “Alyla, please don’t make me do this. I don’t want you to get hurt.”

“No one is getting hurt. I promise. Please, Ben, just listen to me!” Alyla begged.

Reine’s countenance was not so friendly, her eyes dark and her tone hard, “Ben, if you attack, we will be forced to defend ourselves.”

A panicked look flooded Alyla’s face, “Reine, no!”

But Reine’s words had spurred Ben on. His eyes flashed yellow, and he gripped his saber with both hands.

“Then so be it,” Ben growled.

And a brilliant cerulean blade ignited.

“Luke!” Felicity’s panicked voice drew him back from the vision. She was gripping the sides of his arms, looking up at him in fear.

How long had she been trying to get his attention? Long enough for everyone in the room to be
staring at him uneasily.

“Did any of you see that?” Luke croaked, his voice oddly dry.

The Jedi shook their heads.

“What did you see, Luke?” Terror was also in the eyes of Gavyn Kene.

Luke blinked, reaching into the Force to try to catch back the vision, “Ben. Where is Ben?”

“It’s okay,” Leia said. “He’s upstairs in the guest room.”


“I’ll go check,” Han lifted off the couch and tried his best to look casual as he climbed the stairs, barking his son’s name. There was no fooling the room into believing he wasn’t booking it up the staircase in panic.


And then the Jedi saw it.

“BEN! I don’t want to do this!” Alyla screamed, her violet blade interlocked with the saber that once belonged to Obi-Wan Kenobi. The weapon she had taught him to fight with, interlocked with the weapon she had entrusted him with.

There was pain in Ben’s eyes, and perhaps even guilt. He loved Alyla as dearly as his own mother, and it showed in his actions. Ben used the Force to throw Alyla back from him, away from the line of fire as he swung powerfully at Reine.

Reine’s face was hard, but not in anger as she dueled back Ben Solo, the same boy she used to playfully spar with as a child. But as she fought him it a clear duel to the death, Reine did not hold back. As a Jedi, it was her responsibility to subdue the Dark Side, regardless of who was using it.

Ben yelled as Reine’s saber bit across his wrist, causing him to drop it. He glared at her, gripping his bloody wrist. The message was clear: Reine was not only capable, but willing to cut off his hand if she was pushed to it.

“We really got to stop using the term disarm so literally,” Obik said dryly as the Jedi looked to each other in horror.

Leia and Felicity looked about the room in confusion. Neither of them were able to see visions of the Force, but Leia could sense when her family was in danger, and Felicity had lived among the Jedi long enough to know when someone was having a vision.

“What’s going on?” Leia demanded. “Luke, is it Ben? Has something happened to his…arm?”

“Yeah, seriously,” Felicity said, “three generations of Skywalker men losing arms just sounds tacky.”

“Fliss!”

“What? It does!”

“My son could have lost his arm and you’re joking about it?”
“I don’t do well under this type of conversation! I thought you would have caught on to that after I made a joke about killing Rey three days after I literally almost killed her!”

“Everyone calm down,” Luke ordered. “Ben hasn’t lost a hand. Reine just caught him on the wrist… or will catch him. The visions aren’t probably current. Last time we checked, Ben was up in the room.”

“BEN!” Han bellowed from the floor above. There was a loud thudding of running footsteps and they heard Han yell, “He’s gone! Ben’s gone!”

“What?” Leia exclaimed, as everyone shot into action.

Han thundered down the stairs, panic on his face, “The window is open and Ben is gone.”

“The visions are current,” Zena shot to her feet, joining Gavyn, who was already prepping his saber belt.

“They can’t be,” Obik insisted. “His saber is locked in a cabinet in the upstairs office.”

“Your cabinet is open, and the saber is gone.” Han spat a few curses in an alien language and said to himself, ‘Damn it! Why did I teach him to pick locks?’”

“Shocking how teaching our son to do criminal activity had negative repercussions,” Leia shot. She noticed Gavyn in the corner of her eye, “What are you doing?”

Gavyn secured his saber to his belt, “Arming myself.”

“No, he’s not going to hurt anyone!”

“You didn’t see the vision!” Gavyn snapped.


“Don’t you Gavyn me,” Gavyn imitated Luke’s tone of voice. “My sister is in a duel to the death right now. I don’t care who this kid is or how young he is. If he tries to hurt my sister, I will defend her.”

Gavyn’s tone spoke of more than the immediate situation. He had spent the entirety of his youth protecting Alyla from the dregs of society. Sometimes he had won, but more times he had failed. It was clear that Gavyn refused to fail this time.

Little did he know what was about to come.

“No, please,” Leia begged. “You can’t hurt him.”

“Hurt who?” Han arrived back in the living room.

“They want to go after Ben.”

“Like hell you will!” Han exclaimed. “If you think you’re going to lay a hand on my son-”

“So, I just let him hurt my sister?” Gavyn snapped.

“He would never hurt Alyla!”

“Boys! Am I going to have to get Lando on the comm to mediate you two?” Felicity yelled.
“I’d at least think you would be on my side with how much you threaten him,” Gavyn countered.

Felicity rolled her eyes, “My desire to smack Ben upside the head is opportunistic. I don’t get the whiteboard out and design schemes in my garage.”


The group fell silent.

“We can’t go in with aggression and anger,” Luke spoke slowly. “Now everyone, let’s take a deep breath and calmly proceed to the Meditation Gardens.”

“He’s right,” Obik agreed. “We need to stay calm. If he go in with Dark Side in our hearts, it’s only going to provoke-”

A bone chilling scream filled the Force as Ben’s blade slashed down Reine’s face, and she collapsed to her knees.

Obik’s eyes went wide.

“REINE!” he screamed and bolted for the door.

Gavyn followed, hot on his heels pushing Luke aside to get to the door. The men were out the door, Zena tagging behind before Luke even realized what was going on.

“Damn it, Kene!” Han roared, running after the trio.

“What’s going on?” Leia asked.

Luke sighed, “Ben may have just injured Reine, and he’s fighting Alyla. Gavyn and Obik are going to go defend the women, I think.”

“And Loud Mouth Solo is going to defend Ben,” Felicity sighed.

“Oh God,” Leia groaned. “Han’s either going to kill someone or get himself killed.”

“Let’s go after the Loud Mouth before he does anything else stupid,” Felicity grabbed Leia’s hand. “Coming Skywalker?”


A few seconds later the groggy, sleep-laded voice of Kalonia replied, “Yes, Master Skywalker?”

“Join us in the Meditation Gardens immediately. I think there’s been an accident.” Luke then punched off his comm and looked up at Leia and Felicity, “Let’s do this.”

“Gavyn! Gavyn, slow down!” Luke yelled as the group raced through the village to the Meditation Gardens.

It didn’t take Luke long to catch up to Gavyn. Besides Zena, Luke was the fastest runner of the lot, and in no time, Luke was at his side, grabbing Gavyn’s shoulder.

“Get off me, Skywalker!” Gavyn shoved Luke away, not slowing his pace. “Alyla’s in danger!”
“Alyla is not in danger!” Luke exclaimed. “How many times do I have to tell you, Ben would never-”

Something Dark slammed through the Force, and Gavyn fell to his knees. Luke was standing close enough to Gavyn to feel the ice-cold emptiness that ran through Gavyn’s violet Force Signature. Looking around, he could see the wound in the Force had been so violent that not only had Leia felt it, but even Han and Felicity froze for a moment. Luke didn’t understand what could possibly have affected all of them so suddenly and so dramatically.

And then he saw the vision.

---

*Ben’s lightsaber shoved through Alyla’s abdomen, and a look of absolute shock on her face.*

"Why?" she whispered.

*Ben had no answer.*

---

“ALYLA!” Gavyn screamed as the vision faded away.

Luke could barely stand. No, this couldn’t true. Ben couldn’t have…

He felt Gavyn’s frantic movements in the Force. The way his violet signature flurried around Alyla’s diminishing magenta one. The violet reached out for the magenta, trying to grasp and hold her, to keep her tethered to the world of the living as bit by bit it faded away.

And then the magenta was gone.

Instantly, everyone’s wrist comms started to beep. A flurry of confused Jedi had been woken in the middle of the night by the sudden loss of Alyla Kene.

“No,” Gavyn panted in shock, on his hands and knees. He shook violently, and his chest convulsed like he was holding back the urge to vomit. “No, Ally. Alyla!”


He opened his mouth to speak, but no words came out.

“Luke!” Another voice called, and suddenly Doctor Kalonia – still in her pyjamas – was at their side. “Master Skywalker, what’s going on?”

“Alyla…” Luke swallowed. His throat was dry, “Alyla’s… I think she’s dead.”

He didn’t need to be a Jedi to feel the fear that coursed through the group.

“No,” Leia shook her head. Her voice shook as tears threatened to fill her eyes. She was leaning against Han whose white was white and still. “No, it’s not true. It’s impossible.”

Then a flurry of movement behind Luke. Gavyn Kene shot to his feet and he and Obik – fearing for Reine’s life – booked it towards the Meditation Gardens. There were no words exchanged by the group, they simply turned and raced after the group.

Luke would never forget the moment Gavyn Kene entered the Meditation Gardens that night.
“ALYLA! ALYLA!” Gavyn screamed, frantically looking around the Gardens for his sister. “ALLY, WHERE ARE YOU?”

“REINE?” Obik called behind Gavyn. Both he and Gavyn had their sabers lit, ready to fight Ben should they be forced to. “REINE, BABY I’M HERE!”

“ALLY!” Gavyn screamed again as the rest of the group arrived.

“Shh,” Zena held up a hand, her cat ears twitching. “Do you hear that?”

The humans strained to reach the Zygerrian’s hearing abilities, but sure enough there was a faint sobbing coming not too far from them.

“REINE!”

“ALLY!”

The group raised through the gardens, Gavyn carelessly pushing through plants, trampling quite a few in the process.

“REINE, BABY WHERE ARE YOU?” Obik called.

“ALLY! ALYLA! I’M HERE! I’M HERE!” Gavyn desperately yelled. “IT’S GOING TO BE OKAY! WHERE ARE YOU!”

And then they broke into the clearing where they found a horrifying sight. Reine doubled over, screaming and sobbing in pain as she clutched at her face, her hands dripping with blood. Alyla lying on her back, perfectly motionless, her lightsaber gone and Obi-Wan’s discarded at her feet with a piece of black, bloody fabric. And both Ben and Vader’s mask were nowhere to be found.

“ALLY!” Gavyn bolted to Alyla’s still form.

“REINE!” Obik raced to his wife’s side and dropped to his knees. Without a thought, he pulled Reine into his arms and placed his hands over hers to maintain the pressure over Reine’s wounds. Soon enough, his hands were coated with her hot, sticky blood as she cried in his embrace. “It’s okay, it’s okay, Baby. I got you. I got you.”

“Oh Gods,” Felicity gasped, staring at the scene in horror.

Zena slowly followed Gavyn, but said nothing as she stood watching her husband take Alyla into his arms.

“Ally!” Gavyn gasped, holding her up. He winced as her head drooped back limply. “Ally, it’s okay. I’m here. I’m here. You’ll be okay. You’re gonna be fine.”

Han, Luke, and Leia said nothing as they stared at the scene in voiceless shock. What could even be said? Ben had done this.

In an effort to help, Gavyn pressed a hand to Alyla’s lightsaber wound that was oddly bloody. Lightsaber wounds were cauterized by the blade; they only bled if they were irritated. But Luke eyed the probable culprit: the bloody piece of fabric by Obi-Wan’s lightsaber, that looked oddly like a piece of the shirt Ben had been wearing. Had he scrubbed at the wounds? If so… why?

“Doctor, help Reine!” Obik shouted as his sand toned hands stained with the crimson of his wife’s blood. He had to shake Reine a few times to stop her from passing out.
“No!” Reine weakly pushed Kalonia away. “Help Alyla!”

Reluctantly, Kalonia rose to her feet and turned away from the woman with the bloody face. She approached Alyla, but a few steps away she stopped in her tracks. The expression on her face said everything.

But as Gavyn looked up helplessly at her, he wasn’t ready to take no for an answer.

“Help her!” Gavyn screamed, cradling his sister as tenderly as he had his infant daughter. “Don’t just stand there! Save her!”

Slowly, Kalonia dropped to her knees and gently began examining Alyla’s form. A few touches were all it took to make her diagnosis.

“Gavyn…” Kalonia whispered. “Gavyn, she’s cold.”

His eyes filled with tears, “No, no.”

“I’m so sorry,” Kalonia touched his shoulder.

Gavyn let out one of the most desperate cries Luke would ever hear in his life. Gavyn pulled his sister’s dead body into his tight embrace and sobbed hysterically as he clutched her desperately in his arms.

The scene was a blur around Luke. He barely noticed when Kalonia left Alyla to tend to Reine. He couldn’t believe that Ben could have done this.

Slowly a conversation ensued among the group, but Luke barely listened. Instead, he looked around the room with detachment, trying to be more than a ghost as he participated in the scene. But he was just so stunned that night he mourned Felicity on Jakku, it was only three specific moments he could truly recall.

He remembered when he made eye contact with Zena Halcorr.

“Jedi Killer,” she snarled, her eyes as cold, hard, and sharp as ice.

“No,” Leia whispered. “Don’t call my son that.”

“Well, he is, isn’t he?” Zena snapped. “He killed a Jedi, therefore he is a Jedi Killer.”

“He’s just a child!”

“He killed Alyla! He killed my sister who was more my sister in heart than by law. If he killed Felicity, would you want me to ask you not to mourn?”

Luke remembered the moment that Kalonia wanted to move Reine.

“I have to take her to surgery now,” she said, interrupting the feud.


Obik and Kalonia helped Reine to her feet. Kalonia had applied some temporary bacta to her face to stop the bleeding and regulate her a bit.

“How are you feeling?” Obik asked.
Reine groaned, “My face… There’s not even a word for this pain.”

“Are you drowsy? Have a headache?” Kalonia inquired.

“Little bit of a headache from the constant beeping of everyone’s comms.”

“Sorry, Reine, we’ll turn them off,” Felicity said.

“Wait, we might need them,” Kalonia said. “Reine, I’m going to need to do a blood transfusion, but I don’t keep blood on hand. I’m going to need a donor.”

“Take mine,” Obik rolled up his sleeve and held out his arm.

Reine rolled her eyes, “Honey, you are AB Positive, and I’m O Negative. We’re the absolute opposites of the spectrum.”

“Oh, I was hoping you weren’t O Negative,” Kalonia groaned. “You can only receive O Negative blood and there’s only one other person who has that type on Rornian.”

“Who?” Obik asked.

“Tyla Kinall.”

Luke sighed, “I’ll call her. Hopefully she won’t object to being a donor.”

“And if she’s not, I’m more than happy to hold her down and force a transfusion,” Zena sneered.

Kalonia sighed at Zena’s comment but said nothing.

Luke was surprised, usually Felicity or Han would be the one to make that type of comment, but Han was looking so utterly lost, and there was fear in Felicity’s eyes as she looked around the Meditation Gardens wildly.

“Master Skywalker?” Kalonia prompted.


“Luke, what’s going on?” Tyla’s voice was immediately on the comm.

“There’s been… An incident,” Luke sighed, not knowing how else to phrase it. “Tyla… Alyla Kene is dead.”

In the corner of his eye, Luke saw Leia wince. She turned and buried herself in Felicity’s embrace.

“Oh my God, what happened?” Tyla exclaimed.

“It was… It was Ben,” Luke admitted. “Please, Tyla I’ll explain later. He also injured Reine badly. She needs a blood transfusion, and you’re her only match-”

“Yes, of course, I’ll come down immediately. Oh God, how could Ben have done this? And to Alyla of all people.”

“I know it’s all very shocking, but we need to act quickly.”

“Has Ben been detained?”

“No. We weren’t-”
“Master Skywalker, are you telling me that someone who just killed and injured two of our own is roaming wild? He has to be stopped! The others have to be warned!”

“Tyla, it’s alright. Ben isn’t-”

Zena growled, “Skywalker, if you say Ben isn’t going to hurt anyone, I’m going to punch you.”

Luke took a step away from Zena.

“You’re right, Tyla,” Luke admitted. “Everyone should be warned. I’ll make an announcement, just get to the Med Center.”

“Yes, Master Skywalker.”

With a shaking hand, Luke punched in the code to broadcast to all of the Jedi’s comms and made one of the worst announcements of his life.

“I know you all have a lot of questions, so I’ll make this simple. Alyla Kene is dead. Reine Agim is injured, but alive and being rushed into surgery. Ben Solo is responsible. Though his own saber has been discarded, Alyla’s is missing so he may be armed. I implore that you do not go searching for him. Justice will not be met by a lynch mob, am I understood?”

Obik, Reine, Zena, and Gavyn exchanged a look, and then reluctantly nodded.

“If you do encounter him, he is to be considered as extremely dangerous. Immediately call for backup, and absolutely do not engage him, especially not alone. If you defy my orders and do manage to capture and subdue him, do not harm him. Call me and I will deal with the situation. And Ben, if you’re listening to this, I just want to say… I- I just… want to say… Oh God, Ben, what have you done?”

The final moment he remembered was when he flicked off his comm and Felicity said:

“Tyla’s right.”

Those were words Luke honestly never thought he’d hear her utter.


“Tyla’s right,” Felicity repeated. “Ben is somewhere out there on the loose.”

Leia pushed away from Felicity, “Don’t talk about my son like that! He’s not a wild animal!”

“He just murdered the one woman we swore up and down he would never hurt!” Felicity exclaimed. “That boy is no longer the one you called son! If he can kill Alyla, who else will he kill? Me? Han? There’s nothing to hold him back now!”

“You’re wrong,” Leia’s voice shook. “There’s still good in him, I feel it.”

“God, is that what you sounded like on Endor?” Felicity shot a look at Luke.

Luke had no response, so gave a non-committal shrug.

“Easy, Reine,” Kalonia said as she and Obik guided her towards the exit.

To Luke’s surprise, Han was following behind them.
“Where are you going?” Leia frowned, equally confused by Han’s action.

Han stopped and sighed, his head drooping slightly. His reply was devastating:

“Someone’s gotta tell Lando.”

Luke did not envy that conversation.

“Oh God,” he heard Gavyn sob behind him. “She’s supposed to go next week and pick out her kid… She’s supposed to become a Mom. She’s always wanted to be a Mom.”

Luke couldn’t bear to look at Gavyn as he broke down even further. Instead he watched Zena as she considered something, then went over to a grow of flowers, picked one, and laid it on Alyla’s chest.

It was one of the blue morning glories Alyla and Lando had planted together.

“Nobody is safe now,” Felicity whispered. “Not any Jedi, not any family, not any-”

And then she stopped dead.

“Rey!” Fear flooded into her heart, and Felicity bolted for the door.

“Felicity!” Luke yelled, running after her, Zena following close behind.

In the distance, he could see Han heading for the Millennium Falcon, and the other group proceeding to the Medical Center. They left Leia and Gavyn back in the Meditation Gardens with Alyla’s body, while Felicity was headed straight for Gavyn and Zena’s home.

“Rey! Rey!” Felicity exclaimed as they burst through the door. Before Luke could slow her, Felicity was already headed to the garage where they had hidden Rey for the night.

“Mom!” Miri scrambled down the stairs into her mother’s embrace. Her face was red, sad, and confused, “Mom, I heard the message! Is Aunt Ally dead?”

Luke didn’t hear the answer as he followed Felicity into the garage.

“Rey!” Felicity cried as she raced into the room.

A sleepy little girl blinked and groaned in as she sat up in her cot, confused by her mother’s panicked voice.

“Mommy?” Rey rubbed her eyes, pushing away the heavy blankets wrapped around her. Instead she chose to be wrapped up in something warmer and more comfortable: her mother’s arms. “Mommy, what’s going on?”

“It’s okay, Sweetheart, Mommy’s here,” Felicity frantic checked her daughter over. “Is everything okay? Are you hurt?”

But things weren’t okay, Luke realized numbly. The garage was missing its most prominent fixture: Gavyn’s ship.

“I’m okay,” Rey replied. “I promise. Did Ben tell you I wasn’t?”


“Rey, was Ben here?” Luke asked slowly. He ran a hand over her chocolate curls, doing his own
examination of Rey’s safety.

“Uh huh,” Rey nodded. “He woke me up and asked if I was okay.”


Rey shrugged, “Not much.”

“Sweetheart,” Felicity said slowly, “you have to tell Mommy and Daddy exactly what happened with Ben. What did he do? What he say?”

“He said that he was sorry, but he had to go. He did something bad and had to go away for a little while. He didn’t want to leave and he said this wasn’t my fault. He just wanted to say goodbye and to tell me to always remember that he loves me. Then I went back to sleep… Is Ben in trouble?”


“Yes,” Felicity answered bluntly. “He’s in a lot of trouble right now.”

“What did he do?” Fear filled Rey’s eyes.

“Oh Sweetheart,” Luke rubbed her arm. And then he froze. In glanced down in confusion and noticed something was very wrong, “Rey… where’s your bracelet?”

Rey frowned and looked down. Her eyes widened when she noticed her bare wrist.

“It’s gone!” Rey exclaimed. “Daddy, it’s gone! It was on when I went to sleep! I promise!”


Felicity glanced at him warily, “Luke… what does this mean?”

Luke sighed, “It means that Ben Solo has been seduced by the Dark Side… and is now armed with the Sith crystal I never wanted him to have.”

10 Years, 2 Months, 19 Days

A heavy silence clung to the Skywalker house. Luke’s eyes were dark and his head hung heavily as he walked down the hallway of the upper level. His heart lurched as he glanced into the empty room that belonged to his nephew. Ben’s possessions lay abandoned, and Luke couldn’t help but wonder what other dark secrets might be hidden inside.

He couldn’t bear to discover that today.

In the bedroom he had just come out of, Rey was crying into the furry arms of Chewbacca. She couldn’t understand what was going on. Why Ben had left, why Reine had been slashed across the face, why Alyla was dead.

Truth be told, Luke didn’t have an answer either.

Reaching the top of the stairs, Luke glanced over the railing at the entrance to the living room where Leia and Han were mourning. He felt so guilty, how could he have failed them so terribly? How could he let this happen to their son, his nephew?

Luke just didn’t understand.
He sighed and entered the bedroom. Felicity was sitting on the bed, staring blankly at the wall, a hint of guilt in her eyes, and her face white with shock.

“Reine’s out of surgery now,” Luke announced. “Kalonia says she’ll be fine. The scars won’t go away for more than a year but they will fade.”

“That’s good to hear,” Felicity didn’t look over at him. “How’s Gavyn?”

“In shambles.”

“I can’t imagine the sorrow he’s going through.”

“Really? I expected you to make an analogy to Brendan.”

“What happened is worse than losing Brendan.”

“Never thought you’d say those words,” Luke said completely serious.

Felicity ran a hand through her hair, “Alyla was such an important part of his life for him entire life. I just had Brendan at the start, and you’ve only had Leia since you were nineteen. Losing Alyla must be like losing Brendan and Leia put together.”

“Well, truth be told, it’s Zena I’m frightened for. She’s out for blood and already has everyone calling Ben… Jedi Killer.”

Felicity looked down, “I guess that is what he is… Rey was asking me to explain what happened, but I don’t even know what to say.”

“I’m just thankful Chewbacca got here so fast. He’s making sure she’s taken care of while we four take care of ourselves.” Luke sat down next to Felicity and pulled her into his arms, “Lando’s breaking every law of government and physics to get here as quickly as possible. Gavyn’s agreed to hold off on funeral plans until Lando arrives. He said that if Zena had died, he would deserve the chance to see her body, and that Lando deserves the same.”

“Do you think Lando and Alyla loved each other?”

Luke kissed the top of her head, “I know they did.”

“They were going to adopt a child.”

“Yes, they were.”

Felicity began to cry.

“I’m sorry,” Felicity wept in his arms as Luke held her tight. “I’m so sorry.”

“There’s nothing for you to be sorry about,” Luke assured her.

“I did this, Luke. I pushed him to this.”

“No, you didn’t. He made his own choices. I should have tried harder to save him.”


“Enough,” Luke urged. “We could sit here and lay blame all day. I just… I wished I had listened to you. All these years you tried to tell me that Ben was turning… why didn’t I listen? Why didn’t I see
that you were right?”

“You know for once,” Felicity rested her head against his, “I wish I wasn’t right.”

And so they held each other and cried.

10 Years, 4 Months, 11 Days

“Pack as many weapons as you can,” Luke ordered as he and Felicity hurriedly packed their bags. “I don’t know if anyone else has a map to Ahch-to, and if the First Order finds us, we’ll need to be prepared.”

“What are we going to tell Rey?” Felicity asked as she went through the closet.

“We’ll tell her we’re going on an adventure. I don’t want her to panic, so let’s make this fun. A game of sorts.”

“This isn’t a game, Luke. She needs to be protected over anything else. If Ben gets to her-”

“He’s not going to hurt her,” Luke snapped.

“How can you be so sure?” Felicity shot back. “He’s threatened by her.”

“He loves her.”

“That’s not enough! He loved Alyla and still killed her.”

“But he didn’t hurt Rey,” Luke reminded. “He had the chance that night, but he didn’t hurt her.”

“He stole her bracelet,” Felicity objected. “He has a Sith crystal. Let’s not pretend we don’t know what he’s going to do with that, Luke. Our only hope is that he forgets to ventilate it properly and blows himself up.”

Luke winced at the image of his nephew dead. As much as Ben had hurt them, Luke didn’t want him to die.

“Let’s speak of something else,” Luke shook his head. “Have you and Obik gone over hut assignments?”

“Still needs a little tweaking, but if I remember the layout correctly, we should be fine.”

A coy smirk crossed Felicity’s lips.

“I know that look,” Luke chuckled. “Should I take off my pants now, or wait for you to do it?”

“I may have done something sneaky, Luke,” Felicity set her gatherings from the closet on the bed.

“Oh, really?” Luke wrapped his arms around her waist and pulled her against him. “What did you do?”

“I may have assigned us a very familiar hut,” Felicity nuzzled him. “I look forward to re-enacting a certain scene from our honeymoon.”

“As do I,” Luke whispered, his lips hovering over hers. “But I think we might need to practice a bit first. You know, go over the choreography, and remember our cues.”
“With pleasure, Master Skywalker,” Felicity wove a hand into his hair and pulled him in for a tender kiss.

He had her on the bed in a moment, lying between the two suitcases crowding the mattress. She moaned as their lips hungrily pressed together over and over and their hands ran over each other’s bodies.

Felicity gasped as Luke’s natural hand found berth between her thighs. She rolled her hips against his touch, and pulled his shirt over his head. Luke grunted as her tongue dragged down his bare torso, and he eased off her sexy black tank top. Felicity whimpered as his hand moved off her, but his lips were on her neck, and his soon his hands palming her bra covered breasts.

“If I remember correctly,” Luke chuckled, “I got smacked for doing this to you that day.”

“And if I remember correctly,” Felicity shivered as his tongue ran down the valley of her breasts. “I got smacked for doing this.”

Felicity unbuckled his belt and pulled his pants and underwear to the floor.

“It was a spank and you asked for it,” Luke leaned forward to kiss her shoulder while his hands lifted her back off the mattress to unclasp her bra. His hardening cock pressed against her thigh in anticipation.

They were interrupted by the beeping of Luke’s comm.


Luke groaned when he saw the name on the screen, “It’s the Chancellor. I have to answer it.”

“But Luke,” Felicity whined as Luke pulled up his pants. Her desire was throbbing in the Force as she ran hands over her body to entice him back.

“I’ll be right back, Sweetheart,” he kissed her before pulling back on his shirt. He surprised her by suddenly nipping at her erect nipple, “I’m going to take this call into the office. I want you ready for me when I get back.”

Felicity chuckled, a wicked twinkle in her eyes as she unbuttoned her pants and slid a hand beneath them to stroke her likely already moistened sex, “Don’t take too long with that call.”

“I’ll get her off as quickly as possible,” Luke promised. “Then I’ll come back here and get you off as quickly as possible.”

Felicity giggled and eagerly pulled off her pants. She was wearing a matching set of purple bra and panties, practical for daily wear, but with sexy lace and suggestive cuts that turned Luke on. It was the kind of underwear she wore on days she wasn’t positive she was going to have sex with Luke, but was open to the prospect.

“I wonder what Mothma could possibly be calling about,” Felicity openly stroked herself beneath her panties, her eyes locked on Luke.

Luke had to shift the stiffening erection in his pants, “I don’t know, but whatever it is, I’m sure it won’t ruin our plans for Ahch-to.”

Unfortunately for Luke, it did.
“Oh, Luke!”

“Felicity!”

The bed springs squeaked frantically as Luke thrust into her, riding out her orgasm as her body spasmed below him. Her nails dug into his hips, pulling him in deeper and holding him there as her body exploded in pleasure.

It took a few moments, but when she had finished, so did he. Felicity groaned in pleasure as Luke buried his face against her breast. When he was done, he peppered a line of kisses between her breasts, up her neck, and back to her lips.


Felicity whispered back, “I love you too.”

He kissed her lips one more time, and then moved to roll off her. She laughed and locked her legs around his hips, refusing to let him free.

Their panting and soft laughter filled the room as they basked in the pleasure they had just partaken in. They were entangled in the blankets and each other, nothing but the intimacy of their bare skin and the aftermath of lovemaking filling their senses.

“You have to let me go, Felicity,” Luke grinned, absentmindedly stroking his hand across her naked thigh.

“I won’t do it,” Felicity murmured, her voice sounding sleepy. It was nearly three in the morning, and both were exhausted. “Because if I let you go, then you leave me for a whole month.”

“Orders are orders, I have to go to Coruscant. And I’m going to be late. I should have left two hours ago.”

“It’s your own fault for falling for my bewitching charms.”

“Is that now what you’re calling it?”

Felicity swatted his chest and unhooked her legs from around his waist to let him roll off her. When Luke had done so, he rested on his side, playing gently with her hair.

Luke and Felicity had a system that whenever one went on a trip, they would leave in the middle of the night, way past Rey’s bedtime so that she wouldn’t insist on staying up too late to say her goodbyes, nor that she would make a scene in the morning.

Of course, that also meant it gave Luke and Felicity plenty of time to say their own goodbye.

“I wish I didn’t have to go,” Luke sighed. “A whole month without you sounds unbearable.”

“At least it’s not a lifetime,” Felicity rested her head against his chest, soothed by the steady beating of his heart.

“Let’s make a pact, when we do die, we die together so neither one of us has to miss the other.”

“I agree. We’ll die together… or I’ll die first and you deal with all that pain.”
Luke chuckled, “You’re actively wishing me pain?”

“Consider it revenge for the thirty-two-hour labour.”

Luke shook his head, “Or, how about I die first, and then at least I can come back as a Force Ghost and visit you from time to time?”

“Time to time?”

“You’re not the only person I’ll want to visit in the afterlife.”


“I love you too,” Luke kissed her forehead. He glanced at the clock and sighed, “It’s time for me to go.”

Her voice was small, “…I know.”

He dressed slowly, Felicity’s eyes following his every movement. If he had known that was the last time he shared that bed with her, he would have jumped right back in and never left.

“I’ll comm you when I arrive at the first fuelling station,” Luke bent over the bed and kissed her.

Felicity ran her fingers through his hair, “And I’ll comm you with Rey first thing in the morning.”

He walked towards the doorway and grabbed his packed suitcase propped against the wall. He punched the door’s open code, but when it slid open, he paused and looked back at Felicity.

“I love you, Felicity Rhiaon,” Luke declared taking in one last sight of the beautiful woman he loved so much.

She smiled at him, not that wicked smirk but that joyous smile so few got to see, “I love you too, Luke Skywalker.”

And with one last smile, Luke left behind his wife.

10 Years, 4 Months, 25 Days

“I can’t reach them.”

“Luke, don’t jump to conclusions,” Leia said.

“Yeah, Kid, just take a moment to calm down,” Han encouraged.

“No, this is serious!” Luke slammed his fist on the dining table he, Leia, and Han were seated at. “I’m woken in the middle of the night of a vision of Temple Village burning, and now I can’t get a hold of them!”


“It’s been six hours!” Luke said. He lowered his head and took a deep breath, “Something is wrong, Leia. I have to go before it’s too late. Please… Rey and Felicity are in danger. I can’t lose them.”

Han and Leia exchanged a solemn look.

They need not exchange a word to make their decision.
“The Falcon’s acting up, so we can’t take that,” Han said. “You go in your X-Wing to Rornian, and I’ll fix up the Falcon to follow.”

Luke looked up in surprise, “But what about the meetings? The Senate?”

“I’ll take care of it all,” Leia promised. “Please… just make sure the girls are safe.”

And so, with a pat on Han’s arm and a kiss on Leia’s cheek, Luke Skywalker grabbed Artoo and his flight suit and set off for Rornian.

He only prayed that it wouldn’t be too late.

10 Years, 4 Months, 26 Days

Luke and Felicity stood in the forest as the rain poured down and their home burned in the distance. A heavy silence hung over the duo as they stood there holding each other, taking in the tragedy before them.

Then, Luke made a decision he would regret for years to come.


Felicity frowned, "Go? Go where?"

"Somewhere far from here. Somewhere the First Order wouldn’t think to look for you."

"The First Order?"

"The Knights of Ren have always been Snoke's lackeys, and he was the one who corrupted Ben. It's obvious why they came here."


"No!" Felicity jerked it out of his grasp.

"You have to take Rey and get out of here."

"We're not leaving you!"

"We don't have a choice," Luke used his extremely calm voice that always annoyed Felicity.

"Yes, we do," Felicity insisted. She lightly gripped Luke's forearm and hope danced in her eyes, "You can come with us."

"There's no room," Luke shook his head. "The only ship we have access to is my X-Wing. That's a two seater, Felicity."

"So what?" Felicity asked. "We can each take a seat, and Rey will sit in my lap."

"The X-Wing can barely hold two people, it couldn't fit three of us, let alone bare the weight."

"Don't ask me to leave you to die," Felicity begged. "I've left too many people behind to their deaths. I won't do it to you."
"Then we condemn Rey," Luke calmly said. Tears were shining in his eyes, "If we both stay, she
does too, and we put her in the line of fire. I have the best chance of the two of us to survive, and I
might be able to reason with Ben. Your presence would aggravate him. You've already had too
many close calls with death tonight. Please, escape while you still can."

Felicity threw her arms around Luke's neck and sobbed into his chest, "I won't leave you."


Luke savoured the embrace with a sense of finality. As the time passed, Luke felt increasingly unsure
he could bring himself to release her.

"Allowing yourself to let her go is not the same as ceasing to love her," The ghostly voice of Anakin
Skywalker whispered in his son's ear. "It took me too long to learn that. Do not make my mistake of
accepting it when it was too late. In letting her go, you are not asking yourself to permit things to
end. You are asking her to live... Even if it means doing it without you."

Luke sighed: his father was right. No matter how much he wanted Felicity to stay, he couldn't let that
happen.

Luke took a deep breath, and then pulled back from Felicity. He propped two fingers under her chin
and tilted her head up. Felicity's tear filled hazel eyes were locked with own glistening blue orbs.

"I promise you, Felicity," Luke's voice was calm, but filled with pain, "I will never leave you. But I
cannot always be by your side physically, so you'll just have to accept my emotional presence. My
memory. My promises. You'll have to trust me that this will not be the end."

Felicity painfully whispered, "Luke-"

"I love you. I have from the moment I first met you, and I'll love you even beyond my death. But
you have to take Rey and go. It's our best choice right now. I can handle the Knights of Ren, and
you... We both know that you are more capable of making difficult decisions and even sacrifices for
Rey's safety. Decisions... I could never bring myself to commit."

Felicity winced, closing her eyes as she lowered her head and sobbed. Luke's words were too true
for her to deny.

Luke sighed, making a face not unlike the one he had made upon seeing his father's unmasked face
for the first time: a sympathetic, loving, and pained expression.

He lifted her chin once more, "But that is why I love you. You are strong where I am weak, and we
balance each other perfectly. I swear to you, Felicity, this will not be like Brendan. We will see each
other again."

"Promise?" Felicity choked.


They poured everything into that kiss. The magnitude of their love, the happiness of their friendship,
the firmness of their partnership, the passion of a lover to the person they selected to create a child
with, the depth of their promises, and even the sting of the possible finality of their parting.

Then they broke the kiss, they still did not part. They held onto each other, resting their foreheads
together, listening to the other's heavy breathing.
Luke used his flesh hand to stroke a thumb over Felicity's cheek.

"I love you, Felicity Rhiaon," Luke whispered, relishing the warmth of her skin.

Felicity ran a loving hand through his soft blond hair, "I love you too, Luke Skywalker. Thank you... Thank you for loving me."


They embraced one final time, Felicity tightly locking her arms around his neck. Luke reached up and slowly clasped Felicity right hand with his left. Eventually he eased her arms down but did not release their clasped hands.

"Now go," Luke's voice quaked as he pressed a kiss to her forehead.

Slowly, Felicity backed out of his embrace, but their hands did not let go.

"Promise me," Felicity ordered. "Promise me this isn't goodbye."

"I promise you, Felicity," Luke grinned the goofy grin his wife so loved, "we'll see each other again."

Felicity gave the smile her husband loved, and let go of his hand.

"Promise me, Luke!" Felicity backed away from him into the treeline towards Rey.

"I promise!" Luke called as she disappeared into the night. "We'll see each other again! I promise, Felicity. I promise!"

10 Years, 6 Months, and 24 Days

The hallway was too quiet. Luke and Chewbacca were slowly walking down one of the passages of the First Order Tonides Base. They had their weapons at the ready, but not a single soul was anywhere to be found.

When he, Chewie, and Han had touched down on the landing platform, they had been met with the usual legion of Stormtroopers guarding the base. But there was a small number of them, and they were easy to defeat. Perhaps they had been ordered not to give Skywalker much of a fight.

But still... it was too easy.

Han had stayed behind to guard the ship, and Chewie went with Luke to find where they were keeping Felicity. It was a difficult feat though, for Luke couldn’t find her Force Signature anywhere.

He reached desperately into the Force to find that familiar crimson colour, but he didn’t find her. Luke felt the red tone of Phasma – maybe a scarlet shade, but he honestly wasn’t paying attention to her. He felt the blood orange signature of General Hux, but he was relieved to not find the signature of Snoke: a soul black and cold as the night.

But there was a familiar signature, one that made him stop in his tracks.

Forest green.

Luke took a deep breath, “You’re right. She probably is.”

It didn’t take them long to find Ben, a few more turns and the duo find themselves in a very large and very dark room. The location was probably a place to address multiple legions of Stormtroopers at once, for there were multiple legions of Stormtroopers crammed into the room.

There was stage and a long aisle leading up to it. Dozens upon dozens of Stormtroopers in gleaming white armor lined the aisle, filling up the audience. They stood at attention, blasters at the ready, and facing towards the stage. As Luke and Chewie slowly walked down the aisle, not a Stormtrooper so much as twitched.

But Luke’s attention was not on the Stormtroopers; it was on the figure they were staring at. A young boy, aged only sixteen clad in black and armed with a lightsaber stood proudly on the stage. He wore a mask not unlike the one his Grandfather had used to survive, but this boy’s mask was one of vanity, not survival.

Luke didn’t take his eyes off the boy as he wordlessly scaled the stage, Chewbacca following behind. He was holding his lightsaber, but it was unlit. After staring at the boy for a few minutes in silence, an agreement was settled between them. Luke hooked his saber on his belt, and the boy removed his mask, setting it on the ground.


“I prefer Kylo,” the boy answered, his eyes dark with pride and fear.


He looked so much paler since the last time Luke had seen him. Paler and skinnier. He stood straight, but his hands twitched at his side. The blast wound on his face had been done away with, but his visage was not the handsome young man Luke had helped raise.


Ben’s lips twitched but his said in his best formal tone, “We are not here to discuss me. We are here to discuss Rhiaon.”

“Oh, I think we can find time for both subjects.” Luke nodded to the Stormtroopers, “Will they shoot?”

“No,” Ben admitted.

“So they’re here for show,” Luke shook his head. “Oh, Ben, do you even understand what you’ve gotten yourself into?”

“Even if I wanted to escape – which I certainly do not – you can’t be so naïve to think there’s anything to go back to at this point? You think I can Lando Calrissian? Mon Mothma? The Senate? Han Solo?”
“Don’t call your father such a cold name.”

Ben stared right into Luke’s eyes. “A cold name for a cold man. He’s no father.”

“No, my father was no father,” Luke sternly chided. “Your father is flawed, but he is a good father.”

“And why should I get my reference point on good fathers from a man who never had one?”

Luke shook his head, “You’re afraid. I can sense it.”

“I’m not afraid.”

“Don’t lie to me, Ben. I sense the fear, the regret, the guilt.”

“I don’t regret anything I’ve done.”

Luke didn’t buy it for a minute, “Really? You regret none of it?”

“Absolutely nothing.”


Ben flinched at the name.

Luke tried not to smile. He knew where to get Ben.


He continued on, listing the name of every single Jedi who had been slaughtered on that rainy night. But he saved the name of the woman who had died first – the one that would hurt Ben the most – for the very last.

Luke spoke slowly, “You don’t regret killing Alyla?”

Ben winced.


Ben looked down at the ground, “Alyla wasn’t supposed to die.”

“But she did. By your hand. She loved you. She trusted you. She wanted nothing more than your happiness and safety. And you killed her for it. She was protecting you from this.”

“And was Felicity just protecting Rey?” Ben snapped.

Luke took a step back in shock. The cold, hard accusation that had been hanging in the air.


“I will not claim responsibility for her death,” Ben hissed.

“But she is dead!” Luke shouted. “My daughter is dead! You took her from me! Why? Why?”

Ben said nothing, but the guilt in his eyes spoke volumes.
"Why were you so threatened by her?" Luke felt a tear drip down his face. "She... she was innocent. She didn't deserve this. To waste away in a desert."

Ben fixed his eyes to the ground.

"That wasn't my fault," he clenched his jaw. "I didn't take away their supplies, I didn't do anything! I didn't know she was there!"

"And that's the point," Luke glowered. "She was only there because you tried to kill her! Your cousin who loved you and idolized you. Rey trusted you... and now she's dead. I will take some responsibility for what happened... but I will not take all of it."

Ben said nothing.

"But," Luke said after a while, "if I can forgive Vader... I certainly can forgive you. Come with me, Ben. I'll help, I'll show you the way back to the Light."

"I can't go back. I don't want to go back."


A smirk twitched the side of his face, "I wouldn't be so positive. You don't even know half of what I've done."

"And I don't care what you've done. If you killed people, hurt us... even took away Rey. I still love you. Please, hand over Felicity, and then come home with us."

Ben shook his head, "You won't love me after what I tell you next."

Luke frowned, "What do you mean?"

Ben looked up with the cockiest expression Luke had ever seen on his face. A gloating, taunting mock that was ten times more threatening than his pseudo-Vader helmet.

"Felicity Rhiaon is dead," Kylo Ren's mocking words seemed to echo in Luke's mind.

In an instant, his world shattered.


His heart pounded violently in his chest, and he could barely breathe. No, Felicity wasn't dead. She-she couldn't be! She was alive- He- he would have felt it if she had- Oh God, but he hadn't felt Rey, had he? No. No, it's wasn't true. Felicity was alive. It was impossible for her not to be. He promised they would see each other again. He promised!

"I killed her myself!" Ben was gleeful at the thought of his aunt being murdered. "I ended her miserable existence, and ridded the world of her corruptive influence."

Ben killed Felicity? It was his absolute worst nightmare after the thought of losing Rey... But Rey was dead so this was his worst nightmare. No, it couldn't be true. Ben. Ben could not have possibly killed Felicity Rhiaon.

"No. You're lying," Luke said, half in fear and half in genuine disbelief. He refused to accept it as the truth. "Felicity is not dead."

"Yes, she is," Ben grinned. He reached into his cloak and pulled out a small HoloDisc. "See for
Ben hit play.

The Holo projected the image of Felicity on her knees, tied up, face bruised, bloodied, and hair sheered crudely. Ben, Hux, Phasma, and the Stormtroopers holding Felicity back stood around her. A Holo of Supreme Leader Snoke was projected into the room during the recording. Evidently the footage had been recorded seconds after Hux telling Luke he had seven days to get Felicity.

“Skywalker should be on his way shortly, Supreme Leader,” Hux reported.

“And Skywalker’s daughter is dead?” Snoke asked.

“I’ve seen it for myself,” Ben took a step forward.

An odd look crossed Snoke’s face, “Most interesting.”

“Supreme Leader,” Captain Phasma spoke. “What do with do with Rhiaon while we await Skywalker’s arrival?”

Snoke regarded Felicity, “If Skywalker must produce another heir, it should not be with such corrupted chattel as this. Rhiaon has no further use to us. Terminate her immediately.”

Felicity had been making objections behind her gag and trying to shake off her captors, but upon hearing the order to kill her, her eyes went wide. She began trying to scream at the top of her lungs and fight as furiously as possible. The gag muffled her words, but the Stormtroopers were losing the upper hand to her fighting.

“She needs to be subdued first,” Hux crossed the room and opened a small case on the table laden with torture devices. He picked out one of the objects from the case and examined it, revealing it to be a set of three needles.

“What are those?” Ben asked.

“This first one is a paralytic,” Hux answered. “It will get her nice and limp so with can kill her without endangering ourselves.”

The Stormtroopers struggled to contain Felicity as she desperately attempted to fight them off.

“And the others?” Ben inquired.

“A special serum developed by the First Order ourselves. It’s a two-part injection. This formula uses ysalamir blood as its base.”

“The stuff that renders Jedi incapable of using their powers? Why? She’s not Force Sensitive.”

“But she is closely bonded to Skywalker,” Phasma pointed out.

“Exactly,” Hux said. “This is a special formula that will block out a person’s presence in the Force, hence, Skywalker will not sense the moment we kill her.”

“Wouldn’t he sense her presence abruptly being removed from the Force?” Ben asked.

“The serum masks the disappearance of a presence. It will block her, but you, nor Skywalker will not sense the moment that happens. And you, nor Skywalker, will be able to sense when she’s killed.
The next sight was unbearable for Luke to watch. The Stormtroopers did as they were told and pinned Felicity to the ground. There were only two of them, so Phasma had to join in to help. They cut her ropes, though Luke couldn’t at first tell why. Felicity lashed out violently trying to kick, punch, scratch, and injure in any way possible. It was her one last desperate stand to escape death.

Unfortunately, Phasma smashed a fist into Felicity’s face, and as she reared back in pain they were able to grab her and force her face first on the ground. One Stormtrooper pinned down her legs, the other her arms, and Phasma herself held down Felicity’s head.

Hux knelt down on the floor, and it was then clear why they cut her ropes. Felicity screamed as he shoved the first needle into the back of her neck – which had previously been obstructed by the ropes. He didn’t follow proper hygiene, placing the needles straight on the floor. Hus didn’t wipe down the areas before he injected her. Just one, two, three; the needles were shoved into her neck one by one, and he rammed down her plunger as Felicity screamed, cried, and desperately tried to shake loose of her captors.

But to Luke, even more heartbreaking than his wife’s brutal violation was how Ben just stood there, his face pale and scared, watching it happen… and doing nothing to stop it.

“There we are,” Hux stood up, collecting his needles. “That wasn’t so bad, was it Rhiaon?”

Felicity’s response was muffled but angry. Still there was a heartbreaking sound of sadness in her muffled tone.

Luke had watched Felicity’s eyes during the ordeal, and he observed the change with horror. As they pulled Felicity up to her knees, her body had already started to fall limp. Still she tried her hardest to fight, even though her body betrayed her more and more with every passing minute. When she could no longer hold up her own head the heartbreaking realization filled her eyes.

She couldn’t win this fight. Luke watched the moment his wife knew she was going to die.

Tears flooded her eyes and her fight simmered down. Instead of trying to punch her way out, she started to yell behind her gag. Her only last hope was talking her way out of it, but the gag cut deeper into the sides of her mouth, muffling and suffocating her words and her lungs.

“What’s that, Rhiaon?” Hux taunted, holding up a hand to his ear as he returned the needles to their case. “I can’t hear you.”

“Mmm hmph tpmh mhm!” Felicity screamed.

“You’re not talking your way out of this one,” Phasma said. “Not this time.”

She sucker punched Felicity right in the face, and the helpless woman fell to the ground, the paralysis almost complete.

But Felicity was a fighter, and she fought to push herself up on her elbows and lift her head.

Standing in front of her was Ben.
Tears and desperation filled her hazel eyes as they met Ben’s looking down on her.

Luke could have sworn he saw fear in them.

Felicity made a choice, and using her very last ounce of strength, she kept her head up, her eyes locked on Ben and began to scream.

“It’s a pity that whatever her last words are, they’ll be lost to time,” Ben said, shifting nervously.

“I suppose it is,” Hux shrugged indifferently.

“Perhaps,” Ben hesitated. “Maybe we should ungag her.”

“Ungag her?” Hux frowned.

“Give her one last dignity,” Ben tried to sound nonchalant. “Let her have some final words. She might tell us something useful.”

Hux glanced over at Phasma, “She might.”

After a moment of consideration, Phasma nodded.

“Men,” Hux ordered the Stormtroopers standing beside Felicity, “ungag her. You have one minute to speak, Rhiaon. Better make it last.”

A Stormtrooper bent down and untied her gag. The second it was off, Felicity started speaking. She wasn’t snarky, or formal, or loving as she addressed Ben. She wasn’t hateful or guilty. There was only a single emotion in her voice as she faced her last moment to escape a death sentence.

She was desperate.

"Ben! Ben, please! Don't let them do this! Please let me live!” Felicity screamed, tears spilling out of her eyes. She was a broken woman, begging her arch-nemesis for one last show of mercy. "Please, Ben! You win! You win! Alright? You win! Please, don't do this! Please, Ben, you have to help me! You have to save me! Please, don't let me die! I don't want to die! Please, Ben, help me! I can forgive you this! I can forgive you this!"

And then the gag cut back across her mouth, muffling her cries as the Stormtroopers pulled her back to rest upright on her knees.

Luke’s hands shook as he watched Ben indifferently displayed the scene before him. Felicity had begged him for her very life… and he had done nothing.

Then the camera cut to the worst footage Luke would ever see in his life.

The camera was zoomed in extremely close, only Felicity's panicked expression filling the screen. There were muffled screams behind her gagged mouth, and she was shaking her body, trying to wretch free.

Luke would never forget her wide hazel eyes; panic and fear filling them as she tried to scream for help. He would never forget the gloved hand – Ben’s hand – that brought the blaster to her temple. He would never forget Felicity's muffled shouts – begging Ben one last time for mercy – as his hand squeezed the trigger.
Luke would never forget the blast, the way Felicity's eyes went blank, and how she fell face first to the ground dead.

Chewbacca let out an agonizing roar.

“Poetic, isn’t it?” Kylo chuckled. “Set up to die, and then filmed when she does… Just like her brother.”

A rage Luke had never known filled his heart.

“Is she dead?” Kylo’s voice asked on the Holo.

*He wasn’t visible, the shot instead focused on Felicity’s unmoving body.*

“Check for yourself,” Hux instructed.

The camera cut to a wide shot where Kylo, Phasma, Hux, and the Stormtroopers stared at Felicity’s body. The Holo of Snoke was gone, but Luke’s were only on Felicity’s still form.

*Kylo hesitated and took slow steps towards Felicity’s body. When he was a step away, he stopped. In the background Hux watched with hands clasped behind his back, and Phasma fiddled with the dial charge on her blaster.*

*Carefully, Kylo stuck out a foot, and gently prodded Felicity.*

*She didn’t move.*

*It did it again, like he was afraid so was a wild animal he had hit with a speeder and wasn’t sure if it was dead or playing at it, about to spring up and tackle him.*

*Felicity still didn’t move.*

*Kylo took a deep breath and kicked her hard. Once, twice, three times he kicked her defenseless body.*

*She still did not move.*

*Finally, he made one powerful kick, flipping her body over to observe the damage.*

*She laid on her back, crumpled like a rag doll. Her chest rise and fall with breaths, not an inch of her body twitched, and her beautiful hazel eyes stared glassy and unblinking up at the roof.*

*Kylo bent down and checked her over. He felt for a pulse, a heartbeat, the breath entering and exiting her mouth, and motioned at her eyes like he was about to hit her, trying to trigger and blink or a flinch. Felicity’s body was unresponsive, but as the camera lingered on the motion of Ben trying to trigger a flinch, it almost looked like her eyes were trying to plead one last word.*

*Help.*

Chewie growled again and again, screaming out his grief so loud it almost seemed like he was trying to let Han know back on the *Falcon.*
Luke shook as his brain processed the footage he had just been shown. It seemed impossible, but Luke couldn’t deny that Felicity Rhiaon, the love of his life… was dead.

"And do you know what I did next?" Kylo asked gleefully, watching as his uncle literally shook with anger, struggling not to attack Kylo where he stood. The Holo played on, but Luke had no idea what more there could possibly be. "Do you know what I did to that schutta you call a wife?"

Then things got worse.

Luke would never forget the image Kylo next showed. The thing he would refuse to ever tell Han and Leia. The thing he would swear Chewbacca to secrecy about. The thing that would cause Luke to leave the base without his wife's body.

Because what the First Order did to Felicity Rhiaon ensured Luke would have no body to lay to rest.


Kylo was arrogant. He was not the naïve Ben Solo, Luke had been pleading with to come home. Luke looked upon Kylo with new eyes: he knew there was no redemption. Even Vader wouldn't have sunk to the level of vicious anger and bitter hatred that Kylo had resorted to. In Luke's eyes, Vader was a hero for strangling his pregnant wife compared to what Kylo did to Felicity.

Kylo couldn't stop gloating, going on and on about what he had done to his rival and how much he enjoyed every moment of it. Luke didn't hear any of the words, them becoming muted in the background, an angry buzzing paired with the pounding in Luke's ears.

“I did it, Uncle Luke!” Kylo boasted. “I did it! I killed her! I killed Felicity Rhiaon! I freed you from her!”

Felicity was dead…

“You know, you really should be thanking me,” Kylo went on. “Now you can find something worthy of your genetics. I mean, you’re old, but I’m sure plenty of young Force Sensitive girls would be happy to be with the legendary Luke Skywalker himself.”

Ben had killed Felicity…

“And it was so satisfying to do it too,” Kylo bragged. “To wipe that smirk off her face and see her so desperate. She begged me Uncle Luke! Felicity Rhiaon begged me.”

Everything was gone. His home. His pupils. His family…

“Oh, and that pièce de résistance! What I did to her body!”

He had taken away Rey… And now he had taken away Felicity…

“You’ll want to see that again,” Kylo chuckled. He flicked off the Holo and slipped it into Luke’s breast pocket, patting his chest jovially, “Well, not worry Uncle Luke. Now you can watch it again and again and ag-”


The Dark Side flooding into him, Luke grabbed his nephew by the throat and threw him to the ground. Kylo let out a surprised yelp while Chewie roared and the Stormtroopers advanced.

“Stop, Luke!” Obi-Wan said at the same time.

“Stop, you must,” Yoda urged a second after the pair because he always liked his voice to stand out above others.

When questioned why he did that, Yoda would usually reply along the lines of ‘when 900 years old you are, have something useful to say, you will.’

Despite the objecting cries of Force Ghosts in his mind, as well as Chewie and the Stormtroopers’ efforts, and no one could get Luke to stop. Consumed by hatred, anger, and the Dark Side, Luke wrapped his hands around the throat of his own nephew and refused to let go until Kylo Ren was as dead as his wife and daughter.

If they didn’t get to live, then neither would Ben.

It was Chewie who eventually got Luke off of Kylo, locking his arms around Luke's chest and pulling him backwards. Holding Luke in place with one arm, his used his other to bash away a line of Stormtroopers and pulled Luke towards the door.

"No! NO!" Luke cried out, struggling to escape Chewie's unyielding grasp.

With his bowcaster in one arm and Luke in the other, Chewie found off the hordes of Stormtroopers advancing on them.

Kylo stayed behind, stunned at the turn of events. The last sight Luke would have of him for years was Kylo on his hands and knees, gasping for air, scrambling to grab his helmet off the floor.

He looked pathetic.

“No! No!” Luke continued to scream as Chewie dragged them through the maze of corridors. It didn’t take them long to lose the Stormtroopers, but still the Wookiee dragged Luke along. “No, Chewie we have to go back! We have to go back!”

ROAR!

“HE KILLED FELICITY!”

And then Luke heard it: Felicity’s desperate scream.

“LUKE! LUKE!”

She sounded as she did in the recording: desperate and begging. Why did the Force have to taunt him so?

“LUKE!” Felicity’s voice distantly screamed for him. “HELP! HELP ME!”

There was a loud pounding, but Luke was so disconnected from the situation he barely put it together that it was a pounding in his head.

“LUKE!”

Oh God, how could he do this? How could he live with this knowledge that he had failed to save her.
He should have gone to Jakku the second Diego mentioned it. He should have kept a comm on. He should have properly stalked his X-Wing. He should have checked Leia’s messages before going to Mothma. He should never have told Felicity to go. He should have never gone to Hosnian Prime.

He should have listened to her this whole time.

"LUKE, PLEASE HELP ME! HELP! LUKE!"

Chewie pulled him into a hallway and the screams and thudding in his head got louder with every step. Luke hadn’t even noticed when he had started to cry until Chewie had slammed him against a door and he found himself only being held up by two furry paws.

"LUKE!” Felicity’s voice screamed, her voice hitting a climax of volume. The pounding seemed to be throbbing all over Luke’s body, banging him over and over against his head, shoulders, and back. He felt the vibrations tingling to the tips of his limbs.

“I can’t get her out of my head, Chewie,” Luke sobbed. “All I hear are her screams.”

"HELP ME!"

Chewie cocked his head, sadness in his eyes and softly roared, “Raw rah ro rah.”

Luke frowned, “…You hear it too?”

"LUKE! CHEWIE!" Felicity’s voice now took on cries to Chewie, the only other person who had to suffer through that footage.

Chewie replied that he didn’t think he’d ever stop hearing her screams.


"LUKE! LUKE! PLEASE!"

Luke sniffed, staring up into the eyes of his Wookiee friend; a friend he knew would always be there for him now matter what.

“She’s dead, Chewie,” Luke finally let the reality escape his lips. “Felicity is dead.”

"LUKE!"

“This is my fault,” Luke said.

Chewbacca gave a long series of roars. They were comforting words; a speech about the heartache of placing blame, the regrets of what ifs, and the danger of letting grief consume him. It was a touching and beautiful speech that calmed Luke, even if the whole time he could hear Felicity’s screaming and banging.


Chewie smiled and roared a word that was long in Shyriiwook, but short in Basis.

*Anytime.*

“LUKE!” Felicity screamed again.
Luke swallowed hard, “Chewie… You have to promise me something.”

War Rah?

He locked eyes with the Wookiee, “What Ben did to her… To her body… It’s sickening and pity… and the hardest thing I’ve ever had to watch in my life. And I don’t want Han and Leia to ever see what their son did to her. Please, Chewie, promise me you will never tell them what he did.”

Chewie hesitated, but promised his friend.

“Alright,” Luke swallowed back his tears, “let’s get out of here… Oh god, what am I going to tell Han? What am I going to say to Leia?”

Chewie patted Luke on the shoulder and promised they would do it together.

And as they got further from the hall, Felicity’s screams and the pounding faded away.

“Felicity Rhiaon is dead,” Kylo’s words echoed in Luke’s head as the Falcon flew away from Tonides.

Luke stumbled towards the sanctuary of the bunk room. He hadn’t spoken a word since revealing to Han what happened to Felicity. Han knew Luke well enough to leave him alone to grieve. Perhaps Han also needed time to process what Ben had done… and formulate a way to tell Leia.

Luke closed the door to the bunk room behind him. He stared at the room, his eyes focused on the bunk of the right wall – the bunk that had been unofficially claimed as Felicity’s. Luke’s unofficial bunk was the one across. He recalled the nights when Felicity would tease him by throwing a pillow across the room and tell him to go to sleep.

“Felicity Rhiaon is dead.”

Screaming out an anguished cry, Luke fell to his knees and sobbed helplessly.

This was supposed to be his happy ending. His happily ever after where he would spend the rest of his days with Felicity Rhiaon, the woman he loved most in the entire galaxy.

And instead he was lost at the end of a tragedy.

Because he knew Felicity Rhiaon was never coming back.
**Time to Move On**

Chapter Summary


Chapter Notes

To be clear in case this transition back is confusing, this chapter picks up right back on Jakku, immediately after the ending of chapter 22.

We were last on Jakku, four years after the Burning of Rornian with Luke remembering his life with Felicity. He did this because he discovered he’d been falling in love with Aletha (after an intimate shirtless moment was walked in on by Quom and Rey, and Quom told Luke as much.) After Aletha confessed she returns the attraction, Luke decides to officially let Felicity go. This takes place on Luke and Felicity’s tenth wedding anniversary, and Luke was having a day of depression where he didn’t want to do anything but stay in bed, stare at Felicity’s picture, not speak, and mourn all the people he lost and failed. Rey leaves Luke to himself on those days and goes into town, having Quom pick her up and drop her off.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

---

**The Long Way Home**

Chapter Thirty

Time to Move On

“I can forgive you this! I can forgive you this!”

Felicity’s final words rang in Luke’s head. He sobbed as he let the memories of their life together wash over him. That moment of Felicity Rhiaon’s death would never leave him – the number of times he had watched the Holo of it ensured that point.

But as Luke reflected on Felicity’s final moments, Luke realized with horror that the most heartbreaking part of it all was not how desperate and broken she had been nor how Ben stood by and let it happen, then finally delivered the killing blow. The worst part Luke realized, was that all she had to say… all she had to do to escape that horrible fate, to stop that inhumane torture and murder was admit one small truth.
If she had confessed that Rey was alive, Felicity could have saved her life.

The woman who had felt nothing upon holding Rey for the first time, and had gone so far as to almost kill her baby, had made the ultimate sacrifice. Felicity had chosen to literally die for their daughter.

And Luke would never get to thank her for that.

He loved Felicity Rhiaon with every fiber of his being. She had changed his life, shown him true happiness, and share with him that oh so rare, and oh so precious emotion of true love. Felicity Rhiaon was his soul’s mate, and there would never be another who could possibly match her.

But that didn’t mean he couldn’t love again. That didn’t mean that the loves that came before – Nakari, Biggs, even Leia to so degree – meant anything less. Aletha was not Felicity, and frankly Luke didn’t want her to be. If he had wanted a Felicity clone, he would have let things progress with Sienna Ternan – God was that a mistake.

The truth was as much as he did love Felicity... he had fallen in love with Aletha. Just as he had loved Nakari Kelen but still fallen in love with Felicity.

Luke remembered his grandfather’s words. Everyone got three loves in their live: their first love, their last love, and their true love. As it turned out, for Luke those three loves would be three different women. He had been wrong all those years ago: Felicity Rhiaon would not be the only love that mattered. His love for Aletha and Nakari were equally as special... and besides, his love for Rey trumped them all.

And as he turned the idea over his head again and again, it all sounded right.

Nakari Kelen was his first love.

Felicity Rhiaon was his true love.

And Aletha Kymeri would be his last love.

He would never forget Felicity. He would always love her. He didn’t want to let go, he shouldn’t *need* to let go.

And yet he knew it was time.

Luke sighed and looked at his wedding ring. He remembered again the way Felicity’s screams had faded when he exited the hallway with Chewie, and so now must Felicity now fade from his dreams. Tonight was the night of their tenth wedding anniversary. If he was going to let go at anytime, this would be it.

He ran a finger over him wedding band, stroking it like he might stroke her face if she were here. Yes, tonight, he would finally let Felicity Rhiaon go, not abandoning her from his heart, but letting himself move on. He had to do it, for Aletha, for Rey, for himself.

For Felicity.

Luke loved her so much that he would honour the request she made of him so many years ago, and he would find the strength to let her go.

But first, there was something he needed to do.
Rey found her father digging a grave. It wasn’t far from the walker, a little trek so it wouldn’t be in sight and a constant reminder. She found him by following the set of footprints Luke had left behind in the sand. Quom had dropped her off after taking her out to scavenge that day.

“Dad, did you kill someone?” Rey asked. “If so, please tell me it’s Roke.”

“Sorry, Sweetheart. Roke’s still around to terrorize us all,” Luke laughed. He stopped and held out his hand to her. It was not unlike the gesture he had made the day he invited Felicity to join him at his mother’s grave, “Come.”

Rey smiled, took his hand and let him guide her over and down to kneel at the grave. Her heart fluttered as she saw the words etched onto the sheet metal.

Felicity Rhiaon

21 BBY – 20 ABY

She gave her life for love.

“Mom,” Rey whispered, ghosting her fingers across the etchings.

Luke wrapped an arm around Rey’s shoulders and pulled her in tight, “She had a difficult life, but she loved us so much.”

Rey didn’t know if she wanted to smile or cry, “Where’s she actually buried?”

He sighed, “Nowhere. When the First Order killed her, they destroyed her body before I could salvage it. She does have a grave on the planet you were born, but I figured we should have a memorial for her here for the days we need her most.”

“And to remind us that it’s final?”

Luke looked at his daughter, surprised by her wisdom, “You’re an amazing young woman, My Rey of Light. I miss your mother so much, but I take comfort in knowing there’s so much of her in you. As long as you live, her spirit will never die.”

“Thanks, Dad, but let’s agree never to take this to a weird place. I may be like Mom, but that doesn’t mean I can completely replace her in everything.”

Luke shook his head. Even with no one else around the influence her, Rey somehow still managed to tease him about incest.

“You know, I sure can never say I’ll ever miss your mother’s sass with you shooting your mouth off like that,” he ruffled her hair.

“What can I say?” Rey grinned a clone of her father’s. “It’s in my blood.”

Luke laughed and kissed her forehead.

Rey rested her head against her father’s chest and sighed. Her eyes roamed over the image of her mother’s grave as she tried to conjure up memories of the woman who bore her.

“Dad?” Rey asked.

“Yes, Sweetheart?”
“How did you and Mom meet?”

Luke sighed; he wanted to tell her that story of the meeting on Yavin IV, but there were far too many identifying details involved in it.

“I can’t tell you that,” Luke confessed. “Not yet, but I promise I will someday. I promise I’ll tell you everything.”

“I know you will,” Rey snuggled up in his arms. “I just wish I knew more about how you two fell in love. Why I ended up being born. What made her so special.”

Luke smiled, snapshots of his memories flashing in his mind, “Someday I’ll tell you all of it… Well… maybe not all of it. I think you don’t want the story of our wedding night or your conception. Although the conception is a good story.”

Rey scrunched her face in disgust, “Ew, Dad! No!”

“I didn’t mean a play by play! More how your mother figured out she was pregnant. Look, you’ll understand when you’re older.”

“I’d rather not.”

Luke just chuckled.

“So… are there any non-gross stories you can tell me?”


“You were neighbors?”

“For over a year and a half. It started when I was apartment hunting, and we decided to go to lunch together with a… mutual friend who was helping me find the perfect apartment…”

They spoke for hours, Luke telling his daughter every possible story of her mother he could think of that wouldn’t endanger her. References to Han, Leia, and the rest were veiled as best as possible, but Rey caught on enough that Luke and Felicity had a very close set male and female friends that she jokingly asked if she should call them First Quom and First Aletha.

Luke told her stories until the sun had long set. Stories of Luke and Felicity attending the wedding of Riz’s daughter and Gunner’s son. Of that oh so awkward dinner they shared with Garvan Rhiaon – Alaric’s older brother – that ended with Felicity declaring to him that disappointing Garvan was the greatest accomplishment of her life. Stories of Rey’s first steps to Han and how Felicity subsequently tried to smother him with his own vest. Of Rey spending time in Felicity’s office colouring pictures and trying to make them look as good as Mommy’s. Of the lullabies she would sing Rey to sleep with, and the times she crawled into bed with a sick Rey and nursed her back to health, holding her the way Alaric always had refused to do when she got sick as a child because he couldn’t afford to get sick and miss work. What was a credit to Rey from one day of work compared to the invaluable memories she would carry of the feeling of her mother’s arms around her, comforting her in her most desperate times?

After a while, when the sun had gone down, Luke and Rey moved back into the walker. He continued to tell her the stories of Felicity as she etched another day into the wall.

“Dad?” Rey asked as he watched her carve the tally onto the wall. “Mom didn’t know her mom,
“Not really,” Luke admitted. “Not enough to miss her the way you miss yours.”

Rey looked down, “And she had a bad relationship with her dad, right?”

“That’s right.”

“Do you think somebody’s waiting for her? In the afterlife?”

Luke smiled, “I know there is.”

“I meant more than just friends. Mashra says the bond of family runs deeper than any friendship.”

“I wasn’t speaking of a friend, though she does- Did have plenty of those waiting. There was someone else.”

“Who? If she didn’t have family who cared about her-”

“She had someone who cared about her,” Luke interrupted. “Who loved her, and raised her, and protected her as fiercely as I do you.”

“Who’s that?” Rey asked.

“His name was Brendan Rhiaon. He was Felicity’s older brother and he meant the world to her.”

“Brother? Does that mean I have an actual uncle?”

Luke considered his answer, his mind flashing to Han for a moment, “You have a far bigger family than you know, Rey.”

“Uncle Brendan… What happened to him? Did I meet him?”

“No, he died about twenty years before you were born. As for what happened to him, well…”

Rey raised a coy eyebrow, “Let me guess… That’s a story I can’t tell you at this time, Rey, but I promise that one day I will reveal the truth, and that I’m hiding this solely for your own safety.”

Luke mirrored the looked on her face, “That’s it, sarcasm has to be genetic because I certainly didn’t teach you to be that sassy.”

She smiled, “I’ll do my best to honour Mom’s memory and let her sarcasm live on.”

Luke just laughed.

It had to be nearly one in the morning when Rey finally fell asleep. Curled up in her hammock, clutching her Luke and Felicity dolls, Luke watched her sleep. He watched how her face was scrunched up adorably, her chest rise and fall with steady breaths, how she slept on her side like her mother, how her hair would fall in her face the same way.

He looked down at his wedding ring. He missed Felicity so much… and yet he couldn’t deny that something new had blossomed in his heart for Aletha.

“Love me forever, Luke…” Felicity’s words echoed in his head from the first night they had made love. “But don’t let our love shut you off. I will love you beyond my dying days, and I know you will
love me too. But don’t be afraid to move on… if you find another who can keep your heart full until we meet again, take that chance."

Luke smiled at the wedding ring. He knew in his heart that someday he would see her again… and he knew that she would want this for him.

He glanced back at his bed – a small furnished cot with an old storage crate next to it as a bedside table. It was on that bedside table he put the ring every night, and it was also where he kept the Holo of Felicity.

Luke walked over and sat on his bed. Slowly he stripped off his boots and shirt, and after taking a quick glance to make sure Rey was sleeping – living in an AT-AT afforded the pair very little modesty – he changed into a pair of sleep pants.

He switched on the Holo of Felicity, and studied it for a moment. He let himself take in her beautiful form as the image snuggled their daughter. Then he took a deep breath and untied the cord that held Felicity’s wedding and engagement rings around his neck. He placed the rings on the bedside table.

And then he slid off his wedding ring.

He held it in his palm for a moment. It felt heavier than he thought it should. Luke clasped his fingers around it, and looked up at the Holo of Felicity.

“I love you,” he whispered to her image.

Then he flicked it off.

He crossed the room and kissed Rey’s sleeping forehead. Then he returned to his bed, finished his nightly routine, and got into it, ready for sleep to take him to the dream that haunted him.

It was time to finish this.

He had the dream as usual of Felicity locked in a cell. She looked as happy as ever to see him, and she was stronger, each visit making her appear it little by little more.

“Luke!” Felicity exclaimed, running to take her rightful place in his arms.

But that night he did not move to embrace her.

Sensing something was wrong, Felicity stopped in her tracks, a frown on her face.

“Luke?” she asked in confusion. His face looked so serious.

“I love you, Felicity,” he said. “I want you to know that.”

“Oh course I know that. Luke, please listen to me. You have to come to Tonides and save me. There’s still a chance. Please, Luke. You know I wouldn’t ask if I could do it myself. You have to come get me. You still can!”

“I wish that was true,” Luke’s voice hitched. A tear was starting in one of his eyes. “I wish I could just go to Tonides, and you would be there. That you, Rey, and I could be a family again… but I know the truth, and I accept it now. You’re never coming back.”

“No, that’s not true. Luke, please just listen to me!”
He shook his head, “You once told me not to waste my life mourning you. So I will respect your request and let myself live the fullest life I could have… Even if it’s in as isolated a place as this.”

“No, Luke, please,” Felicity begged. She crossed the room in two sets and grasped his hands. She looked up into his eyes, desperation shining in her own. “Don’t give up on me! Don’t let go! We can be together again, you, me, and Rey. You just… Please don’t let me go.”

A pained smile crossed his face. He lifted his natural hand and gently stroked his cheek, brushing his fingers through her dirty, matted, shortly sheared hair.

“And that’s how I know this isn’t really you,” Luke said softly. “Because I know that you wouldn’t want me to waste my life on regrets… The way you did.”

Shock and terror filled the eyes of the ghost that haunted his dreams.


He leaned forward and kissed her forehead.

“Felicity Rhiaon,” Luke whispered, “it has been an absolute honour to be your husband. I have upheld my vow to you to stay yours until death did us part.”

He felt the ring clasped in his hand as it had been in the world not belonging to dreams. His wedding ring dug into his palm as Felicity’s held her hands over his. Slowly he shifted his hands, slipping the ring into hers and releasing her hand.

Felicity frowned, looking down at her balled fist. His false hand still clasped her hand, connecting then one final time. He squeezed her hand reassuringly and watched as she opened her fist to see his wedding band sitting in her palm.

Her head snapped up in shock, her face turning white, and her throat going dry and voiceless.

“Now I return it to you,” Luke whispered. “I upheld my vow for ten years… and I would have gladly held it for ten thousand.”

Felicity’s mouth started to quiver.

He bent down and kissed her hand that was still clasped with his own.

“I love you, Felicity Rhiaon,” Luke declared. “I have since the day you first smirked at me on Yavin IV, and will continue to love you until I draw my dying breath… But it’s time for me to live again, the way you showed me how to live. To laugh. To love. I will hold you as dear in my heart as the daughter born of our love. Yes, one day we will all be together again… but not in this life.”

Felicity shook her head, “No, Luke-”

“Goodbye, Felicity Rhiaon… I will always love you.”

He took a step back from her.

“Please, Luke!” she begged. “Don’t do this! Don’t let me go!”

He released her hand.
And then she was gone.

CRASH!

Luke shot up in bed at the noise. He groaned and rubbed his eyes when he saw Rey do the same.

“What was that?” Rey yawned as she looked around the walker in confusion.

He mirrored her action, and his eyes set on the source of the noise. As usual, while having a Force Vision in his sleep, he had begun to kick. His foot had caught his bedside crate and knocked it clean over.


“You want a hand flipping it upright?” Rey offered.

“No, Sweetheart. It’s late. I’ll fix it in the morning. Just go back to sleep.”

“Are you sure?”

“I’m sure,” Luke laid down in his cot and readjusted his blankets. “Besides, Aletha would have my head if she knew you weren’t getting enough sleep. She’s obsessed with the idea of you growing up to be a healthy, well-adjusted, normal young woman.”

“Sounds like a boring life.”


“Night, Daddy.”

He smiled; she had recognized how badly he needed comfort that night. Even the simple term of Daddy meant the world to him that night.

“Thank you,” he said.

Rey smiled in the dark, “Anytime.”

It wasn’t until the morning that Luke realized the damage he had done. He had flipped the storage crate upright and returned the items to the top.

He hadn’t put on his wedding ring that morning, even though his finger felt oddly naked without it. Luke wrestled a while over what to do with it before deciding he would put it on the string he wore around his neck with Felicity’s rings. Maybe it wasn’t totally moving on to always wear them, but with the shady characters around Jakku, Luke wasn’t comfortable with leaving something of such high value anywhere but on his physical person.

Luke went to reach for his wedding ring, when he noticed it.

It was gone.

“Rey?” Luke frowned as she got ready for the day. “Have you seen my ring?”

She shrugged, in the middle of retying her hair buns, “Last time I saw it, it was on your finger. Is it missing?”
“Yeah,” Luke bent down to examine the sand around his crate. He frantically digged around the area. “I put it on the crate last night when I went to bed. It must have been knocked over. Where is it?”

Rey bent down and joined his digging. At first, the missing ring was a minor nuisance, but when an hour had passed and it was still nowhere to be found, Luke started to panic.

“I don’t think we’re going out scavenging today,” Rey said as she helped her father paw through the sand.

They tore the walker apart, literally from its head to its toes. But as much as they dug, there was no sign of glinting gold band.

“I’m sorry, Dad,” Rey said finally around three o’clock in the afternoon. “We’ve gone through what feels like every grain of sand. It’s nowhere to be found. The desert has probably claimed it. A Scavenger’s going to find it a hundred years from now after a bad sandstorm, but us… maybe it’s not meant to be. I… I think it’s lost. You’re never going to get it back. Maybe you should just accept it.”

Luke smiled and glanced towards the turned off Holo of Felicity.

“Yeah… Maybe I should.”

“Food delivery!” Aletha’s voice rang out in the walker several hours later.

Luke and Rey looked up in surprise to see Quom and Aletha entering the walker bearing packets of rations.

“What are you two doing here?” Luke asked.

“Don’t you listen?” Quom frowned. “Doc literally just told you. We’re bringing food.”

“Why?” Rey asked.

“Doc, I thought you taught this girl better biology.”

Aletha shook her head, “You guys didn’t come into town today, so we wanted to make sure you had something to eat.”

“Thanks,” Luke smiled, pulling up an old workbench, and a repurposed pilot seat to their beat-up dinner table. “We haven’t had dinner yet, so it’s appreciated. But don’t you worry about us, I keep the walker stocked with enough rations to feed two people three full portions a day for three weeks.”

Quom gave a low whistle, “I’m definitely spending the next X’us’R’iia here.”

“Let’s get those rations cooking,” Aletha grinned. “I’m starving.”

“Doc, we live on Jakku under the tyranny of Unkar Plutt,” Quom said dryly. “We’re always starving.”

Aletha rolled her eyes.

“Rey, do you think you could cook them for us?” Luke asked. “I wanted to talk to Aletha alone for a few minutes.”

“Sure,” Rey grabbed the packets and started the well-rehearsed routine of preparing rations.
Luke turned to Aletha, “Do you mind going for a walk?”


Quom looked awkwardly between the pair, “I’ll, uh… Stay here and make sure Rey doesn’t burn down the walker.”

Luke offered Aletha his arm, “Shall we?”

She took it, “We shall.”

“So, where are we going?” Aletha asked as Luke led her away from the walker.

“I want to show something,” Luke brought her down the path that would soon become well tread. He took her to the grave he had made for Felicity, “I did this last night.”

Aletha stared at it, not quite sure what to say, “Luke…”

He looked away from her and let go of her arm, “I wanted to fight this, how I feel about you. I thought after Felicity no woman could ever turn my head. Yet there it turned. You entered my life in one of the darkest phases of my life… and you brought light to it. You understood what I needed and when I needed it. I live for the days when I can help you, make you smile, even just… see your face. I love Felicity Rhiaon… but I’m in love with you too. This love doesn’t make mine for her any cheaper, nor does my love for her cheapen my love for you. It’s not the exact same love, and it’s not pieces of my heart divided between the two of you. I love both of you, and I think I could be genuinely happy with you.”

Aletha sighed, “I’m in love with you too, Luke, and I accept that you love us both… but I won’t share you. If we’re in a relationship it’s can’t be Felicity this and Felicity that. I would never ask you to forget her… Just to move on. If you want to be with me: be with me.”

“I understand that.”

“That’s why I won’t let anything happen until you have let her go… No matter how long it takes.”

Luke smiled, “You know, when you told me that the day before yesterday, I thought I could never do it. That I would need some grand sign to indicate that it was time to move on… And then this morning I lost my wedding ring.”

Aletha blinked, “You what?”

“Aletha, I have spent the past few days remembering everything about Felicity and closing the book on that chapter of my life. I have been gathering myself to move on from her so that I could be ready to give you all of me.” Luke looked down at the ground, “Last night, when I took off my wedding ring for bed, I didn’t plan on putting it back on in the morning. I was going to string it around my neck with Felicity’s rings. But I knocked over my bedside crate and lost the ring in the sand. It’s nowhere to be found. So if I need a sign, I think losing my wedding ring is a pretty good one.”

“You’re right, it is.” Aletha glanced over at the grave, “Did this go up before or after losing the ring?”


“I see.”
“She’s dead, Aletha. I’ve accepted it, and I’ve let her go.”

He took a step forward, arms outstretched to embrace her, but Aletha put a hand on his chest to stop him from closing their distance.

“Wait,” she said.

Luke scowled.

Aletha took a deep breath and gathered her courage, “I believe what you say. I know you wouldn’t make a grave for her if you didn’t have the strength to let her go. To make it so final.”

Luke decided never to tell her about Felicity’s grave on Rornian.

“But we’re not ready yet,” Aletha said. “Not for this. I know you’ve moved on, but you’re not ready to jump into another relationship. Trust me, I’ve been there. I’ve been the rebound, and I never want to be that again.”


“And that’s why I want you to wait. Take some time and get used to the idea of her being gone. Take the time to collect yourself, and I’ll take the time I need to do the same. I don’t want us to be together until we’re both ready to fully give ourselves to the other.”


He reached out with his left hand and clasped her hand in his own. Their fingers intertwined, and Aletha felt the absence of his wedding ring.

“But I promise you,” Luke leaned in so close to his lips that Aletha could feel his breath tickling her, “we will be together.”

The night of his tenth anniversary was the last time Luke dreamed of Felicity locked in a cell, begging him to come save her.

Now his dreams were filled with Aletha.

Chapter End Notes

ANNOUNCEMENT: For those who have been worried about the pace of this story, I have some news that might be really good for you, or really bad for me. I needed to challenge myself to get this story going, so I have made a very serious wager with my best friend. If I do not get this story to the TFA portion (Chapter 44) by December 15, 2017, I do not get to go see The Last Jedi on opening night.

…I have a bad feeling about this.

Coming Up Next Chapter…
X’us’R’iia

When a X’us’R’iia – the Teedo term for a very bad sandstorm – hits Jakku, Luke is forced to camp out with Aletha. As Aletha reveals the story of her past, Luke struggles with the fact he’s trapped in a tent for five days with a woman he has unresolved sexual tension with.
The Unwanted Ones

Chapter Summary


Chapter Notes

Trigger Warning: Mentions of sexual abuse appear in this chapter. If this content is triggering, skip from the paragraph beginning with “In the work camps,” and go to the one starting with “Why’s your tattoo placed there?”

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The Long Way Home

Chapter Thirty-One

The Unwanted Ones

AGE TEN

Luke Skywalker, Rey Rhiaon Skywalker, Quom Tinadar, and Ivano Troade sat outside of Doctor Aletha Kymeri’s tent. It was the middle of the night, Jakku’s two moons shining in the blackness. They sat outside on the ground, fighting off the seductive call of slumber as they anxiously waited.

When Mashra was rushed into Aletha’s tent earlier that day, they made sure to say their goodbyes. No matter how much Aletha insisted that Mashra would be just fine, the group knew it wasn’t true; not this time. The looming shadow of death hung in the air, and as they were forced out of Aletha’s tent, they all knew to take one last look at Mashra, for it would be their final one.
But there was one person who refused to believe that Mashra was going to die, and it was the doctor operating frantically on her.

“Just hold on, Mashra,” Aletha urged as an old medical vitals projector blared warning noises behind her.

**BLEEP! BLEEP! BLEEP!**

“Doctor,” Mashra groaned as Aletha started her on a new course of drugs administrated through an oxygen mask. Her anesthesia – or at least what passed for anesthesia on Jakku, had long worn off, and she was trying not to look down at her cut open chest.

“It’ll be okay, Mashra,” Aletha desperately assured her. “I swear to you, you’ll be alright.”

**BLEEP! BLEEP! BLEEP!**

“Doctor Kymeri, please-”

“Just trust me, Mashra. You’ll be fine. You’ll be okay. I’m going to fix you.”

She would. She *had* to.

…She couldn’t let it happen again. Not what happened last time.

---

*Six Years Before the Battle of Yavin…*

“Just hold on,” nineteen-year-old Aletha urged the Aqualish as an old medical vitals projector blared warning noises behind her.

**BLEEP! BLEEP! BLEEP!**

“Doctor,” the Aqualish groaned as Aletha started her on a new course of drugs administrated through an oxygen mask. Her anesthesia – or at least what passed for anesthesia on a recently firebombed Imperial Medical Hospital, had long worn off, and she was trying not to look down at her cut open chest.

“It’ll be okay,” Aletha desperately assured the Aqualish. “I swear to you, you’ll be alright.”

**BLEEP! BLEEP! BLEEP!**

The supervising Doctor, Doctor Hampton rolled his eyes, “Doctor, please-”

“Just trust me, Honey. You’ll be fine. You’ll be okay. I’m going to fix you.”

“Doctor,” Hampton grabbed Aletha’s arm. “We have tried every course of treatment, but do not have a limitless medical supply anymore. This woman has a fatal lung disease. If she doesn’t die now, she’ll die in a month. We have to let her go.”

**BLEEP! BLEEP! BLEEP!**

“No, I can fix her!” Aletha insisted.

“I’m ordering you not to,” Hampton said coolly.

**BLEEP! BLEEP! BLEEP!**
Aletha looked around the room at the dozen or so nurses and med students staring at the two doctors. How she played this game today would affect the career she had in the Imperial Medical Corps for the rest of her career.

“Nurse, get me 49 CC of ambidexdrine,” Aletha ordered, shoving past Hampton. “Now Tysel, grab me the 72 Hyrex clamp. Enric, I need you to-”

**BLEEP! BL-**

The beeping stopped. All heads whipped around to see Hampton holding the unplugged cord of the life support machine keeping the Aqualish alive.

“Time of death: 4:02 pm,” the nurse next to the Aqualish declared.

Aletha’s head was ringing.

“You- You killed her!” she declared.

“She was a waste of our resources,” Hampton replied coolly. “If you want to be a doctor, you have to make tough decisions like this.”

“I swore an oath against this exact thing! Do no harm.”

“I think you’ll find the Imperial Army Medical Corps has a very different set of standards.”

Aletha narrowed her eyes, “When the General hears what you did to me, she’ll-”

“I’ll do what?”

All eyes swung to the door where the imposing General Alecta Anthea stood. Tall, blonde, athletic, pale skin, and blue eyes that felt as cold as ice, she was the kind of woman who could step on and kill a child’s beloved pet, then keep walking without every sparing a glance back for the creature stupid enough to get in her way, or its heartbroken master.

Her cold eyes were locked on Aletha with a terrifying glare.


“Let me just explain,” Aletha said when they arrived in Alecta’s office.

“You will speak when you are spoken to,” General Alecta pushed past her and took a seat at her desk.

“But-”

“Silence.”

As the General started to do some paperwork, Aletha waited impatiently. She stood with a ramrod posture and fidgeting hands clasped behind her back. She watched the clock slowly tick by as the General didn’t even acknowledge her, too busy flipping through files in silence.

The General’s office was more sterile than an operating room. Silver and chrome fixtures everywhere, not a speck of dust dare lay on any surface. On the walls were the usual Imperial issue propaganda and posters about employee rights and numbers to report fraud. It was a laughable display, in the Imperial Military, you had no rights, and the only thing people were reported for was
rebellion.

Which was why she was now standing in the office of the fearsome General Alecta Anthea.

There were two Holos on the desk of the General – the only personal touches in the entire office. The first was a picture of her family: a similar looking pair of blonde haired, blue eyed, pale skinned couple with their five blonde haired, blue eyed, pale skinned daughters. It was easy to tell which one was Alecta. The teenager looked as sour-faced today as she had when the picture was taken. Scowling and eyeing the youngest girl clinging happily off her father’s neck, hoping her glare would stop said sister from knocking into her and mussing up her perfectly pressed Imperial Cadet uniform.

The other Holo was of her shaking hands with Grand Moff Tarkin. The Holo was there to display to all how highly ranked she was that she got to consort with important people like Tarkin. Never mind that it was only for a brief three minutes at the last Imperial Ball, and he hadn’t even bothered to ask her name.

For forty-five minutes, General Alecta made Aletha stand there and sweat. Aletha knew better than to try her luck to question her. Last officer that had done that, General Alecta had punched in the face right in front of everyone. Aletha really didn’t want to go home that night and explain that black eye to her sister Adrinna – the head of the house since Father’s passing last year.

Calmly, General Alecta set down her stylus and looked up at Aletha.

“What in the Galaxy did you think you were doing?” General Alecta asked coldly, her military polish shining through.

“Alecta-”

General Alecta’s glare was sharp.

“General,” Aletha corrected. “Please, you have to understand, Doctor Hampton killed that woman.”

“Her lungs killed her,” General Alecta said shortly. “Doctor Hampton was conserving precious resources. In case you have forgotten, we recently lost many supplies because of the Rebellion’s firebombing.”

“Radicals firebombed the hospital. Not the Rebellion.”

“They are one in the same. Or are you telling me you’re an Alliance Sympathizer?”

Aletha looked down, “Of course not.”

General Alecta coldly stared at the meek girl for a long time.

“This is the way things are run here, Aletha. If you don’t like it, leave.”

“You’d like that,” Aletha muttered.

General Alecta shot her a look, “Who do you think you are to talk to me like that? To call me out in a conflict with your superior like that?”

“I just thought-”

“I know what you thought. How dare you do that? To expect to call on me, to throw around my name like you have some power with it. You have no idea what I have been through to get to the position I am in today. To lie, to cheat, to steal, to do whatever it takes to achieve a position that the
Empire does not want women to be in. I have fought for years to be one of the only female Generals in the entire military, and then some child comes onto my base and thinks she can cling to my coattails."

“I have fought hard too,” Aletha objected. “I’m one of the youngest doctors in the Imperial Medical Corps.”

“Oh please,” General Alecta laughed cruelly. “You were in the fast track program! A doctorate in a year? You are barely qualified to administer a band-aid! You know what they call people like you? The children that get all gung ho to be doctors and then fast track to join the Corps to do battlefield medical work? …Cannon fodder. That’s what you are. What you chose to be. An expendable life in the military that’ll wrap up a few wounds, and be an adequate meat shield during blaster fire. If you stay in this career, you’ll be-”

“Dead in a year,” Aletha finished. “A sacrifice, taking the blast that would otherwise hit a valuable soldier that actually can do something for the Empire. Yes, I know the speech. You’ve given it plenty of times. And I know what you’re going to say next, that I should have just stayed home with Daddy where I belong. Well, I’m not going to do that. I’m here to fight for the right thing.”

General Alecta glared at her, “Then let me make one thing clear: I did not ask for you to be here. I do not want you here. So, if you’re going to stay here, then grow up and realize that the Imperial Military is a messy place with a lot of darkness, and rules you won’t agree with.”

“And if I refuse to abide by those rules?”

“I will turn you in for treason so fast your head will spin. So, shape up, and stop embarrassing me. If I ever hear you use my name again… You will regret it. Understood?”

Aletha bowed her head, “Understood.”

“Now get out of my office.”

Aletha turned and walked towards the door.

“Oh, and Aletha?” General Alecta’s voice stopped her in her tracks.

Aletha stopped and turned back to the desk. General Alecta’s head was down, focusing on some paperwork.

“Adrinna’s making a roast for dinner tonight,” Alecta said casually, not looking up. “Don’t be late.”

Aletha gave a small grin, “It’s your night to do the dishes.”

“Don’t remind me. When is that husband of hers going to fix the freaking dishwasher? He promised to fix it three months ago.”

“The real question is when is Adrinna going to stop trusting Timor to fix things?”

“Indeed.”

Alecta looked up from her desk, and the women’s eyes met for a minute.

“It’s always nice to see you at work, Sister,” Aletha said.

“Aletha Anthea, you are a terrible liar,” Alecta replied. She nodded to the door, “Now get the hell out of my office before I decide to give you a black eye to maintain my reputation. I am not
explaining that to Adrinna.”

And with a small nod, Aletha left her sister’s office.

It was her usual stop to escape to when she needed a moment alone. On the far side of the hospital there was an over extended roof above the window to one of the janitor’s closets. There was a thicket of trees surrounding the pavement that ran the perimeter of the building, and it perfectly blocked all views of the area. It was the only place in the building where Aletha could be alone.

It was also the only place no one could see her cry.

God, what was she doing here? Alecta was right, she was no real doctor. She was no real soldier; that was Alecta. Alecta would come home after the war with a box full of medals… and Aletha would just come home in a box.

What was there even to fight for? This Empire? This place of oppression and death. Would she become like Hampton and play God, deciding how lived and died based solely on resources? This wasn’t the life she wanted. This wasn’t the life she promised Father she would live.

Maybe she should just be like Adrinna, marry, have some children, and live the life of a homemaker. Or be like Athena and get a menial operations job. Or if she was so eager to travel and help people, be a teacher like Anissa and go from Imperial Academy to Imperial Academy.

What was the point in healing people if the Empire was just going to send them back to their deaths? Did her work even matter? …Did she?

Aletha was startled by the sound of the window latch. She turned just in time to see a man in a janitor’s jumpsuit crawling out the window.

He had sand toned skin, thin brown eyes, and messy straight black hair. He had the grace of a feline as he jumped down from the window, landing easily on his feet in a move that if Aletha imitated would probably result in a shattered ankle. The first three buttons of his jumpsuit were lazily unclasped, and a silver necklace with some symbols from his homeworld hung from his neck. A cigarette was clutched between his yellow stained teeth, and he looked so proud of himself as he turned away from his successful escape.

He turned from the window, chuckling to himself, raising a lighter to his cigarette.

“Uh, Doctor,” the Janitor startled. “I was just, uh…”

She raised an eyebrow, and her irises flicked to the cigarette he couldn’t deny was in his mouth.

“Uh…” the Janitor thought hard as he pulled the cigarette out of his mouth. “… Want one?”

“You’re asking a doctor if they want a cigarette?” Aletha repeated slowly.

“Alright, dumb idea,” the Janitor conceded, twiddling the stick between in his middle and forefinger. “What are you doing out here?”

“I could ask you the same thing.”

“I think what I’m doing is obvious,” he shrugged. He lifted the cigarette back to lips, “Do you mind if I…?”
Aletha sighed, and crossed her arms, “I suppose not.”

“Well… let me know,” he said awkwardly, lighting it. The Janitor took a long drag and exhaled in relief, “Also, let me know if the smoke is bothering you. Your eyes are looking pretty… puffy.”

Aletha was thankful he didn’t explicitly point out that she had been crying.

“Thanks,” Aletha looked away.

“Oh, and do me a favor and don’t tell my boss I snuck out for a cigarette.”

“Sure. Whatever.”

For a long time they stood in silence. The Janitor tried his best not to blow smoke in her face, while Aletha politely tried not to cough whenever the breeze would bring it right to her.

“So…” the Janitor said after a while. “Why were you crying?”

Aletha wiped her eyes, “You can tell?”

“I’ve always had a sixth sense of sort. What happened?”

“Doctor Hampton pulled the plug on one of my patients.”

“Oh, that bastard? I swear he’d pull the plug on all the patients if the General gave him half a chance. She’d do it too. Pardon my language, but she’s one sadistic bitch.”

Aletha laughed, “I know. She’s my sister.”

“My condolences.” The Janitor grinned, “I’m assuming that based on your tone, you’re not upset with me calling her a bitch.”

“Not at all. Our sister Athena does it on a regular basis. Funny part, Athena’s her favorite sister.”

“How many do you have?”

“I’m the youngest of five girls.”

“I guess your parents really wanted a boy.”

“Something like that,” Aletha shrugged.

The Janitor regarded her for a moment, “Must be hard to work with your sister.”

“Especially since she doesn’t want me here.”

“Do you want to be here?”

Aletha paused.

“What?” the Janitor asked.

“Nothing,” Aletha shook her head.

“Come on, tell me. I’m not going to turn you in for treason.”

“I’m not a traitor!” Aletha exclaimed. “I just… Sometimes I think there’s gotta be something… more
out there. You know what I mean?”

“Doc... You have no idea,” the Janitor grinned. He lifted his lighter, “You sure you don’t want one?”

That was when Aletha noticed the symbol etched onto the lighter; a symbol she would later learn to be called a starbird. It was back in the days before the starbird became a known Rebel symbol. Back then it was only known between Rebels as a way to identify themselves to each other.

“I’ll still pass,” Aletha said kindly.

“Well, I should be getting back.” The Janitor’s cigarette was nearly smoked through. He throw the butt on the ground and smushed it with his boot. “It was nice meeting you. Maybe we can talk again some time?”

“Maybe,” Aletha smiled.

The Janitor turned and gripped the elevated ledge of the windowsill.

Aletha rolled her eyes at the display, “You know there’s a door a few yards away?”

“Come on, Doc,” the Janitor pulled himself through the window. Surprisingly, he landed perfectly on his feet. He rebuttoned his jumpsuit and grinned at Aletha, “Gotta live on the edge sometimes. I’ll see you around, Doc.”

“Hey, wait!” Aletha called.

The Janitor paused, “Yeah?”

“What’s your name?”

The Janitor smiled, “Tell me yours first.”

“Aletha Anthea.”

“Well, Doctor Anthea, people around here call me Cynan, but you? ...Call me, Obik.”

That was the day the Rebellion started to recruit Doctor Aletha Anthea.

---

**BLEEP! BLEEP! BLEEP!**

The beeping of the machines brought Aletha back to the present.

“Alright, hold on Mashra,” Aletha said as the Aqualish’s breaths got ragged. She turned to her medicine cabinet, “I just have to get-”

She stopped. She was completely out of ambidexdrine.

“No,” Aletha whispered. “No!”

She frantically started ripping open drawers, trying to find something — *anything* — to save Mashra’s life.

“Doctor,” Mashra moaned.
“I’m going to save you! I’m going to save you!”

Mashra caught Aletha’s hand.

“Aletha. Stop.”

Aletha’s eyes met Mashra’s, and her gaze told Aletha everything.

“No,” Aletha whispered.

“It’s time,” Mashra was resigned to her fate. “Aletha, please. I’ve been in so much pain, and it only gets worse.”

“But I can save you.”

“To live what kind of life? This? Scavenging, starving, waiting for my next coughing fit? Aletha, please… Let me go.”

“But I can do it. I can save you,” Aletha’s voice shook. Tears were gathering in her eyes.

Mashra smiled and closed her hands over Aletha’s, “I know you can, but this is my choice… Please, Aletha, let me die with dignity.”

Aletha sobbed, and then gave a slow nod, “Is there anything I can do to make you more comfortable?”

“Stay with me?”

Aletha knelt down, and shifted her hands so they were over top Mashra.

“Until the end.”

Five minutes later, on the other side of the tent, Luke’s eyes snapped open. Rey was asleep, leaning against his leg – he himself caught between sleeping and awaking – when he felt the shift in the Force.

Blurrily, he looked to his right where Quom was leaning against him and snoring. He nudged Quom, and the Vrogem woke with a groan.


He stopped when he saw Luke’s face.

“She’s gone isn’t she?” Quom sobered.

Luke nodded, “Mashra’s one with the Force.”

They buried Mashra next to Felicity’s grave. It was a small ceremony, only Luke, Rey, Aletha, Quom, and Ivano. Aletha delivered the eulogy, expressing profound sadness for the loss of Mashra and speaking about how Mashra affected their lives.

Luke lowered her body into the grave, Quom made the headstone – another sheet of scrap metal with her name carved upon it – Ivano buried her, and Rey set atop the grave a small bundle of spinebarrels she had picked.
Then Ivano, Quom, and Aletha returned to town to partake in the most unsettling part of death on Jakku: splitting up the deceased’s possessions among themselves. And in a town full of scavengers and petty doctors, sometimes that argument got violent. To prevent her things getting stolen while they were burying her, the group had actually concealed Mashra’s death from the citizens of Niima Outpost – Aletha fed the town some story about Mashra recovering in her tent, and Luke paid Zuvio to have one of his men watch the tent.

Luke and Rey stayed at their walker. Quom and Aletha promised to procure a few trifles for them, but Luke just wanted the extremely vulnerable and heartbroken Rey to be with him and away from all of that ugliness.

Rey didn’t cry as much over death anymore. She had lost so many people in her young life – Felicity, Alyla, Reine, Obik, Gavyn, Zena, Tyla, the rest of the Jedi Order, Mashra, and countless friendly scavengers on Jakku. Frankly, by age ten she was starting to numb to the feeling.

Still, Rey cried heavily over Mashra, breaking down and begging her father to explain why it had to happen and why people had to suffer terrible long-term illnesses like Mashra did. Five years after losing Felicity, Luke had developed no better explanations than the ones he had relayed back then.

Five nights after Mashra’s death, Luke came into the walker after meeting Quom for pickup. Quom had been bringing Luke and Rey small projects to tinker on as well as replenishment of food and water.

He found Rey sitting on his cot, Dosmit Raeh’s helmet on her head, and drawing in her future survival guide with the set of charcoal pencils Aletha had procured as a birthday present for her three months ago.

“Hungry, Sweetheart?” Luke snuck a kiss under the helmet onto her forehead.

Rey shrugged, her concentration on the paper.

He glanced down at the drawing, and the smile froze on his face. Taking up the entire page was an extremely detailed picture of Mashra. She looked calm, her hands folded, and her posture gentle. In the corner, written in capital letters was her name, and underneath was a heartbreaking caption in brackets.

Luke sat down on the cot behind her. He wrapped a single arm around her, and pulled her backwards into his embrace to hug her close.

“I miss her too, Sweetheart,” he whispered.

And Luke held her that night as Rey cried herself to sleep.

In the morning, Aletha’s speeder was parked outside the walker. Luke found her standing at Mashra’s grave, staring blankly with tears in her eyes.

“Morning,” he greeted, coming to a stop at her side.

“Morning,” Aletha said quietly.

“Have you eaten?”

“Think nothing of it. You can come any time.”

They stood in silence for a while.

“I should have saved her,” Aletha whispered.

Luke glanced at Felicity’s grave, “I know how you feel.”

“I could have done it. She could still be alive right now if I just tried a little harder.”

“Mashra asked you to let her die, Aletha. You made sure she was comfortable up to her final moment.”

“I still shouldn’t have done it,” Aletha shook her head. “You know I was originally part of the Imperial Medical Corps?”

“Really?”

“I did the fast track program, so I ended up operating on people without even the level of expertise of a nurse… How many people did I kill because of my incompetence?”

“Aletha-”

“I wanted a life more than this. To not have to choose between preserving resources and preserving lives. My sister was right, I’m nothing better than cannon fodder.”

“Aletha stop,” Luke said. He grabbed her hands and turned her to face him, “You are an amazing woman. An amazing doctor. You’re no cannon fodder. Trust me, I was a commanding officer. I know what cannon fodder looks like.”

Aletha smiled, “That’s a little cynical.”

Luke shrugged, “With a wife like mine, it rubs off on you after a while.”

She laughed, and Luke couldn’t help but crack a smile. He loved her smile; that smile as warm as the sun of Jakku. He found himself reaching out and brushing a lock of hair out of her face. He heard how her breath hitched slightly.


“Luke,” she whispered back, staring into his eyes. She dared not even blink and ruin the connection held between their gazes.

“Aletha Kymeri, you are one of the most amazing women I have met in my life,” Luke’s hand stroked the soft line of her jaw. “And, that’s saying a lot.”

“And you Luke Erso, are one of the most amazing men I have met in my life… Though that’s not exactly saying much in my case.

Luke laughed, and that warm smile of hers widened.


“I practice speeches in my head before I say them,” Luke grinned. “Besides… it’s easy to talk to someone you love.”
Aletha’s breath stopped, “Luke-”

“Aletha,” he whispered back.

He took his chance. Luke leaned forward and captured her lips in his own. She startled at first, but soon she was kissing him back.

It was strange to kiss a woman who wasn’t Felicity… or looked exactly like Felicity. He didn’t have to bend his head down to match her height. Her hands didn’t automatically fist in his hair like Felicity loved to do. Instead she gripped his hips, pulling his whole body in closer to her. Her lips moved against him different… but in a good way.

She was all warm, and soft, and everything just felt… good. The charge of passion riddled his body once more, and he felt that physical connection of love he had so missed.

No, Aletha was not Felicity, but that was okay.

Eventually, she tore away from him.


“Aletha,” he took a step forward, but she stopped him with a finger on his lips.

“No, stop.”

He frowned, “What’s wrong?”

“I… I’m sorry. I shouldn’t have let that happen. Especially not… here,” Aletha looked to Felicity’s grave.

Luke sighed, “Aletha, please… I’ve moved on. Okay? I took the time I need to mourn her, move on, figure who I am without, and now… Now I want to be with you. Okay? I’ve moved on. I promise.”

“I know you have… but I haven’t.” Aletha looked away from him, “I’m… going to say good morning to Rey. Are you coming?”

“Give me a moment.”

Aletha nodded and returned to the walker.

Luke sighed and glanced over at Felicity’s grave.

“I should have got Han to do it,” he said to the grave, “Or at least Quom. He’s close enough to being the Jakku version of Han… albeit a little less talented at throwing a punch.”

He smiled and rested his hand on his wife’s grave.

“I miss you.”

Luke took another deep breath, and then headed for the walker, ready to pretend like nothing had happened.

AGE ELEVEN
The only real place on the Pilgrim’s Road is Old Meru’s, a shack with a few tables and chairs and a coolth reservoir that went dry before I was born. The cool air’s long gone, but there’s still shade and a trough for happabores.

Old Meru is mostly cybernetic parts, and when they cut her up they discarded her ability to make conversation.

- Rey’s Survival Guide

“MG! We’re heading out in a few minutes!” Quom’s voice called.

Rey’s head shot up. She was sitting on a rickety chair at one of Meru’s table, busy sketching the tented pitstop along Pilgrim’s road.

Quom had taken her on an overnight trip to one of the Sacred Villages. He had developed a contract with a few of the villages so they would contact him anytime they needed a mechanic. It had been Luke’s idea to enterprise… but that might have been to get Quom more projects as ever since his partnership with Luke Skywalker, Quom had gotten a little lazy. He now made up any excuse to make Rey and Luke go out scavenging instead of himself.

“Speeder all fixed?” Rey asked as Quom loaded the trunk with his tool kit.

“Almost.” Quom looked down at a pair of legs sticking out from under the speeder, “How’s it going kid?”

“Oil’s all changed, Mister Tinadar,” a voice answered. The legs began to crawl, and soon a young boy emerged from underneath the speeder.

He appeared to be only a few years older than Rey – two she would later learn. Rey smelled him before she saw him. He had olive toned skin that was covered in oil and grease. His short black hair was dirty and matted. Clearly the boy hadn’t bathed in months, if not years. But he had a nice grin and he was very tall. His hands were rough, and his eyes were a brilliant green that made Rey do a double take. She had never seen something so vibrantly green that she genuinely didn’t know green could be that bright.

“Thanks again, Kid,” Quom said. “The gas line is hard for me to fix. I’m not great at the delicate work with these great big paws of mine, and Kymeri would have my ass if she knew I’d been letting MG huff gas without a mask on.”

“Well, thankfully Meru doesn’t actually care what happens to me,” the boy laughed. “In fact, she said to me last week that if I lost an arm, she’d just slap a cybernetic one on me. Gotta get her money’s worth out me, she said.”

Quom frowned, “Wait… did she buy you?”
The boy awkwardly scratched his neck, “Sort of… Uh, I was working as a… servant of sorts to one of the leaders of the Sacred Villages, and she paid him fifty portions to transfer my service to her, and repay the inconvenience of losing my services.”

Quom stared at the boy, “So, you’re a slave?”

“Pretty much. I mean, I think I can go, but I’m not chancing things with Meru. Last time someone messed with her, she came out of the shack with a… very large gun and, well… you can imagine.”

“That sucks, Kid. Any way you can convince Meru to let you go?”

“Not without a miracle, and there’s no miracles on Jakku.”

Quom glanced back at Rey, “You’d be surprised.”

The boy shrugged, “Honestly, there’s not much to complain about. Sure, Meru works me hard, but I have a place to sleep and food to eat. Speaking of, the work will be half a portion.”

“Coming right up.” Quom turned away, “Rey, pack your stuff up and bring me my bag.”

Wanting to hurry, Rey scooped everything up in her arms and tried to repack her bag as she walked. Unfortunately, as Quom paid the boy, Rey dropped her book on the ground.

“Here, I got it,” the boy bent down.

“No, it’s okay,” Rey quickly scooped up her journal, but a loose page fell out.

“Happy-Bore Medicated Dewormer (Slurry Formulation.)” The boy read the pamphlet as he put into his bag the half portion Quom paid him. “The best happenore is a happy-bore!”

Rey snatched it away from him, “That’s mine.”

“Must come in useful.”

“It’s just a thing I’m collecting.”

“Animal care pamphlets?”

Rey glared at him, shoving the pamphlet back into her book. She didn’t recognize the genuine interest behind the boy’s voice.
“What is it then?” the boy asked.

“That’s Rey’s Survival Guide,” Quom interjected. He grasped her shoulders proudly, “My little scavenger knows everything there is to know about surviving in this desert. Thanks to me of course.”

“Oh, I’m sure Dad and Aletha will be thrilled to hear that when I get home,” Rey grinned. “And it’s not a survival guide. Just a drawing book, and a place to put scraps I find. Like that postcard from Bespin… that freaked Dad out for some reason. All it said was a generically printed Wish You Were Here. He doesn’t like Bespin, does he?”

“Probably had a traumatic incident there,” Quom shrugged.

“Well, if you like things like that, why don’t you take this?” The boy dug a scrap of paper out of his bag and handed it to Rey.

“The Jakku travel advisory? Thanks,” Rey grinned. “Hey, Quom. Listen to this. Message to spacers approaching Jakku: Captains are advised not to approach Jakku or attempt a landing there. Then they list five whole reasons not to come here including that the planet has extreme temperatures and terrain, services are minimal to nonexistent, there’s the whole ship graveyard, law enforcement doesn’t exist, and commerce is run controlled by criminal enterprises. It’s good advice.”

“It is that, my MG,” Quom chuckled.

“Thank you,” Rey said to the boy.

“You’re welcome,” he replied. He held out his hand to shake, “Name’s Teng Malar.”

“Rey Erso,” she shook his hand.

“Yeah. How do you know about him?”

“Only person Meru can stand. Something about how only people with cybernetic limbs understand her pain. How’d he get the false hand, anyway?”

“I actually have no idea.”

Teng scowled, “You don’t have to tell me if you don’t want to.”

“No, I genuinely don’t know,” Rey insisted. “We’ve got some sort of weird, secret past. Erso isn’t even my real last name. He won’t tell me what the real name is.”

“Well, I can’t say I have much, but at least I can say I know my name.”

Rey laughed, “Well, I won’t brag. What kind of name is Malar anyway? You sound like a duck.”

“It’s Nubian, thank you very much. At least it’s not some plain old, generic Coruscanti name like Erso.”

Rey frowned, “Is Erso Coruscanti?”

“I have no idea. I just needed a comeback.”

Rey laughed again.

“Alright, well, Rey, we should get going,” Quom squinted over her shoulder in the distance. “The weather’s not looking too great. I want to get the shelter by nightfall.”

“Alright, Quom.” Rey looked at Teng, “It was nice meeting you.”

“Come see me again sometime.”

“I’ll try.”

“Rey, go tell Meru we’re heading out, and pay her for the water and supplies.”

“Sure thing.” Rey headed off.

“Nice girl,” Teng said watching her leave. Suddenly Quom yanked his arm, forcing Teng smack into his chest, “Hey, what?”

“I’ll say this once,” Quom’s voice was slow. “Rey is only eleven… and the last person who messed with her, her dad cut off that guy’s arm.”

Teng stared at the Vrogem in utter confusion, “What are you talking about?”

Quom released, “Have a good day, Kid.”

Then Quom walked away.

Teng rubbed his arm, and watched Quom and Rey warily, “Meru was right. It’s a bad idea to try to make friends on Jakku.”

Dinner is the same thing every night: survival rations. The only variety is whether I get Imperial rations or the New Republic kind. Both are pretty much the same – the New Republic rations taste a bit better but the Imperial stuff is less likely to be stale after all these years.
Luke took a deep breath, and knocked on the tent peg.

“Come in!” Aletha’s voice called.

He ducked underneath the white sheet advertising the Doctor’s completely free availability.

“Hey, Luke,” Aletha smiled when she spotted him. She was busy scrubbing down her medical cot that had a blood stain on it that Luke was fairly certain wasn’t there that morning.


“Sheet’s white, isn’t it?”

“So, you won’t leave my face to be marred by steelpecker scars?”

“Well, never say never,” Aletha scrubbed at the bloodstain.


“That new boy, Strunk sliced his leg up pretty good this morning. Be walking with a limp for a week.”

“What is a boy that young doing scavenging?”

“He’s only a few years older than Rey, and you’ve got her doing a lot worse.”

“Yeah, but I’m pretty good at keeping her out of danger.”

Aletha smiled and shrugged. Luke couldn’t help but think that if Felicity had been in her place, there probably would have been a dark joke uttered concerning Jarex or Felicity’s own death.

“It just breaks my heart to see another kid show up on Jakku,” Aletha sighed. “I don’t know how they get here, or why they do, but every now and then you look up, and there’s a teenager who has doomed themselves to a life on Jakku.”

“Scary thing is that Rey is turning twelve next month, which means in a little over a year, we’ll be looking up and Rey will be that teenager.”

“I can barely believe it. It seems like just yesterday she was small enough that Quom could lift her up. And now she’s lifting him.”

“Has he been getting her to do that again? I told him to stop.”

“Well, your daughter is freakishly strong.”

Luke gave a mysterious grin, “Gets it from me.”

Aletha just shook her head, “So, what brings you around, Luke?”

“Well, Rey and Quom won’t be returning home until tomorrow, so I’m alone again for another night, and I was thinking… Would you like to have dinner with me?”

Aletha shrugged, “I’m always up for a meal with you. You want to help me do inventory and we’ll share a portion packet?”

Aletha froze, “A what?”

He sighed, “Aletha, please, we’ve been doing this little song and dance for so long. We know how we feel about each other. For goodness sakes’ it’s been almost two years since I kissed you.”

“It hasn’t been two years.”

“Mashra passed three months after Rey’s tenth birthday. She’s turning twelve next month.”

“Wow,” Aletha blinked in shock. “It has been two years.”

“Aletha, please,” Luke took a step forward. “I’ve been in love with you for years. You’ve known that fact for nearly three of those years. You know what I was doing with Felicity three years on? Planning our wedding… Well, actually that was basically four years on, but that’s beside the point.”

“Luke-”

“I love you, Aletha… but I barely know a thing about you. Your family, your history, why you came to Jakku.”

“And I know just as little about you, what with the whole mysterious past.”

“You know a lot more than you give me credit. You know I grew up on Tatooine, you know I was in the Rebellion as a pilot and commanding officer, you know my father is the reason I have a cybernetic hand, you know I have a younger twin sister… I don’t even know what your last name is.”

Aletha frowned, “It’s Kymeri.”

“The one before that. Your maiden name.”

“And I don’t know yours… Real surname that is.”

“Actually, I technically maiden name. I combined my name with my wife’s when we got married, so part of my legal surname is actually Rhiaon.”

“How modern of you,” Aletha said. “That still doesn’t mean I know the other part.”

“But you know the reason I don’t tell you is that it would put a significant target on your back,” Luke pointed out. “I don’t know why you conceal your surname.”

Aletha looked away, “It’s stupid.”

“I’m sure the reason isn’t stupid at all,” Luke insisted.

“No, the reason I don’t tell you it is that it’s a stupid last name.”

“I’m sure it’s a wonderful last name. Please, Aletha… Let me know one thing.”

She sighed, “Fine, my maiden name is Anthea.”

“Anthea? That’s a beautiful name.”


“Yeah, it’s a stupid last name,” Aletha said. “I actually used to joke with Antar that the biggest reason I married him was to take his surname.”


“Could be worse. I have a sister named Athena Anthea… Well, had. She died many years ago.”

“I’m sorry.”

“It’s okay. We weren’t close.”

“Still.”

Aletha sighed.

“Well, see now,” Luke grinned. He gave Aletha a small, playful shove, “Was that so hard?”

“I guess not,” Aletha look away from him again.

Luke closed his eyes, “What’s wrong?”

“I’m just…”

“Not ready for this?” Luke supplied the usual answer.

“Scared,” she confessed. “The last time I tried something like this, it didn’t end well.”


Aletha smiled, but shook her head, “No, you don’t, but I understand where you’re coming from.”

She turned back and started to clean her hands in a small basin. Luke took a deep breath, then came up behind her. She gasped as his hands settled on her hips, and his breath from his bowed head was tickling her neck.


He took the gamble. Luke leaned down and pressed his lips to hers. He felt her pull back initially, but just as he was about to respect her boundaries and move away, Aletha’s hand gently grabbed the back of his neck and pulled him to her. Her lips took charge, hungrily consuming his taste like it was the sweetest she had ever tasted.

Luke pushed her back, pinning her against the cabinet that held the water basin and most of the basic medical supplies. He really hoped that there weren’t any sharp objects within reach. Then again, getting stabbed didn’t sound so bad if it meant continuing to kiss this amazing woman. It had been far too long since he had felt a lover’s touch. He didn’t realize how much he had missed it.

“Luke,” Aletha moaned kissing along his jaw with the right tenderness that he couldn’t hold back a soft growl.

“Yes, just like that,” Luke moaned, flipping her around. Slowly his gripped her hips and lifted her onto the flattop of the cabinet.

They froze at the sound.

“Is that your comm?” Aletha asked, awkwardly propped upon the table now that the sexual tension had dissipated. Good Lord, were her legs clinging to his hips?

Luke glanced down at his wrist comm, “Oh, I am so going to kill Quom.”

Uncomfortably the two split apart and hastily fixed their appearance.


“Hey, Luke,” Quom’s voice answered. “Sorry, did I catch you two at a bad time?”

Luke glanced back at Aletha. She blushed and looked down at the ground.


“Just letting you know that the weather was looking bad, so Rey and I headed out earlier than planned. We might be back by tonight.”

“The weather was bad and you thought the best option was to not stay in safety, but rather go straight into said bad weather?”

“Luke, we both know I’m not the brains of this group.”

“Remind me again why I let you take my child on overnight trips alone?”

“Gives you an opportunity to make time with the Doc?”

Luke looked at Aletha again.

“He has a point,” she shrugged.

Luke groaned, “Alright, Quom. I’ll expect you and Rey at the walker tonight. I’ll bring dinner for all of us.”

“You can’t do that,” Aletha objected.

“Why not?”

She smiled, “Because we’re having dinner tonight.”

Luke let his trademark goofy grin split his face, “Really?”

“Well, you better give me dinner after that little display.”

“Luke, what’s going on?” Quom’s voice interrupted. “You took your finger off the button, and I can’t hear you.”

“You think that might have been an intentional choice?” Luke queried.

“Nah, Buddy. You love me.”

Luke rolled his eyes, “How did I end up with him as one of my best friends?”
“I think it had something to do with Rey and kicks to the face,” Aletha answered. “So, you want to give me an hour to clean up and change, and we’ll have dinner?”

He smiled warmly at her, “I’ll bring us the finest rations on all of Jakku.”

Aletha giggled. Her laugh wasn’t anything like Felicity’s, far more girlish and innocent.

But he didn’t love it any less.

---

Luke had done what he could to fix himself up for his date. Dates on Jakku were an odd thing, after all. He had paid for twenty minutes at the wash up place to clean his face, hair, and beard – boy did he miss his old conditioner. Then he had changed into the extra set of clothes he kept at Quom’s in case a sandstorm stranded him overnight. Finally, he had gone to Plutt’s and asked for the best ration packets he had to offer. Because of the occasion, the cost of the rations had been double the usual as these were the freshest type.

He was surprised to see that Aletha had put up the red sheet for the occasion. It was the one that signified that she was with someone already and it would take a while so it was best to come back later. The red sheet made even people with emergencies pause and reconsider if they needed to bother Aletha. And after the Roke fiasco that almost ended in the destruction of Jakku, people took her sheets very seriously.

“Aletha?” Luke called, worried for a moment that she might be attending to a patient.

When she pulled back the red sheet, Luke’s jaw nearly dropped. It appeared he hadn’t been the only one to buy time at the wash up place. Her skin and hair were fresh and clean and only covered in half as much sand as usual.

But her outfit did things to Luke that had not be done in a while. Her bottoms were the usual nicer looking leggings that Aletha always wore; these ones in particular a dark beige. She had her nearly worn through to the sole black flats. The crown of her grey blonde hair was braided and pulled back, the rest of her hair falling down her bare shoulders.

And her top… it was crisp and white. The kind that was sleeveless and backless, and only held up by tying two ends of fabric around her neck. Luke also couldn’t help but notice that her bare back showed no sign of a bra to support her ample breasts.

… Oh, he was in trouble tonight.

“Like what you see?” Aletha smiled, but her face had a slight embarrassed flush.

“Aletha,” Luke shook his head in disbelief, “I had no idea you owned that top, but I am certainly happy you do.”

She laughed, “Come on in.”

As she turned around to led him into the tent, Luke was surprised by something on her back.

“Do you have a tattoo?”

Aletha froze, “Uh… Yeah.”

“Wow,” Luke laughed. “I did not expect you to be the kind of woman who had a starbird tattoo on her lower back.”
“Well… it’s a camp tattoo.”

Luke’s heart dropped. No Rebel needed an explanation as to what a “camp tattoo” was. It was said that something like one out of every four Rebels had ended up in an Imperial work camp at some point in the war.

In the work camps, Rebels were beaten, starved, and nearly worked to death. All were tattooed with a starbird on the left wrist to identify the person as a Rebel.

Felicity’s tattoo had been a camp tattoo, though her location had been chosen in a way to humiliate both her and Alaric Rhiaon who had tried to hide Felicity from capture by the Imperials. She had turned herself in, loudly proclaiming who her father was as she would rather be in a work camp than home with Alaric.

But there was something even more sinister the camps were known for.

“I wasn’t…” Aletha hesitated over her words, “touched. They didn’t really do that to the women. Sure, we got groped from time to time, and I don’t doubt that there weren’t cases of women being violated, but it was primarily the men who were assaulted. It was all about the power dynamic.”

“I know,” Luke said stiffly. “I know men who were… in the camps.”

Luke could probably name two dozen of his friends who had ended up in the camps at some point. All of them had a varying willingness to talk about what happened. Diego Nalto made it no secret what was done to him. Kes Dameron declined to answer questions, but implied something had happened. Han heavily refuted the suggestion that something had happened to him. Hobbie point blank refused to talk about it.

“Why’s your tattoo placed there?” Luke asked as they started to prepare their dinner.

“I was a doctor, so they used me as an Imperial Medic,” Aletha answered. “They hid my branding so Imperials didn’t know they were being fixed by a traitor. What about you? You have any tattoos?”

“No. I’m not fond of needles.”

“How not fond?” Aletha had a knowing look in her eye.

Luke blushed, “I may have been asked to leave a clinic one time when trying to get bloodwork done because I was, and I quote a danger to the staff.”

Aletha burst out laughing, “You’re joking.”

“No, I legitimately cried when Rey was vaccinated as a baby.”

“Oh, so Rey’s got all her shots?”

“All the ones a five-year-old could get.”

“That’s perfect. You know, I’ve been thinking about her health lately, and worrying about her immune system. Growing up in an environment like this, she’s not going to have built up the best defenses, plus she needs to get her shots. The problem is money for those shots.”

“I’ll pay for whatever you need to keep Rey healthy. Just name it.”

And so they talked for hours, sharing their dinner and each other’s company.
“It’s getting late,” Aletha sighed long after the last crumbs of their portions had been consumed.

“I suppose you’re right,” Luke groaned. “I should be getting back to the walker. But I’ve had a great time tonight.”

She smiled, “I have too.”

This time it was Aletha who initiated the kiss. It was sweeter, more innocent kiss; a kiss goodnight.

“You know, you’re a really good kisser, Luke,” Aletha grinned when they had broken apart.

“I may have been told such things in the past,” Luke smirked.

She swatted at his chest and he laughed, catching her hand.

“Oh, you’re going to have to make that up to me,” he had something dark flash in his eyes.

“With pleasure,” she pulled him in for another kiss.

_Beep. Beep. Beep._

“Ok,” Aletha broke away from Luke as his comm went off, “that’s it. Next time I see Quom, I’m kicking him in the face.”

“Can you do that?”

“Of course. That sort of thing bonds you for life.”

Luke laughed as he hit the answer button on his comm.


“Rey and I just got to the walker.”

“Oh, good, I’m just heading home.”

“No, Luke! Stay where you are! There’s a really bad sandstorm brewing. I can’t make it to town, and you won’t be able to make it to the walker.”

“Are you sure?”

“Luke, I’m pretty sure it’s going to be a X’us’R’iia.”


---

[O]ne of the storms that last for days, the ones the Teedos call X’us’R’iia, or “the breath of god.”

---

- Rey’s Survival Guide

“Alright, Quom, bunker down,” Luke ordered. “There should be enough food and water there to last you for a few weeks. The winds are going to block our comm lines, so we won’t be able to speak for several days. Rey, are you going to be okay alone with Quom for a few days?”
“He hasn’t managed to kill me yet,” Rey answered. “I have some faith in him.”

“Never say things like that, MG,” Quom chided. “With your family’s luck, you probably just jinxed it.”

“Then make sure my grave reads I Guess Quom Was Right for Once.”

“Hey, let’s not get carried away,” Aletha cut in on her own comm. “Besides, we all know that his grave is going to read Luke Told Me Not to Do It.”

“Hey!”

“I’ll keep Luke with me during the storm. Just focus on the two of you being safe, okay?”

“Yes, Ma’am,” the two said in unison.


Aletha raised an eyebrow; her message clear. She and Luke were about to get a lot of time alone together.

“Alright, we’re going to end the transmission before it starts to cut out,” Quom announced. “See you in a few days.”

“See you in a few days,” Aletha replied.

“I love you, Rey,” Luke said.

“Love you too, Dad,” Rey answered.

“Be safe.”

“I’m always safe.”

Luke smirked, “Well… Not always. You wouldn’t be my daughter if you were.”

“I’ll see you later, Daddy,” Rey laughed.

Luke grinned, recognizing the intimacy of the word, “See you later, Sweetheart.”

“Alright then,” Aletha said as the comms switched off. “Let’s get to work. I’ll get the water, you get the food. How much will we need?”

“I always grab two weeks’ worth for each person.”

“That sounds like a lot.”

“After Rey and Felicity’s trek in the desert, I’m paranoid over being overprepared with food and water.”

“Fair enough,” Aletha conceded. “Two weeks it is. But come on, Erso, sandstorms are usually three days max. How long do you think this X’us’R’iia could last?”

And so began the longest X’us’R’iia Luke would experience on Jakku.

Five days long.
I totally ended up splitting this chapter in half because the wordcount was going to be huge if I didn’t. So, no coming up next chapter, and no riddle.

Obligatory PSA due to chapter content: Don’t smoke, kids. It’s not cool, it’ll mess up your health, and it’ll probably led to a lifetime addiction and a terrible death. Frankly the only reason I have Obik be a former smoker is for a yet unwritten scene in Felicity’s backstory where they meet and I needed him to be sort of casual and inconspicuous when he collects Felicity for the Rebellion. So, he comes up next to her and starts smoking, and gradually reveals himself to her (also exactly like he does with Aletha, so you can see what Obik’s recruitment method was.)
Luke and Aletha are trapped in a tent for five days... what could possibly happen?

Writing tip for fellow authors out there: Do not name three sisters Aletha, Alecta, and Athena. It may sound fine saying it out loud, but typing out who is who and not making the names blend together is hell.

Exciting news: I have recently discovered you can add pictures on AO3, so I will be slowly adding various pictures from the actual book of Rey’s Survival Guide so you can see what I’m describing. Tell me what you think of it, and I might add more pictures for other sections.

Deep in the heart of Jakku, there is a patch of sand. It is much like any ordinary patch, flat, yellow, and stretches on endlessly into the horizon.

All the sands of Jakku have shifted at some point or another, but there are patches that can remain still for decades. Untouched and unexplored, these patches faithfully keep secure their secrets underneath.

This is one of those patches.

For years upon years, not a grain from this patch has been shifted. Sandstorms have come and gone, and not one has touched this virgin patch of sand.

The winds around the area started to pick up, and in the distance the sand started to swirl. But this patch stood firm, unyielding to the weather. But the storm came nearer and nearer every moment, and the storm become ever more violent. It would be a terrible storm that lasted for days, a X’us’R’iiia for the record books.

And for the first time in seventeen years… the sand began to shift.
Like a lot of people on Jakku, Meru doesn’t talk about how she got here, and I don’t ask. Come to think of it, that’s a good second lesson for Jakku.

DON’T ASK.

- Rey’s Survival Guide

When Luke woke in the morning, he found that the sandstorm was still blowing.

“So, I guess this date ended up going on for a lot longer than we expected,” Luke said as he and Aletha sat on their cots, eating their breakfast portions the next morning.

“Makes me regret choosing to wear this top now that I can’t change out of it,” Aletha laughed. “This is certainly not meant for sleeping in.”

“Well, you can change if you want. I promise I won’t look.”

“I’m sure I’ll survive for a few days. It’s not like I’m going to be getting this all that dirty.”

“It’s a desert; somehow, some way you will get dirty,” Luke chuckled. He glanced over at the secured tent flap for a few minutes, watching it vibrant from the winds as they howled the background. “You know, I’ve always found the sound of a sandstorm to be quite soothing. They lulled me to sleep as a child, and ever since they’ve been very relaxing as long as I’m safely inside from them.”

“That’s sweet,” Aletha smiled. “Did your sister feel the same way?”

Luke shifted awkwardly, “Actually… we grew up apart. My mother died in childbirth, my father… is a story for another day, and we were adopted by separate people. In a twist of fate, we ended up meeting somewhat by chance, and were actually friends for years before we even discovered we were siblings.”

“Oh, that’s sweet.”

“Well, not exactly.”

“What do you mean?”

“I may have been in sort of a non-competitive love triangle with my best friend over her.”

Aletha’s jaw dropped, “You’re kidding.”

“Nope, and I lost that triangle before the big revelation. The upside is that my sister ended up marrying my best friend.”

“And the downside?”

“…My sister once kissed me to make my best friend jealous.”

Aletha laughed, “And I thought my family was messed up.”


Aletha was silent, taking a moment to debate what she wanted to tell Luke.
“Look,” Luke sighed, “I know I haven’t been very forthcoming with my history, but I want to know yours. It doesn’t have to be everything, just a few questions. Why do you always say you’re not good with kids? Where is your family? Where did you come from? What happened with Antar? Whose… Mistress were you? Why did you decide to live on Jakku? I don’t need everything, but… just something to understand who you are.”

She closed her eyes, “It’s not a happy story, Luke.”

“Nor is mine,” Luke pointed mine. “My journey to living on Jakku involves my home burning down twice, my father cutting off my arm, getting a false report that my daughter had died, me deciding to be a coward and abandon everything, and my wife getting brutally murdered. Trust me, if anyone can understand a tragic backstory, it’s me.”

“You really want to know?”

“Yes.”

Aletha sighed, “Alright… the reason I chose to live on Jakku is because I can’t go home.”

Luke frowned, “Is that it? You just can’t return home so you decided to live on Jakku? Why not some other planet that’s more civilized? Coruscant is a perfect planet to disappear on.”

“I can’t go home because my sister has sworn to hunt me down and kill me.”

That shut Luke up.

“My family wasn’t a good one. At least not to me,” Aletha confessed. “They were very pro-Imperial, and when I joined the Rebellion, I betrayed them all. If I go to a civilized planet, my sister will find me and kill me.”

“I don’t understand,” Luke shook his head. “You joined the Rebellion, so your sister is going to track you down and murder you? I think Athena’s taking things too far.”

“Not Athena. Alecta,” she corrected. “Athena is dead, Luke. I told you that. And actually, it’s because of Athena’s death that Alecta wants to kill me.”

“Why? Did you make a medical mistake during surgery or something?”

“I fought in the Rebellion… and the Rebellion destroyed the Death Star.”

Luke’s eyes widened.

“Athena was working in a low-level security position on the Death Star,” Aletha explained. “She died when Skywalker blew it up.”

“I’m sorry, Aletha.”

“It’s not your fault.”

Luke almost replied that it was. He wanted so much to tell her that he was in fact Skywalker, but he couldn’t let Aletha know his identity. The second she learned who he was, the First Order would put a target on her head. He was already guiltily over the one on Quom, but he wouldn’t let what happened to Felicity to happen to Aletha.

“My sister Alecta was the closest one to Athena,” Aletha continued. “So when Athena died, Alecta swore revenge on the three people she blames for my sister’s death: Luke Skywalker for killing her,
myself for betraying the family, and Rogue One for being the catalyst to everything… and also
shooting Athena in the arm during her team’s escape. Actually, one of the reasons I like Rogue One
so much is that I felt a bit of kindship in her after my family turned on me. And in all fairness to
Alecta, we were all already reeling from Anissa’s death a few months before.”


“I’m the youngest of five girls. Adrinna, Alecta, Athena, Anissa, and Aletha. My mother’s name was
Andromeda and my father was Andreas.”

Luke gave a low whistle, “And I thought my family had a lot of A names.”

“Oh, it gets better, we’re all pale skinned, blonde haired, and have blue eyes. I’m surprised I didn’t
end up with someone who looks like that.”

Luke just stared at her.

“…Right,” Aletha scratched the back of her neck.

“If it makes you feel better, all the women in my family look alike… I mean literally. My wife looks
as much like my mother as my sister. How I ended up with my father’s blonde hair and blue eyes is
truly a miracle. Though how he had those features is a literal miracle. His mother had brown hair and
brown eyes like literally all women in the family.”

“His father probably had blonde hair and blue eyes then.”

Luke decided not to mention that his parental grandfather was the literal Force.

“I’m sorry about your sisters,” Luke returned the subject to its original topic. “How did… the other
one die?”

Aletha smiled at his awkward attempt, “Her name was Anissa. She was working as a teacher on
Onderon, and the Rebellion and the Imperial had a skirmish. Anissa and her husband were just
innocent bystanders but were killed while trying to get out to safety. It was probably a stray blaster
bolt, but it’s impossible to know which side fired it. Alecta – the one who wants to kill me – was a
General in the Imperial Army, so she refuses to admit that the Empire could be to blame.”

“What happened to her after the war? Imperial Generals didn’t have an easy life.”

Aletha looked away.

“What is it?” Luke could sense something was wrong.

“It doesn’t matter,” she dismissed.

“Tell me,” he insisted.

Aletha took a deep breath, “Please don’t freak out about this, okay? My sister Adrinna did maintain
some contact with me throughout the years. She even knows where I am now. We were never close,
but she certainly doesn’t want Alecta to kill me. Adrinna was the one who told me of Alecta’s plan
to find and kill me.”

“And?”

She took another breath, “After the war, Alecta got herself caught up with a pro-Imperial
organization under a very persuasive leader. She’s been able to bank on her history with the Empire
and worked her way up into a powerful position.”

Luke frowned. He had a bad feeling about this.

“Aletha,” he said slowly. “What happened to your sister?”

She looked him right in the eye, “My sister is a Captain in the First Order.”

It felt like the floor disappeared from out underneath him.


“I don’t know what she calls herself these days, but I know she’s a Captain,” Aletha answered quickly. “I’m sorry I didn’t tell you sooner. I know you have some business with them, believe me, I do. But I didn’t want to drag you down further into it with my own mess.”

“Aletha-”

“I understand the severity of the situation. I was terrified when they came to Jakku looking for Rey and Felicity. Every Stormtrooper I saw, I feared that I was dealing with my own sister, come to kill me. I might have even crossed paths with her. There was that Phasma that was intent on getting answers from me.”

“Aletha, stop,” Luke grabbed her shoulders. “Take a deep breath. This isn’t that big a deal, okay? The First Order doesn’t know that you and I are connected. As for Phasma, we have no reason to think she’s Alecta. And if Phasma is your sister, we’ll deal with it, okay? Just relax.”

It took a few minutes for Aletha to settle, but Luke stayed there with reassuring words and his hands steadying her as they worked through it together.

“Maybe we should change the subject,” Luke suggested when she was okay. “What about your parents? What do they think about all of this?”

“They died years ago,” Aletha looked away. “Mom died when I was ten, and Dad when I was eighteen. Cancer got both of them. Adrinna stepped in to take Mom’s place after her passing, so she’s never really been my older sister so much as a pseudo-mother. Never mind that in addition to raising Anissa and I – Alecta and Athena were teenagers at the time – that Adrinna ended up having three kids of her own to take care of. Athena had two, but her husband was a drunk, and when he tried to get violent with her one night, Alecta showed up on their doorstep and literally threw him out onto the street. Adrinna ended up raising Athena’s two, as well as Anissa’s one.”

“Aunt Aletha.”

“Six times over, but I’ve never met Anissa’s son,” Aletha said. “My sisters, their families, and I all lived with our father in a rather large house. This meant that often I got stuck babysitting the children whether I wanted to or not.”

“Hence why you claim not to be good with them,” Luke grinned. “You don’t want to get stuck with babysitting.”

“I don’t say this lightly, but I love Rey more than any member of my family, and adore watching her for you. But yes, I use the excuse as a defence mechanism.”

“So, what made you turn to the Rebellion? You didn’t like your family?”
“They were generally indifferent to me. I was an unplanned – and somewhat unwanted – child. Anissa and Adrianna were the nicest, but Alecta was always annoyed that I was even breathing. Dad loved me, but he struggled to have our large family. Money was always tight because Adrianna was a homemaker, Anissa and her husband were in school for years, Athena couldn’t find a good paying good, Adrianna’s husband was a failed inventor, and Dad’s job had been replaced by droids. Alecta was the only one really bringing in money.”

“Trust me, I get living by every scrap of money you can find,” Luke said. “It’s how I grew up.”

“When we lost Mom, I got interested in medicine, wanting to heal people who suffered like her,” Aletha continued. “Dad was encouraging, but I knew we wouldn’t have money for med school. When he was diagnosed with cancer, my sisters encouraged me to drop out of school and stay home to help take care of my father and the children. Anissa and her husband left to go take jobs on Onderon to free up household costs. Anissa hated teaching children, hoping to someday get an Academy teaching position. Adrianna had to get a job to cover the cost of Dad’s medical treatments, and they couldn’t afford proper childcare, nor to continue to send me to school. Dad was against the idea of me dropping out of school, but after Alecta had a conversation with me about the situation, I felt for my own safety I would have to do what she wanted.”

“So you dropped out of school?”

“Sort of. I got materials for homeschooling and worked my butt off to get my diploma while staying home with Dad and the kids. He was supportive and did his best to help me. He died a month after I graduated.”

“I’m sorry,” Luke said.

“It was his final request to me to ignore the other girls and pursue my medical license,” Aletha said. “I did my research and found out that if I used my connection to Alecta, who had become a General at that point, I could do the Imperial fast track program and become a military doctor in a year, serving under my sister’s command. To my sister’s fury I did exactly that.”

“You worked with the sister who wanted to murder you?”

“She didn’t vow to kill me until after the Battle of Yavin,” Aletha corrected. “But that didn’t mean she didn’t make it hard for me to work for her. So hard that when I stumbled upon a chance meeting with Obik Kenu, I became an easy target for him to recruit.”

“How did you meet Obik?”

“He had gone undercover as a janitor in my hospital to recruit people who had been injured in battle and skirmishes, and might hold a grudge against the Empire. Three months after meeting Obik, I packed a bag and left with him to join the Rebellion.”

“What year was that?”

“6 BBY,” Aletha answered. “When did you join?”


“Joined because of the Death Star?”

Luke smirked. “Something like that. So… when did Antar come into the picture? Did you meet him right away?”
“A year later.”

“How did you meet? Was he injured in battle and he fell in love with the beautiful doctor that nursed him back to health?”

“Doctor?” Aletha laughed. “Luke, I was in the fast track program, I wasn’t a real doctor yet. The Alliance made fast tackers study for an additional three years with classes, a personal mentor, and hands on experience before they called us doctors. Until then we were referred to as Medic, but I did impress the Alliance and was upgraded six months earlier than usual. Though that’s because of how hard my mentor pushed me.”

“Who was your mentor?” Luke asked.

“I was assigned to a doctor named Jedek Haru as my mentor.”

“Wait, Jedek?” Luke startled, recalling the name. “As in your most frequent supplier, who likes Rey, and won’t stop talking about his own kids?”

“He’s a friend from my Rebel days.”

“So, where does Antar come into the picture?”

“Like I said, it was about a year into my involvement with the Rebellion. Jedek and I were in the medical office. We were waiting on standby to deal with the next patient who came in, when Major Ryoo Naberrie – the Rebel Alliance’s Head Analyst – entered the room.”

“Hey!” Ryoo whistled at the chatting doctors. “You two busy?”

“No, Ma’am,” Jedek reported as he and Aletha scrambled to stand and salute her. “Just waiting for the next patient.”

“Forget the formalities. Grab two intake kits and come with me.”

Aletha and Jedek didn’t hesitate to follow her.

To Aletha’s surprise, when they arrived in the docking bay, Nils Arlos, Head of the Recruitment Department, was waiting for them.

“Major Arlos!” Ryoo called.

“Major Naberrie,” Nils nodded to her. “I’m honoured. I would have thought they would send someone of less calibre to deal with this.”

“Are you kidding? Don’t you understand the severity of the situation? This involves Organa’s girl. She’s our highest priority asset at the moment. Without her, Citadel is just a distant dream.”

“Kenu acted as he thought appropriate in this situation. And I understand the importance of Operation Citadel.”

“I don’t think you do,” Ryoo snapped. “This project is so top secret, I don’t even have the clearance to know what it’s all about, and I headed the Brendan investigation!”

Aletha and Jedek exchanged a confused look.

“You have any idea what they’re talking about?” Jedek whispered.
“Not a one,” Aletha shook her head.

“INCOMING VESSEL,” blared over the speakers. “PREPARE FOR LANDING.”

“Look, Obik can explain himself to you soon enough,” Nils gestured to the transport that was incoming.

“Oh, I’ll make sure he does,” Ryoo glared. “As well as Organa’s girl. How stupid could a person be?”

“I think it’s quite brave and a little cunning. Almost something your aunt would have done.”

Ryoo rolled her eyes, “Fine, then I’ll invite her to have dinner with my grandparents one day. Until then, we’re going to treat this as it truly is: a very stupid risk.”

“But a risk that paid out.”

Ryoo rolled her eyes.

“Uh, Majors?” Jedek spoke up. “What are Medic Anthea and I doing here?”

Nils glanced back at the pair, “I know you two. You’re both Kenu picks, aren’t you?”

“Yes, Sir,” Aletha nodded.

“Alright, here’s what you need to know,” Nils said, “Kenu’s latest Batch got boarded by a pair of Stormtroopers. They were identified as Rebels, but before they could all be arrested, one of the recruits managed to talk the Stormtroopers not into only letting them go, but joining us. Hence why Major Nabberie is here.”

“We need to collect as much information about these two as possible,” Ryoo continued. “They could very well be spies. Do you know protocol for dealing with possible enemies?”

“Yes, Ma’am,” they answered in unison.

“Good.”

Obik Kenu looked like he knew he was in trouble when he saw Nils and Major Nabberie enter the ship, but he continued on with his final recruitment duties nonetheless.

“And so, in closing we thank you for joining in the most important battle we will ever have to fight.” Obik looked around the crowd of about twenty new recruits of different ages and species, “Ladies, Gentlemen, and other Genders… Welcome to the Rebellion.”

The crowd clapped and a few even cheered. But Obik winced when he heard Ryoo Nabberie’s loud, cold, slow clap that went on far longer than any applause.

“Major Nabberie,” Obik winced. “Ladies, Gentlemen, and other Genders, this is our Head Analyst, Ryoo Nabberie – yes, Nabberie as in Padmé Amidala’s niece. Also with her is Nils Arlos – Head of Recruitment, and two our excellent medics, Aletha Anthea and Jedek Haru.”

“Oh, you remember us,” Aletha blurted out, flattered.

“I will never forget that icy stare Major Nabberie gave me for the outburst,” Aletha chuckled.
“Ryoo Naberrie was a force to reckon with in the Rebellion,” Luke grinned, remembering the day he had first met his cousin while filling out entry paperwork after the Battle of Yavin. “She scared the crap out of me when I met her.”

“Me too,” Aletha laughed. “Scariest woman I had ever met, and my sister, Alecta is a sadist.”

“So, what happened with Obik?”

“Major Naberrie had the same question.”

“Major Naberrie, I assure you that I followed all the proper protocols,” Obik insisted. “All ships get boarded every now and then.”

“But they don’t get identified as Rebels,” Ryoo said coolly.

“How did it happen?” Nils asked. “You had all the proper identification. Have they changed something in the IDs? If so, I’m going to need to order a mass recall on our Recruitment Officers until they get up to date IDs.”

“The IDs were fine,” Obik gritted his teeth. “But we ran into complications when one of recruits was recognized.”

Nils frowned, “Who?”

Obik raised an eyebrow.

“Oh,” Nils swallowed, his eyes searching for the culprit. “Has she been compromised?”

“Her father has informed the Empire she’s defected,” Obik reported. “There was a military bulletin released. Every Stormtrooper in the Galaxy is looking for her now.”

“We’re going to have to deal with this immediately,” Ryoo said. She too looked around the crowd, “Which one of you is Organa’s girl?”

“Uh... That would be me,” the girl who would one day become Rogue One nervously stepped forward.

Luke swore his heart skipped a beat.

“Rogue One?” he blurted out. “Do you remember her?”

Aletha frowned, “Uh, sort of. Why?”

Luke tried to think of a lie, “Well... she’s a bit of a hero to you. And Rey. I just wondered if you remembered what she looked like.”

“Sadly, I don’t remember much. Only a little.”

“Tell me.”

“She was... very small.”

Luke couldn’t withhold his laugh. Felicity would have been furious to hear that that was the first thing people remembered about her.
You know… he couldn’t help but wonder if had Aletha and Felicity met, if they would have been friends. It seemed the only thing they had in common was massive sibling issues, a hell of an aim with a blaster, and their choice in men.

Still, Luke liked to think that maybe they could have been friends.

“Small… and young,” Aletha liked the smile on Luke’s face, thinking it was solely about her comment. “She had dark hair – though I couldn’t tell you for the life of me if it was black, brunette, or auburn. Uh… she wasn’t very athletic. Posh, in fact. Polished and quite weak looking. Almost like a porcelain doll you would put on display and never actually play with.”

Luke tried not the wince at the description. Aletha had no idea of the emotional abuse Felicity had suffered at the hands of her father that made her into that porcelain doll. Of course, Luke recognized that Aletha’s tale had taken place immediately after Felicity she escaped Alaric’s grip, so she wouldn’t be the kick ass woman Luke later fell in love with.

And yet he knew that if he had met her all the way back then, he would have loved her all the same.

“But I think the word that described her most in that moment,” Aletha paused, “…was scared.”

“I’m... uh…” Rogue One glanced briefly at Obik. “I’m the one the Organas sent. I was Leia’s assistant for a few years. I’ve met your sister, actually. Lovely woman, Pooja.”

“You? You’re Organa’s girl?” Major Naberrie fixed Rogue One with an impressed look that would have even made Darth Vader shrink back.

Luke couldn’t help but think that Vader would have shrunk back because he knew Ryoo had the exact same angry glare as his mother… And he knew that because it was the exact same one Leia had used to keep Han Solo in line for years.

“Yes, Ma’am,” Rogue One nodded.

Ryoo looked back at Nils, “Well… I guess considering my aunt was Queen and stopped an invasion even younger, I can’t really criticize this one.”

“Major Naberrie, why don’t I with her and Obik, and we all have a little chat about recruitment protocol?” Nils suggested.

“I can consent to that,” Ryoo nodded. “Besides, it’s those two I’m interested in.”

Ryoo jerked her head towards two young men. They no longer wore the white armour of Stormtroopers, but their underclothes, boots, and gloves were undeniably Imperial issue.

“Come forward,” Ryoo ordered the young men.

The pair looked at each other, and then in perfect unison took a step forward.

“Let’s make one thing clear and simple,” Ryoo folded her arms behind her back and drew herself up to full height. “I do not trust either you. You joined us in very suspect circumstances and are very likely spies the Empire moved to plant within us. So I will be forthcomin in telling you that if you do prove to be moles, I will not hesitate to kill you, and I will sleep just fine afterwards. Well, not fine, my husband snores, but that’s none of your concern. Am I clear?”
“Yes, Ma’am,” the pair said together.

Luke remembered Ryoo giving him and Han the exact same speech – Jagrav snoring comment and all – and receiving the same terrified response. In fact, as they left Ryoo’s office after their induction interview, Han had declared that if he had owed Ryoo money instead of Jabba, he sure as hell would have paid her back ages ago.

“Alright then,” Ryoo continued. “Now as I don’t trust you-”

“Major Naberrie, I assure you I want nothing but to fight to bright down this awful Empire,” one of the Stormtroopers – a mustachioed man – said.

Ryoo glared, “Assurances get you nothing. Only action proves intent. And you will speak only when spoken to.”

“Yes, Ma’am,” the mustachioed man.

“Since you are so eager to talk,” Ryoo went on, “I am going to ask each of you in turn to answer five simple questions. I don’t care about anything more than the answers to these five questions, so no extra flattery. It won’t do you any good.”

“And what are the questions?” the mustachioed man asked.

Ryoo’s look was deadly.

“Apologies,” the mustachioed man bowed his head.

“The questions are as follows: Your full name, your age, your planet of origin, length of service in the Imperial Military – academy years do not count – and why you chose to listen to a little girl and join the Rebellion. And your answer better be good. Since you, boy seem to be quite the chatterbox, you get to speak first. GO.”

“Biggs Darklighter,” the man answered hurriedly. He had dark hair, tanned skin, and seemed to exude confidence. “Nineteen years old, born, bred, and raised on Tatooine. It’s a desert planet in the Outer Rim where-”

“I’m familiar with Tatooine,” Ryoo cut him off. “My uncle was from there.”

Luke blinked. He knew that his Aunt Sola had discovered the truth about Anakin and Padmé’s relationship shortly after Padmé’s death, and that she had shared it with the family, but he had no idea Ryoo so openly referred to Anakin as her uncle… even if she refused to namedrop him.

Also his head nearly exploded at the thought of his almost girlfriend, his late wife, his cousin, his childhood best friend, and his second Jedi student all being in the same room. Sure one in three Rebels knew each other, but that was admittedly a fairly unbelievable cocktail.

It was almost as if whatever being wrote the fate of the world was addicted to making everything connect to him.

“Right,” Biggs nodded. “Uh, I’ve served in the Imperial Military for two months – I’m fresh out of
the Academy. This was my first assignment. And the reason I joined is that I’ve lived under both the oppression and indifference of the Empire, and I’m willing to die to ensure the people I love live in peace and comfort.”

Luke suddenly felt very guilty about living in an AT-AT walker in the middle of a desert planet. At least it was a different planet.

…Under worse conditions.

Blast it, Biggs!

Ryoo looked at Biggs for a long time; no expression on her face.

“Doctor Haru,” Ryoo finally ordered Jedek, “give our new recruit a full medical evaluation. We’ll discuss further arrangements when your background check comes through.”

“Yes, Ma’am,” Biggs nodded, eying Jedek warily as he pulled various threatening looking instruments out of his induction kit. The poor man had no idea what the procedure for unexpected defectors was while background checks were being processed.

“And you,” Ryoo turned to the other man. “Speak.”

The man nodded, “Yes, Ma’am. My name is Antar Kymeri.”

Aletha smiled to herself at the memory, “The first thing I remember about seeing Antar for the first time was how handsome he was. He was tall with black cropped hair, almost buzzed to his skull. His skin was the colour of rosewood, deep and dark with a slight tone of red. His eyes were grey and always a little hard. His body was bulky, well-muscled, his hands large, and his stern lips plump and… delicious.”

Luke raised an eyebrow.

“Hey, I had to listen to this stuff about Felicity for four years,” Aletha smirked. “You can listen to my lovers’ ramblings over Antar.”


“Go on,” Ryoo instructed Antar.

“I am twenty-three years old,” Antar said, “I have served in the Imperial Military for four years, in the Airforce mind you. Darklighter and I are not simple foot soldiers.”

“I told you no extra comments, and you skipped where you came from.”

“I’m from Faclov.”

The temperature in the room dropped.

“I assume I don’t need to cite my reason for joining,” Antar said coolly.
Ryoo crossed her arms, “Who did you lose?”

“My fiancée and her parents. They were shopping at Antilles Fine Imports for things for our wedding when the bombs went off. They got hit the worst because they were nearest the biggest one targeting that Brandon boy.”

“Brendan,” Rogue One interrupted softly. When all eyes turned on her, she bowed her head shyly. “His name is… was Brendan.”

“Brendan,” Antar nodded at her.

“Allright,” Ryoo nodded. “Medic Anthea will examine you.”

“You two stay here with the doctors,” Nils ordered. He looked to Rogue One, “Everyone go with Obik, except for you, Miss. I want to have a word with you.”

“Yes, Sir,” Rogue One nodded.

“Hello there,” Antar said as Aletha approached him and the crowd dispersed.

“Hello,” Aletha smiled for the first time at the man who would become her husband.

“Medic Anthea is it?” Antar asked. “Anthea’s a pretty name.”

“Actually it’s my surname. My first name is Aletha.”

“Even more beautiful.”

Aletha raised an eyebrow, “It’s not advised to hit on a medic who is examining you.”

“Forgive me, Miss but my fiancée was just brutally murdered a few months ago. I’m not flirting, I’m just friendly.”

“As long as you don’t get handsy, I’ll be fine. Roll up your sleeve. I need to check your pulse.”

Antar obediently rolled up his sleeve exposing his muscly and slightly hairy arm.

“So…” Aletha said as she mentally counted his pulse, “what was her name?”

“Vina Dervito,” Antar answered with a bittersweet smile.

“Pretty?”

“Most beautiful woman I’ve ever laid my eyes on.”

Aletha chuckled, “I’m sorry you’re stuck seeing me.”

“Well, not as beautiful to me as her, but certainly not hard on the eyes.”

Aletha fell silent.


Her eyes were lowered and a deep sadness shined in them, “I never could forget what he said that day. Vina was the absolute love of his life… and as hard as I tried, I was never as beautiful or brave or smart or better – not even better, but never simply even equal to her.”
Luke reached forward and clasped her hand, “I’m sure he did think you were better with something.”

“I know what it’s like to be second best, Luke. It’s what I’ve always been. With my family. With Antar… with you.”

He reached forward and lifted her chin, forcing Aletha to look into his eyes.

“You are never second best to me,” Luke promised. “You have your virtues and faults, but so did Felicity. The way I feel about her would never compromise the way I feel about you.”

Aletha let herself smile a little, “I feel like that wouldn’t be true if she was alive.”


“I examined him in the ship while Jedek did Darklighter. Antar spent the whole time telling me about Vina. They were childhood best friends, literally growing up next door to each other. When they were thirteen, they decided to date each other for practice at that sort of thing, and they just never stopped practising. When Antar was sixteen, his parents died in a speeder accident, and he was taken in by her family. Vina was studying to be a teacher, and they were going to get married in eight months, and have children two years after that. She was shopping for her wedding veil when the bombing happened. Antar didn’t learn about the bombing until three weeks later, being out on deployment at the time. He didn’t get death confirmation until two months after the bombing, and hadn’t been able to get home yet to deal with everything, so some of Vina’s relatives dealt with funeral arrangements and such.”

“Well, I’m truly sorry for your loss,” Aletha told him. “The bombing affected so many people.”

“Sometimes I think I’m lucky I avoided the bombing, but other days… maybe I should have been there.”

“You think you could have protected her?”

“No, I should have gone up in a blaze of glory. When I die, I want my death to mean something… because, I’ve lost everything.”

“Hence the defection,” Aletha nodded. “Trust me, I’ve been there. I’ve burnt my bridges to the ground. Roll up your sleeve.”

“What are you doing?” Antar obeyed, but warily eyed the syringe she was prepping.

“Just a small shot we give to all incoming recruitments. Prevent infections and such. Hold still?”

Antar made no fuss as she injected him.

“Perfect,” Aletha disposed of the syringe. “Antar?”

“Yes?”

“I would like to apologize.”

“For what?”

“Lying to you,” Aletha answered. “That needle isn’t a vaccination… it’s a very powerful tranquilizer.”
“What?” Biggs exclaimed as Jedek finished injecting him.

“Oh, she’s right,” Jedek nodded. “We’re knocking you guys right out.”

“Why?”

“We can’t have you running around our base until your background checks are completed,” Aletha said. She looked at Antar, “You might want to sit down. These tranqs hit hard and fast.”

Antar shook his head, “No, I don’t believe you. You’re joking right?”

“Why would I joke about that?”

“Come on, you’re just messing with me. I’m not gonna-”

Antar hit the ground face first.

The pair looked at him casually, and then turned their gazes on Biggs.

“I’ll sit down,” Biggs said.


Teng Malar sat in the corner of Old Meru’s tent, shivering. A thin blanket was wrapped around his shoulders as he huddled in a ball trying to keep warm.

He struggled to keep his mind off the growl in his stomach. He hadn’t gotten any dinner from Meru that night. She had insisted they save their portions and ration them very strictly, which meant no dinner.

Of course, he had seen her consume half a portion when she thought he was taking a nap. But Meru was not someone to argue with.

He was so cold, not just from the winds, but from his starvation. The boy was little more than skin and bones, and probably about three inches shorter than he ought to be. At this point, the shivering was second nature to him, as was the growl in his stomach. Teng didn’t remember the last time he had had a full meal.

Struggling to push the thought from his mind, he wracked his brain to think of something more pleasant.

Rey’s smile had been pleasant.

Then again, he wasn’t sure if she had actually smiled at him or he was just imagining it. Either way, he was sure her smile would be lovely.

Teng wished he could have been able to convince her to show him her drawing book. He, himself loved to draw and would have liked to discussed techniques. Teng had seen her sitting at the table using her charcoal pencils. He admired how concentrated she had been.

Smiling to himself, Teng rummaged through his things and found paper and a pencil. On the top of the page he wrote SHIPS OF THE GRAVEYARD. The Y in graveyard was a little bit backwards, but he hadn’t gotten the best education.
He settled down with his blanket and supplies and started sketching the various shipwrecks in the desert. Next time he saw Rey Erso, he’d quiz her on the types, and maybe even get her to label them. Maybe her writing looked nicer than his. He only hoped she liked the picture.

![Sketch of ships in the desert with labels for different types of ships]

Teng didn’t know it, but years later, Rey would tape that picture into her guide, Teng’s title standing proud on the page, and her own penmanship labeling the types of ships.

It was one of many pictures Teng drew that ended up in her Guide.

Luke couldn’t sleep that night as he laid on Aletha’s extra medical cot. He was so nervous about Rey and Quom. They had made it to the walker, right? Oh, he couldn’t remember.

Glancing at Aletha, he was surprised to find her tossing and turning in her own cot.

“You okay?” he asked.

Aletha sighed and settled on her side to face him, “Not really. I hate sandstorms. I’m always worried that something bad is going to happen. I hate being alone, vulnerable, and trapped.”

“Well, you are trapped but you’re certainly not alone.” Luke smirked, “Vulnerable is debatable.”

Aletha grinned, “Should I be on guard for the unrespectable intentions of a fugitive scavenger on the run from the First Order with a mysterious past?”
“Maybe you should.” Luke teased, “People who get involved with my family typically meet very unfortunate fates.”

“Well, I can’t imagine my situation getting a whole lot worse.”

“Shh! The Galaxy might hear and take that as a challenge.”

“Well, my lips are sealed,” Aletha pressed a finger to her lips. “Don’t want to jinx it.”

Luke just chuckled.

They sat in a comfortable silence for a while.

“You know, it’s rather cold in here,” Aletha said slyly.


“No.”

“Did… Did you want mine?”

“No. That won’t be enough.”

Luke was confused.

“I think the only proper way to do this will be through body heat,” Aletha declared.

Luke raised a brow, “Body heat?”

“It doesn’t need to be much. Maybe we push our cots together and lay back to back?”

“It’s worth a shot.”

So, they did just that.

Luke’s heart raced as he laid close to a woman – who wasn’t his daughter – for the first time since the final night he had made love to Felicity on Rornian.

But that didn’t seem to be enough for Aletha.

“I don’t know,” Aletha shifted. “I’m still pretty cold. I think maybe resting front to front would be the best way to stay warm.”

“Well, you are the doctor,” Luke nervously shifted onto his other side. His breathing got heavier as he found himself face to face with Aletha. “Comfortable?”

“Very,” she smiled. “This isn’t too awkward for you, is it?”

“No… Well, maybe a little, but I’ll be fine.”

“Good. Just let me know if you don’t find this comfortable.”

But it seemed that both Luke and Aletha found the position very comfortable. By the time they woke the next morning, all four of their arms had magically ended up wrapped around the other’s body.

And neither seemed to mind.
The wind blew hard on the virgin patch of desert. The sands that had been secured for almost two decades were violently throw apart by the wind.

Harder and harder, the sand was torn apart, forcing the desert to peel back its layers to what lie beneath. It would be hard to see among the flurry of blinding sand, but if you squinted at just the right spot, you would see something starting to emerge from the sand…

“So, when did you and Antar get together?” Luke asked.

After the story of her meeting with Antar, Aletha had spent the rest of the day trying to get more answers about Luke’s own mysterious past. She hadn’t gotten a lot of success, but found him to be quite open on the topics of Rey, Felicity, and his unnamed sister. He of course refused to tell him the name of his sister because apparently, she would figure out who he was… somehow.

“It took a while,” Aletha admitted. “Like he said, he had just lost his fiancée so he wasn’t looking for romance. In fact, when we first met again he was actually looking for an apology. So the next morning, he tracked me down at breakfast and demanded one in front of the whole table of my colleagues.”

“What did you do?”

“Usually I would have just bowed my head and meekly offered one, but… I don’t know. There was something about the way he did it that triggered something in me. I think it was because it reminded me of how Alecta used to chastise me in front of her soldiers. The next thing I knew I had grabbed Antar by the arm and dragged him off to yell at him.”

“Who do you think you are?” Aletha exclaimed.

“Excuse me?” Antar raised his eyebrows. The Medic had dragged him into an empty corridor so they had some semblance of privacy.

“Look, I get it, you’re mad about me drugging you but I was just following orders.”

“Nonsensical orders. They handcuffed me to a hospital bed for three hours!”

“Because you joined under extremely suspect circumstances and we needed to make sure you weren’t a spy who was going to betray us to the Empire.”

“Why would I do that? I hate the Empire; they took everything from me!”

“You think, you’re the only with that sob story?” Aletha shot. “They just murdered a girl’s brother, filmed it, showed it to her, filmed her reaction, and then pinned it on us. They’ve burned down home, slaughtered innocents, taken away basic rights. We get it, the Empire is bad, hence why we’re here to fight against it. We are not your enemies, and if you continue to walk around with some martyr
complex, no one’s going to cover your back in battle.”

“I’m not a martyr, but they made the woman I love into one.”

“And if you walk back into the cafeteria, you’ll find another two dozen people with the same story. You want to die? Go off and do so, I won’t stop you. But if you want to honour her memory and fight for the future she should have been able to live, then you need to shape up. We’re an Alliance, not a free for all.”

“I remember the way Antar looked at me after that speech,” Aletha grinned fondly at the memory. “There was this slight smile that crept across his face. Next thing I knew, I was having breakfast with him, alone in a corner table when most everyone had finished. He told me about his first terrifying hours in the Rebellion until Ryoo Naberrie finally declared him okay to join the Rebellion. It took the other guy who joined him another hour to get clearance because apparently men from Tatooine got automatically flagged in the system for some reason.”

Luke withheld a smirk. It was discovered shortly after Luke joined the Rebellion that Bail Organa himself had put in that flag system to tip him off should the son of Anakin Skywalker ever attempt to join the Alliance without Bail and Obi-Wan’s knowledge. It had given Ryoo so much of a headache to sort it all out that Luke wasn’t “officially” a member of the Alliance until four whole months after destroying the Death Star.

“True to his declaration, Antar and his companion were both pilots,” Aletha continued. “The other guy got some spot in Red Squadron while Antar was assigned to the Tierfon Yellow Aces.”


“As in Dosmit Raeh, the owner of Rey’s helmet,” Aletha grinned. “How do you think I knew her? She was Antar’s commanding officer, and quite the strict woman.”

“Very no nonsense,” Antar reported as he and Aletha lingered over their breakfasts. “Woman was a little scary.”

Aletha had been assigned the late shift – though thankfully not the night shift – so she could enjoy a long meal. Antar could also as he was not yet in a set routine in the Alliance and wasn’t expected anywhere for a while.

“Dosmit does have a bit of a reputation,” Aletha chuckled. “Last time she dislocated her arm, she wouldn’t let the Med team fix it. Just popped it right back in place.”

“Last time? How many times has she dislocated her arm?”

“Antar, if you’re going to be a pilot, you probably shouldn’t get too attached to having all your limbs… No pun intended.”

He shook his head, “Are all the women in this Rebellion tough as nails? First Naberrie, then Raeh, and I’ve heard things about my physical combat trainer, some woman named Rain-”

“Reine Agim,” Aletha corrected. “And yes, she’s pretty tough as well. Word of advice, don’t be the arrogant guy that thinks because his pair of instructors are a woman and a blind man – by the way, Ji-Dan Hayato is the sweetest man you’ll ever meet, but can beat you up so hard – that he is better
“at fighter than them. They will take you down, and then they will laugh about it.”

“So, I guess it’s true then. All the women in the Rebellion are tough as nails.”

“Well, not everyone. I’m not.”

Antar grinned, “Like I said, all the women.”

Aletha couldn’t stop her blush.

“We became friends soon enough,” Aletha told Luke. “You know as a pilot that you lot didn’t stay stationed in one area for very long, but I saw Antar from time to time over the years. Whenever we saw each other we would share meals and downtime, telling each other all about our pasts. His favorite topic was Vina, telling me all about her likes, dislikes, how she looked, how she spoke, what she did, what her dreams had been, all the memories they made, and how much he loved her. Vina was his one true love, and nothing would ever change that.”

“So how did you end up marrying him?” Luke frowned.

Aletha sighed, “About two years into his joining, Antar decided that he was ready to put himself out there again and start dating. It had been so long, and he was vulnerable, so he wasn’t sure how to do it. He wanted a nice way to transition back into the dating scene. Antar suggested that we practiced dating by going out with each other as I never really had had a relationship and didn’t know how to do the whole dating thing either.”

“Practice dating?”

“You can see where this is going. It was on our third date that he kissed me. Afterwards, he smiled at me and said, just for practice. On our next date, I kissed him and said the same thing. We had several dates, each time finding new things to practice, and then on our tenth date…”

Antar slammed Aletha against the wall of her sleeping quarters. His lips were on hers, her legs were around his waist, and their hands were fumbling at the hems of each other’s clothes.

“Are you sure your roommate isn’t going to interrupt?” Antar asked, his lips roaming up and down her neck. The next day she would have to awkwardly explain the hickey to Dosmit Raeh when he overslept his morning drills.

As well as the ones Aletha left on him.

“Jedek was deployed this morning. Wait, Antar.” Aletha reluctantly pulled away, “Wait.”

“What is it?” he frowned.

She took a deep breath, “Are we- Are we still practising?”

Antar grinned, “No… but there is something I’m out practice with. Want to refresh my memory?”

Aletha grinned, “I’d love to.”

“Two bouts of foreplay, one discussion about protection, and three orgasms between us later, Antar
told me for the first time that he loved me,” Aletha smiled at the memory.

“So it was happily ever after for the two of you after that?” Luke asked. “You know, up until his death?”

Aletha’s smile fell, “No… It wasn’t.”


“As much as he loved me – and he did love me – Antar could never get over Vina. I gave him all of me, but I could always feel him draw back a little. It wasn’t uncommon for him to mention that he wondered what Vina would have thought of me. Whether she’d be happy about him moving on. I accepted it all, thinking it was just hard to let go but that one day he would. I tried my best to be everything he wanted, but I always fell short of the mark. But silly me thought I could be that for him. I thought I could be enough…”

Aletha loved the sound of Antar’s snoring while he slept next to her. It was the middle of the night, and he had fallen asleep holding her tenderly. She couldn’t sleep, so she watched his chest rise and fall with steady breaths.

“I love you, Antar,” Aletha whispered, lightly stroking his cheek. “You make me feel so alive.”

Antar had the habit of talking in his sleep when he was in deep slumber, so she wasn’t surprised when he answered her.

“Not as alive as you make me feel,” Antar mumbled. “You are my everything, My Darling.”

“I’ve never been as happy as this.”

“There is no sorrow in this world when you’re around. You are my reason to live and fight.”

“Oh, Antar… I love you so much.”

“I love you too, Vina.”

“I could feel my heart break,” Aletha struggled to fight back her tears. “I know it was just an utterance in a deep slumber, so I shook it off and didn’t tell him what happened… But then two weeks later, he accidentally called me Vina. It was while we were doing up the laundry that needed to be collected. He just said, don’t forget my flight suit, Vina. It broke my heart again. He was horrified and immediately apologized, so I brushed it off.”

She paused.

“And then it happened again… and again… and again. Soon enough it became a habit, and though he would apologize and promise that he loved and wasn’t thinking about her, it would continue to happen. The day I decided to stop correcting him, I realized that I wasn’t his girlfriend, I was his Mistress. And I would never be anything but his second best.”

And so, Luke held her that night as she cried over the hurt that had never gone away.

**Day Three**
It was emerging slowly from the sand, the monstrous structure of twisted metal. It was battered from the impact of hitting the ground, scratched from the corrosion of the sand particles shifting over it for years, and scorched from a fire long ago put out.

The sand covering it blew far away over the desert, returning the machine to the earth above. Little by little, pieces emerged until the monstrous metal transformed into a familiar ship.

It was a ship.

“I did stand up for myself to him,” Aletha told Luke the next day. “I put up with our issues for two years until I finally had had enough. I told him that I wasn’t Vina, I never would be Vina, and I didn’t want to be her. So if he wanted just a girl who could pretend to be her, then he needed to find someone new.”

“But I don’t want you to be her!” Antar exclaimed. “I only want you!”

He was aware of the dozens of eyes on them. Aletha had decided the best time to confront him was while he had been in the middle of tuning up his X-Wing in front of everyone else in the hanger.

“And I only want you,” Aletha retorted. “But you won’t give me that!”

“You have me.”

“But not all of you! If we’re going to be together, I need all of you to be with me, not just part.”

“Aletha,” Antar shook his head. “I love you, I truly do… But part of me will always belong to Vina.”

It took Aletha everything she had not to cry.

“No, Antar,” she shook her head. “You can have all of me, or none of me… And I won’t accept anything less.”

Antar sighed, “Aletha-”

“Kymeri!” a voice called.

The pair turned to see Dosmit Raeh in full flight suit marching towards them.

“Suit up, Kymeri!” Dosmit ordered. “We’re being deployed.”

“Yes, Captain,” Antar nodded. He turned back to Aletha, “We’ll talk more when I get back.”

She shook her head, “No, Antar. This is over.”

“But Aletha-”

“Goodbye Antar Kymeri.”

As she marched away, she didn’t look back.
“Good for you, Aletha,” Jedek said as he, Aletha, and a few other doctors tended to those who had been injured in the battle Antar had been summoned for. “I mean, I like the guy, but I think you deserve better.”

“I just wish I could have made things work,” Aletha sighed. “I love him so much.”

“Doctor Anthea!” a voice called.

Aletha once more found herself turning to view Dosmit Raeh calling for her. Her long, curly hair looked particularly wild that day, and her face was stern and sullen.

“May I have a moment?” Dosmit asked respectfully. “It’s about Antar.”

“I don’t want to talk about him,” Aletha dismissed.

“Doctor Anthea, I insist. Let’s go somewhere private and-”

“Whatever you have to say, you can say it to me here.”

Dosmit’s eyes narrowed, “Fine. Aletha Anthea, I regret to inform that Antar Kymeri was shot down during battle. We have yet to recover his body, but he is presumed to be killed in action. I’m sorry for your loss. Have a nice day.”

Dosmit turned on her heel and left.

“I broke down right there in the middle of the medical center,” Aletha told Luke. “Jedek held me as I cried until the commander released me from service for the night. I spent the next three nights utterly devastated. How could he have been killed? It hurt so much, and it was even worse to know that our last exchange had been a fight.”

Luke narrowed his eyes, “This isn’t his death, right? You hadn’t married him yet.”

“No, this isn’t the story of Antar’s death. This is the story of how he lost his arm. He was shot down in battle and knocked out for about a day. When he woke, he was injured but not dead. His communications had been destroyed in the crash, and his arm was pinned in the machinery. He fought to survive for two days, unable to escape his trapped arm. Three days after the battle, Antar made the hardest decision in his life: in order to escape and get back to me, he cut off his own arm. By the time he was returned to the Alliance, he had passed out from blood loss, and his amputation was infected. I remember the shock and horror when he was wheeled into my medical center. They dismissed me from treating him due to my personal interest in the matter, but I didn’t leave his bedside for a week.”

“I am so sorry,” Aletha sobbed at his bedside clutching him tightly. His new false arm was cold and hard, but she was just so happy to be back in his arms. “I’m sorry for fighting with you.”

“No, it’s okay,” Antar kissed along her shoulders, clutching her like a lifeline. “I’m so sorry for making you feel so unwanted. I love you, Aletha. I truly do, and I’m sorry that I’ve made you think
otherwise.”

“I know you love me, it’s just—”

“I understand. I’ve been horrible about all of this. Vina’s gone, and you’re my future.”

“Oh, Antar.”

He pulled away from her, “Do you know what I was thinking when I was trapped in that wreck?”

Aletha shook her head.

“I thought of you. Your love kept me alive. As I laid there, all I could think was that I had to get back to you, to make things right. I promised myself that if I escaped this, I was going to fix things with you, be a better man. You kept me alive, Aletha. I love you.”

Tears filled her eyes, “I love you too, Antar.”

He pulled her in for a passionate kiss. She cried as she felt a wave of joy, love, and relief pass over her.

“Oh, Antar,” she sighed when they had broken apart. “What do we do now?”

Antar grinned, “I think the answer is very clear, My Dear.”

Aletha smiled, entwining her hand with his, “Yes... I think it is.”


“I married him.”

What do I do when I’m home? Mostly, I refurbish gear at my workbench – it costs too much to make extensive repairs at Unkar’s washing tables in Niima

- Rey’s Survival Guide

“And... there!” Rey declared as she stepped away from the wall. “Another day, another scratch. Hey, toss me a water bottle, Quom, I’m thirsty.”

“Head’s up, MG,” Quom threw the cannister as he tinkered with an old broken flights comm system.

Rey took a very measured drink and resealed the bottle.

“You know you can have more, right?” Quom lifted an eyebrow.

“Not right now. We need to save it.”

“We’ve got seven others.”

“Quom! We need to take special care that we have enough food and water to last the trip.”
He blinked, “What trip?”

Rey frowned, startled by her own words, “I… Don’t know. There’s no trip. I meant sandstorm.”

He stared at her for a long while.

“Young mom said that to you, didn’t she?” Quom figured it out. “When you did your trek.”

“Maybe?” Rey sadly shrugged and sat on her hammock. She fiddled with her Felicity doll, which had been sitting on her pillow, “I don’t really remember the walk. Just something about digging holes and being half-brave.”

“What? You don’t remember your mom almost shooting me?”

“No, but I think I remember her offering to make out with you in exchange for one of Plutt’s pills.”

“Yeah,” Quom laughed awkwardly. “Make out with me. That’s… definitely what she offered. Hey, by the way, don’t ever tell your dad about that.”

“I’m eleven, not stupid.”

“I guess. And I guess the reason you and your dad are so paranoid about rationing food and water is because of the whole dying from heat stroke thing.”

“It’s not an experience I would recommend.”

“How would you know? You can’t remember it.”

Rey threw her pilot doll at the laughing Quom.

“So,” Quom said slyly as he sat aside the doll, “is that also why you still do the scratches and keep your hair the way your mom did it?”

Rey looked away, “I don’t know what you’re talking about.”

“MG, I once bit a guy in the neck to protect you. I’ve earned the right to have you not lie to me.”

She sighed, “Alright, I know what you’re talking about, but that’s not why I do it.”

“Why do you do it, then?”

“I don’t want to talk about it.”

“Rey.”

“…Fine. But you have to swear to me that what I’m about to say you’ll keep a secret.”

“I promise.”

“Don’t promise. Swear to me!” Rey’s voice was desperate. “Not even Dad or Aletha can know. Swear it, Quom.”

“Alright, I swear it,” Quom said. “Now what’s the big secret?”

Rey took a deep breath, “Quom, the reason I keep doing the scratches on the wall, and keep my hair the same is that… I think my mom’s still alive.”
His jaw dropped, “WHAT?”

“I know it’s crazy-”

“It’s beyond crazy. Rey, I’m sorry to be the bearer of bad news but your mom is absolutely dead.”

“Is she? Dad said they never got to bury Mom’s body, right?”

“…Yes,” Quom did not like where this conversation was going.

“And Dad didn’t get to see her die, right?”

“Well… he wasn’t there.” Quom was fairly certain Luke hadn’t told Rey about the recording Luke had of Felicity’s death.

“Right,” Rey smiled. “Well, a while back I was thinking about that, and I realized that, it doesn’t quite add up.”

“It adds up a lot more than you know.”

“No, it doesn’t!” Rey insisted.

“Yes, it does!” Quom snapped. “Look you’re really young and maybe your Dad hasn’t told you the full story yet, but when he does you’re going to realise that your mom – as sad as it may be – could not have possibly escaped from her death. I’m sorry, but it’s true.”

Rey glared at him, “Well, I don’t believe it’s true, and until I one hundred percent do believe that, I’m not taking out these hair buns.”

Quom sighed sadly.

“I’m going to go study a few schematics,” Rey got to her feet. She snatched her data reader from the storage crate she used as a bedside table, and grabbed the small pouch that held all the data chips she and Luke had recovered over the years.

“I’m sorry, Rey. But you have to accept the truth!”

“Not until I see it with my own eyes.”

As Rey stomped away deeper into the walker, Quom groaned and looked down at the doll of Luke propped next to him.

“Well, I tried my best,” he told the Luke doll. He patted it on the head, “Good luck dealing with the rest of that.”

The Luke doll said nothing.

Day Four

In the climax of the storm it was impossible to see anything, but there was no turning back for the hidden ship. It would be returned to the surface fully by the completion of the X’us’R’iia.
Nose and tip and tail emerged. There was no denying what type of ship had been hidden all those years in the sand.

A Rebellion X-Wing.

“I think the winds are starting to die down,” Luke declared while they finished dinner that night. He frowned when he saw Aletha smirking at him, “What?”

“You got ration in your beard,” Aletha laughed.

“Oh, sorry,” he reached.

“No, I’ll get it.”

Aletha took his plate from him and set it on the ground, beside their combined cots. They had continued to sleep in each other’s arms every night. She reached up and very slowly dragged a thumb across his lip. Aletha had removed the offending beard stain, but still she kept her hand in place.

“Got it?” Luke asked quietly, too afraid to move.

“Yes,” Aletha whispered.

It wasn’t clear which one of them was the one leaning forward – it could have been both – but moments later their lips were mere millimetres away from touching. At the last second, Luke decided to take a bold risk, and he stroked his fingers up Aletha’s bare back.

Sadly that seemed to shake her out of her reverie.

“We shouldn’t,” Aletha pulled back.

She moved to stand but Luke pulled her back down.

“We should,” Luke continued to stroke up her spine.

How strange it was to do this gesture and not feel the rough scar of his father’s destruction. Aletha’s back felt almost strange to him, but it was soft and warm, and he wanted to touch so much more.

That was when Aletha’s eyes fell on the chain around his neck, “You still carry her rings around?”

Damn it.

Luke pulled back from her, “Only because I’m worried about safekeeping them from thieves.”

“Thieves like Quom?” Aletha grinned.

“You know, I honestly don’t think he even knew what to do with them when he blackmailed them from Felicity. He was probably just really surprised his little act worked. Imagine what would have happened if Felicity knew what Quom was really like.”

“I probably would have to patch up more than Rey’s heatstroke.”

“Oh, he’d be dead. I love Felicity, but she was the kind of woman that if she was armed with a
blaster, you know it was going to be fired by the end of the day.” Luke paused, “I’m sorry if wearing her rings makes you uncomfortable.”

“It’s okay.” Aletha leaned over to a locked cabinet that sat next to her cot. She unlocked it, opened the top drawer, and pulled out a small bronze ring set with a single minuscule pearl, “This is my wedding ring. Not very fancy, but we were fighting in a war. I was lucky to get this.”

“It’s lovely,” Luke took off his chain that held Felicity’s rings. He set it on top the cabinet, “I won’t pretend that my wedding day wasn’t one of the happiest days of my life. Rivalled only by the actual best day of my life: when Rey was born.”

“It’s literally the happiest day of my life,” Aletha smiled and set her ring down next to Felicity’s. “We eloped a few days after Antar was released from the hospital and we took a few weeks off for a honeymoon. We literally just went to another Rebel base and stayed in our room for a week. We were so happy after his accident. When I thought I could have lost him, I was more forgiving of his transgressions.”

“So, he continued to give you the same problems?”

“Surprisingly enough, marrying Antar didn’t fix our problems, and in fact might have made them worse,” Aletha sadly continued her story. “He tried; I swear he did, but… it wasn’t enough. I still was only second best to Vina. I put up with it for the rest of the war. Yavin happened two years later, and after that we found ourselves apart a lot. Every time he went in battle, I held my breath, but he fought and come home to me. Sometimes he won, sometimes he lost, but he would always come home to me.”

Luke felt very bittersweet about the story. He wondered vaguely what would have happened if he had met Aletha during the war. Would they have gotten together? What if they had? What if they had gotten together before he met Felicity? Would they have lived happily ever after? What would have happened if he met Felicity after meeting Aletha? He mentally sighed; lifetimes were wasted on what ifs. Nothing could change the fact that he, Felicity, and Aletha had all spent the war lonely.

Well, actually Felicity had been with Pax for the last year, but things had not ended with happily ever after.

“You’re thinking about her,” Aletha murmured.

“I’m sorry,” Luke said. “You have my full attention.”

“Promise?”

Luke opened the cabinet drawer, pushed in both Felicity’s and Aletha’s rings, and closed the cabinet.


“Antar didn’t bring up Vina anymore after our wedding,” Aletha continued as his other hand stroked up and down her back. “Never mentioned her name in front of me, but still, I knew he had moved on. Every time we touched or kiss, a part of him still held back. I wasn’t asking for much. I didn’t need him to forget Vina, just for him to love me. But he couldn’t do both. After Endor we started to make plans for what we would do after the war. We discussed places to live, and the children we wanted to have. I… I had had an early term miscarriage a few months after the Battle of Hoth. We weren’t planning on the pregnancy, but still it broke my heart.”
Luke winced. He still remembered how hard Leia had cried after the miscarriage the wrecked her reproductive system so badly that it ensured Ben would be an only child.

“We agreed that we wanted to have children immediately after the war. One day we were discussing baby names. I told him that I would absolutely not name my children names that all started and ended with the same letter. Not another Alecta/Aletha/Athena muddle. I would also not name them anything starting with a Ky. No stupid Athena Anthea situation.”

Aletha paused.

“Then he told me what he wanted to name our firstborn daughter… Vina.”

Luke’s hand froze on her back.

“I lost it on him. It was the fight to end all fights. I understand he intent behind wanting to name his daughter that, but it was like a dam inside of me had blown. I had had enough, and it was time for the ultimatum.”

“’It’s me or her!’ Aletha yelled, her voice reverberating off the walls of their sleeping quarters.

“Oh, come on, Aletha. You’re being completely unreasonable!’”

“You’ve pushed me to it!” she shoved him.

Antar stumbled back a step, “For goodness sake, Vina is dead! Why are you so threatened by her?”

“Because it’s always Vina this and Vina that!” Aletha screamed. “I know that if she was standing here today and you had to pick between the two of us, there wouldn’t even be a hesitation. I am not a consolation prize!”

Antar said nothing. He just stared at her.

That enraged Aletha further.

“Say something!” she screeched. “Tell me that I’m not a consolation prize! That I’m not second best! That you would pick me!”

Antar closed his eyes. He looked mad at himself, but he still said those four cruel words.

“I can’t say that.” Antar had tears in his eyes, “I’m so sorry, Aletha, but I can’t say I would pick you.”

Aletha froze in stunned shock. There is was, the thing she had been fearing for year. He had so bluntly admitted it.

She slapped him as hard as she could.

“You God damn coward!” she screamed at him. “For years I have fought for this relationship. I have been so much time and effort and love into making this work. And you’ve done nothing but spouted off fancy apologies at the right intervals. But you never change. Do you even love me?”

“I do, Aletha,” Antar objected. “I swear I do! It’s just…”
"Just what?"

He took a deep breath, "I love her more."

She wanted to hit him again, but instead she broke down crying.

"I can't do this anymore, Antar," Aletha sobbed unconsolably. "I can't keep pretending. If you want to love me, you have to love me. I can't keep getting my heart broken."

"I never meant to hurt you," Antar’s answer was honest. "I never meant for this to play out the way it did."

"But it did, Antar... I don’t think we’re meant to be. I think we should separate, and maybe consider getting a divorce."

He was silent for a long time, "...You’re right."

Aletha reeled, "You- What?"

"This isn’t working anymore, and I don’t want you to continue to get hurt. So if that’s what you want, I’m do it."

"No," Aletha whispered in horror. "No, I was bluffing. I don’t that."

"Then we won’t, but if you want to leave, I’m not going to stop you."

"No. No! No!" Aletha shoved him again, "Damn it, Antar! Don’t do this! Don’t just concede defeat. Fight for me. Please, Antar. Fight for this. Fight for us. Fight for me, please!"

But he just shook his head.

Aletha slapped him even harder than last time.

"You’re a coward, Antar Kymeri. Loving you was the biggest mistake of my life."

"He didn’t stop me as he left,” Aletha sobbed as she told the story. “I don’t understand it, Luke. Why wasn’t I worth the fight? Why have I never been worth the fight?”

"You are. You absolutely are,” Luke pulled her into his arms and held her tight as she sobbed into his chest.

"Nobody’s ever fought for me. Not Adrinna against Alecta’s vow to kill me. Not Dad against my sisters forcing me to drop out of school. Not Antar to save our marriage. No one has wanted to fight for me."

"That’s wrong,” Luke pulled away from her. He held her shoulders and looked her in the eye, “That is dead wrong. I’ve fought for you, so has Quom, so has Felicity, so has Ivano, so has Rey, so even has Dirk. Remember when Roke tried to kill you and how many people were ready to shoot him for it? Remember when Felicity saved you from Phasma? Remember when Rey chose a life of loneliness so that Plutt and his thugs wouldn’t hurt you? You have people who love you, protect you, and willingly fight for you... And I’ve been fighting for you for years. To love you, to be with you. I want to be with you, Aletha. Completely. I’ll love Felicity forever, but you’ll never come second to a ghost. I’m ready to move on with you. I’ll fight for you."

She kissed him. She threw her arms around him and kissed his desperately, passionately. Luke
groaned as he returned the kiss with the same vigor. His hands roamed over the bare skin of her back, drifting closer to the edges of the fabric to the places concealed. They pushed further and further to the sides, and then his hands were over her fabric clad breasts.

Aletha pushed him away.

Luke panted, alarm in his eyes, “Aletha. I’m sorry. I shouldn’t have-”

She placed a finger over his lips and shook her head. Her frowned and she removed her hand. Aletha took a deep breath, reached back, and untied the knot of fabric at the base of her neck. The fabric fell forward, exposing her bare chest, and a minute later it was unceremonious pulled over her head and thrown on the floor.

Luke stared at her; shocked by her boldness. He tried to keep his eyes on hers, but it had been so long since he had seen a woman’s naked chest, and Aletha was certainly very gifted in the area.

“Aletha,” he whispered at a loss for further words.


He struggled not to move his hand to explore further. Luke just looked her in the eyes and saw the raw mix of desire and genuine love. There would be no turning if he did this… and he wanted to do this.

“I love you, Aletha Kymeri,” he declared.

She smiled, “I love you too, Luke Erso.”

He grinned and shoved her back on the cot. She squeaked and giggled as he pulled off his tunic and crawled on top her. Her hands roamed over his still muscled torso as he kicked of his boots and kissed along her neck.

So came a flurry of hands and lips and tongues and teeth. Clothing was cast to the floor, and skin was touched in places that had been for years. Each exploration was a spark of electricity in their veins, accented by moans and laughter. Things got hotter, harder, and wetter.

And then bliss.

---

Day Five

---

“Can we officially say we’re together now?” Luke asked as he laced up his boots.

“I suppose,” Aletha was frowning in a small looking glass, trying to figure out how in the middle of a desert she was supposed to conceal a hickey on her shoulder… and a bite mark on her thigh. “Besides, if we don’t, Quom’s going to figure it out anyway. I still don’t know how he learned about our first kiss. Neither of us told him.”

“I’m pretty sure he just smelled it on me.” Luke finished tying his boot and just grinned, “Wow, I can’t believe that for the first time in sixteen years, I’ve slept with someone who isn’t Felicity Rhiaon… And I did it three times.”
“Unfortunately, I only got twice,” Aletha grinned. “Little quick to draw the last time.”

“It’s been seven years, Aletha. You’re lucky they weren’t all quick draw. Besides I got you two others using other methods.”

“I may start calling you silver-tongued.”

“Please don’t. Quom will figure it out, and I’ll never hear the end of it.”

Luke smiled. Suddenly grabbed Aletha, wrapping his arms around her, and playfully pulling him into his lap.

“What are you doing, Mister Erso?” Aletha giggled as Luke kissed up her neck.

“Getting some little last minute touching in,” Luke nibbled at her earlobe. “With the X’us’R’iia over, we’re not going to have as easy a venue to do this anymore.”

“May I remind you that Quom and Rey are waiting for us at the walker to bring more rations and check we’re all okay?”

“I heard the comm message too.”

Aletha smiled, but she pulled away from him, “Luke… I can’t do this.”

He frowned, “What?”

“I’m not calling us off, but… I need you to hear the rest of my story.”

Luke sighed, and shifted her out of his lap. He took her hands in his, and nodded for her to continue.

“Antar decided to fight for me after that argument,” Aletha said. “I had slept in the room of some colleagues that night and when I returned to our quarters to change for shift, he was waiting for me.”

“I’m so sorry, Aletha,” Antar cried as they sat on the bed together. “I have treated you so horribly. You are an amazing woman, and I do love you dearly. You were my ray of hope after losing everything from Faclov, and you’ve been the best thing in my life throughout this entire war. I do want a future with you, I want a marriage with you. I love you… and I need to move on. Last night, I, uh… I went to the mental health team and talked to an advisor. They agreed that I should see a therapist to work this all out. I’m willing to fight for this… I’m ready to fight for you, and give you all of me.”

“He had said things like that before, but this was the first time he implemented a plan to make things better. I could see a light at the end of the tunnel, but I wasn’t sure. I kissed him to see what would happen… for the first time, no part of him drew back from me. I knew that for this time, it was real.”

“Okay,” Aletha agreed. “One last chance. But I swear, if you do it one more time, if you regress… I’m gone.”

“Agreed,” Antar nodded, tears still shining in his eyes, but a smile on his face. He reached up and
brushed a lock of hair out of her face, “I love you, Aletha.”

“I love you too, Antar.”

“And we just sat there holding each other,” Aletha smiled. “We knew that we finally were going to live happily ever after.”

There was a beat. Her grin fell and her eyes filled with sadness.

Luke closed his eyes, sensing the pain about to come, “What happened?”

“Oi! Kymeri!” Dosmit Raeh barged into the room.

Antar and Aletha quickly pulled apart.

“Captain,” Antar rose and saluted, awkwardly trying to wipe away his tears.

“Oh good, you two are clothed,” Dosmit shot a look at Aletha like she shouldn’t be in her own quarters alone with her own husband. “Suit up, Kymeri. The Tierfon Yellow Aces have been assigned the Battle of Jakku. Just think about it. We’re going to fight the final battle of the war. That’ll be something to tell the grandkids. You have thirty minutes to be on your X-Wing. Get a move on.”

Antar nodded, “Yes, Captain.”

“I was proud of him,” Aletha had on a bittersweet smile. “I sent him off to battle with a kiss, a declaration of love, and a vision of living happily ever after.”

Tears filled her eyes.


“That’s not what happened,” Aletha choked out. “When the battle ended, and the Tierfon Yellow Aces returned, I was waiting in the hanger for them. I looked around at the ships eagerly, ready to run into my husband’s arms and start our life together… but his ship didn’t return. Fear filled my heart… and then I saw a Pilot Commander walking towards me with the small silver box every Rebel knows.”

Luke grimaced. The small silver box held the black starbird medal given to families of Rebels killed in battle.

“I don’t know what he said to me,” Aletha continued. “All I heard was a ringing in my ears, the name Antar Kymeri, and I’m sorry for your loss. His tone was sympathetic, but somewhat robotic from having said it so many times. He pressed Antar’s medal into my grip, said another sorry, and left me alone. I had never felt so alone before that moment standing in that hanger with no family, no real friends, and no husband. There was no one to console me, and all I remember is screaming loudly, falling to my knees and crying my heart out alone on that cold floor.”


“At least… alone at first.”

Aletha was screaming so loudly, she was fairly certain that starships a galaxy away heard her. Antar was dead. Her beloved husband was dead. No, this couldn’t be possible, they were finally going to work things out. They were going to get a home and have children.

How could he be dead?

A pair of arms wrapped around her, and suddenly a man pulled her up into his embrace.

“I’m so sorry,” the man whispered, holding her tightly. “I’m so sorry for your loss.”

“I have no idea who that man was,” Aletha said. “All I remember is that he was in a pilot’s uniform. He just saw me crying, and decided to come over and comfort me. He pulled me into his arms and held me. He left me sob and scream, and even hit him a little as I worked through the death of my husband. We exchanged no names, asked no questions, just shared a moment of pure human connection. When I was done crying, I thanked him, he told me it was his honour, then he left and I never saw him again. Sometimes I sit up at night and wonder who that man was, but I’ve long ago realized it doesn’t matter.”

Luke wished he could say it had been him to share that beloved moment with Aletha, but alas, the day after the Battle of Jakku, Luke wasn’t on the Rebel Base. He was on his way back, flying in the Millennium Falcon, being told by Han and Leia that surprise, he was going to be an uncle.

Aletha took a deep breath, “You’ve asked me why I came to Jakku, so here is the answer. I came as part of the recovery team, hoping that Antar had had another miracle and survived his crash. A group of about fifty Rebels came to Jakku to do recovery. About a dozen pilots straggled in, but none were Antar. Still I waited… Weeks went by, and soon they turned to months. Long after it was possible for Antar to still be alive, I waited for him. It was three months later that I accept the truth, and decided it was time to go home. Of course, I had no home at the time. I had commed Adrinna, and that’s when she told me of Alecta’s vow. We’ve talked a few times since then, but she’s no trusted ally. I was going to go home with Jedek and stay with him and his wife until I got things settled. Jedek had joined the recovery team, and stayed on with me for the three months. We were the last ones on Jakku when we decided to leave.”

“So why did you stay?”

Aletha smiled, “Throughout my time on Jakku, I had been treated very well by an Aqualish named Mashra. When Jedek and I were packing up to leave, Mashra dropped in the middle of the street with a coughing fit. Jedek and I sprung into action and saved her life. I discovered that she had the same lung disease as a patient I had in the Imperial Army, who my supervisor pulled the plug on, even though I could have saved her. When I had fixed Mashra, Ivano Troade cam eup to me asking if I could fix a wound and he would pay me. Then came Varé, Binz, Quom, and even Roke. I felt like it was a sign, a call from something bigger. Jedek agreed to return on a regular basis to bring me medical supplies, and I stayed on Jakku. I decided to stay on Jakku to save lives… I decided to stay for Mashra. And so ends the tale of my tragic backstory, Luke Erso. Any questions?”

“Just one,” Luke replied. “Why were you so hesitant to be with me after our kiss? You knew I was ready… why weren’t you?”
Aletha sighed, “Because I’m a lot like you, Luke. I felt that I needed to wait for the sign.”


Aletha smiled and wrapped her arms around his neck, “To find his body. Antar’s body has never been recovered, hence why I always inquire if you and Quom found an X-Wing. I thought if I found Antar, I could move on… but I realize that I don’t need a sign. I don’t need to bury his body… I just need you.”

He brushed a lock of hair out of her face, “And I need you.”

Then they kissed the sweetest kiss Aletha had ever tasted.

The storm had finally settled. It had been a dramatic one that changed the lives of many forever. There would be no turning back from the consequences to come… and there was no reburying the X-Wing hidden so many years in the sand.

Deep in the heart of Jakku, there is a patch of sand. It is much like any ordinary patch, flat, yellow, and stretches on endlessly into the horizon. But now that sand had given up the secret it held concealed for twenty-three years.

The X-Wing was Rebellion-era, a relic of the Battle of Jakku. Shot down brutally in the battle, the yellow ship and its pilot had met their destruction on the planet of Jakku.

Still strapped into the cockpit was the pilot who had given his life for the Alliance, and the freedom of all. His body was now no more than a skeleton that would soon crumble to dust. His jumpsuit sagged around the brittle bones, and his helmet was strapped upon the cranium.

He was like so many others who died in that desert, bones to be shoved aside for the equipment he horded, but there was something about him that made this particular body special.

A patch on his jumpsuit reading his codename of Yellow-4… and a helmet that bore the name Kymeri.

Chapter End Notes

To all the people horrified by the plotline of Rey thinking Felicity is alive, I just want to say that you forced my hand. People keep thinking that I somehow managed to save Felicity even though I explicitly showed her getting shot in the head, and had Ben kick her corpse. Let me say this point blank: Ben is not lying about Felicity being dead. Felicity was in fact shot. You know how much I love her, and I will admit that writing that scene of her getting shot was one of the hardest scenes I’ve ever had to write, but Ben did not lie.

You know, this is going to make more sense when I reveal what Ben did to her body. Stupid dramatic reveals I have to wait to unveil only at the point in which it is narratively appropriate.

Question: Do you guys want an extended dirty version of the Luke/Aletha love scene? I
have thoughts for it, but I’ll only do it if there’s interest. (She says totally not having cut
it out because she just wanted to finish this damn chapter.)
Chapter Summary

Quom torments Teng, Luke makes Dad jokes, oh, and Aletha buries her husband.

Chapter Notes

Important Announcement: For those who are unaware, Teng Malar is actually a canon character. He appears in a single line in Rey’s Survival Guide and I thought it would be interesting to take the tidbit and build a whole story about him and his relationship to Rey. For those reading on AO3, you see that romance is the endgame, and I thought it would be interesting to make their relationship a romantic one.

However, I strongly urge you not to go researching the character. Like I said, there’s only a single fact about him known, and realize that it must be something pretty significant for me to build a whole plotline around. If you do know that information about Teng, I ask you not to mention it in any comments or reviews that are seen publicly. Please don’t spoil this for anyone else.

Thank you.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

The Long Way Home

Chapter Thirty-Three

Skeletons in the Desert

AGE TWELVE

If I need welding, I see a manumitted power droid named AMPS. AMPS doesn’t eat rations, of course, but he’ll weld in exchange for a recharge, spare gas canisters, metals he finds interesting, or a good joke. I spend a lot of time driving across the Goazon trying to think of jokes AMPS will decide are worth a trade.

- Rey’s Survival Guide
“Well, the Imperials obviously weren’t convinced, so they asked for his… reporting number I think,” Rey couldn’t recall the minor detail. “Solo naturally didn’t have a number, so he just shot the comm system and said *boring conversation anyway.*”

AMPS gave an electronic chortle, and Rey smiled proudly at making the droid laugh.

“Impressive, Miss Erso. I will weld for you,” AMPS grabbed her few objects and started to work. His voice had a static sort of buzz to it from years of disrepair, “It is a delightful story, Miss Erso. Did you make that one up yourself?”

“No, it’s a real story. I think the Wookiees that were here a few years ago told it to me. They told me most of my Solo stories, though Doctor Ally had a few too.” Rey paused, “Actually… the weird thing is I swear I remember hearing the story in a man’s voice. Not Dad’s, someone… gruffer? I’m probably just imagining things.”

It had been a long time since Rey ceased to remember not only that Han Solo himself had told her the story, but that Han Solo had been involved in her life at all. Uncle Quom was the only uncle she remembered at that point.

She was halfway to the day her past would come crashing back into her present.


She stuck up her hand and waved over the group of Luke, Quom, and Aletha who were searching for her. Rey hadn’t seen Doctor Ally at all that day, and Quom had been busy with Dad messing around with Quom’s speeder that morning.

“Excuse me, Miss,” Luke grinned as the group reached Rey. “But have you seen my daughter anywhere?”

Rey rolled her eyes, “Daadd, I’m right here.”

“What? *You*?” Luke pretended to be startled. “No, that’s not possible. Last time I checked, my daughter was only the length of my forearm. And look at you. You’re all grown up.”

“Well, not *all* grown up,” Rey grinned. “I’m hoping to get a little taller than this.”

Quom smirked, “Yeah, considering your parents, I won’t put money on that, MG.”

Rey giggled.

Luke just shook his head, “Believe it or not, I have met a fully-grown woman who was even shorter than Felicity.”

He decided not to add that the woman was his twin sister, Leia.

“If you lot are done with your banter, I believe I am missing a hug from my favorite girl.” Aletha pulled Rey into a snuggly embrace, “Happy birthday, Sunshine. I can’t believe you’re already twelve.”

“Seems just like yesterday that we were gathered around that tiny cake singing you happy birthday,” Quom reminisced. “Now that I think of it, why did we decide lighting a candle in the desert was a good idea?”

Quom shrugged.

“Miss Erso, your welding is complete,” AMPS announced.

“Thank you,” Rey nodded at the droid.

“I enjoyed the laugh. Have a pleasant day,” AMPS waddled away.

“So, what are we doing today?” Rey turned back to her family.

“Well, Quom and I have a delivery that we thought you might want to accompany us on,” Luke smiled. “We’re heading to Old Meru’s. Wanna come?”

“Of course!” Rey rummaged for her notebook in her shoulder bag that Luke had given her that very morning as her birthday present.

What she didn’t know is that Luke hadn’t scavenged it, but rather arranged it to be purchased by Jedeck from a store on Coruscant that Luke and Felicity had used to buy equipment for the Resistance. The bag could go through Hell and back and it would be fine. He wanted her to have some gear on her at all times in case of a sudden need to depart Jakku.

“Just let me sharpen my pencils and we can head to see Meru,” Rey said excitedly.

The grown ups exchanged a look.

“Right,” Quom said in a drawn-out voice. “Meru is who you want to see.”

“Actually, can I come with you guys?” Aletha asked. “I would like to meet this Teng boy I’ve heard Quom rant about so much.”

“Of course,” Luke nodded. “It’ll be great to finally see how much of a no-good troublemaker with dishonorable intentions he truly is.”

Rey rolled her eyes, “Quom, stop it! I don’t like Teng like that.”

“You only think that now, but give it a few years-”

“I’m twelve! Boys are icky! Stop ruining my friendship with the only person my age around here. Do you know how boring it is to be with adults all the time?”

That shut the group up.

“Sorry, Rey,” Quom looked sheepish. “I didn’t think of it like that.”

“It’s okay,” Rey sighed, “I just wish I could have more friends my age.”

“Well, there is that Devi girl that came in a few days ago,” Aletha suggested. “Maybe her?”

“No, she gives me an uneasy feeling. Kind of the same one... he did.”

They no longer uttered the name of the man who had abused Rey once upon a time. There were still times she woke up in a panic, convinced he was coming for her. And every now and then, a sudden movement would make Rey flinch. It broke their hearts to know she might never escape the grasp that horrid man had on her.

“I’m sure Teng is a lovely boy,” Luke put a comforting hand on Rey’s shoulder. “And I’m sure
you’re just friends. You’ve only known him a month, after all.”

“Exactly!” Rey exclaimed. “Dad, haven’t you ever become really close friends with a member of the opposite sex in a short amount of time, and had a really strong friendship with them after said short period of time?”


Rey’s smile fell, “Oh. Then uh… Um…”

She glanced around the marketplace, casting about for answers before her eyes fell on Aletha.

“It’s like you and Aletha!” Rey grinned. “Just really close friendship. Nothing romantic at all.”

Luke and Aletha glanced stiffly at each other.

“Yeah…” she laughed awkwardly. “Friends.”

Quom raised an eyebrow.

Luke wouldn’t meet his gaze.

“MG, why don’t you go sharpen your pencils?” Quom suggested. “Your Dad and I will load up the speeder.”

“Okay,” Rey raced off.

They all waited until she was gone.

“You seriously haven’t told her yet?” Quom shook his head in disbelief.


“Oh, you have no idea how complicated it is.” Quom still hadn’t spilled Rey’s little mother secret. “But you’ve already been making out with the Doc for a month, and you haven’t told Rey.”

“We haven’t just been making out,” Aletha blushed.

Quom grinned, “Don’t worry, Luke told me what happened in the tent. Not a big surprise. You know the saying, if you’re alone with a pretty girl during a X’us’R’iia, you’re about to get lucky.”

“That’s not a saying.”

“It should be.”

“So because you say it is, that makes it one?”

Quom stared at Aletha, “I’m sorry, did you just meet me?”

Aletha rolled her eyes, “Seven years ago I took one kick to the face, and now this is my life.”

“Would you rather the life of loneliness you had before?”

She said nothing.

“I thought not.”
Luke shook his head, “I really made a mistake staying on Jakku.”

“So, when are you going to tell Rey about the two of you?” Quom asked.

“I don’t know,” Luke sighed. “We’ve just started a relationship and we need to see if this is going to work before we involve in it.”

“He’s right,” Aletha agreed. “I don’t want to get her hopes up about mothers or any of that, and then break her heart.”

Quom grimaced, “Believe me, Doc, whether you want it or not… this whole mother situation can’t end in anything but heartbreak.”

“I know. The only question is,” she looked at Luke, “whose heart will it be?”

Teng looked so excited when he saw the speeder pull up with Rey. He was dirty, thin from starvation, and his clothing was ragged – oddly he was wearing a long sleeved blue shirt under the hot Jakku sun – but his smile was as brilliant as his green eyes.

“Rey!” he exclaimed as she clamored out of the speeder. “What are you doing here?”

“He’s right,” Aletha agreed. “I don’t want to get her hopes up about mothers or any of that, and then break her heart.”

Quom grimaced, “Believe me, Doc, whether you want it or not… this whole mother situation can’t end in anything but heartbreak.”

“I know. The only question is,” she looked at Luke, “whose heart will it be?”

Teng looked so excited when he saw the speeder pull up with Rey. He was dirty, thin from starvation, and his clothing was ragged – oddly he was wearing a long sleeved blue shirt under the hot Jakku sun – but his smile was as brilliant as his green eyes.

“Rey!” he exclaimed as she clamored out of the speeder. “What are you doing here?”

“Hey Teng,” she smiled as the adults worked unloading the speeder. “Dad and Quom had a delivery for Meru, and I tagged along.”

“Well, I’m glad you came. Happy birthday.”

“You remembered?”

He blushed and shrugged, “It wasn’t a far off date when you told me it. Not that hard to remember.”

“Well, thank you. Your birthday is next month, right?”

“I’ll be fourteen,” Teng nodded.

“That seems so grown up,” Rey marveled. “You, uh… probably don’t want to hang out with a kid like me when you’re fourteen.”

“Well, my other option is Meru, so I think we’ll be good.”

“You’re sure?”

“I promise, Rey, if the choice comes down to you or Meru, I’ll pick you every time,” Teng winked.

Rey didn’t know why she was suddenly blushing.

“MG! Stop consorting with that ruffian!” Quom called.

Teng froze like a steelpecker had just spotted him, and Rey suddenly wanted the ground to swallow her whole.

“Lay off him, Quom,” Luke chided as he approached the children. “Rey, would you like to introduce your friend?”

“Dad, this is Teng Malar,” Rey said. “Teng, this is my father. He’s less embarrassing than Quom.”

“But not entirely unembarrassing,” Luke grinned as he shook Teng’s hand. “It is in my job
description of father.”

“If you make a Dad joke, I’m walking home,” Rey warned.

Luke couldn’t resist the challenge, “Just don’t forget to put it on a leash.”

Rey spun on her heel and started marching in the vague direction of the walker.

Aletha caught her shoulder and turned Rey back around, “Settle down you two. Hello, Teng. I’m Aletha Kymeri. I’ve heard a lot about you from Quom. I assume none of it is true.”

“Well, maybe not none of it,” Teng grinned at Rey as he shook Aletha’s hand. “Wait, Kymeri as in Doctor Kymeri?”

She looked surprised, “You’ve heard of me?”

“Little bit from Meru. She says you’re kinda badass. I heard you shot a woman in the knee.”

“Protecting Rey,” Aletha slung an arm over Rey’s shoulder.

“That’s so cool!” Teng exclaimed. “And you faced down Roke, letting him be forever mauled.”

“Do not mess with the only doctor in Niima Outpost.”

“But steelpeckers. Dang, those things give me the creeps.”

“With good reason,” Rey nodded.

“Wow, Doctor,” Teng shook his head in disbelief, “you have got to be the most badass person I have ever met.”

Oddly enough, Luke felt uncomfortable at the proclamation.

“Well, you know,” he cut in awkwardly, “I’ve done a few things in my day.”

“Oh really?” Quom lifted a teasing eyebrow. “What could you have possibly done that’s badass? You’re not exactly the kind of person who hung around Rogue One or Han Solo.”

Luke glared at Quom.

“He’s got a point, Dad. I mean, sure you punched out… Jarex,” the word was hard for Rey to utter, “but really, what’s so badass about you? The most I’ve ever seen you do is a one-armed handstand.”

“You can still do those?” Aletha frowned. It had been a few years since she had seen him attempt one.

“While balancing a storage crate on my foot at the same time,” Luke griped.

“Using which arm?” Teng asked.

“The natural one, thank you very much,” Luke tried not to be mad at the boy. “You know, I am more impressive than you think I am.”

“I’ll believe it when I see it,” Rey smirked.

“Just you wait,” Quom grinned remembering the day he witnessed Luke Skywalker in action with a lightsaber and the Force. “He puts on one hell of a show.”
“So, uh…” Teng looked around at the group, “these are the people who raised you, Rey?”

Rey laughed, “There’s certainly never a dull moment.”

“I can imagine.” Teng suddenly perked, “Oh, wait right here. I have something for you.”

He soon returned with what would be considered on any other planet, a pathetic offering. Some pathetic looking spinebarrel blooms in some piece of what looked like tubing or pipe, transformed into a cup.

“For your collection,” Teng explained, feeling the eyes of the adults on him.

---

I collect flowers – spinebarrel blooms and nightblossoms – and display them to remind myself that there’s beauty everywhere if you look hard enough, even on Jakku.

- Rey’s Survival Guide

---

“Thank you so much, Teng,” Rey clutched her birthday present against her chest. “Hey, I brought my drawing book. You have anymore pictures you made?”

“No, but I’ve got a few I’m working on,” Teng shyly fidgeted with his pant pocket. “Meru should be busy with your family if you want to maybe hang around a draw a little with me?”

“I guess I didn’t sharpen my pencils for no reason,” Rey grinned. She grabbed his arm, “Come on.”

“Ow!” Teng suddenly screamed and pulled his arm away.

“What’s wrong?” Aletha frowned.

“Nothing,” he refused to meet her eye as he cradled his arm.

But Aletha, full on in doctor mode, would have none of it. She marched over to Teng, grabbed his arm, rolled up his shirt sleeve, and began inspecting it.

“How long have you had this cut?” Aletha asked, staring at the very nasty wound he had been concealing with his clothing.

“Couple weeks,” Teng admitted. “It’s… not healing well.”

“I can see that. Is it painful?”

“Uh huh. Is something wrong with it?”

“I think it might be infected.”

Teng winced, “How can you be sure?”

“Shouldn’t be this red, and there’s fluid draining. I think I see a little puss too. Did you cut this on metal?”

“Yeah.”
“Was it rusty?”

“Might have been,” Teng shrugged. “We ran out of bandages, so I’ve been covering it with my sleeves.”

“Yeah, this is definitely infected,” Aletha said. She rolled down his sleeve, “Come on, I’ll patch you up.”

Teng pulled his arm away from her, “That’s okay, I… I can’t pay you.”

Aletha sighed and glanced back at Luke and Quom. The adults tried not to let their sadness infect the mood.

“It’s okay,” Aletha told Teng. “This one’s on me.”

“Are you sure?” Teng looked at Rey for confirmation that Aletha would be so generous.

“I give some treatments out for free time to time.” Aletha teased, “Besides, I don’t want anything to set in. Amputations are not on my freebie list.”

The blood drained out of Teng’s face, “Amputations?”

“Come on, Teng,” Rey playfully shoved him, “don’t you want a fake arm?”

“I’ll take the freebie,” Teng said quickly.

Aletha grinned, “Well, you know, this might be infected enough that I might end up having to amputate anyway. You might want to start saving up just in case.”

Teng looked terrified at the prospect. The group shared knowing grins between each other. They really had to stop teasing the boy.


Luke shrugged, “Usually an arm and a leg.”

“Ok, I will leave you here,” Quom threatened.

“We’re not going to amputate, Teng,” Aletha promised. “Just having a little fun with you.”

“Really?” Teng looked nervously at Rey.

“It’s what we do,” Rey laughed. “Don’t be nervous; it’s a good sign.”

“It means we like you,” Luke input. “You seem like a good kid, and I’ll glad my daughter has a friend her age.”

“Actually, I’m two years older than her,” Teng admitted.

“Funny,” Luke grinned. “My wife was two years older than me.”

Teng lost the blood from his face again.

“Just ignore the boys,” Aletha advised, putting a hand on Teng’s back to nudge him towards Old Meru’s tent. “They’re idiots.”

“Nah, it’s true,” Quom admitted.

Luke shook his head.

Aletha laughed and looked to the children, “Let’s get you two inside.”

“Come on, Teng,” Rey grabbed his hand and pulled him forward. “Doctor Ally will fix you, and then we can have lunch and draw.”

“I’m not eating any of your food portions this time. I don’t care what you say.”

“Well, it’s my birthday and I don’t want my best friend to starve, so yes you will.”

Teng looked surprised, “I’m your best friend?”

“It’s either you or Quom,” Rey said flatly.

“Rey,” Teng’s modest smile felt warmer than Jakku’s sun, “I’m so… happy to be your best friend. You know, you’re mine too. Thank you, Rey.”

She smiled back at him, and let her fingers close tighter around her hand, “Anytime.”


Suddenly Teng’s smile dropped, “I’m still not eating your portion.”

“Are too,” Rey said stubbornly as they clamoured towards the tent still holding hands.

“Are not.”

“Are too.”

“Are not.”

“Are too.”

Their voices became muffled as Aletha and the children entered the tent.

Luke just stared after them in utter shock.

“Oh my God,” he proclaimed.

“I know,” Quom chuckled.

“She said anytime to his thank you.”

“I know.”

“You were right. Rey… likes a boy.”

“I know,” Quom exclaimed. “Geez, I am right about things sometimes.”

“Rey likes a boy,” Luke repeated slowly, shaking his head. “I am so not ready for this.”

“Well, I think we’ll be safe for a while. Teng seems like the kind of kid who’ll wait until Rey makes the first move. How long do you think that’ll be?”
Luke raised an eyebrow, “Quom, Rey is the daughter of myself and Felicity Rhiaon. If Teng is waiting for her to make the first move, he is screwed.”

“I like Teng,” Aletha declared as Luke drove them back to Niima Outpost several hours later. “He seems like a nice boy.”

“He is,” Rey agreed. She was sitting in the backseat next to Quom with her flower on her lap. “I can’t believe he got me a present.”

“They’re beautiful flowers,” Aletha looked back at Rey. She was sitting in the front passenger seat next to Luke. “You take good care of those.”

“You’ll show me how, right Doctor Ally?”

“Of course.”

Rey’s flower collection was a project she had started with Aletha. One day, Aletha had told Rey that the thing she missed most about civilization was seeing all the diverse types of flowers across the worlds. Jakku didn’t have many flowers, but Aletha and Rey were determined to collect and tend to all the different types it did.

“Doctor Ally, how many kinds of flowers are there on Jakku?” Rey asked.

“Eight,” Aletha replied. “Sorry, Sunshine. There’s not a lot here. We’ve found all eight.”

“Are you sure? I thought I saw another flower once on Jakku… Or maybe I’m just remembering something else.”


“I… can’t describe it,” Rey sighed. “I’ll draw a picture for you sometime.”

“I look forward to it,” Luke smiled. “Teng was very thoughtful with his gift. I do like the boy.”

“I just can’t believe that Meru let his arm get that bad,” Aletha sighed. “You know, we joked, but a few more days and I probably would have had to amputate. I’ll definitely checking up on him.”

“Well, I’ll go with you,” Quom volunteered. “I can’t believe how little Meru cares for him. She starves him, she doesn’t help him with injuries, and did you see the state of his clothing?”

“It’s nothing new on Jakku, Quom,” Aletha reminded. “Not everyone is like you and I.”

“It just,” Quom glanced down at Rey, “reminds me of that day I found her with the sunburn.”

“I remember her arms,” Aletha shook her head. “I’m amazed you don’t have long-term effects from that.”

“Or any of your ordeal,” Quom agreed. “Though you’ll probably get messed up psychologically from it in a few years.”

“To be honest, I don’t remember much of it,” Rey shyly admitted. “I don’t think I remember anything before Jakku.”
Luke slammed on the breaks.

The trio exclaimed and moaned as they shot forward and then their seatbelts slammed them back against their seats.

“Luke, what are you doing?” Quom exclaimed.

“Oh, my head hurts,” Rey groaned.

“Why did we stop?” Aletha asked.


But to everyone’s surprise, that wasn’t Luke’s intention. Instead he got out of the driver’s seat, walked around to the other side, and climbed into the passenger seat Aletha had vacated.

“Rey, come here,” Luke ordered as he buckled in.

She started to walk around the speeder to Luke’s seat.

“No, Rey, sit here,” Luke patted the driver’s seat.

Aletha’s jaw dropped.

“Really, Dad?” Rey’s eyes lit up.

“Come on, Birthday Girl,” Luke grinned. “I’ve got a promise to fulfill. You may have forgotten it, and which ship I promised to do it on, but I’m delivering on my promise nonetheless.”

Rey scrambled up into seat excitedly. Luke smiled as he watched her settle behind the control. When she was three, he had promised that one day when she was old enough, he would teach her to fly. The plan had been to start her on his X-Wing, which was sit a possibility as his X-Wing still was hidden in the Qyhsh Caves, regularly maintained by Luke and Quom. But that would raise too many questions.

And he certainly couldn’t fulfill the promise to then have himself, Chewie, and Han teach her to fly the Millennium Falcon as they had taught Ben. Of course, Luke had no idea that very soon, the idea of teaching Rey to fly the Millennium Falcon wouldn’t be out of reach.

“Luke Erso!” Aletha chastised as Rey buckled into the driver’s seat. “You are absolutely not teaching that child to drive.”

He looked at her, “Aletha, I learned to drive at seven, my father professionally raced pods and won at nine. As far as I’m concerned, I should have taught Rey this a minimum of two years ago. You ready, Sweetheart?”

“I’ve been ready for years!” Rey was literally bouncing with excitement.


“Enough, Doc,” Quom placed a hand on her shoulder. He was holding Rey’s plant with his other hand, “Don’t make him play the Dad card. If he made her, he can break her.”
Aletha scowled at him, “Thank God you don’t actually have kids.”

“You wound me, Doctor. You wound me.”

“Okay, the first thing we do when we get in a vehicle is what?” Luke asked.

“Seatbelt,” Rey answered confidently.

“Exactly,” Luke grinned. “So, what you do next is adjust the seat to fit you. Most speeder have controls to move the seat back, forth, up, and down. On this one, it’s these here.”

For a while they played around with the controls, Luke teaching her about each and every one. He named them, explained their function, as well as how they worked in a system as a whole. Since Rey had been scavenging and working in Quom and Luke’s shop for so long, she caught on very quickly, and even already knew quite a bit.

“This speeder is an automatic, so we’ll start with this one,” Luke said. “Quom’s is a manual, which means it has a clutch. I’ll got over the difference with you next time we’re in his speeder and teach you that. So, in an automatic, you have two pedals: acceleration on the right, and the break on the left. The break is usually larger than the acceleration. Do you feel them?”

“Uh huh,” Rey nodded. “Can I press them?”

“Not yet. In fact, never have your foot on both pedals at the same time; only the one you are currently using. Now let’s talk mirrors.”

It must have been an hour of instruction – much to Aletha and Quom’s annoyance as they sat bored in the hot sun – before Luke finally declared it was time for Rey to give it a try.


“A little,” Rey admitted. “Are you sure I can do this?”

He smiled at her, “I have full confidence in you.”

“What if I mess up? What if I hurt us?”

“I’ve got you, Rey. I won’t let anything happen, I promise. Now, come on, let’s drive.”

Rey grinned, “I bet I’m going to be a better driver than you.”


“Challenge accepted.”


Rey dutifully made sure the area was clear. Quom and Aletha had gotten well out of the way.


Rey’s hands were shaking.

“Deep breath. We’re not doing anything until you’re calm. Never drive when you can’t control your body. Just relax, you can do this. I believe in you, Rey.”
Her foot came off the pedal and she gasped as the speeder began to move forward slowly.

“Daddy!”


Rey took a deep breath, and her hands stopped shaking.

“Good,” Luke nodded. He too took a deep breath, readying himself for the first moment his daughter ever drove, “Now, you’re going to keep an eye on your speed, but make sure you are watching where you’re driving.”

“How do I do that?”

“Practice. That’s why we’re in the middle of nowhere with nothing to run into. Now, very slowly you’re going to press lightly on the acceleration. We’re going to go to the one that says 30. That’s 30 kilometers an hour. If you feel uncomfortable, you can go slower, but tell me. If you’re good, we can go faster. Ok?”

Rey nodded.

“When you hit 30, take your foot off the acceleration, and hover it over the break in case you need to slow down. Are you ready?”

Rey grinned, “I’m ready.”


There was nothing quite like the joy that coursed through Rey as she pressed down that pedal for the first time. She was driving, she was really driving!

“I’m doing it! I’m doing it!” Rey exclaimed as the speeder moved forward.


She did it almost perfectly on the very first try.

As Luke instructed her to accelerate again, this time going faster, he couldn’t be prouder of his daughter. The natural talent of her lineage boiled in her blood. She was born to drive…and she was born to fly. It was too soon to add a third dimension into her piloting, but someday he would teach her to traverse the skies.

She did so well. Rey listened intently, and followed her father’s instructions dutifully. She didn’t always get it right; he had to correct her a few times to go hand over hand while turning, and she forgot to switch gears into reverse when practising backing up. But there was no doubt about it, Rey was a born natural.

Anakin Skywalker, Brendan Rhiaon, and Han Solo would have been so proud had they seen it. Maybe her Grandfather did see it; Luke honestly wouldn’t be surprised if he turned back and saw a Force Ghost grinning in the backseat. Maybe Brendan too was watching them somehow from the afterlife, cheering Rey on, and teasing Felicity about her own lack of skills. Of course, Felicity would be bursting with pride and reminding Brendan the reason her driving skills sucked when that he was supposed to teach her, but then went and got himself blown up.

But Han Solo couldn’t possibly witness this might. He should have, but Luke had made a selfish
choice that robbed Han of that experience. He would have been so impressed, and so proud of her. There was no doubt in Luke’s mind that Rey would become one of the select few Han allowed to touch his precious Falcon.

He would see it one day, Luke vowed. He couldn’t imagine a life where Rey never met her uncle again… he couldn’t imagine a life where Luke never met his best friend again.

He missed Han so much. And Leia, and Chewie, and Artoo and Threepio and Lando and Wedge and Diego and… Reine.

He missed Reine and Obik and Gavyn and Zena and Tyla and Alyla and all the people who had been slaughtered on that rainy battlefield. He missed the people he had lost in the war. Uncle Owen, Aunt Beru, Biggs, Dak, and he missed Shara and Grandma Jobal. He missed his Granddad, Ruwee having passed away a year before the Burning of Rornian.

He missed his casual friends: Kes and Poe, BB-8, and Kalonia, Lor San Tekka, Nils Arlos, Dex, Malla, Waroo, Ryoo, Jagrav, their daughter Padmé, Pooja, her wife Erisha, Aunt Sola, Uncle Darred.

And Ben… he missed Ben. Luke didn’t care what he called himself now, and he didn’t care that the last time he saw Ben, he had wrapped his hands around his own nephew’s throat.

It seemed impossible to think it had been seven years since he walked away from everything. Rey had lived a life longer on Jakku than off it. She knew very little else but this shabby little world.

But the one person he missed most of all was the woman who was willing to give her life so Rey could safely live even this pathetic existence. He missed Felicity so much.

Rey slowed down the speeder, and moved it into park.


She smiled at him, “I just wanted to say… thank you, Daddy, for teaching me this.”

“It’s no problem. I rather enjoyed it.”

“Me too, I finally get why you like driving so much.” Her eyes flicked down momentarily, “Dad, I just want you to know, there is no one else in the entire Galaxy I’m happy to share this moment with.”

He smiled and stroked her hair, “You’re right, I’m glad it was just you and me. Happy Birthday, my Rey of Light.”

And they embraced as the sun set in the distance.

“There!” Rey exclaimed, a week later.

Luke looked up at Rey from the schematic he was studying on his data reader. The reader was old and banged up, and Luke had had to refurbish it multiple times, but he refused to let it die on him.


Rey scrambled out of her hammock, and shoved a page in his face. He had to hold up a hand to
signal her to give him so space as she was practically crawling in his lap. Luke still enjoyed holding Rey in his lap from time to time, but at twelve years old, she was on the edge of outgrowing his available lap space.

“The flower I remember,” Rey took a step back and offered him the page. “The one from last week? Do you know what it is?”

Luke took the drawing from her. It took him a few minutes before he remembered what kind Rey had drawn.

“A morning glory,” Luke struggled not to let sadness enter his voice. “Do you know why you remember this?”

“Not really,” Rey shrugged.

“Try. Think back, and remember. Why do you know this flower?”

“I… I don’t know.”


Rey took a deep breath and closed her eyes. Luke could feel the Force gently moving around her, trying to guide her memories and senses. He knew it was dangerous to get her too familiar with the Force, but at the same time, he knew how important it was to try and train her. Even a little bit of subconscious prep would benefit her massively in the long run. After all, one day the lull would end, and Rey would need to be able to tap into her powers to protect herself.

…Of course, that was only if he decided he wanted to train her.

But that was a struggle for another day.

“I remember… a woman,” Rey said, her eyes still closed.

Luke gave a small smile, “What does she look like?”

“I don’t know… dark hair… a warm smile… and scars.” She opened her eyes, “Is it Mom?”

“No. The woman you are remembering was named Alyla.”

“So, I’ve known two people called Ally?”

Luke chuckled, “You never really called her Ally. Aletha’s the only one you’ve done that with.”

“Alyla… Alyla…” Rey frowned. “Why does that name make me… sad?”

Luke sighed, “Oh, Rey… Alyla’s story isn’t a happy one. For a while it looked like it would at least have a happy ending, but it wasn’t meant to be. She had a heartbreaking death; one she absolutely did not deserve and should never have happened. Her childhood was even worse, worse than the one I’m giving you—”

“My childhood isn’t bad!”

“But it could be a lot better. It should be.”

“I don’t care,” Rey crossed her arms stubbornly. “I have you, Daddy, and that’s all I need.”
“Oh, Sweetheart,” he was sucker for her words. Luke pulled her into his lap, embracing her with a tight hug, “You truly are the only thing I need in my life.”

“I love you, Daddy.”

“I love you too, My Rey of Light.”

As they held each other tenderly a battle raged in Rey’s mind. If there ever was a time to tell her father her suspicions about her mother’s survival, this would be it.

“Daddy?”

How happy would her words make Dad? Thinking Mom was dead had been a terrible toll on her father, and knowing they could be reunited, together again?


The worse words Rey had ever heard in her life slammed to the forefront of her mind.

---


Rey’s eyes went wide.

“No!” Rey exclaimed. “No! You’re lying! Mommy said she’d come back! She’s coming back, Daddy!”

“Sweetheart…I’m so sorry,” Luke raised his hand to stroke Rey’s face. “But Mommy’s gone.”

Rey swatted his hand away, “STOP LYING, DADDY!”

“Rey,” Luke struggled to keep his voice calm for her, “I’m not lying. Mommy’s not coming back.”

---

Dad would never believe her about Mom.

“It’s nothing,” Rey eased out of her father’s embrace. “I just… miss Mom.”


She glanced over at the wall where she kept her mother’s tally going. Rey would go on pretending her blissful ignorance of her mother’s true situation.

But someday she would show them all.

Someday Mommy would return.

---

The Graveyard’s full of bodies, from Feressee’s Point to the Spike. Some of those big Imperial ships had populations a lot larger than all of Jakku, which means a lot of bones.

- Rey’s Survival Guide
“Quom, if you give me another arm bone and tell me you’re giving me a hand, I will leave you here,” Luke warned.

Quom looked down at the skeletal hand in his grasp, thought for a moment, then tossed it aside. “Hand jokes are played out with you anyway,” Quom went back to digging in the ship remnants.

They were scavenging in a site that had been uncovered by the X’us’R’ia. It was two ships, a B-Wing and a TIE Fighter that had crashed into each other, become interlocked, and crashed in the desert together. The ships and bodies were an absolute disaster, and frankly not worth their time.

“We should give up on this one,” Rey declared. “It’s be fully picked over, and I’m getting scratched up by all this rusty metal. Can’t we get find somewhere else?”

Luke sighed, “Fine. You’re right, this is done. Let’s load up the speeder, Quom.”

“Where should we go?” Quom asked when they had finished loading what little they had found. “Why doesn’t Rey pick?” Luke grinned at her, “You want to drive us to our next location?”

“Really?” Rey squealed.


She didn’t need to be asked twice, “This is so awesome! Where should I take us?”

“It’s completely up to you,” Luke climbed into the seat beside her.

“I hear the Western Reaches have gotten a good portion uncovered after the X’us’R’ia,” Quom suggested.

“But where?” Rey asked. It was the first time she had been asked to pick a spot. Sure she had given suggestions before, but never had the power of the final say. “How do I figure out where to go?”

Luke smiled, an idea occurring, “Why don’t you… look inside yourself?”

Quom raised an eyebrow, catching Luke’s drift.

“What do you mean?” Rey was obvious to the implication.

“Reach out, feel,” Luke said. “There’s something inside of you that’ll help to guide. Listen for that little… it’s not a voice but a feeling. An instinct.”

“Dad… that’s complete gibberish.”

“Just try it,” Luke was getting a little sick of her snark.

Rey loudly exhaled, making a show of her irritation, “Fine.”

So she did as her father told. Rey didn’t understand how she knew exactly what to do. Somehow this… reaching into her seemed familiar. She knew the right breathing pattern, and she knew the feeling of sinking into her own core.

There was something around her. Lightness and Dark, somehow familiar. It moved all around her,
binding and penetrating the Galaxy and the contents within.

Then a different light… lilac. It filled her and felt so… familiar. How did she know this?

“Dad?” Rey tried to keep the fear out of her voice. “What’s going on?”


Where he stood, Rey felt another colour. A sky blue that her soul yearned for it, gravitating toward it like a planet pulled to a star.

She registered another colour, this one she thought she had felt before, but it wasn’t as familiar. Where Quom stood, a rusty grey colour occupied him.


“I do,” Rey frowned. “But what do I do with it?”

“Use it to find a direction to go in.”

“But how?”

“Here, this might be easier. Close your eyes and listen to my voice.”

Rey closed her eyes. All around her the familiar feelings became stronger, more intimate, more within her grasp.”

“Breathe,” Luke’s voice was soothing. “Just… breathe.”

Rey focused on nothing but her cleansing breaths. Somehow this all felt second nature to her.


Something independent of her conscious self reached forward into Force around her.

“What do you see?” Luke whispered, trying to keep the excitement out of his voice. He couldn’t believe that Rey still knew how to do it. He would have to be careful he didn’t push too far, or else a rush of unpleasant memories might set upon her.

“Something… distant,” Rey whispered back. “I see… a ship, not far from here. We need to go there.”

Whatever this thing was, it was screaming at her, pulling her to this ship. This… force around her wanted her to find it.


“But I need my eyes closed,” Rey frowned as she opened them. “I can’t see the ship while they’re open.”

“Then close your eyes and drive.”

Rey closed her eyes and reached for the parking break.

“Stop! Everybody stop!” Quom shouted.

Rey’s eyes flew open and her connection with severed.

“Luke, I’m happy that you got Rey to do… whatever you want to call this, but absolutely not.”

“Oh great, did Aletha get to you with her whole Rey isn’t old enough to drive spiel?”

“No, but your kid or not, there’s no way letting a twelve-year-old drive with her eyes closed will end in anything but disaster.”

Luke opened his mouth to refute Quom, but paused when he realized Quom was right.

“Alright, point taken. Switch seats with me, Rey. I’ll drive, you navigate.”

“But Dad—”

“No buts. I will not let another member of my family lose a limb.”

Rey frowned, “Does that happen a lot?”

“There’s about a 70% chance you’re going to someday get your arm cut off.”

“Great,” she groaned.

I don’t really notice the bones anymore – there are simply too many of them. These days I only think about them when I come across a body that’s more or less intact.

- Rey’s Survival Guide

“It’s an X-Wing!” Rey exclaimed as they pulled up to the battered ship. “I can’t believe it.”

“MG, we’ve hit the jackpot,” Quom grinned as they got out of the speeder.

“And it looks fairly intact,” Luke examined the X-Wing.

He always worried he might recognize a ship belonging to a friend from the war. He had known several who died in the Battle of Jakku, but he didn’t recognize the ship in front of him. The ship was rusty, and the paint had faded, though Luke could make out it used to be yellow.

“I think it’s Tierfon Yellow Aces Squad,” Luke ran his hand across the ship. “This looks like it was completely untouched.”

“Look, an R4 unit!” Rey pointed to a droid that had been completely scorched. “I wonder if it’s still operational? Could we keep it if it is, Dad?”

“Maybe,” Luke answered. He wasn’t the kind of person to abandon a droid, but if Artoo found out he had been hanging around with another droid on Jakku, Artoo would kill said droid.

He wondered how Artoo was doing.

“Alright, let’s split up,” Quom said. “Luke, you check out the droid, I’ll take the cargo bay, and Rey you check out the cockpit. This thing hasn’t been touched, so we’ll be stripping it for a few days.”
Remember, don’t tell anyone about until it’s a chassis of sand.”

Rey froze, an unwilling memory surfaced.

“Who told?” Jarex snapped.

Rey swallowed hard; if she stayed silent, the others might get hurt and that wasn’t fair to them.

“I did,” Rey said in a quiet voice, taking a step forward.

Jarex looked surprised, “You told?”

“Uh huh,” Rey nodded. She tried to keep her voice light, “I’m really sorry. I thought we were done and I only mentioned it in passing. It won’t happen again, I prom-”

Pain exploded in her face as a set of knuckles smashed into her nose and cheek.

“I’m sorry,” Tears streamed down Rey’s face, her heart thudding wildly in her chest. Blood dripped out of her nose, but she was too afraid to wipe it away. “I’m sorry! I didn’t mean to!”

“Rey?”

A hand fell on her shoulder, and Rey panicked. Without thinking, she turned and swung, closing her eyes tight in anticipation of another blow.

“Rey! No! Stop!” Luke exclaimed, leaning back from her flailing limbs. Using his Force powered reflexes, she grabbed her wrists and held them firmly in place, forcing her to stop swinging. “It’s okay, Rey. I’m here. You’re safe.”

She calmed when her brain registered that she was in her father’s arms.

“I’m sorry, Daddy,” Rey sobbed, tears dripping down her cheeks. She could have sworn she felt the blood dripping from her nose, but it was just snot. “I’m sorry.”


Rey sniffed, “Promise?”

“If he does, your Uncle will take off the other arm,” Quom winked at Rey.

It took a few minutes before she was settled, and Quom made a mental note of the triggering phrasing he had used so he wouldn’t repeat it. Soon enough, they were straight back to work, ready to discover why the Force had drawn Rey to this ship.

“Up you go,” Luke pulled Rey from her footing on the wing to the top of the ship. “You look at the cockpit, and I’ll take the droid.”

“How’s he look?” Rey gave two quick knocks on the cockpit glass as Luke pried open the dome of the R4.
“I think this one is pretty fired,” Luke inspected the droid. “Most of his innards are melted together. It’ll be better to just scavenge the parts.”

“Pity,” Rey started to lift the glass.

“Rey Erso, what do you think you are doing?” Quom exclaimed.

She frowned, “What?”

“You didn’t knock.”

“Yeah, I did,” Rey frowned.

“Not properly,” Quom shot.

She knew well enough to always knock before opening a part of a ship. Steelpeckers liked to roost in old machinery, and you did not want to crack open a nest. The scavengers had learn though that if you knocked in a certain way that sounded like a steelpecker searching for nesting grounds, a steelpecker would knock back to warn that the area was claimed.

“Come on, Rey,” Quom scowled at her, “three long knocks. Not two short ones. You don’t want to end up like Roke.”

Rey sighed, “Fine.”

She gave three long knocks.

There was no reply.

“See,” Rey said.

“Rey, don’t give Quom attitude,” Luke warned. “He’s just watching out for your safety.”

“Sorry, Quom,” Rey sighed. “Alright, let’s see this cockpit.”

Luke leaned over and helped her pull it open.

Rey gasped at the sight.

It was a full body in the sense that it had all its bones. The skin, hair, and eyes were long gone, with the rest of the organic material. He was now no more than a skeleton that would soon crumble to dust. His jumpsuit sagged around the brittle bones, and his helmet was strapped upon the cranium.

“You okay?” Luke looked at her. It wasn’t the first body she had seen, but he still didn’t like the idea of her seeing it.

“Yeah,” Rey swallowed. “Just… hard sometimes. You know, when you can tell it was a real person.”

“Yeah, it is,” he rested a hand on her shoulder. “Do you want me to move it?”

“No, let him be for now.”

“Sure. Why don’t you test the computer systems and I’ll help Quom start checking the wings?”

“Ok,” Rey nodded.
Luke scaled over to the wings where Quom was checking the laser generators. It was funny to think that once upon a time, Luke worked hard to maintain those kinds of ships, and now he was taking them apart.

“Targeting computer still works,” Rey declared. She tried to avoid the body as she unfastened the pull-down system. “Dad, do you think this was the same kind of system that Skywalker used to destroy the Death Star?”

“I guarantee it’s the same,” Luke chuckled. “Check the flight computer next when you’re finished with that.”

“Got it,” Rey declared.

“Toss it down.”

Rey leaned out the cockpit and dropped the targeting computer to the ground. She was oddly talented in dropping things great distances and not having them break. Her dad must have been worried or jealous over the ability. Whenever she dropped something, he would always weirdly reach out his arm and lower it in tandem to the ground.

Quom muttered, “Do you have to obvious about it, Luke?”

“Saves us time from constantly climbing up and down,” Luke muttered back.

“Just saying, makes MG look a little dumb for not noticing.”

“Well, she got my awareness DNA, not her mother’s… even then Felicity could be oblivious quite often.”

“Flight computer works!” Rey called. “Oh, and the memory drive is intact.”


Rey did her best to navigate the computer, though she didn’t have the passcode to get through to a lot of the information. What she didn’t know is that all Rebel Pilot Commanders had a master passcode programmed into all flight computers, that gave various levels of access based on the Commander’s own internal rank within the Command team.

And she also had no idea that her father’s passcode as Commander of Rogue Squadron, just so happened to be the highest-ranking Commander code. Then Rey was busy elsewhere, Luke would do his own investigations into the equipment.

“I’ve got a transponder ID,” Rey announced. “You’re right, Dad, this guy was part of the Tierfon Yellow Aces. He’s Yellow-4.”

Luke frowned. Why did that sound familiar?

“We’ll come help you with that shortly, MG,” Quom promised. “In the meanwhile, check behind his seat and check the trunking to the generator.”

“Also see if the power convertors are intact.” Luke caught Quom’s look, “Not a word from you. There’s literally power convertors behind the seat.”

“I love that we’re at the point I don’t even need to make jokes with you. Just send you a knowing look.”
In the cockpit, Rey was struggling with getting behind the seat. It wasn’t an extremely small space, it’s just that she didn’t feel too keen on the idea of clamouring over a skeleton to get to power convertors.

“Hey, Dad?” she called. “Do you think you could come move this body now? It’s giving me the creeps.”


“Sure thi- Oops!”

Rey dropped the screwdriver she had been using to unbolt the power convertors. It fell on the skeleton’s right arm and bounced off. But the strange part was the metallic clang it made when it hit the arm.

“That’s weird,” Rey muttered.

Steeling herself, she carefully lifted his right arm and rolled back the sleeve. To her absolute shock, he had a prosthetic arm.

Her curiosity was peaked. She knew that many pilots lost various limbs in the war, but there was something about this skeleton. Why had she been so drawn to it. She had to investigate.

The next odd thing she noticed about him was the glove of his left hand. Outside the glove, slid on the ring finger was a ring made of twisted bronze. The design looked somewhat familiar, but she couldn’t place from where.

What was odd about the ring was the fact it was outside the glove. In battle, pilots wore not accessories for their own safety. Married pilots were permitted to wear their wedding rings, as long as it was inside the glove.

The glove was stained with bloody smears. Looking at the other glove, Rey found that the palm was shredded and blood had soaked into the fabric. It took a minute before it clicked in Rey’s mind; when the pilot had been shot down, he must have taken off his glove, and… put his ring outside? Maybe as a way to identify himself?

Weird.

Everything else about him seemed normal for a crash victim. There weren’t any impressive markings on his helmet noting his participation in any battle of note. There was a black symbol of a starbird and the letter Forn, the symbol that he had joined the Rebellion because of the Bombing of Faclov. His kill count was average, but nothing to brag about.

Then she came to the name on his helmet.

She didn’t recognize it… but she had the feeling she should. The thing about Rey growing up on Jakku was that although Luke, Aletha, and Quom did their best, she wasn’t the most literate. Most of what she read were schematics, portion preparation instructions, various warning labels, and the teaching program Jarex had given Luke. The program unfortunately peaked at the third grade, so she had outgrown it a few years back. Aletha had been trying to get her to read medical texts, but Rey found them boring.

Rey could read on a basic level, but her writing wasn’t the greatest. It wasn’t until five years later when she wrote her guide that she improved her writing abilities.
So when she saw the name on the helmet, she didn’t recognize it, having only seen it written down a few times. And yet she knew it was familiar to her somehow.

“Hey, Dad?” Rey asked, “Do you recognize this pilot’s name?”

Luke frowned as he reached the top of the ship, “What name is it?”

She squinted at the letters, “Uh…”

“Sound it out.”

“Kay… Mar, or maybe Mer like Her… Eye? Kay Mer Eye?”


“Krill Yirt Mern Esk Resh Isk,” she spelled out.

Luke nearly fell off the ship.

“Did you just say K-Y-M-E-R-I?”

“Yeah. Do you know it?”

His mouth went dry. His stomach churned as he slowly walked over to the cockpit and looked down at the pilot within. Bronze ring, metal arm, a helmet reading Kymeri…


She scowled.

“Quom, stop scavenging this ship,” he didn’t even look at his friend. Luke couldn’t tear his eyes away from the body.

Quom was not happy about the command, “What? Why?”

Luke took a deep breath, “Because this is the ship of Antar Kymeri.”

Aletha was in the middle of reading a medical text when she heard Luke’s speeder pull up. Instantly her smile brightened, and she set aside her reading material. Taking a glance in her small looking glass on a cabinet, Aletha fixing up her appearance before going out to greet Luke.

He didn’t look as happy to see her.

“Hey, there stranger,” Aletha grinned as Luke stood at his speeder, not moving to approach her. “Back early for any particular reason?”

Luke glanced behind him into the speeder, “I needed to see you.”

She smirked flirtatiously, “Oh really? Quom and Rey don’t appear to be with you… Though I do recall all of you going out in this speeder. Did you just leave them in the middle of the desert?”

“They’re, um… we found a ship to work on.”

“So they’re busy.” Aletha sauntered over and wrapped her arms around Luke’s neck, “Good. I’ve
needing a little… quality time.”

She pulled him onto a passionate kiss, hoping to spark something more. To her surprise, Luke gently pushed her off him.

“Aletha, wait,” Luke couldn’t meet her eye. “We can’t right now.”

“What’s going on?” Aletha frowned.

Luke bowed his head, “You know that question you always ask me when I scavenge?”

She nodded.

Luke took a deep breath, and lifted a helmet out of the speeder.

“What question?”

“Aletha, ask me again.”

Aletha tried not to cry as they drove to the site in complete silence. Twenty-three years of waiting, wondering, hoping… and finally she would have the body of her husband.

Antar had not been the perfect husband; in fact, she probably shouldn’t have bothered him to begin with, but she had loved him so deeply. She remembered the way he made her laugh, how he showed off to her during flight simulations, the flowers he brought her, the way he held her, the way he had fought to come home to her. She had loved him with an unmanageable depth, and she knew that feelings for Vina aside, he truly did love her too.

She glanced at Luke in the driver’s seat. His eyes were fixed on the horizon as he piloted them. Aletha loved this man just as much as she had Antar. Luke understood her in a way no one else could. Their shared knowledge of losing a spouse had brought them together, and their love for Rey had bound them for life. Even if things ended up not working out superficially, they would love each other forever.

Luke was not the great love of her life, and nor was Antar. Their hearts had belonged to the lucky women, Felicity and Vina. Though, Aletha supposed they weren’t lucky. Though they got to share a life with the wonderful men Aletha loved, they had died brutal deaths for it. Vina for going out to shop for her wedding to Antar, and Felicity for… well, Aletha didn’t know why, but she did know it was because of Luke.

She did not hate either woman. She certainly had no fond affection for Vina, more being indifferent these days to the woman. Aletha could bring herself to care for the woman that her own woman always yearned for. She couldn’t bear to give kindness to the woman who held her husband’s heart captive. Aletha Anthea was a petty person, and so while she refused to hate Vina, she would always dislike her.

Felicity Rhiaon was a different story. Three brief interactions the women had had, but they left a profound effect on Aletha. Now that she thought about, Aletha realized that Luke probably only knew about two of them. The first time they met when Felicity proved so desperate to protect her child, and so mad at Luke when he failed to receive her comm call. And the last time, when Aletha had taken a beating to protect Felicity, only to be rescued by her. There had been another meeting, shortly after their first, when Felicity brought Rey for a follow up check up after Felicity had discovered during the CPR to save Rey’s life, she had accidentally fractured one of Rey’s ribs.
Better than a dead child, Aletha had told her.

In those brief moments, she had learned why Luke would love this woman so much. Brave, loving, selfless, what was there not to love? Of course, she didn’t know Felicity well enough to know her fault, and those weren’t exactly the type of things widowers tended to extol about. But those brief encounters ensured that Felicity left a lasting impression on Aletha. Try as she might, Aletha could never hate Felicity Rhiaon for taking Luke’s love.

So it was a good thing that Luke had learned how to not prioritize his love for Felicity over his love for her.


“For what?” he still didn’t turn to her.

“Finding him.”

“Well, technically it was Rey.”

She smiled, “Then I’ll thank Rey.”

Luke was barely holding it together for her. He too had the mass of conflicting emotions over Aletha’s love for another man. Besides, there was another thing in the situation that was bothering him, and stirring up emotions he had long ago thought defeated.

“Is there any possibility you might recover Felicity’s body someday?” Aletha gently asked.

“No,” he shook his head. “It was very violently destroyed using a very intention technique. The First Order’s last shoot of gloating over killing my wife.”

Aletha sighed, “I’m sorry.”

“Don’t be. This isn’t about me, it’s about you finally getting closure with Antar. I’m really sorry about all of this, Aletha. You don’t deserve it.”

“No, but I’m responsible for the choices I made that brought me here. That’s all we can ask.”

“And what of the choices that brought me here?”

She reached over and clasped his hand, “Luke… I can’t speak for destiny or fate or any of that, but I do know that if it all had to happen, I am glad it happened to bring us together.”

He looked over at her and smiled, “I love you, Aletha Kymeri.”

“I love you, Luke Erso.”

They smiled at each other. Neither surname truly belonged to the other, yet here on Jakku, Aletha Kymeri and Luke Erso existed. They lived, and laughed, and loved each other. Even if it was just a lull in their lives, nothing could take this moment away from them.

And in that moment, Aletha knew that it was to right time to find Antar’s body. Antar Kymeri had been a chapter in her life that Aletha needed, but he was not her happily ever after. Luke Erso could be that happily ever after.

…but, part of her still wondered what it felt like to be someone’s first choice.
But she supposed it was simply something she would never know.

Aletha’s heart dropped when the X-Wing came into view. Quom and Rey were patiently waiting for their arrival, and next to them was something covered with a sheet.

Luke parked the speeder a little way from the X-Wing.

“We’re here,” he announced.

“I know,” Althea nodded, gathering her courage.

Luke reached over and took her hand, “Are you ready?”

She looked at him and gave a sad smile, “…Yes.”

Quom and Rey quickly stood when they saw Luke and Aletha. Quom opened his mouth to speak, but Rey tugged on his cloak and solemnly shook her head.

Luke said nothing when they reached the body. He led Aletha over to sheet, nodded at her, then released her hand and backed away.

Aletha took a deep breath and bent down. She needed a few minutes to steel herself. Her eyes ran over the sheet, trying to make out the shape of the body underneath. Closest to her was a hand. Cautiously, she reached underneath and drew out the body’s left hand.

Upon the pilot’s ring finger was Antar Kymeri’s wedding band.

Tears filled her eyes as she accepted the reality of the situation. This was her husband… and he was truly dead.

So she pulled back the sheet, and finally let herself cry.

Most of the people aboard the ships died the second they hit the ground – a fall from orbit will do that. Sounds bad, but they were the lucky ones.

- Rey’s Survival Guide

“His life support system shorted out,” Quom declared, rooting around the X-Wing as Aletha examined her husband’s body down on the sand.

“Based on his positioning and injuries, I think he knocked himself out badly,” she struggled not to burst back into hysteria front of the others. Later that night, her pillow would be filled with a great many tears.

“He would have been unconscious when the system died,” Luke grimly said. He stood several respectful feet away from Aletha and her husband’s body.

“Is that how he died?” Rey asked, a part of her hesitant that it might be an inappropriate question.
Aletha turned over the body and felt her hand up his spine, “Fractures and breaks in several places. If he had survived he would have been paralyzed very badly. His neck is broken, though I’m not sure if it was fatal… And there’s a fracture on his cranium. His brain would have filled with a lot of blood, and if he survived, he probably would have had mental difficulties… I think. I never did a lot of brain stuff in my medical studies. I don’t know what killed him, the impact, the spine, the neck, or the brain. It was a good thing he was unconscious, if he were awake, he would have died a very painful death. He might have even been conscious near the end, but with these injuries, he wouldn’t have been able to get himself out of the cockpit. Running out of air would have been a blessing. I don’t know what killed him, but he suffered.”

“That’s horrible,” Rey felt like she was about to throw up. She had seen so many bodies in the Graveyard and so many horrific deaths, but hearing Aletha describe the unbearable end her husband met stirred something in her. This time felt personal.

“It’s the risk of a pilot,” Luke sighed. “I remember whenever I got fresh blood in my squad, I told them the same thing. There’s not going to be glory in this. You will take lives and you will see your friends die. If you do die, it is not with dignity. It’s painful and brutal, and most times long enough to think about the ones you’re leaving behind. If you want to be a pilot, then you have to be prepared to die.”

Rey stared at the body of Antar Kymeri. A simple man who had fought so that people like her could know freedom. Sure, Jakku wasn’t the greatest place in the Galaxy, but because of Antar, she would never have to know what it felt like to live under the Empire.

“Thank you,” Rey whispered to him. “Thank you so much.”

I took the pilot’s helmet, sidearm, and comlink, along with his ejector’s seat’s gyros and magnetic couplings – all that stuff’s valuable in Niima, and it wasn’t going to do him any good. Then I buried him, still in his uniform.

- Rey’s Survival Guide

They buried him next to Mashra. It didn’t seem right to put him beside Felicity’s grave; there needed to be some sort of buffer between the graves of Luke’s spouse and Aletha’s.

Aletha gave Rey Antar’s helmet, she gave Luke his sidearm, and Quom received the comlink. She kept her husband’s wedding ring and kept it in her tent with his death medal and her wedding ring.

“Antar was a catalyst,” Aletha delivered the eulogy. “If he had never boarded Obik’s ship, Rogue One would never have convinced him to join the Rebellion, and she never would have become a Recruiter. If she wasn’t a Recruiter, she wouldn’t have gotten that offer from her father, and never would have then stolen the Death Star plans. If the plans weren’t stolen, Princess Leia wouldn’t have received them, Luke Skywalker wouldn’t have destroyed the Death Star, and the war would never have been won. Antar Kymeri was the reason we won the war, and he was the love of my life. Perhaps when I did he will be simply a love of my life, but the fact stands that I loved him, and it was an honour to be his wife. Thank you, Antar for giving me something worth fighting for… and for giving your life so we may know peace.”

Aletha stayed at Antar’s grave long past his burial. Luke, Quom, and Rey returned to the walker to give her some space. The sun was setting when Quom announced he had to leave, and Luke told
him to go on without Aletha. He could always drive her home later, and worse came to worse, she stayed the night with him and Rey.

"Aletha?" Luke gently called as he approached her, still standing vigil at the grave.

"I just can’t believe I’ve really buried his body," Aletha’s voice was barely a whisper. "All these years, and now he’s here."


"I’ll tell you when I know myself.” Aletha stared forlornly at the grave, “I wished for this for so long, and now that it’s here, this seems so… final.”

"I know, I felt the same way about Felicity’s grave.”

"Do you think they’re happy we’re together?"

"I think Felicity would like you.”

Aletha smiled, “She did, enough to save my life. As for Antar… I think he might feel self-conscious about you. He always did say I deserved better, and I think if he knew I ended up with you, he would think you were the better.”

"What we have doesn’t invalidate what we had with them.”

"I know that, and I think that’s why I keep holding back from you.” Aletha turned and wrapped her arms around his neck, “But I asked for a sign, I asked to find his body to know it was time for me to move on… And today I found his body.”

Luke wrapped his arms around her waist, “So what does that mean?”

She grinned, “I’m all in, Luke Erso. Are you ready?”

“Absolutely.”

And they fell into a passionate kiss in front of the graves of the ones they would always love.

For one moment it seemed like for the first time in years, something was finally going right.

Rey played with her Luke and Felicity dolls in the walker. Dad was taking forever to go talk to Doctor Ally. She felt so sad about what had happened, but the sun was setting and it was dangerous for Dad to drive Doctor Ally home.

Sighing, she set her dolls down and left the walker to join them at the graves. But when she caught sight of the graves, she came to a dead halt.

Dad was making out with Aletha… in front of her own mother’s grave.

No. No, it couldn’t be. This was impossible. Dad and Aletha were friends, good friends and nothing more. Why were they kissing? And in front of Mom? How Dad do this? No, she refused to believe it.
Rey blinked her eyes hard, trying to clear the image from her vision, but the only thing that changed was it getting more blurred with tears.

How long had this been going on? Days? Weeks? Years? The whole time Rey had known Aletha? A horrifying thought occurred to Rey. What if the reason that they had stayed on Jakku was that Dad and Aletha had been messing around since the day Dad found her alive. Had they been here all this time for Aletha?

Horrifying thoughts filled her mind of Aletha plotting to steal her father away. That was it, she must have manipulated everything to lead to this moment where she entrapped for father for… What? Money? Maybe? Sort of? Something?

Did she really think Aletha that nefarious?

Rey couldn’t stand the sight. She ran back to the walker and inside she collapsed to her knees in tears. Why? Why? Mom was alive and Dad was cheating on her. He was having an affair, and hiding it from her.

Then she saw her dolls. Laying eyes on her father’s toy figure filled Rey with a dark rage she had never know. She picked up the doll and threw it as hard as she could against the opposite wall. She left out a bloodcurdling shriek of rage letting herself fill unknowingly with Darkness.

The ration cooker exploded.

Luke broke away from Aletha, sensing a burst of Dark Side in the Force.

“Did you hear that?” he looked around startled.

Aletha frowned and shook her head.

He looked at the walker and whispered, “Rey.”

Luke ran for it.

Rey fell backwards in fear from the explosion. She stared at the smoking ration cooker in horror and confusion. How did it break, and so violently? She couldn’t shake the sick feeling inside of her that somehow she was responsible.

“Rey?” she heard her father called.

Her eyes widened. She scrambled backwards, and grabbed her mother’s doll. Rey ran for her hammock, jumped in, and pulled on the covers just as Luke entered the walker.

“Rey!” he called, looking around. “Are you alright?”

She pretended to be asleep.

He exhaled in relief as he saw Rey was safe in her bed.


He used a hand on her back to usher Aletha out of the walker, but before he stepped a foot outside, he smelled smoke. Luke turned back and took in the scene in front of him, noticing what he hadn’t while worried solely on Rey’s safety.

The ration cooker was completely destroyed. The pilot doll was lying across the room, against the wall. And Rey was in her hammock, tightly gripping her Felicity doll, watching him through half closed eyes.

“You saw,” he said simply.

A tear rolled down Rey’s cheek as she nodded.

“Rey,” he whispered, at a loss of what to say. This wasn’t how she was supposed to find out, “Rey, I’m so sorry.”

“It’s okay, Dad,” she rolled onto her other side. “I’m fine.”

Luke sighed, knowing how false her words were. He could feel the truth in the Force and the intensity of her true emotions. While he thought Rey would be surprised at the thought of him dating Aletha, he never expected her to be mad. This mad.

How mad Ben had been over Felicity.

Luke had a bad feeling about this.

Chapter End Notes

Coming Up Next Chapter…
Second Best
While Luke struggles to get Rey to accept his relationship with Aletha, Aletha struggles to accept she’ll always be second best to Felicity.

Fun Fact, I don’t know how to drive. I never learned, so if there’s any inaccuracies to driving in this chapter, blame the how to drive articles I googled for this chapter.
The Terrible Twelves

Chapter Summary

Rey makes Aletha's life a living hell, Teng has a medical emergency, and Quom gets Luke laid.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The Long Way Home

Chapter Thirty-Four

The Terrible Twelves

“Come on, Rey, hurry up.”

“I’m going as fast I can.”

“She’s going to notice.”

“Stop worrying, Teng. You’re exaggerating the magnitude of the situation.”

“Hey, I live with her, I think I know a bit about her reaction to things.”

“There,” Rey declared as she completed the final stroke of her pencil. “All done.”

“Sweet,” Teng leaned over her shoulder to view the small drawings she made in her book. “Which of Meru’s tattoos did you get?”

Rey stared at the picture, “… I have no idea. I mean I recognize the ships, but I don’t understand why she would have them.”

Meru didn’t like people staring at her with all her cybernetic parts, and would throw out anyone she caught staring at the tattoos on her flesh arm. That was why Rey could only copy them down when Meru wasn’t looking. Teng had been a reluctant lookout, she knew he’d do it. Teng never said no to her.

The tattoos Rey had managed to copy down was the symbol of three staffs crossed together, and the image of an Imperial Star Destroyer fighting four TIE fighters… or at least they appeared to be fighting.

The speculation of the meaning behind Meru’s tattoos had sustained many hours of conversation between Rey and Teng. Of course, they were under hushed whispers, and they were on the constant lookout for Meru, but they were a popular topic whenever Rey hung out with Teng.

…And Rey had been hanging out with Teng a lot lately.

“You still avoiding your Dad?” Teng asked.
Rey sighed, “No, I gave up on that a few months ago. It’s hard to give the silent treatment to someone you live with.”

“And yet you’ve managed to go four months without speaking to Aletha.”

“That’s different. I can’t be as mad at Dad as I am at her.”

“Why?”

Rey frowned as she tried to think of an answer.

“Guess your resentment of Aletha dating your dad being greater than your anger at your father for dating her is kinda unfounded,” Teng said casually, trying not to appear smug.

She scowled at him, “Shut up with your stupid logic. I’m twelve. I wanna be mad.”

“Ok. As long as we’re on the same page.”

Rey sighed, “Teng, am I being ridiculous about this?”

“Yeah.” He caught her look, “Oh sorry, was that the wrong answer?”

She smacked his arm with her drawing book, “You’re supposed to agree with me.”

“Ok. I’m sorry. No need to hit me for making a mistake.”

Rey’s face went white.

---

**Pain exploded across her cheek as Jarex’s fist slammed into her face.**

“I’m sorry,” Tears streamed down Rey’s face, her heart thudding wildly in her chest. “I’m sorry! I didn’t mean to!”

---

“I’m sorry,” Rey said in a panic. “I’m sorry, Teng, I shouldn’t have- I’m sorry.”

Teng frowned, “Hey, it’s okay. I’m fine. It’s was just a bit of teasing among friends. Are you okay? You zoned out there for a second.”

Rey sighed, “No, I’m not okay.”

“What’s wrong?”

“It’s nothing,” Rey looked away.

“That’s not nothing,” Teng shook his head. He repeated more firmly, “What’s wrong?”

“It’s just… it brings back memories.”

“Of what?”

So Rey told Teng all about Jarex Zolhar and how he used to knock her around. Though Teng’s face was sorrowful as she told the story, fury was flashing in his eyes.
“What a monster,” Teng declared when she had finished.

“I try not to let it affect me,” Rey nervously rubbed her arm, unable to meet his eyes.

“I know what that’s like.”

Rey gave him a curious look.

“The pirates that left me on this planet used to knock me around too,” Teng admitted. He paused for a second, blinking as he tried to catch his bearings.

“You got left here?” Rey almost ended her sentence with the word too. There was some sort of sick glee in finding someone with the same traumatic experience as her.

“You may not think it, Rey, but frankly you’re lucky you don’t remember your past. I wish I could forget mine.”

“Teng?” Rey frowned as he started to sway. The sun was beating down pretty hot that day, “Hey, do you need something to drink? …Teng?”

Suddenly he grabbed the table with both hands; his grip upon it was the only thing holding him upright. His eyes were glazed and distant as his breathing became more frantic.

“Teng?” Rey’s voice was more frantic. She could sense something was wrong. “Hey, talk to me! Teng, you’re scaring me. Teng!”

That was the last thing Teng heard before he hit the ground.

“He’ll be alright, right Dad?” Rey asked as she, Luke, Quom, and Meru waited outside the tent for Aletha to finish with Teng.

“I’m sure he will be,” Luke patted Rey’s shoulder reassuringly.

Quom had been the one to bring Rey to Old Meru’s in the first place, working that day to fix up an engine that was giving Meru problems. He had taken Rey with him to see Teng and prevent there from being another day of awkward and angry bickering between Luke, Rey, and Aletha. Sometimes he just couldn’t stand being the awkward third wheel… or fourth wheel in this case, even though having four wheels completely defeated the metaphor. Though technically wheelbarrows had three wheels, and they worked just fine. And who even used wheels these days with all the speeder technology.

Ok, he seriously needed to get out of the heat.

When Teng had passed out, he immediately called for Aletha to come help. Both Rey and Meru had objected: Rey because of her bitterness towards Aletha, and Meru because she didn’t want to pay a doctor to fix her indentured servant. It was only when Luke agreed to pay for Teng’s treatments himself that Meru stopped complaining about the profit loss Teng was causing.

Finally, after about an hour, Aletha emerged from the tent.

“Well?” Rey demanded, shooting to her feet.

“He’ll be fine,” Aletha smiled, secretly glad that Rey was actually conversing with her for the first
time since Antar’s burial four months ago. “Teng just passed out from hunger with the extreme heat magnifying the situation. When was the last time he ate?”

“No clue,” Meru shrugged. “I give him portion packets when he completes work. I don’t track when he cooks them. But he has been getting a lot less packages lately.”

“Why’s that?” Luke eyed Meru sternly. Even though Teng wasn’t his child, Luke’s Papa Bear instincts were perking up.

“Because he’s been wasting all his time with her lately,” Meru jerked a thumb behind her at Rey. “He completes less projects, so he gets less food.”

“But you have to feed him!” Rey exclaimed. “You’re his caretaker!”

Luke placed a hand on her shoulder to ease her back.

Meru glared at Rey in a way that indicated she’d be doing a lot more than glaring if her father wasn’t around.

“I’m his employer, not his mother,” Meru snarled. “I paid for him to help me out around here, not keep as a pet. And believe me, I’m starting to regret that decision.”

Rey opened her mouth to argue, but Luke sternly pushed her behind him. The gesture was gentle but firm. Meru was not someone for Rey to argue with.

“Let’s go check on Teng, Rey,” Luke ordered. “Aletha, is he safe to see?”

“He’s stable now,” Aletha stepped forward and wrapped her arm around Luke.

Rey glared at the sight.

“Come on, Rey,” Luke nodded down at her. “Let’s check on Teng.”

“Okay, Daddy.”

Rey roughly pushed between Luke and Aletha, intentionally shoving them apart. As Aletha stumbled from the force, Rey entered the tent without even a glance back.


Aletha grabbed his arm, “Leave it.”

“But-”


Luke glanced warily at Quom. The Vrogem’s eyes were fixed on the tent, and his face was distant. But when he realized Luke was staring at him for guidance, Quom offered a simple shrug.

“Alright,” Luke sighed, wrapping his arm around Aletha’s waist. “But I will speak to her when we get home.”

“Deal,” Aletha agreed. “Now, let’s check on Teng.”

“In a minute,” his voice sounded a little distant.

Luke nodded and disappeared with Aletha inside the tent.

Quom stood there and just stared at Meru; his brow furrowed ever so slightly. It was a long time before he spoke.

“Were you serious about what you said?” Quom asked. “Are you regretting buying the boy?”

“He’s been nothing but a profit loss to me,” Meru replied. “If he gets in trouble like this one more time, I’ll be forced to sell him.”

Quom sighed as Meru stomped away so matter of fact. She might as well start searching for a buyer, because there was no way Teng wasn’t going to get himself in major trouble again. Not when he had a Skywalker for his best friend.

…Even if it was a miniature Skywalker.

“I’m not apologizing to Aletha,” Rey refused as she returned with Luke and Quom to their mechanic tent.

They had dropped off Aletha when they returned to Niima Outpost. She had some medical business to attend to, so she wouldn’t join them for the rest of the day. Luke and Aletha had parted with a tender kiss, which Rey had made loud gagging noises to, leading to Luke’s lecture on not only the inappropriateness of that action, but the earlier shoving incident.

“Yes, you are,” Luke said sternly. “Aletha has done nothing wrong. If you have anything again our relationship, you bring it up with me.”

“Fine,” Rey folded her arms, “I don’t like you dating Aletha.”

“Well, I hear your objection, but you don’t really get a say in it. Aletha treats you with uttermost respect and affection. You don’t get to veto her without just cause, and there is not just cause in this situation.”

“Yes, there is.”

“How?”

“I don’t know, there just is!”

“Rey could you please be reasonable for two minutes while we have this conversation?” Luke rubbed his temples.

“Luke Erso, you are arguing with a twelve-year-old,” Quom pointed out. “Are you really surprised that a child is being a little childish.”

“Yeah!” Rey grinned. Then his words registered, “Wait. No!”

“Too late, you agree with me,” Quom gave her a toothy grin.

Rey rolled her eyes, “I’m not apologizing to Aletha.”
“Yes, you will, and you will be sincere about it,” Luke admonished. “You’ll have a chance tonight at dinner.”

Rey frowned, “What do you mean?”

“Aletha is joining us for dinner tonight,” Luke said. “I think it’s time we sit down and work this out.”

“I’m not having dinner with her!”

“Yes, you are, so shape up because I expect you on your best behaviour tonight.”

“I wanna go home now. Without Aletha.”

“Tough, we’re staying in town and having dinner with her here. Now go too the bathing situation and clean yourself up. Tell them to credit me a bath for you.”

“No!” Rey refused. “Take me home now.”

The sternest look Rey had ever seen from her father entered his eyes.

“Rey Rhiaon Erso,” Luke gritted his teeth, “you will march over to the bathing situation now.”

But the fire of Anakin Skywalker and Felicity Rhiaon burned in her blood.

“Fine, I’ll drive myself home then,” Rey stomped toward the speeder.

Luke grabbed her by the shoulder and turned her back around, “No, you won’t. We have to get over this, Rey, so we’re all going to have dinner tonight like we used to do.”

Rey tried not to gulp in fear; when Dad got a look like that in his eye, used the name Rhiaon, and put a hand on her, she knew she was in deep trouble.

Her father never laid a hand on her the way Jarex had, but Luke was not above literally using a firm hand when she got insubordinate. It was how he had been raised by Uncle Owen, you don’t hit a kid, but if you had to physically hold one back, then so be it.

Felicity had actually not approved of this method of discipline. She was more for a stern word and removal of privileges the way her father had dealt with her, but to a far less extreme.

It was interesting, seeing how when Felicity got into fights with Luke at the beginning of their relationship, Felicity had no qualms about getting physical with him. Nothing that would get the police called, but a slap, smacking his natural arm or chest, shoving him back from her, or other such small actions.

When she returned home from her treatment of Postpartum Depression, she and Luke had gone through couples counselling to address the problems in their relationship that had led to the circumstances around the Incident They Didn’t Speak of. In those sessions, Luke and Felicity had come to the agreement that due to Rey’s Force Sensitivity, if Rey ever got to a level where Luke genuinely feared she was close to giving in to the Dark Side or injuring herself, he would be allowed to physically stop Rey from going off on her own. He was also allowed to use it under the same circumstances to remove her from a situation to deescalate things. Of course, getting physical was only once all other resources had been exhausted, but there were times Luke had to step in.

“Enough, Rey,” Luke warned her. His grip on her arm was firm, but not violent or painful. Whenever he was forced into the action of grabbing her, he always was very cognisant of how he
was touching her.

She looked to Quom for support, “But-”

“He’s right,” Quom agreed. “This is the best way to resolve this conflict, MG.”

“Thank you,” Luke smiled. “See Rey, even Quom thinks it’s a good idea for us all to have dinner together.”

Rey scowled, “You can’t make me.”

“Sweetheart, I am your father,” Luke said simply as he released her shoulder, “until the day you turn nineteen, I can make you do anything I want. And tonight, I’m going to make you sit down and have a nice dinner with myself, Aletha, and Quom.”

“Wait, what?” Quom blurted out. “I’m coming to the awkward dinner where you three are probably just going to sit there and glare at each other?”

“Whether you like it or not,” Luke grinned. “Aletha will be here in an hour.”

“Is it too late to rescind my agreement that having this dinner was a good idea?”

“Yes, yes it is.”

“Damn it.”

Dinner was just as awkward as Quom suspected. The four of them each sat on one side of the square table, perfectly distanced apart. Rey had refused to sit beside Aletha, so they sat facing each other head on, Rey glaring the whole time. Quom was across from Luke, giving him an equally poisonous glare, furious that he had been dragged down into the whole mess.

The tent was filled with absolute vocal silence, the only noise in their ears being the scraping of utensils against their plates. They wolfed down the bland Imperial portions as quickly as possible, everyone looking like they were ready to bolt from the table the second their plate was clean.

Reminded too much of the awkward, silent dinners she had grown up with, Aletha made a stab at engaging the group in pleasant conversation.

“It’s so nice to finally sit down with all four of us and share a meal together once again, do you think?” she smiled around at the group.

No one said a word, but Rey glared very harder. Aletha swallowed. Rey was making her worry about getting stabbed with a dinner knife as much as Alecta once did… Actually, Alecta would always sit across from Aletha at dinner too, glaring that terrifying glare.

She seriously didn’t know how she ever made it out of adolescence without Alecta smothering her in her sleep.

Aletha tried again, “How are your driving lessons going, Rey?”

Intrigued, Rey raised an eyebrow, “I thought you didn’t like me driving?”

“Well, not when you’re so young, but I’ve accepted that I have no say in the matter. That is a
decision for your parents to make, specifically your father. After all, I’m not your mother.”

Rey grinned, “You’re right. You’re not my mother.”

Aletha winced, and Luke sighed, pinching the bridge of his nose.

“Well, you walked right into that one, Doc,” Quom chuckled.

“I’m not trying to be your mother, Rey.” Aletha tried to defend herself. “Yet you’re acting like I’ve dyed my hair brown, taken lessons in sarcasm, and started nagging you to take your vitamins.”

“You have been nagging me to take my vitamins.”

“I’ve been doing that since you were five years old, there’s precedent!” Aletha gritted her teeth, “You’re welcome for getting you those vitamins, by the way.”

“I’ve never asked for them!” Rey snapped. “You don’t need to get them for me.”

“Yes, I do. I’m not going to let you grow up unhealthy. We may be on Jakku, but I’m going to do everything in my power to ensure you grow up right.”

“That’s not your responsibility!”

“Whether you like it or not, yes it is.”

“You’re not my mother!” Rey screamed.

“Enough!” Luke exclaimed. “Rey, she is not trying to be your mother. Aletha, you don’t need to yell at her. Now can we all just simmer down and have a nice meal together like the family we once pretended to be.”

Aletha looked at him with pity, but she couldn’t take it. It was too much like her home life and too much like Antar to handle.

“I’m sorry, Luke,” Aletha stood up, “but I can’t deal with this anymore tonight.”

“No, Aletha,” he caught her hand to stop her.

She just shook her head, “I’ll see you tomorrow, Luke.”

Aletha pulled her hand out of his grip, and exited the tent.

Rey threw down her fork and got to her feet, “I’m done too. I’ll be waiting in the speeder to go home.”

And Rey exited the tent too.

“So... that went well,” Quom said.

Luke sighed, staring out the tent flap after the girls, “I don’t know what I’m going to do. I love them both, but I don’t want to choose between them. If I pick Aletha, I alienate Rey, but if I pick Rey, I cut off Aletha and treat her the same way Antar did, like she’s some second rate love interest.”

“But isn’t she?” Quom asked, collecting the dinner plates.

“No, Aletha is just as important to me as Felicity was,” Luke stood to help. “Sure, we don’t have a
child together, but she’s an important part of my life and I love her dearly. I’d die for her.”

“Luke, in all fairness, you would die for pretty much anyone.”


“Much better,” Quom nodded as they packed away the dishes.

Luke sighed, “I just… can’t believe I’m in the middle of this again.”

Quom frowned, “Again?”

“This is how the feud between Ben and Felicity started. Ben would never admit to me what the trigger had been, but one day he just turned on her. It happened overnight, one day being actually really fond of her and excited whenever she was around. Then all of a sudden, he hated her.”

“Was this when you started dating her?”

“Months before then, before we even started showing signs of being seriously attracted to each other.”

Quom opened his mouth.

“I’ve checked with Han and Leia,” Luke interrupted. “They agree that things weren’t serious yet with us. Sure, it was after I learned she had a boyfriend, and I had tried to ask her out, but it wasn’t full on, apparent to everyone love yet. As far as Ben knew, Felicity and I were just good friends. Next thing I know he starts in on her being very hostile, protective, and did whatever was in his power to cut Felicity out of my life.”

“Was it because of Snoke?”

“Maybe, maybe not. But I know Snoke certainly fed on that anger and hatred, and it led Ben down a path that turned him into what he is today.”

“Yeah, but what happened with those two was different. Aletha’s not reacting aggressively like Felicity did.”

Luke raised an eyebrow.

“Before tonight,” Quom amended. “Besides, you know Doc doesn’t mean it. She’s just frustrated with the situation. Felicity did mean the actions she took against Ben. And besides, Rey doesn’t have Snoke in her head.”

“But there is Dark Side in her soul,” Luke pointed out. “It’s in all of us, but with how strong my family is with the Force, the danger increases exponentially. There’s a Darkness in Rey, one that could corrupt her if left unchecked. She has to learn to tame these impulses.”

“And become a Jedi like her father before her?” Quom smirked.

Luke gave a bittersweet smile, “She’s not ready for it, Quom.”

“She isn’t? Or are you the one not ready?”

Luke didn’t have an answer for that.

“She needs to learn the truth someday,” Quom said.
“Someday, not today,” Luke insisted. “The sooner she knows, the sooner it’s likely to get out, and the sooner the First Order comes after us. She’s not strong enough yet to face the First Order. She’s not strong enough to face Snoke.”

“Then make her strong. Teach her to use the Force.”

“No, I can’t without revealing who I am.”

“Then what happens if the First Order shows up tomorrow?”

“Quom-”

“No, I’m serious!” Quom objected. “It’s highly unlikely you’re going to control when the… what did the ghosts call it? The lull? You’re not going to control when that ends. If Rey doesn’t learn to defend herself from the Dark Side soon, she’s going to be in danger, and not just from the First Order.”

Luke stared at him, “You’re afraid you’re going hurt her.”

Quom looked away, “You know what the Dark Side does to me. I can’t control myself, I would even attack you.”

“You’re not going to hurt her, Quom,” Luke said kindly but firmly. “I won’t let that happen.”

“You need to teach her, Luke, for all of our sakes. A surge of anger from her has already destroyed a ration cooker, what next? We’re scavenging a site, she gets mad at you and suddenly the wing of a ship collapses on you? Yes, she needs protection, not only from the First Order, not only from me, but from herself. You don’t want this feud to end like Ben and Felicity’s? Teach her better than you taught Ben, or else this is going to end with another blaster bolt to the temple.”

Luke sighed and looked down, “But I can’t teach her to be a Jedi without revealing what I am. Who I am.”

Quom smiled, “Then don’t.”

Luke frowned, “What do you mean?”

“Don’t teach her to be a Jedi… Teach her to be one hell of a scavenger.”

Luke grinned, “You, My Friend, are a genius.”

Quom shrugged, “I try. So what did you think about that Teng boy?”

Luke frowned, “Good kid, why?”

“Meru’s not happy about her investment. She’s thinking of… trying to reclaim the money she tied up in the venture.”

“For Rey’s sake, I hope not. That boy has been a blessing these past four months.”

“As much as I don’t like her spending time with the ruffian, I will admit he’s been good for her,” Quom admitted. “Just hopefully he doesn’t get too good for her. And I don’t mean in the out of her league way. I mean the he’s doing things that-”

“Yes, I understand what you meant,” Luke interrupted. “Have you told Rey about Meru’s interest in divesting herself of her asset?”
“No, I think it’ll be better for you to tell her.”

“Good luck with that, Rey and I are barely on speaking terms these days.”

Quom exhaled loudly, wrestling with himself over the knowledge he had been hiding from Luke since the X’us’R’iia. If only Luke understood Rey’s mindset, he might know how to handle Rey’s rejection of Aletha. But Quom had sworn to Rey not to tell Luke, and with everything going on, Rey needed a consistent ally. He couldn’t betray her without destroying her in the process, so he kept her secret safe.

But still… that didn’t mean he couldn’t encourage Luke to uncover the truth.


“I know, it’s just—”

“No, seriously, you have to sit down and have a serious heart to heart with that girl. She’s… going through some things right now, and not just puberty stuff. Rey… She’s got a… There’s something she really needs to tell you.”

Luke frowned, “What’s going on?”

“I promised not to tell, and she really needs someone on her side right now,” Quom answered. “I can’t tell you, but… there’s something big going on right now.”

“Is someone hurting her?”

“It’s not another Jarex situation,” Quom assured. “But the things she went through when she was young are starting to catch up with her. She needs her Dad.”

Luke nodded, “I respect your decision to hold such loyalty towards Rey’s wellbeing, so I won’t pry further. Force knows that there were plenty of things I admitted secretly to Biggs that I couldn’t tell Uncle Owen while growing up. I’ll try to talk to her tonight.”

Quom hesitated, “Maybe give her a night to simmer down. Trust me, Luke, this isn’t going to be an easy conversation.”

Luke nodded. He smiled and placed a hand on Quom’s shoulder. He didn’t need to express in words how grateful he was to have a friend with him on Jakku like Quom. Some days he missed Han’s friendship, and Quom was able to offer a close substitute.

But not a full one. Oh how he wished he had at least had the courage to leave Han and Leia with even a note, any sort of explanation of why he left… and why he now stayed away.

He only hoped they would find it inside themselves to forgive him.

“You should get going,” Quom urged. “It’s going to be dark soon, and you know better than anyone how dangerous the desert gets at night.”


“Nah, thank you. Life has gotten so much more interesting ever since a Skywalker got involved. I’ll see you tomorrow, Luke.”

“Have a good night.”
Quom sighed again once Luke had exited the tent. Faintly her could hear the voice of Rey and roar of the engine on Luke’s speeder. Soon enough his friends were gone, and once again Quom was left to spend another cold night alone.

He envied the duo; even while fighting, Luke and Rey always had someone to sleep by their side. Quom had never really cared about being alone until Rey Rhiaon Skywalker entered his life. She, Luke, and Aletha had ruined him forever, now he didn’t like being alone. Now he wished there was someone to wake up to in the morning. A lover, a child, a friend, it didn’t matter. He just wished there was someone there.

Then again, Quom didn’t always envy Luke and Rey. He certainly didn’t envy their forthcoming conversation. It would be one of the hardest of Luke’s life, and Quom wondered if the Jedi would have the courage to admit to Rey what had truly happened to her mother.

How could someone have possibly survived that?

The woman who called herself Captain Phasma stood on the balcony with her hands clasped behind her back. On either side of her were the four other highest-ranking Captains in the First Order.

It was selection day, the day the Captains would pick their units from this year’s batch of sixteen-year-olds, the age in which the First Order declared they were ready to be full time soldiers.

“The unit three from the right, four rows in looks promising,” Captain Roan said.

“I’ve got my eye on four left, six in,” said Captain Sigma.

The five Captains stood out from the sea of gleaming white Stormtroopers, but they looked relatively identical to each other when standing together. They had the same sort of weapons and capes on their mantle. There were three women and two men, all in an armor of different hue and metal than the average soldier.

Captain Roan had a red suit of some metal Phasma didn’t know what planet it came from, nor really cared to find out. He was a pompous ass who went through soldiers faster than batteries in his voice modulator.

Captain Tyche literally burned through batteries in his voice modulator fast. He loved the sound of his own voice, and his troops tended to hear his approach long before they caught a glimpse of his black armor.

Chapter Sigma was a perfectionist. Her sky-blue suit was so shiny, Phasma could see her reflection in it. Sigma didn’t necessarily have the most skilled soldiers, but by the Gods were their movements flawless. You couldn’t get a battle droid to reload and fire as mechanically as Sigma’s troops.

Captain Electra made Phasma’s skin crawl. Electra was the head of interrogation aka the torture unit. Her suit was made of brass, which was a secret joke among the other Captains, but there was a sickly green hue to it that made one as uneasy as the woman herself. True to her name, Electra’s specialty was using electrical shock to obtain information, and the woman always liked to start her sessions at 100% voltage.

But Phasma had the highest rank of the five, and no one dared question her. Not after what had happened to Felicity Rhiaon.
“Who do you have your eye on?” Sigma asked Phasma.

“Oh, you know, Phasma,” a mechanical but male voice called.

The Captains turned to see a masked Kylo Ren and General Hux striding towards them.

“Phasma never chooses until she sees them up close,” Kylo grinned behind his mask.

“Master Ren,” Phasma bowed stiffly.

“Now, Ren,” Electra chuckled, “I don’t think any of us truly know who Phasma is.”

“Captain,” Hux warned.

“Come now,” Electra goaded, “unmask yourself and let us see the real woman beneath.”

“That will be enough, Captain,” Hux ordered with a glare.

Electra’s smile was evident beneath her faceless mask.

“You never answered the question, though,” Hux turned to Phasma. “Do you have your eye on any troop this year?”

Phasma cocked her head to the side, “Is there something special about this batch?”

Hux smiled, “We’ll see.”

Phasma glanced over at Kylo Ren, “What I think is immaterial. Master Ren always gets first pick.”

“OFFICERS ON THE FLOOR!” a training commander down below bellowed. “ATTENTION!”

In perfect unison all two hundred soldiers salute and stood to attention.

“Shall we?” Hux gestured to the staircase.

It was the same procedure as every year. A row of soldiers containing three units would step forward. Hux, Kylo, and the five Captains would walk the line, scrutinizing the cadets, and then one would lay claim to each unit before them. Kylo had first dibs, then Hux, then Phasma, Electra, Tyche, Sigma, and Roan. Once selected, the cadets would present their left wrist to logging assignments – a Stormtrooper was tattooed with their number on their left wrist at age ten. Finally their new Captain would present each sixteen-year-old with a shiny new blaster. A child no more, the Cadets were soldiers to die for the cause.

Things were going fine until one group stepped forward. The unit in the middle had four boys in it, and as they stepped forward, one of the boys slipped on the freshly waxed floor. He flailed as he fell to the group, desperately trying to grab one of his brothers for support. He grabbed the arm of a redhead, and accidentally yanked him down with him.

The room laughed until Hux raised his hand to signal silence. The redhead boy who had been pulled down shoved the boy who had slipped.

“Nice going, 2003,” the redhead snarled.

“Leave him, Nines,” the boy next to him snapped. The boy had brown skin, black hair, and brown eyes. He grabbed the fallen boy and helped pull him up.
“Don’t defend him,” the fourth boy said. “Seriously with a stunt like that, we should just start calling you Slip.”


Slip’s shoulders drooped.

“Attention!” Electra snapped.

The boys immediately shot back into formation.

Kylo would always observe the cadets first, walking the line of them reaching into the Force to see if any of them stood out.

“How many Knights of Ren does he need to replace this year?” Roan muttered.

Sigma answered, “Three. The boy goes through soldiers faster than you.”

“Silence,” Electra hissed at them.

Kylo walked the line with his head held high and arms folded neatly behind his because. He didn’t even glance at the unblinking teenagers as they waited to hear their fate. There wasn’t nothing remarkable about this lot. Not a signal one stood-

Kylo stopped in his tracks.

Wait a minute.

Following the tug in the Force, Kylo backtracked a few steps and turned to face the unit containing Slip and Nines.

“Which of you is the unit leader?” Kylo demanded.

The boys looked at each other in confusion.

“Master Ren,” Phasma interjected, “we don’t assign leaders at this stage.”

Kylo sighed, “Then which one of you has the highest test scores?”

One of the boys stepped forward.

It was the same that had helped up Slip.

Kylo studied the boy’s face with interest. None of the cadets were ever fully Force Sensitive – those children always went directly to Snoke – but some had… potential.

And this boy had great potential.

“Number,” Kylo snapped.

The boy obediently held out his arm and pulled back his sleeve.

Kylo’s heart froze.

“FN-2187,” the boy declared.

Silence fell upon the group of Officers. Sigma, Tyche, and Roan looked at each other, hoping one of
the others had an answer. Hux exchanged a nervous glance with Electra.

Phasma looked like she had been slapped. Without a word, she stepped forward and joined Kylo’s side. She stared into the boy’s face in disbelief. Her heart was pounding in her ears as she took in the sight of a face she never thought she’d see again. She remembered so vividly the day the boy became important in her life. The day Phasma tore him out of the arms of Felicity Rhiaon.

“You’re FN-2187?” Phasma said.

FN-2187 tried not to scowl, “Yes, Captain.”

“You’re so… young,” Kylo whispered. “Sixteen and ready for combat?”

He had never really thought about the ages of the cadets before, and yet as he stared at the boy, he was reminded of how many years it had been since Felicity Rhiaon had entered his uncle’s life and ruined everything.

Had it really been that long ago?

Phasma looked at the young man at her side, “You were his age when you took your first life.”

“That’s right, Ren,” Hux nodded. “These cadets usually don’t actually see action for another few years, but they do it afar with blasters. Meanwhile you were this young and stained your hands with the blood of Alyla Kene.”

Ben Solo clenched his fist.

Captain Electra gave something that was too evil to be a giggle, “Tell me Master Ren, when you ran Kenobi’s blade through her, did the Jedi Bitch scream?”

For a moment, Ben Solo’s hand twitched to his lightsaber. He was ready to ignite it and swing it through Electra to see if the Brass Bitch screamed. But he refrained because he knew what he was supposed to think: he wasn’t supposed to defend the honour of some good for nothing Jedi who had tried to stop him from pursuing the path of goodness and join the First Order.

Even if that good for nothing Jedi was the kindest, gentlest, most loving soul he had ever met. No, he wasn’t supposed to feel sympathy for her, not even as he recalled the heartbreaking look on her face of sorrow, disbelief, and non-understanding as Obi-Wan Kenobi blade sunk through her chest.

“Why?” had been Alyla Kene’s last whispered word.

Seven years later, Ben Solo didn’t have an answer.

Phasma placed a hand on his shoulder. Ben looked up at Phasma and she nodded at him. Kylo took a deep breath and nodded back.

“He’s mine,” Phasma declared, bringing them back on track. “I want FN-2187.”

“Now wait a minute,” Electra stepped forward, “I have had my eye on this one for a while. He has some of the highest test scores we have ever seen.”

“And you’re going to waste him on interrogation?” Phasma laughed. “I think not.”

“Master Ren, please, you can’t let her have him. I’ll make him into the finest torturer the First Order has ever seen.”
“And I will make him into a General fit for Darth Vader’s own command.”

Electra glared at Phasma from behind her mask. Everyone knew if you wanted something from Kylo Ren, namedropping Darth Vader was a guarantee. Especially if one was Kylo Ren’s favorite Stormtrooper Captain. Ren and Phasma had been almost inseparable for the past three years.

Sure enough, Kylo looked to Phasma and said, “His troop is yours, Captain Phasma.”

“Thank you, Ren,” Phasma bowed her head.

“But I want him added to my saber classes. He has… great potential and I want to nurture it.”

“I’ll be sure to take it into consideration while making his schedule.”

Electra objected, “But Master Ren-”

“Phasma has seniority, Electra,” Kylo said sharply.

Behind her mask, the woman smirked at Electra, “Better luck next time, Electra.”

As Phasma went to step back, Electra grabbed her arm and yanked Phasma in close.

“You have no right to that boy,” Electra hissed.

“Oh really?” Phasma smirked. “You really want to challenge me on this? Here? Now? In front of everyone? Go ahead, challenge me, but I guarantee that if you do it… you’re the only one who’ll end up looking like a fool.”

“Withdraw, Electra,” Hux coolly ordered.

Electra glared and released Phasma, “This isn’t over.”

“I know. It wouldn’t be fun if it was.”

It took all of Electra’s restraint not to yank the chrome helmet from her smug face.

Phasma did the traditional presenting of the squad their face weapons, but when she handed FN-2187 his weapon, she didn’t let it go.

“I’ll be keeping my eye on you, FN-2187,” Phasma promised. “Just remember, no matter what happens, no matter what you’re forced to do, or whatever trial comes your way… never forget who you truly are.”

FN-2187 frowned but nodded, “Yes, Captain.”

Phasma released his weapon and stepped away, “FN Squad, you are dismissed.”

The four boys marched out of the room in confused silence. When they entered the holding area with the other assigned cadets, they stared at each other as if one of them had an answer for the strange interaction.

“What just happened?” Nines asked.

Zeroes – the boy who had named Slip – frowned, “I have no idea.”

The boys stood in continued silence.
“Are you guys actually going to call me Slip now?”

“Yep,” Zeroes and Nines answered together.

FN-2187 scowled.

“Stop scowling,” Luke chided as Rey glared across the market at Aletha.

They were waiting in line with all the other scavengers to make their trade with Plutt. Aletha was busy attending to the wound of Ivano – he had sliced his arm earlier that day. As they moved closer to the head of the line, Rey would not stop giving her the evil eye. Luke could have even sworn she wasn’t blinking.

Luke sighed and muttered, “Any advice, Father?”

But Anakin Skywalker made no reply. Luke had been hearing significantly less from his father these days, and whenever he could ask why, Anakin would simply answer that he was busy with something else. Then he would usually tell Luke that Felicity sends her love, as if Luke would actually believe that Felicity Rhiaon would send him a message via Darth Vader. Seriously, couldn’t his father think of a better diversion if he wanted Luke to stop asking questions?

“We really need to work through this Aletha situation, Rey,” Luke turned his attention back to his daughter.

“I’m not having dinner again with her tonight,” Rey said stubbornly.

Quom was standing in line behind them, “You two make any progress last night?”

“No,” they answered in unison.

He frowned, “Just thought I’d ask.”

“Erso,” the gruff voice of Unkar Plutt called up Luke next to the window.

Luke and Rey stepped forward, unloading their haul for him.

“Well, these are some beautiful pieces here.” Plutt chuckled as his eyes flicked up to Rey, “But certainly not the most beautiful thing you own, Erso.”

Luke’s eyes narrowed, and Rey took a step back. Her stomach churned as his beady eyes took her in, something the Blobfish had been doing more lately.

“It’s always a pleasure when I get to see you, Sweetheart,” Plutt grinned. “You really should accompany your father to see me more often, My Girl.”

Luke protectively placed a hand on Rey’s shoulder, “Rey, go stand back with Quom.”

Rey nodded and raced back to Quom’s awaiting embrace. She tried not to shudder as Quom wrapped his free arm around her and glared at Plutt.

“She’s growing into a very lovely woman, Erso,” Plutt grinned. “Looking more like her mother everyday.”
“I would be very careful of what you say about my daughter,” Luke warned. He knew exactly what Plutt had thought of Felicity, and it angered him to imagine that Plutt might start thinking those same things about Rey. “Let’s just get down to trading, shall we?”

Rey watched as her father negotiated with Plutt. The way he had looked at her had made her skin crawl, and she almost vomited at his usage of the terms “Sweetheart” and “My Girl.” Sweetheart was the name her parents tenderly called her, and My Girl belonged to Quom on occasion, sometimes saying that MG stood for both Miracle Girl and My Girl. Now Plutt had tainted those precious words. No one was allowed to call her that, no one but Quom and her father.

Luke was aware of Rey’s eyes on their interaction. He tried to keep a calm head for her sake, but he got that same ugly feeling in his stomach he had gotten the day he had seen Jabba the Hutt force Leia into… that outfit. He had hated seeing it on her as her friend, but was horrified by it as her brother.

Rey was only twelve, why did he have to deal with this now? Between Teng and Plutt, why were people checking out his little girl? He was so not looking forward to her teenaged years… though age twelve was proving difficult already.

As he negotiated with Plutt, Luke couldn’t help but recall Quom’s suggestion of teaching Rey the Force without actually explicitly teaching it. With Rey’s focused attention on the interaction, this might be a good opportunity to do so.

“Two portions,” Plutt finally offered for the haul.


“Two. Final offer, Erso.”

Luke glanced back, making sure Rey’s full attention was on the scene.

It was.

Luke looked Plutt straight in the eye and firmly said, “You will give me three portions.”

Plutt shook his head, “Two, Erso.”

“You will give me three portions,” Luke repeated in the same tone, but this time he very casually waved his hand. It looked like a gesture anyone who spoke with their hands did, but Luke did it for a very different reason.

The way Plutt’s eyes glazed over was indiscernible to anyone but Luke, and his voice was slightly monotonized as he said, “I will give you three portions.”

The crowd buzzed with confusion as Plutt handed over the portions. Out of the corner of his eye, Luke could see Roke glaring at him. But Roke was too well paid to reveal Luke’s secret identity and the fact that they had all just witnessed a Jedi Mind Trick. Luke just grinned at Roke and nodded as he collected his portions and returned to Rey.

“That was so cool!” Rey exclaimed as Quom stepped up to do his own trade in. “How did you do that?”

Luke chuckled and ruffled her hair, “I’m very persuasive. A casual gesture, a firm tone, and focusing your mind on making it happen, you can do that to anyone with a weak enough mind.”

“Can you show me?”
“We’ll practice it.”

“Thank you!” Rey suddenly hugged him.

Luke stumbled back slightly at the impact. He blinked, confused for a moment. It was the first time she had hugged him since the night the ration cooker exploded. Then Luke smiled, and he wrapped his arms around her, savouring the moment.

“You know, you’re getting tall,” Luke grinned. “Soon you’ll be towering over me.”

“I don’t think so,” Rey pulled away. She was smiling, “But maybe I’ll get close.”

“Maybe you will.”

Suddenly Rey’s grin fell as her eyes locked over his shoulder. Luke turned and saw the source of the disruption: Aletha watching them with a large smile.

Luke sighed, “Rey—”

“Half a portion!” Quom exclaimed as he stormed back to them. “What a swindler! I swear, Luke, I’m getting you to do my trades from now on. Half a portion, are you kidding me? I’ll starve on that.”

“As I’ve said countless times,” Luke replied, “you’re welcome to some of our portion credits.”

“And as I’ve said countless times, I’ll pass.” Quom noticed Rey’s glare at Aletha, “Hey, MG, I was thinking. If you’re getting so mad at your dad, maybe you two need some time apart.”


“Why doesn’t Rey spend the night with me?” Quom suggested. “I’ve got that extra cot. Maybe you two need a little room to breathe.”


“Could I stay over tonight?” she asked.

Quom grinned, “We’ll have the finest slumber party you’ve ever been too.”

“I’ve never been to a slumber party.”

“Exactly!”

Luke shook his head.

“Hey, Dad?” Rey asked, “Can I go hang out with Dirk for a while? I want to show him those computer chips we found.”


“Well, more the language program one,” Rey corrected. “I don’t think he can handle the flight sim, and the cookbook will just make him hungry. Besides, I can’t risk letting anyone knock my high score off on the flight sim.”

Luke chuckled, “The only one you should worry about doing that is me.”

“Exactly why I won’t let you play with it,” Rey grinned.
He kissed her forehead, “Off you go, but don’t stay too late. We need you in the shop today. That oxygen filtration system isn’t going to fix itself.”

“Oh, Teng had some suggestions for that. He’s really handy, you know.”

“I bet he’s *handsy* too,” Quom muttered.

Luke swatted at him and they watched Rey run off to find Dirk.

“I really don’t like her going off on her own,” Luke sighed.

“She’ll be fine,” Quom assured him.

“And if she isn’t?”

“You cut off the guy’s hand. We’ve done this before, Luke.”

He sighed.

“By the way,” Quom leaned in conspiratorially. “You’re welcome.”

“For what?”

Quom grinned, “Come on, you know. Rey’s spending the night with me, so you’re all alone free to sleep *wherever* you desire. But I heard it might be cold tonight so you might want to find something, or someone to warm you up.”

Luke just looked at him in disbelief, “Quom-”

“Go get laid, Luke,” Quom grinned. “But make sure you’re safe about it. You really can’t keep your past hidden from a girl if you get her pregnant.”

Luke playfully punched his shoulder, and Quom just laughed.

Rey was getting ready for bed with Quom when there was a knock on the tent peg.

“Come in,” Quom called.

“Hey,” Aletha ducked into the tent. “I just wanted to come over and say goodnight.”

“Dad already has gone home,” Rey glared at her.

Aletha and Quom tried not to look at each other. Luke certainly had bid Rey goodbye and left the tent, but they both knew that the walker wasn’t the place he had headed afterward.

“Oh, I actually came to say goodnight to you,” Aletha smiled at Rey.

She rolled her eyes and turned away, “Whatever.”

Aletha sighed and looked to Quom, “Could you give us a few minutes?”


“Just because I’m a Doctor doesn’t mean I want to hear about that sort of thing, Quom.”
“Doc, we live on Jakku. When nature calls, we dig a hole. During sandstorms we designate a corner of our abodes, and look away when someone needs to use it. You really want to start pretending we have dignity about our bodily functions? Hell, you’ve been excessively open about your menstrual cycles to Luke and I.”

“It’s to set a welcoming environment for Rey to feel comfortable when she gets hers, and so she knows she can come to me with questions about it.”

Rey shuddered, “If I have a pleasant conversation with you Doctor Kymeri, will you please stop talking about my future reproductive functions?”

Aletha tried not to wince at the title Doctor Kymeri. Ever since Rey had discovered about her relationship with Luke, Rey had refused to continue to call her Ally. The affectionate name had been taken away as punishment for her relationship, and Aletha had been consigned back to the name of the man Rey thought Aletha should only be romantically involved with.

“Well,” Quom looked between the girls, “good luck with this one, Doc.”

He was quick to make his exit.

Rey and Aletha stared at each other in cold silence for what felt like an eternity.

Aletha was the one to break the ice, “We need to talk, Rey.”

“No, we don’t,” Rey crossed her arms.

“Yes, we do,” Aletha insisted. “Please Rey, I’m tired of all this fighting. I don’t want you to be mad at me.”

“But I am mad.”

“Then tell me how to make it better.”

Rey was silent.

Aletha sighed and sat down on Quom’s cot. The one Rey was using was spaced about a metre away.

“I love you, Rey,” Aletha opened with. “I truly do. You have been an utter blessing in my life. Before you, I lived a miserable life barely existing. You gave me a reason to live, to laugh, to love.”

Rey sat down on her cot to face Aletha, “If you love me, why are you doing this?”

“Because I love your father.”

Rey looked away in pain.

“I do love him,” Aletha repeated, “and he loves me.”

“He loves my mother,” Rey gritted her teeth.

“Yes, he does, very much, but that doesn’t mean he can’t love me. Just because he loves me, doesn’t mean his love for your mother is lessened. I know my place in his heart, I’m his second best. I know that if she magically was alive and standing in front of him, and he was told to pick between us, I know he would pick her.”

“What if she is alive? If she came back, what would you do?”
Aletha cocked her head but answered the question, “I would stand aside. I promise.”

It wasn’t enough for Rey, “No! No! Dad is supposed to be with Mom and you’re supposed to be with Antar. That’s how it’s supposed to be! That’s when everyone is happiest!”

Aletha laughed, “Sunshine, I love Antar, but our relationship is far more complicated than you know. The love between myself and Antar is nowhere the same level that your parents’ story was.”

Rey narrowed her eyes, “She’s still his wife. They promised to love each other forever.”

“And they do, but your mother told your father that if she ever passed away first, she wanted him to be happy with someone else afterwards.”

“You’re lying. She never said that.”

“It’s what your father claims.”

“Then he’s lying.”

“Why would he lie about that?”

“To justify having an affair,” Rey answered.

Aletha sighed, “Rey, I would never agree to be someone’s mistress. I am disgusted by infidelity and absolutely would never consent to be involved with an affair.”

“But Mom-”

“She’s gone, Rey. She’s not coming back.”

Rey twisted her hands, “She promised she would.”

Aletha’s heart broke, “Oh my Sunshine-”

“Don’t call me that!” Rey snapped. “Don’t you pity me, you’re the one who’s wrecking everything.”

“Rey, I give up! I love your father, your father loves me, and I’ve been respectful of you.”

“Respectful? Learning about you two by walking in on you making out isn’t respectful.”

“The only reason you found out like that was we were trying to be respectful and see if the relationship would work before involving you in it.”

“Is that the story you tell yourself?!”

“Oh, what do you want from me, Rey?” Aletha exclaimed.

“I want the truth,” Rey snapped.

“About what?”

“All of it. How did that happen? When did it happen? Have you been planning this from the start?”

Aletha’s brows knitted together, “Rey, I swear there was no plot. It happened, I didn’t scheme anything.”

“Then tell how it happened. When did it all start?”
Aletha sighed, “After your father made his initial agreement with Plutt, I went to retrieve him, do you remember that?”

Rey nodded.

“We shared a moment, relating to each other over our deceased spouses, and he broke down in front of me. He was terrified over how he was going to tell you that your mother had been killed. I comforted him with a hug and a few kind words, nothing more.”

“Did you ask him to stay on Jakku?”

“Yes, but not for my sake. He didn’t know where to go with you, and he was being pursued by the First Order. I suggested he stay to collect himself for a few days because he was still adjusting to the idea of you being alive.”

Rey frowned, “He thought I was dead?”

Aletha nodded, “Luke choosing to stay here had nothing to do with me beyond my suggestion. After that we were nothing more than friends, but slowly the relationship developed into more. When after we saved you from Jarex, I realized I have fallen in love with him, but I didn’t say anything out of respect for you, him, and your mother. I confessed my feelings after he confessed his own a few years later. I asked him to take some time to collect himself and let go of Felicity, and that’s why he made her grave. Still, I wouldn’t be with him until he was truly ready.”

“When was he ready?”

“We shared a kiss a few days after Mashra died, but I still refused to let things continue from there. It wasn’t until the latest X’us’R’iia when we got trapped in a tent for five days alone that we worked through everything… I will also admit that there was a few moments of… physical intimacy during that storm.”

Rey frowned at the thought of Luke and Aletha making out during the sandstorm. She didn’t even imagine what had truly happened that night. It was impossible for Rey to even conceive of her father being sexual… at all. Not just with her mother, but even with her mother. Oh, she knew how it happened, but she just liked to pretend there was a stork involved or something.

“We got together after the X’us’R’iia and like I said, we kept it a secret to make sure it worked before involving you. I promise you that that’s exactly how it all went down.”

“Exactly?”

“Exactly.”

Rey sniffed and wiped her nose on the back of her sleeve, “What do you want with my dad?”

“What do you mean?” Aletha frowned.

“Is it just fun? Do you want to get marry? What’s the endgame?”

“I don’t know… Maybe someday marriage if things go that way, but this is just more than a fling.”

Rey started to cry.

“Oh, Sunshine.” Aletha got down on one knee to look the little girl in the eye and clasped her shoulders. “I love you, and I swear to you that that love has meaning to me. I love you more than
anyone else I have ever known; more than your father, more than Antar, more than my own family. I have risked life and limb for you because you matter more than the world to me… but your father matters to me too. I do love Luke. I promise you that, and I promise our relationship blossomed from friendship, not manipulation. I didn’t mean to fall in love with your father, I didn’t want to fall in love with him, but I did and I don’t regret it. I’m not asking to be your mother or to replace Felicity in any way. This doesn’t overwrite the love shared between your mother and father, nor the love I have for you, but I swear that you mean so much more to me than romance with Luke ever could. I love you, Rey, and I would do anything for you.”

Rey raised her eyes to meet Aletha’s; a few tears shone out bravely, “Then answer me this: if I asked you to end things with my father… would you do it?”

Aletha paused for a minute to think about it, “…Yes. If that’s what it took to repair our relationship, I would end things with your father.”

“Really?”

“Say the word and it’s over.”

Somehow that didn’t bring comfort to Rey, “I… No.”

“No?” Aletha frowned, trying not to look too surprised. “You... want me to be with your father?”

“No! Well… I don’t know. I just want things back the way they were.”

“Things can never return to what they once were, but I am willing to work this out between us. Please Rey, tell me what I can do to fix this.”

Rey looked away, “I don’t know.”

Aletha dared to reach out and lift her chin, “Well, let me know when you do, because frankly… I miss you, Rey.”

Aletha was only met with silence. Conceding defeat, she sighed, got back to her feet, and with one last longing look, swiftly exited the tent.

It wasn’t until Aletha was long gone that Rey whispered her response.

“I miss you too.”

“You actually offered to break up with me?” Luke repeated in disbelief. He was sitting bootless and shirtless on the pushed together cots of Aletha’s tent, watching her as she prepared to join him for bed.

“I’ll do it too,” Aletha undid her hair from the messy bun, and tried her best to brush out the dust and sand from her greying hair. “Rey is the most important thing in my life.”

“As in mine,” Luke nodded. “But you have to know where to draw the line.”

“We should have told her immediately once we started up, and maybe even sooner. I just wish that she could understand I’m not trying to replace her mother.”

“It just doesn’t make sense. You’re almost nothing like Felicity, it’s not like I’m trying to substitute in
a clone.” He muttered to himself, “If I wanted that, I would have gone for Sienna.”

Aletha raised a brow, “Who’s Sienna?”

“A name you weren’t supposed to hear.”

“Another story for when your mysterious past is revealed?”

“No, that’s a story I’m never telling anyone, and you would do best to forget it.”

Aletha smiled and set down her brush, “So, am I really nothing like Felicity?”


He grabbed Aletha and playfully pulled her down onto the bed with him. Pinning her as she giggled, Luke’s hands caressed up her bare leg. Her leggings had already been discarded for the day, leaving Aletha to only be covered by a rather short skirt, and what Luke suspected to be nothing else underneath.

“There is one thing you have in common.” Luke began to kiss up her calf, setting all her senses aflame, “A predilection for a certain oration of mine.”

Aletha moaned, weaving her hands into him hair to guide his mouth higher.

“That’s because you’re so talented at it, Mister Erso.” Aletha gave a sharp gasp as his mouth hit her sweet spot, “Luke!”

He grinned up at her mischievously, “I suppose if Rey does call in on your breakup offer, I’m going to have to get my fill of you until then. Starting with you getting rid of that shirt.”

Aletha pulled her top off without a second thought, and Luke’s hands were instantly on her breasts, “What about my skirt?”

Luke raised an eyebrow, and unbuckled his belt, “For now? …Leave it on.”

Rey lay awake in bed the next morning. Quom was snoring next to her, lost in the world of dreams, but Rey’s sleep had been uneasy.

Had Aletha’s words been true? Was this love between her father and Aletha just something that had happened against their wills? Would her mother really approve of the situation?

Was her mother really dead?

She wished the answers could all just be a flat no. It would just be so much easier to hate Aletha, paint her as the villain, and pretend this wasn’t a grey situation.

But it was, and even if Aletha had lied to her about all of it, there was one thing that Rey couldn’t deny was true. She knew that Aletha loved her. Aletha had been the closest thing Rey had to a mother for years, and her heart ached as she tried to cut Aletha from it. Whether Rey liked it or not, Aletha was forever a part of her… and she loved her almost as much as the mother who had walked out of her life without a glance back.

Rey sighed and pushed off the blanket on her cot. She glanced over at Quom to make sure he was
still asleep before sneaking out of the tent.

She couldn’t be mad at Aletha forever, Rey thought as she made her way through the silent town. The sun was barely peeking over the horizon, and only scavengers like Ivano Troade, who got up ridiculously early each morning were awake.

Her father and Aletha should never have been secretive about their relationship. Maybe if they had informed her while it was developing that this was a possibility, Rey could have accepted it easier. She loved them both, and she didn’t want to be mad at them. Rey was ready to forgive them. First Aletha in her tent, and later her father when he came into town.

And so, ready to mend bridges, she pulled back Aletha’s tent flap.

The sight within struck her cold like a slap across the face.

Lying on the cot with Aletha was her father. But not just her father sleeping next to Aletha, her clearly nude beneath the blanket father sleeping with an equally nude Aletha, the pair only covered modestly by a thin blanket while their clothing was scattered all over the floor. Even worse, her father was asleep on top of Aletha, one hand buried in her hair, the other cupping her breast, and Aletha’s legs were wrapped around his hips.

There was no pretending you didn’t know what Luke and Aletha had been up to the previous night. The only way the sight could have been worse was if they were awake and Rey had caught them mid-thrust.

“Dad?” Rey shrieked loud enough to be heard three tents over.

“What?” Luke startled awake, sitting up straight. “Rey?”

Unfortunately, sitting up straight brought the blanket up with him, pulling the it off Aletha, baring her chest to Rey and making things oh so much worse.

“Oh my god,” Aletha’s eyes were wide with horror, as she pulled the blanket up to cover herself.

But Rey had already seen the hickey on Aletha’s chest.

Tears filled her eyes, and unable to stand the sight, Rey turned and ran.

Neither Luke nor Aletha followed her – not immediately anyway – as they had to dress first, so it gave Rey a head start. People were starting to fill the street, so Rey could disappear in the crowd. She pushed through the marketplace, trying to run as far and as fast away from the scene as possible.

The image made her feel physically nauseous. Growing up on Jakku, Rey lived around enough gruff characters to have learned the signs of sex at an early age. Dad had always promised her that he would never ever succumb to the cheap hookups that occurred in Jakku; meaningless one night stands. He had sworn to her that because he had loved her mother so much, he would never have sex again unless he found a woman he loved as much as Felicity.

That thought made her even sicker… or perhaps it was the stress of the situation. Either way, behind the tent of some merchant she didn’t recognize, Rey fell to her hands and knees and emptied the contents of her stomach in the sand.

She stayed there, crying in the puddle of her own vomit. How could this happen? How could Dad do this? How could Aletha? How could they betray her mother? Didn’t they understand? No, no one understood the passion Rey held to the notion of her mother being alive. She had to be. She just had
No one could ever find out why Rey needed it to be true.

Rey wailed in the sand, not caring who saw. Her heart hurt so much. How could Aletha have done this? Betrayed her, seduced her father, and stolen him away from her mother? Aletha had made an adulterer out of Luke, and she had taken advantage of the fact Rey needed some space from him to do it.

Aletha Kymeri was an evil woman. Devious and a liar. She had planned it all from the start; hadn’t she? Yes, the feelings had started after Dad’s deal with Plutt, when it was revealed Dad had money. Aletha had been plotting this ever since she found out that her father had money. Aletha had never cared about her, only used her as an ends to the means.

Rey didn’t know where these thoughts were coming from, but she could feel something Dark around her. The thoughts weren’t logical, and deep down she knew they weren’t true, but it was so hard to fight against them. In fact, it felt good to give in to the Darkness in her mind.

Yes, give in to it, something in her soul said. Give in to your anger. Give in to your hate. Hurt her the way she has hurt you. Make her feel your pain. Get your revenge.

Rey’s face hardened, spurred on by the words inside her soul. The voice in her soul was right; she had to make Aletha pay. She had to make Aletha hurt just as much as she had hurt Rey.

And she knew exactly how to do it…

“Ivano?”

The scavenger looked up in surprise at Rey Erso running towards him and his speeder he was in the process of loading.

“Hey, Rey,” Ivano nodded at her, and threw his toolbox in the trunk.

“Good, you haven’t left,” Rey skidded to a stop in front of him. “Are you heading out to the Graveyard?”

“On my way now.”

“Would you mind giving me a ride to Old Meru’s?”

Ivano frowned, noticing the red puffiness of her eyes and the small sniffles she was trying to disguise, “A ride? Why don’t you ask your Dad or Quom?”

“They’re both already gone out for the day, and I was supposed to go to Old Meru’s to deal with some business for Dad. Unfortunately, you know how Dad and Quom can get. Quom thought Dad had me, and Dad thought Quom did, and I ended up here alone. Please, can you take me? I’ll pay you a portion.”

Crying twelve-year-old or not, Ivano wasn’t about to pass up a free portion.

He swung open the passenger door, “Hop in.”
By the time they reached Old Meru’s, Rey’s tears had ceased. Her sorrow had mutated into not just anger, but pure rage. The dark feeling of hate was intoxicating, and letting herself give in to Darkness made her feel strong. With rage in her heart, Rey was powerful, and she craved the taste of more.

Teng looked confused when Rey pulled up with Ivano Troade. It was an odd little sight to see Rey bribing the scavenger, instructing him not to tell anyone about the ride as “that’s the way my Dad wants it. His deal with Meru is a secret for now.” As Ivano drove away, Teng felt something dangerous about the situation, though he couldn’t figure out what.

“Is Meru here?” Rey marched right up to Teng.

“No, she’s off picking up rations in town,” he answered.

“Been gone long?”

“Roke picked her up for the trade about an hour ago. Why?”

“Because I need you to drive me to my scavenging site today.”

Teng frowned, “Couldn’t your father bring you?”

“He won’t take me there himself,” Rey dismissed. “Please, Teng, it’s important I do this.”

Teng sighed. He knew if he agreed to this and ran off with Rey and took her to the forbidden site, he could get in a lot of trouble. Not just with Luke, but Meru as well.

But still… how could he possibly say no to Rey Erso?

“Get in,” Teng conceded, climbing into the driver’s seat of Meru’s speeder.

“Thank you so much,” Rey grinned, clamouring into the passenger side.

“You are going to get me in a lot of trouble, you know that?”

“Yep.”

Teng shook his head, “So where are we going?”

Rey grinned with a genuine look of wickedness – not mischievousness but cruelty – in her eyes.

“We’re going to scavenge an X-Wing.”

Chapter End Notes

Coming Up Next Chapter…

Second Best
Luke draws the line when Rey scavenges Antar’s ship, but Teng finds that he’s the one to truly pay the price.
Second Best

Chapter Summary

Luke draws the line with Rey, Quom is just done with all this drama, and Rey and Teng discuss the merits of eating soup on Jakku.

Chapter Notes

So, last chapter I totally forgot to insert an important line that sets up later how Finn actually knows how to use a lightsaber. It’s a small line from Kylo Ren, but important as it comes back up later when Finn escapes with Poe. I’ve gone back and inserted it in the last chapter, but for those who haven’t the line, here it is:

Sure enough, Kylo looked to Phasma and said, “His troop is yours, Captain Phasma.”

“Thank you, Ren,” Phasma bowed her head.

“But I want him added to my saber classes. He has… great potential and I want to nurture it.”

“I’ll be sure to take it into consideration while making his schedule.”

Electra objected, “But Master Ren-”

“Phasma has seniority, Electra,” Kylo said sharply.

Credit to crazyman844 for parts of, and the general spirit of Luke’s description of Aletha in this chapter.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

The Long Way Home

Chapter Thirty-Five

Second Best

This X-wing has been sitting here for as long as I can remember.

- Rey’s Survival Guide
After discovering Antar’s body, Luke, Quom, Aletha, and Rey all agreed that scavenging his ship would be off-limits. Rey knew this well as the group would actively keep it hidden from others. She wasn’t sure how they managed to do it, but it was a mix of mistaken instructions, distractions, threats, and secretly a few mind tricks on Luke’s part.

Rey had eagerly agreed to keeping the secret, wanting to respect Aletha. So when she walked in on the sight of her father having had sex with Aletha, Rey knew just what to do.

She wanted to hurt Aletha. Badly. She wanted to make Aletha feel the same pain her mother would when she discovered Luke’s affair.

“Rey, are you sure this is a good idea?” Teng asked nervously as they worked on salvaging the deflector shield projectors power couplings. “Aletha won’t be happy.”

“Good,” Rey grunted as they lowered their prize into the pile on the ground below.

She had been making quick work of the ship, stripping it as fast as possible. Indeed, it seemed like she was working faster. Every time she hauled something, her pulls were stronger. Every time she climbed up the ship, her jumps were higher. She basked in the feeling of this Darkness bathing in her soul. It made her feel powerful, and she craved more.

Teng on the other hand didn’t like the change. Oh he couldn’t put his finger on what happened, but there was something different about Rey. Every sudden movement made him flinch, and once he could have even sworn that her eye colour had changed. It had just been a moment, the briefest flash of yellow, but he waved it off, blaming the heat of the sun to cause delusions. Maybe Rey was just overheated.

…Or more likely something had happened between herself and Aletha to deepen that feud and Rey was unhealthily repressing expression of emotion making her bitter, angry, and more dangerous, prone to allowing her emotions to take over a make a mistake.

But he was just a lowly mechanic, and not even a very good one at that. What did he know?

Either way, he would be there for her however she needed it.

“Water break?” Teng offered.

Rey sighed and nodded. The sun was burning quite hot today.

Grabbing a pair of water flasks, they settled in the shade against the ship and took a break.

“We’ll have a profitable haul today,” Teng tried to make conversation.

“The Blobfish will have a heart attack,” Rey wiped her brow and splashed some water on her hand which she patted on the back of her neck. “Do you think he’ll even have that many portions?”

“Considering he feeds the entire town on a daily basis, I don’t think it’ll be too much a hardship.” Teng eyed Rey, “Man, I really gotta start following your example and start tying up my hair. This heat is killing me.”

“Your hair is getting pretty long,” Rey didn’t know why she reached out to run a hand through it. “If you want, Dirk’s surprisingly good at cutting hair.”

“No offense, but I don’t really trust him with scissors.” He caught her angry look, “At least not ones he wants to use on my body.”
“He’s not a joke, Teng. Just because he’s not… mentally… He’s got some neurological deficiency, but he’s not an idiot. Dirk is just biologically different.”

“Sorry, I didn’t mean to-”

“Whatever,” Rey looked away.

Teng grabbed her hand, “Hey, no. Come on, Rey. I didn’t mean it like that. You’re right, Dirk does… require assistance is some areas, but he’s not just a pawn for our entertainment. He’s a really good guy, and he’s lucky to have you as a friend. As am I.”

Rey gave a small smile, “Even if I get you in trouble sometimes?”

“Starlight, you have gotten my head on the chopping block today, and I go to my execution with a head held high.”

Rey laughed, “Starlight?”

“It’s what Dad used to call Mom,” Teng shrugged. “She was his Starlight, and he was her Moonshine.”

“Why did you call me it?”

“It’s just the term of affection I associate men using for women. What about you? What did your parents call each other?”

“I don’t remember for certain, but I think it was Sweetheart.”

“For both of them?”

“And me,” Rey said. She struggled to uncover the memories of her life before Jakku, “They didn’t really like using pet names for some reason. But I think maybe Dad used to call Mom… Miss Rhiaon? I think? And sometimes she would call Dad… I don’t remember the name. She would call him our real surname, his surname. Then sometimes Mister in front of that? …No, not Mister, something close to that. I can’t remember right now.”

“I get it,” Teng nodded, “I can’t remember much from my younger years either.”

“Before Jakku?”

“I remember before Jakku. I only got here a few years ago when I was twelve.”

“Where were you before that?” Rey asked. “You once mentioned something about pirates?”

Teng laughed, “It’s a long story.”

“I’ve got time.”

“Maybe some other time.”

Rey huffed.

Teng couldn’t stop his smile.

“So what’s the story with the hair?” Teng ran his own hand through her hair. “Three buns is a little odd.”
Rey shrugged, “My mom did it like that, but I don’t know why. I keep it in memory of her so that she…”

Teng frowned, “So that she what?”

“Nothing.”

“Come on, Rey, you can tell me anything.”

“Not this. No one can know this… No one but Quom.”

He raised an eyebrow, “You really think Quom Tinadar is better at keeping secrets than me? The man- Er, the Vrogem can’t even hide his distain for me. Honestly I think he dreams of pushing me into a steelpecker colony.”

“He’s not trying to keep that a secret though. And besides,” Rey bumped her hip against his, “I’d never let him do it.”

Teng grinned, “So come on, what’s up?”

Rey bit her lip, “Okay, but you have to promise not to tell.”

“Cross my heart,” he made the motion over his chest.

She took a deep breath, “The reason I keep my hair like this, as well as my clothes is that… I think my mom’s alive.”

Teng raised an eyebrow. He didn’t trust himself with any bolder expression of the mass oh crap what do I do, be her friend, support her, talk her out of this, I regret asking questions, oh God, oh God, be cool Malar, be cool, oh God what do I do bubbling inside him.

“Oh,” he said.

Rey raised her own eyebrow back, “Oh?”

“What do you want me to say to that?”

She frowned, “That you believe me.”

“Rey, until about four months ago, I thought Aletha was your mother. Sure you don’t have blonde hair and blue eyes like Luke and Aletha but genetics are weird sometimes.”

“Aletha is not my mother!” Rey snapped. “My mother is Felicity Rhiaon! No other.”

“I know that. Geeze Rey, you don’t need to be so dramatic.”

“I think I’m entitled to being this mad.”

“How? You’re acting like you walked in on your father having sex with her.”

Rey looked at him.

Teng’s face went white, “Oh my God, did you-”

“They weren’t in the process but it was very clear what had happened.”

“Rey, I’m so sorry.”
“I just don’t understand how he could do this to Mom. I thought he loved her.”

Teng sighed, “Rey, I don’t know the circumstances of her alleged death, so I can’t say one way or another if she is or not, but do you really think she’s alive?”

“Her body was never found.”

“That’s not what I asked. Do you think she’s actually alive?”

“No, Rey,” Teng cut her off. “Answer the question. This whole Aletha thing, is it really because you honestly think your father is cheating on your mother?”

Rey was silent for a very long time.

“We should get back to work, Teng,” she shoved her water flask in his hands and got to her feet.

Teng sighed as he watched Rey collect her satchel and climb back on the ship. His movements were slow as he put away their flasks and got back to work.

There was definitely something more going on.

The only question was what?

“I can’t find her anywhere!” Aletha exclaimed as she raced up to Luke in the market.

“No one’s seen anything either,” Luke shook his head. “Oh, Aletha, we messed up, didn’t we?”

“I should have just sent you home last night,” Aletha sighed. “You know, I really thought we were about to make progress.”

“I’m just worried that this is going to lead Rey down a very dark path. Oh, Rey, where are you?”

The only reason Luke was staying so calm was that he didn’t sense Rey was in danger, and it wasn’t exactly the first time she had gone missing. Rey had the tendency to go join another scavenging group for the day whenever she got mad at Luke. As long as she showed up back in Niima by sundown, Luke wouldn’t panic. Sure, he gave her a harsh talking to when it happened, but he wasn’t going to start tearing the Galaxy apart to find her.


The pair turned, still clutching each other’s arms as they faced their friend.

“Quom?” Aletha asked.

“Guys,” he skidded to a stop. He was breathless and panicked, “I woke up and Rey was gone. I am so sorry.”

“It’s okay,” Luke raised his hand to shush his friend. “This is our fault.”

“Rey walked in on us this morning,” Aletha informed Quom.

Quom winced, “When you say walked in, what exactly-”

“We were post-coital, but it was clear what happened,” Luke answered. “Rey ran away and now we
can’t find her.”

“She’s not answering her comm either,” Aletha added.

Quom spat some Huttese swears and said, “Oh kriffing hell, this is bad. Really bad.”


“No, you don’t know.” Quom sighed, “Luke, there’s something I need to tell you about Rey…”

“So, what exactly do you want from Aletha?” Teng asked.

Rey looked up from the power convertors she had pulled from the ship, “What do you mean?”

“What do you want? What’s going to make this better?”

“I don’t know.”

“Think about it. Will scavenging her husband’s ship make things better? Will talking it out? Will breaking up with your father? What do you want, Rey?”

Rey sighed; what did she want? Well, she wanted Aletha to hurt. Yes, that’s what she wanted, she wanted to cause Aletha pain. The pain of betrayal, mental… emotional…

Physical.

She wanted to give Aletha physical pain. Rey wanted to slap her, to hit her, to punch her, to kick her. No she wanted more. To bite her? No, even more than that. She wanted blood, she wanted tears, she wanted the harlot to be so disfigured that Luke Erso never gave Aletha a second look. Yes, let her father be lost in memories of her mother’s beauty like her brown hair, and hazel eyes and… petite stature, and…

Well, it didn’t matter, just as long as Luke focused on Felicity. Just as long as Aletha felt pain, brutal, agonising pain. She wanted Aletha to suffer, to lose an arm or get stabbed, or even… even set on fire and burn.

Rey’s own thoughts scared her, but she allowed them to usher forward. Something inside of her fed on the pain and filled her with something terrifying yet seductive.

She imagined a million different injuries. Aletha electrocuted on wiring in the Graveyard or slitting open her throat on jagged metal in the dark. Inhaling dangerous gas that Quom always warned Rey about. Getting torn to shreds by steepleckers from an improper knocking, or Roke finally getting revenge and tearing her to shreds himself.

“Rey?” Teng called. “Can you pass me a Harris wrench?”

He was perched on the top right wing of the ship checking out the laser generator. The port wing laser cannons had both snapped off in the crash, but maybe there was something left to salvage from the wings.

“Standard Harris or powered?” Rey asked as she dug through her satchel.

“Standard if you’re not using it,” Teng answered knowing she only had the one standard. “I’ll grab
one of the powered if not.”

Rey shoved aside her two powered Harris wrenches and found the standard, “Coming right up.”

She stood on the main body of the ship, reaching out to him with the wrench. It wasn’t a good idea to have two people on these old wings as the rusted metal couldn’t bear the weight.

Rey was only half paying attention as Teng reached for the wrench. She didn’t look at him, rather eyeing the front of the ship and planning her attack to free the communications antenna. When Teng grabbed the tool, Rey moved off to start working on it as Teng carefully balanced the length of the wing.

“It’s trashed,” Teng declared after a few minutes.

“Pity,” Rey was pondering the different ways to hurt Aletha as she freed the antenna. Maybe Aletha would get lost in a sandstorm and die that way. Or wander in the desert and die of thirst. “The antenna needs a little repairing, but this’ll fetch a nice price.”

“That’s good. I think the wing in general is a lost cause.”

“Get underneath the ship and check out the repulsorlifts,” Rey suggested. Maybe Aletha could be poisoned? Would that work on a doctor? Aletha might catch the signs and know an antidote.

“Making my way down,” Teng carefully walked along the wing.

Plus her dad would know it was her. If she was going to hurt Aletha it would have to look like an accident. Some blunt force trauma, something crushing her. A piece of ship falling on her. But what could Rey loosen? The only thing she could take apart quickly enough would have to be a small, precarious appendage.

The Dark Side boiled in her blood, filling her with a strength and confidence she had never known. Even her father didn’t seem a threat to Rey in that moment.

Rey eyed the wing Teng was scaling, and smirked. Oh if only she could get Aletha underneath that wing. How she would love to make the wing snap off and crush Alet-

Teng screamed as the wing suddenly snapped off the ship.

Another big hazard is injuries. It’s dark inside the dead ships, and you can run into jagged metal that will slice you open or step on hull plating that’s turned brittle and is the only thing between you and a hundred-meter drop.

- Rey’s Survival Guide

“TENG!” Rey shrieked as he fell off the wing and hurtled towards the ground.

Something in her reached out for him, not physically but instinctively trying to grab him and cushion his fall. The Darkness seemed to flood out of her in an instant, a bright warmth forcing her body. Maybe it was just her imagination, but when Teng hit the ground – which he did before the wing, which physics told her wasn’t possible – it sounded less thuddy than it should have.
But that didn’t mean there wasn’t a thud. That didn’t mean there was a crash and a crunch as the wing fell on top of him. And that didn’t mean there wasn’t one of the most bone chilling screams Rey had ever heard.

“Teng!” Rey cried again as she scaled down the grappling line secured on the ship.

She raced towards Teng, who was moaning and crying in the wreckage, unable to move. The Light that had flooded in her body continued to pump through it as her thoughts were focused only on one thing: save Teng. She dropped to her knees and ripped off the wreckage that pinned him to the ground. There was pieces Rey sworn she shouldn’t have been able to move, but the Light inside of her seemed to give her the strength. It almost felt like it was lessening the load.

“Teng! Teng!” Rey exclaimed as she freed him.

He was bloody and in pain, unable to answer with more than a series of moans and tears.

“Oh God, no Teng,” Rey’s eyes pricked with tears as she observed her broken friend.

“Rey,” he croaked.

“It’s okay, Teng. I can fix you. I can fix this.”

She checked over Teng’s body, mentally cataloguing each wound. A cut here, a broken arm there, a shattered leg even. She did what she could with her meager medical kit, but it soon became clear that this was beyond her medical knowledge. Which only meant one thing.

“I think I need to take you to see Aletha.”

As Rey got Teng slowly to the speeder and helped lay him down across the backseat she could only think one thing:

I’m a twelve-year-old, about to drive a speeder to Niima Outpost, stolen from the most dangerous and terrifying person on Jakku. I’ll have to take a boy I injured – because deep down I know somehow I was responsible for the wing breaking even if I can’t explain it – on a site that not only am I not allowed to be at, but I went specifically to because it’s the X-Wing of my dad’s girlfriend’s dead husband, and I have to face the woman I just caught my dad having sex with.

Not gonna lie, a very small part of Rey kinda wished Teng would just die because it would be so much easier to just bury a body in the desert than face Aletha, Meru, and her father.

“Don’t forget our haul,” Teng groaned as he laid across the backseat. He too was partially hoping for death because it would be a lot less painful than having to deal with Meru.

Rey shook her head, “We should leave it and head out now. I don’t want things to get much worse.”

“It’s at least an hour drive to Niima, if things are going to worsen there’s nothing we can do to stop it. At least load up our haul so we can make this worth the consequences.”

“Teng, can we just go to one of the Sacred Villages, lie about our names, get you fixed, and then bribe our way onto a merchant ship and run away from Jakku?”

He paused to seriously think about it, “…Maybe.”

Soon enough Rey had the speeder loaded, and she climbed into the driver’s seat. Taking a deep breath, Rey mentally prepared herself to face the confrontation forthcoming.
“Let’s do this,” Rey whispered and slammed her foot down on the acceleration.

And as she drove carefully towards Niima Outpost, totally not ready to face her father or Meru’s wrath, she dug deep into long forgotten memories, trying to come up with a fake name to flee the planet with Teng. Somewhere in the back of her mind came a name that she didn’t know the origins of, but like the sound of.

Kira Dameron had a nice ring to it.

“My father is going to kill me,” Rey declared as Niima Outpost appeared as a dot on the horizon. “He’ll kill me and bury me next to my mother.”

“Hey now, I thought we were operating on the Mom’s not actually dead theory,” Teng teased.

Rey couldn’t help but smile, “You know, if you’re capable of making wisecracks, I’m not going to be too concerned that I permanently maimed you.”

“Then you owe me a nice nursing back to health. Knelt at my bedside and feeding me soup and everything.”

“You want to have soup on Jakku?”

“Fine, give me bread or something. Just as long as I get to wake from my sickly stupor to the vision of your lovely face.”

Rey blushed, “Lovely?”

“A scientific observation of things the neurons in my brain find aesthetically pleasing. You are only twelve, and I am no child lover.”

“Don’t worry, I still think boys are icky.”

“As long as we have it settled.”

Rey laughed, “So anyway, since I am about to die, maybe you could be a darling and tell me that long story you promised.”

“Darling?”

“It’s just the term of affection I associate women using for men. Now come on, the story, Moonshine.”

Teng sighed, “Anything for you, Starlight.”

He paused to think about how much he wanted to tell Rey.

“It’s sort of an odd story how I ended up here,” Teng confessed. “When my parents were young they sort of… got involved with a cult.”

Rey’s jaw dropped, “A cult?”

“It was the time of the Empire, and to a lot of people anything sounded better than Imperial life. Cults all over the Galaxy thrived with people just wanting to escape. My family was from Naboo, which
was basically Imperial Headquarters. They were seduced by a cult, left everything behind, and joined it. After the war was over, they started to realize the situation they were in, and when I was born they decided to escape. But cults aren’t an easy thing to escape, and Dad got killed. Mom managed to get us out with the help of someone on Naboo, and a gang of pirates got us away. The problem was that Mom didn’t trust the pirates, so she only gave them small pieces of our escape route giving them the next when we reached each destination. She wouldn’t tell me anything for fear the pirates would try to hurt me for the answer, so I only knew the name of the woman she knew back on Naboo.”

“So why are you here and not on Naboo?”

“The pirates got in a skirmish with the First Order on the way, and Mom was killed. The pirates didn’t know where to take me to get their reward – they had been paid only a third of the fee upfront – so they decided to keep me to work off their debt. I was ten when Mom died. When I was twelve, the pirates decided they didn’t want me anymore, so we landed on Jakku in one of the Sacred Villages.”

Rey cringed, “Which village?”

“Not Tuanul, unfortunately,” Teng answered.

In Niima some say the villagers are pacifists, but that’s not true. You could ask the bandits who raided the Sacred Villages – except they never came back. You’ll find their bones hanging in cages in Kelvin Ravine as warnings.

- Rey’s Survival Guide

“I wish it had been Tuanul,” Teng sighed. “I might have had a nicer life and not ended up with Meru.”

“What did happen?” Rey asked.

“One night, I went to sleep with the rest of the pirate crew. When I woke up, they were gone and the Village Leader claimed that I had been sold by the pirates to be his servant. It wasn’t as bad as living with the pirates, but I’m not exactly keen on going into details. Let’s just say that when the Village Leader sold me to Meru, I was very happy… until about a month of living with her.”

“You seem so happy for someone who has gone through so much horror.”

“I wasn’t happy for many years. Sad, alone, angry, always crying, always just wanting this to be the day I never woke up from sleep. I would wake up and think, maybe today’s the day I finally get to die. You never know when death is coming after all, and there’s no point in living when there’s nothing to live for… and then something happened that gave me a reason to be happy.”

“What was that?”

Teng smiled, though Rey couldn’t see it, “A ray of light walked into my life, and she’s been brightening my days ever since.”

Rey’s face turned bright red as she found herself at a complete and utter loss of how to respond.

“Teng, I-”

Teng shushed her, “It’s okay. I don’t need you to respond, I’m just so glad that I finally have someone special in my life. I’m blessed to have a friend like you.”
“I’ve got contacts in the Sacred Villages,” Quom said. “Maybe we should send a message to them to see if Rey tried to run away to one of them.”

“And I’ll talk with the ship merchants,” Aletha suggested. She frowned as she saw Luke staring into the crowds of the scavengers returning from their daily hauls, forlornly scanning the crowd for his daughter. Aletha gripped his arm and turned his head to look at her, “Hey, we’ll find her.”

“What happens when we do?” Luke sighed, “I just can’t believe she thinks Felicity is alive.”

“I think you need to sit her down and explain as much about Felicity’s death as possible to her.”

Quom and Luke exchanged a look.

“That… uh, might be difficult, Doc,” Quom said awkwardly. Other than Chewbacca, he was the only soul Luke had ever told about the full circumstances of Felicity’s death. “I don’t think Luke can really properly explain what happened so that there was no body. Not without a hell of a lot of context.”

Luke’s eyes suddenly lit up, “Meru!”

He dashed away from the group towards Meru who was emerging from Plutt’s negotiation building with Roke and Dirk.

“What is it, Erso?” Roke snarled.

Roke’s arms were covered in steelpecker scars, so Luke was able to recognize him behind the mask and voice modulator… Plus he was the only one who was constantly glaring at Aletha.

“Meru, have you seen Rey today?” Luke asked as Quom and Aletha caught up with the group.

“No,” Meru answered shortly, heaving a bag of rations over her shoulder.

“Is something wrong with Rey?” Dirk’s voice was worried. “Where is she?”

“I’m sure she’s fine, Dirk,” Aletha assured him. “Please, Meru, was she maybe with Teng today?”

“I left the boy alone when they picked me up today. Now if you’ll excuse me, I should be getting back.”

Luke, Aletha, and Quom pursued Meru with continued questions as Roke and Dirk led her through
the market. Meru had nearly gotten into Roke’s speeder, when suddenly, Ivano Troade’s voice rang out.

“Doctor!”

Everyone turned to see Ivano cradling a very bloody arm.

“Ivano, what happened?” Aletha exclaimed, rushing to his side to tend to his arm.

“Hey, Doctor, I don’t mean to interrupt,” Ivano let her deal with his arm. “I sliced my arm open good on a-”

His eyes fell on Meru and Luke, and he stopped.

“What are you doing here?”

Meru and Luke exchanged a look.


“I thought you two were doing your business at Meru’s tent,” Ivano answered.


Luke shrugged, “I didn’t have any business with you.”

“Weird, but makes sense,” Ivano said as Aletha started wrapping up his arm with supplies from the medical satchel always over her shoulder. “I did think sending your daughter to deal with Meru was a little odd.”

“My daughter?”

“Yeah, Rey. She said you and Tinadar forgot her here and needed a ride to Meru’s to deal with business for you.”


“Yeah,” Ivano frowned. “I dropped her off at Meru’s a few hours ago.”

Luke whipped around to face Meru, “Do you have any way to contact Teng?”

“Of course, she ran off to spend time with the boy,” Quom rolled his eyes. “I swear, if he lays one hand on her, I’m pitching him into a steelpecker colony.”

Roke cracked his knuckles, “Did I just hear a joke about steelpecker mauling?”

Quom raised an eyebrow, “What makes you think I’m joking?”

“I’m comm him,” Meru pulled back her sleeve to get at her wrist comm. “He knows that girl isn’t allowed to be alone with him. She’s a troublemaker that one.”

Luke opened his mouth to object, but he caught the look on Aletha’s face, and he shut his mouth. Considering the trouble Rey had made today, the label wasn’t exactly incorrect.

“The boy’s not answering,” Meru declared after a few minutes of attempts. It had been long enough for Aletha to finish patching up Ivano, and long enough for a pronounced vein to start throbbing in
Meru’s forehead. “The boy isn’t there.”

“Are you sure?” Quom asked.

“The boy knows to pick up if I call, and I’m betting the girl would too. I’m telling you, Rey and Teng are not there.”

The group shared nervous looks – except Roke, who didn’t give a damn and was just waiting to give Meru a ride home.

“If Rey isn’t at Meru’s,” Aletha looked at Luke.

“Then where is she?” he finished.

That was the moment Rey pulled up in the marketplace.

“REY!” half a dozen voices exclaimed.

Rey was rather indifferent to the horde of people who ran up to her. She merely unloaded her haul from the speeder and marched directly up to the concession stand window of Unkar Plutt. There was a queue formed, but Roke was rather entertained by the sight of Rey Erso pissing off so many people – especially Aletha Kymeri over the past few months – so he blocked the other scavengers from intervening and let her go straight up to the window, ready to watch the drama unfold.

“Rey, where have you been?” Luke demanded.

“Scavenging,” Rey hauled her pieces up with a thud.

“Well, My Girl,” Plutt grinned lecherously, also pleased with seeing Luke Skywalker so mad, “what do you have for me today? I’m feeling quite generous in my portions today if only to make your dad mad.”


Rey glared at her father and announced her haul, “Communications antenna from an X-Wing, electromagnetic gyros from an X-Wing, targeting computer from an X-Wing, reactant injector-dorsal. Sorry it’s cracked, but it’s not worth repairing. Oh, and it’s from an X-Wing.”

On and on, Rey listed each item, emphasizing at the end that each piece had come from an X-Wing. At first Luke’s eyes went wide as he realized that every piece had been from an X-Wing but soon that shock turned to anger. His jaw locked as he glared down in silence at his daughter, fighting to suppress the Dark Side raging inside of him.

To his left, he heard a faint growl.

“Quom, please leave the area,” Luke muttered. “I can’t guarantee things aren’t about to get… dramatic.”

“Sure, Luke,” Quom understood the meaning. He looked over at Meru, “Hey, isn’t that your speeder Rey drove in?”

Meru glared, “It is. Tell me girl, why do you have my speeder?”

“I had Teng borrow it from you to get me to my scavenging site,” Rey answered.

“And what site was that, Rey?” Luke gritted his teeth.
She met his eyes, “An X-Wing.”

“What X-Wing?”

Rey grinned and turned back to Plutt, “What’s my total haul today?”

Plutt slid over a moderate pile of packets, “37 portions. Congratulations, that’s the largest profit anyone’s made in a while.”

Rey began sliding the portions from the counter into her bag, when Luke’s hand stopped her arm.

“Rey,” he said slowly, trying to temper his rage, “what X-Wing did you scavenge?”

She looked him right in the eyes, “Yellow-4.”

Luke tried his hardest not to react, instead copying Rey’s actions as she turned to look at Aletha. Aletha had winced and was trying to suppress her own emotions while Rey observed her, but it didn’t take a Force Sensitive to sense her pain.

With a single movement, Luke shoved all the portions in Rey’s bag and said, “We are going home right now.”

He grabbed her arm and started marching her to his speeder when Meru called out.

“Wait a minute, I’m not done with you,” Meru shouted.

Luke and Rey came to a stop.

“Meru, I apologize that Rey stole your speeder,” Luke said calmly. “I will replace the used gas.”

“You better, but that’s not what I meant.”

Luke frowned, “What did you mean?”

Meru narrowed her eyes at Rey, “If you had Teng steal my speeder… where is Teng?”

“Rey?” Teng groaned from the backseat of Meru’s speeder where he was lying out of sight. “Have you finished dramatically making a point to your father yet? I really need medical help.”

“Oh my goodness!” Aletha exclaimed as she, Dirk, Meru, and Quom raced to the speeder. “What happened?”

“The wing of the X-Wing fell on me,” Teng groaned as Dirk lifted him out of the seat. “Please tell me this’ll be another freebie, Doctor Kymeri. I don’t think I can afford this medical bill.”

“Neither can I,” Meru glared at Teng. “Shattered bones, bloody cuts, probably some raptured organs. Are you kidding me with this bill?”

“We’ll talk about payment later,” Aletha snapped. “Dirk, help me get him to my tent.”

“Yes, Doctor,” Dirk nodded, and they raced towards Aletha’s tent.

Rey watched them go, trying to mask her concern, “Do you think… Will Teng be okay, Dad?”

“I’m sure he’ll be fine.” Luke looked down at her, “You on the other hand is still up for debate.”

Rey swallowed.

Rey obediently marched to her doom.

“Well, that was fun.” Roke looked to Meru, “You still need a ride now that your speeder’s here?”

“I’ll be fine. Same time next week?”

“Same time next week.”

Roke marched off and after an awkward beat of silence, Ivano finally went to join the line to the concession stand. It was just Meru and Quom left.

“I can’t believe that boy,” Meru shook her head. “I warned him. I swear I told him what would happen if he pulled another stunt, and now look at what’s happened. Well, I am a woman who follows through on her threats, mark my words.”

Quom sighed, “I’ll mark them alright.”

The only time Rey had ever seen her father this angry was during the Jarex incident. Luke did not say one word to her the entire drive home. It wasn’t until they had parked next to the walker than he sternly ordered her to get out and get in the walker.

He immediately set to work. Grabbing a large bag, he started gathering everything Rey used as a form of entertainment. Her dolls, her drawing equipment – he took her satchel right off her shoulder – schematics, Dosmit Raeh’s helmet, her datapad and the assorted chips of language programs, recipes, and even the flight simulator. The only thing Luke left were her plants, and that was only because he didn’t want to kill them.

Rey followed her father silently as he gathered up her possessions, throwing them somewhat carelessly into the bag. When they were all collected, he brought them outside, and locked them in the trunk of his speeder.

Luke slammed the trunk shut loudly and dramatically. Rey gulped as he fixed her with a deathly glare.

“Rey Rhiaon Erso,” Luke said slowly, “you are in the biggest trouble of your life.”

“Bigger than the time the First Order tried to kill me?” Rey grinned, trying to lighten the mood with humour.

The look on Luke’s face told her it wasn’t the time for jokes.

“Sorry,” she muttered.

“Sorry for what?” Luke snapped. “For the joke? For injuring Teng? For lying to Ivano? For running off on your own without permission? For terrifying Quom when he woke up with you gone this morning? For hurting Aletha? For scavenging a dangerous site without supervision? For scavenging Antar’s ship? Please tell me what you’re sorry for because you Rey Erso have messed up big time.”

Rey lowered her head.

But Rey said nothing. Instead she stood there trying to contain the tears gathering in her eyes, resolutely refusing to look up at her father. She couldn’t bear the pain and anger in his expression that she had caused him. Rey and Luke had had their disagreements before, but she had never disappointed him like this.

“Fine, don’t speak,” Luke turned away from her. “But you will listen to me.”

He too couldn’t bear to see that expression on Rey’s face, but he couldn’t back down. She had intentionally disobeyed him. She had outright betrayed Aletha, and daughter of Luke Skywalker and Rogue One or not, he would not stand for such a display of rebellion.

“You will be receiving a massive punishment for this, Rey,” Luke warned. “If I could leave you on your own, you would be grounded, but this little incident displays to me that you are not mature enough for the responsibility to be left on your own. For the next two weeks you will never be unsupervised. I will always be in your company, and if I have to stand a foot away while you go to the washroom, I will.”

“What’s a washroom?” Rey interrupted, her voice sounding a mix of genuine curiosity and bitter snark.

Luke’s eyes narrowed as he decided to dub her words mockery, “During those two weeks you will not have access to any of the items I have confiscated. You will also not be permitted to scavenge, drive, cook, barter, or fix anything in the shop.”

“But Dad-”

“But nothing,” Luke snapped. “I don’t have a lot of privileges to revoke from you, so an incident of this magnitude means I have to do this.”

“What am I supposed to do? Sit still for two weeks and watch you scavenge, tinker, and cook?”

“Perhaps this will teach you the importance of obedience. Aletha issue aside, you put yourself in a dangerous situation today and injured Teng in the process.”

“I didn’t break the wing!” Rey exclaimed. “It was an accident!”

Luke raised an eyebrow, struggling to bite back any Force related comments, “I’m sure it was, but the fact remains that an accident occurred because of your disobedience.”

“So I have to undergo psychological torture?”

Luke fought the urge to roll his eyes. Uncle Owen was right, teenagers were so dramatic. He could only imagine the stuff he had put Owen through at Rey’s age.

“You may earn privileges back with good behaviour,” Luke said. “And you won’t be disallowed from doing anything.”

“You’re right, there’s plenty to do with everything taken away from me,” Rey snarked. “I might take up meditation.”

“You honestly should,” Luke advised. “You’re going to need in the years to come. Might as well start practising.”

Rey openly rolled her eyes at him.

She scoffed, “Young Lady? Yeah right, you don’t treat me like an adult.”

“Because you are not an adult. You’re not even a teenager. You are a child. My child, and I get to make the calls right now. You have to earn the privilege of me treating you more maturely by acting more maturely. Today you acted immaturity, hence the punishment.”

Rey crossed her arms and looked away from him. Luke took her silence as a moment to take a deep breath and collect himself. It was honestly a little bit funny that she was getting pushed closer to the Dark Side by his twelve-year-old daughter’s antics than the combined effort of Vader and Palpatine.

And he thought dealing with her temper tantrums at three was difficult… Then again he had also had Felicity, Poe, and Ben’s help dealing with those. Here he was on his own.

“You have no one to blame for this but yourself, Rey,” Luke said. “However, I am a decent person, so I will give you the opportunity to make this all go away.”

Rey frowned and turned back to look at him, “What? How?”

“By having an honest conversation. Let’s just put it all out in the open and talk about this. Can you agree to that?”

Her face paled, “Talk? Talk about what?”

Luke raised an eyebrow, “Well, I’m sure there’s something for us to discuss. Maybe not explicitly Aletha related, but related.”

Rey focused on biting her lip to stop her jaw from dropping. Quom had told Luke her secret. He was so mad, but she would yell at Quom later. Right now, she couldn’t bear to give her father the satisfaction of this conversation.

“Nope, nothing to talk about,” she lied.

Luke scowled, “Really?”

“Really.”

“You’re sure there’s nothing to discuss? Nothing at all?”

“Well, we could yell at each other about Aletha some more if you wanted, but I don’t think that’s going to get us anywhere.”

“Indeed.”

Father and daughter stared at each other with arms crossed in a battle of who was going to break.

“Well,” Rey finally declared, “if there’s nothing to talk about, I’m going to head inside and make some dinner… Unless I’m not allowed to do that?”


Rey nodded and with maybe a little too much skip in her step, pranced inside.

The second she was gone, Luke groaned loudly, dropping his head into his hands.
“Relax, Luke,” something warm tapped his shoulder. Luke looked up to find Anakin Skywalker’s ghostly visage patting him. “Don’t let the stress get to you too much. She is a child after all.”

“A stubborn child,” Luke muttered, ensuring to keep his voice low enough that Rey wouldn’t overhear and start asking questions.

“That’s what you get for having a child that is half Rhiaon,” Anakin replied. “Alaric Rhiaon may have been a disposable underling that was an Empire fanatic and a pushover when it came to convincing him that what he’s doing is for the good of the Empire, but he was a stubborn man when it came down to it. The whole exhaust port flaw was from him swearing up and down that Drayson had done the calculations right and was trustworthy. Of course, that proved to be his literal downfall as Drayson was a spy, and I got ripped into by the Emperor for that.”

Luke couldn’t help but laugh.

“What?” Anakin asked. “You find the Emperor getting mad at me so humorous?”

“No. Just memories,” Luke shook his head. “I remember Nakari telling me that the Emperor did that to you.”

“Nakari?”

“My first girlfriend. It was a conversation that also included me awkwardly discussing my romantic feelings for Leia and how out of my league she was… and also whether or not you had ever eaten cake.”

“Excuse me?”

“No, I’m serious, this was an actual conversation I had with her. Cake equals happiness,” Luke confessed. “…You have had cake, right?”

Anakin stared at his son for a long moment, “Yes, Luke. I have eaten cake.”


“So…” Anakin eyed his son, “why did that memory make you chuckle like that? Is the concept of me having cake that funny?”

Luke bit his lip and cleared his throat, “It’s not something you probably want to hear as my father. Let’s just say that what happened after the conversation was quite memorable.”

“So, cake was your lead in line to-”

“Don’t judge me. I was a nineteen-year-old virgin. Anything would get me going.”

“Hey, no judgement on my part. I was that age when I first-”

“As much as I love hearing about Mother, I feel like I should skip this story.”

Anakin shrugged, “Well, if it makes you feel better, the first time we kissed was proceeded with a rant involving my hatred of sand.”

“I was destined to live a minimum of 75% of my life in the desert, wasn’t I?”

“Sorry, Son. And hey, you once flirted with Felicity over the topic of sand… I was so proud of you.”
Luke sighed, “So, what are you doing here?”

“Can’t I drop in on my son occasionally?” Anakin asked.

“Usually not without motive.”

Anakin shook his head, “Fine… I think you’re going a little hard on Rey.”

“Excuse me?”

“This is being far more dramatic than it needs to be. Just call things off with Aletha, and it will be a lot less heartache all around.”

Luke fixed his father with a glare, “Thank you for the advice, but I think I’ll pass.”

“Son-”

“No!” Luke snapped. He held up his prosthetic, “You think I’m going to take parenting advice from the man who did this to his son?”

“You act as if Jedi cutting off arms doesn’t happen on a regular basis.”

“Father!”

“Sorry,” Anakin held up his hands in defense. “You know you sound just like your mother when you use that tone?”

“The mother you strangled which is why I’m also not taking relationship advice from you?”

“Oh great, what next? Are you going to bring up the slaughter of the Tusken Raiders too?”


“Fine!” Anakin huffed. “I’ll go visit her instead. I may annoy the hell out of her, but at least she doesn’t tell me to go away!”

And with that, Anakin was gone.

Luke sighed and wished mercy on Leia, Padmé, Ahsoka, or whichever poor soul in the world of the living or the dead he had just unleashed a sullen Anakin Skywalker on.

That night, neither Luke nor Rey could fall easily to sleep. They tossed and turned in the pitch black of night, staring up at the ceiling, a thousand unspoken words racing through their minds.

It was Rey who broke the silence.

“I’m sorry, Daddy,” Rey’s quiet voice sounded so loud in the stillness of the tension and the silence.

He sighed in his cot. His back was turned to her as he considered her words, her actions, and the sadness of her tone. Luke wanted nothing more than to take her into his arms and forgive her for everything… but he couldn’t.

Luke rolled over to face Rey in her hammock, “Don’t tell me sorry until you actually are.”
He turned his back to her and let himself fall asleep.

Rey curled up in her hammock, clutching the blanket her mother made so many years ago, wishing she could hug the doll of her mother that had been taken away. With tears in her eyes and Teng’s words ringing in her head, Rey tried to fall asleep.

But all she could think of was Teng right? Did she truly believe that her mother was alive? Rey touched her hair buns and sobbed.

Her heart knew the truth.

It was two of the longest weeks of Rey’s life. Boredom dragged on as she followed her father around in silence everyday. She actually took up her father on the suggestion to meditate, which Luke helpfully offered tips and corrections to her techniques. Sometimes she swore she could see things, far away things or long forgotten things. She dared not admit it to her father. It was bad enough he thought her insubordinate, she didn’t need him to think her crazy too.

Because she was saddled with her father, her encounters with Aletha were increased to her chagrin. Aletha tried her best to mend bridges with Rey, but Rey continued to give her the cold shoulder.

The only time Rey deigned to acknowledge Aletha was when she brought updates on Teng’s health. He luckily was going to pull through, though the healing was slow-going. Meru was of course, furious with Teng and Rey, so Rey had been temporarily banned from Old Meru’s. Luke wasn’t exactly bringing her there in the first place; that was more her thing with Quom.

Unfortunately, the Quom situation had become a whole other issue.

After two weeks, Luke did as promised and returned her items. Rey was back to tinkering and drawing to her relief.

It was bittersweet though. She used to eagerly show him her drawings, which he would praise to the high heavens. When she fixed stuff, Luke would beam with pride and teach her new techniques to better herself. Tinkering was their true source of bonding; tinkering and having long, honest talks about life, love, and as much of their past that Luke could answer. Rey loved those late-night talks as they laid in bed, trying to fall asleep as they discussed the wonders of the universe.

Nowadays, they barely spoke a word.

“You’re staying the night with Quom.”

Rey looked up from the broken shifter she had been working on in the corner of Quom’s tent.

“I’m sorry?” she frowned.

Luke was packing up his bag. Once again, Quom was nowhere to be found, but he knew the Vrogem would be returning soon. They had agreed upon it via the comm earlier that morning.

“You’re staying the night with Quom,” he repeated, refusing to look up at Rey.

“Why?”
“Because I’m spending the night with Aletha.”

Rey winced.

Luke saw it out of the corner of his eye and sighed, “I made a mistake in hiding this all, so I’ve decided to be open. You don’t need to know what I’m doing with her-”

“I’m pretty sure I can guess,” Rey grimaced.

“The point is that I’m not going to hide this anymore. I love your mother, but I’m with Aletha now. If you don’t like it, tough.”

Rey scowled, “You used to be nicer to me.”

“I’m your parent, not your friend,” Luke quoted the phrase Uncle Owen had used on him so many times.

Honestly, the older Rey got, the more Luke understood why his uncle was the way he was. The thought was terrifying. Next thing Luke knew, he would be yelling at Rey for stealing a speeder with her best friend and driving it out in the middle of the desert to a dangerous and forbidden area.

… Wait a minute.

“I’m not staying with Quom tonight,” Rey crossed her arms. “I’m staying with you.”

Luke raised an eyebrow, “Well Rey, I’m spending the night with Aletha, and we’re going to do things that I’m pretty sure I would get arrested even on Jakku if we did them in front of you. So, no; you are not staying with me tonight.”

Rey pulled a face, “Ew, Dad! I don’t want to hear that!”

“You want me to treat you like an adult, then I’ll talk to you like one.”

“I don’t want to picture that! It’s bad enough I already have the image of you and Aletha…” Rey shuddered. “Can we just pretend that’s a thing you don’t do, haven’t done, and never will do?”

Luke raised an eyebrow, “I have explained to you the biological process that led to your existence, right?”

“I will actually pay you not to draw the diagrams again.”

“Are you still mad that I used a Death Star analogy and quote ‘ruined the Battle of Yavin’ for you?”

“If I agree to stay with Quom tonight will you stop talking about this?”

“Deal,” Luke agreed. “You know, I think you’ll be happy spending the night with Quom. It’s been a while since any of us got to spend time with him.”

It was true; Quom appeared to have washed his furry hands of the whole Luke/Rey/Aletha situation. For the past three and a half weeks he had gotten up at sunrise to go scavenge on his own and came back at sunset to trade for portions after Luke and Rey had left town for the night. Seemingly overnight he would work on repairing his pieces, focusing on making as high a profit as possible.

True, Luke, Aletha, and Rey did see Quom from time to time, but it was clear he wasn’t interested in being around anymore. Not until the three of them had cleared up their situation and Quom wasn’t at risk of being affected by the Dark Side anymore.
“But we do need to have these conversations, Rey,” Luke said. “You’re on the cusp of puberty and I would like you to have some general idea of what’s going on with you.”

“If I wake up bleeding profusely, you will be the first one to know, Dad,” Rey replied dryly.

Luke looked at her seriously, “Rey, I am open to answering any questions you may have, but please, if you think there’s something serious, or I don’t have an answer to, or you just don’t feel comfortable asking me… I want you to go to Aletha.”

“Absolutely not.”

“Rey-”

“She’s not my mother!”

“I’m not telling you to do it because she’s your mother. I’m saying it because she’s a woman and she’s a doctor. She’s far more knowledgeable about this than me. For goodness sake’s, I would never say she’s your mother.”

“Could have fooled me,” Rey muttered.

Luke’s eyes narrowed, “Do you actually think that?”

Rey winced, “Sorry Dad, I didn’t mean-”

“No, look at me,” Luke ordered. “Do you honestly think I could forget your mother?”

She turned away, “I dunno… Maybe?”

“How could you think that’s possible?”

“It is though, possible to forget her.”

“No, it’s not.” Luke sighed and rubbed his forehead, “Look, Rey, let’s just say it, I know that you think your mother is alive.”

“Last time I trust Quom with a secret,” Rey muttered, remembering the shouting match she had gotten into with him the day after Teng’s accident.

“Rey, I’m sorry if I have done anything to encourage this delusion… but your mother’s dead. I truly wish she wasn’t, but there is no denying that fact.”

“Then where’s her body?” Rey snapped.


“Yes, it does! You want me to believe you? Then tell me what happened!”

“No! You are too young to know. Not now… maybe not ever.”

“I have a right to know!”

“This isn’t up for discussion, Rey,” Luke said coldly.

“It’s never up for discussion!” she screamed. “Why won’t you ever talk about it? Where we’re from? Why we came here? Why did she leave me behind? Why did you?”
Luke took a step backwards, “Excuse me?”

Tears were blurring Rey’s vision. Her head ached but she could have sworn she saw something odd in the distance. Rain and trees? No, it wasn’t possible.

“Aletha told me that you thought I was dead when you came here,” Rey said. “Why weren’t you with us when Mom left? What were we running from?”

“Rey, I promise you will get answers when it’s the right time.”

“I’m sick of waiting for the right time! Why can’t I know now?”

“Because I’m not ready!” Luke yelled.

Silence filled the tent at Luke’s confession. Rey started at her father with heartbreak and confusion.

“You’re going to be ashamed of me, Rey,” Luke let his tears fall. “I was a coward.”

“What do you mean?” Rey whispered.

Luke dropped his forehead into his hand, “We have a family, Rey. A family I left behind.”

She didn’t know what to say.

“We have family, friends, a home… to a degree. When the First Order came for us, they burned down our home in an attempt to kill your mother and to slight me… but they wanted to take you for themselves.”

“Why?”

“I can’t tell you,” Luke answered. “But they would have used you against me, and turned you into a mindless weapon. Your mother and I wouldn’t let that happen, so I told your mother to take you and run while I held them off. That’s why we got separated, and that’s why your mother died. They found her and they took her. She told them you were dead, and they passed the same information on to me. Then they killed her, and I lost it. I broke down, and in a panic, I walked away from everything. No one knows we’re here, and I only found you by accident.”

“By accident?”

“I came to bury you, Rey… Not to save you.”

She looked away so he couldn’t see the tears in her eyes.

“Your mother made the ultimate sacrifice, the one we always promised we would never make, but prayed to the Force that we would never need to. Your mother died for you, for us. So we could live and love and be happy… But I could never be happy, not fully. Not without her. I love Aletha, it’s true, but your mother…”

Luke covered his face with both hands and sobbed.

“How could I forget her, Rey?” Luke broke down. Eyes squeezed shut, he lost himself to memories of Felicity Rhiaon, “How could I ever forget Felicity? The way she laughed? The way she smiled? The tone of voice, the sass of her snark? How could I forget that look on her face when her eyes sparked playfully and the right corner of her mouth turned up slightly in a smirk? How could I forget that soft brown hair, those large hazel eyes, that smooth pale skin? How could I forget that petite stature, how when she stood close in my embrace my chin rested atop her head? How her hands fit
Rey winced. “The way she held you as a babe? Those lullabies she sang? Those toys she sewed for you? How could I forgot that smile she reserved solely for you filled with a love warmer and deeper than even the one she held for me? How could I forget the way she loved me? Felicity Rhiaon was the most amazing woman I could have ever loved. I remember every detail about her… only a monster could forget her.”

He let himself cry for a few minutes. While he struggled to gather himself, not a peep came from his daughter. Rey’s strength in the face of such sorrow was amazing, and it gave Luke the strength to pull himself together for her sake. Luke took a deep breath, lowered his hands, and opened his eyes.

Rey was gone.

He knew not to follow.

Rey didn’t know how she knew where to drive. She just hit the gas and followed the pull inside of her that led her to the random patch of sand in the middle of the desert where Quom was working. It was something in her soul that gravitated to the dim, rusty grey light that seemed to inhabit the air where Quom stood.

He frowned at her, “Rey?”

No other words needed to be said. Rey just launched herself into his arms, and Quom held her as she cried.

A while later Rey and Quom were seated in the middle of the wreck of an upturned B-Wing. They shared a cannister of water as Rey’s sorrow began to cease. There was always something oddly comforting about cannisters of water to Rey. They always made her feel brave… or at least half brave.

“You can’t keep doing this, Rey,” Quom said.

Rey was curled up in herself, hugging her knees as she sipped from the cannister, “I just can’t stand the thought of the two of them together.”

Quom frowned, “No, I mean stealing speeders. MG, you are twelve years old. You really shouldn’t be driving a lot in general, much less committing grand theft auto.”

She sighed, “I’ve made a mess of things, haven’t I?”

“Eh,” he shrugged. “You’re a kid; it’s all part of the growing up process. I highly doubt those two didn’t make dumb decisions like that. They ended up on Jakku, after all.”
“And willingly made you their friend.”

Quom gave a throaty laugh and smiled. Rey grinned at the sound; she had missed the sound of his laughter so much. It had been so long since they had had a genuine moment of humor. Rey bit her lip at the thought. Her guilt getting the better of her, she looked down at the ground in shame.

“So…” Quom watched her, “tell me the truth… are you really upset at Aletha for dating your father?”

“No, I’m not mad at her,” Rey admitted.

“Then what’s going on? Why is this whole situation so hard for you?”

“It’s nothing.”

“You’re fighting with your father, stopped talking to Aletha almost five months ago, and Teng got badly injured. I may not like the kid, but I wouldn’t wish on him what happened. That’s not nothing, Rey. So tell me what’s going on.”

Rey buried her face in her legs, trying to shield her tears from Quom. She gripped the water cannister tightly to draw strength from it, but it wasn’t enough.

“Hey,” he placed a arm around her shoulders and pulled her to lean against him in a hug. “Come on, MG. Tell me what’s going on.”

“I can’t tell you.”

“You can tell me anything.”

“Not this.” Rey quietly sobbed into her legs, “I’m so ashamed.”

“MG, there is nothing you could ever say or do that would make me stop loving and supporting you. You could kill Ivano Troade with a shovel and I’d still stand behind you… You’re my kit, Rey. I may not be your father, but you are my litter of one, and you are more than enough trouble and heartache to last a dozen Vrogem pups. So please, tell me what’s going on.”

It was his proclamation that she was his kit that did it for Rey. The next thing she knew, she had broken down and sobbed out the whole sordid story, much like how her father had confessed his Jedi past to Quom several years earlier.

It wasn’t hard to understand why those words had triggered the confession. At the conclusion of the story he pulled her into his tight embrace and held her as she cried.

“It’s okay, MG,” he whispered into her ear as she buried herself in his warm, comforting fur. It had been so long since that day he had almost left her to die, and he would never let something like that hurt her again. “It’s okay, MG, I’ve got you.”

“I’m so sorry, Quom,” Rey wailed. “I’m so sorry.”

“It’s not your fault at all, so don’t you dare blame yourself.”

“I just don’t know how to fix things.”

Quom sighed and reluctantly pulled away. He wiped the tears from her reddened cheeks as her breath hitched with sobs. Quom placed his hands on her shoulders and looked Rey directly in her blurry, tear-filled eyes.
“Yes, you do,” Quom whispered. “…It’s time to tell your father the truth.”

Rey sniffed, “But I’m scared. What if he-”

“The man cut off Jarex’s arm to protect you… Don’t you dare think for a second that he’s going to respond with anything but the same tears, hugs, and words of comfort. This is about more than Luke and Aletha, and he needs to know that.”

Rey closed her eyes and took a deep, pained breath, “Do I have to tell him right now?”

Quom smiled and rubbed her shoulder, “Take a few a days if you need to, MG, but things aren’t going to get better until you talk to him. So promise me you’ll talk to him as soon as possible.”

“I promise,” Rey nodded. Then after a moment, she gave a small smile, “Hey, at least there’s nothing else that could go wrong from all of this, right?”

Quom laughed, “Oh Rey, My Girl… You’ve just doomed us all.”

There is no such thing as the *sound* of an awkward silence, but there certainly is a weight to it. And that night on Jakku, Luke and Aletha felt it bear down on them with the full force of a Death Star.

They stared up at the ceiling of Aletha’s tent unable to think of what to say to break the frigid cold ice clinging to the room. The cots were pushed together and they lay bare upon them, covered only by a thin blanket.

“So…” Aletha said.


“Don’t worry, it happens to all guys sooner or later. Especially when they get older and are under a lot of stress. If you think it’s going to be a problem, I know a pill-”


“I’m sure it was,” Aletha smiled and turned on her side to face him. She lazily brushed her fingers in random patterns across his chest, “So, what happened?”

Luke sighed and played with her hair, “I just… I started thinking about things I shouldn’t.”

“What kind of things?”

His eyes said it all.

“Oh,” Aletha rolled away from him.

“I promised that I would never make love to you while thinking of Felicity,” Luke said. “I had to stop myself when she came to mind.”

“Why did she come to mind? Was I doing something-”

“No, it’s Rey. We had a huge fight today and she accused me of forgetting Felicity. My mind has been fighting against the accusation all day, so it slipped into my mind, and… Like I said, I promised not to make love to you while thinking of her, so when my mind went to her I stopped things.”
“You stopped things because of that? Because if you asked me it certainly felt like you were just… unable to maintain interest.”

Luke looked at Aletha, “I’m not particularly turned on by making love to one woman while thinking of another.”

Sienna Ternan notwithstanding, but that was a whole other thing altogether.

“Well, I’m not going to get mad at you for stopping things because of that,” Aletha sighed. “I just wish I was enough for you.”

Luke frowned, “You are more than enough for me.”

“Luke, please don’t do this, don’t be another Antar. I know you love me, but I also know that if she was standing here in front of you alive and you had pick between the two of us, there may be a little hesitation, but you would pick her.”

He sighed, “Alright, if you want me to say it, I will. If you both were alive and available, and I was asked to pick one over the other… yes, I would pick Felicity.”

Aletha winced.

Luke cupped her cheek and forced her to face him, “But what a choice to make. I am truly blessed to have found such amazing women to share my love with. In different ways from Felicity, you are everything I have ever looked for. I used to tease Felicity that I could have never brought her home to my Aunt and Uncle, but you I would in a heartbeat. You’re kind, gentle, intelligent, but still have a little steel beneath you. You are gorgeous in that sort of fair skinned maiden almost princess out of a storybook way. If Felicity was my opposite, you are my mirror image, and I am so happy I get to share the rest of my life with you.”

Aletha blinked, “The rest of your life?”

Luke realized the error of his words, “It’s not a proposal.”

“Of course,” she nodded. “But if it were… It wouldn’t exactly be a yes but… I am open to the possibility.”

Luke blinked, “You are?”

“Uh huh. Are you?”

He smiled, “Yes, I’m open to the possibility.”

They shared a grin.

“Let’s not commit to anything now,” Luke said, “but it’s nice to know where we want things you head.”

“Potentially,” Aletha corrected. “But yes, if I find that kind of love again, the love I had with Antar, I’m open to marrying again.”

“And I’m open to remarriage after Felicity.”

“Even if I’m just your second best?”

“You are no just anything. You are the woman I love, Aletha Kymeri, not a consolation prize. And I
promise you this, no matter what happens, no matter what issues the First Order or my past may cause us, the heart of the man I was belonged to Felicity Rhiaon… but the heart of the man who calls himself Luke Erso will always be yours.”

Aletha pulled him into a kiss.

“I love you,” she whispered when they broke apart.

“I love you too,” Luke chuckled. His hands started to playfully drift down her body, “Now, I believe I owe you an orgasm.”

“I believe you do,” Aletha giggled as Luke pulled down the blanket and shifted his body over hers.

Aletha moaned as Luke kissed and licked along her neck while his mechanical hand gripped her hip and the other stroked sensually up her thigh. He grinned as he found a streak of her natural wetness still on her thigh from when her body had gotten itself ready for his penetration. The thought made him a little hard again, and Luke vaguely wondered if he’d have to get himself another condom.

His lips trailed down her neck, beneath her collarbone, between her breasts, and then circled back to lavish their attention on her nipples.

Aletha’s breasts were more well endowed than Felicity, and her nipples were larger too. In fact, Luke found the women’s bodies to be quite different – Felicity had larger hips, Aletha’s legs were longer, Felicity was more muscular and flexible than Aletha, but Aletha could last longer. Even their techniques and likes were very different: Felicity could handle multiple orgasms easier, Aletha understood male anatomy and erogenous zones a lot better, Felicity enjoyed getting on her knees and giving Luke oral sex, Aletha easily got off from fingering, Felicity liked to be on the bottom, and Aletha liked to be on the top. There were similarities between them though: both liked a little spanking, both were down for him giving them oral sex pretty much literally at any time – the man truly was talented in cunnilingus – both cried out his name as they orgasmed.

It was different enough that Luke didn’t often have to worry about his mind drifting to Felicity during sex, but familiar enough that Luke was able to let loose and bask in the ecstasy of sexual pleasure.

Luke lavished his attention on Aletha’s breasts, making her moan and coo in a way that was absolutely preparing himself to give the act of intercourse another go. Between her thighs, Luke’s fingertips swirled in the lubrication of her still wet and wanting pussy.

Insanely turned back on, Luke pushed two fingers into her. Aletha moaned, throwing her head back onto her thin, flat pillow, as Luke pumped his fingers steadily into her while his thumb attended to her tender clit.

But as enjoyable as it was while Luke pleasured her… Aletha’s mind couldn’t help but wonder what it would feel like to be someone’s first choice.

Diego Nalto observed the blur of frantic activity in the hallway of the Resistance Base. As the Second in Command of the Resistance, it fell to him to deal with the chaotic situation, and indeed his comlink had been going off like crazy for the past few hours. His finger had become very well acquainted with the mute button; there was something he had to deal with that was far more important than any Resistance business.
“Move!” a gruff voice came down the hallway.

A scruffy old smuggler was racing down the hallway, literally shoving people out of the way as he bolted towards the medical wing. Han Solo was a man unashamed to say he would race to his injured wife’s bedside.

“Nalto!” Han shouted.

Diego nodded politely as Han reached him, “You got my message then?”

Han glared at him, “No, I was in neighbourhood. What do you think? How’s Leia? Is she okay?”

“She’s out of surgery now,” Diego explained as they strode down the hallway together. A few people came up to Diego, trying to get his attention, but he waved them all off. “Doctor Kalonia says she’s stable, but… Leia’s not well.”

“How not well?”

“She’ll live but there could be lifelong side effects, some of which the General will really not enjoy.”

“Kriffing hell. How many were injured?”

“Fifty-two, but most of them are minor injuries, not like the General’s. Leia was the closest to the detonators.”

Han shook his head, “What kind of sadist uses poisonous gas on their enemies?”

“Intel says they’re a favorite of the First Order’s Head of Interrogation,” Diego answered. “Captain Electra honestly gives Phasma a run for her money.”

Han grabbed Diego’s arm and pulled him to a halt.

With a hardness to his face, Han looked Diego straight in the eyes and said, “Nobody is worse than Phasma. Not after what happened to Fliss.”

Diego held Han’s gaze, “With all due respect, Captain Solo… it wasn’t Phasma who put the bolt through her temple.”

Stricken by the words, Han released Diego’s arm. A sadness he was fighting to supress was in his eyes.

Han looked around the hall, afraid someone was listening, “Was Ben involved in this?”

Diego sighed, “…We have reason to believe he’s the one who attacked her.”

Han winced and looked away quite suddenly. Diego could have sworn he heard the gasp of a sob.

“Where is she?” Han’s voice was shaky as he fought against the emotions bubbling in his chest: sorrow, anger, and above all, shame.

“This way,” Diego hit a button on the wall to open the door of the Medical Wing.

It was absolutely full of people. Victims were being tended to by doctors, nurses, Medics, Med-Droids, and anyone who was free to lend a hand. Diego had to shoe off a good dozen people, all clamouring for his attention now that Leia was out of commission. It was a blessing when Threepio found them, a statement not often made.
“Oh, Commander Nalto! Captain Solo! This way!” Threepio urged them towards a curtained off bed in the corner. “Hurry please.”

Muttering a quick thanks to Threepio – displaying how seriously Han was taking the situation that he was willing to audibly thank Threepio – Han pushed the droid aside as he reached the curtain. He pulled it open and he was met with a heartbreaking sight: Leia hooked up to a myriad of medical equipment and her face was covered with a breathing mask.

She still looked like the most beautiful woman in the galaxy to him, greying hair, wrinkles, breathing mask, and all.

“Han?” Leia croaked, her voice barely audible behind her mask.

“I’m here, Sweetheart,” Han clasped her hands, and fell to his knees to look her in the eyes. He smirked, “Broke half a dozen Galactic laws to get here this fast, but I’m here.”

Diego Nalto smiled and stepped away to leave the couple their privacy. With Solo delivered to his wife, it was time for Diego to step into his leadership role.

Starting by dealing with the boy a few metres away.

“Dameron!” Diego grabbed Poe by the shoulder and dragged him up from the patient who he was assisting Doctor Kalonia with. It was nothing she couldn’t do without a helper, so Diego felt justified in dragging off Poe.

BB-8, however, seemed to disagree.

SQUEE! SQUAW! SKOIW!

BB-8 squawked and chirped angrily at Nalto, ramming over and over into his leg to drive Diego off his attack of his master.

“Easy, Buddy. I’m okay,” Poe assured BB-8, calling off the attack. “Commander Nalto, I can explain.”

“What were you thinking?” Diego scolded. “You should have called the retreat the second you spotted those First Order ships. I thought they covered don’t intentionally engage an ambush trap on your first day of being in the Resistance.”

“I wanted to retreat, Commander, but once she sensed him I couldn’t deter her. General Organa insisted on continuing ahead and I can’t disobey her orders.”

Diego sighed, “I suppose not, but to let her go alone-”

“I’m sorry, she separated from us during the scuffle. You know she did it intentionally. If anyone had tagged along, you know it would have ended with us trying to kill Kylo Ren.”

“You could have stopped them.”

Poe’s eyes hardened, “I would have helped them.”

Diego frowned.

“I have no sympathy left for that boy,” Poe said coldly. “Not after spending so much time with Rey. She didn’t deserve to die, and I will see that he’s punished for her death… as well as Felicity’s.”
Diego sighed; how could he possibly chastise Poe for the very same feelings he kept in his heart?

“They will be avenged, Poe,” Diego promised. “But it can’t be at the risk of losing General Organa.”

“Forgive me, Sir, I just thought…”

Diego frowned, “Yes?”

Poe sighed, “Maybe if she could turn back Kylo… Luke might come home.”

Diego groaned. How had he not seen it before?


Poe shook his head, “I was the last person who spoke to him—”

“Kalonia was the last person to speak with him before he disappeared, and Tekka was the last person to hear from him.”

“But I was the last person he spoke to before he made the decision to leave. Maybe I did something or said something—”

“Enough,” Diego grabbed Poe’s shoulder. “Listen to me, Dameron. Skywalker leaving had nothing to do with you. After what he went through, it’s no surprise he broke down. Losing Fliss and Rey, and what happened to Temple Village… I saw those bodies, Poe. I collected them. I know the horrors he witnessed that night, the things he blamed himself for. I was the one who brought the idea of Fliss and Rey hiding on Jakku to his attention. But I know I can’t sit around and blame myself for it. I will carry the burden forever, but I can’t put the rest of this Resistance at risk due to my guilt.”

Poe sighed, “I just don’t know how we’re going to win this war without him.”

Diego shook his head.

“I have been fighting long before Luke Skywalker ever joined the Rebellion, and I will fight long after he is gone. You must too, we all must fight for there is always hope.” Diego looked over at Han by Leia’s side, “We fight for them. For that. For love. That’s the only thing one can truly fight for, and love will always win.”

Poe smiled as he watched the husband and wife, “You know, the General is never as happy as when Captain Solo is around. It must be nice to have someone to love like that.”

Diego’s stomach churned, trying to suppress the regrets of his loveless life, “Yeah… it must be.”

Meru has one flesh-and-blood arm, covered with military tattoos. Don’t get caught looking, though—she’ll throw you out for being curious. She doesn’t like people being curious. Or being anything else.

- Rey’s Survival Guide

Luke and Rey were surprised when Meru pulled up to the speeder with Teng in the backseat three days later. It was nearly sunset and they had long ago completed their meals, settling into another
night of ignoring each other until one of them snapped and they started yelling at each other until bedtime. Rey had yet to tell her father her secret, though she had been gathering the courage to do so that night. Unfortunately, Teng’s arrival had cut off any chance of doing so.

“Five minutes,” Meru glared as Teng got out of speeder. “Not a second more.”

“Yes, Ma’am,” Teng nodded. He tried not to grunt as he climbed out of the speeder with great difficulty. Teng nearly winced when he caught sight of Luke and Rey, “Mister Erso, Rey, I’m sorry for interrupting.”

“It’s no problem,” Luke waved. “Rey and I were just having another night of not speaking to each other. Would you like to come in, Meru?”

“I’ll wait out here,” Meru’s tone could barely pass for polite.

Luke nodded and ushered the children into the walker.


“No, Sir, I just came by to speak with yourself and your daughter,” Teng hung his head as he finished limping inside. He was covered in bandages and bruises, but he could stand upright at least. “Starting with apologizing for being disobedient and taking Rey to that X-Wing. I knew it was wrong and I did it anyway.”

“You are forgiven,” Luke replied. “Besides, I think you’ve more than paid your dues. How is the healing going?”

“I’m in a lot better shape, but it will be a long time before I’m back to normal.”

Rey winced; these past few weeks had been terrible. She had hurt Teng very badly with her recklessness, and the consequences had been great. Divided from her father more than the time she had been hiding Jarex abusing her. Untrusting of Quom and now he had been spending all of his time working just so he could avoid facing Luke and Rey. Missing Aletha dearly and wanting to embrace her the way she once had, but too afraid of betraying her mother to do so. Separated from Teng, the one person she knew would stand by her side through thick and thin as he recovered from the injuries she had caused him. And now she was feeling the physical effects of the situation: cranky, crampy, and her head pounding with a headache.

The consequences of her actions had been so hard to bear, but now she was over the hill and things were starting to settle back to normal. Even if she wasn’t on speaking terms with Aletha and her own father, at least she finally had Teng back.

But Rey was just about to realize truly what the consequences of her X-Wing stunt had been.

“Would you like to sit?” Luke gestured to his cot.

“No, thank you, Sir,” Teng smiled politely.

“Well, Rey and I will be glad to see you back to normal soon enough.”

Teng looked down at the ground, fidgeting with his own hands, “Unfortunately, you won’t be able to see me when I’m back to normal.”

Rey and Luke frowned, both resisting the urge to share a confused look.
“What do you mean?” Rey asked.

Teng took a deep, shaky breath and looked at directly at her.

“I’ve been sold, Rey,” Teng said with tears in his eyes. “I’m leaving tomorrow.”

Chapter End Notes

Coming Up Next Chapter…

The Price of Growing Older
When puberty brings a significant change to Rey, she finally confesses her dark secret. Meanwhile Luke races against the clock to save Teng from his new owner.

And for everyone freaking out about the Leia storyline, I promise we will come back to it, and trust me, it turns out to have a ridiculous reason for me to make up said storyline.
The Price of Growing Older

Chapter Summary

Rey gets her first period, Luke tries to save Teng, and to no one's surprise, I manage to shove in another Felicity flashback.

Chapter Notes

So, because I’ve had to split a few chapters in half due to bulk of content, my friend and I have re-evaluated our bet. Instead of getting to TFA before TLJ (because the only way to do that in the next thirty days is to literally quit my job to write fic, we’re still twelve chapters away) I just have to write at least ten chapters from the start of our bet. I’ve already written six, so this is going to work out just fine.

In other words, don’t expect TFA to start until probably January at the earliest.

Now back to fretting over how much the events of TLJ will screw over my fic.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The Long Way Home

Chapter Thirty-Six

The Price of Growing Older

Some live here because it was where they were born, and it’s all they’ve ever known.

- Rey’s Survival Guide

“We have to save Teng!”

“Rey, settle down and go to sleep,” Luke ordered as he lie in his cot, pulling the blankets over his body.

“But Dad!” she objected from her hammock.

“But nothing. We have to leave this for the morning. There’s nothing we can do about it tonight. Go
to sleep, and we’ll figure this out in the morning.”

Rey grumbled but fussed about in her sheets and settled for bed. Sleep would not come to her, her head with a pounding ache, and cramping in her abdomen. Something more than a stomach ache, her body must have been punishing her for her misbehaving the last few weeks… or maybe months.

“Dad?”

Luke groaned, having been a moment away from surrendering to slumber.

“Sorry,” Rey scratched at a pimple on her face. Her skin had started developing them over the last year, but in the past week she had had a large flare up of them on her cheeks and jawline.

“It’s okay,” Luke shifted into a more comfortable position. “What is it?”

“What can we do to save Teng?”

Luke groaned but thought about her question, “I suppose I’ll just have to go to Meru and pay her double for Teng or something. I don’t know what we’re going to do with him after, but that should hold off the buyer.”

“Who is the buyer?”

“I have no idea, but I’ll try to find out. Hopefully it’s someone local.”

“Who knows not to mess with you?”

“Exactly.”

Rey smiled, “Thanks Dad.”

Luke grinned back in the darkness, sensing her smile, “It’s no problem. That’s the sort of thing you do for a friend.”

“He’s not exactly your friend.”

“No, but you’re right, you need someone your age to spend time with. Teng is a nice boy, and you don’t have many other options.”

“Just that Devi girl and Strunk guy. Honestly, they give me a bad vibe.”

“Same here. Strunk seems a little… Dirkish-”

“You mean simple?” Rey teased.

“Exactly,” Luke nodded. “It’s the Devi girl you can’t trust. Promise me you won’t trust her further than you can throw her.”

“I don’t know. I bet I could throw her pretty far.”

Luke chuckled, “Alright, then don’t trust her further than she casts a shadow.”

“Deal.” Rey thought about his words, “You know, I think I kinda like that phrase. Can we make that be a thing?”

“Will you stop talking and let me go to sleep?”
“Deal.”

“Then it’s a thing.”

The next morning, Rey was woken by the throb in her abdomen. She groaned and wrapped an arm around her body as she sat up in her hammock. It had gotten so much worse overnight. It was like a stabbing pain in her gut… No lower than her gut, sort of somewhere around her pelvis.

Something wet slid down her legs.

Oh no. Had she been so stressed out by the Teng situation that she wet the bed? It had been years since that happened. How could she have done it now?

What would her father say?

Rey glanced over at Luke. He was sound asleep, breathing heavily, and his feet gently kicking under the blanket. He weirdly did that sometimes, though Rey couldn’t figure out why.

Carefully, Rey slid out of bed and slipped on her shoes. She would head outside, check herself over, and if she had wet the bed, she would come back in and clean it all up before her father woke… somehow.

She was too embarrassed to look at her hammock as she snuck outside. If she had, she would have been in for a huge shock.

Rey did end up getting said shock when she went outside.

Behind and a little way away from the walker was their designated washroom area. It wasn’t the most dignified thing to deal with bodily fluids while living on Jakku. Squatting in sand was awkward, and burying solids was meant not only as a courtesy to your fellow desert dwellers, but also the age-old game all species liked to play “let’s pretend no one ever defecates.”

Rey pulled down her leggings and readied herself to deal with the embarrassment of cleaning her urine stained clothing when her heart froze. Her leggings and underwear weren’t stained with urine.

They were stained with blood.

Rey’s heart thudded in her chest a mile a minute. There was blood. She was bleeding. It was staining her thighs and her groin- No. *Coming* from her groin.

It wasn’t normal blood either, not bright red and spurtting until it clotted. It was dark red, thick and sticky. It flowed almost imperceptibly. When Rey wiped herself – if there was one luxury Luke was not going to stand letting his daughter grow up without, it was toilet paper – the blood wiped away with it, but more blood flowed from her, taking its place.

Rey’s head raced with concern. Okay, she knew what this probably was. Headaches, cramps, hormonal acne, being very cranky. This was probably her first period.

…but what if it wasn’t? What if something was massively wrong and she was slowly bleeding to death? What if something terrible was happening and she was about to get blood out of every orifice of her body? What if her uterus had been ripped in two? What if her entire reproductive system was about to fall out of her? What if she had cancer?
What was cancer again? She remembered Aletha mentioning it before.

No, she had to focus. She had to figure out what was going on and then… do something.

But what?

Oh, she should have paid far more attention when Aletha was teaching her biology.

Ok, she needed to make a plan. Step one: Tell Dad.

…Should she tell her father? After all, he was a man. He might have general knowledge about periods, but could he answer all the questions she had about it? Could he tell the difference between a period and something else? Most importantly, could she really look her father in the eye and say “Dad, I’m bleeding profusely from my private area.”

She definitely knew the answer to number three.

Oh God, what was she supposed to do? Why, oh why did she not pay attention more to Aletha when she was talking about-

Wait, Aletha! That was it! That was the answer. She could talk to Aletha about…

Oh no…Well, this going to be a very awkward day. And that wasn’t even considering they had to go save Teng. Could Rey still go do that?

There was one thing that was clear: she had to wake up her father and then she would figure this all out.

“Dad. Dad,” Rey shook her father.

Luke groaned and opened his eyes, “Rey? What’s going on?”

Rey looked very nervous for some reason, “Dad, we, uh… I have to go to Niima Outpost right now. We have to go.”

“Why?”

“I, uh… I need to see Aletha.”

Luke narrowed his eyes, unwilling to summon the energy to sit up, “Why? What are you going to do to her?”

“Nothing,” Rey blushed, “I just have to see her. I… I hurt myself.”

That made Luke sit up.

“What? Where?” he grabbed her arm and started to examine her.

Rey pulled away, “Don’t get excited, it’s just my… legs.”

“Did you cut yourself?”

“Uh… sort of.”
“Let me take a look.”

“Uh, no, it’s… kinda high up.”


“Uh…” Rey bit her lip and looked at the ground. “Higher.”

He didn’t get it until Rey awkwardly glanced back at her hammock. There was a small spot of blood on the fabric… and her legs were very firmly clenched together.


He found the little pouch Aletha had given him a few years back, and handed it to Rey.

“Here,” he said. “There’s some special painkillers that focus on relieving… thigh cramps.”

“And this?” Rey frowned as she pulled out a small white bundle.

“A bandage of sorts,” Luke wished he didn’t have to use euphemisms. He was comfortable talking openly about periods, but Rey didn’t appear to be, so he respected her decision. “Line the… section of clothing that comes into contact with the source of the blood. That should soak it up for a while. There’s several of those in that pouch. You’re going to need more than one before it finishes. Do you… have any questions for me about it?”

“I’d kind of like to talk to Aletha about it.”

“Of course, as a woman and doctor she does know quite a bit more about… thigh cuts.”

“Thanks,” Rey blushed. “Dad, what about Teng? We have to go get him.”

“How about this?” Luke offered. “I’ll drop you off with Aletha, and I’ll go handle this whole Teng business.”

“Promise you’ll save him?”

“I’ll bring him home. Now go… line your clothing. I’ll start the speeder.”

“Excuse me, Doctor?” Luke smiled as he entered Aletha’s tent, “but am I interrupting something?”

“Of course not, Mister Erso,” Aletha grinned, automatically crossing the room to wrap her arms around his neck and greet him with a kiss. “This is my favorite part of the morning.”

“Ahem!”

That was when Aletha noticed Rey had followed in behind.

“Right,” Aletha quickly pulled away from Luke, “What can I do for you two?”

Luke looked back at his daughter, “Why don’t you tell her?”

“I, uh… I need some medical help,” Rey awkwardly looked at the ground and rubbed her arm.
“Come on over,” Aletha prepped the medical cot. “What seems to be the issue?”

“Rey’s been bleeding,” Luke replied.

“Oh goodness,” Aletha said in worry.

Luke grinned, “From her thighs.”

“Oh goodness,” Aletha gave him a knowing smile. “How long has this been going on?”

“I woke up with it this morning,” Rey confessed.

“Well, why don’t you come over here and we’ll check things out?”

Rey looked back at Luke, “You can go now, Dad.”

Luke raised an eyebrow, “Are you sure?”

“Leave us girls to deal with it,” Aletha chuckled at him. “I’ll let you know if there’s any issues.”

“But you two are in the middle of a fight,” Luke reminded. “Can I leave you both alone?”

“I’m sure Rey won’t kill me when your back is turned.” Aletha’s voice was humorous, but after a moment her face fell. Concern edged her voice, “Right, Rey?”

Rey shrugged, “Maybe we can call a truce. You promise everything’s going to be okay with Teng, Dad?”

“I promise,” Luke vowed. “Call me if you need me. I’ll be back in a few hours.”

“Bye Dad.”

“Bye Darling,” Aletha called at the same time.

Rey glared at her as Luke exited the tent.

“Alright, first thing’s first, let me put up my sheet,” Aletha got up, ignoring Rey’s hostility.

Rey frowned at Aletha’s actions, “The black sheet? Is it that serious?”

“Sunshine, you are the most important thing in my life. If you came in with a papercut, I would still put up the black sheet. Now, come on, have a seat on the cot. What’s going on with Teng?”

“He’s been sold,” Rey reluctantly came over and sat on the cot. “Dad’s going to try to save him before Meru sends him away today.”

“Well, don’t you worry for a second,” Aletha pulled on a pair of rubber gloves. “Your dad is an expert in that area. I promise you that tomorrow night, Teng’s going to be all safe and sound. Now, let’s talk about you. Where exactly is this cut?”

Rey bit her lip, “Aletha?”

“Yes, Sunshine?”

“…It’s not actually a cut.”

Aletha smiled warmly, “I know, Sunshine. Is it menarche?”
“Huh?”

“Your first period,” Aletha corrected.

“I think so,” Rey blushed.

“Hey,” Aletha lifted up her chin, “come on. You know there’s nothing to be embarrassed about. I’ve been openly talking about my own for years to make you more comfortable with the topic.”

“I know, it’s just… you know, still a little awkward.”

“Well, you can talk to me about anything.”

Rey looked away, “Not everything.”

Aletha guided Rey’s head back to face her again, “But definitely about this. So, let’s talk about it.”

Rey gathered her courage, “Okay.”

“Have you been getting discharge the last few months?”

“Discharge?”

“Have you been finding stains in your underwear? Sort of a clear and sticky liquid that comes from your genitals?”

Rey blushed, “Maybe.”

“Hey, no blushes, okay? This is perfectly natural.”

“Are you sure?” Rey let the panic start to seep into her voice. “What if something is really wrong? What if I’m dying? What if I have cancer?”

“This isn’t exactly the sign of cancer,” Aletha said kindly. “But hey, it could be. Would you like me check you out?”

Rey hesitated.

“I’m your doctor, Rey,” Aletha reminded. “I’ll be a total professional, and besides, it’s nothing I haven’t seen on myself.”

Rey blushed, “Okay… What do I do?”

“Take off your leggings and underwear and climb onto the cot,” Aletha instructed. She helped Rey move into position, “Did your father give you my package?”

“Yes. Thank you for that.”

“It’s absolutely no problem. Make sure you change out those pads every few hours. They’re biodegradable, so you can safely bury them when you’re done with them. Lay back and scoot all the way to the edge of the cot.”

Rey did as instructed.

“Good,” Aletha put a blanket over Rey’s legs to give the girl a sense of modesty. “Now spread your legs and relax. This won’t hurt at all.”
It took a few minutes for Rey to gather her courage, but she followed Aletha’s orders. The Doctor was very respectful to Rey as she examined her, but Rey still squirmed in discomfort, not from pain but sheer awkwardness.

A part of her that had to have come from Felicity Rhiaon couldn’t help but think that Aletha had definitely seen her father in the same level of nudity. The thought made her shudder.

“Definitely your period,” Aletha finally declared. “Nothing at all to be worried about. No death, no cancer, just the natural cycle of fertility most females endure.”

“And everything’s normal?” Rey asked.

“As far as I can see. It did happen a bit sooner than I expected, but not out of the realm of normality. Plenty of girls starts at age eleven, twelve, heck some even start at nine and ten. You’re perfectly fine.”

“Thank you, Aletha.”

“No problem at all,” Aletha pulled off her gloves and threw them away. “I’ll admit, it’s a little nice to interact with you like this again. It’s been a while since you came to me with your problems. I’ve certainly missed it… Not you having problems, but rather you coming to me with them.”

“I’ve missed them too,” Rey confessed. “But still, this is a little awkward.”

“Would it make you more comfortable if you were wearing underwear?”

“So much better.”

“Let’s get you dressed, Sunshine.”

As Rey dressed, Aletha explained to her all she needed to know about caring for herself while having a period. How to clean herself, protect her clothing, symptoms of things going wrong, symptoms of things going right, the different look of discharge throughout her cycle, and a million other questions Luke really never would have known the answer to.

“I’m glad I have you around to explain this stuff,” Rey confessed once she was dressed again. “Sometimes it can get a little awkward dealing with it around so many boys.”

“Between Luke, Quom, Dirk, Ivano, and Teng, it is pretty testosterone filled in these parts,” Aletha chuckled. She smiled and let her voice be serious, “I’m happy to be there for you, Rey. Whatever you need, just ask.”

Rey looked away, “It’s not your job.”

“You’re right, it’s not. But I’m happy to do it. With your mother not around…” Aletha cut off Rey before she could say something, “I’m not trying to replace her. Okay? You don’t need another mother, and I don’t want to take her place. Your father doesn’t want me to take her place, okay? We would never let you to forget her.”

Rey broke down crying.

“Oh Sunshine,” Aletha grabbed Rey into her arms. “No, please don’t cry.”

“I can’t stop it,” Rey wailed. “I’m a horrible person, Aletha.”

“You’re not a horrible person. You were just uncomfortable about my relationship with your father.”
“No, that’s not it at all! I don’t care that you’re dating my dad. In fact… I love that you’re dating my dad. I like the idea of you being my mom.”

Aletha was overwhelmed by Rey’s confession, “You do?”

“Uh huh.”

“…Why?”

“Because… Because…”

Rey couldn’t say the words.

Aletha released Rey and dropped to her knees so she was looking Rey straight in the eyes. Rey had grown so much taller from the time Aletha first met her that now when she made the gesture, she ended up staring at Rey’s throat.

“Sunshine… Rey. Please tell me what’s going on,” Aletha begged.

Rey took a shuddering breath, and then admitted her deepest, darkest secret.

“I… I don’t remember my mother!”

It was like a pail of freezing cold water had been thrown in Aletha’s face.

“What?” Aletha exclaimed.

Rey sobbed, “I don’t remember my mom… I can’t remember anything before Jakku. I- I don’t even remember meeting you and Quom.”

Aletha stared at Rey in open mouthed horror for a long minute. Then instantly she pulled Rey into her arms and held her as the girl cried.

“It’s okay, Sunshine,” Aletha lovingly stroked Rey’s hair. “Are you… Are you sure about this? You don’t remember her at all? You know so many stories about her.”

“Stories, yes,” Rey sniffed, “but just stories. I know her no more than I know Han Solo. When I think about her, she just a faceless blur, and her voice is muffled and distant. I don’t know her laugh, I don’t know her smile, I don’t remember her. The only thing I know is a distant woman’s voice telling me- promising me that she would come back for me. Oh God, I’m a terrible person.”

“No, Rey, no.” Aletha sighed; how had she not foreseen this? “It’s perfectly normal for you to forget your early childhood. Five is about the cut-off age, and you lost her when you were five.”

“I’m scared Aletha. I’m scared that I’ve forgotten her entirely. That’s why I’m so against you being with dad, of replacing my mother… because you are the only mother I know.”

Aletha held Rey for a long time, whispering words of kindness as the girl cried in her arms. It was evitable with the timing and the fact that Aletha was the only constant female influence in Rey’s life. To Rey, who else could fill the title of mother but Aletha?

“It’s okay, Sunshine,” Aletha cooed when Rey had started to settle down. “It’s okay.”

Rey gathered herself and pulled out of Aletha’s grasp. She wiped her nose on her sleeve, but her eyes were still so wet and puffy.
“I’m the worst daughter in the world,” she declared.

Aletha cupped her cheek, “You are no such thing.”

“Yes, I am. I forgot my mother, and I’ve been treating my dad so horribly.”

“You’re scared, it’s understandable. When Luke finds out—”

“No, he can’t know! Please don’t tell him.”

Aletha gave Rey a kind look, “I will not withhold this from your father, Rey. He needs to know about this.”

Rey sniffed, “I’m so scared.”

“He’s not going to be angry. If anything, it’ll just make him scared.”

“That’s what I’m afraid of.”

Aletha sighed, “Rey… I don’t know what to say.”

“Tell me she wouldn’t be mad,” Rey begged. “Tell me Mom would say it’s okay for me to feel like this.”

Aletha opened her mouth to tell Rey that she couldn’t say any such thing, having not known Felicity Rhiaon well enough. But she paused when an old memory surfaced.

“Rey?” Aletha asked. “Do I know why I call you Sunshine?”

She shook her head.

“It’s because of the second time I met your mother. It was about a week after our first meeting. Do you remember that?”

Rey shook her head.

Aletha smiled, “Then let me tell you the story…”

It had been a week since you and your mother came to Jakku. I was busy fussing with inventory or something when I heard a knock on my tent peg.

“Come in,” I called.

A woman ducked into my tent, holding the hand of a little girl. The two of you looked so similar: ratty brown hair; tired hazel eyes; sunburnt, pale, dirty skin; and pained looks on your faces. You had an arm wrapped gently around your ribcage, and your mother’s worried eyes didn’t leave you for a moment.

“Good afternoon, Doctor,” your mother pleasantly greeted me, even though she wouldn’t look at me. “Mind if we bug you for a moment?”

It took me a few minutes before I recognized the two of you.

“Of course,” I smiled and gestured toward my medical cot. “Please come in and have a seat.
“Fidelity was it?”

“Felicity,” she corrected as she led you over to the cot and had you sit.

“What seems to be the problem, Felicity?”

“It’s Rey here. Her ribs have been hurting the past few days, and this morning we found a bruise on her ribcage. I’m worried she broke something.”

“When would the break have occurred?”

“I don’t know. We’ve been careful since our last visit, so it must have happened during out trek.”

“Well, if it is a break, you probably would have had more signs closer to the moment of injury, but I’ll take a look. Mind if she lifts her shirt?”

You looked up at your mother for permission with such uncertainty.

“It’s okay, Sweetheart,” your mother stroked your hair. “Remember, this is the nice lady who took care of you last week. Doctor… Chimera?”

“Kymeri,” I corrected.

Your mother got a strange look on her face, “Kymeri? I think I knew a Kymeri… Oh this is going to bug me until I figure it out. It’ll come to me.”

“You can call me Aletha, if you would like, Rey,” I told you. I winked, “Or Ally if that’s your preference.”

You got this incredibly heartbroken look on your face in an instant.

“Ally?” tears filled your eyes.

“It’s okay, Sweetheart,” Felicity wrapped an arm around you and tried to soothe you. She looked at me and explained, “We had a friend who recently died that Rey called Ally.”

“How about you just call me Doctor Kymeri, Sweetheart?” I smiled at you.

Your mother bit her lip, “Uh… Doctor? Do you mind maybe not calling Rey, Sweetheart? I’ve sort of got a thing about it.”

I blinked in shock and confusion, “Oh, uh, sure. Is it all pet names or just Sweetheart?”

“Just Sweetheart.”

“Well, how about Sunshine?” I offered. I leaned in to your mother and explained, “I like to be a little affectionate with children because it makes them less scared and more comfortable. Desert medicine can get quite frightening.”

“Sunshine is fine,” Felicity said.

So I had you lift up your shirt and set about examining you. A few minutes I came to the conclusion that one of your ribs had cracked. I had some cream with bacta that could fix bones by spreading over your wounded area, but it was a painful process to endure. I got your mother’s permission to administer you a low level aesthetic and next thing we knew you were out like a light.
“There,” I declared when I had finished applying the cream. “Give it an hour and Rey should be all healed.”

“Thank you,” Felicity looked away. I could see she was holding back some tears.

“Hey,” I gently touched her arm, “are you okay?”

With watery eyes, your mother shot me a look like I was the stupidest person in the world. “Really? I’m stranded in the desert with my five-year-old daughter, my idiot of a husband is too damn wrapped up in the theatrics of his ridiculous family drama to think clearly for one minute and leave a single damn comm open, I’m depending on Unkar Plutt to provide for me, the First Order is hunting me down, I just spent a week walking through the desert with very little food and water, my daughter technically died, and you’re asking if I’m okay. What do you think the answer is going to be?”

“Sorry, I get it.”

Your mother raised an eyebrow, “I really don’t think you do.”

“Part of it at least,” I shrugged. “My sister’s a Captain in the First Order and has vowed to hunt me down.”

Felicity squinted at me, “You’re not Phasma’s sister are you?”

“I have no idea who Phasma is.”

“Good.”

Your mother and I sat in silence for a few minutes.

“So, you’re a Rebel vet?” I decided to make conversation.

Felicity looked down at her starbird tattoo in surprise – she had one on her right arm.

“Uh, yeah,” she said. “Recruitment.”

“Medical,” I turned around and showed her my camp tattoo.

“Whose Batch?”

“I’m a Kenu girl.”


“Small world,” I laughed. “Hey, can I ask you something?”

“Is it going to be something obvious again?” she dryly replied.

I smirked, “Don’t tempt me.”

Your mother let herself laugh.

“I was just wondering why you didn’t want me to call Rey Sweetheart?” I asked.

Your mother’s face fell, “It’s a bit of a painful story.”

I waited until she was ready.
“The term is special to me. It’s what my husband and I call each other.” Felicity sighed and stroked your cheek as you slept, “When Rey was born, I had quite a bad case of Postpartum Depression.”

Postpartum Depression is complicated, and we’ll go over it later, Rey, but for now just know that it means your mother had a hormonal imbalance and got really sad and detached after you were born. It’s not your fault at all, but it’s something that happens to a sizable number of women.

“I’m so sorry,” I told your mother.

Felicity swallowed, “It was the darkest time of my life. I wouldn’t even let my husband name her until she was three months old. Until then I just called her it. I… did something bad, and my husband and I decided I should go to a treatment facility where I could get mental health help. She was five months old before I could call her anything, and I settled on the term Sweetheart. It would because I use the term for my husband who was the person I loved most in the Galaxy at the time – Rey has now overtaken him. By calling her Sweetheart I was putting her on the same level as my love for Luke. Since then, the term Sweetheart has been quite precious to me.”

“I’m sorry you had to go through that.”

“And now here I am all over again being a terrible mother.”

I frowned, “What do you mean?”

“Look at this! Look at what I’ve done! My daughter is hungry and tired, her ribs are cracked and she almost died!”

“Stop it, you are not a terrible mother.”

“Yes, I am. I let her go hungry and thirsty and-”

“You let her live!” I exclaimed. “Give me your hand.”

Your mother frowned but obeyed. I took her hands and placed them over your chest, crossed one over the other in the formation you take when you perform CPR. The bruise was the perfect shape of her hands.

“I did this,” Felicity whispered in horror. “I cracked my daughter’s ribs.”

“By saving her life.” I looked her straight in the eyes, “You performed the bravest, most selfless act a mother can do for their child. You gave her her life back. You used your bare hands to physically restart her heart. You gave her the very air from your lungs. That is the action of a great mother.”

But still your mother would not rally, “She’s still in great danger.”

“Then she has one hell of a Mama Nexu to protect her,” I smiled at your mother. “Honestly, you are one of the most amazing women I’ve ever encountered. Not many could have survived the desert trek, and even less could do it with a child and have you both survive.”

“I fear what’s to come though,” Felicity confessed. “If Luke doesn’t come soon… If the First Order gets here before him… I’m scared of the thought of what I might have to do. I’m terrified of what I might be capable of… Of the sacrifice I might have to make for her.”

It seemed a weight had been dropped upon the room.

“What happens to Rey if I make that sacrifice?” she whispered.
Something stirred down inside of me, and I took her hand.

“I’ll protect her for you,” I promised. “If anything happens, I’ll have her back.”

“You don’t need to do that.”

“Yes, I do.” I smiled, “We Rebels have to stick together.”

She smiled at me, and then turned to look at you. Her smile fell slowly from her face. Your mother’s eyes filled with tears, and she didn’t dare look away from you.

“I hope she forgets this,” Felicity whispered. “I hope that five years from now she doesn’t remember any of this.”

“She will,” I said.

Felicity looked up in shock, “Are you sure?”

“I’m positive… because I won’t let her forget how brave and selfless a mother she has,” I promised. “No matter what happens, to you, to me, to her, I swear to you, I’ll make sure she knows the kind of woman you are.”

She smiled at me, “If something does happen to me, I’d be happy to have someone like you watching over her. A girl needs someone to watch over her.”

“Yeah,” Felicity whispered.

Our eyes locked on each other, an unspoken parallel and promise to not only protect you, but to watch out for each other passing between us.

“I’ll watch over her, Felicity,” I vowed. “And I won’t let her forget you, I promise.”

Felicity smiled and grabbed my hand, “And I won’t let her forget the kind Doctor who was there for us when I couldn’t be… I promise.”

Aletha smiled at Rey, “Nothing else needed to be said between us that day. Sure, we made a little small talk as we waited for your treatment to finish. When it did, you thanked me and waved goodbye.”

Rey’s eyes filled with tears again as she knew what was to come next.

“The next time I saw your mother, she saved me from Phasma,” Aletha looked down in guilt. “I let her sacrifice herself for you, and when Quom brought you to me with that terrible sunburn, I vowed to uphold my promise. That’s all I’ve been trying to do, Rey. To be there like your mother wanted someone to be there for you… Falling in love with your father wasn’t part of that plan.”

Rey smiled, the tears shining in her eyes, “I think she would be okay with it.”

“Really?” Aletha grinned.

“I have no idea,” Rey confessed. Then she smiled and grabbed Aletha’s hand exactly as her mother had done seven years ago, “But I’m okay with it. I’m never going to call you Mom, but I want you to know that you have been my second mother. And I’ll never forget the kind Doctor who was there
for us when I couldn’t be… I promise.”

Aletha pulled Rey into a tender hug, and in that moment they both knew that things were finally going to be alright.

There’s an ironclad rule of surviving as a scavenger:

**All salvage is worthless until you’ve been paid for it.**

- Rey’s Survival Guide

Luke pulled up to Meru’s with a trunk full of portions and an unwillingness to take no for an answer.


“I’m interested in taking Teng off your hands,” Luke climbed out of the speeder.

“Sorry, Erso, but I’ve already found myself a buyer.”

“I’m willing to offer you double what you were paid.”

“I can’t do that.”

“Triple.”

“Let me rephrase that,” Meru said. “I would love to accept the offer, but the buyer picked up Teng an hour ago.”

“Damn it,” Luke muttered. “Alright, where is he?”

“Hell if I know,” Meru shrugged. “Probably put the boy to work first thing.”

“Who did you sell Teng to?”

“Sorry, but I’m under strict orders not to tell you.”


“He knew you would come for the boy,” Meru explained. “He didn’t want you to buy Teng. Said he wanted to do that himself, and not having you get in the way. Almost held the boy back to see what you would give me, but decided the whole fee upfront was better.”

Luke winced. While he had withdrawn a large amount from Plutt, Meru was right, he hadn’t pulled the entire fee.

“Is there anything I can do to get Teng?”

“You’ll have to take it up with his new owner.”

“And you won’t tell me who that owner is?”
“Exactly.” Meru gave him a toothy grin, “Good luck, Erso.”

Luke sighed and rubbed his temples.

What was he going to tell Rey?

“I’m so sorry about Teng, Rey,” Luke said that night as they cleaned up their supper dishes in the walker. The rosy light of dusk filtered through the cracks of the walker, signifying the impending bedtime.

“I just can’t believe he’s gone,” Rey sadly set down the plates in a banged up metal box they used to collect dishware until it was time to do a wash.

“We’ll find him. I’m not giving up that easily. Someone has to know where he went. We’ll get him back, I promise you.”

“Thank you.”

Luke sat on his cot and watched Rey for a while. She grabbed her guide and laid down in her hammock as she started drawing something. He sighed and looked over at his storage crate bedside table. Two discs seemed almost to glow as they begged for his attention.

“Rey?” Luke didn’t look at her when he spoke.

“Yeah, Dad?”

“Come here for a minute,” Luke patted the cot, moving aside his blanket to make room for her.

Rey obediently put her guide away and joined her father. When she was seated beside him, Luke wrapped an arm around her and grabbed the top Holo.

“I’m so sorry that you don’t remember your mother,” Luke whispered.

Rey looked away, “I’m sorry I forgot.”

“You don’t need to apologize. There’s nothing to forgive.”

She sighed, “I know, but… I just wish I could picture her.”

“Maybe you can.”

Rey frowned.

Luke flicked on the Holo, the one that had been salvaged from their home on Rornian and was the only real token Luke had taken from their past life.

“This is you when you were three years old with your mother,” Luke said as Rey gaped at the picture.

“She’s so beautiful,” Rey stared in amazement at the Holo of the woman.

She looked so familiar. That hair, those eyes, that nose, the smile… This was her mother.

“Yes, she was,” Luke smiled at the Holo. He would have reached out to touch it if he didn’t know
She… she doesn’t look anything like Aletha.”

Luke looked at his daughter kindly, “I promised you that I wasn’t trying to replace her. My love for Aletha is separate from my love for your mother.”

“I know.”

For a long time they stared at the picture in silence.

“So why was it so hard for you to tell me the truth about what was going on with your mother?” Luke finally asked. “Why do this whole charade of saying you don’t think she’s dead?”

“Because part of me does think she might be alive.”


“Is it so much to ask?” Rey queried. “To know what happened?”

“I’ve told you what happened.”

“Not all of it.”

“Rey, I can’t tell you all of it. Not yet.”

“I understand that, it’s just…” Rey sighed. “It just doesn’t feel real.”

Luke closed his eyes. What could he possibly say or do to fix this for Rey?

And then it hit him.

“Rey?” Luke said carefully. “What if I could make it real for you?”

She frowned, “How?”

Luke sighed and swapped out the Felicity and Rey Holo for the other on his bedside crate.

“This is the footage of your mother’s death,” he held up the disc. “They gave it to me to show me what happened to her. They told me I had seven days to come get her. I showed up in less than one, but they had murdered her before I could get there. This Holo contains the answer to not only how your mother died, but why there was no body for me to bury.”

He placed the disc in Rey’s hand.

“I will show it to you if you want.”

Rey’s jaw dropped, “You- You what?”

“You can watch it,” Luke said. “But only if you’re truly ready. Only if you need to. The choice is yours, Rey.”

She thought about it for a long time.

“I want to watch it.”

Luke studied Rey carefully, “Are you absolutely sure you want me to show you this? It’s going to
make you very upset, and honestly, I think this is a pretty bad parenting decision on my part.”

Rey gathered her strength and nodded, “Yes Daddy, I want to see it.”

Luke sighed. He wrapped an arm around Rey and pulled her into his lap for a tight hug. She was so much bigger now; sitting in his lap had been something she long ago had outgrown. But they needed that intimacy for this horrible moment.

He knew he probably shouldn’t be doing this, showing Rey her mother getting murdered. But in the same strange way that Luke knew he needed to have been electrocuted to save his father, he knew Rey needed to go through this pain to become stronger.

“Are you ready?” he whispered.

Rey swallowed and nodded, “Yes.”

Luke took a deep breath and hit play.

He wouldn’t put Rey through all of it. She didn’t need to hear Felicity beg Ben for her life, Rey just needed to see the moment it ended.

For a moment, Rey got to see the image of her mother in a way she never should have to: beaten, bloody, hair sheered, crying, bound, gagged, and fighting for her life. They watched the blaster get lifted to Felicity’s temple, and Rey flinched at the blast that set Felicity Rhiaon limply to the ground.

Rey balled her fists, fighting not to break down as the tears started to come. Luke just squeezed her tightly and kissed her cheek.

“It’s okay,” he whispered in her ear, holding her preciously.

“Is she dead?” an oddly familiar voice asked on the Holo.

The owner of the voice wasn’t visible, the shot instead focused on Felicity’s unmoving body.

“Check for yourself,” another man instructed, though Rey didn’t know his voice.

Rey’s vision was blurred with tears, so she couldn’t make out the details of the black-haired boy who approached her mother. She felt Darkness stir inside her soul as the boy kicked her mother’s limp corpse, but something reached out for her. A familiar feeling, something that felt sky blue if she had to name a colour. The sky blue enveloped her soul like her father’s arms enveloped her body, comforting and calming her as she went through the ordeal of her mother’s horrific shooting.

“Turn it off if it’s getting to be too much,” Luke urged.

Rey shook her head, “No. I… I think I can handle it.”

Luke sighed, nodded, and kissed her once more before turning his attention back to the Holo. It was now playing the part where Kylo unsuccessfully searched for a pulse.
“Nothing,” Kylo declared mutely, drawing his hands back to stare at Felicity in shock. “Felicity Rhiaon... is really dead.”

The camera stayed on Kylo as he struggled with his mass of emotions. Shock, horror, and maybe even a trace of guilt passed over his face.

Hux laughed in the background, “Well now, are you finally satisfied, Ren?”

Kylo’s face scrunched together in a hard scowl.

“No,” Kylo whispered.

Suddenly he lifted Felicity’s body as he rose to his feet.

“What are you doing?” Hux exclaimed, clearly thrown off by the sudden change of plan.

“Taking her to the place she truly belongs,” Kylo answered, striding towards the door as his aunt flopped bonelessly in his cradle hold. “The-”

The Holo shut off.

Luke frowned as he stared at Rey’s hand on the Holo’s power switch.

“I don’t need to see the rest.” Rey bit her lip and drew her hand back, “At least... not now.”

Luke let himself smile a little, “You’re very mature for your age.”

“No, I’m not. I’m twelve and like doing dumb things,” Rey let herself smirk a little.

“Well, twelve is the age of stupidity. Enjoy it while you can still relatively get away with things.”

“I have two weeks of psychological torture proving I can’t get away with as much.”

“Call it psychological torture one more time and you’ll get another week of it.”

“Love you, Daddy.”


Rey smiled, enjoying hearing the sound of her father’s laughter for the first time in a while.

“Dad? I’m sorry I’ve been such a brat.”

“I forgive you,” Luke hugged her again. “And I want you to know that no matter what stupid things you do in the future, I will always love you, and I will always forgive you... I just hope you can find it in your heart to forgive me.”

Rey closed her hand over her father’s mechanical one, “There’s nothing to forgive... Ever. I don’t care if you’re secretly Han Solo himself. Although that would be disappointing.”

Luke laughed, “I promise, I’m not Han Solo.”

Rey looked down at the Holo, and a hand ran through her hair, “Dad?”

“Yes, Sweetheart?”

“Would you be okay if I kept my hair and clothes the same?”


“I know she’s dead,” Rey assured him. She gave a forlorn look to the Holo, “I can accept that now, but I still want to keep them in honour of her memory… Plus they’re very good for desert living.”

Luke smiled, “You can keep your hair and clothing however you want, as long as it doesn’t compromise your safety. Did you also want to continue the count?”

Rey nodded.

“Alright then, but you have to promise that you are no longer going to give myself and Aletha a hard time.”

“Promise.” Rey paused, “Well… I promise to not give you a hard time about dating. Everything else is on the table. Quom didn’t train me up for nothing.”

“Maybe we should hold off on telling him that we’ve resolved our issues. You and Quom spending too much time together is a very bad combination.”

Rey winked, “Yeah, and we enjoy every moment of misery we give you and Aletha… You know, truth be told, I think the two of you are kind of cute.”

Luke laughed, “Yeah… we kind of are.”

And for the first time in months, they didn’t fall asleep in a cold, distant silence.

“Are we really going to save Teng, Dad?” Rey asked as she, Luke, and Aletha strode through Niima Outpost the next day.

“I promise, Rey.” Luke’s face was set with determination. “We won’t stop until we get him back.”

“How are we going to even find him?” Aletha asked, finding comfort in Luke’s arm wrapped firmly around her waist.

Aletha bit her lip and glanced uncertainly down. Rey smiled at her, and gave Aletha a small thumbs up. Aletha exhaled in relief. It was a load off to finally have Rey’s approval.

“Quom knows some people in the Sacred Villages,” Luke answered. “If that doesn’t turn up anything, I’ll press Plutt to see if there’s anything he can do.”

“Dad?” Rey frowned as they reached Quom’s tent. “What if Quom doesn’t want to help us?”

“Why wouldn’t he help?” Aletha asked.

“He hates Teng. Thinks he’s no good and thinks we’d be better off if Teng just went away.”
Luke sighed, “Well, that may be true, but he loves you. If making you happy means saving Teng, then Quom will do it in a heartbeat.”

Rey hesitated as Luke unhooked his arm from Aletha’s waist and ducked into the tent.

“Hey,” Aletha hugged Rey’s shoulders. “It’s going to be okay.”

Rey smiled and hugged her back, “Thank you, Aletha.”

The doctor smiled at hearing the name, “Anytime.”

They ducked into the tent together and found Luke in conversation with Quom, who was busy working on his speeder.

“Yes, Luke, I have contacts in all the Sacred Villages. What’s this all about? OW!” Quom stubbed his toe on his toolbox, which was sitting right at his feet. “Hey! I told you not to move the toolbox!”

Luke frowned, “I didn’t touch it.”

“Not you,” Quom waved off.

Aletha and Luke exchanged a look. It wasn’t entirely uncommon for Quom to talk to himself… or complete nonsense.

“Please, Quom, can you call up your contacts?” Rey begged. “This is really important!”

“Okay, fine, MG. Anything for you. What am I telling th- OW!” Quom gave a low growl and shoved the toolbox aside. He bent down and yelled under the speeder, “What did I just say about the toolbox?”

To everyone’s surprise, Teng Malar rolled out on the scooter from underneath the speeder.

“Hey, there’s a lot of carbon scoring under here,” Teng objected. “I need the toolbox within arm’s reach so I can-”

“TENG!”

Suddenly Teng was tackled to the ground with a hug from Rey.

“You’re okay!” Rey exclaimed, tearing up a little.

“I’m alright, Rey,” Teng chuckled, reluctantly hugging her back, desperately trying to ignore the amused gazes of the adults.

It was her father’s chuckle that made Rey realize her inappropriate position.

“Sorry,” she blushed, pulling away. Teng helped her stand up, and Rey asked, “What are you doing here?”

Teng awkwardly glanced over at Quom, “Uh… Turns out Quom was the one who bought me from Meru.”

All eyes turned on Quom, and the Vrogem looked away in embarrassment.

“That’s why you’ve been working so hard these past few weeks,” Luke realized. “Not to avoid us… to buy him.”
Quom shrugged, “I didn’t want MG to go running off and having an adventure trying to find him. Besides, someone’s gotta keep an eye on this rapscallion before he wrecks serious havoc. It’s my… civic duty.”

Rey ran over to Quom and threw her arms around him in a tight hug. Quom chuckled and returned the embrace.

Over her shoulder, Quom shared a look with Luke. There was no need to ask why Quom hadn’t asked Luke to pay for Teng himself. Quom would never dare voice the answer, and Luke didn’t need to hear it spoken.

“Thank you so much,” Rey whispered to Quom.

“Anything for you, Miracle Girl,” Quom grinned, holding her tight. He caught Teng’s eyes as he held Rey, “It was my pleasure.”

Teng’s face went a little red.

Aletha laughed happily at the sight and wrapped her arms around Luke’s waist. He instantly returned the gesture, unabashedly pulling her in close in the open gaze of Rey.

“I guess that means you three have figured things out?” Quom asked.

“I told them the truth,” Rey admitted. “So, what’s going to happen to Teng now?”

“He’ll stay with me,” Quom answered. “I’ve got the extra cot. We can get a sleeping bag for the nights you want to stay with us… Teng of course gets the sleeping bag when you’re around.”

Teng frowned, “Why are you glaring at me? Of course she would get it.”

“She better get it,” Quom warned. “Otherwise you sleep with one eye open.”

“Doctor Kymeri, can I come live with you instead? I’m scared he’s going to kill me in my sleep.”

“Sorry, Teng, but he did buy you. But Quom, no killing Teng.”

“But Doc-”

“No buts,” Aletha fixed him with a stern look.

“Oh man,” Quom grumbled. “You got lucky, kid.”

Teng looked anxiously between Quom and Aletha, “Are they always like this?”

“The four of us in general as a matter of fact,” Rey replied. She grinned at him, “Welcome to the family.”

Teng gave a less than enthusiastic smile.

“Yay,” he said weakly, lamely pumping his fist.

Luke laughed at the group in front of him. Sure, they were no Han Solo or Leia Organa, but he was truly content with the strange little family he made on Jakku. He missed his legal family dearly and looked forward to the day that he got to see them again, but until that day came he had this family.

And this family was more than enough. If the past wanted to stay hidden for now, so be it.
What more could he ask for?

Lando Calrissian woke up, upside down. More specifically, he woke up lying upside over the back of the couch in his living room. His body ached from the uncomfortable position, his head pounding from the excess of alcohol the previous night. But as his blurry vision cleared up, Lando found that there were much worse positions he could have woken up in.

Han Solo was lying facedown on the coffee table.

“Okay,” Han groaned as the men pushed themselves off the furniture. “We are definitely too old to be doing this sort of thing anymore.”

“Remember the days when we could drink twice the amount of alcohol as we did last night and wake up without even a hangover?” Lando checked to make sure his mourner's armband - a black piece of fabric with a blue morning glory embroidered on it, tied around his upper right arm - was still on him. He then pulled a face as he put a hand on his back. “I don’t think spines are meant to be bent this way.”

“Fliss was right. She always used to say that I didn’t go on benders often, but when I did I went hard. Then again she once literally ended up in the hospital with a head injury from her bender.”

“Alyla used to just say she didn’t mind the occasional bender as long as she was the only woman I was waking up next to,” Lando smiled. “Then again, usually she was the one to wake up on the coffee table. That girl could really put them back. I think the day I first saw how well she could drink was the day I decided that this girl was special and I needed to hold onto her… Well, that and about three dozen other reasons.”

“Oh great,” Han groaned. “I get an early morning dose of guilt over being a huge screw up of a father and having a kid who runs around killing family and friends.”

“Let’s get off the topic before we both decide we need another drink,” Lando headed towards the kitchen. He paused briefly to smile at the vase of freshly cut blue morning glories that always sat on his dining table. “Cup of caf?”

“Make it two,” Han settled down on the couch.

“Oh, I forgot to ask yesterday. How’s Leia doing?”

“Recovery’s going very well. She’ll be back to yelling at me in no time.”

“And they still think Ben did it?”

“Well he murdered your girlfriend and his five-year-old cousin. It’s not out of the realm of possibility.”

Lando was silent.

Han sighed, “I’m sorry. I shouldn’t have-”

“It’s okay,” Lando said as he carried a tray with cups and a pot of caf to the coffee table. He set the tray down and slumped down on the couch, a little less brightness in his eyes, “It’s the truth. Ben killed Alyla and Rey. There’s nothing that can change that.”
“I’m sorry.”

“It’s not your fault.”

“Yeah, it is.” Han rubbed his temples, “God, this headache is killing me. How much did we drink?”

“A lot,” Lando answered. “I swear, I’m going to outlaw gambling here on Cloud City if I’m put through another night like last night.”

“I just can’t believe that Ducain guy actually thought I could get drunk enough to lose the Millennium Falcon in a hand of Sabacc.”

“Well, that’s how I lost it to you.”

“Yeah, but I’m smarter than you.”

Lando raised an eyebrow.

“At Sabacc at least,” Han chugged his caf.

“I just feel bad for poor Chewbacca,” Lando took a drink. “He got pretty knocked back for a Wookiee.”

“I’m just thankful he’s down in the hanger guarding the Falcon. I don’t trust that Ducain.” Finishing his cup of caf, Han scrunched his nose, “Hey do you mind if I borrow some clothes? These are getting pretty ripe.”

“Now, Han, what kind of man just helps himself to his friend’s clothing?”

Han raised an eyebrow in perfect imitation of Lando, “I have at least five eyewitness statements testifying that you wore my clothing immediately after freezing me in carbonite.”

“Bedroom’s three doors down on the right,” Lando stuck a thumb toward the hallway.

Han got up and started to walk around the couch. He had a teasing look on his face, and opened his mouth to speak, but whatever wiry joke he wanted to utter was cut off when he suddenly tripped over a giant, furry mass on the floor.

“Chewie!” Han exclaimed.

“Rowr,” Chewie moaned weakly, his hangover affecting him as badly as his friends.

“Hey Chewie,” Lando grinned as Han helped the Wookiee to his feet.

“Oh my god,” Han gasped. “Chewie what are you doing here?”

Ra grr ro row.

“Yeah, I figured as much, I mean why are you here?”

“Han, ease off him,” Lando chuckled. “Wookiee hangovers must be killer.”

“Lando!” Han snapped. “If Chewie is here, who is watching the Millennium Falcon?”

There was a silent beat as the horror dawned on them, and then all three made a mad dash to the door. They looked ridiculous and undignified as they bolted through the halls of Cloud City, but
none of them cared. All that mattered was that their fear hadn’t come true.

But when they reached the now empty hanger that had contained the Millennium Falcon the previous night, and learned twenty minutes later from Lobot that Ducain and his crew had disappeared from the city, it appeared that it was true.

“Oh my god,” Han stared at the empty hanger with wide eyed horror, “I lost the Millennium Falcon.”

The hanger was utterly silent.

And then Lando burst into laughter.

“Oh Han,” he slung an arm over Han’s shoulders. “I am so being there when you tell Leia.”

Chapter End Notes

Coming Up Next Chapter…

One Man’s Trash

Luke doesn’t know what to do when the Millennium Falcon shows up on Jakku, and Rey decides to build a speeder.
One Man's Trash

Chapter Summary

Niima Outpost gets a new form of entertainment, Rey gets a vision, and Luke has a panic attack.

Chapter Notes

Special thank you to miranda88 who suggested I make Finn’s colour be aquamarine and Teng’s be maroon. I’m actually going to switch them so Teng is aquamarine to go with the blue/green motif I’m looking to establish, and Finn is maroon because the other members of the First Order are reds (Hux is blood orange and Phasma is scarlet.) Enjoy your reward of naming Teng’s parents. Ronhar and Saché Malar are wonderful names.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The Long Way Home

Chapter Thirty-Seven

One Man’s Trash

AGE THIRTEEN

There isn’t much to Niima besides the Blobfish’s concession stand, particularly if you don’t have credits. There’s the bazaar where you can buy guns and black-market stuff, and a couple of launch bays that pass for a spaceport. But nothing anyone leading a normal life would want.

- Rey’s Survival Guide

It was a truth that all residents of Niima Outpost had to admit at some point or another: Niima Outpost was a boring place. Everyone had the same day: wake up, scavenger, barter with Plutt, eat, sleep, repeat. Nothing exciting ever happened on Jakku, and news of the world tended to show up several years late. The story of the Burning of Rornian had only just reached Niima Outpost, and the conclusion of the story with the reported “fate” of Luke Skywalker’s wife and daughter were still years away. In fact, as far as Niima Outpost was concerned, Luke Skywalker’s wife and child were still on the run.

So when Unkar Plutt purchased a new retinue of weaponry, his thugs decided to make their own entertainment.
The crowd winced as the staff cracked against Vance Thurinos’s skull, and Roke sent the alien to the ground cold.

“Winner – Roke,” Kerlos Slarga announced, holding up Roke’s arm.

There was a polite round of clapping as Vance was dragged out of the fighting circle. Aletha was waiting at the side of the new wooden structure with her medical bag and a cot at the ready.

“That was a nasty takedown,” Rey said as she assisted Aletha in treating Vance.

“Well, this whole fighting ring thing is a nasty business,” Aletha had Rey hold Vance’s head steady as she rolled the bandages around it. “I’ve heard much worse happens in Zygerria, and not just in the pits themselves.”

“Look at Roke,” Rey said in disgust as the thug fought a new contender.

Kael Merquise wasn’t one of Plutt’s thugs, but rather a fellow scavenger. While the thugs fought each other for bragging rights and to show off their talents to the residents (aka remind them what happens when you mess with Plutt,) the rest of Niima Outpost was allowed to fight the thugs for reward. Everyone who wanted to watch the matches had to pay half a portion, and if a regular person beat a thug, they would win the daily pay of portions. If more than one resident won against a thug, the winnings would be split… however such an occurrence had yet to happen. Residents could also fight each other and the winner would get a prize of five portions per victory.

“I would love to just take that staff from him,” Rey glared at Roke as he swung the quarterstaff across Kael’s shins.

Aletha grinned, “I would pay good money to see that. Someone needs to put Roke in his place.”

“You have already,” Rey looked at his steelpecker scarred arms. “And anyway, you don’t pay to watch these. They pay you to be on standby.”

“As much as I hate these wretched things, I do admit they keep me in business. Thanks for helping me out today.”

“No problem. Anytime we can get Quom to get off his lazy butt and go scavenge is a good day.”

“I resent that statement!”

Rey and Aletha looked up to see Luke and Quom returning from their bartering with Plutt.

“You two back already?” Aletha asked as Luke hugged Rey. “Mustn’t been a very big haul.”

“I think you underestimate my abilities,” he greeted her with a kiss. “And Quom, Rey’s right, you are getting lazy. It was bad enough when I first got here, once we started Rey on scavenging you got worse, and now that you have Teng working for us you’ve been terrible.”

“Why go out personally when I’ve got a guy instead with a keen sense of jackpot loads, a girl with the agility of a vulptex, and a boy to do all the fixing and polishing? Personally, I think I excel in the management field.”

“Where is Teng?” Rey asked as one of the thug carried off Vance under Aletha’s watchful eye.

“Off checking out the new ship merchants,” Quom replied. “I think the boy has quite the silver tongue.”
Rey raised an eyebrow.

“Don’t test that theory.”

She rolled her eyes, “Come on, Uncle Quom! Just because he’s a boy my age doesn’t mean I’m going to make out with him. I have more standards than that.”

They would be making out within two years.

“What have you girls been up to today?” Luke asked. His arm was wrapped around Aletha’s waist.

“Fighting ring all day?”

“Actually we went out hunting this morning,” Aletha smiled.


“Shot some steelpeckers that were bothering Karica’s bloggins,” Aletha reported.

“Just got back?” Quom asked.

Karica was the first of the Sacred Villages, about an hour’s drive from Niima Outpost.

“Few hours ago,” Aletha shrugged. “Bobbajo gave me a good price for the steelpeckers, and then we came here.”

Bloggins are avians with eyestalks and long tails. Their eyestalks let them see predators coming from far away, but this doesn’t do much good because they might be the dumbest creatures in the galaxy. Their reaction to trouble is to panic, run around in circles squawking, and then they try to fly (which they aren’t very good at).

The Sacred Villagers raise bloggins for meat, feathers, and oil. And if you’re in Niima, Bobbajo the Crittermonger will have some trussed for sale on his back.

- Rey’s Survival Guide

“Is he still telling that ridiculous story that his creatures are responsible for the destruction of the first Death Star?” Luke scowled.


Luke crossed his arms, “It’s the ones that do that bother me.”

“Don’t worry, Dad,” Rey laughed. “We know it was Skywalker who destroyed the Death Star. No needed to get weirdly offended… Well, Skywalker and Han Solo.”

He groaned, “Why do you always make Luke stories about Han?”

“Because Han Solo is so much cooler than Luke Skywalker.”

A chuckle at his side made Luke glare at Quom, “Stop enjoying this.”
“Never.”

“If it makes you feel better,” Rey added, “Aletha’s cooler than both of them.”


“Oh, thanks Sunshine,” Aletha hugged Rey. “But I’m not cooler than Han Solo or Luke Skywalker.”

“Of course you are,” Rey said. “They may have done some awesome things, but you taught me to shoot your sniper rifle this morning. Makes you so much cooler than some story.”


“The girl needs to defend herself, Luke,” Aletha stood by her decision.

“I’m sorry, but you gave me hell after teaching my own daughter own to drive, and then you turn around and teach someone who is not technically your own child how to fire a weapon?”

“That’s precisely why I taught her. If you deem her old enough to control a large machine that can cause massive destruction, surely she can handle a small, contained one.”

“You really can get petty, can’t you?”

“It’s been five years since the Roke incident, and you’re figuring it out now?”

Rey laughed and looked back at the fighting ring. Haken Ruo was fighting Thalo Tame.

“Hey, where did Roke go?” she asked.

“GUYS! GUYS!”

Teng Malar’s voice shouted across the market seconds before he emerged racing through the crowd.

“Guys! Guys!” Teng skidded to a stop, his eyes lit up in more excitement than they had ever seen. He grabbed Quom’s arm and started to try and pull him forward, “Come on, you’ve gotta see this!”

“Whoa, steady boy,” Quom pulled his arm out of Teng’s grasp. “Settle down, son.”

“Yeah, Teng, what’s going on?” Rey asked with a frown.

“Guys, this ship!” Teng panted. “You gotta see the state of this ship!”


“I don’t know what it’s called, but it’s new in the yard. Come on, you gotta see it. Quick before someone else approaches the Captain with an offer of work.”

“You’ve made a contact with the Captain?” Quom was surprised. Usually Teng didn’t take such initiative without direct orders from Quom.

“Well… no,” Teng admitted. “But come on, this ship needs major work. It looks like absolute garbage. We could really rake it in on this.”

Luke and Quom exchanged a look.

“Oh, come on,” Quom decided. “Let’s give it a shot.”
Without a word, Teng grabbed Rey’s hand, and the two teens took off with a pair of grinning and runs. The adults traded amused grins.

“So, are we going to do a pool on this?” Aletha asked as the group casually strolled towards Niima Outpost’s ‘landing port.’ “Because at this rate, there’s no way those two aren’t hooking up in a few years.”


“I say one,” Aletha said.

“I say next week,” Quom groaned.

Romance was the furthest thing from Rey’s mind as she raced through Niima Outpost holding Teng Malar’s hand. She laughed with Teng, feeling perfectly comfortable and at ease with him as they pushed through the town.

Rey didn’t much like people grabbing her hand without permission – it was something she remembered Jarex doing a lot – and Teng hadn’t liked it either. He said it reminded him of the way his mother would always grab his hand and pull him behind her protectively when dealing with the pirates.

It was an incident while scavenging that had started them with the hand holding. Teng had been on a shaky ledge when it started to break. Terrified of another X-Wing incident, Rey grabbed Teng’s hand and yanked him to safety. They had an awkward moment in which they agreed due to personal comfort levels not to do such a thing again. A few weeks, Teng instinctively grabbed Rey’s hand and yanked her behind a rock ledge when they were divebombed by a steelpecker. After that, they had an unspoken agreement that they trusted each other enough to grab each other’s hands without asking prior consent.

She didn’t know it at the time, but as silly as it was, Rey would forever associate the juvenile act of hand holding as something very intimate… and her love for Teng.

“Just wait until you see this thing, Rey,” Teng said. “It’s just indescribably awful. Like… like the Quom’s speeder of spaceships.”

“Oh, now you’re building it up too much,” she grinned.

Teng pulled her to a stop, “Trust me, I’m not.”

He pointed behind Rey, and when she turned, her jaw dropped.

“What a piece of garbage!” Rey exclaimed as she set eyes on the Corellian freighter.

She couldn’t believe the ship before her. It was atrocious. It was ugly. It was poorly put together. It was modified to hell and back. It was trash. It was-

…It was familiar.

No, that couldn’t be possible. If she had seen a ship like this before, she would remember it.

But she did remember it.
No, she was being silly. She didn’t know this ship. How could she? And even if she did know a ship remotely like this, what were the actual odds that it would have ended up with her on Jakku?

Unless it belonged to someone looking for her.

“Have you seen the crew?” Rey asked.

“Uh, no,” Teng frowned. He thought she would have had a bigger reaction to the ship than staring blankly at it.

“Can we get closer to it?”

He stared at her oddly, “I guess.”

She released Teng’s hand and started walking towards it. Rey didn’t blink or take in her surroundings as she moved towards the ship, drawn like a mohar to a flame.

Meanwhile, Luke was busy arguing with Aletha as they trailed with Quom behind the teenagers, completely obvious to what was going on.

“I’m not going to apologize for teaching Rey to shoot,” Aletha exclaimed.

“You had no right to do that without my permission,” Luke snapped. He was walking in front of Aletha, facing backwards as they fought. Uncle Owen always told him to look a person in the eye if you were going to argue with them. A little thing like motility wasn’t going to stop Luke from being a gentleman. “She’s my daughter, Aletha. I get to make those decisions.”

“Oh, would you stop flip flopping with your opinion? I know I’m not her mother, but it feels like every day you keep redefining my role with her. How can you give me full permission to talk to her about things like the mechanics of sexual intercourse and the horrors of war, and have her assist in surgeries, and have Quom get her to scavenge ships and fix dangerous ships, and do all of that without running it by you, but then turn around and get mad at me for teaching her to protect herself?”

“She’s still too young to need to learn fighting and weaponry.”

“Rey is thirteen years old, Luke. She’s not a little girl. Jakku isn’t like civilized planets, no one’s going to be giving her a break anymore. Most people don’t even know about the Jarex thing these days. People die and leave here all the time. It’s not the same group of people that were here eight years ago. Pretty soon she’s going to have to defend herself, and I’m going to make sure she can do so. Quom back me up on this.”

“Hell no. I’m not getting in the middle of this.”

“Fine,” Luke said. “Since it’s apparently so confusing, let me state it for the record: I don’t want anyone but me teaching her how to use a weapon without my permission. Understood?”

“Fine,” Aletha narrowed her eyes. “But that doesn’t solve the issue.”

“There is no issue.”

“Oh, there’s the ship,” Quom said casually. He crossed his arms, “Wow, Teng was right. That is trash.”
Luke and Aletha just stared at each other.

“I know you’re hiding from the First Order, Luke. We both know that you can’t do it forever.”

“I know it’s not going to be forever, but it’s not going to be today.”

“You can’t control that. What if it does happen today? What if your past comes crashing back into your life here and now? Wow that ship is garbage.”

Luke rolled his eyes, “My past isn’t going to come crashing back into my life today.”

He turned around and his jaw dropped.

Sitting in front of him was the freaking *Millennium Falcon* itself.

Luke’s eyes were wide and his face pale. He was frozen in place, utterly petrified by shock and terror. Even if his brain was barely unable to process the sight before him, he was able to speak. That is, he was able to mutter something under his breath in Huttese that is too vulgar to write down.

The *Millennium Falcon* was here. Holy crap. What was the *Millennium Falcon* doing on Jakku? How did it get here? Did Han and Chewie bring it here? Had his secret somehow gotten out? Maybe Jarex blabbed and Han found out, and he came racing here to get Rey and Luke and beat the hell out of his idiot renegade brother-in-law for breaking Leia’s heart.

He couldn’t handle it; he couldn’t face Han. Not here and now. Oh, no, no, no, no Luke was screwed. Rey’s survival couldn’t be public knowledge, not yet. She was still so young. But Han would never keep that sort of secret from Leia, and Luke could never ask such a thing.

When his mind finally caught up to the situation, his instincts kicked in. He reached out into the Force and searched for that familiar yellow-gold Signature Han Solo carried. Luke looked for any familiar Signature. Chewbacca’s golden-brown. Leia’s navy blue. Lando’s black.

Luke sensed no one familiar. All he felt were his sky blue, Rey’s lilac, Teng’s aquamarine, Aletha’s crisp white, Quom’s rusty grey, and a multitude of other unfamiliar colours. But that didn’t mean his family wasn’t around. Maybe Leia was here and blocking their colours from Luke. Maybe she sensed the familiar lilac and figured out-

*Rey!*

Luke’s eyes set on his daughter walking towards the Falcon, and he shot into action.

“Rey!” he yelled, racing forward.

Luke reached her in seconds, before anyone could realize what was going on. He grabbed Rey’s arm, jolting her out of the mini trance upon her, and yanked her back away from the Falcon.

“Rey, we have to go *now!*** Luke’s voice was utterly panicked.

“Dad?” she blinked. “What’s-”

“No time to explain. We have to leave now.”

“Leave where? The walker?”

“Maybe the walker? Maybe Jakku altogether. I’ll figure it out later. We just have to go.”
“Luke, what is going on?” Aletha exclaimed as she, Quom, and Teng raced up to them.

Quom glared at Teng, “What’d you do?”

“Nothing,” Teng was as confused as the rest.

“Dad, why are we leaving?” Rey pulled her arm out of his grasp. “Is it because of the ship?”

“Luke?” Quom grabbed his arm and pulled him in close. He whispered in his ear, “Seriously, what’s with all the fuss? This a you know what thing?”

Luke took a deep breath and muttered back, “Quom, that’s the Millennium Falcon.”

Quom burst out laughing.

Luke shoved him away, “You’re not helping!”

“I’m not trying to help. Oh boy, this’ll be entertaining!”

“What will be entertaining?” Aletha looked between them. “Luke, seriously, what is going on?”

He sighed and gazed at Aletha. He wanted to confess everything to her, make her understand the severity of the situation. Make her understand why he had to take Rey and leave. Ask her to come with them so he didn’t have to leave a piece of his heart with her.

But he couldn’t do it.

“I’m sorry.” Luke looked at Rey, “Come on, we have to go. I’ll… explain everything. I promise.”

Tears and disbelief were in Aletha’s eyes, “But Luke-”

“I love you,” he whispered. Luke pulled her in for one last kiss. “We’ll see each other again.”


Quom placed a hand on Aletha’s shoulder to hold her back. He would have the burden to explain things to her once Luke was gone.

Teng watched helplessly as Rey was pulled away from him. Her teary and confused eyes didn’t leave his own. She put all her energy into locking the image of those vibrant green orbs in her mind one last time. Rey wouldn’t let herself forget him; not like her mother.

Luke was collecting this thoughts, trying to make a game plan of what to do next and how to explain things to Rey when he literally smacked into Unkar Plutt.


Luke blinked, “Your ship?”

“Dad, what’s going on?” Rey asked.

“Give me a minute. What do you mean your ship? Do you mean-”

“That hunk of junk that’s really not worth our time?” Roke finished. His quarterstaff was casually hanging from his shoulder.
“Oh, it’s worth our time,” Plutt chuckled. “I’m sure it’s very valuable to some people.”

Luke narrowed his eyes.

“So that thing is your ship?” Rey said. “Why is Dad freaking out about it?”


“No idea,” Plutt answered.

Dirk scowled, “But Boss, isn’t it because it’s-”

Roke punched him in the stomach.

“Hey, don’t you touch him!” Rey launched herself forward, only to be suddenly pulled back by Teng.

“Easy there,” Teng restrained her. “That’s a battle you’re not going to win.”

“I bet I could,” Rey growled.

Roke chuckled, “Anytime you want to fight, Princess, I’m up for it. I don’t give a damn who your dad is.”


“Luke,” Aletha called as she and Quom caught up to them. “What is going on?”

“Now there’s another woman I want to face off with.” Roke grinned and stroked his quarterstaff. Vance Thurinos’s blood still glistened at the end of it. “What do you say, Kymeri? Let’s go a round in the ring.”

Aletha narrowed her eyes, “I’ve survived on Jakku by not being stupid. Now, seriously, what’s going on?”

Luke was silent as all eyes fell on him.

It seemed he had only one choice.

“I…” He couldn’t believe what he was about to say, “I used to work on that ship.”

Aletha and the kids looked at each other in surprised, as Quom and the goons peered at Luke in interest at his chosen words. Technically it was true… from a certain point of view.

He swore he heard Obi-Wan Kenobi laughing at him.

“You worked on that ship,” Rey repeated.

“Apparently not very well,” Teng muttered.

She elbowed him.

“Ow!”

“Your friend? Nah, word is that he’s been looking for this for almost a year now. See, I stole it from the Irving Boys, who stole it from Ducain, who stole it from your friend, H-”

“I get it. So, he’s not here then?”

“Your past is safe for a while longer yet, but you can guarantee he’ll be looking for it.”

“If he arrives, I’ll deal with it appropriately.”

“Appropriately?” Plutt laughed. “Seemed like you thought the best way to deal with it was to frantically run off, bumbling nonsensical explanations.”


“So this friend is really an enemy?” Aletha asked.

He turned and looked guilty at her, “No, not at all. I just… I feared what it meant if he found me. Life has been so peaceful on Jakku, and we’ve finally settled into some weird sort of normality. I’m worried that something’s going to happen that will change everything.”

“Who’s this friend, Dad?” Rey asked.

Luke sighed, “That’s a story for another day, but he was my best friend during the war… Actually, he’s the best friend I’ve ever had.”

Quom loudly cleared his throat.


“Really?” Quom shot. “You’re just going to stand there and say he’s your best friend? Fine. Screw you, Aletha’s my best friend now.”

Luke groaned. Why did he feel like five years from now Han and Quom would have a best friend off? He had to stop hanging around such insane people.

“So to be clear, nobody who owned this ship or was associated with this ship during the time I spent on it, is currently on Jakku?” Luke asked Plutt.

“Correct,” Plutt nodded.

Luke glanced back at the ship. Deep down, part of him yearned to race onto it and relish in the memories of the ship that had once been his home. But he knew for the sake of Rey he would have to stay away.

“Alright then,” Luke said. “If you promise not to drag me into this mess, I’ll stay away from your ship.”

Plutt and Roke exchanged a look.

“That’s not exactly going to work.”

“What do you mean?”

“I’ve got a bit of a… proposition for you, Erso.”

“The answer is no,” Luke replied immediately. He grabbed the arms of Rey and Aletha, “Come on,
let’s go.”

“Hear me out, Luke,” Plutt exclaimed. “I just want you to check over the ship. Make sure there’s nothing or no one hiding in any secret compartments that I might overlook. You must know the ship inside out.”

“It’s not happening. Come on, everyone.”


“I’ll pay you!” Plutt offered.

“Not happening,” Luke just marched forward, guiding Rey and Aletha as Quom and Teng followed behind.

“Three portions a day!”


“For a year!”

Rey hesitated, but Quom nudged her forward.

“For each of the five of you.”

The group stopped in their tracks.

“Excuse me?” Aletha turned back slowly.

“All five of you get three portions a day for a year,” Plutt promised. “All I want is one day of Erso checking out the ship.”

Luke felt the eyes of the others on them. He knew none of them would ask, but the offer was tempting to them. While Luke and Rey ate three portions a day on a regular basis, Aletha, Quom, and Teng did not. Sure, they certainly ate a lot better than they had before Luke’s influence. Quom’s fur was thicker and shinier, Aletha’s ribs no longer stuck out, and in the past year, Teng had gained five inches of height, thirty pounds, and a good set of muscle. But they still went to bed hungry. A year of food could mean the world to them.

Could he really say no?


“Be here bright and early tomorrow morning,” Plutt said. “We’ll be waiting.”

“Then if you’ll excuse us, we have work to do,” Luke led the group away.

“Thank you, Luke,” Aletha said quietly as Rey raced forward with Teng to discuss what all had occurred. “You didn’t have to do that.”

“For you, of course I did,” Luke wrapped his arms around her waist and kissed her forehead.

She glanced back at Quom who was giving them a respectable distance, “Does Quom know something I don’t?”
“I may have been forced into a situation several years ago where I had to explain part of my past to him because he saw something he shouldn’t have. He actually thought I should tell you too, but I told him no, out of fear of your safety.”

“The less I know, the better?”

“Exactly.” He watched her, “Does that bother you?”

“A little,” she confessed, “but I know it’s not malicious and it really doesn’t matter. I don’t care who or what you were before Jakku. All I know is that I love the man called Luke Erso, not whatever you were before.”

“And I love the woman called Doctor Aletha Kymeri. Not Medic Aletha Anthea.”

She smiled at him coyly, “You know, if you have to be in town bright and early tomorrow, there’s really no point in you going to the walker tonight.”

Luke raised an eyebrow, “I thought we ran out of protection two weeks ago. Did Jedek Haru’s latest restock include more.”


“Hey Quom?” Luke called.

“Yeah?” he answered.

“Can you take Rey tonight?”

Quom grinned, “Attaboy.”

Luke rolled his eyes.

Rey shuddered, not needing an explanation, “I miss the days of euphemisms.”

Teng laughed, taking a bit of joy in Rey’s reddening face, “Someone’s getting lucky tonight.”

“Shut up!” she elbowed him.

Teng just laughed.

Plutt watched with narrowed eyes as the group left.

“You know Skywalker’s not going to tell you anything about the ship,” Roke said.

“And that’s why we’ll be watching him very closely,” Plutt replied. “He’s bound to say or do something that we can exploit.”

“Oh, so if he’s quick to bypass something—”

“That’s where something’s hidden.”

“I don’t know. Skywalker seems a little too smart for that. How do we know he’s not just going to steal the ship from us?”

“Which is why we’re not telling him that we found the Imperial tracking device they got bugged with back on the Death Star. If he hasn’t found it in twenty-eight years, he’s not going to find it
Dirk frowned but stayed silent. His gut was telling him this wasn’t a nice thing to do, but he vaguely understood the importance of the Millennium Falcon to Rey. She was a nice girl and didn’t deserve to have the First Order take her like her Mom. So if keeping his mouth shut was going to keep her safe, then his mouth would stay shut.

…Plus he really didn’t want to get punched by Roke again.

“Oh God, Luke, yes, just a little more,” Aletha urged as he slammed between her legs. “Oh, Baby, I’m almost there.”

Luke grunted as he buried his face in her ample breasts. Aletha wasn’t a dirty talker like Felicity, rather giving herself over to loud moans, groans, and sighs of ecstasy as he made love to her. But Aletha would tell him when she was getting close to orgasm, and that was something he excelled at.

Making love to Aletha Kymeri was one of the most pleasurable things Luke Skywalker experienced in his life. While he would occasionally muse over the difference in techniques between Aletha and Felicity, he dare not ever compare the pleasures. It really didn’t matter to him which of the two he found more enjoyable, they were too different to make a judgement, and Felicity did have several years practice advantage over Aletha… though Aletha’s medical degree did aid her in being able to find and hit all the sweet spots more efficiently than Felicity. Then again, Felicity had no shame over being quite the tease.

It was much easier if Luke just never made a final call on the issue. Besides, there was no way making said call would end in anything but hurting one of the women he loved.

Instead he just enjoyed the partner he was with at that point in time. He loved the way Aletha lost herself to passion, digging her nails into his shoulders, scratching his back, slamming her hips against his, and biting at his neck. She really was a nexu in heat.

It was probably his Jedi training alone that gave Luke the patience to hold off until his partners had reached their pleasure. But when Aletha reached her peak that hot summer night, Luke was relieved to release himself inside of her.

“I swear that gets better every time,” Aletha panted as Luke withdrew from her and dealt with the condom.

“That’s because it does,” Luke settled back into the bed – their usual method of pushing Aletha’s cot and the medical cot together – with her. He held her and kissed her as they basked in the afterglow.

“You know, I’m really glad that I found you here. I don’t know if I could have made it these past eight years without you.”

“Definitely would have killed Quom if I hadn’t been here.”

“And Roke and Plutt and Jarex and a good number of people who wanted to mess with my daughter.”

“So, speaking of Quom, I’ve gotta ask, why does he get to know about your past, and I don’t?”

Luke sighed, “Aletha, the only reason he knows is that he ended up in the wrong time and place. If I had my way, he wouldn’t know.”
“But he does, so why don’t I get that honour? And don’t give me that whole it’s for your own protection. I’m being actively hunted by the First Order myself.”

“I… I just don’t want to lose you.” Luke stroked her arm as he let himself get lost in old memories, “My mother died minutes after I was born, and my father was indirectly responsible for it. My Aunt and Uncle raised me, and were violently murdered when I was nineteen. My childhood best friend was shot down in battle by my father. The first partner I ever loved was killed before I could tell her how I felt. My father turned out to not only be alive, but an Imperial. He saved my life, but gave his in the process. Both my mentors died before I was ready to lose them. My wife was violently murdered by someone I love. Everything I worked for, for twenty years was taken from me. And the moment I heard that my little girl had died was the worst moment of my life. I couldn’t cope with it all, and that’s how I ended up here. If I lost you-”

“You won’t,” Aletha promised. “I’m not going anywhere, I promise.”

“What about the day the First Order finds one of us? What happens then? Do we stay and fight together, or does one of us bow out to protect the other?”

“…I don’t know. Truthfully, I’m not much for plans. Life has never given me the pleasure of letting me fulfill them. But I do know this, no matter what happens, I will always love you. Even if you turn out to be Han Solo himself… except for the fact he’s married. I don’t mess around with married men unless a late wife is involved.”

“Trust me, you’re not my mistress. I would rather die than have an affair.”

“Good, because if I do find out that I’ve been your mistress, I may have to kill you.” Aletha frowned, “Actually scratch that. If your wife is alive, I’m getting the hell as far away from you as possible. That woman terrifies me.”

“Don’t worry, she would kill me on your behalf… Very slowly and painfully too.” He kissed her forehead and got out of bed, “I’m going to go get some water. You want some?”

“Not to drink, but I could use a wipe down,” Aletha watched him dress. “I am absolutely drenched in sweat, and a lot of it is not even my own.”

“I like to get in a good workout every now and then,” Luke grinned and kissed her. “I’ll be right back.”

Luke grabbed a pair of canteens and headed for the well. It was the pitch black of night, and no one in Niima Outpost was outside. They were all either sound asleep or off scavenging.

He was in a pretty good mood as he filled the canteens at the town well. Luke glanced at the Millennium Falcon in the distant. He shook his head. He couldn’t believe it; what were the actual odds that the Millennium Falcon showed up on Jakku of all places? How did Han even lose it? A part of him worried that he might have lost it because Han had been killed, but Luke dismissed the idea. He would have sensed it if Han died. Once upon a time he might have believed otherwise because of what happened to Felicity and Rey, but their deaths had been explained by Rey not actually dying, and Felicity’s ysalamir serum.

He did wonder why the serum needed two parts though.

Luke shook the thought away. He was no chemist.

He splashed some water on his face, and rubbed it on his sweaty back. He looked down at his reflection in the water. Dirty, hairy, and ragged; if Han had been on the ship, would he have even
recognized Luke?

He wondered what Han, Leia, Chewie, and Lando looked like now. Luke knew what Artoo and Threepio looked like; no one ever dared changing their plating. He let his mind drift to his other friends: Diego, Wedge, Kalonia. What did Poe look like? All grown up now. Poe was now older than Luke was at the Battle of Endor. Now there was a scary thought.

What did Ben look like?

Luke quickly pushed it away. He didn’t care what Kylo Ren looked like; the boy he loved had died along with Alyla, Reine, and Felicity. Along with the man they once called Luke Skywalker.

The past was gone, and so was that life. No point in worrying about it anymore.

He sensed someone moving not far from him. Luke looked up and was surprised to see the figure creeping onto the Millennium Falcon. It was Rey.

Luke hesitated; his gut told him to go after her, but his heart knew better. The Force was calling Rey to the ship of her past, and he understood her need to go explore. She was a teenaged Skywalker, and that was not a thing easily contained.

He smiled as his daughter climbed the loading ramp and disappeared into the ship. She would find safety in the walls of a ship she once called a second home. It was in that ship she had taken her first steps, and perhaps it was in that ship she took her first steps into the mystery that was her past.

Luke capped the canteens, and returned to Aletha’s bed.

Rey stared at the ship in wonder. Neither Quom nor Teng had noticed her sneak out, both surrendered to slumber and making the exact same high-pitched snore. She knew she shouldn’t be out alone, and certainly not breaking onto one of Unkar Plutt’s ships, but she couldn’t help herself. She knew this ship.

Had Dad taken her on this ship before? She swore she could hear a toddler’s distant giggle.

Rey took in the sight of the ship with wide eyes. The rusty hallway, the ratty and overmodified cockpit, a ladder leading up and down she vaguely understood to lead to guns, a hollow floor with cracks that she somehow knew to lift up into smuggling compartments. She knew it all.

If you had told Rey the name of this ship – which Rey actually hadn’t bothered to look at, she now realized – she figured she couldn’t tell you a thing about it. But setting her eyes on this familiar space, somehow she knew every inch of its interior.

She walked further into the ship until she came upon the lounge area. A semi-circle of seats surrounded a Holotable.

Rey frowned and ran her fingers along the perimeter. A chunk of the rim had been torn off. Not just cracked, but like a strong set of fingers had ripped it. That was wrong, she knew for some reason. There wasn’t supposed to be a piece missing.

“Good girl, Rey,” a familiar voice suddenly laughed.

She looked up and her heart stopped beating.
Her father was sitting at the table.

No, not her father – well, yes, her father – but he was younger. Rey couldn’t tell how much younger, but his hair was fully blonde and he had no beard. And he was so clean. He wore a black getup that easy showcased how athletic he was. His expression was unburdened, carefree for once, and completely happy. A black glove was on his right hand, a wedding ring on his left, and a little girl on his lap.

Rey didn’t recognize herself at first. She was too clean, too happy, chubby even a little. Her hair was down, and she wore a dress of all things. Rey couldn’t remember ever wearing a dress. She was bouncing eagerly on her father’s lap as they watched the Holotable before them.

They were playing a game on it, and sat across them was their opponent. His back was to her, so all Rey could see was greying brown hair, a cream coloured shirt, and a black vest.

“She must of cheated,” the opponent declared.

“She’s four years old,” chided the younger Luke Erso. He looked at the little girl in his lap, “Your uncle is just a sore loser, isn’t he?”

Little Rey giggled.

“Uncle?” Older Rey whispered.

“Fine, if she didn’t cheat, then you did, Kid,” Uncle said.

Dad rolled his eyes, “Or maybe I’m just a better player than you? I’ve had more practice. You rarely leave the cockpit for a game.”

“Kid, the only reason I’m back here right now is I’ve got a great co-pilot. If he wasn’t here, either you or I would be in that cockpit right now.”

“We do have another person on board.”

“The day I let Felicity Rhiaon fly my ship is the day this family checks me into the nuthouse. Now, admit it, you’re cheating.”

“You just hate admitting you’re losing to a four-year-old. Now, Rey, how are we going to beat your uncle next?”

Little Rey giggled.

Older Rey stumbled back, and suddenly the scene was gone.

What in the Galaxy had been that? Was she dreaming? It made some sense; if she was actually asleep back in Quom’s tent, it would explain why the ship seemed so familiar down to the last detail.

But she pinched herself and didn’t stir.

Rey was awake.

The vision had been real. Was that some sort of long lost memory? Her heart told her that yes, that was what her father had looked like once upon a time, but had she really been aboard this ship with him? Did she really have an uncle?

“Listen to me, Rey,” a woman’s voice filled her mind. They were familiar words, almost like
something from long ago. "You listen to me. Our family is going to come back for you. You do not go with anyone but our family. Do you understand?"

Rey didn’t understand. She didn’t understand why this ship seemed so familiar. Why it seemed to call for her… or maybe she did.

Maybe, as crazy as it sounded, somehow, someway… this ship was family.

A valuable thing scavengers overlook is information.

- Rey’s Survival Guide

The sun was just barely starting to rise when Luke led Roke, Plutt, Dirk, Vance, and Kerlos to the Millennium Falcon. It looked so wrong to see the ship on Jakku, and yet the sight still made him smile. The ships held so many memories, and they all started to rush back to Luke.

Luke remembered the first time he saw the Millennium Falcon. After all the boasting Han had done, Luke expected it to be a glorious sight out of a storybook from its beauty and speed.

The result was far less than expected.

“What a piece of junk!” he exclaimed.

Obi-Wan looked over at him and smiled a little. He very much shared Luke’s sentiment, even if he would never voice it.

Han meanwhile looked like Luke had just insulted his firstborn son.

“She’ll make point five past lightspeed. She may not look like much, but she’s got it where it counts, Kid. I’ve made a lot of special modifications myself.”

Out of his peripheral, Luke saw Obi-Wan roll his eyes. He had to hold back a grin because although Luke could see Han Solo was some smooth-talking scoundrel without the goods to backup him claims, he wasn’t sure how dangerous the man was yet.

Although seriously, this ship was a pile of trash.

“But we’re a little rushed, so if you’ll just get on board we’ll get out of here,” Han pat a hand on Luke’s back and urged him forward as he smiled at Obi-Wan.

“Can you believe this, Ben?” Luke muttered as they walked up the ramp. “Who does this guy think he is? He’s so smug and overly confident. A slimeball. What kind of person would want to hang around a guy like that?”

“Actually,” Obi-Wan glanced back at Han with a smile, “he reminds me a lot of your father.”

Luke fixed his eyes on the ship and took a deep breath.

The *Millennium Falcon* it was garbage then, and it was garbage now. But still, it was home.

“Let’s do this,” Luke said.

---

Chills tingled down his spine as he set foot on the *Millennium Falcon* for the first time in eight years. The last time he had been on the ship had been landing on Rornian to start the cleanup process that triggered Luke’s mental breakdown.

The ship was a little dirtier than last time, a little more banged up, and a little more modified, but by the Gods was it the same ship. It looked the mostly same: the same halls and mechanics Luke could traverse blindfolded. It sounded the same: worrying bangs and hums that always meant no good. It seemed the same: dirt, rust, and a suspicious burning that Han had declared years ago to give up on tried to locate. If it hadn’t blown up yet, Han figured it wasn’t going to blow up at all.

Luke never liked that statement, especially when Rey was aboard the ship.

As he looked around the familiar hallway while thinking of his daughter, Luke smiled. A memory tugged to the forefront of his mind of a very important event in Rey’s life that had occurred in that very hallway.

---

“*Come on, Sweetheart. Come to Mommy,*” Felicity was crouched on the floor in the hallway of the *Millennium Falcon*.

*Luke was at the other end with Rey, helping her as she stood unsteadily to catch her if she fell. They were trying to get Rey to take her first steps.*

“*Come on, Sweetheart,*” Felicity urged. “*You can do it.*”

“*Walk to mommy, Rey,*” Luke urged

“*Would you two give it up?*” Han chuckled as he came up next to Felicity. “*If Rey hasn’t done it in the last two hours, I highly doubt she’ll randomly do it now.*”

“*Hey, you got your own kid in the cockpit to critique, Loud Mouth Solo. Leave this one to us,*” Felicity said.

“*Actually, Chewie is currently critiquing him in the co-pilot’s seat.*”

Luke lifted his eyebrows, “*Have you switched to Manual control?*”

“*Yep,*” Han grinned proudly. “*The boy flies just like his old man.*”

*The ship suddenly jerked roughly, and Luke’s lightning fast reflexes caught Rey before she fell.*
"Sorry!" Ben’s voice called from the cockpit.


He reached into the Force to comfort her but already found Ben’s forest green light trying to soothe Rey. Sure enough, within a minute, Rey’s tears had dried.

“Good girl,” Felicity smiled warmly, having just righted herself. She reached out her arms, “Now, come on. Walk to Mommy.”

“Cut the girl a break,” Han rolled his eyes. “It’s not that important that you see her walk today.”

Felicity narrowed her eyes, “Solo, considering I have spent a significant portion of her life away in a mental health facility and missed most of her firsts, yes. Yes, it is important to see this.”

“Give it up, Fliss,” Han knelt down beside her and assumed the identical open-armed stance. “It’s not as easy as bending down and saying, Come here, Sweetheart. Come walk to Uncle Han.”

Rey waddled the three steps straight into his arms.

“Oh my goodness!” Luke cried as the very shocked Han picked up his niece. He took Rey from Han and showered her with hugs, kisses, and praise, “That’s my girl! Good job! I’m so proud of you!”

Felicity just stared at Han in frozen shock.

“Hey, whadya know?” Han grinned. “I guess it is that easy.”

Felicity smiled, but it did not reach her eyes. In fact, there was a rather psychotic look in them as she stared unblinkingly at him, rising to her feet.

“You got her to walk,” her voice was too pleasant as she stepped forward. She casually grabbed the shoulder of his vest and fiddled with it, “Weeks I’ve been trying to get her to walk and she just one waddles right up to you.”

“Luck of the draw, I guess. You okay, Fliss?” Han frowned as she started to pull the vest over his face. His eyes went wide when she started to press down. “Hey careful, Fliss. Can’t breathe when you do that… Fliss? Fliss? Hey knock it off! Fliss, stop it, you’re smothering me! Luke! Call her off, Kid! Call her off!”

Luke laughed to himself. Felicity had always loved to play around with Han like that… Or at least he hoped Felicity had merely been playing.

Honestly, he couldn’t tell.

“Let’s get down to it, Skywalker,” Plutt boomed looking a little lost being outside his concession stand for once. “Where are the smuggling hatches?”

Luke sighed, hoping Han wouldn’t be too upset with him for doing this, but he had to for his family.

“Down here,” Luke crouched to the floor and showed them the lines on the floor from the lids.


Luke shook his head and got to his feet. He knew they wouldn’t find anything of value to Luke
Luke knew better by now than to ask Han, Chewie, and Lando what were in the cargo boxes they were loading into the smuggling hatches; he just hauled them.

“Good, we should be go to go to Rodia without any problems,” Han declared as they sealed the hatches.

Luke raised an eyebrow, “So everything’s going to go wrong?”

“Almost immediately.”

Luke shook his head.

“You wanna come see how this all goes south, Lando?” Han asked.

“I’d love too, but I’ve got a lovely, young Jedi waiting for me. You can just drop me on Rornian with Luke.”

“How you got a woman to move in with you is beyond me.”

“I’m not sure who was more upset with the move: Ben or Felicity.” Luke paused, “I’ll go with Felicity.”

“Good choice,” Han nodded. “But still, I just can’t wrap my head around Lando Calrissian in love.”

Lando scratched the back of his neck, “Well, we don’t really like to put a label on it.”

“You still haven’t said I love you?” Luke asked. “I remember having a conversation with Alyla before Rey was born, and that was over five years ago.”

“Some things don’t need to be send. I don’t need to tell her, and she doesn’t need to tell me.”

“A girl like that’s gonna want commitment,” Han pointed out.


“Well, with the whole slavery and on the run past she’s had, she’s going to at least want stability. You’ve been living together most of the time, but not always is going to work?”

“It’s working for you and Leia,” Lando pointed out.

“Yeah, but we’ve got a kid and a Luke to tie us together.”

Lando fell silent.


“Well, we don’t have a Luke to tie us together, but… there’s something I need to tell you guys. Alyla and I are getting a kid.”

Whatever Han’s reaction to the statement was, Luke couldn’t see it because there was a sudden roar and a blur of golden-brown fur. The next thing he knew, Lando was airborne in Chewbacca’s arms there. Han never kept things hidden unless he, Chewie, Lando, or Luke was around to protect it.
“Alright, Buddy,” Lando squirmed in Chewie’s grasp. “Let me down. Thank you for being happy, but this isn’t gonna happen for Alyla and I, if one of us is dead.”

“You’re getting a kid?” Han exclaimed. “Who is giving you a kid? Are you stealing one?”

“We’re adopting,” Lando said once Chewie had him back on the ground. “Began working with an agency and it’s looking good.”

“Congratulations,” Luke smiled. “Are you two thinking about raising it on Rornian or Bespin?”

“Depends. Alyla is interested in finding a Force Sensitive kid, and if so, it’ll be Rornian. But a Non-Sensitive will probably stay on Bespin.”

“Boy or girl?” Han asked.

“We’ll see which is a better fit, but honestly I’m kinda hoping for a boy. Actually, we were wondering if you guys might write us a letter of recommendation?”

“Really? Like all of us?”

“We need three letters, so we were thinking Zena and Gavyn, and then you and Leia, and you and Fliss. What do you think?”


“I’ll talk to Leia, but it’ll probably be yes from us too.” Han shook his head, “I just can’t believe it. Lando Calrissian, settled down with the girl and kid.”

“No more unlikely than Han Solo in the same situation,” Luke grinned at his brother-in-law.

“I know,” Lando grinned. “Honestly it feels like for the first time in my life I’m finally going to get a happy ending.”

“Oi, Skywalker!” Plutt shoved Luke. “Help me with this control panel.”

Luke winced as another memory pulled at his mind. He couldn’t bare to relive it, but as he turned around to inspect the control panel on the wall, the memory forced its way to the forefront of his mind.

He heard the sobs before he was even fully in the ship. Luke’s all black outfit weighed heavily on him as his mind replayed Zena’s eulogy for her sister-in-law.

Everyone else was congregated at Skywalker residence, but what Lando disappeared, Luke offered to be the one to find him.

Luke found him slumped on the floor of the Millennium Falcon, his back to the wall next to the control panel. His eyes were red and puffy, but they were dry, no longer having anymore fluid his body to let tears form.

He was staring at a small blue morning glory he was hanging onto with both hands. It had to have
been one of the ones and neatly arranged in Alyla’s hair before Gavyn and Lando lit her pyre. The woman who had once been so full of life was now a pile of ash buried in a shallow grave.

Luke didn’t say anything, just sat down next to his friend, and put a comforting hand on Lando’s shoulder.

“It shouldn’t have been her,” Lando’s voice struggle to overcome a sob. “It shouldn’t have been Alyla.”

Luke rubbed Lando’s shoulder, but remained silent.

“I should have told her, Luke,” Lando whispered. “Why did I never say I love you?”

And Lando to let himself be lost to tears.

“Clear, Boss!” Roke announced as he and the goons climbed out of the hatches and replaced the tops. “It’s clean.”

“Disappointing but expected,” Plutt replied. “Kerlos, come help me with this control panel. I think some of this wiring is mixed up.”

Kerlos rolled up his sleeves, “I’ll see what I can do, Boss.”

“You,” Roke grabbed Luke’s shoulder and shoved him towards a ladder on the wall leading to areas above and below. “These gunners’ ports?”


“Check them out with me.”

“You want to go up and I’ll go down?”

Roke laughed, “You’re insane if you think I’m leaving you alone on this ship. Now start climbing.”

“This here is the gunner’s port,” Han announced. “Considering the little trouble we had during takeoff, I’m assuming these will come in handy. You know how to shoot, Kid?”

Luke jumped off the ladder, landing on the ground somewhat ungracefully. “Sure. I bullseye womprats in my T-16 at home all the time.”

“I have no idea what that means.” Han caught sight of Obi-Wan climbing down the ladder to join them, “Oh, don’t worry. You don’t have to come down.”

“Nonsense,” Obi-Wan reached the floor. Unlike Luke, he did it rather elegantly. “I have to know where the weapons are.”

“Well, I just don’t want you getting stuck down here.”

Obi-Wan narrowed his eyes slightly. “I assure you I am not so frail that I cannot get back up a ladder, Captain Solo. It’s for all of our safeties that I can help on the guns should we run into
Han raised his eyebrows, “You on the guns? Listen, I am sure you’ve experience some things back in your day, but—”

“I fought in all three years of the Clone Wars. I know my way around the gunner’s port.” Obi-Wan settled down in the chair and turned it on like it was something he did every day. “Standard controls?”

“Yeah,” Han looked impressed as Obi-Wan tested it out.

“Well, a little primitive and not as immediately response as I’d like, but it’ll do.”

“Wow, were you a pilot too, Ben?” Luke asked.

“Oh no, that was far more your father’s area of expertise, though he did drag me on many adventures with him.”

“Can tell me any?”

“Perhaps some other time. There was an incident on Iago that is interesting, but it’ll raise more questions than it answers. So, is there anything for entertainment around here, Captain Solo?”

Hans crashes neck, “Uh… Not really. There’s a dejarik if you want to play.”


“Perhaps some other time,” Obi-Wan smiled kindly.

Suddenly there was a beeping above them where Threepio, Artoo, and Chewbacca were gathered.


“Artoo said he knows how to play and would be up for it,” Threepio translated.

“Oh no, I’m not playing a droid,” Han refused. “That’s basically cheating.”

Roar roar grr.

“Really, Chewie?”

Grr.

“Chewie says he’ll play the droid.”

“How marvelous!” Threepio exclaimed.


“Well, I think I might have a blast remote around here somewhere.”

“That will do wonderfully.” Obi-Wan touched the viewscreen of the gun and sighed. No doubt he was losing himself once more to memories of Anakin Skywalker. “Come, Luke. It’s time to leave this behind.”
“Well, that was a bust,” Roke declared as they climbed back up to the main part of the ship.

“At least the guns are still working,” Luke pointed out.

“Stop trying to find the bright side in everything.”

“Leave my girlfriend alone and you have a deal.”

“Kaybatta,” Roke muttered.

“I remind you once more that Huttese is my native language and I can understand exactly what you called me… Oh, and kaybatta is the feminine version. Technically I would be a koybotto.”

“Trelana na torla.”

“Leave my mother out of this.”

“Find anything?” Roke asked the others.

“A bust so far,” Vance took a step back when Roke got too close. He was still sporting a nice head bandage from the fight yesterday. “You?”

“Nothing,” Roke snarled. “If we don’t find something soon—”

“Hey, guys! I found something!” Dirk exclaimed.

“What is it?” Plutt pushed his way through the men excitedly. His smiled fell when he set his eyes on Dirk’s discovery, “You found a closet.”

Vance slapped his forehead, and then winced at irritating his head injury.

“Were you dropped as a child?” Kerlos asked.

Dirk frowned, “But what if there’s supplies?”

“There’s not going to be supplies,” Roke rolled his eyes. He looked to Plutt, “ Seriously, why do we keep him around?”

“You should see him throw a punch,” Plutt answered.

Dirk looked helplessly around at the group, “But what if—”

“Enough, you useless idiot!” Roke snapped. “There is going to be nothing—”

Luke hit the open button and revealed the walk-in storage closet was lightly filled with basic supplies and food. The goons swarmed the closet like ants on a hill.


He clapped his shoulder and muttered so only Dirk could hear, “That’s friends are for.”

“Han Solo, you let us out of this closet!”

“Loud Mouth Solo, I will kick your ass if you don’t let us out right now!”
Luke could hear Han’s chuckle from the other side of the door, “Not until you two make up.”

“Han, we do not need you intervening in our relationship,” Luke pounded on the closet door.

“Your relationship? Kid, you two wouldn’t have a relationship if it wasn’t for me.”

“That doesn’t mean we need constant intervention,” Felicity yelled. “What are you going to do next? Propose on Luke’s behalf? Tell him I’m been pregnant?”

Luke’s eyes widened.

“Not pregnant,” Felicity said quickly.

He gave a sigh of relief.

“I’m sick of all this fighting,” Han said. “You two need to work through this problem civilly.” Oh Luke raised an eyebrow, “really? You’re complaining about me not calmly talking through my relationship problems with Felicity? After eleven years of putting up with you and Leia, now you’re complaining?”

“After eleven years of doing things like that, I can safely say there’s better ways of solving problems. Now, I’m going to leave for twenty minutes and when I come back, you better have made some progress. And don’t think about lying and pretending things are better. After eleven years, I can tell when the Kid is lying.”

“Han! Han!” Luke yelled after him, but Han was gone. He slammed his mechanical fist against the door, denting it slightly, “Damn it.”

“Don’t just punch the door,” Felicity snapped. “Use your lightsaber and get us out of here.”


“I may have given it to Leia when she asked to see it for a few minutes,” Luke said sheepishly.

Felicity glared at him, “I hate it when those two work together. Nothing good ever comes from it.”

“Ben?”

“I stand by my statement.”

Luke sighed and leaned against the door, “So, I guess we have no choice but to talk this out.”

“I guess so,” Felicity said sadly.

She crossed the small space to the opposite wall and sat on the floor, her back against the wall, knees tucked her chest, and arms wrapped around them.

Luke joined her.

“I just don’t understand why you refuse to learn to fly ships,” he began.

“And I don’t understand why it’s so important to you that I do,” Felicity countered.

“Because piloting is something so important in my life. My father was a pilot, Han’s a pilot, my sister’s a pilot, I was a pilot in the Rebellion, most of my friends are pilots… It’s just hard for me to
be with someone who is so anti-pilot.”

“I’m not anti-pilot, I just don’t want to be one. And what does it matter I don’t have all the same interests as you? I don’t complain that you won’t talk Nubian architecture with me.”

“No, that’s when you use Uncle Darred for.”

“I don’t need to be a pilot, Luke,” Felicity said softly. “Can’t you accept that?”

“… No, I can’t,” Luke admitted. “Piloting is an extremely important life skill. You can’t live without it.”

“Says the man who couldn’t do laundry until he was thirty.”

“Says the woman who couldn’t cook until she was over thirty.”

“Says the man who couldn’t cook until he was twenty-five. Oh yeah, I talked to Leia. Turns out you were lying when you said your aunt taught you to cook.”

“I wasn’t lying that she taught me… It just wasn’t edible until I was twenty-five. I didn’t have much opportunity to practice until the war was over.”

“Whatever helps you sleep at night, Skywalker,” Felicity laughed and clapped his knee. She rubbed it and sighed, “Why is it so hard for you accept this?”

Luke sighed, “What if we had children, Felicity?”

She frowned.

“I live the very dangerous life, and sooner or later my children will be involved in it. What if we get a situation where the only way to save the child is for you to take that child away on a ship?”

“What? And leave you behind?”

“Not forever, but temporarily.”

“Luke-”

“I do not ever want to risk my child.”

Felicity sighed, “I get it, Luke, but it’s just not that easy.”

“Then how can we make it easier?” Luke clasped her hand, “Come on, tell me why you won’t learn to fly a ship.”

“… Because I promised Brendan and I wouldn’t.”


Felicity hung her head guiltily and picked at a loose thread on her pants.

“He made me say the words to him,” she fought against her tears. She felt Luke’s arm wrap around her, and let herself all into his embrace. “We always planned on him teaching me to fly. The last time I saw him, I said I might have to get someone else to teach me since he was always off on tours of duty. He said, don’t you dare! I am the only person who is allowed to teach you to fly, and you know it. I objected, but he cut me off. I’m serious, Fliss, promise me that you’ll never learn to fly a
ship unless I'm the one teaching you. I rolled my eyes and called him a drama queen, but he insisted. Say it, Felicity. He urged me. I want to hear the words come from your mouth. So I did; I told him, I swear on my very life itself, that I'll never learn to fly a ship unless you're the one teaching me. Then he kissed me on the forehead, said I love you, Little Sis, I hugged him and said, I love you, Big Bro, and that was the last time I ever saw him.”

“And that’s why Bail Organa let you join the Rebellion without knowing how to fly.”

“I’ve seen other people do it: Leia, Diego, even Biggs even tried to teach me, but… I can’t. That was the last conversation I had with my brother. I swear on my very life itself, that I'll never learn to fly a ship unless you're the one teaching me. That was my final promise to him.”

“The last time I spoke to my aunt and uncle, I fought with them.” Luke kissed Felicity’s forehead. As he stroked her hair, he fought back his own tears, “If I could take it back, return to that moment and know that was our final one, I would have told them everything. How much I love them, how grateful I was to have them in my life, tell them to forgive them for their secrets, and lies, and all the things they never told me… if I could tell them what they meant to me, I would. Them, Biggs, Nakari—”

“Obi-Wan?”

“Nah. I talk with Obi-Wan on a regular basis. We worked things out long ago. We’re good.”

Felicity laughed.

Luke smiled at her, “You can’t punish yourself for breaking a promise you made to a dead man. Do you think Brendan would really want you to never learn to fly?”

“No,” she admitted. She let herself grin, “In fact he would be horrified at the thought of me thirty-two and unable to fly. Make fun of me mercilessly… Well that, and sleeping with our father’s killer on a regular basis.”

“Han does that enough for both of us.”

“Yeah, he does. You know, he reminds me a lot like Brendan, and so do you. At times it’s like if we stuck the two of you in a blender, we’d get Brendan.”

“Actually I think you would get a mess and murder charges.”

“And they call me the sassy one,” Felicity swatted at Luke.

He caught her hands and kissed them, “So, come on. When you say? You want to learn to fly a ship?”

She smiled and stroked his cheek, “Oh, Luke… no.”

His smile dropped.

“But I will make you a promise.” She kissed his puzzled scowl, “When we have children, I’ll learn. Just promise that if I do have to escape somewhere with our kids, you’ll come get us.”

“Deal,” he kissed her. “Wow, five minutes and it’s all fixed… And now what?”

“Han is not coming back for fifteen minutes.” Felicity played with the flap of his tunic, “I wonder what we could get up to in fifteen minutes?”
Luke gently pushed on her back, Felicity giggling as he kissed his way down her neck.

“In fifteen minutes, I might be able to do it twice.”

Fifteen minutes later, Han really regretted opening the closet door.

It was the first time they made love on the Millennium Falcon, but it certainly wasn’t the last. After Han made a big fuss over them ‘defiling his precious ship’ Felicity had made it her mission to ‘defile’ every part of the ship.

And Luke was only too happy to oblige.

He tried not to let Plutt and all of his goons see his smile as Luke remembered all the places he and Felicity had defiled. All seven of the bunks on the Falcon, multiple tables, a few times on the Holotable, those two very interesting times in the gunners’ ports – movable chairs led to some great things – that one time Felicity inexplicably decided to pull him down into smuggling compartment. But Luke’s favorite time of all had to have been that time Felicity worked him over the good as he sat in Han’s captain chair while Han had a nap in the other room.

Han would kill him if he ever found out about that one.

“The closet’s clear,” Luke declared, withholding a grin when the goons exited the closet with their arms full busy stockpiling their treasures.

But Roke was eyeing him suspiciously, “Something funny about this closet?”

Luke stroked the dented door, “Just memories.”

The AT-AT’s my home, but my speeder’s even more important to my survival. I built it myself, from parts I found in the Graveyard and in junk piles in Niima, along with a few things I got in trade from the Teedos.

- Rey’s Survival Guide

“It was the weirdest thing, Teng!” Rey told him as they worked on Quom’s speeder together. “I swear it had to have been a memory.”

“Are you sure we just didn’t eat some funny rations last night?” Teng was hard to hear as he held a screwdriver between his teeth. “I did dream that Quom and I tap danced for the Emperor.”

“Okay, you are so telling me that dream when we’re done discussing this.”

“We were actually pretty good. Hand me the bonding tape?”

Rey chucked it to him.

“Thanks,” Teng caught it with one hand, his other busy with a flashlight. “So did you tell your dad
“No. He would get weird?”

“Is it possible for you to have an uncle?”

“Actually, yes. I do have at least one. Uh… Brendan. Mom’s brother, but he died before my parents even met.”

“What about your dad? Does he have family?”

“He did mention last year something about leaving family behind,” Rey recalled. “It would make sense why he freaked out so much over the ship. Imagine if your brother or brother-in-law just randomly showed up on Jakku.”

“Aright, I think I got it,” Teng slammed shut the hood of the speeder. “Start her up.”

Rey climbed into the driver’s seat and turned on the engine. There was a triumphant roar of successful operation… and then a bang, grunt, crackle of electricity, and all the systems died instantly.

“Damn,” Teng banged his fist against the hood of the speeder.

“Guess we can’t go scavenging today,” Rey sighed, crawling out of the speeder. “This is so unfair! Why do we have to be stuck in town all day?”

“Because Quom’s using your dad’s speeder to do business in Tuanul, Luke is working with Plutt, Aletha’s ringside, and this thing is dead.”

“I hate being dependent on their speeders. Dad’s runs like a God put it together, but this thing is someday got to explode and kill nineteen people.”

“Meanwhile we’re stuck fiddling with engines and power couplings like a pair of chumps while the others scavenge the good stuff. There was a sandstorm yesterday morning, do you know how much stuff must be uncovered, and we’re stuck here.”

“I just wish we had our own speeder,” Rey slumped to the ground, arms crossed and back against the speeder. That was when she noticed Teng staring at her with wide eyes, “What?”

“You’re a genius.”

“What do you mean?”

“Let’s build a speeder!”

“Are you serious?”

“Dead serious!” Teng’s voice was filled with excitement. “We know how machines are put together, between the two of us we could probably make a speeder.”

“Teng are you crazy?” Rey got to her feet. “Do you know how much time and material it would take? It would probably end up being worse than this thing.”

As if on cue, Quom’s speeder sputtered a pathetic belch of smoke.

“I highly doubt that.” Teng took her hands in his, “Come on, Rey. I believe you can do it. Don’t you
Maybe it was the novelty of the idea. Maybe it was the excitement buzzing inside the two of them. Or maybe it was just the way those expression green eyes – greens as the plants on planets of life – stared into hers.

Whatever the reason, Rey found herself saying, “There is that pair of turbo engines in that cargo-hauler two kilometres south of here. We could attach them to those amplifier intakes over in the Imperial gunship four kilometers north-west.”

“And the afterburners we have in storage from that crashed racing swoop inexplicably in the middle of the desert.”

“Then we just bolt on a bunch of X-Wing repulsorlifts, and bingo, we should be in business.”

“Rey Erso, let’s build a speeder.”

Plutt and the goons were busy evaluating the haul from the closet, and Luke saw his chance. He wanted this moment to himself. Luke pulled up his hood in case one of the goons followed so his could conceal his reaction from them.

With slow but determined steps, Luke walked into the cockpit. His hands shook and his heart raced. It looked exactly as he had left it behind. He stopped at the doorway of the cockpit and just savored the sight of the moment. How many times had he sat in all four of those chairs? Fought with Leia over whether he or she had the role of co-pilot when Chewie wasn’t around – Leia automatically got dibs, Han had declared after their marriage.

Taking a deep breath, his eyes locked on the captain’s chair, Luke flipped on the cockpit. A whirring start up sound filled the room, and Luke’s head jerked to the right towards the source of the noise, for a second. He then faced to his left, and completing a full arc turned his head from left to right, took in the full sight of the cockpit.

He couldn’t believe he was back in the cockpit of the Millennium Falcon. It seemed like he would never return to this place, but then again, there was a time when Luke never thought he’d been that far from it.

There was a time when the world was a much different place.

It wasn’t the first time Luke held Ben, but it was his first time alone with him. Ben was two months old. Han and Leia had agreed to take him to Rornian to meet the other Jedi students... All three of them. Of course, Reine, Obik, and Shar’vida, would be joined by Davarl and Brinna in the next few months, but it was a nice visit nonetheless.

They were on their way to Rornian, making the trip overnight. Ben had constantly woken the other passengers with his crying. Luke could see how much at their wit’s end Han and Leia were getting, so when Ben was crying without needing feeding or changing, Luke had offered to step in.

“You two get some sleep,” Luke told Han and Leia. “I’ll watch him for a while.”
“No, Luke, it’s all right, just go back to sleep,” Leia insisted.

“Leia, you look terrible; the two of you need a break. I’ll take him, and it will be fine.”

She narrowed her eyes, “You know what? I’m too tired to get you for that you look terrible comment. I’ll swat you upside the head or something in the morning.”

“I expect nothing less,” Luke chuckled as he accepted the baby Ben from Leia.

“Thanks, Kid,” Han said as he wrapped an arm around Leia, and led them out of the cockpit. “Let me know if my baby gives you any problems.”

“Ben and I will be fine. I promise.”

“… I meant the Falcon.”

Leia wasn’t too tired to swat Han upside the head.

Luke laughed, kissed Leia’s cheek, and watched as the couple exited, Han patting him on the arm as he did so.

Silence filled the cockpit and Luke looked down at his nephew.


Ben wriggled in his arms.


“That means I’m your mother’s brother. It’s actually kind of a new development. Well… the being aware of it portion. I only found out about a year ago, but I was best friends with your parents for four years before that… Wow, I’ve been friends with them for five years. Time really does fly.”

Ben stared at him.

“You know, I don’t know much about having a nephew, but I do know lots about having an uncle. I was raised by mine.”


“And before you start asking questions, no your mother wasn’t raised by our uncle. But that’s a long story for another day.”

Ben’s eyelids started to droop.

“I miss my uncle,” Luke confessed. “I put Anakin and Obi-Wan on a pedestal, but it was Uncle Owen who made me the man I am today. Him and your father.”


“I’m going to be that for you,” Luke vowed. “I’m going to teach you to be a good man. To show you how to overcome the darkness in this world.”
Ben had fallen asleep in his arms.

“I’ll protect you, Ben,” Luke held his nephew lovingly. “I’ll protect you from the Dark Side and show you how to be a Jedi like my father before me.”

Luke could feel Ben’s Force Signature, a deep forest green enveloping the sky blue of his signature. Somewhere, a black as dark as midnight reached for Ben, but he took refuge in the safety of his uncle’s arms.

“And I promise to always be there for you,” Luke whispered. “No matter what you say or do, I will always love you. Light Side, Dark Side, or anything in between… I’ll never give up on you. I promise.”

It was a promise Luke couldn’t keep; not after Ben had broken his trust and done that horrible thing to Felicity. He hurt the woman Luke loved simply because Luke loved her.

A petty fight that got too far out of hand.

“Good, it’s working,” Plutt suddenly said. Luke hadn’t noticed when the alien had joined him.

“Vance, get in here and inspect this thing. Skywalker, you’re with Roke and I.”


Roke roughly shoved him forward, but fed up with his mistreatment, Luke grabbed Roke’s arm and using an unexpected show of strength threw the nearly three-hundred-pound alien against the wall. He slammed into at and fell to the ground in a daze.

Everyone stopped what they were doing to stare at Luke in shock.

“Do not underestimate me,” Luke warned. He looked around the ship, “All of you.”

Dirk gulped.

Luke walked over to Roke and offered his hand. Roke looked over at Plutt uncertainly, a spark of fear in his eyes.

Plutt looked dumbstruck, but gave him a hesitant nod.


“Touch me again and you’ll get much worse,” Luke whispered. “And if you touch my girls, I’ll make what I did to Jarex Zolhar look like child’s play. And Teng is to be considered under my protection these days too. Am I understood?”

Roke nodded, but his gaze hardened, and his hand clenched, trying to crush Luke’s.

“Then we have an agreement,” Luke released Roke. “Now, the rest of the ship.”

When they entered the lounge area, Dirk and Plutt were waiting for them.

“Now I bet this brings back a lot of memories, doesn’t it Skywalker?” Plutt asked.

Luke placed a hand on the Holotable and smiled when he noticed the rim was still broken. He rested his mechanical fingers over the hole, and they fit perfectly.

It wasn’t unusual to find Princess Leia Organa staring off into the distance sadly. It was unusual to see a haunted look ghost over her eyes. It wasn’t unusual for Leia to turn away and tell you there was nothing wrong when that clearly wasn’t true.

It was another thing altogether to catch her full-on crying. But that was how Luke found her that night on the Falcon. Han was asleep in the bunks, Threepio and Artoo were powered down, Chewbacca was in the cockpit, and Luke had been in the fresher.

Leia was seated at the Holotable, crying quietly.

Luke didn’t know what to do. At the time, he had only known her a few months and wasn’t sure of the kind of reaction she would want. He stared at her for a few minutes, hoping she would not look up and notice him. Then he decided to comfort her the way she had comforted him in the same position.

He found a blanket carelessly tossed to the side and walked up to the Holotable. Luke placed it over Leia’s shoulders, and she startled. She looked up, saw it was him and smiled. He sat down next to her, wrapping an arm over her shoulders as she wiped away her tears.

“You shouldn’t see me cry,” Leia said softly.

“Crying is natural,” Luke replied. “Especially for someone who has been through as much as you.”

“Don’t you mean as much as us?”

“Leia, I lost my family, but you lost your entire planet. I have no idea what that feels like.”

“I can’t even begin to describe it. You know it gets better everyday, not easier but you get used to the pain.”

“I know what you mean. That ache will never go away, but somehow it becomes a part of you, or at least I assume so. This is the first time I’ve lost someone. What about you?”

“I lost my mother when I was a young girl,” Leia answered.

“I’m sorry,” Luke said. “Were you a lot like her?”

“More so my father, but I do take after my mother in some ways.”


“That would be a miracle. I’m actually adopted.”

“Really? I had no idea.”

“It’s not a big secret, but it’s really not a secret. We were different ethnicities after all.”

“Do you know what happened to your parents? Your real parents?”

Leia shrugged, “No clue. You?”
“I know Vader killed my father,” Luke clenched his fists. “As for my mother, I don’t know. Maybe she’s alive? Maybe I have another family out there. That would be nice to find.”

“It would, wouldn’t it? You know, when I was younger I used to pretend Padmé Amidala was my mother. People used to say that her nieces look like me. It makes me smile anytime I see Pooja or Ryoo Nabberie.”

“Wait, Ryoo Nabberie is Padmé Amidala’s niece? Are you serious? That woman scares the crap out of me.”

“Then don’t bring up Amidala’s vote of no confidence to her. She literally once punched a guy for it.”


He looked over at Leia and grinned to himself. His arm slung around her shoulder, he rubbed her arm and ever so slightly pulled her closer into his embrace. It was the furthest he had ever been with a woman.

“So what brought on the tears?” Luke would do anything to fix them.

Leia laughed, “It’s, uh… it’s my birthday in a few days, and it’s the first one I’m having without my father.”

“I’m sorry. I know how you feel, my birthday’s coming up in a few days too.”

Leia looked at him.

“You don’t think-”

“When’s yours?” Leia asked.

“The twenty-fourth.”

“You’re kidding. Luke, you don’t need to lie about your birthday to impress me.”

“I’m serious, it’s the twenty-fourth. Is it really yours too?”

“This is the weirdest thing,” Leia shook her head.

“At least it’s not weird enough that we’re the exact same age. You’re turning, what? Eighteen? Nineteen?”

“Twenty.”

“…Are you serious? That’s how old I’m turning!”

Leia burst out laughing, “I don’t believe this. What are the odds that you and I would have the same birthdate?”

As it later turned out, the odds were pretty good.

The table buzzed and suddenly the top was filled with the blue images of very familiar creatures.

Luke grinned at him, “You know how to play?”

“No,” he looked away bashfully.

Luke patted his shoulder, “Perhaps I’ll teach you.”

“Don’t be giving him ideas,” Plutt warned as he and the other goons ransacked the lounge. They found odds and ends, but none of it had belonged to Han and their family. “You’re not going to be on this ship after this.”

He chuckled lightly, “Of course not.”

Plutt narrowed his eyes, “I mean it. You and your girl stays off.”

Luke’s brows lifted fractionally; he didn’t expect Plutt to know about Rey’s little escapade. Of course, that didn’t mean Plutt was going to stop him or Rey from exploring this ship, that in the situation technically belonged to them.

“Skywalker,” Plutt threatened.

Luke held up his hands, “I understand. Shall we continue on?”

“Show me the bunks.”

He led them down the corridor that contained the living quarters. There was a bunk in the lounge area, a custom built one large enough to contain a Wookiee, but otherwise there was two bunk rooms each containing three bunks.

Between the bunkrooms was a head with a toilet and very crappy shower. Luke wondered if Han had ever gotten around to fixing it. He remembered the day that Leia and Felicity got tired of the shower that randomly switched between freezing cold and boiling hot and had the pressure of hail on Kamino. They had declared that if the boys wouldn’t fix it, they would try it themselves.

The event did make it a little better – the hot water was a little less skin peeling – but mainly resulted in the establishment of a new family rule: Don’t let Felicity mess with plumbing. The floor of the ship was soggy for two months.

“So which one’s yours?” Dirk asked in a hushed voice. It wasn’t good for him if he let Plutt see him too friendly with the Skywalkers.

“Not really any in particular,” Luke answered quietly. “We played musical bunks for a while, but after Rey came around it sort of settled that Felicity, Rey, and I would be in the first room, and then Han, Leia, and Ben were in the second – these bunks aren’t double wide, so two people can’t share one bed.”

“Why’d you get the first room?”


Luke didn’t like to ever use his physical strength on the people he loved, but as Felicity hysterically screamed and hit his chest in front of the other members of the Resistance, Luke had no choice but to
physically drag her away to the bunkroom where she wouldn’t disturb the infants they had saved from the First Order.

“We have to go back!” Felicity screamed. “Luke, we have to go back!”

He pulled her by the wrist into the bunkroom, admittedly tossing her a little bit, and quickly slammed the door shut.

Hysteria turned to wrath in a second.

“You coward!” she screeched in his face, banging her fists against his chest. “Let me out of here!”

“No,” Luke said firmly as he stood in front of the door, blocking her path. “Felicity, I’m sorry but you have to calm down.”

“Calm down? Calm down? If we don’t go back, we sentence that baby to death!”

“There’s nothing more we can do right now.”

“We have to go back.”

“We can’t.”

“Get out of my way you son of a bitch!”

Luke knew she didn’t mean her words, “I won’t move.”

Their eyes met, and something in the calm blue pools of his irises changed those teary hazel ones.


He made the gamble to pull her into his embrace. She could have hit him, push his away, screamed out him, even shot him with the blaster she had thankfully forgotten was on her belt. Instead the risk paid off. Felicity threw her arms around him, gripping him tightly like her lifeline and sobbed into his chest.

She wailed hysterically, the kind of sobs that used your full chest. Every sob broke Luke’s heart, but he held fast and held her tight. When Felicity started to lose the strength to stand, he let her sink them to the floor. On their knees they held each other and Felicity cried. She buried her face in his neck, and he stroked her hair whispering words of comfort.

By the time of the incident, Luke had already admitted to himself that he was in love with her. But as he held her, listening to her sobs over failing FN-2187, that was the moment Luke promised himself to spend the rest of his life stopping Felicity from experiencing this level of heartbreak ever again.

And with such a display of devotion towards a stranger’s baby, that was the moment he knew she would become the mother of his child.

“This was the room where I decided to spend the rest of my life with her,” Luke answered.
Dirk smiled sadly and placed a hand on his shoulder, “She was a nice woman. Liked to punch things, but kind to me. Like Rey.”

“Yeah,” Luke fought back a tear, “she’s a lot like her mother. The best of me and the best of her combined.”

Dirk paused for a long moment, “She… She didn’t deserve to die.”

“No, she didn’t.” He smiled at Dirk, “Thanks.”

“Skywalker!” Plutt barked.

“Boss is calling,” Dirk looked down shyly. “I’ll look over the room and you go to him.”

“Sounds like a plan.”

Dirk paused again.

“If I find anything, I won’t let him know,” Dirk whispered.

Luke blinked but then grinned wider, “You’re a good guy, Dirk. Pretty smart too. Don’t let anyone tell you otherwise.”

“Hold still,” Teng instructed.

“Come on, Teng, I look ridiculous,” Rey laughed, her voice muffled by all her wrappings.

Teng and Rey had finished their tasks for the day, and decided to take a drawing break. He was drawing her wrapped up in all her sun gear, scarves around her face, googles on, head covered, and satchel crossed over her body.

“You look fully geared up for protection from the sun,” Teng waved off. “Now hold still, I just have a few more lines.”

Rey rolled her eyes, which Teng couldn’t see behind her coverings, but held still. It was ten minutes – and three pounds of sweat – later that Teng declared he was done.

“What do you think?” Teng asked as she sketched down a caption in the book.

“It looks wonderful,” Rey said, writing down the words Me-geared up for maximum protection.

“Really?”

“Really. You perfectly captured how stiff and awkward I was.”

“Oh, I’ll get you for that!”

She squealed as Teng playfully pulled her into his lap and started to tickle her.

“Teng! Stop it!” Rey giggled as he attacked her mercilessly. “No, not my sides, you know how ticklish those are!”

“Not until you say I’m a good artist.”
“Never!”

She managed to push him to the floor, but he pulled her down with him. For several minutes they rouged, tickled, played until they were lying on their backs out of breath.

“Okay,” Rey panted. “You win. You’re a pretty good artist.”

“Thanks,” Teng grinned. “You’re not so bad yourself.”

“Lunch?”

“Absolutely.”

“I’ll go grab some water for the bread.” Rey lifted herself up and kissed Teng’s cheek, “I’ll be right back.”

She didn’t notice as she left Quom and Teng’s tent how Teng stared after her in frozen shock. When she was gone, Teng sat up, eyes wide and jaw dropped.

Carefully he reached up and touched the spot she had kissed.

It was a simple gesture, and one he knew didn’t really have a meaning behind it. He had seen her kiss the same sort of kiss of the cheek to Luke, Quom, and Aletha on a regular basis.

But still… it was so soft and lovely. The kiss had been gentle and nice. Something burned within him, yearning to feel those chapped lips against his skin once more.

He stared at the tent flap, beyond which Rey had disappeared. His hand still pressed to his ever so damp cheek where her lips had been, longing so hard for more.

“Uh oh.”

“I didn’t know this place had a galley,” Vance said as they raided the cupboard on the Millennium Falcon. “Never heard of it in all the stories.”

“It’s a relatively new addition,” Luke replied. “Han added it just after the war as a wedding present for my sister.”

“A wedding present?” Roke scoffed. “That is the craziest thing I have ever heard.”

“Oh, this is Han Solo we’re talking about,” Luke chuckled. “That doesn’t even break the top 100 craziest things he’s ever said.”

“Construction is just starting, but if I play this right, I’ll be done converting the space into a galley in about three months,” Han showed off the area to Luke.

“Translation, it’ll probably be about 12-18 months before it’s done,” Leia said.

“Hey!”
“Don’t you **hey** me. There are parts of this ship being held together by duct tape, and you know it.”


“So, what do you think?” Leia asked her brother.

“I think it’s about time,” Luke observed the area with crossed arms. “Which means this is suspicious. Why are you adding a galley?”

Han nervously eyed Leia, “I just thought since Princess here’s going to be spending more time on the Falcon, I ought to give her a nice little luxury. Gotta impressed the father-in-law somehow.”

“Han, Leia has been frequently on the ship for four years. That can’t be the reason.” Luke narrowed his eyes, “What are you hiding?”

“Well... it’s not exactly a regular gift,” Han admitted. “It’s a... It’s a...”

“If you can’t say it, I can,” Leia offered.

“Nah, I can do this.” Han took a deep breath, “It's a wedding present. Luke, we’re getting married.”

Han grinned brightly down at Leia as he wrapped his arm around her waist. He looked so eager as they waited for Luke’s reaction.

Luke stared at them, “You’re... Getting married?”

“Yes, we are,” Leia looked so happy as she smiled at Han and leaned into his embrace.


That was not the answer they were expecting.

“Wow, thanks, Kid,” Han scowled.

“Thought you might be a lot more excited,” Leia said.

“Don’t get me wrong, I am. Congratulations and all that, but... It doesn’t make sense.”

“I love her and she loves me,” Han said. “Sure, that in itself doesn’t make sense but it’s a valid reason to marry.”

“Not for you, and not this quickly.”

“We’ve known each other over four years,” Leia pointed out.

“Yeah, but you’ve only been together one and honestly not even that long. Han spent most of that year in carbonite. It’s been tops five months and now you’re getting married? Something’s not adding up. Sure, you two are impulsive, but not that impulsive. What’s going on?”

Han and Leia shared a very long look. She nodded at him, and Han gulped.

“You’re right, Kid, something’s going on.” Han took another deep breath, “You know how a year ago you had no family, and now you have a father and sister... Well you’re about to get another family member.”

Leia gathered her courage and confessed, “I’m pregnant.”

His eyes shot wide. Had... Had he heard that correctly? Han and Leia were having a baby? No, that couldn’t be right. Could it?

Luke looked at Han. He had the guiltiest, most terrified expression that Luke had ever seen on him. It made sense; Luke and Han hadn’t spent a whole lot of time together since Hoth. Since the Tauntaun incident Han had sort of won his best friend’s crush away from him, impregnated her, and now was going to marry her. All without a single conversation with Luke about it.

Secret twin revelation aside, it was kind of a shitty move on Han’s part.


“Well, it certainly makes more sense now,” Luke blurted out. “And you two are... happy about this?”

The pair of them scowled.

“We would be happier if our numbskull best friend wasn’t making a big deal out of it,” Han said.

“But it is a big deal,” Luke pointed out. “Look, I’m happy if this is what you two want. My best friend and my sister getting married and having a baby; it’s like a dream come true. But are you sure this is what you want?”

“I may not be a decent guy, but I am honourable enough to know if you knock up a girl, you marry her,” Han countered.

Leia turned her glare on him, “I don’t need you defending my honour, so if that’s the only reason you’re doing this-”

“Of course, it’s not. Look at what you’re doing, Kid. You’re wrecking this thing.”

“Han. Leia. Please listen to me. If this is what you want to do, I will absolutely stand by it... but I want to make sure you want this. Leia, you’re twenty-three. Are you really ready to be married and have a child? I’m gung-ho about commitment and even I don’t want that for another three or four years.”

Or eleven, but whatever.

“It is scary Luke, but we’ve faced a lot worse,” Leia said wrapping her arms around Han’s broad left one. “Father always did say my mind was ten years older than my body.”

“But you don’t always have to be ten years older. If you don’t want this... there are alternatives.”

Luke didn’t like bringing it up, but someone had to.

Han and Leia looked at each other.

“Actually, we did discuss the alternative,” Leia confessed. Her grip tightened on Han’s arm.

Luke startled, “You... you did?”

“We actually bet the result of Jakku on it,” Han sighed. “We didn’t- Don’t want to juggle a kid and
fighting a war. So, if we lost the Battle of Jakku and the war continued, we agreed not to proceed with this. And if we won, we figured let’s give it a shot. We may be in over our heads but at least Luke and Chewie have our backs.”

“And we won, so here we are,” Leia said, struggling to contain her emotions.

Leia blinked, and Luke saw the tears forming that she fought to hold back. Han seemed to see them too because he pulled her tighter into his embrace. He shifted the left arm that Leia clutched so that his palm rested against her stomach underneath which was his child.

Luke stared at the palm and the stomach. Han and Leia were going to have a baby. They had created a child. It was ridiculous, it was unplanned, it was outrageous, it was… it was exactly what Luke would expect from those two.

Han and Leia were going to have a baby. Their family – an actual bound by blood family, not the family by heart they had been for four years but a family legally recognized by the law family – was going to grow.

Luke reached into the Force to see if he could sense the baby. The question of Force Sensitivity would be raised at a later time, but for now it was simply about the boy who would later be named Ben. Luke searched the Force, but he couldn’t sense anything more yet but the yellow gold and navy blue colours of Han and Leia.

And screaming in the Force that was the distress of that navy blue. Luke was shocked when he took in the quietly crying face of his sister. She was always the brave one, the strong one, so to see her so scared and vulnerable broke his heart.

“And you have our backs?” Leia whispered, scared of the answer.


And he pulled them both into a tearful, but quickly joyful hug.

“I’m going to be an Uncle!” Luke exclaimed as he took a turn just holding Leia and resting a hand on her belly to feel his nephew. He then pulled Han into a hug, “You’re going to be my brother.”

“I’ve always been your brother, Kid,” Han punched him in the arm as they pulled apart. “We’ll just have paperwork proving it.”

Shaking his head, Luke laughed and pulled Han and Leia into another hug. Soon their conversation devolved into plans of the future, of where they would all live, of whether the baby was a boy or girl – oddly enough Leia was the only one of them to end up being right with their guess of boy as Luke and Han both thought it would be a girl – of names, and who to call first with the happy news.

The war was over and it seemed like this baby would lead them onto the path of living happily ever after.

Luke sighed; if only he had known how wrong they had been.

Catching Luke’s look, Plutt offered, “Want to go check out the other bunk room?”

He nodded, “Sounds like a good idea.”
To put it plainly, Luke was very giddy the morning of the medal ceremony. Though inwardly he mourned Biggs, he was on such a high from destroying the Death Star.

“You saw the shot, right?” Luke was practically bouncing as he and Han prepped for the ceremony. Luke had spent the night on the Falcon, the Rebellion not actually having a room yet for Luke. “You saw me fire it?”

“Of course, I did.” Han rolled his eyes as he laid out his outfit for the ceremony. “Didn’t just wander off after I shot Vader.”

“Do you think he’s dead? How amazing would that be?”

“Wow, you’re morbid.”

“He killed my father.”

“He’s killed a good many fathers.”


An awkward expression crossed Han’s face, “Uh… Not sure. I never knew my family.”

Luke’s face fell. Though he was poor farmboy, at least he could say he had a family growing up. He didn’t know how to handle the idea of someone growing up without one.

“I’m sorry,” Luke settled on. “I’m sure they would be proud of you killing Vader.”

“Vader’s not dead, Kid. Sorry to burst your bubble, but he’s probably off on some Imperial ship right now, sulking and vowing revenge.” Han looked down at the clothing on his bed proudly, “What do you think? Fancy enough to get a medal?”

Luke regarded the black shirt, brown pants, and gold jacket, “Very nice. What about me? You think I should do this or the pilot’s outfit?”

Han frowned at the white outfit had been wearing the past few days, “Uh, don’t you have anything else other than the desert pyjamas?”

Luke reddened, “They’re not pyjamas.”

“Whatever they are, they’re way too casual. You have anything else?”

“I got the poncho.”

“No, you don’t. Leia burned it.”

Luke chuckled, “She didn’t burn it.”

Han arched a brow.

Luke paled, “She burned my poncho?”

“Said it was for the good of humanity or something. Almost got her hands on my vest too, but I put a stop to that.”
“But not my poncho?”

“Just drop it, Kid. Pick something else.”

Luke looked away, “I, uh… I don’t have anything else.”

Han scowled, “What did the old man not let you pack any clothes before you ran off to have an adventure?”

“No. Um, well the Empire was looking for the droids, and my aunt and uncle – the people who raised me, Dad was killed by Vader and my mother’s a question mark – had purchased the droids… The Empire burned down my home and murdered my aunt and uncle. I quite literally only have the clothes on my back.”

Han stared at Luke with a white face and slack-jawed shock.

Luke couldn’t meet his eyes.

Suddenly, Han’s arms were around Luke in a tight hug. Luke blinked in surprised, and opened his mouth to speak. He thought better of it, then smiled and patted Han’s shoulder, happy and thankful to take the comfort.

Han cleared his throat when he pulled away, “Don’t- Don’t tell Her Highness about that. Don’t want anyone getting the wrong idea about me… In the guy who likes hugging people type of way, not the, well you know, other way it could be taken. I’m not into… Not that there’s anything wrong with it if you are-”

“Are you implying I look like a-”

“No, of course not.” Han paused, “Are you?”

“Sort of,” Luke confessed. “It’s hard to explain. I know I am attracted to both men and women, but I don’t actually have any experience to back up those claims.”

“Gay, straight, or anything in-between, I’ll back you up anyway,” Han promised. “Just no pedophilia, bestiality, or incest.”

“Deal.”

Han then looked at his clothing laid out on the bunk, “Luke?”

“Yeah, Han?”

“Take my outfit.”

“What?”

“You’re the hero today, you deserve it. It’s a little too small for me anyways.”

“Han, I can’t take them from you. What would you wear?”

“Don’t worry about it,” Han waved off. “I’ll just… wear this.”

Luke regarded his scruffy attire, “That?”

“It’s what people will expect,” Han shrugged as Luke tried on the jacket. “I’ll just… shine my boots
and do up the top button of my shirt. I’m sure Princess will understand. Besides, the jacket really looks good on you. Keep it.”

Luke grinned, the golden jacket fitting him perfectly. Then he pulled Han into a hug.

“Thanks Han,” Luke held him tightly. “I knew there was more to you than meets the eye.”

“Someone’s gotta keep a kid like you outta trouble.” Han considered his next words, “You might not have family anymore, Kid, but I promise... You got me. Promise.”

It was a promise Han would keep for the rest of his life.

“Alright, the ship is looking good, but there’s just one more spot to check out,” Plutt declared as they walked down the hall. “The roof. Show us where the hatch is. Kerlos, you and Vance will go up there.”

“Yes, Sir,” Kerlos replied.

Luke led them back through the lounge area and down the hall, right to the exit hatch.

“Careful,” he instructed as the pair opened the hatch. “The lift sometimes gets stuck.”

“I’m sure it’ll be fine,” Vance waved off.

And as he watched the pair go up the lift, Luke couldn’t help but remember a time it had broken.

He remembered the odd sight that night of Leia Organa sitting on the roof of the Millennium Falcon. It was the day after they arrived back to the Rebel Fleet, and they had spent said day explaining their three-month long absences, Luke’s AWOL adventure, introducing who the hell this Lando Calrissian man was, reporting what had happened to Captain Solo – during which the Alliance decided to promote him to General for his actions in protecting the Princess and the location of the fleet – and also dealing with that pesky situation of the fact Luke Skywalker had shown up missing a hand.

Luke shuddered as he remembered the horror-stricken looks of Wedge, Diego, Zev, and the rest of Rogue Squadron at the sight.

Arrangements were being made for Luke to be fitted with a replacement, and for now he walked around with a splint and a large cast on his right arm shaped to make it look like he still had a hand. There was no point in letting everyone know what happened until Luke’s injuries had been fully taken care of.

Luke knew he didn’t need an invitation to join Leia, but he still respectfully entered the Falcon and went through to the location of the roof hatch to join her. He called her name up at her to let her know of his presence, but Leia had always had a knack for sensing him anyway.

Some days Luke wondered if Leia had her own secret Jedi father.

“Mind if I join you?” Luke asked as Leia looked down at him through the hatch.

“It’s actually broken. You know, like everything on this ship, the lift had to break too.”
“How did you get up?”

“I climbed.”

“I could too.”

“Luke, don’t, you can’t possibly get up here with your hand… in its condition,” Leia ended awkwardly.

He glanced down at his splint in a little bit of shame.

“Not that there’s anything wrong with it,” Leia said quickly. “There are plenty of Rebels walking around with this and much worse.”

“I know. Apparently tomorrow they’re sending a one-armed pilot from the Tierfon Yellow Aces to give me a pep talk. Let me join you, Leia.”

“You can’t get up here, Luke.”

He grinned at the challenge, “Back up.”

Leia frowned, but obeyed. Luke couldn’t resist showing off what he had learned on Jakku and made an impressive jump up through the hatch and onto the roof.

“That’s amazing,” Leia grinned as she grabbed Luke’s (non-maimed) arm to steady him. “Is that what you learned on Dagobah?”

“Among other things,” Luke settled to sit beside her. They sat in silence for a while, thinking about the man to whom the ship below them belonged. “We’ll get him back, Leia.”

She was sitting with her knees to her chest and there was a glimmer of tears in her eyes.

“Luke…” Leia forced herself to say. “There’s something I have to tell you. While we were escaping Vader, Han and I… Something happened.”

He didn’t need her to say any more.


Leia nodded, looking almost ashamed of herself.

Luke swallowed hard, forcing back his bubble of emotions, and nodded.

“I understand,” he looked away from her.

“This wasn’t how I planned for it to go, Luke,” Leia explained. “One moment we were bickering and then the next… There was a kiss and I ran away. Then I cornered him, yelled at him to figure out what was going on with us, and we were together.”

Leia pulled her legs tighter to her chest.

“Before Vader froze him in carbonite, I told Han I loved him,” Leia confessed.

Luke bit his lip, “Did he tell you he loves you too?”

“No,” Leia let herself have a single chuckle. With a grin on her face, she told Luke, “I said ‘I love
Luke couldn’t help but laugh. “That sounds like Han alright.”

They let the silence linger once more.

“Are you okay?” Leia asked delicately.

“I’ll be fine,” Luke couldn’t bare to look at her. “I’m just surprised. I mean… Han.”

Leia sighed, “I shouldn’t want this. I don’t want this. The rational part of me is screaming at my heart, shouting what am I thinking. But the heart is no slave to logic, and as insane as it sounds, I am in love with Han Solo.”

Luke nodded slowly, “Alright. If that’s how you feel then I’m happy for you. My two best friends in the entire Galaxy falling in love. What more could I ask for?”


“Don’t apologize for feeling the way you do… But I just have one question.”

“What that?”

Luke took a deep breath and looked Leia straight in the eyes.

“Did I ever have a chance?” he asked boldly.

It took Leia a long time to answer.

“No.”

Luke looked away from her, “I see.”

Leia reached out and took his remaining hand, “I do love you, Luke… but not the way I love them. You mean so much more to me than just a friend, but deep down I know that this could never be anything romantic. You’re not my friend, not my lover… honestly, if I had to give it a name, deep down I’ve always felt like you were the brother I never had.”

Luke couldn’t help but burst out laughing, “The brother you never had? Are you trying to make this the most painful and stereotypical let down as possible. What next? It’s not you, it’s me?”

She grinned at him, “Of course not. Clearly I was going to go with there’s someone out there who is going to love you more than I ever could.”

“Well, if you happen to know where I can find said person, I would love to go meet them.”

“I’m sure I could set you up. Let’s see,” Leia thought hard for a minute, and then her face fell. “Huh.”

“What?”

“I literally cannot think of anyone.”

“You’re joking.”

“No. Not a single name comes to mind. Do I have any female friends?” Leia scowled. “…Wait, you
date both men and women right?”

“Right.”

“Might have a guy for you then.”

Luke laughed and shook his head.


“Be the daughter of Anakin Skywalker?” Leia teased. “I’d be honoured.”

Luke’s eyes widened as he remembered Vader’s confession.

“What is it?” Leia always could sense when something was wrong with him.


She grinned, “And we’ll do it together.”

“Promise.”

Luke sighed as he looked around the ship. So many memories, so many people he had loved and lost. A life was shared upon this ship by their odd little family. In ways, the ship was exactly like their family: cobbled together by odds and ends and things that really shouldn’t go together, constantly breaking down, falling apart, and being put back together in unexpected ways. Absolute garbage to the outsider, but the best thing in the world to those who knew it personally.

“We got some haul but not much,” Plutt announced when they were finished.

But Luke knew there was something special in his peripheral. Something he would never reveal to Plutt and his goons. Something he prayed was still there.

“Looks like we’re done here,” Plutt declared.

Luke smiled; he knew he wasn’t.

My custom speeder. There’s nothing like it in the whole galaxy.

I made this fancy schematic like it came out of a factory.

- Rey’s Survival Guide

“There, done!” Rey proudly showed the picture to Teng three weeks later.

“It looks perfect,” Teng grinned as they eat dinner with the others. “Now to just find all the parts.”
“You two are really building a speeder?” Aletha smiled. “I’m impressed. Imagine if you can pull it off.”

“I’m sure they’ll do just fine,” Luke laughed. “Now the only thing left is if I’m up to letting Rey go off on her own with a speeder. We all know how that ended last time.”

“I still walk a little funny,” Teng said.

Rey blushed.

“Speaking of,” Aletha said, “if you two need anything at all, by all means go take it from Antar’s ship.”

The clattering of cutlery stopped.

“What?” Aletha frowned as four sets of eyes stared at her in utter shock.

“You’re telling us to go strip Antar’s ship?” Rey slowly repeated.

Teng was horrified, “I don’t want another forty-seven stitches.”

“No problem, Sunshine.”

“Exercise caution, but yeah, go ahead,” Aletha consented.

“Why?” Quom asked.

“Well, it’s not like it’s doing anything,” Aletha said. “Look, Antar’s dead and buried, and a good portion of it’s already scavenged-”

“Sorry,” Rey muttered.

“Might as well use the rest,” Aletha finished. “I think it’s what Antar would have wanted.”

Rey smiled, “Thank you.”

“No problem, Sunshine.”

“That’s very kind of you,” Luke smiled at Aletha and clasped her hand. He leaned in and whispered, “Would he really want that?”

“Oh, who knows? But I don’t really care. Love the man, but really didn’t know him that well.”

Luke shook his head and then pulled her to her feet, “I think we’re going to retire for the night.”

Quom and Teng gave a wolf whistle in perfect harmony, and Rey smacked both upside the head.

“It was a bad idea letting these two live together,” Luke said.

Aletha nodded, “Agreed.”

Luke found Rey sneaking off to the Falcon in the middle of the night that same way she had done every day she spent the night in Niima Outpost. Quom had no idea of Rey’s midnight adventures, though Luke mildly suspected Teng knew.

Usually Luke would let her go off on her own, but this night he decided to follow.
Luke had been holding off from returning to the *Falcon* until he was certain Plutt wasn’t guarding it. Since weeks had gone by with Rey making frequent visits, he knew he was in the clear.

The lights were on when Luke boarded the ship. He reached out and sensed her presence in the cockpit. It made him smile to know she couldn’t resist it. But he wasn’t ready to join her; his objective was something else.

Quietly he crept through the hallways, careful not to make a sound. He came to a panel of the wall, and with perfect practice removed it to find a secret closet. Luke grinned as he saw the contents within; he had hit the jackpot.

Clothing, weapons, even a few Holos, this closet was the proof of belonging to the Skywalker family. Luke eagerly dug through the closet to see what he could find. A shirt from Han, a skirt from Leia, a vest from Felicity, a pair of pants belonging to Luke. Ben’s gloves, five-year-old Rey’s shoes, an extra ammo belt for Chewie, some extra metal paneling for Artoo and Threepio in case of emergency. Han’s medal for the Battle of Yavin, Leia’s weapon belt from the war, some extra parts Luke used to repair his lightsaber. A Holo of Han and Leia’s wedding, a Holo of Luke and Felicity’s. A Holo of Lando and Alyla. One of Chewie, Malla, and Waroo. One of Artoo and Threepio with Threepio looking magnificent. Ben, Poe, and Rey hanging out by the lake on Rornian. Ammunition, maps, charts, and intel for the Resistance.

But one item made Luke’s heart stop.

With shaking hands, he withdrew a NN-14 Imperial issue blaster: the one that he once belonged to Brendan Rhiaon.

They had found it the day after the Burning of Rornian, discarded by Luke’s X-Wing. The gas cartridge was used up, so Felicity had no chance but the drop and fire her brother’s precious blaster.

To Luke’s surprise, it had been fixed and polished. It was in much better condition than the day Luke had thrown it against the wall in Felicity’s office.

Han had kept Felicity’s precious blaster in perfect condition.

Luke smiled and replaced it gently in the hidden closet. He was glad to see it was safe.

Before he was to replace the hidden panel, Luke looked down at the inside of it. Carved onto the metal were words:

---

**RULES OF THE MILLENNIUM FALCON – Enforced as of 15 ABY**

1. Do not question the Captain. He knows what he’s doing… most of the time.
2. If you are married to the Captain, you may question the Captain. Because she’s gonna do it anyway, so we may as well codify it.
3. No food or drink in the cockpit at anytime.
4. You get hair in the control panel, you clean it up, Chewie.
5. Felicity Rhiaon does not pilot this ship unless everyone else on board is dead, comatose, or unrevivable. Even then, seriously consider the amount of damage that would be done by a crash landing vs Fliss’ piloting.
6. Don’t complain about the shower.
7. Don’t complain about the hyperdrive breaking.
8. Don’t complain about the smell.
9. Don’t complain.
10. Reine Agim may only gamble against droids.
11. Felicity Rhiaon is not allowed to touch the plumbing.
12. Ben Solo may not use the blast remote without supervision.
13. If you break something, you’re the one fixing it.
14. Resign yourself to the fact that this ship will break down at the worst possible time.
15. Stop adding rules to this panel without my permission, Leia.

Luke laughed and slowly replaced the panel back on the wall. He was so grateful to see that some items from his former life had survived the chain of stealing. Perhaps someday he might be able to return the items to their rightful owners.

His heart sunk as he thought of the NN-14.

Not everything could return to their owners.

Rey was sitting in the captain’s chair, absorbed in the workings of this insanity called a cockpit when a voice spooked her.

“What in the galaxy do you think you’re doing?”

She bit her lip.

“Do I know this ship?”


Rey looked away in shame. She felt her father’s hand on her shoulder as crossed the room and sat in the co-pilot’s seat.

“There’s hair on the control panel,” Rey picked at a long golden-brown strand.

“Yes, there is,” Luke chuckled, running his hand across the controls.

“They’re very long. They kind of look almost like… Wookiee hair.”

“You’re a smart girl. They are Wookiee hairs.”

“That’s how I met Wookiees before Jakku, right?” Rey guessed.

“Yes, it is.” Luke closed his hand over hers, “Don’t go putting the pieces all together yet. I’m not
ready for you to know the truth of our past.”

“I’ll try not to muddle over it too much, but I make no promises.”

They sat in silence for a long time.

“Dad?”

“Yes, Sweetheart?”

“Did this belong to my uncle?”

Luke’s head snapped to his left, “Excuse me?”

“I sort of came here a few weeks ago and I saw something,” Rey admitted. “It felt like a dream but it was real. I probably sound crazy.”

“No, not at all,” Luke assured her. He swallowed hard, trying to think of how to proceed, “What did you see?”

“Us… with a man. I was very little and sitting in your lap. We were playing at the Holotable when a man whose back was to me, so I couldn’t see his face. But you called him my Uncle… did this belonged to my uncle?”

Luke stared at her for a long time.

“Yes,” he finally admitted. “It belongs to your uncle, but please, Rey, I beg you, don’t push too far with this. We’re not ready. You’re not ready. I’m not ready.”

“I know,” Rey looked away. “I just want to know so much.”

“You will find out, but you’re still so young. One day you will learn everything. It’s going to happen a lot sooner than I’d like, I guarantee you that, but I swear to you, I’ll tell you everything.”

“Okay… Dad?”

“Yes, Rey?”

“Do you see visions too?”

“Yes.”

Rey looked at her father, “Are we normal?”

Luke grinned, “Not in the slightest. But it’s okay, normal is boring.”

“I’m scared of these visions.”

“Have you had any others?”

“I don’t think so.”

“Let me know, and I’ll help guide you through them. Perhaps we should start getting you to seriously meditate; it helps control them. But Rey, I need you to promise me one thing.”

“What’s that?” she asked.
“I made the same mistake I’m about to warn you about, so I know what I’m talking about.” He looked down at his false hand, “Because I didn’t heed this advice, I lost my hand, and I’m going to be very upset if you lose one too.”

“I will be upset to.”

“Good. Rey, I need you to know that sometimes what you see in these visions, aren’t real. They won’t come to pass, and don’t need to. I want you to promise that every time you see something, you will stop and seriously evaluate them. Don’t just throw yourself headfirst in saving someone because of a false vision. Promise me you’ll think about them first, Rey.”

“If it means saving my hand?” Rey smiled and clasped her father’s false appendage, “Of course I’ll promise.”

Luke pulled her in for a tight hug.

“This is so weird, Dad,” Rey said as she pulled apart from him. “We can really see the future?”

“Sort of. It’s always in motion, and sometimes it’s not the future, but rather the past or something going on elsewhere in the galaxy, and like I said, sometimes it’s a lie. Be very careful on trusting them.”

“I’ll tell you about every one I get.”

“Good.” Luke glanced at the control panel, “Oh, what is this? This wasn’t here three weeks ago. Why would Plutt do that?”

“What?” Rey frowned.

“This,” Luke pointed to a small part on the panel. “Unkar Plutt put a compressor on the ignition line.”

“Well, that has to be a mistake.”

“Why’s that?” Luke always liked to get Rey to explain what was wrong with a machine to test her knowledge and see if she could figure out how to fix things.

“It puts too much stress on the hyperdrive,” Rey answered.

“Good girl. And where would on go to disable the compressor?”

“Here!” Rey stood, pulled down something and pointed at the correct piece. She saw her father’s proud smile. “What?”

“You wanna learn to fly a ship?” he asked.

“What, this one?”

“We wouldn’t go anywhere today, but you want to learn the controls?”

“Absolutely!” Rey raced back to the pilot’s chair and eagerly strapped herself in. “What do we do first?”

So Luke spent the rest of his night teaching his daughter how to fly the Millennium Falcon and making his long wanted dream come true.
Chapter End Notes

Coming Up Next Chapter…

Taking a Stand

When an unexpected comm call comes to Jakku, Aletha has to make a difficult choice, and Teng finds he’s got it bad for Rey.
Taking a Stand

Chapter Summary

Aletha makes a difficult decision, Roke trolls Luke, and Teng chooses the worst moment to be shirtless.

Chapter Notes

Warning for anyone who doesn’t like underage content, the next several chapters do frankly discuss two teenagers desiring, imagining, and participating in an increasingly physical and sexual relationship. Said teenagers are two years apart, and most of the physical stuff takes place when Rey is 16/17 and Teng is 18/19, but please know that things are going to happen in the upcoming chapters. I’m going to go literally less hardcore with them due to their ages than I do with Luke, but there will be AO3 versions involving them.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

The Long Way Home

Chapter Thirty-Eight

Taking a Stand

AGE FOURTEEN

Before you came to Jakku, I bet you thought it was small and unimportant. And you were right.

- Rey’s Survival Guide

The walker was practically abandoned during Rey’s fourteenth year of life. Luke’s cot had been permanently moved into Quom and Teng’s tent for Rey, while Luke spent every night with Aletha. They didn’t always make love, but Luke enjoyed sleeping with Aletha in his arms. It wasn’t unusual for a resident of Niima Outpost to come into Aletha’s tent with an injury and find Luke Erso sleeping at her side.

It was a lazy morning, one where Aletha begged Luke to get up and go scavenging so he could come home to her sooner, but somehow they just couldn’t get out of bed.

“Come on, tell me,” Aletha urged, lying on her side.
She and Luke were covered by the blankets, wearing only sleep pants, and Aletha wearing a simple tank top with hers. Her golden and grey hair was down, spilling over her shoulders in a positively lovely image as her hands roamed playfully over Luke’s muscular form.

“I’m not telling you,” Luke chuckled before sneaking a line of kisses along her collarbone.

“Why not?”

“Because what good will come out of it?”

“Did you tell Felicity?”

Something heavy clung to the air. Though Aletha’s voice had been easygoing, her words had an unintentional coldness to them.

“I’m sorry,” Aletha looked down shyly. “I didn’t mean- It’s not a jealousy thing. I’m just curious.”

He kissed her shoulder, “I know what you meant. I suppose I can regale you with the list. Just please don’t judge me for the length of it. I’ve never been the greatest at relationships, and screwed up a lot of good things.”

“Or picked the wrong lover?”

“You have no idea how bad some of my decisions were.”

“Well, since I brought it up, how about I go first?”

“Honestly Aletha, I’m not sure I want to hear the list of your romances.”

“Too bad because I’m telling,” Aletha grinned.

Luke sighed, but a small grin was on his lips, “Alright. Tell me the list.”

“Well, I was a loner when I was a teenager – Alecta made sure of that – so my first romance wasn’t until I was in Med School. His name was Cander Burkan; he was the most handsome and popular student in the program. I never thought he’d even look my way, but, um… he ended up being my first in pretty much all departments. Those he didn’t achieve were fulfilled by you and Antar.”

Luke couldn’t help but give her a wicked grin.

“You are certainly a surprising man, Luke Erso,” Aletha chuckled.

“So was Cander instantly swept off his feet by your beauty?”

The smile on Aletha’s face fell, “No. He – like most of my stories – is not a happy tale.”

Luke winced, fearful of hearing once more than someone had hurt Aletha so badly. Recognizing what was to come, she took his hand and held it tight.

“We were partners on a project,” Aletha told the tale. “We were studying in my dorm. Anatomy… Things became hands on. I thought it meant something, but I ended up being nothing more than a tale to regal his friends with. I became something of a joke in my program as the silly girl who thought Cander Burkan liked her, and it followed me into the military. We were assigned to the same Medic Unit, and he would brag about conquering General Anthea’s little sister. I would hear the snickers in the hall about Burkan taking my virginity.”

“It was humiliating… and then Alecta found out. He wasn’t a problem after that.”

“What happened?”

“She beat him so badly that he was permanently confined to a wheelchair. Broke his spine, ribs, punctured organs. She showed him why the other officers feared her.”

Luke’s mind flashed to the image of Phasma beating a bound and gagged Felicity Rhiaon. The woman was truly someone to fear.

“But she didn’t do it for me,” Aletha whispered. “She didn’t care that he hurt me. Alecta just wanted people to stop insulting her with the whole business. She told me that if I ever made a mess like that again she would have no qualms over killing me and whatever boyfriend I dragged down with me. She acted like I had dated someone as bad in her eyes as Luke Skywalker.”

Luke shifted uncomfortably, “And after that?”

“Didn’t get involved with anyone until the Rebellion. I had a short relationship with a man from my Batch named Arslan Orden. He was a pilot and we met after he got shot in the arm.”

“Another pilot with an arm injury. You have an odd type.”

“Guilty.”

“How did it end?”

“Like a lot of Rebellion relationships; he was killed in battle. I met Antar a few months later. In the years before we got together, I had two one-night stands, one with a mechanic named Zek Deccol, and the other with a pilot named Cyan Roeder. Antar was after that.”


“Couple,” Aletha admitted. “There was a merchant named Tomax L’hnmar who reintroduced me to passion, but it eventually fizzled out. We parted on good terms, and later he had a falling out with Plutt, so he stopped coming to Jakku. I had a one-night stand with Varon Qorbin a year later, and then Bando Piorgil about three years after that. Then… no one but you. That’s where my list ends.”

“Not bad. Definitely shorter than mine.”

“Oh really? Do tell.”

“Disclaimer, I haven’t slept with everyone I’m about to name… but I have most of them,” Luke confesed.

“My man got around in his youth, did he?” Aletha teased.

“We were in a war. We thought we could die any day. Things happen.”

“Alright, who was first?”

“Growing up I had a crush on my best friend-”

“What’s her name?” Aletha asked.

“Why? Do I know him?”

“Yes.”

Aletha blinked, “Oh.”

Luke chuckled, “But my first romance was Nakari Kelen.”

“Like Kelen Biolabs?”

“The owner’s daughter. She was beautiful, hot tempered, and a terrible cook. She called compliments sugar and asked me to give it to her quite a bit. Hell of a sniper too—”

“So your type is snipers then?” Aletha glanced at her rifle in the corner.

“Not quite. Sure, two of my top three have been snipers, but it’s not a requirement to my heart,” Luke answered. “She did do one thing that made me uncomfortable, and that was shooting again someone she had shot dead to make sure they were. I understand the logic, but it always seemed a little cold blooded. Nakari Kelen was my first love.”

“She died before you told her,” Aletha remembered.

“Yes… It was months before I dated again. This time a pretty little analyst name Kara Raan. She was also killed in battle. If I had to rank the people I loved, she would be my number five.”

“Oh? And what is this top five ranking? Obviously Felicity was number one, but the others?”

“I’ll tell you when I’m done. My next girlfriend was Tadia Bendix. We dated for a few months and then I told her that I was also attracted to men, and she took off.”

“I’m sorry she did that to you.”

“I’m sorry Cander treated you worse.”

“Who was after Tadia?”

“Riyan Terius,” Luke smiled. “First man I loved. He showed me things I never thought I could feel. Dated him for a few months under two years and honestly, I thought I might end up with him… until Darth Vader murdered him.”

Aletha put a hand on his arm, “I’m so sorry.”

“I loved him so much. After that, after losing so many lovers, I stopped doing relationships. Oh, I tried. I managed two months with Kiandra Sode, and one with Hosh Hune, but after that it was a series of one night stands. Daska Tarven, Leo Forto, Jemmila Hibliss, Isabeau Marr, Crevan Sekel. It wasn’t until the war ended that I met Beka Alavai and I started dating again. I was very fond of Beka, but she couldn’t live the life I was pursing,” Luke shook his head at the memory. The uncertainty of his life as a Jedi proved too much for Beka. “Ellona Katarn was after her, but we fell out of love after about five months. Dayana Terek was three years. I almost proposed too, but a… friend of mine disapproved.”

It was years before Tyla Kinall had admitted to Luke she had threatened to kill Dayana if she didn’t leave him. Luke was furious when he found out, but by then he was happily with Felicity, and Dayana was married with a few children, so there wasn’t much cause for reconciliation.
“Next was Satana Puto, who cheated on me and my sister almost murdered her for it. Tej’al Soduntis was fun, but he wasn’t the one for me. Then a series of men and women who lasted at most two months, and honestly I can’t even remember their names. One day I woke up and found that I was almost thirty and still alone.”

Aletha raised an eyebrow, “Cue Felicity?”

Luke grinned, “Yes, but… not romantically at first. It wasn’t until almost a year later that we started to date. I mean, I tried asking her out at one point, but it turned out she was dating someone else, so I ended up dating Doctor Calla Jastara… The biggest mistake of my life.”

“What happened?”

“She ended up being insane. Accused me of incest and polygamy, accused me of cheating on her, tried to burn down my office when I broke up with her, and then took out a hit on my sister via the Hutt Clan when she learned I was dating Felicity. Thank goodness Felicity came next, because after that I was done with the whole dating thing and probably would have settled down with anyone.”

Aletha laughed, “Not that Felicity apparently didn’t have her own version of insanity.”

“Yes, she did,” Luke grinned. “That brings us to the end of the list: Felicity and then you.”

Aletha lifted a brow, “Oh really?”

“Really.”

“Then where does Sienna come into play?”

Luke paled, “You weren’t supposed to remember that.”


He sighed, “She was a woman I met on the night of Felicity’s birthday, after Felicity had been killed. I was very vulnerable that night and we were both so drunk… There was nothing more than a kiss, but we did almost sleep together.”

“Luke… I’m so sorry.”

“Oh, you haven’t even heard the worst part yet.”

“What could be worse than that?”

He hesitated, “Sienna… looked almost exactly like Felicity.”


“I know. I’m awful. I should never have… I don’t know what to say. Felicity would murder me if she ever found out what I did. I just… I missed her so much.”

“And that’s why you break things off with me if your mind goes to Felicity.”

“Exactly. Aletha, please, promise me you’ll never tell a soul about what I did. I’m so ashamed.”

Aletha lifted herself up to kiss Luke’s forehead.

“Your secret is safe with me.” She stroked his cheek, “Now… what about this list? Your top five?”
“You sure you want to hear it?”

“Is Sienna on it?”

“Absolutely not.”

“Then go for it.”

“The top five loves of my life are as follows—”

“Felicity is number one,” Aletha started.

“Fine, yes, Felicity is number one, but calm down, we’ll get there.” Luke shook his head at her, “Alright, so number five: Kara Raan. Number four: Riyan Terius. Number three: Nakari Kelen.”


“Yes, Felicity is my number one, but you… you’re second place. I’m sorry I can’t give you more.”

She closed her eyes. Aletha hadn’t expected to overtake Felicity, but it still was bittersweet to hear Luke so resolutely call her his second best. She wished so desperately to hear a man call her his be all, end all, first pick of the draft. But Aletha knew the truth; she was nothing more than a silver contender.

Luke’s hands were upon her teary cheek, “I do love you. Please don’t think I don’t.”


“My grandfather always told me that you get three great loves of your life: your first love, your last love, and your true love. Some people are lucky to have only one or two people for the positions, but I’ve had three amazing women in those roles. Nakari Kelen is my first love, Felicity is my true love, but I swear to you Aletha, you will be the last woman I ever fall in love with. I swear to you: my heart is your forever, and if you’ll have me, I will spend my life with you until the end of our days.”

Aletha couldn’t help but smile, “You can’t promise that.”

“I just did.”

“Oh really? Well, what if Felicity magically comes back from the dead? Then what are you going to do? Be with me? Or be with her?”

Luke thought about it.

“Is polygamy an option?”

He was answered with a squeal and a pillow to the face.

“Well, someone had a late morning.”

Luke and Aletha couldn’t stop their blushes as Quom and Rey found them exiting her tent after the pair had already returned from scavenging.

“Shut up, Quom,” Aletha muttered as she hugged Rey good morning.
“Trust me, we could be seeing a lot worse,” Rey teased. “Aletha can you help me this afternoon?”

“What’s up?”

“My clothes are getting pretty tight,” Rey tugged at the tunic that was starting to ride up. “I need some help finding a vendor to sell me some new ones.”

“Why don’t you use Melara?” Luke nodded at Aletha’s neighboring clothing vendor, who at the words new clothes had started to frantically wave at Rey.

“Well, it’s uh,” Rey looked at the ground. “More of a girl thing. Things in the chest area are starting to chafe.”

“We can definitely take care of that, Rey,” Aletha smiled. “In fact, I’ve already been sussing out where I can get your first bra.”

“You know,” Quom said, “I didn’t vote for this let’s be open about puberty policy you lot instated.”

Aletha glared at him, “I know. You sent poor Teng to me utterly ashamed of himself when he had his issue two nights ago.”

“Hey, I changed his sheets for him!” Quom objected. “I just didn’t want to start answering questions about his wet dreams.”

Rey blushed. She didn’t want to know this about her best friend either.

“It’s a perfectly natural thing that happens to boys his age,” Aletha said.

“Not Vrogem,” Quom crossed his arms.  

“Vrogem are weird, Uncle Quom,” Rey shot.

“No, not Vrogem,” Luke said. “Just Quom.”

“I’m one of a kind,” he grinned.

“Thank goodness,” Rey muttered.


“Alright, I’ll take Rey today. Luke why don’t you go have a man to man chat with Teng to counteract the damage Quom caused. And Rey you help me tie Quom to a tent pole to prevent him from causing anymore trouble.”

“Hey!”

“Careful, Aletha,” Rey grinned. “We don’t want to set the precedent of that option.”

“MG, you are fourteen years old now. Old enough for me to start getting revenge,” Quom warned.

“Do you just threaten my daughter?” Luke asked in a very even tone.

Quom gulped; while he knew Luke was probably just messing with him, part of him wasn’t 100 percent sure and afraid of mauling via Jedi.

“What if I just tied myself to the tent pole?” Quom offered.

“Come on, Sunshine,” Aletha slung an arm around Luke’s waist as she smiled at Rey. “Let’s go find you a good clothing vendor.”

The group started walking down the dusty street, casually chatting about current events. Rey was delivering her latest report on progress with her speeder when they passed the Niima Outpost Comm Station. They didn’t notice Roke exiting the station, looking wildly around the street, and his eyes set on the group.

“Hey! Get over here!” Roke yelled.

The group didn’t particularly care to be yelled at by Roke, so they assumed it wasn’t about them and continued on ignoring him.

“Oi!” Roke barked. “Kymeri! Tinadar! Ersos! Stop!”

“Damn,” Aletha muttered as they slowed to a halt.

“What is it, Roke?” Luke turned to face Roke, who was walking up to them.

“And please be quick about it so we don’t have to waste too much time with you.”

“And to think people think the two of you are a pair of innocent balls of sunshine,” Roke snarled. “I hate playing messenger boy, but there’s a call for you.”

Rey frowned, “A call?”

“From who?” Quom asked.


“Excuse me?” he whispered. “Sister?”

“At least she claims to be so,” Roke grinned. “I did notice a family resemblance.”

Luke’s heart was pounding in his ears. Leia was calling him? How did she know where to find him? Was it because of the Falcon? Did she know about Rey? Did the First Order? He couldn’t believe it. He wouldn’t believe it!

“It can’t be,” Luke breathed heavily. “How did she find us?”

Roke shrugged, “Don’t know and don’t actually care. Now can someone go talk to her, or are we just going to leave her hanging on the line? Plutt wants that line clear ASAP. We’ve got vendors calling in today, so hurry up!”

Luke just stood froze at a loss of what to do while Quom and Aletha watched him with uncertainty.

No one noticed Rey silent in the corner until she said, “Dad?”

Luke’s head whipped to the right. Fear filled his eyes.

“Rey,” he whispered. “Rey, I…”
But Luke didn’t have the words.

Thankfully, Rey did.

“You have a sister?” Rey’s words weren’t truly a question, just a disbelieving statement of fact.

Luke opened and closed his mouth a few times. He settled on a nod.

“You have a sister,” Rey repeated, chewing over the concept in her mind. Tiny threads were tying pieces of a mystery together, trying to put together a clearer picture of her past. “This sister... Is she married to one of my uncles?”


He was glad Rey was taking the lead on this. She was starting to be old enough to understand the situation, but not fully yet.

“Uncle Brendan or Uncle Freighter?”

“Uncle Freighter,” Luke answered with the term they had started to refer to Han by. Of course, Rey didn’t know that Han was Han, but she knew that she had an uncle who owned that junky Corellian freighter.

“Is that sister one of blood or is Uncle Freighter the blood relative, and she related by marriage?”

“She’s my younger sister, and he married into the family via her,” Luke explained. “You share no blood with him.”

“Can I…” Rey bit her lip. “Can I know her name?”

Luke closed his eyes, “No.”

Rey tried to hide her pain as she looked away, “I see.”

Aletha untangled herself from Luke’s embrace, and pulled Rey into a hug.

Luke watched his beloved comfort his daughter, and smiled a little at the sight. He turned to Quom, who was watching the scene with an uncharacteristic severity. The Vrogem’s eyes met Luke’s, and Quom nodded.

He knew Quom was right.

“I’ll go talk to her,” Luke announced. “We’ll all talk and figure this out afterwards. I promise.”

“I believe you,” Rey said.

Luke smiled and nodded once more.

He had taken two steps away from the group when Roke called out to him.

“What are you doing?” Roke asked.

Luke frowned, “Going to talk to my sister?”

Roke gave a very loud and very planned out laugh, “Oh, I’m sorry, did you think I meant your sister? It’s Kymeri’s.”
“What?” Aletha exclaimed.

“Your sister Adrinna is on the line,” Roke grinned. “I’m sorry for the confusion.”

Four pairs of glaring eyeballs disagreed with his sincerity.

“I suppose I should go talk to her,” Aletha awkwardly untangled herself from the very confused Rey.

“Hurry up, would you?” Roke snapped at her. “I’ve got places to go.”

“I know where you can go,” Quom muttered.

Roke just laughed, patted Quom on the shoulder, and strolled off. Quom burned holes in the back of Roke’s head as he walked away.

“Go, talk to your sister,” Luke instructed. “We’ll see you at the shop later.”

Aletha kissed his cheek and then scampered off into the Comm station.

Luke sighed, “Alright, Rey, I have to go talk to Plutt about Roke. I’m paying him way too much to have this sort of thing pulled on me. Why don’t you go see if Ivano scrounged up those parts for your speeder he promised, and we’ll have a nice long talk about this whole sister thing later?”

“Sounds good.”

He watched her for a minute, “Are you mad at me?”

Rey shrugged, “I don’t know. I don’t think so, but maybe I’m a little… disappointed? I don’t know what to think.”

Luke reached out and grabbed her hand, “Just please remember that any information I hold back is simply for your own good.”

“But why can’t I know the names of my aunt and uncle? What, would I recognize them?”

“Yes,” he said simply.

Rey blinked, “Oh.”

Silence filled the air for a long stretch.

Luke sighed, walked over to Rey, and lifted her chin, “I promise you… it will all make sense someday. Please, just trust me.”

“I do.” She gripped his hand, “I always will.”

The hugged tightly, and when they drew back, they both were smiling.

“Run along,” Luke smiled. “Go have fun working on your speeder. We’ll talk later.”

“I love you, Dad.”

“I love you too, Sweetheart.”

And with that, Rey was gone.

Luke sighed as he watched her go, “Well, this is a real fine mess I’ve gotten myself into, right
“Quom?”

There was no answer.

“Quom?” Luke frowned and turned to look at his friend.

The Vrogem was stalking away angrily in the other direction.

“Where are you going?” Luke called after him.

“To cut Roke’s breaks.”

For some reason, Luke didn’t feel the need to stop him.

Don’t miss the repulsorlifts – I scavenged a bunch of those for my speeder.

-Rey’s Survival Guide

“Teng?” Rey called as she entered Quom’s tent. She looked around the workshop, “Where are you?”

“Under here,” an olive-skinned arm stuck out from under the bulky, red work-in-progress.

Rey grinned and set down her satchel, “How’s our baby?”

“Exhaust pipe is rusted, so I’ve been having to give her a little underbelly work. I’ve almost got it.”

“Good. I was able to scrape up some good parts with Dad this morning. I also got those parts from Ivano that he offered us. Oh, Teng, just wait until you hear what happened at the Comm Station today. Operation Uncle Unravel just got very interesting.”

“I’m all ears. Unless your dad is around?”

“Nah. He’s got some business to attend to. Quom back yet?”

“Briefly. He popped his head in, and then left mumbling something about Roke’s speeder.”

“Then hurry up, will you? I need someone to help unload the trunk of Dad’s speeder.”

“Alright, Alright. I’m coming.”

And then Teng rolled out from under the machine.

Rey had never appreciated exactly how athletic and muscular Teng had become in recent years. Not until he stood before her completely shirtless in the hot Jakku sun…as the sweat glistened down his body.

“Oh, um…” Rey struggled for words.

Teng scowled in confusion. Then he noticed where Rey’s eyes were directed, and he looked down at himself.

“Sorry,” Teng blushed. “It’s pretty hot out, so I just thought I’d strip down some layers.”
“Right,” Rey said, her eyes for some reason glued on Teng’s chest. “Have you been working out?”

“Yeah, your dad has been teaching me a few things. Said he needed a workout buddy to keep him in shape.”

“Well, it’s certainly going well for you.”

Rey didn’t know why she was biting her lip. Teng just looked so… She had no idea. All Rey knew is that for some reason she wanted to make it illegal for Teng to ever put on a shirt again.

Teng on the other hand, did know what Rey was feeling. There was a hunger in her eyes and a blush to her cheeks. It was the same that rose on him every time Rey bent over in front of him, her outgrown clothing riding up to expose some midriff, or perhaps the occasional time when the neckline of her tunic allowed him a further down peek than he should be allowed to have.

If he were a braver, bolder man, he would grab her by the waist and pull her into a passionate kiss then and there. But he was not a particularly brave man, just a boy enamored with one Rey Erso, and would follow her to the ends of the universe if she asked him. Anything to make her as happy as she made him.

“Did you want me to put back on my shirt?” Teng offered.

“No,” Rey said quickly. She was surprised at her own answer, and tried to fumble an excuse, “I wouldn’t want you to be uncomfortable.”

“Neither do I want you. Hence the offer.”

“I- I’m fine, Teng,” Rey smiled. “We are friends after all.”

“Right,” he nodded. “Friends.”

Teng didn’t dare admit what he had come to realize in the past year: that he would do anything to be more than just a friend to her. But he didn’t want to risk ruining the friendship they did have with any unfounded declarations. For all he knew, Rey Erso had no interest in him romantically or physically whatsoever.

…Though the way she was biting her bottom lip was promising.

“So, how’s our baby?” Rey approached the speeder to examine it.

“She’s doing well,” Teng reported, proudly running a hand over the new red paintjob. “Still got a list as long as my arm of parts to get her, but we’re on track.”

“Glad to hear it.” Rey frowned as Teng rubbed the space between his shoulder and neck, “Your shoulder still hurting?”

“Yeah. Aletha said I strained my trapezius muscle – the part between the neck and shoulder. Or at least I think that’s what she called it.”

“Is it bad?”

“No. She said I should be good if I lay off scavenging for a week, try to put a cool cloth on it if I could manage getting ice or cold water, and to just massage it a little if it hurts a lot. She’s got me on some painkillers for a couple days.”

“Is it hurting a lot now?”
“Yeah, but I can handle it,” Teng assured her. “Let’s go unload your dad’s speeder.”

“Absolutely not!” Rey refused. “I’m not having you do heavy lifting with a busted shoulder.”

“You need help unloading.”

“And you need that trapeze massaged.”

“Trapezius.”

“Whatever,” Rey shook her head. “It needs to be done, Teng.”

“Then give me a minute to rub it, or do you want to massage it for me?” Teng sarcastically asked.

“Alright.”

Teng was thrown off the mark when a second later Rey was rubbing his bare shoulder, her body only inches from his own.

“Rey,” Teng was startled. He could feel her hot breath on his chest as she stood facing him, concentrated on her massage.

“You’re very tense,” she said. “Is something stressing you out?”

Her hands were magic on her bare skin, and she was standing so close he had front row tickets to the inappropriate cleavage show.

“Maybe a little,” Teng’s voice was a pitch higher than before his voice had dropped two years ago.

She continued to rub his shoulder so calmly and easily as if she were sorting screws and bolts. Teng struggled not to let her in on how much he was enjoying it, though a few moans did escape his throat.

He couldn’t tear his eyes from her lips. They were small, pink, and chapped. Those lips that would stretch into such a perfect smile, would help her form amazingly intelligent and witty words. Those lips that had a tiny impression of tooth marks left on the bottom one, a hint at her shared desire.

“Rey,” Teng whispered.

Her hands stilled, and she looked up at him, “Yes?”

Teng wasn’t a bold man, but he was a brave one. He knew he would only have one shot at this, and it was a great gamble. If things went wrong, he could lose his best friend.

But if things went right… he had to take the chance.

Very slowly, Teng started to lean forward to kiss those beautiful lips.

“There!” Quom exclaimed suddenly bursting into the tent.

Teng ripped himself back before Rey or Quom could realize what he had just attempted.

“Quom?” Rey said.

“I showed him, MG,” Quom said proudly as he deposited his satchel on a workbench. “Let’s see if Roke messes with me after that.”
“You know he’ll still do it,” Rey replied.

“Yeah, but at least he’ll now think twice.”

Quom turned and finally took in the sight of Rey Rhiaon Skywalker standing inches apart from Teng Malar, with her hands on his shirtless, muscular body.

“Oh…” he scowled. “Have I been transported five years into the past, because I’m pretty sure I’ve already walked in on something like this once.”

“Hey guys?” Luke then ducked into the tent. “Why isn’t the speeder unloaded yet? I thought Rey was going to-“

Luke froze when he caught sight of his daughter and Teng.


“Dad!” Rey blushed and took a step away from Teng. “Sorry, Teng’s shoulder was hurting and I was just helping check it out.”

Luke and Quom exchanged a look.

“Alright then,” Luke dare not press the issue further. “Has Aletha come back yet?”

“No yet,” Rey answered.

“Dang.” He sighed, “I wonder what this is all about?”

“What, what’s all about?” Teng asked.

Rey answered, “Well, Aletha-“


She came into his embrace, his arms wrapping around her waist as she placed her hands on his chest, “Luke, I have to talk to you. Privately. Now!”


“Of course.”

As Luke attempted to herd Aletha towards the exit, she stopped and looked at Rey.

“Rey, I want you to go to the walker right now,” Aletha ordered.

She frowned, “What?”

“I want you to go to the walker, and stay there… And make sure you’re armed.”


Aletha took a deep breath, “It’s Phasma. She’s coming here.”

“I’ll take her to the walker,” Quom immediately grabbed his and Rey’s satchels. “Come on, Rey.”

“Uncle Quom, what’s going on?” Rey looked frantically around the room. She didn’t understand what was happening, but she could sense something was wrong. “Who’s Phasma?”

“Everything will be explained later,” Luke promised. “Quom, make sure you and Rey are armed. If they come-”

“I won’t let them get her,” Quom vowed.

“Should I come with you two?” Teng asked, equally confused by the situation.

“No. The less you’re involved, the safer you are,” Luke answered.

“Rey, go start my speeder,” Quom ordered. “I’ll get us armed.”

“Come on, Luke,” Aletha tugged on his arm. “We need to talk.”

“Of course.” He took a moment to hug Rey and kiss her forehead, “I love you, Sweetheart.”

“I love you too, Daddy.”

And with that, Luke, Aletha, and Rey exited the tent.

“Come on, Teng. You may not be coming with us, but you can help me prep and load the weapons.” Quom stopped as he once again took in the state of Teng’s appearance, “Why are you shirtless?”

“It’s hot out,” Teng shrugged.

“Oh come on, put on a shirt,” Quom picked up Teng’s, which was lying on the floor. “What, were you born in a barn?”

Teng frowned, “Actually, yeah. I was.”

Quom blinked, silent for a moment.

“Huh.”

Silence filled the tent.

“Oh, put on a damn shirt,” Quom threw the shirt at him.

But to quote Mashra, nobody will pay you if you’re dead.

- Rey’s Survival Guide

“Aletha, what is going on?” Luke demanded as they entered her tent. “Phasma’s coming?”

“My sister, Alecta,” Aletha set about putting up the black sheet. “You said that was her First Order
name, right?”

“Yeah.”

“Well, she’s found me. She’s found me, Luke!”

“How?”

Aletha sighed, “Adrinna said that Alecta was looking at the case file for your wife’s capture, and my name was written down. She mustn’t have recognized me when she beat me, but the Stormtroopers would have gotten my name for her report later.”

Luke ran a hand through his hair, “I can’t believe this. Does she know about Rey and I?”

“I don’t think so, but we can’t discount the possibility.”

“How long do we have to act?”

“I don’t know. Adrinna said Alecta would come for me when she could get away from the First Order for a while. Luke, if she comes for me, she’ll kill me.”

He didn’t know what to do, “Couldn’t Adrinna talk her out of it?”

Aletha looked away in shame, “She told me she wouldn’t. Said she has six children and two grandchildren to think about. To protect from Alecta. If she turns against Alecta, she puts them all at risk, and she said…”

She didn’t finish her sentence.


Aletha took a deep breath and remembered Adrinna’s terrible words, “She said I wasn’t worth it. That I deserved it for my involvement with Athena’s death.”

“You had nothing to do with the Death Star.”

“I know! I told her that, but… but she doesn’t care. She said I betrayed the family, and she wasn’t willing to stick her neck out any further than giving me a head’s up. I don’t know what your relationship with your sister is like, Luke… but I know it’s nothing like mine.”

Luke sighed and held her hands, “What are we going to do?”

“I don’t know,” Aletha looked away from him. She squeezed his hands tightly, “But there is another issue that we’re not discussing.”

“If Phasma comes here… she’ll find Rey and I.”

“I can’t let that happen.”

“Neither can I.”

“Then what do we do? Can we… Can we go somewhere? Take Rey, Quom, and Teng and flee somewhere safe?”

Luke thought about Ahch-to, “I do know one place, but…”
“But what?” Aletha asked.

“It was the place I originally planned to go before coming to Jakku. I’ve left a map with a friend, and explicitly told him that I was going there. If they find that out, they’ll come right for us.”

“We’ll make sure to keep an ear out for First Order movements towards the planet.”

“That won’t work. It’s a lost system with no forms of technology or civilization. The only thing really there are porgs.”

“Porgs?”

“Sort of birdlike rodents I guess you would describe them,” Luke explained. “I only know of this place because Felicity and I went on our honeymoon there. Actually, Felicity tried to steal a porg. Stuck it in her bag, and lied that she didn’t know what I was talking about.”

Aletha couldn’t help but laugh, “So this planet is out of the question then?”

“It would seem so.”

“Then where do we go. We can’t stay here.”

“This was the safest place to keep Rey. Trust me, I’ve thought about this a lot. The most obvious place that it would be the least obvious, and the least obvious that it would be the least obvious.”

“But Alecta is coming here for me,” Aletha said.

“Do you know how long we have?” Luke asked.

“Could be months, or it could be hours. Depends on when she can get away.”

Luke sighed, “What are we going to do? I can’t leave Jakku, but we can’t stay if Phasma’s coming.”

And then Aletha thought of the idea that would forever change their lives.

“What if we go somewhere where there was dozens of people able to protect us?”

Luke frowned, “What are you talking about?”

“What if we don’t retreat? Stop playing defense and start an offensive attack? What if we met them head on. Said here we are, here is Rey, we’ll fight you for her.”

Luke had a bad feeling about this, “Do you mean-”

“Let’s join the Resistance.”

Silence clung to the room as horror filled Luke’s body.

“Aletha,” he whispered. “No, we can’t. I can’t.”

“You have to!” she insisted. “For Rey. Listen, there’s dozens of people in the Resistance who would be able to protect her. If we hide her behind layers of safety and soldiers-”

“I had nearly fifty people protecting her when she was five. They burned down my home, slaughtered all of them, and murdered my wife.”

Aletha fell silent. It was the first time Luke had told her straightforward what had happened to bring
him to Jakku. He always had used vague terms when discussing his past, but now... Now she could understand the horror.

"Don’t you understand?" Luke whispered. "Until she’s strong enough to protect herself, Jakku is the safest place to be. To be hidden with me where no one knows about it. Not even my own family. I cannot bring Rey to the Resistance. If I do that, I might as well just stay here and wait for Phasma to find us."

Aletha swallowed hard, “But Luke... if I stay, they’ll find her.”

“And if I go, they’ll find her too.”

“Then what do we do? I can’t stay and you can’t go, so what are we-”

And the answer came to them. The horrible, heartbreaking answer that neither wanted to voice.

“No,” Aletha whispered. “No, I won’t let you go.”

“I don’t want this either,” Luke said. “I love you so much. Just the thought of watching you walk away from me... But then I think about Felicity. Of what they did to her. I won’t let that happen again. I won’t lose you.”

“Luke, please,” she begged. “Come with me to the Resistance. We can fight Phasma, we can raise Rey, we can... we can get married.”

An hour ago, if Aletha had raised the issue of marriage to him, Luke’s answer would have undoubtedly been yes. But now with the chips down, there was only one word for Luke to say.

“No.”

Aletha winced.

Luke closed his eyes and bowed his head, struggling to fight back the tears. He dropped her hands and fought to gather the courage to do this. To love her so much that he could leave her.

“I love you so much, Aletha,” he whispered. A tear rolled down his cheek, “But Rey is the most important thing to me in the entire galaxy. Nothing comes before her, and I won’t risk losing her again. I’ve felt that pain. I’ve been told she was dead. I won’t let myself go through that again. I’m sorry, but where Rey is involved, you come second.”

The words felt like a dagger to her heart, “Luke-”

“And I won’t lose you the way I lost Felicity. I won’t let that happen to you. I’m sorry, Aletha.”

“I understand,” she whispered.

“I’m sorry, Aletha... but I can’t go.”

“And I can’t stay. I love her too, Luke. Know that.”

“I do.”

A long silence filled the tent.

“I’ll call Jedek to come pick me up,” Aletha declared. She wiped the tears from her eyes but her voice shook and her nose ran fast, “He always said I could stay with him when I wanted to leave
Jakku… I just never thought I would take up that offer.”

“And I never imagined this is how things would end.”

“Is it the end?” she dared to ask. “Are we… finished?”

He stared at her, “I… I don’t know.”

So they just held each other and cried.

Not knowing the fate that lay before them, Luke and Aletha made love that night. Tender and passionate, a final plea not to give into the fate that appeared before them.

Luke undressed Aletha and laid her on the cot. She panted heavily, moaning his name as he spread her legs and kissed his way up her thighs. He spent some time tasting her wet quim and tonguing her clit.

Aletha’s hips jerked up involuntarily as he pleasured her. Her small hands – which had been made rough by desert living – buried into his hair and pulled him closer to her. His beard scratched her thighs as his lips delved through her pubic hair. Shaving was a luxury no one could afford on Jakku, no matter where the hair was placed.

When her moans turned more throaty, Luke knew it was time to move on.

He pulled back, much to the disappointment of Aletha, who whimpered at the sudden loss of sensation. Luke kissed her breasts, and sensually glided his tongue over and around her pink nipples. His hand was low, slowly dragging up her thighs and around her sensitive folds. Aletha moaned at the contact of his thumb on her clit, but his touch was gone too soon.

She gasped as he sunk a finger into her.

He thrust in and out of her a few times, curling his middle finger inside of her making her even more wet for him. When he felt her ready, Luke added a second finger, and soon enough a third.

Aletha groaned in time with his thrusts, her hips jerking forward to meet them. She buried her head in his neck as she rode his fingers to orgasm.

“Luke!”

He bit down on her nipple when she came.

“Please don’t ask me to give this up,” Aletha moaned as Luke pulled off his shirt in front of her.


She dropped to her knees in front of him and did as she was told.

Luke ran a hand through her grey-blonde hair. To him there were few things more erotic than the clinking sound of a belt being undone before sex. Aletha made quick work of his clothes, and moved out of the way when he kicked his pants and underwear to the side.

She spent a little while teasing him. Running her fingertips over the thin skin of his hardening shaft, tracing the veins. She cupped his balls expertly, and Luke once again was thankful for her medical
knowledge of male anatomy. Frankly, there had been a few things Aletha showed him over the years that Felicity had never even coming close to guessing.

Then Aletha’s lips were on him and he was in her wet mouth. Luke couldn’t help himself; he pulled her by the hair a little closer and made small thrusts into her mouth. When he saw she wasn’t using their signals to slow down or stop, Luke let himself give in to pleasure.

Aletha Kymeri was an amazing woman, and not just because she gave one hell of a blowjob. She was kind, and brave, and beautiful. She wasn’t as sardonic as the people Luke usually found himself surrounded by, but she wasn’t a pushover. Her pettiness may have annoyed him occasionally, but he was proud of the way she stood up her herself. Aletha Kymeri was a woman who demanded she be taken seriously.

But she had a heart made a cracked glass. How many times had it been shattered by someone she tried to love? And yet here Luke was about to break that heart once more. Sure, Aletha woke every morning with a smile, but he saw the sadness in her eyes.

How could he ever let her go?


She looked up at him with full eyes and she knew what he wanted. Aletha rose to her feet and tangled in his embrace. They held each other, warmed by the heat between their bare bodies.

Aletha pulled away, and Luke laid down on the cot. She found a condom and rolled it down his length. His hands caressed her sides as she climbed on top of him. She grasped his shaft and slid it along the length of her slit, lubricating the condom to enter her.


She looked at him with heartbreak in her gaze, “I love you too, Luke Erso. I love you so much.”

Aletha lowered herself upon him. Luke savoured the gasp she made as he filled her tight cunt. She planted her hands on his chest, and his went to her hips. He helped guide her as Aletha worked herself up and down his cock.

The tent was filled with low moans and the wet slapping of flesh. Her nails dug into his chest as she gripped harder, and his hands soon found her wildly bouncing breasts.

“I love you, Luke,” Aletha said breathlessly as rocked back and forth with increasing difficulty.

Luke sat up and kissed her passionately. She moaned as he shifted their legs into better position: his favorite position. Into the position of both of them sitting up and holding each other to kiss, caress and cuddle. The position Luke always called the ultimate lovemaking position, and indeed the position that he had once used to express his love so deeply, he had used it to create a child.

Neither knew when they started to cry, nor who was the one to shed the first tear. They just held each other and made love. Luke didn’t perceive when he climaxed, nor even if Aletha achieved her own orgasm. All he knew was that after a significant passage of time, his cock was soft and out of her, his condom was full, and he was holding Aletha as they cried in each other’s arms.


“I love you too, Aletha Kymeri,” Luke cried, his head buried in her neck.
She took a shaky breath, “We can’t be together, can we?”

He sighed, “You will always have my heart, Aletha.”

“I know, and you’ll have mine, but…but sometimes love just isn’t enough.”

Luke couldn’t sleep that night. Quom was staying with Rey, poor Teng was all alone, and Aletha was by his side.

He watched Aletha’s chest slowly rise and fall with gentle breath. Blonde and grey hair splayed about, face scrunch up, and head resting on her hand – she complained every morning about it being asleep, but did nothing to change her sleep patterns. Aletha Kymeri looked so beautiful as she slept.

Luke rolled over and stared at the ceiling of the tent. Why did this have to happen? He was so happy with Aletha. After everything they had been through, they deserved to be together. Why were they forced into this separation? Was this the Force’s plan from the start? To have her love him and then leave him?

Words his father said once came back to him, “Things will just get complicated and I think you’ll regret it.”

Was this what Anakin Skywalker had meant? Had he known all along that Aletha would be forced to leave him, and Anakin was just trying to protect his son’s heart from being broken?

But Anakin was wrong. Luke didn’t regret loving Aletha, just as he didn’t regret Nakari, Felicity, or any other great love of his life. Grandfather Ruwee always said a person got three great loves, and it seemed that Nakari, Felicity, and Aletha would be those for him.

He would do anything to have any one of those women back. To live happily ever after with him, but it seemed the only woman who would see Luke Skywalker’s happily ever after would be Rey Rhiaon Skywalker.

Luke half wondered if Nakari Kelen would even like Rey.

He really had to get some sleep, so Luke decided to do the thing that always managed to get him down for the night. Luke meditated. And soon enough he found himself lost to the meditation. He didn’t know if it was a dream, or a vision, or something else entirely, but whatever it was, Luke lost himself to another world.

In front of him was a tree; a beautiful tree, strong and proud. The tree was in the middle of a pool of water. Somewhere the sun was setting. The tree had three branches in total, and from each branch hung a single leaf.

Each leaf looked different. The one from the highest branch was small, spiky, and amber hued.

The middle branch had the largest leaf. It was slim, long, and narrowed to a point at the top. Its hue was of crimson.
The lowest leaf was round, smooth, and pure white.

A gentle breeze blew through the air, shaking the leaves. Luke knew the leaves were precious, so he reached out to still them. But he was too late; the breeze blew too hard, and the amber leaf began to fall towards the pool of water.

“Nice, isn’t she?”

A voice he hadn’t heard in years sung on the air. Luke turned towards the source and found a scene from the past playing out as real as if actors were standing there performing it for him.

“That’s the Desert Jewel,” Nakari Kelen told the young Luke Skywalker standing before them. They were in front of the ship Luke would come to find so familiar. “You fly her safely, now.”

Nakari was a tall woman with dark skin and a cascade of tightly curled ringlets framing a narrow face. She gave Luke a friendly smile and he smiled back.

“Is she yours?” he asked.

“Yep! Well, I guess I should say she’s my father’s. But both his ship and his daughter are at the disposal of the Alliance now. Just got here last week.” She extended a hand. “Nakari Kelen. Glad to meet you.”

“Kelen?” Luke said, taking her hand and shaking it. She had a strong grip, and he tilted his head to the side as he connected her name and the ship’s to a memory. “Any relation to the Kelen Biolabs on Pasher?”

Her eyes widened.

“Yes! Fayet Kelen is my father. Are you from Pasher?”

“No, I’m from Tatooine.”

“Ah, another desert planet. So you understand all about my fascination with ships and how they can take me far away from home.”

“Yeah, I understand that very well. I’m Luke Skywalker.”

“Oh, I know who you are,” she said, finally letting her hand slip from his. “They told me you’d be taking my ship out for some kind of spooky mission, but no one told me you hailed from Tatooine.”

“Ha. It’s not really spooky. Kind of a boring business trip, in fact, but this looks like it will prevent any Imperials from thinking I’m with the Alliance.”

“I should hope so. My baby’s classy and elegant and ill disposed to rebellion.”

“Hey, speaking of ill disposed, mind if I ask you something?”

Nakari nodded once, inviting Luke to proceed.

“I’ve always wondered why your dad chose Pasher for his biolabs. You’d think a jungle planet would be better suited simply because there’s more actual biology there.”
She shrugged.

“He started small and local. The poison and glands of sandstone scorpions and spine spiders turned out to have medical applications.” She chucked her chin at the Desert Jewel. “Very profitable applications.”

“I’ll say.”

“What did you do on Tatooine?”

“Moisture farming. Spectacularly dull. Some weeks were so boring that I actually looked forward to going into Tosche Station to pick up some … power converters. Huh!”

“What?”

“I just remembered I never did pick up my last shipment. Wonder if they’re still there.”

Luke felt the need to turn and behind him he found another scene. He and Nakari were sitting in the cockpit of the Desert Jewel, just having escaped some Imperial trouble.

Nakari closed her eyes, clenched her fingers on the armrests of the copilot’s seat, and took a deep breath. When she exhaled, she relaxed, tension draining out of her shoulders and fingers, and she opened her eyes and looked at Luke.

“I’m sorry for yelling, Luke. You obviously knew what you were doing, and I wasn’t helping.”

“Don’t worry about it,” he said. “People tend to yell in combat. It’s high stress. Was that your first time being chased like that?”

Nakari nodded, her lips pressed tightly together.

“If we’d been in the Harvester, you’d have had cause to be worried,” he told her. “But you made a good decision to spend all your credits on those engines. A fancy bunkroom wouldn’t have saved us.”

“Thanks.” She took another deep breath and then made an effort to smile. “You know, we never did get to finish our earlier conversation.”


“We didn’t?” he asked.

“No, we were interrupted.”

She unbuckled herself and moved close to him. Her right hand raised to his left cheek and Luke flinched minutely, wondering if he had crossed a line with his staring earlier and now he was going to pay for it, but something else happened. She rested her hand lightly there, and then she planted a soft kiss on his right cheek.

Nakari murmured in his ear, “I was going to say I don’t mind if you’re obvious. But since I think you missed all my subtle hints, this is me being obvious.”
“Oh,” was all Luke could manage to say, overwhelmed by surprise.

Nakari didn’t remove her hand from his face, but she reared back to look him in the eye, her expression incredulous.

“That’s all you have to say? ‘Oh’?”

Luke made a completely unnecessary throat-clearing noise and said, “I liked that thing you did a few seconds ago where you kissed me. I think you should do it again.”

Nakari smiled and gave him a kiss that was more than a peck on the cheek.

Luke turned again and found a fond memory of a day they spent in a hotel room.

“Attaboy,” she said, encouraging him. “You bring me the sugar now. Go on.”

It took Luke a moment to realize she was speaking metaphorically, but he was glad he caught himself before he moved to search for a sugar packet in the hotel room.

“Right. Sugar. Well, you are so …” Luke struggled to think.

“I’m so what, Luke? Don’t stop now.”

“So ... how do people do this? Everything I can think of to say sounds trite and insincere in my head.”

“Don’t worry. You just earned all these sincerity points with the too-much-honesty thing. That’s not saying you shouldn’t strive to be original; I’m just saying that if you blurt out something I’ve heard before, I might believe you.”

“Ah, but no pressure, right?”

She winked, “Right.”

“Well, actually, that’s something I really admire about you. No pressure.”

Nakari narrowed her eyes, “You sure this is sugar?”

“Definitely. I guess this is a roundabout compliment, but I’m going for originality.”

“All right, dazzle me.”

“Well, I don’t feel the crushing weight of your expectations,” Luke explained. “I mean you had them—you just shared them with me—but I never would have known unless you said something. And believe me, that’s refreshing. Important.”

Nakari prodded him to clarify, “Important how?”

He struggled to find the right words.

“Ever since the Battle of Yavin, I feel sometimes that people expect me to top it and wonder why I
haven’t yet. What I feel from you is encouragement to top it—which is very different—and rare.”

The other person who habitually encouraged him was Leia, but Luke thought it best not to elaborate on that.

Nakari leaned back in her chair, “Whoa. I’m not encouraging you to top the Death Star thing.”

“I know—that probably didn’t come out right,” Luke said. “Let me try again. The secret about the Battle of Yavin was that I succeeded because of the Force, so to me, topping what I did there doesn’t mean a bigger explosion or killing more stormtroopers. It means taking another step along the path to becoming a Jedi. And I’ve made more progress in the Force since I met you than any other time after I lost Ben. I actually have hope that I can learn to use it now and it’s because of your encouragement … So, you see, you’re …”

He flailed for some kind of original phrasing and nothing came to mind. Panicked that he would clam up and let loose another awkward silence into the world, he finished up with a simple fact:

“… You’re good for me.”

Nakari waited a few beats to make sure he was finished.

“Hmm. That was some pretty complex sugar,” she said, her mouth teasing up to the left, “but you wrapped it and put a neat little bow on it at the end.”

She leaned forward again, pushed her plate out of the way, and propped an elbow on the table, resting her cheek against her good hand. It had been injured on the crazy mission they were in the middle of. Her half smile bloomed into a wide one.


Luke felt giddy and exhausted at the same time, the way you feel after a narrow escape from death. He was glad she didn’t seem intent on fanning the flames of jealousy. Luke didn’t doubt for a second that she still thought of Leia as competition, but at least for the moment she was content to let it slide. And Luke had better not push my luck any further. Having negotiated one minefield successfully, he’d be a fool to step back in and dance around.

Reaching across the table to snag her plate, Luke placed it on top of his own and rose to clear away dinner.

“You know what?” he said, as he moved to the kitchenette. “If I could go back to see that old Luke—the one right after the Battle of Yavin with a medal around his neck, still riding high after sinking proton torpedoes down an exhaust port that must be history’s greatest design flaw—I don’t think I’d be angry with the way he felt back then. But I’d tell him it wasn’t always going to be that easy. Because the Empire’s obviously still out there. A huge victory for us was only an inconvenience for them. They still kill and enslave people—well, I don’t need to remind you of that. We’re hiding in the Outer Rim like the vermin the Empire says we are, and running missions like this one where we don’t know if it will make a difference or not, or if anything we do really matters.”


When he turned to look at her she had a crease between her eyes and was regarding him intensely.

“We are the thorn that pricks the Emperor’s finger when he looks at the galaxy as his personal garden. And you know who he punishes every time we get away with something? Vader.”

“Because pooodoo rolls downhill and Vader’s not at the top. He passes it on to everyone beneath him, for sure, but he gets it first every time the Emperor is displeased. And the fact that we are still out here displeases him plenty, I bet.”

“You want Vader to get what’s coming to him, eh?”

“Sure. I mean, it’s not all I want. But I wouldn’t pass up a chance to take a shot at him if the opportunity presented itself. He took my mom from me and betrayed your dad. Don’t you want him dead?”

“I want him defeated.”

“Dead qualifies as defeated,” Nakari pointed out.

“Yeah, but I guess I’d like to know how he became the thing that he is so I would know what not to do. You can’t get answers from a dead man.”

“Hold on. You think you could turn all evil like that? You think you have that inside you?”

“No, no, that’s not what I meant. Ben said he’d been seduced by the dark side of the Force, almost like he didn’t have a choice. I need to know more.”

Nakari’s voice deepened along with the crease between her eyes, “He chose to send my mother to the spice mines and let her die there, Luke. It wasn’t some metaphysical dark side that made him do it. He chose to do that, just like everything else he’s chosen to do. He’s not helpless. He’s responsible.”

Seeing his mistake, Luke hastened to reassure her, “Yes, he is, absolutely. I’m not saying I agree with Ben—I simply don’t know what he meant. There are mysteries about the Force to which Vader might know the answers.”

“True, but you couldn’t trust anything he said anyway, so why talk?”

“Like it or not, he’s one of the few people remaining in the galaxy who can even discuss it with me.”

Nakari blinked, “So what are you saying? You want him to teach you?”

“No, of course not. I just think I could learn something from him.”

She made a noise like steam escaping a pressure valve, “I don’t think you’d like anything you learned. He’s not going to make you happy.”

“No, I suppose not.”

“Vader probably doesn’t even know what happiness is. You know what? I bet he’s never had a slice of cake.”

The abrupt change of subject startled Luke.


“Absolutely. You want to ask him something when he’s defeated, ask him that.” Her voice changed this time, not to imitate her father as she had done many times on their trip but to imitate Luke. “‘Lord Vader! Have you ever had any cake? Answer me!’”
She sounded strange and kind of nasal.

“Hey, I don’t sound like that, do I?” Luke frowned.

“Don’t get distracted! We’re discussing Vader’s dessert preferences. If he says yes, he’s had cake, then he was human at one point and remembers what it was to be happy, and you can continue to talk because there’s some common ground there. But if he says no, he’s hopeless. Chuck him out the air lock and end his misery.”

They started laughing, and even though it wasn’t that funny, they laughed until their stomachs hurt and tears streamed from the corners of our eyes. When you laugh at something that scares you, it’s not so scary anymore, which is probably the reason Vader had Nakari’s mother sent to the spice mines. He wanted to be feared and couldn’t bear to be mocked.

Luke never told Nakari, but he thought those stolen moments with her in a Kupohan hotel were so much better than cake.


She bit her lip, “You know what’s even better than cake?”

Luke smiled as he remembered what happened immediately after that conversation. It appeared that was where the Force was leading him for the next image he saw was of his younger self in bed with her, tangled in the sheets.

“Nakari!” a breathless grunt filled the air.

Luke was on top of Nakari, and their clothes were scattered on the floor. He was panting, his head buried in her neck as he comprehended the feeling of finishing inside of a woman for the first time in his life.

Nakari, thankfully looked very satisfied.

“Now that’s what I call sugar,” Nakari chuckled.

“That was…” Luke struggled for words. “Well, now I understand what all the fuss over sex is about. That was incredible.”

“Thanks.”

“Was it good for you?”

“…Wasn’t bad for a virgin.”

Luke frowned, “It wasn’t good?”

“I didn’t say that.” She playfully ran her fingers over the well-defined muscles of his shoulders, “It was good, but your technique needs a little refinement. You just need some more experience, preferably by the hands of a woman and not yourself.”
“Well, I am willing and eager to obtain more experience,” Luke kissed down her neck.


Luke pouted and withdrew his assault of pleasure. He rolled off Nakari and laid back on the bed. She surprised him when she climbed on top of him.

“But while we wait, why don’t I show you another way to give a woman sugar?”

It was an hour later when they had made love a second time that Luke realized he was in love with Nakari Kelen. But considering the time and place, he decided it would be better to wait until a later, more inappropriate time to tell her.

After all, they would have all the time in the world to say it.

Luke winced as he knew what was to come next.

He, Nakari, Artoo, and Drusil – the alien they were on a mission to rescue – had finished discussing their plan to get past the bounty hunters to safety.

Luke and Nakari both took a couple of steps in different directions, thinking only of the mission. But then they stopped, thinking of each other, turned back, and froze.

Both of them waited for the other to speak first, and each made one or two halting starts, simultaneously, which caused them to stop and wait for the other to continue, and the awkwardness escalated with every fraction of a second—not to mention the terror.

Luke was mortified that whatever he said next would be precisely the wrong thing—either too much or too little, just wholly inappropriate and not what she wanted to hear. Nakari must have been feeling something similar, and he wanted to say she didn’t need to worry, she could say anything to him, but even that would probably be wrong.

“What is happening?” Drusil asked. “I am unfamiliar with this kind of human behavior. Have you lost the power of speech?”

“No,” Nakari said, and she closed the distance between herself and Luke in three long strides. Her head darted forward, lips kissing his briefly, and then our gazes met. “Be safe, Luke.”

It was a very safe thing to say compared to all the other phrases he had been considering, so he nodded with some relief and replied, “You, too.”

“That was astoundingly straightforward,” Drusil commented, her confusion clear. “What was the difficulty that prevented you from expressing such commonplace wishes?”

Thank goodness neither Quom Tinadar nor C-3PO were witness to such a moment in Luke’s life.

The Givin’s words evoked embarrassed smiles from Luke and Nakari, but Luke was grateful to Drusil for saying them anyway.

Nakari’s eyes spoke volumes to him, and Luke hoped his communicated as much to her.
What he said, however, was, "No time to explain."

He broke eye contact with Nakari to witness the landing of the first of the bounty hunters on the beach.

“We have to go,” Luke said. Thinking of the extensive catalog offered by Utheel Outfitters on Rodia, as well as many other such businesses throughout the galaxy, Luke gave some final instructions, “Artoo, make sure you’re scanning in the infrared and other channels besides the visual and let Nakari know if you see something she doesn’t. These bounty hunters are sure to have some tricks in their arsenal.”

Artoo acknowledged with a short electronic burp, and his dome rotated to face the lagoon.

They truly did part after that.

It was the last time Luke would speak to Nakari.

A final, heartbreaking scene played out before Luke. The scene of a battle in the jungle that would end poorly for Nakari Kelen.

Giving up on trying to blast the bounty hunter since all Luke hit were trees, Luke aimed at the trees instead—ones that might fall on the bounty hunter and cause him to quit firing grenades long enough for Luke to do more lasting damage.

Drusil helped, and several of them began to topple around the bounty hunter, but he managed to fire two more grenades before scrambling out of the way, finally affected by our fusillade.

Desperate, Luke stretched out with the Force, trying to locate those grenades and divert their path at least a little bit, but I couldn’t find them or feel them. He felt Nakari’s presence, though, - an amber hued signature – and the Aqualish running for cover, and also the last bounty hunter, a reptilian Trandoshan, crouching in the ferns close to the lagoon and taking in the scene.

Luke was able to sense all this just as the grenades boomed and shook the ground below them and a cry of pain, cut short, was accompanied by Artoo’s wail, and then there was a sharp, empty space in the Force where Nakari had been a moment earlier.

It was a blow to the gut, realizing what that sudden absence meant. He hadn’t seen it happen with his eyes, but Luke had felt Nakari’s life snuffed out through the Force.

The amber leaf hit the surface of the pond and dissolved. As the water rippled, changing the pool forever, the leaf was gone.

Gone like Nakari.

The wind began to stir again, and Luke looked up to see the crimson leaf rip from the branch. Luke raced forward to catch it from falling and leaving him.
His fingers closed upon it when he felt a hand on his and he was pulled away from the scene by another familiar laugh.

A younger Luke was pulled across the dancefloor by Felicity Rhiaon as they danced together at the wedding of Koran – Gunner’s son – and Ayessa – Riz’s daughter.

“You’re not a bad dancer, Master Skywalker,” Felicity smiled as they moved to the beat of a reasonably up-tempo song.

“You dance nicely as well, Miss Rhiaon,” Luke laughed as he watched Diego Nalto dance with Gunner’s widow. “Nalto chose an interesting dance partner.”

Felicity glanced back, “Oh, just a promise we made.”

Luke’s expression signalled her to explain further.

“Before we left for Operation Citadel, the five of us made the other promise to fulfill one wish should we not survive,” Felicity elaborated. “Gunner wanted his wife to never dance alone at a wedding, so Diego attends weddings with her. Ji-Dan wanted a memorial in a Jedi Temple should the Jedi ever arise, if you happen to be looking for a new architectural feature on Rornian. Riz wanted the survivors to visit his daughter at least once a year, and tell her stories of him so she’d never forget her father. Diego and I have done such.”

“What about Diego?”

“He wanted his X-Wing to go to someone worthy.”

“The X-Wing the Council ended up giving me?” Luke asked.

“Yes,” Felicity grinned.

“Alright, what about you? What did you want?”

Felicity bit her lip, “To spread my ashes with Brendan’s on a happy planet. That way we’d be together again in death.”

Luke stared at her, “Wow... you really are morbid, aren’t you? Have you thought about maybe trying a therapy session?”

She swatted at him, but Luke used the chorus change as reason to twirl her away.

“I was just suggesting,” he chuckled, pulling her back into dancing position.

“You keep those suggestions for your girlfriend. If Calla doesn’t end up needing therapy of some sort, I will eat my shoe.”

“You know, she wasn’t that mad over me attending this wedding with you.”

“She’s going to dump you in less than a month, I guarantee it.”

Luke shook his head and twirled her again.

“You know, this wedding is a little depressing,” Felicity admitted. “I mean Riz’s daughter got
married before me. There must seriously be something wrong with me.”

“I’m sure you’ll find someone,” Luke said. “Someone loads better than Drystan or this Pax guy you wanted to avoid.”

“Pax is a lovely man, just wasn’t the man for me. I wonder if I’ll ever find the man for me though.”

“Well, until you do, you’ll always have me to dance with at weddings. I promise.”

Luke watched his younger self spin Felicity again and when the spin was completed, they were in different clothing and the scene was now set in the Meditation Gardens of Rornian.

“This seems familiar,” Felicity laughed as she danced with Luke a few months later at Reine and Obik’s wedding.

“I did promise to be available to dance with you at weddings,” Luke grinned. “Just didn’t quite expect that I would end up being the man you were looking for.”

“Trust me, I don’t expect this either… Though if I remember correctly, Calla did. Tell me, Master Skywalker, how long after she accused you of being in love with me did you realize you were in love with me?”

“I’m pleading the fifth.”

Felicity laughed as he spun her again. When the spin was complete, he pulled her into particularly tight.

“I am glad of how things worked out, though,” Felicity said. Her eyes were dark and her voice sultry.


“Luke?”

“Yeah?”

“Would you kiss me already?”

“Your wish is my command.”

And he pulled her in for a passionate kiss… in fact maybe a little too passionate. It had been days since their make out session on Lando’s ship and their desire grew with every physicality. Luke kissed her like he didn’t care if anyone was looking, and with the moan Felicity gave, it was clear that she didn’t care if they were looking.

“Hey! Cut it out you two!” Lando called as he and Alyla danced a little way away from them.

“Yeah, Luke, there’s children around,” Alyla teased. “Let’s keep this PG, alright?”

Luke shook his head, “Okay, you know you’re going overboard when Lando Calrissian says it’s too
much.”

“Well, why don’t we go sneak away for some private time?” Felicity pressed herself against him.

“I would love too,” Luke couldn’t help but admire that dress that would get him in trouble later that
night. “But people would notice if we disappeared.”

“Not necessarily. We could go when people are distracted. Maybe when the cake is cut?”

Luke couldn’t wait until it was cake time.

Felicity pulled apart, letting the sexual tension dissipate.

“Spin me again, Luke.”

He spun her again and once more their clothing and setting changed. Now it was a scene inside the
old Rebel Base on Yavin IV, and the pair of them wore their wedding attire.

“That is a beautiful dress, Mrs. Skywalker,” Luke grinned.

“And you look very handsome yourself Mr. Rhiaon.”

Luke shuddered, “I sound like your father.”

“And I like Darth Vader’s wife.”

“Pact never to call each other those names again?”

“It’s a deal Mr. Rhiaon Skywalker.”

“I like the sound of that Mrs. Rhiaon Skywalker.”

Sadly, the song came to an end.

“Alright, it’s my turn to dance with the groom,” Leia declared as she approached the pair with Ben.

“Oh, you come to steal my husband?” Felicity grinned. “I love saying that. My husband.”

“I love it almost as much as saying my wife,” Luke smiled back. He paused, “And also that fact that
for once this didn’t lead to an incest joke.”

“I would pay so much money for people to stop bringing up Hoth,” Leia admitted. “Come on, I
want to dance with my brother.”

“Alright, I’m sure I can spare a minute,” Luke agreed. “Is Han available to take my place and
dance with my beautiful wife?”

“I think I’m going to be sick,” Ben rolled his eyes.

“No, he and Lando are starting up a pool on when you two are going to have a child,” Leia
answered.
Luke scowled, “I don’t believe this!”


“Reine and Obik went off on their own for a little while,” Leia reported. “They said something about cake and revenge for what you two did at their wedding?”

Suddenly neither Luke nor Felicity found they could look Leia in the eye.

She narrowed her eyes, “Do I want to know?”

“Absolutely not,” Felicity answered. “Alright, you two dance, and Ben, how about you and I have this next dance?”

Ben scoffed, “Honestly? I’d rather be punched in the face.”

“I can arrange that.”

They turned to see thirteen-year-old Poe Dameron approaching them with a grin. Kes was following closely behind.

Luke and Felicity greeted them fondly with hugs, thanks, and the receiving of congratulations. At some point Ben managed to slink off.

“Looks like you’re down a dance partner,” Poe said when he noticed. “You wanna dance with me, Felicity?”

“I would be honoured,” Felicity laughed, taking his hand.

“Make sure you bring her back to me,” Luke joked.

“I make no promises Master Skywalker,” Poe grinned. He waggled his eyebrows at Felicity, “What do you say? The offer to run away together still stands.”

“You know I’ve got you on retainer,” Felicity ruffled his hair. “Come on. Let’s dance.”

Luke watched Poe lead his wife away.

Then Poe’s voice came again: this time deeper and more somber.

“Is it true what they’re saying about Felicity? She’s gone too?”

A devastated Luke nodded as he lowered his head, trying not to let Poe see his tears. He was in Felicity’s office on Rornian, slowly going through the clean up process after the massacre.

BB-8 watching from the corner made a sad noise.

Poe sighed and dropped his own head, “I’m sorry. She was a good friend to me and my family. If you need anything at all.”

“I know,” Luke gave Poe a smile, but Poe could see the pain and falseness behind it. “Thank you.”

“Wait, can you give this to Leia?” Luke handed Poe the data chip with the Temple blueprints.


“You too, Poe.”


He was all alone.

The crimson leaf hit the surface of the pond and dissolved. As the water rippled, changing the pool forever, the leaf was gone.

Gone like Felicity.

The breeze picked up one last time, and Luke raced with every ounce of his energy to catch the final leaf. Sure enough, the white leaf broke off the branch and started to fall.

“Rey, why don’t you properly introduce me to your friends?” Luke asked as the scene formed into one from Niima Outpost many years ago.

“Okay, Daddy!” Rey said excitedly. “Mister Quom, Doctor Aletha, this is Daddy.”


“Daddy, these are my friends,” Rey introduced. “The nice lady is Doctor Aletha Kymeri. She and her husband fought in the Rebellion, and her husband, a pilot named Antar was in a crash and cut off his arm and got a mechanical one like you. But he’s dead now.”

Luke raised a brow as Aletha stifled a laugh.

“Don’t you love how blunt children are?” Aletha grinned at the horrified Luke.

Luke blinked and suddenly his younger version was standing outside of Unkar Plutt’s business building with Alethea.

“The First Order didn’t capture Felicity,” Aletha insisted. “She turned herself in. Remember your
wife’s apprehension for what it was: the bravest, most selfless act I have ever seen a mother do for their child.”

Luke grinned. After the hell Felicity had gone through with her postpartum depression and the lingering fears it had left behind in her, Luke knew that Aletha’s declaration would have meant the world to Felicity.

“She truly was the most… amazing woman I have ever had the pleasure of meeting,” Luke felt the lump forming in his throat. “It was the greatest honour in my life to be selected to be her husband and the father of her child.”

Luke looked back to the ground and fought the tears threatening to fall. Aletha gave Luke a sad smile. She touched Luke’s arm and a sob escaped from his throat.

“She’s dead, isn’t she?” Aletha asked softly.

Luke looked at her with wet, red eyes and nodded, “It’s my fault. She’s gone, and it’s all my fault!”


Luke clutched onto Aletha and sobbed harder than he had dared to in months. He rested his head on the junction of her neck and shoulder and wailed in a heart-wrenching display. It was the first time he had truly focused on the loss of Felicity without alcohol or Rey being a factor. He had lost his soulmate, and he needed to experience the physical catharsis of letting it all out.

But Aletha didn’t care as she held Luke in her arms. It wasn’t like the other hugs Luke had gotten during his breakdowns about Felicity. It wasn’t Leia or Han holding him; struggling and failing to hold back their own tears. Aletha just held him, eyes dry, stroking his hair and alternated between telling him it was okay and making a soothing shushing noise.

“It’s alright. I understand,” Aletha used her best bedside manner tone. “I lost my husband several years ago.”

“She wasn’t supposed to die,” Luke sobbed. “She was supposed to come back and we’d be together again.”

“I know. It was the same thing with Antar. He was supposed to go out, make his final stand against the Empire, and then we would live happily ever after. He wasn’t supposed to be shot down on these pathetic heap of a planet,” Aletha glared at the very ground of Jakku.

“How am I supposed to tell Rey that her mother is dead?” Luke asked, slowly pulling himself away.

“I wasn’t expecting to find Rey, and now not only do I have to figure out what to do next, but I have to tell her the worst news of her life.”

“Well, I’m not great with kids or mourning, so I can’t really help you with that, but I will say this. Just remember that no matter how terrible this news you have to share is, this could have gone a lot worse. You could have lost both of them, or worse, what if you spent the next fifteen or twenty years thinking you had lost Rey and she grew up alone on Jakku?”

Luke shuddered at the thought. He could imagine it, being a bearded hermit on Ahch-to until one day the Millennium Falcon arrived on and he found himself face to face with his grown daughter he didn’t raise, her frame thin from starvation and loneliness.

That sounded horrible.
“Besides,” Aletha went on, “if that little girl has a tenth of the strength her mother had, she’ll be fine.”

Luke smiled, “Yes, she will be. I just have to be open and honest with her. Nothing from ‘a certain point of view.’ Just the full truth... But I still have no clue what to do next.”

“Why don’t you stay here on Jakku for a little while and figure things out?” Aletha suggested.

Luke was surprised, “Stay here?”

“Quom and I will help you with Rey any way you want, and apparently, the place Rey is staying is pretty safe and stable for Jakku. You could do worse.”

Luke hesitated at the thought of living for any amount of time on Jakku, “I suppose a few days couldn’t hurt, and it would give her a sense of normalcy which she probably hasn’t had in a while.”

Aletha just grinned at him.

“Oh alright,” Luke conceded. “We’ll stay for a little while.”

Luke saw the scene shift to one outside of Aletha’s tent.

“What’s going on, Aletha?” Luke asked as the tent flap closed behind them. “What’s that mark?”

“Luke,” Aletha carefully placed a hand on his forearm like she had done so many times before. It had become a gesture of comfort and support between the two. “That shape... is an indentation mark.”

Luke scowled, “I don’t understand. What does it mean?”

Aletha took a deep breath, “It means that... Luke, somebody hit your child.”

Luke’s eyes went wide as horror washed over him like being dunked in a lake of ice cold water. It was his worst fear... someone was abusing his child.

“No,” Luke clenched his fist. He was shaking. “This can’t be.”

“I’m so sorry, Luke,” Aletha rubbed his arm.

“How can you be certain? What is an indentation mark and why does it make you say this?”

“An indentation mark is a mark left behind when someone is hit with an object. If Quom smacked you hard enough with a wrench, the mark would take the shape of said wrench.”

“And the Imperial mark?”

Aletha cocked her head to the side, “A very small mark, wouldn’t you say? Almost the size of... I don’t know... a ring?”


“My guess is that he back handed her while wearing his ring,” Aletha observed. “And I would also guess that this isn’t the first time he’s hit Rey.”

“How did I not see it?” Luke put his head into his hands. A few rogue tears slid down his cheeks as he let out a strangled sob. “How could I let this happen?”

Determination setting on her face, Aletha gently, but firmly pulled Luke’s hands down and lifted his chin so he was forced to look her in the eyes.

“You listen to me, and you listen carefully,” Aletha had her authoritative tone on. “This is not your fault.”

“Isn’t it?” Luke shot aggressively, yet not angrily. “I left her alone with him. Force... why didn’t she tell me? Can I not be trusted to protect her? Of course, I can’t. I let this happen. Why would Rey ever trust me after that?”

“Stop it!” Aletha ordered. “This is not your fault! This is a classic case of abuse, Luke. He probably has scared her into silence. After all, who’s more terrifying to a child? A brute who hits her? Or a man who likes to talk things out and gives unlimited second chances?”

No one on Jakku feared Luke Erso, or even knew what he was capable of.

But that was about to change.

The scene was then one of Aletha and Luke standing at Mashra’s grave.

Aletha laughed, and Luke couldn’t help but crack a smile. He loved her smile; that smile as warm as the sun of Jakku. He found himself reaching out and brushing a lock of hair out of her face. He heard how her breath hitched slightly.


“Luke,” she whispered back, staring into his eyes. She dared not even blink and ruin the connection held between their gazes.

“Aletha Kymeri, you are one of the most amazing women I have met in my life,” Luke’s hand stroked the soft line of her jaw. “And, that’s saying a lot.”

“And you Luke Erso, are one of the most amazing men I have met in my life... Though that’s not exactly saying much in my case.

Luke laughed, and that warm smile of hers widened.


“I practice speeches in my head before I say them,” Luke grinned. “Besides... it’s easy to talk to someone you love.”
Aletha’s breath stopped, “Luke-”

“Aletha,” he whispered back.

He took his chance. Luke leaned forward and captured her lips in his own. She startled at first, but soon she was kissing him back.

A year later they were entwined in the blankets in Aletha’s tent. She lay atop him, collapsed and panting from having finally consummated their growing passion.

“Oh my god, Luke,” Aletha moaned. “I should have done that years ago.”

“Yes, you should have,” Luke grinned.

Suddenly, he flipped her on her back, and positioned himself over her.

He ghosted his lips over hers and his hand started drifting down Aletha’s body, “But the good news is that we’re only getting started.”

Aletha shrieked with pleasure as Luke’s hand hit its mark.

Then a final scene, one from hours before.


“I love you too, Aletha Kymeri,” Luke cried, his head buried in her neck.

She took a shaky breath, “We can’t be together, can we?”

He sighed, “You will always have my heart, Aletha.”

“I know, and you’ll have mine, but…but sometimes love just isn’t enough.”

The white leaf slipped through his fingers and the stem dipped into the pool.

Suddenly a burst of wind blew it away from the pool and the tree. Hearing Aletha’s laugh in the distance, Luke chased after it.

Soon enough he found himself in a room filled with desks. It looked familiar, but Luke couldn’t place it.

He stood in the doorway watching Aletha. She was pressed gently against one of the desks, her arms wrapped around the neck of a man Luke couldn’t identify. Aletha was smiling and savoring the mystery man’s embrace.
She looked happier than Luke had ever seen her.

“They look good together, don’t they?”

Luke looked up in shock to find Felicity standing next to him. She was smiling at him, and somehow she looked different, though Luke couldn’t put his finger on it.


Felicity clasped his hand and cuddled into his side, “Almost as attractive as us. *Almost.* I refuse to admit he makes a cuter couple than I do.”

Luke laughed but couldn’t take his eyes off Aletha. He had never made her smile like that.

Felicity watched him carefully, “You love her… don’t you.”

“Not as much as I love you.”

“But you still love her.”

“Yes.” He looked her, “Are you mad?”

“Maybe a little jealous,” Felicity admitted, “but I understand. And I’m okay with it. I know what she means to you, and I know what I mean too. One doesn’t negate the other.”

“Is she happy with him?”

“We both know the answer to that.”

Luke sighed, “I just wish I could have made her that happy.”

Felicity rested her hand against his shoulder, “It’s okay, Luke. At the end of the day, we all realized where we belonged. You with me… and him with her.”

Aletha did look so happy with him.

Luke knew he had made the right decision in letting her go.

He looked at Felicity, and wrapped his arm around her waist, “I’ve missed you so much.”

Felicity smiled, “I missed you too.”

And they shared a tender kiss.

That was when Luke woke up. The vision cleared from his mind like a dream, but the imagine of Aletha with the other man stayed. He knew what that vision meant: someone out there a man was waiting for Aletha. He would be the one who got to live happily ever after with her.

But what about him? What about Luke’s happily ever after?

He looked over at Aletha sleeping peacefully next to him. Luke stroked her hair out of her face, and he understood. Like Jakku, she would not be a permanent fixture in his life. As wonderful as this love he shared with Aletha was… she was nothing more than a lull.
Luke kissed her forehead and accepted his fate.

In the morning they made their decision: when Jedek came next week to take Aletha away, that would be the end of their romance. Luke dare not tell her of his vision, but Aletha could see something in his eyes that made her okay with the choice.

“Don’t wait for me,” Luke urged. “Find someone who will love you the way Antar and I could never manage.”

They also decided that until their final day together, there was no harm in continuing their relationship just one more week. One more week of kissing, holding each other, and making love.

It was the goodbye they never got with Felicity, Nakari, nor Antar.

But they would have this one.

“You can’t go! No, I won’t let you!” Rey screamed.

“Rey, calm down, please,” Aletha urged as they explained their plan of action to Rey and Quom in the walker.

“You can’t leave!” Rey sobbed. She threw her arms around Aletha’s neck, “Please don’t leave me.”

Aletha cast a helpless look back at Quom and Luke.

“We’ll give you two a moment,” Luke said sadly. He patted the sullen Quom on the shoulder, “Come on.”

“Just a moment,” Quom said.

Luke exited the walker.

Quom waited a moment, and then dug in his bag. He pulled out a small object.

“Here, Doc,” he offered it to her. “This might help.”

Aletha smiled when she recognized it, “Thank you.”

Quom opened his mouth to say something, but thought the better of it and exited the walker.

For a long time, Aletha held Rey as she cried in her arms. Rey begged, screamed, and sobbed, doing all she could to get the woman she called mother in her heart to stay.

“I can’t, Sunshine,” Aletha cried on Rey’s shoulder. “If I could, I would stay in a heartbeat, but I can’t, Rey. I have to keep you safe.”

“But why? Why do you have to go?” Rey sobbed. “I don’t want you to go. I need you!”

“I need you too. You are truly a ray of light. Before you came into my life, living on Jakku was unbearable. You changed me, Sunshine, and so I have to return the favor and keep you safe.”

“But I don’t want you to go. I want you with me.”

“And I want you with me, but sometimes it’s just the hand you’re dealt with.”
Aletha held Rey for a while longer.

“I’m so sorry, Rey,” she whispered. “I know that this is sort of what happened with your mother. I don’t want you to relive it, but I don’t have a choice.”

“It’s just not fair,” Rey buried her face in Aletha’s neck.

Aletha took a deep breath and pulled back. She lifted Rey’s chin and looked her straight in the eyes.

“Rey, part of growing up is learning that sometimes the right choice, isn’t the desirable one,” Aletha said. “I know you understand that. You understand that I have to leave.”

With teary eyes, Rey nodded, “I know… I’m just afraid. Will we ever see each other again?”

“I don’t know,” Aletha confessed. “And I won’t promise you something I’m unsure of… but I will promise that I will do everything in my power to see you again. I truly hope we’re together again someday. I love you so much, Rey.”

She hesitated, “I love you too… Mom.”

Aletha winced, and gave something that could equally be a laugh or a cry, “Oh, don’t you start that. I can’t handle that.”

“I know. But it needed to be said. I’m going to miss you so much. Who am I supposed to talk girl things with now?”

Aletha stroked the side of Rey’s face and then handed her the object Quom had given her.

“What’s this?” Rey asked.

“Antar’s comm. The one we got off his body,” Aletha explained. “This would have gotten him in a lot of trouble if the Alliance found out he had it.”

“Why?”

“It’s a two-way comm. I have the other. This comm will connect to mine wherever you are in the galaxy. No one can hack into it, and it only goes to and from these two comms. Antar would have gotten in trouble for having it because Imperial spies among the Rebels often used them to communicate with the Empire. I want you to have this, so whenever you need to talk to me, you can.”

“Really?”

“I promise,” Aletha smiled. “Day or night, if you need to talk to me about anything at all, you use that comm. I swear to you, I will always pick up… Unless I’m in the middle of a surgery, and then I’ll call you back. No matter what you need to talk about – be it puberty, boys, frustrations with your dad, or a dream about a tapdancing Quom – I’ll be there to lend an ear.”

Rey threw her arms around Aletha, and held her tight.

“I love you, Mom.”

“I love you too, Sunshine.”
I have to stay, but they don’t. So it’s always a relief to see those strange ships lift off again.

- Rey’s Survival Guide

The day Aletha left came far too quickly for their little makeshift family. A few of the villagers had come to say goodbye to Aletha, and Roke made sure to tell her that their feud wasn’t over.

“I wouldn’t have it any other way,” Aletha grinned.

Roke just rolled his eyes and stormed off.

“Alright,” Aletha turned to look at her family as Jedek picked up her bag. “I guess this is goodbye.”


They were all trying not to cry.

None of them were succeeding.

“Are you also joining the Resistance, Jedek?” Teng asked the former Rebel.

He scoffed, “Nope.”

Rey frowned, “Why not?”

“What’s the point?” he asked. “If Luke Skywalker thinks it’s not worth fighting them, then what good is it to think the rest of us could beat them?”

Quom and Luke exchanged a look.

“I don’t think that’s why he went into hiding,” Quom said.

“Well, I’m not risking my family on your hunch, Tinadar,” Jedek replied.


He grinned at Luke, “Alright then, you have my word, Erso. The day I hear that Luke Skywalker has returned, I’ll join the Resistance.”


Jedek took Aletha’s bags and boarded his ship.

Aletha watched him go, and then decided to start her goodbye.

“Come here, Teng,” Aletha pulled him into a hug. “I am so proud of you, young man. You’ve grown into a fine young man.”

“Thanks, Aletha,” he smiled. “I still think you’re pretty badass.”

“I hope to prove you right. Oh, and Teng?” Aletha glanced at Rey. She leaned in and whispered to Teng, “Good luck with Rey. I’m rooting for you kids.”

Teng blushed, but hugged her one final time.
Aletha then turned to Quom.

He threw himself into their hug.

“We don’t need to say anything, okay?” Quom sobbed. “We’ll see each other again. This isn’t goodbye. I’m sure of it. I won’t let it be.”

“I believe that,” Aletha laughed. “I can’t wait to see what insane stunt you pull to full through on that.”

Quom laughed and they held each other for a while.

“Aletha?” he whispered.

“Yeah?”

“…Don’t,” the vulnerable side of Quom reared its rare head, “don’t forget me, okay?”

“Quom,” Aletha grinned, “how could I ever forget you. Come on, we took kicks to the face together. We’re bonded for life.”

“Promise?”

“Promise?”

It was Rey’s turn next. They had the same hugs and goodbyes, a vow of love and a wish for good luck. As they pulled apart, Rey finding the strength to let go, Aletha whispered in her eye.

“Day or night, you call me, okay?”

“I will,” Rey smiled. She stood with her arms still around Aletha, “This isn’t like when Mom left. You’re not letting me down.”

“Be strong my Rey of Sunshine,” Aletha clapped her shoulder. “You’re going to be an amazing young woman.”

Then Aletha turned to Luke.

Nothing needed to be said. They had had their final goodbye that morning, so all they shared as a final hug.

“I love you,” Aletha whispered.


Aletha smiled, “Any time.”

And as his heart broke, Luke let her go.

Aletha took a deep breath and looked around, “I love all of you. Never forget that. Goodbye. I hope we see each other again.”

“May the Force be with you,” Quom said.

She smiled and turned to enter the ship.

Quom’s words unsettled something in Luke.
“Wait!” Luke exclaimed when Jedek reached to close the door.

He surprised everyone by running up the ramp and grabbing Aletha.

“Aletha,” Luke pulled her away from the door, out of sight of everyone.

“Yes?” she looked at him with such hopeful eyes.

“Aletha,” Luke sighed, “I’m sorry, but this isn’t some last minute change of heart. I’m not about to declare my love for you and beg you to stay with me or offer to come with you. I love you, but we’ve made our decision here.”

Aletha looked down, “Yes, we have.”

He stroked away the tear that fell down her cheek, “I need you to promise me something.”

“What’s that?”

“Please… If you ever figure out who I truly am, I beg you please keep it a secret.”

“Luke?”

“You don’t understand now, and I pray you never will but it’ll all make sense one day. Please, Aletha, swear to me that if you figure it out, you’ll keep Rey and I safe from the First Order.”

She cupped his cheek and looked deep into his eyes, “Of course I will.”

“Thank you.” Luke sighed, “I’ve said it before and I’ll say it again, I was lucky enough to get three amazing women to love in my life. Nakari Kelen was my first love, Felicity Rhiaon was my true love, but you, Aletha Kymeri, I swear you’ll be the last woman I ever love.”


“I love you, Aletha Kymeri.”

They shared their final kiss, and then Luke let her go.

Aletha paused at the door, watched Luke rejoin their family, and waved. Then the ship’s door closed, and a few minutes later, Aletha’s ship was in the air, and she left Jakku.

Rey burst into tears the moment the ship was out of sight, and to everyone’s surprise, it was into Teng’s arms she threw herself.

“Probably thought you were going through a lot right now,” Quom murmured, trying to hold it all together. He hesitated, “We’ll see her again, right Luke?”

Luke shook his head, “I honestly don’t know.”

There was only one thing Luke was certain of: Aletha Kymeri would be his final love.

…but he would not be hers.

---

Two Months Later…
“Remind me again why you lot do this?” Kylo Ren asked as he sat in the mess hall of the juvenile Starkiller Base.

The leaders of the First Order would sit at the head of the hall at a long, elegant table on a raised platform. They never ate, just all five Captains sat there in full armor and helmet, staring down the other soldiers. Kylo had joined them that day, donning his own mask.

“Intimidation technique,” Captain Roan answered. “Never give them a moment where they think they aren’t being watched.”

“Plus there’s the bonus of them not seeing when you eat, so they never see a moment of humanity,” Captain Sigma added. “As far as any of them know, we could honestly be droids.”

“Somehow I don’t feel very honored with the fact that we have to eat in our rooms every night,” Captain Tyche said. “Getting crumbs in my bed isn’t something found in a good benefits package.”

“Are you questioning the Supreme Leader’s judgement?” Captain Phasma asked coolly.

All masked eyes turned on Tyche.

“Of course not,” he said quickly.

“I thought not,” Phasma said.

Kylo smirked behind his own helmet. He wished he had the ability to shut down complaints as easily as that. Phasma just had a presence about her; one that had taken an interesting turn the past few years.

“Don’t let them ever see you without a mask, Kylo,” Phasma advised. “My mask is my survival. Make it yours.”

“Well, I don’t think unmasking is that big a deal,” Captain Electra said. “Come now, Phasma. You take off your mask and I’ll take off mine. Let everyone see your true self.”

“Not a chance,” Phasma replied half-distracted. She was trying to pretend she hadn’t spotted FN-2187 in the crowd.

He had grown so much.

“Captains!”

The table stood at attention as General Hux joined them.

“Be seated,” Hux dismissed them. “We have a bit of a situation. We just received a very interesting message. It’s addressed ‘To the Woman Who Once Called Herself General Alecta Anthea.’”

The Captains muttered among themselves but fell silent when the woman who was once Alecta raised her hand.

“Who is it from?” Alecta asked, her voice elegant through the electronic modifier.

“Your sister.”

“Adrinna?”
“Aletha.”

Alecta frowned, “Aletha? She contacted me?”

“How would she have even gotten our contact information?” Tyche asked.

He shut up when Phasma turned her gaze on him.

“Sorry,” Tyche muttered.

“Better,” Alecta said. “What’s the message say? You can play it for the table.”

Hux withdrew a disc from his pocket and pressed a button. Soon the blue image of Aletha Kymeri stood in miniature atop their table.

“Alecta, you were never one much for many words, so I will keep this short,” Aletha said, staring straight ahead, even though Alecta was actually seated a little to the left. “I know you want to kill me, and I know you’ve found me on Jakku. I know that you plan to come to Jakku to end my life when you have the ability to get away, so I’m informing you that I have left the planet of Jakku. I will be joining the Resistance, and fight to take down this First Order organization you have gotten yourself involved in. I never wanted things to get this bad, but you’ve given me no choice. You want war? Then there’s only one thing to say to you, sister: bring it on.”

And that was the end of Aletha’s message.

“So that’s your sister?” Sigma asked. “You two have the same fire, Alecta.”

“She is no sister of mine, and you will call me by my proper title. Alecta Anthea died with the Empire. I bear my new name with pride.”

“My apologies,” Sigma bowed her head.

“Do we have to worry about this Aletha?” Kylo asked.

“Intel has very little to report on her,” Hux answered. “Not much to her other than she’s a doctor and a pretty good sniper.”

“There’s a combination you don’t see often,” Roan said.

“Then what’s the concern with this message?” Electra asked.

“The concern is the contents,” Hux said. “I was not informed that any of you were planning on making a side trip to Jakku for assassination purposes.”

“All side trips are confined to our allotted time off,” Phasma removed. “It wouldn’t be breaking any rules.”

“Oh, I’m sure you’ve studied those rules thoroughly,” Hux glared at Phasma. “But let me make myself very clear: none of you will be making any side trips. Not Phasma. Not Electra. Not any of you Captains. You only go where I order you to.”

“And me,” Kylo shot to his feet, interrupting. “You go where I tell you to as well.”

Hux openly rolled his eyes at Kylo, “Yes, Ren. We all know how much of the Supreme Leader’s lapdog you are.”
“Now if only you were as intimidating as you believe yourself to be,” Electra bolded said.

Kylo narrowed his eyes at her, but deep down it tore at his insecurities. He had tried so hard to be frightening, and yet here he was being put in his place by the actual most terrifying person in the First Order.

He felt a gloved hand on his shoulder.

“Don’t you listen to her,” Phasma said, gently patting his shoulder. “We all know how much of a venomous bitch Electra can be.”

“If that is what you wish to label me,” Electra chuckled. “But just you wait; one day my venom will get you.”

“I look forward to overcoming it. Though I don’t think that would take much effort.”

Electra glared at Phasma from behind her mask.

“Captains,” Hux scolded, “I would like to return to the point of side trips. You will never be making one of your own arrangement. Is that understood?”

“Yes, Sir,” all five Captains answered in unison.

Hux narrowed his eyes at Phasma, “I’m not sure about you, so I want to hear it from your lips. Swear to me, PH-5177. Swear to me that no matter what happens – whether it be the work of Aletha Kymeri, Leia Organa, or even Luke Skywalker himself – you will never return to Jakku unauthorized and alone.”

“I swear it, General Hux,” Phasma vowed. “I will not attempt to go to Jakku without authorization.”

Hux didn’t see the fingers crossed behind her back.

“Hand me the Harris wrench?”

“Sure,” Teng tossed it to her.

He watched as Rey caught it and diligently went back to work.

They were alone in the tent, working on Rey’s speeder. Luke and Quom were out scavenging and wouldn’t be back for hours.

It was a suffocatingly hot day. Rey was bent over her speeder, fiddling with the engine, covered in sweat. She was panting, her newly developed breasts heaving in the heat. From sweat, her clothes stuck to her slender but athletic form. Not a negative sign of puberty on her, no pimples, no unruly hair, no teenaged awkwardness of any kind. Rey Erso was utterly irresistible.

And Teng couldn’t resist anymore.

“Rey?”

She turned around and his lips were on hers. His kiss was hot and hungry, and Rey moaned as her arms wrapped around his neck.
“I’ve wanted this for so long,” Teng’s voice was husky.

“Me too,” Rey panted. “I’ve thought of it so many times.”

And then his lips were back on hers, and his hands were on her body. Roaming, caressing, exploring. He pressed her against the speeder, and his lips started to trail down her neck.

“Oh yes, Teng, please,” Rey encouraged, cupping his head against her body as he got lower and lower towards her breast.

One of his rough hands fiddled with the hem of her shirt, and she moaned as it slid up, underneath her shirt. Up her soft sides, her stomach, and ribcage and then enclosed over her brea-

Rey gasped as her eyes shot opened. The walker was pitch dark, and it was probably about two in the morning. Her body was hot and tingly as she gripped the blankets in her hammock, desperately trying to hold onto the forbidden images of her dream.

Her father’s voice startled her, “Rey? Are you alright?”

She swallowed, her mind reeling from the images she had conjured.

“Oh, yes. I’m okay,” Rey lied.

Luke frowned at her in the darkness, sensing her distress, “Bad dream?”

“Oh no,” she whispered. “A very good one.”

He just scowled, staring at his daughter for a very long time, debating whether or not to pry.

“Alright,” Luke laid down, settling back to sleep. “But if you need anything-”

“I’m fine,” Rey said quickly.

She stared up at the roof of the walker tensely, gripping the edges of her blankets, waiting for the soft snores of her father to signal she had gotten away with it. It took too long for them to come, but came they did.

Rey let out a breath of relief. She tried to settle back to sleep, but her mind was racing to remember her dream, trying to make sense of it.

What had that all been about?

Chapter End Notes

Coming Up Next Chapter…

The Burdens of Independence
Rey completes her speeder and finds independence is a lot tougher than it sounds. Meanwhile, Luke gets a blast from the past when he’s recognized in the market.
Credit of the Nakari flashbacks (with the exception of the end of the cake one and the whole virginity one which I wrote) goes to Kevin Hearne from Heir to the Jedi. Flashbacks have been edited a little because the book is in first person and I write in third.

First of all, to anyone worried, this is not the last we’re going to see of Aletha. She will now be part of the Resistance and we’ll keep tabs on her, but at this point she’s no longer a main character for the moment. In fact, we’re going to see a lot of her in the next few chapters, but I will state it for the record: Aletha and Luke are not endgame. This is the conclusion of their romance. Will they meet again? Time will tell, but it’s time for Aletha to move on to someone else. I hope you’ll come to enjoy the new romance. Her future partner has even been foreshadowed a few times already. I wonder if anyone (other than the two people I’ve already told) can guess who that is.

…I’m going to get thirty emails guessing Poe, aren’t I?

And yay! This is the last chapter posted before the release of The Last Jedi. For two years I’ve been writing this story, and I’m happy to have had you along for the ride. I’m sorry we haven’t gotten to TFA yet, but hey, as I plan to continue this story with the events of TLJ, it allows me room to adjust to fit that.

Honestly, I’m going to try not to change really anything from my current plans, but I might have to. I’ll admit to anything I do have to change, but the thing I’m worried about is a big event that happens later in this story. Depending on what happens during TLJ, I may end up bringing it forward to the next chapter. I really, really, really do not want to do it, but we’ll see if TLJ has to force my hand. (Okay, you know you’ve been writing Star Wars fan fiction too long when you automatically capitalize the word Force.)

Word of warning, for the next chapter the bottom author’s note will contain a spoiler for TLJ, and that will be whether or not Rey is Luke’s daughter. I’m either going to angrily rant, or smugly gloat depending on the result. I literally pray to God it’s the latter. So, if you haven’t seen TLJ by the time the next chapter is posted, skip the bottom author’s note.
Chapter Summary

Rey finishes her speeder, Luke encounters an old foe, and Aletha meets her biggest fan.

Chapter Notes

New rule, guys! Don’t put TLJ spoilers in your reviews until at least a month has passed since it’s released. Special thanks to the person who decided they were going to be “helpful” and intentionally told me the result of Rey’s parentage before I saw the movie, so I wouldn’t stress about it.

Truth be told, your intention had the exact opposite effect. Please don’t do such a thing in the future, thank you.

Thoughts on The Last Jedi and how it affects my story are included at the bottom of the chapter.

Although, I will say this, literally for pretty much no reason at all because of that movie I am now shipping Poe/Kaydel (Billie Lourd’s character) so that’s going to be a thing in this story. I really like the idea of Poe just having this girlfriend in the background, and I think it’ll be something fun to add to the story.

Also the whole plot Kaydel has in this chapter literally came out of nowhere. Seriously, it popped into my head and spun out of control, so sorry if it feels so random, because frankly it is. But hey, let’s give this storyline a shot. Who cares if the galaxy gets a little smaller? I like connecting characters and it’s my fic. Worst case scenario we just have some more background on the character.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.
Get the best tools you can, learn to use them, and maintain them properly.

- Rey’s Survival Guide

When Rey turned fifteen years old, Luke was surprised to find that Jakku did have a set of laws. A very small set, mostly things like no murder, no rape, no unlawful imprisonment. Most laws weren’t even enforced, but there was a set of them.

From his own experience with planetizing Rornian, and the knowledge he had gained from Felicity’s previous line of work, Luke figured that it was so no government – whether it be Imperial or Republic – could come in and instate the standard set of baseline laws then.

Luke wasn’t fond of the idea of Jakku’s pre-emptive laws, but understood it. However, there was one law that made him very nervous.

“Rey is legally an adult on Jakku?” Luke stared at Quom in horror.

“No, he was fourteen. And besides, slavery and age of majority are two separate issues.”

“Yeah, we still haven’t dealt with the fact that you technically own Teng as your slave.”

“When he starts paying me rent, I’ll give him his freedom. Until then, tough.”

Luke put his head in his hands, “You act as if slavery is your thirty-year-old son still living in your basement.”

“Hey, he had a chance to move out but he didn’t take it.”

Having the same thought, Luke and Quom turned to look at the tent that once belonged to Aletha Kymeri. These days it was occupied by a group of newcomer scavengers who had no idea their home had been the centerpiece for so many important events of an odd little family’s lives.

“I can’t believe it’s been six months since she left,” Luke sighed heavily. “Feels like just yesterday I was waking up at her side.”

“Hey.” Quom set down his tools and placed a hand on Luke’s shoulder, “You guys made the right decision. If the First Order found out about Rey-”

“I know. It’s just hard.”

Quom gave a small smile, “Yeah. It’s for me too. She was the first friend I ever had on Jakku, and I’ve been here a very long time.”

“She changed our lives.”

“In the best way possible.”
Luke sighed, “I just wonder what she’s doing right now.”

Doctor Aletha Kymeri was nervous as she stepped into the command centre of the Resistance Base on D’Qar. She was wearing a brand new Resistance uniform, and her old Rebellion medic bag was slung over her shoulder. It had been a hard six months, first getting herself recertified as a Doctor – it was a marvel how much medicine had advanced since the end of the war – and then actually getting herself to the Resistance. Not to mention readjusting to civilization after so many years of Jakku. But she had done it and she had made a show of it. She put in her application for the Resistance in the most convoluted manner, going through every piece of paperwork, ensuring that the First Order would be tipped off to her whereabouts.

It had been a hassle, but it was worth it to protect Rey and Luke.

She missed them so much. Quom and Teng too. For years they had been her family and now she had no one. Standing in the command centre, she was alone in the Galaxy. It was time to start over once more, to let go of Jakku, to let go of her sisters, to let go of Antar… to let go of Luke.

“Don’t wait for me,” he had urged. “Find someone who will love you the way Antar and I could never manage.”

It was time to move on from the past.

Well… not entirely. She was in a base filled with several former Rebels; she was bound to run into a familiar face at some point. Unfortunately, her only lead at the moment was Nils Arlos, who she had discovered during her application process to have taken up Head of Recruitment. It made sense; Nils Arlos was so good at talking people into things, he probably could have convinced Palpatine to destroy the Death Star.

But it was not Arlos that Aletha was looking for; it was another face from her past. Albeit, not a familiar face, one she had only seen once before and couldn’t pick out from a crowd…Which was proving to be a bad thing as she literally scanned the crowds of people in the room, looking for her.

Who would have thought figuring out which one was General Leia Organa would be such a difficult task?

Chrep beep che.

Aletha startled at the cheerful chirping. She looked down and found an orange and white droid staring up at her. The model was one of which she had never seen: a large ball with a smaller affixed on top. The head wasn’t upright, rather the droid was leaning backwards at an angle, staring up with a giant black eye in what Aletha could have sworn was a look of curiosity.

Beep bop?

“Uh… Hello,” Aletha smiled politely at the droid.

Bip.

Aletha and the droid stared at each other.

After a few moments, the droid’s head swung slightly to the side, and then after a few more moments returned to its original position. He sat up slightly, though was still leaning back, gazing up at her.
Boip boop boo?

Aletha just bit her lip. It had been years since she had had to interact with a droid, and frankly she didn’t know what to do.

The droid seemed to get the hint, because its head moved to the upright position. He rolled forward the few inches between them – Aletha was amazed to see the head stay in position as the lower ball rolled – and he bumped gently into Aletha, prodding her before rolling back and repeating his inquiry.

Boip boop boo?

“Uh, I’m sorry,” Aletha tightly gripped the strap of her medical bag. “I don’t understand binary.”

The droid rolled back an inch and looked at her for a moment. He then turned his head and let out a very loud squeal, like the ones Rey used to make to get her father’s attention when she was five and he wasn’t paying attention.

Sure enough, a man’s head shot up and looked at the droid. He exhaled part in humour and part in annoyance. He appeared to excuse himself from his conversation, and walked towards his droid.

“Allright, alright, BB, I’m coming,” the young man came to a stop in front of them. “What’s up, Buddy?”

The droid launched into a series of beeps, bops, and squeals, his head moving animatedly between the young man and Aletha. The droid rolled towards her a few times during his storytelling, and the young man observed it all with a smile.

“Is that all, Buddy?” the young man laughed when the droid finished.

Yip.

The young man chuckled, “He wants to know your name.”

“My name?” Aletha blinked.

“BB-8 here doesn’t recognize you, so he came over to check you over and find out who you are. New recruit?”

“Of a sort. I’m a Rebel veteran.”

“Oh, well then, welcome back. Judging by the medical armband and the number of wing rank patches you have on your arm, I must say you’ll be very helpful. We could always use more doctors around here, Doctor…?”

“Kymeri,” she provided. “Aletha Kymeri.”

“Poe Dameron,” he offered his hand. “Commander of Black Squadron.”

“Dameron?” Aletha shook it. “I know that name. Where have I… You’re Kes and Shara’s boy, aren’t you?”

He looked surprised, “Uh, yeah. You knew them?”

“Briefly. I did a few of your mother’s checkups when she was pregnant with you… Wow, there’s nothing to make you feel old than to meet the grown-up child you did pre-natal checkups for. How
“How old are you, if you don’t mind me asking?”

“Twenty-eight.”

“Yep, I am old.”

“Well, you certainly don’t look it,” Poe winked. “So, what are you doing in the Command Centre?”

“Oh, I just arrived. I was told to get my uniform and check in with General Organa, so here I am,” Aletha gestured to her uniform. “Do you know which one- I mean where the General is?”

Poe grinned, “This way, Doctor.”

He brought Aletha toward the center of the room where a group of officers were discussing battle strategies.

“I’m telling you, engaging them on the ground gives us far better odds than in aerial combat,” a bearded officer said.

A man in a pilot’s uniform disagreed, “We have some of the finest pilots in the Galaxy among our ranks. Nothing the First Order has is even on par with our boys.”

“And girls,” an older woman in a purple vest with an air of power about her shot the pilot a hard look. “We have many fine young women piloting for us as well, Captain Gisk.”

“Don’t mind Vash, General,” Poe interjected. “He comes from Tanoor, and we all know what they think about females there.”

“Then he’d do well to remember that we are not on Tanoor,” the woman’s gaze didn’t move from Vash Gisk. “I will not tolerate sexism, no matter how casual the avenue. And I think you’ll find that most soldiers on this base won’t stand for it either. A fair majority of our members joined in the name of Shara Bey, Fliss, or my brother’s daughter.”

“A good number joined because of Alyla Kene too,” added a man Aletha recognized. His eyes lit up with he saw her, “Speaking of strong women, look who we have here. Welcome back, Medic Anthea.”

“Hello Commander Arlos,” Aletha smiled at Nils. “I’m surprised you remember me.”

“How could I forget? You were the best at drugging suspicious intakes.”

“Strangest accolade I’ve ever been given, but hey, I’ll take it. And it’s not Medic Anthea anymore.”

“Commander Dameron?” the other woman looked to Poe, who was observing the scene patiently. “Who is this you’ve brought us?”

“General Organa,” Poe gestured to the woman and then Aletha, “may I introduce you to Doctor Aletha Kymeri?”

“It’s a pleasure,” Leia Organa offered her hand.

“Pleasure’s all mine,” Aletha nervously shook the General’s hand.

She couldn’t help but wonder what Rey would make of Aletha shaking the hand of one of her heroes. Rey would definitely freak out if Han Solo was anywhere nearby, and considering that Leia was wearing a wedding ring, that was a possibility.
“We’re blessed to have this one, General,” Nils said. “Aletha Kymeri was one of the finest medics and snipers in the Alliance. Kenu handpicked her himself.”

Aletha’s blushed, “He exaggerates.”

Leia smiled, “Don’t worry, I know Arlos well enough by now to know when he’s getting a little too hyperbolic… Though I’d wager there is more than a kernel of truth to his claims.”

“Maybe a little,” Aletha admitted.

“Kymeri, huh?” Leia thought about the name. “Any relation to Antar Kymeri?”

The question took her by surprise.

“His war widow, unfortunately,” Aletha admitted.

“My condolences.”

“Thank you. Did you know him?”

“I knew of him,” Leia corrected. “My sister-in-law liked to tell the story of how she recruited him.”

“Oh yes, the sixteen-year-old Fliss manages to talk two Stormtroopers into joining the Rebellion story,” Nils laughed. “I haven’t heard that one in ages.”

“And yet, I could still recite it in my sleep,” Leia laughed. “I take it that this is your first day with us, Doctor Kymeri.”

“Officially, but I’ve been in the process for months,” Aletha answered.

“Yes, she’s been giving me a proper headache over her admission,” Nils playfully scolded her.

Aletha looked away awkwardly.

Nils sensed his error and added more seriously, “Though, considering the circumstances of your family, I do not blame you.”

Leia frowned, “Circumstances?”

Nils bent down and whispered in Leia’s ear. It was a horrifying thirty seconds as Aletha watched the look on Leia’s face as she realized the sister of Captain Phasma was standing in front of her. Aletha was just thankful that Nils Arlos had given her the privacy of hiding it from the others in the room.

“Oh, that does make sense then,” Leia admitted when she was properly informed.

Aletha looked away, “General, if I make you uncomfortable-”

“I am the last person to judge anyone over a blood relation,” Leia’s voice was kindly yet firm. “My birth father was the second-in-command of the Empire after all.”

“And your son the second-in-command of the First Order,” Vash Gisk muttered.

A dozen sets of horrified eyes turned on Vash. The looks seemed to work because he quickly tried to backtrack.

“General-” he started.
“You’re dismissed, Captain Gisk,” Poe cut him off. “Leave the General right now.”

“Commander Dameron—”

“Dismissed,” he said firmly. “Go.”

Vash looked around the group, then grumbled and stormed off to another section of the room to review the latest scouting reports.

“I, um… I’m aware of the identity of Kylo Ren,” Aletha admitted.

Leia gave a half-hearted smile, “It’s hard not to be. If you don’t mind me asking, why are you only now joining the Resistance?”

“Well, my sister has vowed to kill me, and when she learned where I was, I figured there was safety in numbers. As for why I waited so long, honestly, it was quite easy not to pay attention to the First Order where I was living.”

“Where were you living?”

“Jakku.”

The group went perfectly silent.

And Aletha had no idea why.

“Is something wrong?” she timidly asked.

No one dare speak up in Leia’s stead.

Leia thought about her words hard, “Jakku… doesn’t have many happy memories for me.”

“Have you been there?” Aletha obliviously asked.

“No, but… my sister-in-law and niece were there for a brief time.”

“What are their names? Maybe I know them. I’ve been living on Jakku since the end of the war. We probably crossed paths.”

“I highly doubt it.”

The conversation was too painful to watch. Poe Dameron was so happy when he heard an accented voice call out his name, and he could excuse himself and BB-8.

“Perfect timing, Commander Nalto,” Poe approached Diego, who had just entered the command center. “I have never been happier to have to read through reconnaissance paperwork than today.”

Diego frowned at the stiff looking group of leaders. None of them were saying a word as an unfamiliar blonde kept pushing Leia for some explanation, but instead received very clipped answers.

“What’s going on over there?” Diego asked.

“New doctor,” Poe explained. “She’s been living on Jakku and apparently didn’t get the memo about what happened to Rey and Fliss. Thinks she can bond with Leia over the fact that her sister-in-law and niece were once on Jakku. It’s so painful to watch.”
Diego cringed, his heart aching as he remembered once more the incidents that led to the deaths of Rey and Felicity Rhiaon Skywalker. Just hearing that the Doctor was bringing it up pained Diego; he could only imagine how much worse it was for Leia.

“Stay here,” Diego ordered Poe.

“Gladly,” Poe replied.


Diego looked down at the datapad in his hands, and got his idea. He marched straight up to the group as the Doctor continued to pry for answers.

“I’ve seen quite a few children on Jakku over the years, General,” Aletha said. “I’m sure that at some point-”

“General Organa!” Diego interrupted. He stepped between Leia and Aletha and held out his datapad, “Latest intel is in. Your hunch was right; the First Order is tailing my squadron. We should switch from Rogue to Black as our mainstay for a while. Reconnaissance and my proposed plan are all in this outline.”

“Thank you, Commander Nalto,” Leia nodded. She gave her best political smile to Aletha, “Pardon me for a moment, Doctor Kymeri.”

“Of course,” Aletha nodded, suppressing her frown. She had finally caught onto the fact something was wrong, but she didn’t know what.

Leia excused herself for a moment – as well as most of the officers, who were so happy to get away from the situation. But Diego stayed standing in front of Aletha, his back to her, almost as if guarding Leia from her.

“Word of advice, Doctor,” Diego said in a low voice. He had leaned backwards to be closer to Aletha, but did not turn to look at her, “Never mention Jakku to General Organa.”

Aletha let herself frown, “Did… did something happen? I’m sorry, Jakku really is behind the times when it comes to world news. We only heard about the Temple Village slaughter about a year ago.”

“We tend to refer to that as the Burning of Rornian,” Diego corrected. “And yes, something very bad happened.”

“What was that?”

Diego debated or not whether to answer. The Burning of Rornian and subsequent murders of Rey and Felicity – while the exact details of Rey’s death was known, all in the Resistance insisted on referring to it as a murder – had been a very painful series of events for many people, himself included. But could he really snub her because she was simply out of the loop?

“Her sister-in-law and niece were murdered on Jakku by the First Order,” Diego declared.

Aletha gasped, “Oh my goodness! I had no idea. If I had known, I never would have asked General Organa-”

“It’s alright. I’m sure she understands the context of your error. But like I said, it’s a sore spot that no one around here likes much to discuss. Especially when it comes to Fliss’ daughter. That poor little girl deserved so much better.”
Of course, perhaps if Diego had revealed the actual story to Aletha at that time of how Rey allegedly died in the desert, Felicity was kidnapped by the First Order, and then shot in the head a few days later, Aletha might have put things together then and there. Perhaps the entire story of the Galaxy would have been different, but words are a tricky thing and should always be carefully chosen.

Intentional or not, there is always great damage done when something is presented simply from a certain point of view.

“How old was she?” Aletha asked. “The little girl?”

Diego sighed, “I… I don’t remember. I think she was six, or maybe seven. She was barely more than a toddler.”

“But why? Why would they go after her?”

“Snoke wanted the daughter of Luke Skywalker to corrupt the way he corrupted Ben Solo.”

“And her mother?”

“Do you know who Leia’s sister-in-law is?” Diego asked.

“Sort of,” Aletha replied. “I know that she was Rogue One, but I’ve never been informed of her actual name. I assume her surname was Skywalker in the later part of life.”

“Partly. She took her husband’s name, but also retained her own. Fliss wasn’t fond of the connection either had individually, so thought maybe putting them together was the lesser of two evils. Although she seriously considered combining them into Rhiwalker at one point. But as Rogue One, she pissed off a lot of people, especially officers in the First Order, and with her personality it was only a matter of time before her mouth got her into trouble she couldn’t escape. She was a strong woman… but not an invincible one.”

“You knew her?”

Diego couldn’t help but turn to face her and grin, “I’m Rogue Two.”

Aletha blinked in shock, though she wasn’t sure if it was because she was standing in front of the only other survivor of Operation Citadel… or because he was rather handsome.

“Commander Nalto,” Leia returned to the pair. “I’ve given it a preliminary glance, and I think we should be able to give your plan the go-ahead. There’s still a few things I need to discuss with the other Squadrons first.”

“Of course,” Diego grinned. “Can’t just start ordering around Dameron’s lot without his go-ahead… Not that I really need it as Head of our Air Force, but I don’t particularly enjoy his droid ramming into my leg whenever we disagree.”

“Tell the other leaders to meet me by the Council Table in about thirty minutes. I first have to escort Doctor Kymeri to the Medical Center and introduce her to Doctor Kalonia.”

“Oh, you don’t have to do that,” Aletha dismissed.

“It’s an honour we grant to those Rebels who chose to return to the fight,” Leia said. “It’s no trouble at all.”

“General, if you’re occupied, why don’t I escort Doctor Kymeri?” Diego offered. “Until I get your
go-ahead, I’m simply on standby for orders.”

Leia looked between Aletha and Diego, her brow raised so slightly that it wasn’t noticeable to the pair. She didn’t need the Force to sense what was starting to brew in front of her.

“Very well, then,” Leia agreed. “Send Doctor Kalonia my regards. Meredyth will have all of Doctor Kymeri’s final paperwork and information. You two should head over at once so Doctor Kymeri can settle in as quickly as possible. War waits for no one.”

“Yes, General,” Diego bowed his head. He turned and offered his arm to Aletha, “Shall we?”

Aletha smiled and accepted his arm, “We shall.”

“Cafeteria is just down that hallway,” Diego pointed to a corridor as they passed it. “Quarters are to the left of this intersection. As a doctor, you’ll be getting the nicest quarters, which are also right next to the Medical Center. Kalonia should show you the way to your assignment. Doctors also don’t get roommates, so you lucked out on that one.”

“Oh, roommates aren’t that bad,” Aletha said. “Honestly, I like having someone I know will be around. I don’t know anyone but Nils Arlos around here.”

“Well, you know Dameron, the General, and I already, so that’s a start.”

“Indeed. So are you truly Rogue Two?” Aletha asked.

“In the flesh. Have the war wound to prove it,” Diego held up his arm and rolled back his sleeve to reveal the long, ugly scar left by a lightsaber. “Got this from Vader himself. Lucky he didn’t just take it off altogether.”

“Lucky indeed.” Aletha reached for his arm, “May I?”

“Of course.”

They stopped walking so that Aletha could examine it.

“This may sound morbid, but this is impressive work,” Aletha admitted. “Vader knew exactly what he was doing when delivering this. You’re still functional enough to fly?”

“Have spasms sometimes, but otherwise I’m fine,” Diego answered. He caught her look, “Alright, my motor skills may not be as great as they once were, my nervous system is a little messed up, my reflexes aren’t as quick – though nowhere near grounding levels – and the sensation of touch is a little lower, but I’ve lived a good life with this.”

“Well, your spouse must be happy that you managed to survive.”

“Unfortunately there is no such figure in my life.”

“Really? I would have expected since you helped take down the Death Star that might have counted for something.”

“Was married to the job for many years, then woke up one day and found that I had forgotten to pursue romance.” Diego rolled up his sleeve, “Of course, it’s never too late, but after you hit your fifties the dating pool narrows quite a bit.”
“Believe me, I understand. I’m fifty-five next year.”

Diego smiled at her, “Wouldn’t think it from looking at you.”

Aletha blushed, “Living on Jakku, you get a lot of sunshine. I think that’s the only reason I haven’t gone totally grey yet.”

“Hair dye is my secret, but I’ll deny it if you tell anyone.”

Aletha laughed, “Only if you tell me the secrets to such a convincing dye job. Do you do your facial hair too?”

“It’s a time-consuming process,” Diego started them off towards the Medical Center again. “So, living on Jakku?”

“I wouldn’t recommend it. Not the nicest place.”

“Oh, I know. I lived there for about a month.”

“Really? When?”

“When Fliss and I stole the Death Star plans, we hid out on Jakku for a month until we could get in contact with the Alliance. Worked for Unkar Plutt, packaging rations.”

Aletha stopped in her tracks and grinned at him, “Oh, I’m sorry. We can’t keep talking. I can’t be friends with an associate of Unkar Plutt.”

“Friendship, really?” Diego laughed and casually nudged her forward as if they had been playing around for years. “Is that what you’re after?”

“Would you be scared if I said yes?”

Diego looked at her and realized her voice was only half joking.

“Would you be scared if I said I was okay with that?” Diego asked.

Aletha smiled gently, “No.”

“Neither would I. I get what it’s like to be alone. Everyone should have a least one friend. It breaks my heart to hear when a person has none.”

She bit her lip, her mind going to those she left behind on Jakku, “I do have friends. A few people on Jakku I would gladly give my life for.”

“Why are they not here with you?”

“I left them to protect them from my sister and the First Order,” Aletha answered. “It would destroy me if I caused them harm. So I made the decision to keep them safe and leave them behind, no matter how much it hurt me.”

He placed a hand on her arm, “It takes a very strong person to do that. I’m sure they’re grateful for your sacrifice.”

“I know. I just wish I wasn’t alone here.”

“You’re not. I promise.”
That was the moment Diego Nalto realized how beautiful Aletha Kymeri was.

“Sorry,” he quickly removed his hand from her arm.

Aletha would be lying if she said she wanted him to.

“So did you enjoy your time on Jakku?” Diego said as they continued to walk down the hallway.

“Parts of it,” Aletha admitted. “I had a romance for a few years, but sadly things didn’t work out.”

“Is that why you left?”

“No, it was the psychopathic sister. It’s probably a good thing I left, though. I ended up getting in a feud with Unkar Plutt’s right hand man.”

“Now this is a story I have to hear.”

So Aletha told him the story of Roke and the steelpecker scars. She kept Luke’s identity vague, and left Rey out of the tale entirely. Diego didn’t notice; he was too busy enjoying her story.

“You really headbutted him?” Diego laughed.

“My head colliding with his face made the most satisfying smack,” Aletha grinned. “You think that’s a good story, I should tell you about the time I shot a woman in the knee.”

“Oh, I am definitely hearing that story.”

Diego held out an arm to halt Aletha. They were standing in front of a large set of doors with the words MEDICAL CENTER bolted to the wall above.

“Here we are,” Diego announced.

“So I see,” Aletha said. “Thank you, Commander Nalto for showing me the way.”

“It’s no problem. And call me Diego.”


“It’s a pleasure, Aletha.”

Diego looked at the doors and felt something ache inside him. He didn’t want her to go into that room; he wanted her to stay and talk with him for a few more minutes.

Aletha would never admit to him she felt the same way.

“I should go,” she reluctantly said.

“Of course,” Diego nodded. “Uh, Doctor Meredyth Kalonia is who you’ll report to. She’ll take care of the rest.”

“Thank you, Diego. It’s been a pleasure. Maybe I’ll see you around.”

“I’m sure our paths will cross again.”

Aletha smiled, but made no further response. When the silence lingered long enough, she nodded at Diego, then started towards the doors.
“Wait, Aletha,” Diego found himself saying not of his own volition.

“Yes,” she paused, her hand hovering over the door button.

“Um…” Diego thought for something, anything to justify his objection. “I was just wondering… what did you miss the most on Jakku?”

Aletha thought about her answer, “Flowers.”

Diego lifted a brow, “Flowers? Not food, better shelter, clothes, or water?”

“Food, shelter, clothes, and water are the basics of life. If you can survive, you’ll find them in some form. Flowers are the beauty of the galaxy, and beauty is guaranteed nowhere. Beauty is enjoyment, and enjoyment is not only the reason we push ourselves to survive, but why we fight to protect our lives. There was only a handful of flowers on Jakku, as drab and dry as the rest of the planet. I used to help collect flowers for a little girl on Jakku. They always make me think of happy times. Even if the world is full of darkness, at least we still have flowers.”

He stared at Aletha for a long time, and then smiled.

“You’re really something, Aletha Kymeri.”

Aletha blushed once more, “I’m nothing special.”

“I find that very hard to believe.”

She said nothing further, just smiled, and entered the Medical Center.

Five minutes later, Diego was still grinning at the door.

When Doctor Meredyth Kalonia showed Aletha to her quarters, Aletha found a surprise sitting on her bedside table. A vase of sundrops – D’Qar’s most famous flower – and a handwritten note.

Welcome back to the fight, Aletha. I hope we prove to be better than Jakku.

- Diego

Aletha really hoped she saw him again.

Once I built my speeder, I had my independence. Not real independence, of course. There’s no such thing on Jakku – Unkar controls everything. But while I’m here I can go where I want, when I want.

- Rey’s Survival Guide

The group was tense as they stood around the ominous red machine, all of their hopes, dreams, and fears placed upon it.
It’s now or never, Rey,” Luke told his daughter.

Rey wrung her hands nervously, “What if we did something wrong? What if I connected the wrong thing, or put too much power into it, or too little? What if once I turn it on, it blows up? Or what if-”

“Oh what if you did this perfectly and you actually managed to build your own speeder?” Luke cut off. “Come on, Sweetheart. We both know you’ve done this.”

“Yeah, Starlight,” Teng said, “we’ve triple checked everything. It’s going to work.”

“It would take a miracle for me to have made my own speeder using the junk of the Graveyard,” Rey dismissed. “And there’s no miracles on Jakku.”

“Yes, there are,” Quom refuted. “Now get on up there, Miracle Girl.”

Teng put a hand on Rey’s shoulder and looked her in the eye, “Come on, Rey. You can do this.”

She smiled at the encouraging expressions of the men in her life, “Alright. I’ll do it.”

The trio cheered as Rey climbed atop her speeder.


She smiled and pulled them down. Rey gathered her courage and took a deep breath.

“Come on, Baby,” Rey whispered, stroking the ratty, red metal. “Don’t fail me now.”

Then she started the ignition.

Nothing blew up.

“I did it!” Rey exclaimed. “I did it! I built a functioning speeder. I DID IT!”

The group cheered and celebrating, giving pats on the back, shoulders, and even a few hugs – Quom’s hug of Luke lingered for an awkward too long time – as Rey raced around the desert on her speeder.

“She’s perfect!” Rey declared when she turned it off, satisfied with her tests. She jumped straight into the arms of her father, “I did it!”

Luke stumbled back by the sudden force, “Oof! Yeah, you did, but careful with me, Rey.”

“Sorry Dad,” she grinned pulling back. She turned to pull Quom into a hug, “But I just can’t believe it.”

“I knew you could do it, MG,” Quom laughed. “Aletha would be so proud of you.”

Rey looked down sadly, “I just wish she could see.”

“You’ll show her one day,” Teng promised.

She pulled Teng into a hug that startled him, but he was all too happy to accept.

“Thank you, Teng,” Rey whispered, holding him close. He was so warm and sturdy; she always felt protected in his arms, “I could never have done this without you.”

“It’s my pleasure,” Teng replied. She was so soft and fit so perfectly in his arms. He held her tight,
relishing the feeling of her body against his. Teng murmured under his breath, “Believe me. It’s my pleasure.”

It was probably a good three minutes of hugging before the pair remembered they had an audience.

“Sorry,” Rey exclaimed as they pulled apart and tried to avoid the amused gazes of Quom and Luke. “Sort of lost track of things there.”


“I promise, Sir,” Teng held up his hands defensively, “I didn’t mean for that to go on so long.”

“Honestly we didn’t do anything because we just wanted to see how long it took before you remembered us.” Quom narrowed his eyes at Teng, “Now if you rapscallion would remember where to keep your hands—”

“It was a hug, Quom!” Rey exclaimed.

Her protests weren’t out of annoyance though. Her vigor was from the fact that over the past several months, Rey couldn’t shake those forbidden dreams of Teng’s hands on her body that made her wake up feeling all tingly. It couldn’t have meant anything, though. Teng was just the only boy she really knew. Of course her brain would put him in those dreams; there were just no other candidates.

Why she felt the urge to let her hands wander her body after those dreams was a whole matter altogether.

Puberty truly was a bitch when your father slept a foot away from your bed.

“One day it’s hugs, the next we’re having a quickie wedding to cover up a mistake,” Quom warned. “You mark my words.”


“It’s my purpose in life,” Quom said proudly.

Rey rolled her eyes.

“Well, since this speeder experiment is such a success, why don’t we do something to celebrate?” Luke suggested.

“Like what?” Teng asked.

“How about you two be the ones who scavenge today?”

“Wait, what?” Rey exclaimed. “Like… alone?”

“Quom and I will watch the shop,” Luke said. “I trust the two of you to be responsible. If you need anything just call our comms.”

“You’re serious?” Rey grinned. “I can go scavenging alone?”

“Take Teng with you. Safety in numbers and all that, but yeah. I trust you, and according to the actually existing laws of Jakku we apparently have, you are an adult. Go on. Have some fun and bring back a nice haul. Just no dropping X-Wing wings on Teng, and if someone tries to beat you up, you tell me immediately. I want to expedite the hand chopping off process this time.”
Rey threw her arms around her father, hugging him tightly, “Thank you so much, Daddy!”

Luke laughed and held her tight, “Anytime.”

So Teng and Rey gathered their tools and loaded up the speeder.

“Good luck,” Luke called as Rey climbed into the driver’s seat.

“Uh, Rey?” Teng frowned. “It occurs to me that this speeder is a one seater. The only place I can sit is directly behind you, and that doesn’t seem very safe.”

Rey grinned wickedly, “Then hold onto me tight.”

Teng was only too happy to obey.

“Bye! Have fun!” Quom called as he and Luke waved, the speeder disappearing into the horizon. The image of Teng’s arms wrapped around Rey’s waist, and body pressed so close to hers on the back of the speeder burned into his mind. He leaned over to Luke and said through his teeth, “What are the odds those two are making out by the end of the day?”

“If they don’t run into any distractions?” Luke answered, “One hundred percent.”

“This is so cool!” Rey exclaimed as they worked on A-Wing that had been uncovered in the latest sandstorm. “We actually built a speeder, and now we’re scavenging by ourselves. I just can’t believe it.”

“We make a good team, Rey,” Teng replied as he busied himself sniping broken wires to free some mechanics in decent shape.

“We make a great team. Honestly, finding you at the road stop was one of the best things to ever happen to me.”

“Yeah… same on my end.” Teng let the silence linger for a minute. Then he looked down, gathered his courage, and made a decision, “Rey? I wanted to talk to you about-”

Her head snapped toward the horizon, “What’s that?”

Teng scowled. It was a few minutes before the other speeder came into view, but in the meanwhile Teng knew to trust her instincts.

“We’ve got company,” Teng rose to his feet.

“There’s no need to worry,” Rey’s voice was uncertain as they packed their tool kits. “We’re just kids. They’re not going to give us trouble, right?”

But they both knew the truth: they weren’t kids anymore. They were alone and weaponless; a dangerous combination on Jakku. The best plan of action was to just get the hell out of there as fast as possible. They quickly tried to pack up their things, but they were fitting a generator into the netting on the side of the speeder when the other one arrived.

“Good morning,” a scavenger named Toras Kern greeted with a lecherous grin at Rey. “What’s a pretty girl like you doing out here in the middle of the graveyard?”
Teng took a step between Rey and Toras as the other scavenger’s crew got out of their speeder.

Toras’ group was a rather new one, never having heard the stories about Luke Erso and why not to cross Luke’s children. But Teng and Rey had heard stories about Toras and his crew. They didn’t like those stories one bit.

“We were just leaving,” Rey said stiffly. She turned back to the speeder, but found one of Toras’ crew blocking her way to the driver’s seat.

“Stay a bit,” Toras got out of the speeder. “There’s enough A-Wing here for us all.”

“We’ll find somewhere else,” Teng said.

“You don’t like to share, boy?”

Teng’s fist balled as Toras’ eyes turned to Rey.

“No. I don’t,” Teng answered firmly.

“That’s too bad,” Toras chuckled. “You’ve got a real beauty there. You sure I can’t get a cut?”

Disgust filled Rey’s face, “If you think I’m going to do anything with you—”

“The generator, Darling,” Toras cut her off. “But if you’re offering—”

“She’s not,” Teng interrupted.

Rey fixed Teng with a glare, “I can defend myself.”

“We can talk about this later, Rey,” Teng whispered. “Please, don’t fight with me. Not here and now. We need to be a team.”

His words were able to calm her; Rey knew what Teng was getting after. Teng respected Rey enough to let her stand up for herself, but understood the situation a lot better. Having dealt with the pirates for many years, he understood the power dynamics of scoundrels. If Toras was going to act like Rey was a nexu in heat to be claimed and tamed, the best way to keep both herself and Teng safe was to let Teng challenge that claim and make one of his own.

It would also be a bit of a lie for Rey to say that she didn’t like the idea of Teng acting like he was her mate… you know, a little bit.

“Are you just going to stand there and take that, Darling?” Toras chuckled. He walked towards her, and Teng took another step, intentionally blocking her from him. “Come on, Darling. You’re a grown up. You going to let this boy walk all over you?”

“I trust Teng with my life,” Rey said evenly. “You? I don’t trust further than you cast a shadow… and it’s high noon.”

“Indeed it is.” Toras sighed, “I didn’t want to do this, but you’ve forced my hand.”

“Teng!” Rey screamed as two of Toras’ crew grabbed him.

He tried to fight and kick, but they were too strong for him. But even worse was when they played the Rey card.

“Keep fighting, and I’ll unpretty her pretty little face,” Toras threatened.
Teng instantly stopped fighting.

“Good,” Toras grinned. “Now how about we be civil? You give me that generator and the rest of your haul, and... why don’t you toss in one of those tool kits too, actually make it both. In exchange, we’ll let your boyfriend go.”

“He’s not my boyfriend.”

“Rey, this really isn’t the time!” Teng objected.

“I’m not giving you anything, Toras,” Rey refused. “Now let him go, or I’ll...”

Toras raised an eyebrow, “You’ll do what? What can a pretty little girl like you do against my guys?”

“I’ll make you pay for this,” Rey growled.

“I’m sure you will,” Toras chuckled. He placed a hand on her shoulder, “Of course... we could always come to a different agreement.”

His hand drifted from her shoulder, down her arm, and over to cup her-

Rey smashed her fist into his face as hard as she could.

“You schutta!” Toras howled, clutching his face.

She moved to help Teng, but Toras grabbed her by the hair. Rey screamed as he yanked her backwards and threw her onto the ground.

“Rey!” Teng exclaimed, struggling against the two holding him back.

She cried out as Toras kicked her in the face. Tears rolled down her face as her thumb throbbed and the blows landed all over her body. Rey tried to roll over and crawl her way to safety, but Toras just pulled her back and let the agony continue.

And then he said it.

“This is your own fault! If only you cooperated!”

In a moment, it wasn’t Toras hurting her anymore. It was Jarex Zolhar tormenting her like the helpless child she was. She stopped fighting and tried not to cry. Rey knew that tears made Jarex even madder. More tears meant more punches. She couldn’t cry.

“Let her go!” Teng screamed, desperately trying to fight the others off. He was horrified at the way Rey had shut down, her face blank, accepting the blows like she deserved them. “Get off me you sons of a bitch!”

But Teng wasn’t strong enough to face them, Rey knew. Just like she wasn’t strong. She had never been strong, and she never would be.

“That’s a lie, Rey,” a woman’s voice said.

Rey frowned. The voice was familiar but she couldn’t see any women around.

“You’re strong, Rey,” the woman said. “You can fight this.”
Then Rey saw her. Standing over Toras’ shoulder was a woman she knew. Kind eyes, standing tall, dark skin that looked like a permanent tan, covered head to toe in scars, and curly black hair, with a single blue morning glory tucked behind her ear.

She was beautiful… and she was terrifying.

The woman’s eyes locked with Rey, and she knew the terror would not be for her. This woman would never hurt Rey.

Rey was the only one who seemed to have noticed the woman. She tried to turn her body towards the woman, and strangely when Toras shifted, his leg went through the woman’s.

“Fight, Rey,” the woman urged. “You can do it.”

Rey struggled for words, “H- How?”

Teng frowned, “Rey? Who are you talking to?”


The Force was a Jedi’s tool. How could it help her?

“The Force is in all of us,” the woman answered the unvoiced question. “It helps us all, and it will help you. Trust in it… and trust in me.”

Rey took a deep breath and nodded.

“Now,” the woman guided. “Kick.”

She did as she was told.

Her foot collided perfectly with Toras’ face.

“Again.”

He reared back and Rey got his chest. The wind knocked out of him, Toras collapsed back.

“Again.”

She got him in the groin that time. It seemed to make the woman smile mischievously.

“Push.”

Rey got all of his bodyweight off her, and was able to break free.

The woman continued to guide Rey as she managed to get Teng away from the others. By no means did Rey defeat them, but the woman helped Rey and Teng buy themselves some time.

“Run,” the woman ordered. “Go home now.”

Rey did as she was told. She and Teng scrambled to the speeder and took off as quickly as possible. The woman disappeared without a word when the other scavengers were out of sight, and Rey struggled to explain to Teng what had happened.

A mercy granted, he didn’t question her on it. Teng had the habit of believing Rey when it came to her visions and other such odd things, so he was totally okay with believing in a random scarred
Rey and Teng were fixing each other up in Quom’s tent when Luke walked in with Quom. Luke stopped dead at the sight of the pair bloodied, bruised, and clearly beaten.

“Whose hand am I cutting off this time?” he simply asked.

“Dad,” Rey sighed. “Don’t, please. I don’t want this to turn into a thing.”

“Oh, it’s turning into a thing,” Quom said.


“I’m not telling you!”

“Teng?” Quom asked.

“Toras Kern.”

“Teng!” Rey snapped.

“What?” he shot her a look. “I’m sorry if I didn’t enjoy us getting our asses kicked.”

“Don’t go after him, Dad,” Rey warned.

Luke crossed his arms, “Why shouldn’t I?”

“Because revenge is the path to the Dark Side,” Obi-Wan answered.

“He wasn’t asking you,” Anakin cut in.

Luke resisted rolling his eyes. What even was his life that the ghosts of his dead father and mentor had a running commentary of his life?

“Because…” Rey started.

Luke raised an eyebrow.

She sent a helpless look to Quom and Teng, her message clear.

“Why don’t we give them a few moments?” Quom suggested.

Teng nodded and got up. He paused to look down at Rey. Their eyes met, and he smiled at her, patting her on the shoulder. Rey smiled back, and it made Teng’s even larger. Then he exited the tent.

“What’s going on, Rey?” Luke asked.

She sighed, “What happens when I’m alone again? If I keep running to my Daddy to save me, what’s going to happen when you’re not around to do it?”
“Then I’ll just always be with you when you’re scavenging,” Luke said.

“And when I’m not scavenging? There’s still going to be other people, and I can’t live my life with you always by my side. I’m sorry, Dad, but I just can’t!” Rey started to cry.

“Hey, hey, hey,” Luke knelt down in front of her and grasped her hands. “It’s going to be okay. I promise.”

“How? I’m not a child anymore. People don’t care about me now.”

“That’s not true. You have people who care about you, and the ones who do are the only ones on this planet that matter to us. Quom, Teng, me, Dirk even. You’re not alone.”

Rey wiped her nose, “But… I’m scared, Dad. People keeping staring at me. The Blobfish keeps saying how much I look like Mom, and we both know what he thought of her… I’m not a child anymore and I’m afraid of what that means. What people – men especially – will want from me. What if I get in a situation I can’t overcome? I’ve been the victim before, and I can’t keep sending mothers away to protect me or having you cut off people’s hands. Because I’m still the victim then; I still get hurt. I don’t want to get hurt anymore… I don’t want him to control me.”

And then Luke understood, “You thought of Jarex today.”

“It’s silly; I barely remember what the man looks like, but I remember what he did. I remember how afraid he made me, afraid of even being honest with you. I can’t protect myself, instead I rely on you and Teng and visions of oddly familiar women.”

Luke frowned, “Did you have another vision today?”

“It’s how I escaped today,” Rey answered. “I saw a woman I knew, but she wasn’t really there.”

“Tell me about her.”

So Rey did, and it didn’t take a lot for Luke to know who Rey had seen.

“Do I know that woman?” Rey asked.

Luke sighed, “Yes… her name was Alyla Kene.”

“Alyla? Like the morning glory woman with the sad story?”

“It’s probably why she appeared to you with a morning glory in her hair. It’s strange, I’ve never seen her myself. I didn’t know she was able to… never mind.”

“Something for when I’m older?”

“Maybe not that much older. This will be an odd question, but did Alyla have a blue outline?”

Rey scowled, “No.”

“Interesting,” Luke said. “I’m not sure that this is the same as usual.”

“As usual? Dad, do you see dead people?”

“Sometimes.”

“…Oh.”
Silence filled the tent.

“It’ll make more sense when you’re older,” Luke said.

She raised an eyebrow, “I find that hard to believe.”

“Trust me, there’s days I do too.”

“So, who do you see? Mom?”

“I wish, but sadly no. Your mother isn’t one of the people who can visit me,” Luke explained.

“Who does?” Rey asked.

“My father and my two mentors.”

“Your father?”

“He makes frequent appearances. More so when you were younger, but he’s here for us.”

“Could I see him?”

“Perhaps one day,” Luke replied. “I’d like for you to meet him.”

Rey smiled, “I’d like that too.”

She had never thought about her lack of grandparents before, but the idea of meeting one filled her with an excitement and yearning she didn’t know she had.

“Was Alyla your mentor?” Rey asked.

“No, our relationship was different,” Luke answered.

“Different like Aletha different?”

“Never even crossed our minds. I mean, sure, Alyla is absolutely one of the most beautiful women I have ever had the pleasure of meeting, but there was nothing romantic between us. She was actually involved with a friend of mine. But Alyla and I were just very good friends… Actually she sort of is the reason you exist.”

“Really? How?”

“Never mind. Forget I said that.” Luke said quickly, regretting his words.

“Tell me, Dad!” Rey urged.

Luke hesitated, “Alright, but you asked so don’t blame me if you’re traumatized. One night I had a conversation with Alyla about, you know, the future and children and families and all that. It was a nice conversation, a touching moment.”

“And?”

“Well, it provoked a sort of nostalgic, looking forward to the future feeling inside of me, and…”

“Yes?”

“I went upstairs, found your mother, and conceived you.”
Rey was silent.

“Regret asking the question?” Luke said.

“Yep.”


“So, why did I see Alyla today?” Rey asked. “Why did she help me?”

He sighed, “I think it has to do with her history. She went through some terrible things in her life, and I think she didn’t want you to endure them either.”

“What happened to her? Or is that a story for another day?”

Luke thought about it, “I think you’re old enough to know this.”

So Luke told her about the tragic history of Alyla Kene. Of her life as a slave, what was done to her, and how she had mutilated herself to exit the abuse. Rey listened to the story with silent horror on her face.

The story wasn’t complete. Luke still censored the Jedi aspects, and he himself didn’t know all the details, but he shared what he could.

“So that’s why I think she helped you today,” Luke concluded. “I couldn’t bare for anything like that to happen to you, and neither could she.”

Rey was quiet, trying not to let her fear take a hold of her, “There’s a real evil in this world, isn’t there, Dad?”

He looked her in the eyes, “Yes, but we stand and fight everyday to protect the good from the evil. Darkness is strong, but the Light will always win. I swear it.”

“But how do I stop the Dark? How can I ever overcome it?”

“By starting at the beginning. Come on, stand up.”

“Why?”

“Because I’m going to teach you to fight.”

“Really?” Rey’s eyes lit up.

“Really,” Luke grinned, pulling Rey to her feet. He placed his hands on either of her shoulders, “Let’s start with this. Pretend I’m pinning you against a wall. How are you going to escape?”

“Uh… Wriggle out of your grasp?”

“Try it.”

Rey jerked her shoulders, trying to throw him off, but Luke was far stronger.


She considered her options, “Well, I could always kick you in a very unagreeable spot for men to be kicked.”

“Really? You want me to kick you in the groin?”

“Don’t want you too, but if that’s going to free you, go for it.”

Rey smirked and swung her foot forward, for the briefest moment, balanced on one leg. In a second, Luke hooked his own leg around her grounded one and jerked it forward. Rey fell to the ground before her other foot had made contact. She was on her back, and immediately her father was on the ground with her, his body over hers as he gently, but firmly pinned her to the floor.

“And now you’re in a much worse position,” Luke explained. “A kick to the groin – while a dirty move – can have a time and place. This was not one of them.”

“Clearly,” Rey nodded, praying no one walked in at that moment, or else they would have a very awkward scene to explain.

Luke got off her and helped Rey back to her feet, “Let’s switch positions. You hold my shoulders, and I’ll show you how to get out of it.”

Rey grasped her father’s strong shoulders, “So what would you do?”

“When fighting, the thing you most pay attention to is where is your opponent’s strength? And where’s the weakest? In this position, the strength is the grip on your shoulders. If you can break that grip, your opponent loses the upper hand.”

“How do I break it?”

“See the empty space between your arms? I’m going to put my own hands up into that space,” Luke did the actions as he explained them. “See how now it’s your arm, my two arms, and then your other arm?”

“Uh huh.”

“I’m going to continue to bring my hands up, and then I’m going to circle them downwards in the opposite directions, down onto your arms.” Luke demonstrated and when his arms hit Rey’s, they were forced off his shoulders, breaking the grip. “And that’s how you escape. Make sure it’s a fluid movement, but it’s very simple and effective. Now, give it a try on me.”

And so with that lesson, Luke Skywalker began to teach his daughter how to fight.

But he would only be one of her teachers in the days to come.

The sniper classes for the incoming Resistance recruits were always something of an event in the Resistance. All recruits had to go through a few weeks of the basics – hand to hand combat, blaster, thermal detonators, survival techniques, ship basics, and so on – but the sniper class was special. It wasn’t just because Diego Nalto – the Resistance’s best sniper – taught them, but because Kes Dameron would visit the Base to be the other instructor.

Which always meant that Poe Dameron was going to act as undignified as possible that day.

“Dad!” Poe exclaimed, racing across the landing yard.
BB-8 was nothing more than a blur of orange and white beeping as he spun frantically behind his master, happy to see Kes as well.

Kes chuckled, shouldering the sniper rifle he was inspecting from the set he and Diego would take out into the jungle with their team that day. Diego Nalto also grinned at the sight of Leia’s prodigy looking so ridiculous.

“Dad!” Poe jumped on his father in a hug. “You’re here!”

“Yes, I am.” Kes looked down at BB-8, who was pressed against his leg and making what sounded like a purring noise, “Hello, BB. You taking good care of my boy?”

BB-8 launched into a long spiel of how he was keeping Poe in line as much as possible. More importantly, he told Kes of all the wrongdoings in Poe, BB-8 couldn’t manage to correct and he required Kes’ assistance on.

“Oh, really?” Kes raised an eyebrow at his son.

Bip.

“Is this true, Poe?”

“Alright, I’ll concede to articles 1-14,” Poe answered. “15 and 17 are completely false, can you really blame me for 18-23, and in defense of number 16, it isn’t that many girls.”

“Good boy, BB,” Kes patted him on the head. “I’ll see to it you get an oil bath tonight.”

BB-8 squealed in delight.

Poe eyed him half-sternly, “Traitor.”

Bee bee bew chee.

“Are you here for long, Dad?” Poe asked.

“Only really have business for today, but I can stick around a few extra days if you want your old man around.”

“You bring any koyo melons?”

“Wouldn’t come see you without them.”

“Stay as long as you want, Dad.”

Kes laughed and clapped his son on the shoulder.

He was a burly man; tall and thick. The kind you would expect to be a wrestler or a bodyguard. Most people weren’t surprised to learn Kes owned and operated a ranch.

But Kes was more than a simple rancher. A former Rebel, Kes had a well-decorated military history. A solider in many big name battles, including work in the Battle of Endor, which resulted in Han Solo writing his first letter of recommendation. Kes had once endured one of the longest recorded stints in an Imperial work camp. It was fourteen months before his wife, Shara Bey led the charge to free the Rebels in his camp.

His most active timed in the Alliance had been the nine months Shara was pregnant with their son.
Kes had vowed to pull as much double duty as possible to make up for the absence of Shara. The Alliance was only too happy to take Kes up on that offer.

Of course, that plan wasn’t pre-set. In fact, the idea to have Poe to begin with was not a conscious choice. Poe was what the Rebels liked to call a “MisCalc” or Miscalculation. Birth control in the Rebellion was hard to come by, so many depended on calculating the safest days of a woman’s cycle to have sex. Accidental pregnancies were typically the result of a miscalculation, hence the name.

Kes Dameron didn’t really look like his son. His skin was darker, his black hair was buzzed short to his skull, he had facial hair, and he was the kind of man who wore a lot of shirts without sleeves. Kes was a true man of the ground, and his son belonged to the skies.

But still the men were inseparable.

“Are you coming out with us?” Kes asked Poe.

“No, I’ve got drills to run with Black Squadron,” Poe replied. “But we’ve got a presentation to the General later day. Will you come?”

“I’ll be there.”

“Oh, recruits, fall in!” Diego ordered, his voice projecting across the yard. “Grab a rifle and fall in line!”

Poe excused himself and BB-8 as Kes and Diego got to work. A dozen bright eyed youths formed a line in front of the men, each holding with shiny new rifle. It was the older woman at the end of the line, holding an ancient looking rifle that caught Diego’s notice.

“Doctor Kymeri,” he nodded to the familiar blonde.

“Hello, Commander Nalto,” she smiled at him.

Diego opened his mouth to correct her to use his given name, but then realized she was doing it for the sake of the other recruits.

“Lieutenant Dameron,” Aletha looked to Kes. “Been a while.”

“I’m sorry, have we met?” Kes asked.


“I did a few checkups for Shara when she was pregnant with Poe.”

“Oh, Aletha,” Kes remembered. “Right, I remember you. Shara said you were the one doctor who didn’t have cold hands during ultrasounds.”

“I keep getting the strangest accolades around here,” Aletha laughed.

“Doctor Kymeri, would you please take a rifle so we may begin our lesson?” Diego requested.

“Actually, Commander, I was wondering if I may use my own weapon?” She patted the rifle affectionately, “This girl and I have seen a lot of action. I can’t go abandoning her now.”

“Alright, but we’re bringing an extra just in case. That is a very old blaster, and I don’t trust it to be stable.”
“Thousands of steelpeckers would disagree with you.”

Diego couldn’t help but smile.

“Allright, recruits, why don’t we get to it?” Kes said. “For those of you who are unaware, my name is Kes Dameron. I fought in the Rebellion, including in the Battle of Endor as the strike team on Endor under General Han Solo. And for those of you wondering, yes that is Dameron as in Poe Dameron. Whoever didn’t see our little display before, I’ll inform you that Poe is my son, but that will not affect my instruction of you. However if I overhear any comments disparaging my son, you will face me.”

Aletha was the only one who wasn’t too nervous to chuckle.

“As for myself, I am Commander Diego Nalto, Head of Flight, and Second-in-Command of the Resistance,” Diego said. “I can get you in even more trouble than Kes. My credentials are many: countless Rebellion battles, flew as Red Five for years until giving up my title to Luke Skywalker, who is a close friend. Flew in his Rogue Squadron as Rogue One. Participated in Operation Citadel – the operation that stole the Death Star plans – as Rogue Two, and am the only surviving member of the original Rogue Squadron. Rest in peace, Fliss, Riz, Ji-Dan, and Gunner. And I also hold the record for longest stint in an Imperial war camp and still lived to tell the tale. After three years in a work camp, I can pretty much put up with anything, but don’t try my patience.”

Kes added, “I am also Kes Dameron as in the husband of Shara Bey, the woman who was unfortunately killed by the First Order, and in whose name the Resistance was formed. Captain Phasma took my wife’s life, but from that tragedy was born something great.”

The rest of the men’s words were drowned out in Aletha’s mind. Shara Bey had been killed by Phasma? Her sister was responsible for the creation of the Resistance? Oh God, how could she stand just feet away from Kes knowing what her sister had done to him?

Aletha resolved to talk with Kes later.

“Any questions?” Kes asked when they came to the end of their speech.

“Yeah, I got one,” a young man raised his hand. He pointed at Aletha, “What’s the other instructor’s name?”

“Oh, I’m not an instructor,” Aletha answered.

“This is Doctor Aletha Kymeri,” Diego said. “She is a new recruit. As you know, all recruits must undergo a basic set of training before they can enter active duty. She arrived two weeks ago, and will be one of our students today.”

The young man scowled, “Really? Her?”

Diego narrowed his eyes.

The young man leaned over to his friend beside him, “We must really be hurting for recruits if they’re digging up dinosaurs like her.”

“Doctor Kymeri is a Rebel veteran,” Kes said shortly. “She’s been fighting since she was, how old were you again?”

“Nineteen,” Aletha answered smugly. “I’ve been fighting against Empires and First Order since seven years before Commander Poe Dameron was born. I’m sure that accounts for something.”
The group murmured among themselves, clearly not convinced of Aletha’s worth.

“We’re not here to question the abilities of fellow recruits,” Diego said, staring down the troublemaker who started it. “We are here to test them.”

“I look forward to witnessing the test results,” the young man laughed. He said to his friend, “Can you imagine Grandma firing a sniper rifle?”

“Everyone gather your things and move out,” Diego ordered.

As Aletha hoisted her rifle over her shoulder, she felt someone grab her arm.

“Did you really once shoot a woman in the knee?” Diego asked in a low voice.

Aletha smiled, “I’m very skilled with a sniper rifle, Commander Nalto.”

“Good. Show them.”

They shared a wicked grin.

“So you finally started teaching Rey how to fight?” Quom said as he and Luke walked through the market.

“Over the past few weeks,” Luke replied. They barely took in the faces of the other scavengers as they passed them. “It’s going good, but she’s not picking it up as quickly as I’d like.”

“Luke, she may have it in her blood to be athletically inclined, but she’s not born knowing how to throw a punch.”

“I know. She sprained her thumb punching Toras. Turns out she doesn’t curl it in while punching. We’ve since corrected it.”

They passed by a strange, new alien. Neither Luke nor Quom noticed how the alien did a double take at the sight of Luke.

“Marcus!” the alien yelled.

“Well, it’s a good thing you’re teaching Rey all this,” Quom said. “Rey’s fifteen now; she’s not a little girl anymore, and people are starting to take notice. Stuff like the Toras incident is only going to start happening more.”

“I know,” Luke scowled. “Plutt’s eyes are starting to linger too long on her for my liking. If I have to hear that lecherous chuckle as he tells me how much she looks like her mother one more time, I’m going to do something that will get me into a lot of trouble.”

“Marcus!” the alien called again.

“You know, Teng told me that before Toras beat up Rey, he made a pass at her?” Quom said.

“I know,” Luke’s fist tightened. “She said he tried to grope her too. Sprained her thumb punching him for it, which started the fight.”
“That’s my girl,” Quom chuckled.

“MARCUS!”

“You know, Luke,” Quom said slyly, “maybe you and I ought to visit Toras today and settle this little matt—”

“SKYWALKER!”

They stopped dead in their tracks.

Luke whispered, eyes filled with horror, “Did someone just say—”

“Yep,” Quom answered.

Someone knew who he was. What was Luke supposed to do? Was it the First Order? He so desperately wanted to turn and look, but answering the alien would out him even further.


His friend dutifully fulfilled his instructions. If anyone were to look at Quom and Luke, they would think the pair was just as confused as the rest of the market.

Then Luke’s eyes landed on a solution.

“Dirk,” he whispered.

Luke and Quom very casually walked up to Dirk, who was supervising the line to the concession stand.


“I don’t know, but you’re going to help me find out,” Luke answered. “You’re going to find whoever it is that just called out… that name, and bring them to our tent. If Rey or Teng are in there, remove the kids from our tent. Quom and I are going to join the concession line and return to the tent afterwards. Understand?”

“Yes, Sir,” Dirk saluted and took off to set his plan in action.

“I don’t get it, Luke,” Quom muttered as they joined the line. “Who the hell knows you’re here?”

“I have no idea.”

“I don’t blame you for what happened to Shara,” Diego overheard Kes say as they trekked to the sniper range deep in the forest.

Diego turned to see Kes walking along with Aletha, a serious look on his face.

“But my sister killed your wife,” Aletha said. “You’re not uncomfortable with my presence?”

“Not unless you’re secretly a First Order mole,” Kes teased. He patted Aletha’s shoulder, “It’s okay, Aletha. The actions of your sister are not the actions of yourself. I will never blame someone for actions of another person.”
“Thank you, Kes. That means a lot to me.”

Kes nodded, then picked up speed to check on the recruits at the front of the pack. He nodded at Diego as he passed, and Diego decreased his speed to hang back and watch the others.

As they followed the well-worn path to the training field, Diego noticed a small purple flower growing at the side of the road. Glancing back at Aletha, he stopped, bent down and plunked it.

“Have you seen one of these yet?” Diego offered her the flower as she reached him.

Aletha looked startled but smiled.

“No. Thank you,” she took the flower and tucked it into her belt. The tiny purple petals were nearly drowned out in the myriad of brown. “What’s it called?”

“Tilla, if I remember correctly.”

“Sounds pretty.”

“Pretty flower, pretty name.”

Aletha rubbed the back of her neck, “I got your other flowers. Thank you for those.”

“The sundrops? Just a welcome gift,” Diego tried to wave off.

“I meant the other ones. The ones you sent to my room the other day. The Yavinese lilies.”

“Well, I just did a mission on my home planet and thought I’d give you a token.”

“It’s appreciated. So you come from Yavin IV?” Aletha asked. “I wouldn’t have thought with the accent.”

“Yavin II,” Diego said. “Different moon, different accent. Honestly the common ground among the moons are the language.”

“I don’t think I’ve heard Yavinese in years.”

“Stand by Poe Dameron when he’s trying to fix a broken X-Wing, and you’ll hear plenty. The only downside is it’s usually just curse words.”

“Are you implying my delicate little ears can’t take the vulgarity of Yavinese swears?”

“If you ask me, I’d say either you’re the type who doesn’t swear at all, or swears worse than a Bothan,” Diego joked.

Aletha grinned, “I lean more towards the Bothans.”

“Good. So do I, but I think I have a far more creative set of swears than you.”

“I’m war doctor who operated most of her life on Jakku. I’ve been sworn at in almost every language. Try me.”

“I just might.”

Aletha couldn’t help but think that the weather suddenly picked up a few degrees.

From the way he tugged at his collar, Diego agreed.
“So, your sister is Captain Phasma?” he asked.

The weather went back to normal.

“Yes, she is,” Aletha took a small step to the side. “Alecta Anthea, bane of my existence. I’m sorry if it makes you uncomfortable.”

“Only if it doesn’t make you uncomfortable that I’ve sworn to kill her,” Diego answered simply.

“Really? Why?”

“You sound oddly nonchalant over me threatening to murder your sister.”

“I lost sympathy for her the day she swore to kill me. Why do you want to kill her?”

“She killed Fliss.”

“Rogue One?”

“My best friend,” Diego said. “I hold Phasma personally responsible for the death of Fliss and her daughter. I will make her pay.”

“I’m so sorry,” Aletha replied. “I never thought her plan for vengeance would include a child.”

“What plan?”

“Alecta has sworn revenge over the death of our sister Athena, who died on the Death Star. She swore to kill the three people she blames for it: me, Rogue One, and Luke Skywalker.”

“So it follows she would kill the daughter of Luke Skywalker and Rogue One.”

“It would seem so,” Aletha said.

“Aletha,” Diego grabbed her hand, stopping her. “I’m sorry for the part I played in your sister’s death.”

“I don’t blame you,” Aletha assured him. “We did what we had to do to protect the Galaxy. There were going to be causalities… but thank you for the apology.”

“It’s no trouble.” Something then clicked in Diego’s mind, “Wait, your maiden name is Anthea? Aletha Anthea?”

“Shut up,” she blushed.

Diego couldn’t stop laughing, “No, but really? Your surname was Anthea? Alecta Anthea? Aletha Anthea? Athena Anthea?”

“Oh, it gets worse. I also had two other sisters named Adrinna and Anissa. Sadly, Anissa also died during the war, but Adrinna took her husband’s name of Connix.”

He frowned, “Adrinna Connix?”

“Yep. Why do you know her?”

“No, but… I must be thinking of the wrong person.”

Aletha stared at him, but chose not to pry.
“Oh God, look at that,” Diego nodded up the path. “We’ve lagged so far behind. We should catch up.”

“I don’t know,” Aletha teased. “I’m just so ancient, I don’t know how I could ever make it.”

“Aletha, we need to go show that young recruit exactly who he’s toying with. I’ll carry you the rest of the way if I have to.”

She almost took him up on that offer.

Then there’s Sarco – he’s not one of Unkar’s but a bounty hunter or something. I don’t mess with him. There’s a rumor he killed a squad of stormtroopers on a jungle planet once. Don’t know if that’s true, but he’s certainly mean enough.

- Rey’s Survival Guide

The alien was sitting on a workbench, arms crossed when Quom and Luke returned to the tent.

“Well, well,” the alien said, his voice electronically distorted by his faceless mask, “if it isn’t Korl Marcus. Or should I call you Luke Skywalker this time?”

It took Luke a few minutes to place him, “Sarco Plank. Never thought I’d see you again.”

“Didn’t think you would see anything after our little encounter.”

“Oh, yes I remember. You threw a grenade at me and tried to blind me.”

“And yet you still managed to fight, Nobody’s Padawan. Managed to make a name for yourself, something more than Nobody’s Padawan. Of course, the latest intel informs me that your own Padawans are now Nobodies.”


Quom looked between the pair, completely lost, “Ok, what’s going on? How do you two know each other?”

So Luke quickly told Quom the story of the time he journeyed to a Jedi Temple on the planet Devaron, made friends with Farnay, and hired Plank to be his guide to the Temple. On the trip, Plank figured out that Luke was a fledgling Jedi and dubbed him “Nobody’s Padawan.” At the Temple, Luke learned how to better his lightsaber skills, but was attacked by a gang of Stormtroopers. Plank and Luke defeated them together, but Plank betrayed Luke, wanting to loot the Temple, but had been unable to get inside without a Jedi’s help. Then Luke and Plank battled – during which he temporarily blinded Luke – Plank threatened to kill Farnay and enslave Luke, but Luke defeated him and rescued Farnay. Unfortunately he sensed Plank was still alive, but their battle would be one to fight another day.

And apparently today was that day.

“Ok, seriously Luke,” Quom asked, “have you ever just had a normal Tuesday? Why does everything have to be an adventure with you?”

“You cost me a lot that day, Marcus,” Sarco growled.

“That temple was sacred. Not something to be looted and left abandoned.”

“Then tell me this, Nobody's Padawan, why did you build your Temple on Rornian? Didn’t you do exactly as I described? Looted it for what benefited you and then abandoned it?”

“I don’t need to justify anything to you,” Luke snapped.

“No, but you fear me,” Sarco chuckled.

“I don’t fear you.”

“Yes, you do. If you didn’t, you would have walked right up to me in the market. I couldn’t believe my eyes, the infamous Luke Skywalker just walking down the street of the new planet I settled on. You’ve been gone for years. There’s rewards for revealing your whereabouts, and your sister isn’t the only one offering them. You don’t want anyone to know you’re here.”

Luke glanced at Quom.

“You’re right,” Luke said. “That’s the reason I’m afraid.”

Sarco stared at him for a long while, “…No. It isn’t. I can see it in your face, Marcus. What is it you’re hiding?”


Too quickly.

“Oh, there’s something, and I’ll figure it out,” Sarco chuckled.

Luke dropped his voice low, “You’ll never figure it out.”

So naturally that was the moment Rey and Teng walked in.

“I didn’t even know the speeder could go that fast!” Rey laughed, oblivious to the situation.

“Just because it goes that fast doesn’t mean you should drive that fast.” Teng spat on the ground, “I’ve got so many bugs in my mouth. Ugh, and how’s my hair? It must look an awful mess.”

“No it doesn’t.” Rey lunged at him and playfully messed up his hair, “But now it does!”

“Oh, I’ll get you for that!”

Rey shrieked, starting forward, but Teng caught her arm and pulled her back into his embrace. They laughed as they jokingly rough housed, their bodies pressing close.

Quom cleared his throat.

“Uncle Quom!” Rey exclaimed, springing apart from the blushing Teng. “We were just—”

Then she noticed the other alien in the tent.

“Dad, what’s going on?” Rey asked.

Luke winced; the jig was up.

“Rey, please leave the tent,” he ordered.

She frowned, “But Dad-”


Rey looked back at Teng in confusion.

“Come on,” Teng took her arm and led her out of the time. “Let’s give him some privacy.”

Sarco had the tact not to start speaking again until the teens were well away.

“Well, well,” he laughed, “the daughter of Luke Skywalker lives. I’m sure the First Order would be most interested in hearing this.”

If Sarco was someone like Jarex or Plutt, Luke would have had no problem throwing Sarco around and asserting his dominance. But he knew Sarco better than that; Sarco was a legitimate threat and one he might lose to. Rey had to be his concern here, so Luke had to be smarter about the situation.

“What do you want from me?” Luke asked. “What’s it going to cost to buy your silence?”

Sarco thought about it; he was too smart to pass up a business opportunity like this. Money was the only thing that mattered in his world, and Luke Skywalker had a lot of it.

“I’ve heard you have a deal with Plutt,” Sarco said.


“I want half.”

“I can’t give you half.”

“So your daughter’s safety is worth less than three stale Imperial rations?”

Luke glowered at him, “Fine, you can have half. I’ll drop it off everyday at your tent. Tell me where you’re living.”

“We can go there right now. Oh Marcus, you really have no backbone do you. You’re just as helpless as you were all those years ago.”

“Are you really going to let him push you around like that, Luke?” Quom frowned.

“I don’t have a choice,” Luke answered. “Where Rey’s safety is concerned, there is no compromise. But let me make my conditions clear, Plank. You will tell no one we are here. You’ll tell no one that Rey is alive. You will not increase your fee for your silence, and if you ever cross me, I’ll make you regret it.”


Luke smiled, “You’re wrong. You know who I used to be. When we met, I was young, naïve, and untrained. I assure you, I am none of those things anymore, and if you ever lay a hand on my daughter, it’ll be the last thing you ever do.”
Sarco smiled behind his mask, “Agreed.”

“And that is how you prime and set your blaster rifle,” Diego finished his demonstration. “Now who wants to try it? What about you, Hot Shot?”

The man who had disparaged Aletha smirked, “Why don’t you ask Grandma to do it? That would be fun to watch.”

A few of the recruits snickered and Diego’s eyes met Aletha’s.

“Doctor Kymeri?” Diego asked.

Aletha nodded.

She came to the front of the group to stand by Kes and Diego, who were the ones holding all the ammo.

“You need special ammo for that weapon?” Kes asked.

“Standard power cells and gas cartridge. Thank you, Gentlemen,” Aletha accepted her supplies.

Diego didn’t let go of the power cell.

He leaned in and whispered, “Give him hell.”

Aletha grinned, “Yes, Commander.”

They took a step apart, and as Aletha readied herself, Kes raised an eyebrow at Diego.

“What?” Diego frowned.

“Nothing,” Kes smiled. He set his stopwatch, “We’ll be timing all of you. Anything more than twenty seconds is unacceptable. You get points docked for making excessive noise. Doctor, are you ready?”

“Ready.”

“Begin.”

Her movements were perfect and silent, and she was set, prepped, and crouched on the ground, ready to knock her mark in 13.4 seconds.

“Impressive,” Diego gave her a small round of applause. “Doctor you may get up. Can anyone beat that?”

An hour later, no one had managed to.

“Alright, now that everyone has had a chance to practise setting their rifles, we’re going to practice shooting,” Diego led them at the treeline.

There was a meadow full of sundrop flowers, surrounded by trees. On their end, there was half a dozen trees with rope ladders leading up to a lookout platform. Across the meadow were various targets set in the branches.
“You’ll take turns climbing the platforms and taking your shots,” Kes instructed. “You may shoot whichever target you want, but we will be assessing not only what you hit and what you didn’t, but also which you tried for. We don’t half-ass anything in the Resistance.”

“And if anyone hits that target,” Diego pointed to a tiny speck way off that he had pointed out, they would have all mistook for an acorn, “I will have them join myself at dinner sitting at the table with all the Heads of Department. That means Nils Arlos, Head of Recruitment; myself, Head of Flight; Meredyth Kalonia, Head of Medical; Statura, Head of Ground Teams; Akbar, Head of Tactics; and Taslin Brance, Head of Communications. This is a golden opportunity to make connections and could build your career.”

“We will also be judging you on your ability to be silent. A sniper gets one shot, so make it count. Everyone pick a tree and let’s get started.”

The recruits jostled about, but Diego’s attention was on the one he called Hot Shot.

“You may begin,” Diego announced. “Go up, empty your cartridge, and then come down and let the next person take their turn. So who’s brave enough to be first. Hot Shot?”

“With pleasure,” Hot Shot grinned.

Kes and Diego shared a look, taking their attention away from the others. It seemed all eyes were turned on the showdown as they didn’t hear anyone climbing the trees around them.

“Show me what you’ve got, Hot Shot,” Diego challenged.

Hot Shot holstered his blaster and began to climb. His slipped and he caught his balance, but not before his rifle jostled and smacked against his back.

“Dead,” Diego called. “You have to be silent. But keep going.”

Hot Shot scaled the tree, his ladder rattling, but Diego and Kes watched the boy. Reaching the top, Hot Shot pulled himself onto the platform and landed with a soft thud.

“Dead,” Kes called this time. “Again, you have to be silent. But go on and load your blaster.”

Hot Shot did so, making a great deal of noise.

Diego and Kes smiled at each other.

“Dead,” they called together.

“Come on, man,” Kes yelled up to him. “Show us that there’s something behind your boasting.”

“Take your shots,” Diego ordered. “Maybe you can at least hit a target from afar.”

Desperate to impress the pair, Hot Shot unloaded all five of the blasts the rifles were to be loaded with at the nearest target.

All five missed.

“Unbelievable,” Diego scoffed. “Take this as a lesson all of you, words are meaningless without action behind them. I could call myself the Emperor, but that wouldn't make me it. But then again, maybe I should temper my expectations. I don’t think any of you could climb up the tree, set your blaster, and hit the target all five times without making a noise.”
Everyone looked around wildly to see the source of the blasts. It was Diego who spotted Aletha Kymeri on the lookout platform in the tree to his left, holding a smoking blaster rifle.

““You said we can start,” Aletha shrugged as everyone stared up at her in shock.

“When the hell did she get up there?” someone muttered behind Diego.

But Diego couldn’t stop smiling at her.

It was a smile Aletha shared.

“How’d I do, Commander Nalto?” Aletha called down to him.

Diego unclipped his quadnocs from his belt and observed the targets in the distance. His heart fell as he failed to find a blast mark on a single target… Until he looked at the furthest target.

It was marked by five perfect blasts.

“I believe, Doctor Kymeri,” Diego replied, “that I will be taking you to dinner tonight.”

“I’ll wear my finest uniform, Commander.” Aletha looked over at Hot Shot and shouldered her rifle, “Don’t worry, Hot Shot, I’m sure Grandma can give you a few pointers.”

Hot Shot gulped.

Kes chuckled and leaned over to Diego, “What do you think about that?”

“Honestly?” Diego lowered his quadnocs and looked at Kes, “I think I’m a little turned on.”

A few hours later, Aletha was working her shift in the Medic Center. Diego and Kes were there as well. Diego was supervising the treatment of one of the sniper students who had been accidentally shot in the foot by another student, who was profusely apologizing at his bedside so much it was starting to get annoying.

Kes was in the Medic Center because of Poe. Poe had decided he wanted to show off his piloting skills to his father during the presentation, took too hard a turn on a spin, and smashed his head into the dashboard. He claimed he was okay, but BB-8 tattled to Kes about what had happened. Kes told his son in no uncertain terms that if he didn’t walk right to the Medic Center and get himself checked for a concession, that Kes would drag Poe there himself.

He was strong enough to back up that threat, so Poe practically ran to the Medic Center. Twenty-eight years old or not, Poe Dameron could still be bossed around by his father.
As Aletha went through the various patients, she couldn’t help but notice that Diego was watching her. It wasn’t the kind of watching that he would glance away and pretend he wasn’t doing it when caught. Diego would continue to stare at her, and smiled when their eyes met.

For some reason, Aletha couldn’t help but blush.

But his vigil ended when a young blonde haired, blue eyed woman entered the room. She must have been in her very early twenties, and she made a beeline for Diego. They spoke for a few minutes, not that Aletha was paying much attention to them. She did notice however that the pair kept pointing to her.

After about three minutes of discussion, the young woman took a deep breath and approached Aletha.

“Doctor Kymeri?” the young woman asked.

“Hello,” Aletha smiled. “Are you my next patient?”

“Uh… not exactly. Do you have a moment to talk?”

Aletha glanced down at her datapad for the list of currently waiting patients, “Well, there’s nothing major on my roster. I suppose I can spare a few minutes. What can I help you with?”

“Ok, this is going to sound crazy, but do you know someone named Adrinna Anthea?”

Aletha stiffened, “I’ve crossed paths with her. Yes.”

“It was more than just that though, right? You’re her sister. Aletha Anthea?”

This conversation was making her uneasy.

“How do you know that?” Aletha demanded, though her voice was reserved.

“It is your name then?” the girl’s eyes were alight with hope.

“I haven’t been Aletha Anthea in years, and I have no intention of resuming life as her. So how do you know this and what do you want from me?”

The woman blushed, “I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to be so bold. I’ve just pictured this in my head so many times, and now that I’m living it out, I’m not sure what to do.”

“Pictured what?”

“Meeting you! I’ve been looking for you for years!”

Aletha frowned, “Who are you?”

“Sorry, let me start over.”

The young woman took a deep breath and extended her hand. Aletha regarded it warily, but deigned to shake it.

“Aletha Anthea, I’m happy to finally meet you. My name is Kaydel Ko Connix.”

Aletha stopped shaking, “…Kaydel Connix?”
“My father is Timor Connix and my mother is Adrinna Connix née Anthea… You’re my aunt.”

She just stared at the girl.

Kaydel smiled weakly at the awkward silence, “Uh… surprise?”

“How old are you?” Aletha whispered.

“Twenty-one.”

“Impossible. Look, I don’t know what game you’re playing, but Kaydel Connix is thirty-five years old.”

“The first one would have been.”

“First one?” Aletha scowled.

Kaydel bit her lip, “Um, Kaydel died a few years before I was born. My mother was devastated and decided to get pregnant again. When I was born a girl, they decided to name me after her, but threw a Ko in there to differentiate. I am the daughter of Timor Connix and Adrinna Anthea. I can prove it. Ask me anything. Your parents were Andreas and Andromeda Anthea. Your sisters were Adrinna, Alecta, Athena, Anissa, and then yourself, Aletha. You’re fifty-four years old, and were born on Mallarex on the third day of the eighth month in their calendar.”

Aletha honestly didn’t know what to say. But she couldn’t deny the girl’s words; the more she looked at the young woman in front of her, the more she recognized the features of her sister and her parents in the girl. This girl had to be who she claimed to be. Who else could know so much about Aletha’s family unprompted?

“I don’t believe this,” Aletha shook her head. “You’re my niece.”

“I can do a blood test if you want,” Kaydel offered.

“Maybe. I don’t know. This is a lot to process.”

“I’m sorry for throwing it all on you. I’ve just so badly wanted to meet you.”

She had a niece. Aletha couldn’t believe it. Well, yes she could believe it. She was well aware of the four nieces she had (or five as it now would seem.) But her nieces were little girls who didn’t really like her. Now she was staring at a full grown young woman who actually seemed interested in her.

“Why do you want to meet me?” Aletha asked.

“Because you’re the Rebel,” Kaydel grinned. “You’re the one who stood up to this family, said this situation with the Empire is wrong, and then fought to change the Galaxy.”

Aletha sighed, “That’s not quite why I left.”

“It’s why I left,” Kaydel said.

“What do you mean?”

“I left home to join the Resistance. Mom told me I was out of the family if I did it, but I knew I had to. So I decided to join and maybe find you, the one person in the family who gets it.”

Aletha did get it. How many years had she wished for someone in the family to not only see her
point of view, but share it? Not since her father died had anyone sided with Aletha. Alecta had made sure of that isolation.

Alecta, she remembered with horror. Aletha had been forced to leave Rey behind to protect her from Alecta, and now here another girl was putting herself in the path of Alecta’s fury.

She couldn’t let that happen.

“Kaydel, stop! Listen to me. Do you know where I’ve been the past two decades? On Jakku sleeping in a tent because your other aunt has vowed to kill me, and if given the opportunity, she will.”

“She’s made the same vow against me,” Kaydel said.

Silent horror filled Aletha’s face.

“Wh- What?” she managed to blurt out after a few minutes. “Alecta wants to kill you?”

“And that’s why I have to fight,” Kaydel said evenly. “I met Aunt Alecta one time in my life, and after ten minutes with her, I realized that that woman and all who think like her must be stopped at all costs. After that, I found out about you from Katha – my older sister.”

“I remember her.”

“Right. Well, Mom actually hid your existence from me, but once I started showing signs of rebellion, Katha told me about you to warn me off from rebellion… Ended up doing the opposite, and I became a little obsessed with you for a while.”

Aletha blushed.

“When I turned eighteen, I set out from home to join the Resistance and find you,” Kaydel continued. “My search for you wasn’t fruitful, but my involvement with the Resistance was. Unfortunately, Alecta found out, and now she’s sworn to kill me.”

“But how do you know that?” Aletha asked. “If you haven’t seen her in that time-”

“She sent a message to the Resistance demanding I be turned over to her as my rightful guardian. General Organa basically told her to go to hell, and then took me under her wing.” Kaydel took a deep breath, “Look, I understand that this all is a lot to throw on a person who is a stranger, but I needed to meet you. You can take me or leave me; it’s your choice and I respect it. But if you wanted some semblance of family around here, just know you’ve got a niece hanging around.”

Aletha took a while to consider Kaydel’s words… and then smiled.

“Did Adrinna really name you Kaydel Ko?”

Kaydel grinned, “We have as insufferable names as you and your sisters did. Kaydel, Katha, Keth – the only boy among us if you don’t count Athena and Anissa’s boys – Kyra, and Kaydel Ko.”

“And Connix as a surname too. You poor thing.”

The women stood there, staring at each other, and smiling.

Then Aletha pulled her niece into a tight hug and let out a joyous laugh.

“I’ll take any part of you you’re offering, My Darling,” Aletha held her close.
“I’m happy to hear that, Doctor Kymeri.”

“Call me Aletha, Auntie, Aunt, or whatever you want. No honorifics here, Darling.”

“How about Aunt Ally?”

Aletha’s heart lurched as she remembered Rey calling her that once upon a time, but she agreed to the name.

The women stood there holding each other for a while; laughing and relishing the feeling of having their own flesh and blood by their side once more. Sure, the best families were the ones a person chooses for themselves, but there was still something warm and comforting when blood got along.

“How did you find me?” Aletha asked after a while. They had already made plans to share dinner that night and learn all they could about each other.

“Commander Nalto,” Kaydel nodded towards Diego. “You mentioned to him my mother’s name, he put two and two together, and approached me. He said you seemed like you would want a loving niece in your life.”

Aletha’s eyes went to Diego, who had watched the entire scene. He was smiling at the sight of aunt and niece in a loving embrace. His eyes met hers, and something oddly tender entered his gaze. She couldn’t believe what he had done for her.

“Thank you,” she mouthed to him.

Diego nodded.

Aletha turned her attention back to her niece, but Diego’s focus didn’t wane. He just folded his arms and watched the tender moment with an enormous grin.

There was a chuckle behind him.

“What?” Diego didn’t deign to look back at Kes.

“I know that look,” Kes grinned at Diego’s expression. “You sir, are in a lot of trouble.”

Diego just smiled, “Yeah, I think I am.”

Chapter End Notes

Coming Up Next Chapter…

Something in the Air
As the situation with Rey intensifies and Aletha finds herself on a battlefield for the first time in years, Teng and Diego discover that the mating game is the same whether you’re seventeen or fifty-seven.

Spoilers for The Last Jedi:

How do I describe my reaction? In a word: disappointed. First I was sad, then I was angry, then numb, and now I’m just resigned to disappointment.
You know the truth; Luke is dead, Rey is a nobody, and Reylo will probably be endgame. Lucasfilm wasted all of our time with this fucking mystery.

But I’m not mad, not anymore. I’m glad I had this theory because from it I’ve had this story. A story that I adore and a story that I am proud to have written. And I will continue this story, the story that should have been told of a father and daughter torn apart by the jealous rage of his nephew, and the struggle they endure to be a family while the daughter of the son and the son of the daughter battle it out for the Skywalker legacy.

Will episode 8 be included in this story? Absolutely. I’ve already been working out how to do it, and I think I have some great ideas to fix the mess that is The Last Jedi. I will warn you though that the outcome of that story will be very different.

Oh by the way, I’m not fucking killing off Luke. That was bullshit, and I’m furious. Though the double sun visual was beautiful… Holy shit, it really just hit me that Luke Skywalker is dead. And what? The man who puts his family and friends before himself first never got to really find love beyond – currently the only canon love interest he has is – Nakari Kelen? I hate that thought.

Nobody is taking Felicity Rhiaon from me though. I worried about a competing love interest, and now I can safely say I view Felicity as Luke Skywalker’s soulmate… but then again I created her specifically to be so.

So long story short, I will continue with this fic. I hope you can enjoy it even if it’s totally, massively, non-canon.

Because honestly fuck Episode 8; that was such a slap in the face.

Like it better than Rogue One though.
Something in the Air

Chapter Summary

Aletha gets a medal, Teng asks Quom for dating advice, and Luke uncovers a startling mystery.

Chapter Notes

Wow, I guess people are really starving for Rey Skywalker stuff. There’s been such an influx of reviews, favorites, and follows, so I want to just say welcome to all the new readers. Since there have been a few new people asking, I would like to say for the record that I update chapters once I finish writing them. There’s no specific day I do it, or guarantee of at least once a week. Recently, I was very good with doing it at least once a week, but then holiday stuff happened, and I’ve been so completely exhausted that I haven’t had the mental energy to write. So, to answer the frequent question, I update when I update.

And for those wondering when we’ll finally get to TFA, I’d like to announce that we are in the homestretch. There should be two more chapters left of this story arc (where Rey learns to fight) and then there will be only 2.5 story arcs before we get to TFA. It’ll be about two chapters involving the story that takes place in Rey’s portion of the novel Before the Awakening. A chapter involving Aletha discovering something I think we all want her to figure out. Then three chapters surrounding the events that set The Force Awakens into motion. So roughly eight chapters left before we get there.

Finally, the reason I took so long with this chapter is that I took a break to outline the entire TLJ portion of this story, and I’m really excited. I have some really great stuff planned, including continuing some Star Wars traditions Rian Johnson didn’t put in (I do not count BB-8 as being the one to say I have a bad feeling about this), as well as some twists on the traditions (there’s something that happens in every middle movie of the trilogy that Johnson didn’t do, but not only will I do that, but then have the character it happens to do something a character’s never done afterwards), and doing something truly epic with the Force we have never seen before. I hope you guys enjoy, because this is going to be amazing, and I’m starting to set up some of it now.

Plus, I’m giving BB-9E the respect he deserves. I love that little ball of hate, and no lie, I am literally wearing a BB-9E t-shirt while writing this chapter.

For those interested, according to the current outline, there will be at least 141 chapters of this story… No pressure on me at all.

Also, for the battle scene in this chapter, I highly recommend listening to ‘Enter Lord Vader’ from the Revenge of the Sith soundtrack. For the… Leia scene – you’ll know which one – I highly recommend listening to ‘Luke and Leia’ from the Return of the Jedi soundtrack. And for the final scene I recommend ‘The Scavenger’ from the Force Awakens soundtrack.
The Long Way Home

Chapter Forty

Something in the Air

My speeder’s not easy to pilot. It’s top heavy and if you’re not careful, it’ll roll. That’s fine with me – I know what I’m doing, and if anyone steals my baby they won’t get far.

- Rey’s Survival Guide

Rey could dodge the fist that flew towards her face, but she couldn’t avoid the knee that slammed into her stomach.

She moaned and hit the ground, incapacitated as she heard the pair of scavengers laugh at her misery. Rey couldn’t move to stop them as they scampered past her and hopped on the driver’s seat of her beloved speeder. She was helpless as the scavengers made off from the TIE fighter with not only the speeder, but her daily haul.

Groaning, Rey forced herself to her feet and ran after the pair. They were just one of many scavengers who had decided Rey Erso was now fair game to beat and steal from. Toras Kern had set a dangerous precedent, and despite her father’s fighting lessons, Rey was struggling to stand her ground.

The pair were laughing at Rey’s pathetic attempt of literally giving them chase and not paying any attention to their surroundings. If they had they would have noticed the speeder starting to tip. And they also would have noticed the speeder parked next to the Y-Wing they were fast approaching.

Rey grinned as her baby flipped over, throwing her attackers off. As she ran towards the Y-Wing and her speeder continued on, it disappeared behind the ship. For a minute, she could have sworn she heard the engine cut, but that was impossible. Who could get it to stop so quickly? No one could have jumped on and killed the engine so fast. They would have to have something like Jedi powers and use the Force to turn it off.

It probably just ran out of gas.

The pair of scavengers looked furious as they lifted themselves off the ground. They spat a few insults at her in Huttese and readied themselves to charge at her. They would make her pay for this.

A boot slammed into the back of the first scavenger, pinning him to the ground. Before the second even realized what had happened, a metal fist slammed into his face.

Rey skidded to a halt as the men looked up at Luke Erso in surprise.

“I didn’t realize I had to cut off a hand every ten years to prove the lengths I’ll go to protect my daughter,” Luke shook his head, almost looking genuinely disappointed in the men.
They tried to fight him off, but Luke Erso was too skilled for them to defeat. Rey watched her father with a smile as he expertly dispatched the duo. He was truly amazing when he fought. Perfectly timed kicks, punches, and impossible to know dodges. It was like something was guiding him.

She almost felt ashamed of herself as she slowly approached the scene. Why couldn’t she fight the way her father did? The rational part of her reminded her that her father had almost fifty years of experience over her. But still, how could Dad defend himself so well, and yet she always failed?

“Because he has given in to the Force that lives inside of him,” a woman’s voice said.

Rey frowned and turned around in surprise. Standing before her was a woman in a dark purple tunic, black pants, grey knee-high boots, a blue morning glory in her hair, and a strange cylinder clipped on her belt.

“Alyla Kene?” Rey whispered.

“Hello, Rey,” Alyla smiled. “It’s been a very long time.”

“I’m sorry, but I… I don’t remember you.”

“I didn’t expect you would. Not for some time yet. I’m here to help you, to guide you, and encourage you.”

“Encourage me to do what?”

“To draw on the strength inside of you,” Alyla answered. “Though hopefully it will go better than it did with your cousin. That really did not end well for me.”

Rey blinked, “I have a cousin?”

Alyla looked over Rey’s shoulder and frowned, “I must go.”

“No, wait please!”

“You are strong, Rey,” Alyla placed a hand on Rey’s shoulder. “Draw on that strength, and do not give in to fear.”

“Alyla!”

Luke gave the pair of scavengers one last punch, and one told the other to make a break for it. Luke smiled as he watched the two scamper off, and then looked up at Rey.

His heart dropped when he saw a decidedly not glowing blue Alyla Kene standing next to his daughter.


She looked up like she had heard him, and smiled across the sandy dune. Before Luke could do anything, Alyla disappeared.

“Rey?” Luke called, racing up to her.

“Are you okay, Dad?”

“Yeah, I’m fine. What just-”
“You saw her too? Alyla?”

Luke blinked, “Yes. So we both saw her… and she wasn’t glowing blue?”

Rey frowned, “Does that mean something?”

“Maybe… or maybe it’s just a shared vision.”

“She felt pretty real to me.”

“What do you mean?”

“She put a hand on my shoulder,” Rey said.

Luke scowled, “And it… was solid? Not just a warmth?”

“Yeah, it was solid. Should it have not been?”

“No. It shouldn’t.”

Rey let the silence linger as she bit her lip, “Dad… She said I had a cousin.”

Luke stumbled a step back, “She what?”

“Well, yes, but… why is she telling you that?”

Rey wrung her hands together, “Is something wrong?”

“Yes, I just… I don’t know what.” Luke took a minute to think things over, and then returned his attention to his daughter, “Are you okay? Those two put up a pretty good fight.”

“I’m fine.”

Luke smiled and stroked her cheek, “I’m proud of you. You’re getting to be a very good fighter.”

Rey sighed, “It doesn’t feel like it.”

He pulled her forward to kiss her forehead, his beard tickling her skin. She leaned forward, wrapping her arms around him and dissolving into his loving embrace.

They stood there for a while, holding each other. It may have been a strange and dangerous life they lived, but at least they had this: love. They had each other.

But still… Luke couldn’t help but wonder about Alyla Kene.

Rey’s lips on Teng’s were like heaven. So soft and sweet, like some sort of dessert. Or at least Teng thought that was what dessert was like. It had been over a decade since he had the pleasure of having dessert. But it didn’t matter, he had Rey Erso and that was the best taste in the galaxy.

“Oh Teng,” Rey moaned, her hands running over his sturdy body.

“Rey,” Teng murmured in reverence.
She was beneath him, basking in the pleasure they exchanged. His hips were between her legs, one of which was coiled around him. Rey moaned as they pressed their bodies against each other, and Teng buried his head in the crook of her soft, swanlike neck.

“Rey,” Teng moaned again.

Slowly she began to grind up against him, and he-

“I said, pass the screwdriver!” Quom exclaimed.

Teng slammed his head up on the speeder in shock.

“Okay, that hurt,” Teng rubbed his forehead as he rolled out from under the speeder.


Teng wiped his oily hands on a rag, and began digging through the toolbox.

“You know, I see you under speeders and machinery so often, I wonder if you’re part samalizard.” Quom frowned when his quip got no response. “Hey!”

Teng sputtered as Quom’s balled up polishing rag hit him in the face.

“You okay?” Quom asked.

“Yeah, I’m fine,” Teng tossed the polishing rag aside and handed Quom the screwdriver.

“Then where was your head a few seconds ago? Somewhere better than here in my shop?”

“Yeah… somewhere a lot better.”

Quom raised an eyebrow, but said nothing as he went back to work. Teng watched Quom nervously as the Vrogem uncharacteristically dropped the subject. He was apparently too occupied with his work to let his mind go to other things.

Teng’s mind, however, was not.

Gathering his courage, Teng sighed and asked, “Quom?”

“Yeah?”

“How do get a girl to like you?”

Quom instantly stopped his busywork, “A girl?”

Teng winced, regretting his question.

“What girl?” Quom asked.

“No one.”

“Rey?”
“No! It’s… Demi! That Demi girl!”

“You mean Devi?”

Teng reddened, “Uh… yeah. Devi.”

Quom just looked at him, “So, Rey?”

He sighed, admitting defeat, “Ok, fine. Yeah. I like Rey.”

“Well, it’s about time! I’ve been waiting for this for ages!”

“Shh! Keep your voice down! Luke and Rey could be back any moment.”

“Then this was a very bad time for you to bring up this topic of conversation.”

Teng sighed, “Yeah, it was. I just… I don’t know how to make her like me. Like like me like me.”

“What are you, ten?”

“Quom, please!”

Quom set down his tools, “Alright, I may not be an expert in romance, but I’ve been around long enough to see the signs. I’ll teach you to court a girl the best way! The Vrogem way!”

Teng had a bad feeling about this.

“First thing is appearance,” Quom looked over Teng. “You got to make your fur… or hair in your case nice and poufy. Ladies love a male with a thick, shiny coat. And bright colours! We have to dress you in colors so bright, you can guide a ship to the ground for a safe landing. And jewelry! Put on as many bobbles and trinkets as possible! You should be jingling as you walk down the street!”

Teng just stared at Quom, “I’m going to regret asking you this, aren’t I?”

“Yeah, probably.”

Teng sighed.

The other scavengers don’t mess with my ride. One reason is because Unkar’s told them not to – not because he likes me but because I bring in the most valuable stuff.

- Rey’s Survival Guide

“One portion,” Plutt slid the packet over to Rey.

She scowled at him, “No way. That haul has to be worth at least three portions. You’re ripping me off!”

“Are you new here?” Roke muttered from the side where he was supervising the line.

Rey glared at him.
“One portion is my final offer,” Plutt refused. “Unless you want to withdraw some from your father’s fund?”

“No,” Rey knew she wasn’t supposed to do that without her father’s permission. It was so he could keep track of their credit better.

But the mention of her father brought an idea to her mind. Why didn’t she try doing that negotiation trick her dad had been teaching her? How did it go again? A firm tone? A casual gesture? Someone weak-minded? She might just be able to pull it off.

“You will give me three portions,” Rey imitated her father as best she could.

Plutt and Roke shared an amused look.

“No,” Plutt said simply.

Rey tried it again, waving her hand harder this time and concentrating on his face intently, “You will give me three portions.”

“No, I won’t,” Plutt repeated.

“The Boss has spoken. Now knock it off or I’ll knock you off,” Roke threatened, fingering his quarterstaff slung across his shoulder.

“You wouldn’t touch me,” Rey smirked. “Not with my dad around.”

Roke matched her grin, “Well, good news, Little Girl, Daddy isn’t around. You think I’m afraid of hitting some pompous fifteen-year-old girl? Try me. I dare you.”

Rey suddenly wished her father was with her in that moment rather than back at Quom’s tent.

“Now, now,” Plutt said. “Perhaps there is some way you can earn a few extra portions.”

She didn’t like the way he was looking at her. That lecherous grin as his eyes drifted down her body. Rey gave a small shudder and crossed her arms over her chest.

“I’m not doing that,” she said firmly.

Plutt asked, “Doing what?”

“Whatever it is you want.”

He chuckled, “You know, you’ve grown into quite the beauty, Rey. Are you sure there’s nothing you’re willing to offer?”

She didn’t want to have to play this card, but felt like she wouldn’t be safe if she didn’t, “I will scream for my father.”

“Oh, I’m not asking for much… How about a smile? You look quite beautiful when you smile.”

Rey put on her biggest scowling grimace/glare possible, “No.”

Plutt dropped some portion packets on the counter with a thud, “Five portions for one smile.”

She stared at the packets hungrily. Five whole portions for a tiny little action. What was the harm in a facial expression?
But it was more than a facial expression; it was a dangerous door to open. One day a smile, the next, what, a hug? Maybe a kiss on the cheek a week later, and one on the lips a while after… All leading up to something unthinkable.

Yet, portions were important. For some reason, her father had been paying Sarco Plank half of their daily portions, so they were a little short on them. Not to mention Teng and Quom needed all the help they could get.

“Come now,” Plutt goaded. “Just one little smile.”

Was her dignity worth making sure her family was fed?

Rey very slowly lifted the corners of her mouth into a smile.

Plutt slid over the portion packets, “That’s My Girl.”

She shuddered, her face instantly dropping as she slid the portions into her bag. Rey could hear Roke and Plutt laughing as she scurried away. In need of comfort, she went to the only place she could be alone and feel safe.

Though someone else lived there now, Rey dropped her bag to the ground, sat against the tent of Aletha Kymeri, and cried.

“He asked you for dating advice?” Luke was absolutely gobsmacked as he walked through the market with Quom. They were casually looking for Rey, she not yet having come back from bartering with Plutt, but hadn’t been at the concession stand. “Why would he ask you for dating advice?”

“Because I’m pretty sure he didn’t want to walk up to you and say ‘your daughter turns me on. Teach me to seduce her.’”

Luke glared at Quom, “Teng is definitely after more than just sating his lust. He cares for Rey on a deeper level.”

“True, but he’s also a seventeen-year-old boy. Lust is certainly a factor in the equation.”

“Why am I having this conversation about my daughter?”

Quom shrugged, “You started it.”

“And I’m finishing it,” Luke said shortly. He looked around at the passersby warily, “I don’t want people getting the wrong idea.”

Quom winced, “So, you’ve heard the whispers too? Damn, I was hoping you could avoid that.”

“Why don’t people understand that a father can be close to his daughter without them being that close?”

“Don’t let them bug you. We both know it’s not true. Besides, it’s not like there aren’t similar rumours about me and Rey.”

“I just pray that Rey never overhears these-”
“REY!” Quom exclaimed, pulling Luke to a halt.

She was walking down the street, her eyes red and wet, and trying to avoid anyone’s gaze.

“Hey, Quom,” she gave a loud sniff and she wiped her eyes. “Dad.”


“Nothing,” she looked away.

“Rey.”

“I don’t want to talk about it. Besides, it’s nothing more than the usual.”

“That’s not very encouraging,” Luke pointed out. He gently reached out and grabbed her arm, “Please talk to me.”

“I can’t,” Rey struggled to say. She caught her father’s look, “Not because anyone’s threatening me, and it’s just... I can’t talk about this to you.”

“You can come to me with anything,” he gently reminded.

“I know, but I don’t want to discuss this with you.”

Quom traded a look with Rey, “What about someone else? Could you talk about it with another person?”

Rey smiled, understanding his meaning, “Yeah. I think there’s someone I can discuss it with.”

“I just felt so cheap,” Rey said. She sat with her knees to her chest, gripping the comm tightly as she sat in the sand a little from the walker. “I never thought a smile could be so terrible.”

“I’m so sorry you had to go through that, Sunshine,” Aletha Kymeri’s voice chirped through the comm. “You should never feel like you have to do something like that to get yourself more food. You know your father provides not only for you, but Quom and Teng as well. You don’t think he would actually let them starve?”

“I know, it’s just hard,” Rey sighed. “I wish you were still here to help me through this.”

“I am here. Just not physically, but have I failed to answer your comm even once yet?”

Rey smiled, “No.”

“You’re a strong young woman, Rey. Don’t let anyone think otherwise. It’s a sad fact of human nature that we’re predisposed to put others down to make us feel superior. Heck, I even met some resistance when I joined this... Resistance. Not sure it qualifies as irony, but it was a little funny.”

“How did you overcome it?”

“I used the help of my sniper and a few friends to put the boy in his place,” Aletha chuckled, remembering the day of her sniper lessons.

Rey frowned, “You didn’t do it all by yourself?”
“Don’t ever be afraid to ask for help, Sunshine, nor to accept it. Humans are social creatures. You need to stick together to protect each other.”

“But you didn’t stick together with us,” Rey muttered.

There was a long silence from the other end of the comm.

“I’m sorry,” Rey regretted her words.

“I left to protect you, Rey,” Aletha said. “I didn’t want to leave, but your safety was compromised. I couldn’t put you in danger.”

“I know. I just… miss you.”

“I miss you too. All of you.”

“Even Dad?”

Aletha paused again, “To a degree, but Rey… that whole thing is over now. Even if we do meet again, I doubt your father and I will get back together. And I’m okay with that.”

“Why? Have you met someone new?” Rey teased. Her grin fell to a frown when Aletha was silent, “Oh my god, have you?”

“No,” answered Aletha. “I’m not dating anyone, but there is a man who makes me smile. Nothing more has happened between us.”

“Yet?”

“… yet.” Aletha sighed, “Does your father still not know we’re communicating?”

“Quom and I agreed we would respect my privacy. I really need our chats to just be between the two of us.”

“Same. Though Kaydel walked in on the tail end of our last conversation, so she might think something is up.”

“How are things going with you two?” Rey asked. “I still can’t believe you found your niece.”

“Kaydel is a lovely girl, but I feel a little overwhelmed sometimes. Our relationship isn’t like the one I have with you. Kaydel doesn’t need a parent, so I’m trying to figure out how to be her cool aunt and not mother her too much.”

“I’d kind of like to meet her,” Rey admitted. “There aren’t a lot of girls around here. It would be neat to actually talk with a girl around my age.”

“I’ll see what I can do,” Aletha chuckled a little. Her voice then turned more serious, “Rey? There’s something I have to tell you. Tomorrow… I’m being sent out to battle.”

“What?” Rey exclaimed.

“As a medical team. There’s a certain area where we’ll set up our camp, and I’ll treat those wounded on the battlefield. I may be asked to do a little sniping, but I’m not going to be part of the team that retrieves the injured. I should be safe.”

“But what if you aren’t? What if they storm your camp?”
“It’s against the Reasonable Wartime Measures Act to assault an opponent’s medical camp. They could be tried with war crimes if they overstepped the bounds of the RWMA.”

“Like that’s going to stop the First Order,” Rey sneered. She closed her eyes and bit her lip, “Please be safe, Aletha.”

“I’ll do my best.”

Rey glanced towards the walker, “I should get going. It’s almost dinnertime.”

“Same here,” Aletha said. “I’m going to have an early morning.”

“Comm me when you’re back safely.”

“I will. I promise.”

Rey hesitated, “Aletha?”

“Yes, Sunshine?”

“May the Force be with you.”

Aletha laughed, “And with you too, Sunshine.”

And then Aletha’s comm flicked out.

If there was one thing Aletha forgot about battle, it was how loud it was. The deafening exchange of blasts, explosions, and shouts rung in her ears. It probably didn’t help that her earpiece comm was never silent.

It was a foggy, unpleasant place the First Order and the Resistance had decided to battle. Dark clouds covered the sun, making the planet Valra’s temperature plummet. Hard snow crunched under Aletha’s boots as she rushed a load of supplies to Doctor Kalonia in the medical tent upon the mountain ridge.

“Thanks,” Kalonia didn’t look up from her patient as Aletha dumped the supplies on a work table. “How’s it going down below?”

“We should send another team down to collect the wounded. The First Order fired another round of grenades,” Aletha reported, taking the free moment to reload the sniper rifle she carried on her back.

“We could hear the explosions up here,” Evan Tharel, a nurse shook his head.

“We’re not going to be able to collect anyone else until we get some cover,” Kalonia said. “Kymeri, take Tharel up the mountain and clear us some space for a team to run.”

“With pleasure,” Aletha grabbed some extra ammo. She grinned at Evan, “Ready to roll, Hot Shot?”

Evan grinned, “Lead the way, Grandma.”
“Just like we practised, Evan,” Aletha said as they lay flat on the ground peering through their scopes, ready to fire. “Rogue Squadron is almost here. You want to impress Commander Nalto with how much you’ve improved, right?”

“Aletha, if Commander Nalto takes notice of our sniping, it’s not me he’s going to be focused on.” She couldn’t help but blush. “Shut up.”

“Word on the base is he brings you flowers from every planet he visits.”

“I said shut up.”

“Alright collection team,” Kalonia’s voice crackled over the comm, “move out!”

A barrage of fire hailed upon the team from the First Order, but Aletha and Evan provided cover from above, carefully picking off the First Order troops.

“Maintain your fire,” ordered the voice of Statura, who was directing the battle back at the D’Qar base. “Air support has almost arrived. Black Leader? Rogue Leader? What are your ETAs?”

“Five more minutes and we’ll be with you,” Wedge Antilles – Rogue Leader – answered.

“And we’re right behind you guys,” Poe Dameron – Black Leader – added. “You ready to remind us what you’re made of, Wedge?”

“Challenge accepted, Black Leader,” Wedge replied with a chuckle.

Wedge had recently returned to the Resistance after taking a nearly two years leave when his husband, Ceren had been diagnosed with a terminal illness. It had been finally determined that Ceren was not going to be better and had less than a year to live.

In his absence, Diego had taken up command of Rogue Squadron and the air force. Wedge had returned after Ceren begged him to because he knew how much Wedge loved piloting. Diego had stepped down from command of Rogue Squadron with Wedge’s return, but maintained control of the air force in case Ceren took a turn for a worse and Wedge had to make a quick exit again.

“Black Squadron, you advance upon the First Order craft, and keep them away from our people,” Wedge ordered. “Rogue Squadron, we’ll clear the perimeter. Most of the trouble is coming from the First Order snipers, so I want to light up that mountain side.”

Kalonia’s voice entered the conversation, “Rogue Leader, please be advised that we have personnel on the mountain. Doctor Kymeri has a defensive sniping position.”


Aletha couldn’t even pretend she didn’t see Evan smirking at her.

“We’re located at 4 knock 16,” she answered using the Resistance’s location code. It was a version of latitude and longitude to conceal their location from the First Order in case the comm line got hacked.

“Noted, Doctor,” Diego answered perhaps a little too formally.

“Careful, boys,” Poe teased. “Don’t hit the doctor or Nalto will give you hell to pay.”

“Cut the chatter, Black Leader,” Wedge snapped. “Though, he’s not exactly wrong. Don’t hit our
“Aletha,” Diego said, “you used the word ‘we.’ Who else is there with you?”

“Evan Tharel.”

“Really?” Diego chuckled. “You brought Hot Shot with you?”

“He’s gotten so much better over the past four months.”

“Only because you insisted on taking him under your wing to give him private sniper lessons.”

“Rogue One!” Wedge snapped, using Diego’s callsign. “You may be Head of Flight, but I’m still your commanding officer on this squad.”

“Explain to me again how that works?” Poe asked.

“Quiet, Dameron,” Wedge ordered. “That means the cut the chit chat order also applies to you, Nalto. Flirt with the doctor on your own time.”

Aletha’s face was so red, she was pretty sure she was giving away their location.

“Wedge! I was not- She’s not- We’re just-” Diego sputtered. He stopped, ceding there was no way out of this, and said, “Cutting the chatter, Rogue Leader. Kymeri, has the First Order located your position yet?”

A blast just barely missed her shoulder.

“They just did,” she answered, adjusting her shots towards the First Order sniping team that had settled on the next ridge. “Enemy red eyes at mark 8 knock 4. Appears to have 12 cygnets.”

“Engaging the red eyes,” Diego replied.

An X-Wing broke off from the horde that had just arrived. The ship swirled and twirled impressively as it skimmed along the mountain range, firing upon the First Order snipers. Within a few minutes, the hail of sniping blasts stopped raining upon Aletha and Evan.

“Nice shooting, Rogue One,” Zev Senesca chuckled over the comm.

“Medical snipers, report your status,” Statura requested.

“A little crispy but nothing we can’t shake off,” Aletha reported. “Our location is compromised though. It might be best if we disengage before the First Order can set up another team.”

“Agreed,” Statura said. “According to the ground team, they need a few more doctors down there. Get your things and get going.”

“Yes, Sir.”

“Be careful, Aletha,” Diego said.

Aletha couldn’t help but smile, “I will. I promise.”

“Okay, he’s good to move now,” Aletha told the retrieval team as they lifted the soldier onto a
stretcher. “Just make sure you maintain pressure!”

She watched as the team left with the man, assuring him everything would be okay. Aletha wiped her forehead, smearing the soldier’s blood across it. There was no dignity in cleanliness on a battlefield.

“All right!” Aletha called out. “Who’s next?”

She was directed to a female pilot who had been thrown from her ship. The young woman had a round face with high cheekbones. Her hair was covered completely by her yellow cap, and she was clutching a necklace with a golden pendant shaped like a comma.

“Hello,” Aletha greeted with a smile. She always liked to keep a chirper attitude on the battlefield so her patients wouldn’t panic and go into shock. “My name is Doctor Aletha Kymeri. What’s your name?”

“Paige,” the woman groaned in pain as Aletha assessed her. “Paige Tico.”

“It’s nice to meet you, Paige. You want to tell me what happened?”

“My ship got shot down. I was thrown. My partner’s dead, but I… I survived. Oh, god it hurts!”

“Just relax,” Aletha urged. “You’ve got some nasty injuries, but nothing to lose your head over.”

“Promise? I can’t die. Please, I can’t. My sister, Rose-”

“Will be at your bedside tomorrow, I promise. She with the Resistance?”

“Yeah,” Paige laughed. “I told her not too. She’s only fifteen, but she wouldn’t leave me. Works in maintenance, but is destined for so much more… That is if she didn’t get star struck all the time. Thought she was going to lose her mind the first time we saw General Organa. Asked me to get an autograph.”

“I have a special girl like that,” Aletha smiled thinking of Rey as she worked on Paige’s injuries. “That’s a pretty necklace.”

“Rose has a matching one. They fit together, that way we’re always united. The love of a sister is a powerful thing, don’t you think?”

“Oh, I wouldn’t know. My sisters hated me, and one has vowed to kill me. It’s a long story. But if there is strength in the love between you and your sister, draw on that to pull yourself through.”

“I won’t make it?”

Aletha knotted a final bandage, “You will now.”

Paige smiled.

“Bring her up to the camp!” Aletha ordered a nearby duo with a stretcher. “Tell Kalonia to start her on 3 cc on malanoix.”

“Yes, Ma’am!” one of the medical team saluted.

Aletha squeezed Paige’s hand, “It’s nice meeting you, Paige. I’ll see you around.”

“Thank you, Doctor.”
“Tell your sister to keep you out of trouble, okay?” Aletha called as they carried Paige away. “I don’t want to see you as my patient again.”

It took her some effort, but as Paige was carried away, she smiled and waved goodbye. Aletha returned the gesture.

She stopped for a moment to think, and then pressed a button on her comm, “Commander Nalto?”

It took a moment for Diego to reply, “Aletha? Is everything okay?”

“Yeah, I was just wondering… I know it’s sort of against protocol, but do you think you could get someone to tell Rose Tico in maintenance that her sister will be okay?”

“Aletha, we’re in the middle of a battle. I can’t really-”

“Please? Just this one favor?”

Diego sighed, “Alright, fine. How can I say no to you? I’ll see what I can do. How are you doing?”

“I’m fine. I just-”

A blast barely missed her head.

“We’re under attack!” someone yelled as a hail of blasts rained upon them.

The First Order has broken through their frontline and was storming towards where the injured were being dragged. It wasn’t the actual medical camp, which was located up on the mountain, so it technically wasn’t against the RWMA. But it was a dirty move.

“Rogue Squadron!” Wedge ordered. “Avert your attention to the medical teams. Protect our doctors! Black Squadron, hold our line. Kymeri, report.”

Aletha was a little dazed, trying to take cover from the blasts. It took her a few moments before she realized why Wedge Antilles had asked her to report.

The Resistance chain of command was heavily based on the former Rebel Alliance chain of command. A person retained their previous wartime status if they joined the Resistance, and Rebel vets were given command preference over new recruits due to their experience.

Aletha had learned that due to the majority of medical work being done by droids, and a lot of former Rebel medical vets having high paying jobs these days, the only Rebel veterans in the Medical department were she and Kalonia. Due to Kalonia’s longer work with the Resistance, as well as being the former doctor for the New Jedi Order, Kalonia was in charge of the department. However, since Kalonia was up on the mountain, when it came to command of the medical team down below, Aletha was actually the next in line.

Aletha swallowed hard: she had no idea how to be a commanding officer.

“Kymeri, report!” Wedge snapped.

Like it or not, she was about to learn on the job.

“Twenty-seven injured soldiers still needing to be taken up to the camp,” Aletha reported, her voice sounding infinitely more confident than she felt. “We’ve got First Order troops firing on us from both the west and the east, and-”
Aletha froze.

Standing in the advancing troops, in gleaming chrome armor was Captain Phasma.

Aletha uttered a very vulgar Huttese curse.

“Excuse me?” Wedge had spent enough time with Luke Skywalker to recognize exactly what that meant.

“Phasma,” Aletha whispered. “She’s here.”

The comm line went silent for a moment.

“Phasma?” Poe Dameron said in shock.

“Chrome Dome is here?” Snap Wexley asked.

“How far from you is she?” Wedge inquired.

“About…” Aletha bit her lip as she calculated the distance, “Two hundred metres?”

“Anyone have a clear shot?” Diego demanded.

“Negative,” Poe said. “She’s got five enemy fighters overhead. It’d be suicide to go in for her, and she’s too far to get a clear shot from our current position.”

A silence ensued over the comm as everyone held their breath, praying that they weren’t about to hear those three horrible words.

“I’m going in,” Diego declared.

“Nalto, no!” Wedge snapped. “You’ll only get yourself killed.”

“We have to take her down! For Luke! For Fliss! For…” Diego couldn’t utter Rey’s name. He never had been able to since that devastating comm call he received from Leia Organa, reporting the death of Luke and Felicity’s little girl. “She needs to pay for what she did!”

“Nalto, stand down! That is an order!”

To Aletha’s horror she saw Diego’s ship turn towards Phasma and accelerate.

“No!” Aletha shouted.

“Nalto!” Poe exclaimed.

“Damn it!” Wedge yelled.

The rest of the pilots chorused similar exclamations as Diego sped at top speed towards the gleaming chrome armor. He barely took in the two TIE fighters zoning in on him. He barely took in Wedge Antilles and Poe Dameron breaking from their positions to go after him. He barely took in Aletha’s plea over the comm for him to stop.

All he could think about was the chrome suited Stormtrooper and how fast he could make her die.

The TIE fighters were on his tail, firing rapidly at him. Diego dodged and swerved their blasts but stayed his path. Another TIE fighter whipped around, blocking his path to the front. It was too late to
adjust course. He would slam into it, but Phasma was in range. He had ten seconds to turn his guns on Phasma and take her to hell with him.

Ten.
He lowered his guns.

Nine.
He primed them.

Eight.
They were ready to fire.

Seven.

“Diego, please don’t!” Aletha yelled over his comm.

Six.
Diego locked his targeting system on Phasma.

Five.
He thought of Felicity.

Four.
He thought of Rey.

Three.

“This is for you, Fliss.”

Two.
Diego pressed the button.

On-
An X-Wing slammed into his side, knocking him off course, and sending his blasts leagues away from Phasma.

Aletha could only watch the scene in horror as one of their pilots smashed into Diego. No one could react fast enough to change what happened next. The five ships – two Resistance X-Wings and three First Order TIE Fighters – crashed into each other in a brilliant, explosive ball of flame.


Rey, Quom, and Teng froze at his sudden collapse. They had been loading up their speeders with the haul they had scavenged from a TIE fighter when Luke had suddenly grabbed at his chest and fell to his knees.

“Dad!” Rey exclaimed, dropping to her knees beside him. She had a hand on his back, and fear in
her eyes, “Are you okay?”

“I’m fine, Rey,” Luke took deep breaths, trying to hide his true emotion from her. “Just got a little lightheaded. Teng, would you mind grabbing me some water?”

Teng quickly obeyed, getting a cannister from his satchel.

Quom knelt down and whispered some words of comfort to Rey. When Teng brought the cannister, Quom accepted it.

He gave Rey a few kind words and talked her into giving Luke some room. She nodded, stood, and backed up. Teng touched her arm, and she joined his side, the pair wrapping an arm around each other’s waist.

“What’s going on?” Quom whispered to Luke as he helped him drink.


“DIEGO!” Aletha screamed as the ships hit the ground in a sickening, scattered crunch of blood, fire, and twisted metal.

She didn’t even realize she had started to run towards the ship until she was far from her defensive position. First Order Stormtroopers fired at her but she ducked, and weaved, and dodged, her mind focused on one thing alone.

She had to get to Diego.

“Resistance scum!” a Stormtrooper suddenly appeared before her.

Aletha couldn’t pull out her rifle fast enough, and even if she had, sniping rifles weren’t the best close range weapons.

A blast hit the Stormtrooper in the chest and he fell down dead.

Aletha looked behind her to see Evan Tharel reloading his rifle, leading a team of five other medics.

“Leg it, Grandma!” Evan called. “Or can you not keep up with us whippersnappers?”

Aletha grinned and ran as fast as she could.

She could smell the blood before she smelled the smoke. There was no sound besides the crackling of burning equipment. Her years on Jakku taught her what to avoid on a burning ship, and she navigated the wrecks expertly.

“Diego!” she called desperately, but to no avail. That was when she saw the wreckage of a very familiar ship, “Diego!”

She raced to his ship, praying to every deity she had ever heard of that Diego would be okay. The glass of his cockpit was darkened out by smoke, and a sickening smear of blood.

“No! Diego!” Aletha screamed, trying to pry open the glass. “Please be okay. Please be alive!”
The glass finally lifted and she coughed, blinded and suffocated by the cloud of smoke. When it cleared, her eyes watered, though it may have not been from the smoke. Diego was lying perfectly still, bleeding profusely from the head, and he wasn’t breathing.

“No!” Aletha cried out. She shook his shoulder, “Diego, please wake up. Diego, look at me! Look at me!”

But Diego didn’t even flinch.

Aletha muttered a swear and got to work. She hadn’t been able to carry both rifle ammunition and respiratory equipment in her bag, so she left the equipment back at the camp. Aletha would have to do it the old-fashioned way.

She tilted his head, and sealing her mouth to his, she began a set of rescue breaths.

Aletha tried not to think about how his lips felt against hers. Mouth to mouth respiration wasn’t a make out session, but his lips were soft and smooth, a counter to the scratch of his scruffy, yet maintained facial hair. She could barely pay proper attention to the way his chest responded to the new air. Aletha just wanted more than anything for those eyelids to flutter open and reveal the dark brown pools that sparked with both severity and lightheartedness.

His recovery was decidedly less dignified as he coughed violently into her mouth, and involuntarily shoved her backwards.

“Thank the Force,” Aletha exclaimed as Diego hunched over, trying to catch his breath. She rubbed his back, “There we go, Diego. Deep breaths.”

“You… you saved me,” Diego panted. “Thank you. Though that wasn’t exactly the way I wanted-Uh… never mind.”

“What?”

“Nothing.”

Diego didn’t dare admit he was going to say *Though that wasn’t exactly the way I wanted to first put my lips to yours.*

As he caught his breath, Aletha bandaged his still bleeding head.

“Anything else hurt?” she asked.

Diego tried moving his body, “My… uh, legs are- *Oh fuc-*”

“You’re still on comm,” Aletha grinned, covering his mouth. “We can compare swear words later.”

“You are an angel,” Diego said when she removed her hands to work on his legs.

“Because I don't let you swear?”

“Among other reasons,” Diego watched her in admiration.

An expert in battlefield medicine, the gentlest and sweetest bedside manner, fearless enough to charge headfirst into a warzone to save him, beautiful even when covered in sweat and blood – Diego always had a sort of weird attraction to a battle worn woman – a natural sniper that could maybe even rival him, and the owner of the softest, sweetest lips he had ever tasted.
Kes Dameron was right; he was in a lot of trouble.

He was definitely falling in love with this woman.

“Shattered,” Aletha declared. “Your legs… You’re not going to be able to crawl out of here. I’ll get the team—”

“I’ll be fine,” Diego insisted. “I can walk.”

Aletha looked at him like he was insane, “You absolutely cannot walk on those legs. You’re going to need hours of bacta to fix this. I’m surprised you’re not screaming in pain.”

“Adrenaline probably. Aletha, who hit me?”

“It was one of our pilots.”

“But who? Are they okay?”

That was when the announcement buzzed through all the chatter on the comm.


The entire comm went silent.

Commander Wedge Antilles, the man who had taken down two Death Stars, who had been a highly respected military officer in the Rebellion, Republic, and Resistance, who had stood up with Luke Skywalker at his wedding, and gave everything he had to build a brighter future.

Wedge Antilles was dead.

For a very long time, there was silence. No one could manage to say a word. A lot of the Resistance had grown up listening to stories of his bravery. He had mentored and fought alongside so many. He had made the ultimate sacrifice for one of his men.

It was General Leia Organa who spoke, “He is one with the Force now. He died just how he wanted to: a hero. Let us never forget him.”

“Rest in peace, Wedge Antilles,” Poe Dameron said.

Every Resistance solider repeated it, “Rest in peace, Wedge Antilles.”

“Okay, boys, change of plans,” Poe took command. “We gotta roll with the punches. Any status on Nalto?”

“I’m alive, boys,” Diego sighed bitterly. Wedge Antilles had died to save his life. “I’m alive.”

“Guess that makes you Rogue Leader,” Zev awkwardly pointed out.

“Not for this battle,” Diego groaned as Aletha did her best to fix his legs with the equipment she had on hand. “My ship is not doing well.”

“Recoverable?” Poe asked.

“She’ll need to be towed, but I can fix her. Zev, you take command of Rogue Squadron. I’ll join the ground team.”
“Negative,” Aletha said into her comm, eyeing him sternly. “Commander Nalto can barely walk. We need a med team over here ASAP.”

“We’re just getting Commander Antilles out of his ship,” Evan replied. “We’ll be with you shortly.”

“Alright, we’ll see you back at the base, Nalto,” Zev said.

“Aletha, I’m fine,” Diego scowled at her.

“No, you are not,” Aletha snipped. “I’m the doctor, and I say you are not.”

“I think I know my own body. I’ll be fine. I’ve gone through much worse.”

Aletha sighed and glanced at her medical bag, “Can I at least give you something for the pain?”

“Now we’re in business,” Diego grinned. He obediently let her give him the shot, “How long until it kicks in?”

“It’s a delayed serum made for the battlefield so you don’t go out of it right away. About ten minutes?”

“That’s a very long time.”

Aletha shrugged, “It does the job I need it too.”

A blast suddenly hit the ship.

“Get down,” Diego pulled her down into his lap. Instinctually he pulled her head into his chest, shielding her face as his other arm wrapped around her waist, “It’s okay. I got you.”

Aletha gave a sigh of relief and relaxed into his embrace, “Thank you.”

“It’s my pleasure.” Diego groaned as his right hand started to spasm, “Damn it, not now.”

“What’s wrong?” Aletha asked as he pulled his arms off of her to rub his shaking arm.

“I have life long consequences from my lightsaber wound. I get tremors every so often. The med droids told me that Vader damaged my nervous system. They did their best to patch it up but…”

“Let me see.”

Diego held out his arm to Aletha. She gently took it. After examining it for a minute, she began to stroke very deliberate spots on his arm. Diego frowned as his tremors calmed and ceased.

“That’s… amazing,” he said.

“When you practice medicine on a place like Jakku you need to learn ways to fix injuries without medicine. I’ve learned a lot of chiropractic practice and acupuncture and such to treat injuries. I can show you later how to do this.”

“I would love it. I can’t tell you how many times I’ve had a tremor, broken what I was holding, and accidentally…”

Diego didn’t need to finish his sentence. The myriad of scars on his arm told Aletha all his stories.

“I… use plastic cups a lot these days,” Diego confessed in shame. “I don’t trust glass anymore.”
“Nor would I,” Aletha said. “I’ve seen a lot worse, though.”

“Woman typically don’t like seeing my arm. It’s so…”

“Doesn’t bother me. In fact, you’re far from the only pilot I’ve met with a messed-up arm. And I married one of them.”

“Really?”

“Yeah, I apparently have a very weird type. Rebel vet pilots with messed up arms. Go figure.”

Aletha couldn’t meet his eye as he smiled warmly down on her.

“Well, I’ve got a weird type too,” Diego confessed. “Snipers covered in blood and ash. When I can tell they’ve been kicking ass in battle… Let’s just say that it does things to me it really shouldn’t do.”

Aletha blushed but pressed herself closer to him.

Another blast hit the ship.

“We could die here,” Aletha whispered.

Diego dared to stroke her cheek, “We could.”

“Are you afraid?”

“I’m not afraid of death. You?”

“I’m only afraid of dying with regrets. I have none. What of you?”

He looked down at her. How easy would it be to kiss her right now?

“No,” Diego lied, staring into her eyes. “None at all.”

Silence passed between them.

“Aletha,” he murmured.

“Diego,” she whispered.

A blast suddenly hit her in the arm.

“Aletha!” Diego exclaimed as she screamed in pain.

She gritted her teeth, holding her arm tightly, “Oh, hell no!”

Aletha grabbed her rifle, adrenaline balming her pain, and whipped around. She fired at the First Order soldiers, picking one off with every shot in a frenzy.

“Would it be inappropriate to say that I’m finding this very hot?” Diego asked.

Aletha grinned, “Yes… but I don’t mind.”

Diego chuckled. Where had this girl been all his life?

“I’m out of ammo!” Aletha declared after a couple minutes. “Is there any more in my bag?”
Diego dug through her satchel, which was hard as it was still slung over her shoulder, “No. You’re out.”

“Keepuna!” Aletha exclaimed.

“Actually, you can’t shoot, you’re out of ammo,” Diego teased. “Get it, because keepuna means shoot?”

She shoved him playfully, “This isn’t the time to show off your language skills. Do we have anything else?”

“Just my sidearm,” Diego nodded to a blaster strapped to his leg. “Won’t do much for long range, but…”

His eyes went wide.

Aletha frowned and turned to follow his eyeline. Her heart dropped at the sight before them.

Captain Phasma marched towards their ship, only about one hundred metres away.

“Permission to curse even though my comm is still on?” Diego asked.

“Granted.”

Phasma was marching through the battlefield elegantly, shooting only when necessary. Her objective was not to kill Resistance officers but see if she could find a familiar face among the snow and ash.

Her troop had been the one ordered to check out the crash that had killed three of their TIE fighter pilots. It was odd, considering that Captain Tyche was in charge of the air force, but she figured the reason she had been assigned to it was that some crazy X-Wing had tried shooting her down. Phasma was very interested in seeing what idiot would try to make the mistake of shooting her of all people. If only they understood the position she held. If only they all knew the truth.

She was about one hundred metres from the ship when a hail of blasts was fired at the troops. A lone sniper was trying to take them down, and admittedly, the sniper was succeeding. Phasma ordered a halt, knowing that the sniper would only have so much ammo, and it was best to just wait until they used it up.

Sure enough, the sniper had completely discharged all their ammo within minutes. Phasma was just about to order her troops to march again when two heads popped up from the cockpit. A black-haired, brown-eyed, tan-skinned man, and a blonde-haired, blue-eyed, pale-skinned woman. It took a minute for the recognition to strike her, but when it did, it felt like she had been hit by lightning.

She couldn’t believe it. She was laying eyes on… Only a hundred metres away was… It really was…

Phasma didn’t think, she only broke into the fastest run of her life.

Aletha swallowed as she saw Phasma charge forward like something possessed.
Okay, there was no need to panic. It didn’t have to mean that her sister was about to brutally murder her and the man Aletha couldn’t yet admit she was falling in love with.

Clearly Alecta was a sensible woman. One didn’t get into a position of power without a sense of fairness. Surely she could just get her sister to stop, put down her weapon, and just talk to-

Oh, screw it.

Aletha grabbed the blaster strapped to Diego’s thigh and started shooting at Phasma.

Phasma narrowed her eyes beneath her mask at the blonde woman. Was she really doing this? Trying to actually shoot her, and when she was so close?

No, she wouldn’t believe it, and she certainly wasn’t going to let it happen. Not when she was so close.

After all these years she would finally be reunited with her sister.

Aletha gritted her teeth and focused on the chrome suited Stormtrooper racing towards her. She could remember the metallic glove smashing into her face, and the taste of blood. The way the Stormtroopers has destroyed her tent on Jakku. She remembered the painful accusations from Adrinna of being responsible for their sisters’ deaths, and the threat Alecta had made. She remembered that way Alecta had made her feel: sad, unwanted, worthless. How she had put her down in front of soldiers and family alike. The woman who had made her life a living hell.

She would not let Alecta take her life.

One last round was in the blaster, and Aletha aimed it with purpose.

The final bolt hit Captain Phasma right in the knee.

Phasma went down, slipping on the snow and stumbling to the ground. She clutched her knee in pain, but fought through the sting and pushed herself back to her feet. Phasma had taken one unsteady step forward when one of her own soldiers yanked her back.

“We’ll get you to medical, Captain!” the Stormtrooper exclaimed proudly as he pulled back from the ship.

“No! No!” Phasma screamed. “Let me go this instant! You have to let me go! Release me, soldier!”

But the Stormtrooper knew the value of his captain and struggled to drag her back to safety. Surely when the dust had settled and Phasma was in her right mind, she would thank him.

“Now’s our chance! Go!” Aletha exclaimed.
She and Diego scrambled out of the cockpit right as the medical and mechanic team arrived.

Aletha hit the ground first and was met with the leader of the mechanics, who was instructing his team to hook up the X-Wing so they could tow it to a safe place to repair it.

Diego set down seconds after her, and everyone knew the exact moment he did. When Diego’s injured legs hit the ground, he let out a bloodcurdling scream and string of Yavinese swears that would make even R2-D2 blush.

“Told you, you couldn’t walk,” Aletha teased as she helped Diego to his feet. “Come on, we’ll get you a stretcher.”

“I told you, I’m fine,” Diego groaned, leaning his weight against her.

“You don’t need to make a show of your manly strength to me, Diego.”

“I’m not doing that.”

Aletha raised an eyebrow.


“If you stop lying to me, I’ll admit one of my own falsehoods.”

Diego froze thinking of her vow of no regrets, “What falsehood?”

“Admit your lie first.”

He sighed, “Alright, I’m in immense pain right now. When is that painkiller going to kick in?”

“Any moment. Just be patient.”

“I’ll try,” Diego groaned. “Now what was your lie?”

Aletha smiled and put her hand on his chest, “My lie was…”

Diego’s breath caught, “Yes?”

“That wasn’t a painkiller. That was a slow acting sedative.”

He frowned, “Wait, what?”

That was the moment he passed out in her arms.

Aletha just tittered at the unconscious pilot in her grasp, “You should have just let me get you a stretcher.”

“No! No!” Phasma screamed as the soldier pulled her back. “Let me go! This is my chance!”

“Captain! You’re injured!” the Stormtrooper exclaimed.

She tore out of his arms and smashed a metallic fist into his face. The Stormtrooper dropped with a moan, clutching his bloody face.
Phasma turned back to the battlefield, and her heart dropped. The blonde doctor and black-haired pilot were gone, retreated into the safety of their medical camp. Fury enflamed her heart. Even the First Order respected the sanctity of a medical camp. There was no way she could get in there without removing her armor and exposing herself as vulnerable to the fire of the enemy.

She had lost her chance.

“No!” Phasma screamed.

The sound drew attention, and the Resistance troops turned their fire to one of the main figureheads of the First Order.

Phasma narrowed her eyes; if only they knew the truth. Of who they were dealing with, of the connections she had, and what she was capable of.

Without a second thought, Phasma yanked up the soldier who stole her opportunity of that long-awaited reunion. She held him in front of her, literally using him as a shield to take the blasts meant to kill her. He was dead long before the fire ceased.

She dropped him to the ground, and looked down on him with disgust. Any normal human would have guilt over such a careless and indifferent murder she had committed. But she didn’t care; in fact, she wished she could do it all over again. He had taken it from her, that moment she had dreamed of so many times. She was disgusted with him and had half the urge to spit at his feet.

Any shred of humanity she had had left had been stolen when they took the girl she loved from her. Her flesh and blood, the best part of her, the only thing that had ever mattered in her life. They had taken her from Phasma, and if she had to kill every person on this battlefield, then By the Gods, she would make them pay.

What she didn’t notice was the small, black BB unit recording her every move.

I was still very young when I realized that I knew how to scavenge and survive on Jakku better than any of them. They needed me, but I didn’t need them. So I struck out on my own.

- Rey’s Survival Guide

“You sure you don’t want me to join you?” Teng asked.

“No, I want a little time to myself,” Rey said. “I think watching today’s fights will be entertaining enough.”

Teng hesitated and put a hand on her shoulder, “You heard Quom. Luke’s going to be okay. He just needs to rest.”

“I know. Let me know when Quom gets back from dropping Dad off at the walker.”

“As long as you stay by the fighting ring.” He leaned in conspiratorially, “No sneaking onto your uncle’s freighter.”

“But it’s been so long. With Aletha gone I don’t have an excuse to stay in town.”
“Don’t do it in daylight, Rey. We don’t want you getting on the wrong side of the Blobfish.”

“Better than his right side,” Rey shuddered remembering the smile she had given the previous day.

Teng looked like he wanted to say something, but thought better of it. He just nodded and left to go back to the tent to tinker and bang his head against the wall over not being man enough to tell Rey how he truly felt about her.

A well balanced day.

Rey went to the fighting ring and paid her portion to watch. Roke was once again taking on Vance. No one had ever defeated Roke in the ring yet, and he had gone through all the goons except Dirk who didn’t fight, but just watched.

She was enjoying the spectacle before her when she felt a hand grab her where it shouldn’t.

“Don’t touch me!” Rey exclaimed, whipping around and slapping the unfamiliar alien.

The crowd around her chuckled, but the scene didn’t draw much attention.

The alien rubbed his face and laughed, trying to play it off like a game, “What’s the matter Sweetheart? Just having a little fun.”

Rey slapped him again, “Don’t ever call me Sweetheart!”

“Then what would you like to call me?”

“Preferably nothing at all.”

“You’re a feisty one. I like them feisty. How much you cost, Baby?”

Fury flashed in her eyes, and Rey was seriously considering trying to break his neck when a girl stepped between them.

“Leave her alone, Onark,” Devi ordered. She was a girl about Rey’s age, shorter than her, and her hair was short, shaved on both sides. “She’s not that kind, and you know you’re not good for it anyway.”

Onark grumbled and stormed off.

“Thanks,” Rey muttered, though not actually that grateful.

If Devi picked up on it, she didn’t mention it, “You’re welcome. We girls have to stick together.”

They stood and watched the fight for a while. Rey kept glancing at Devi, trying to figure out her purpose.

Devi finally said, “I hear you’re getting pretty good at combat, Rey.”

And there it was: motive.

“What of it?” Rey asked stiffly.

“I was thinking that I wanted to enter the fight and try to win some portions. The only problem is there aren’t a lot of people in town I could take. Except for you.”
“You want to beat me up in a public venue?”

“Not what I was going for. I was thinking we enter the fight, put on a little show, one of us wins, and we split the profit. You get five portions, so the winner gets three and the loser gets two. That way we both come out on top. If you even wanted, Strunk could fight your boyfriend and then both pairs get five portions.”

“Wait, my boyfriend?”

“Teng,” Devi said. “He can fight, right?”

“Yeah, but,” Rey blinked, “he’s not my boyfriend.”


Rey glanced over at the fighting ring where Roke was violently smashing his staff into Vance’s face. She winced. Then she looked over at Devi and remembered her father’s words.

“Don’t trust that girl further than she casts a shadow.”

It was noon.

“I’ll pass,” Rey said simply.

Devi didn’t look disheartened, “Alright. For now it’s a no, but keep it in mind. The offer’s always good, and besides, what better way to show this town what we girls are made of?”

Rey tried to push the words from her mind as Devi walked away. But still… she had to admit that Devi did have a point.

Maybe the fighting ring did have its merits.

When Diego Nalto woke up in his Medical Center bed, Aletha Kymeri was standing at the foot with arms crossed and a very unhappy look.

“You almost killed yourself,” she said.

He frowned at her, “You drugged me.”

He frowned at her, “You drugged me.”

“You weren’t cooperating. I took matters into my own hands.”

“What about Phasma? Is she-”

“Still alive, and so are you. Wedge Antilles was the unlucky one.”

“And the battle?”

“We won,” Aletha said. “Just finished getting the wounded back to base an hour ago. You’ve been out all morning.”

Diego sighed, “I’m sorry I compromised the mission.”

“Don’t tell me. Tell General Organa. She asked to be informed when you woke up. I’ve already hit the call button.”
“Oh good, if there’s one thing I love, it’s getting yelled at by Princess Leia Organa. This will be fun.”

“It’s your own fault,” Aletha said. “You’re lucky to be alive.”

“All credit goes to you,” Diego couldn’t meet her eyes. “I shouldn’t have gone after Phasma. If I just stayed on task, Wedge wouldn’t have gone after me and he might still be alive.”

“He made his own choice. It’s not your fault he died.”

“Oh, I know.”

Aletha blinked, “You- You do?”

“I learned a long time ago not to dwell in the past. There’s too much pain to cry over, and the people who gave their lives for me did it so I could live. Not wait for death.”

She considered the question before asking it, “Do you think that’s why he decided to die?”

Diego raised an eyebrow.

“I heard about his husband’s condition. Less than a year?”

“Something like that. I wouldn’t be surprised if that was one of his reasons. When he told me about Ceren’s diagnosis, Wedge said that he didn’t want to end up like Luke.”

“Luke Skywalker? What happened to him? People don’t talk about it, and I’m almost afraid to ask questions.”

“Then why ask me?”

“Because you’re the only one who has been open about the situation. He left everyone, right?”

Diego sighed, “It’s terrible what Luke did, but I don’t blame him. To lose so much, so quickly, and in such a horrifying manner. It wasn’t just losing his wife, but his daughter, and knowing there was nothing he could have done to save her. The moment she told Fliss to take their child and run, he signed that little girl’s death sentence. She was such a sweet little girl.”

Aletha winced, “So when you saw Phasma, the one responsible for her death—”

“How could I not go after her? Wedge understood, and that’s why he saved me. He couldn’t let himself fall like Luke did. I bet he remembered that night as clearly as I do.”

“What night?”

“The night Rornian burned.”

“You were there?”

“Wedge and I collected the bodies,” Diego said. “It was such a horrifying sight. I think I remember Obik Kenu the most.”

Aletha’s breath hitched, “Obik? You… you found him?”

“He was in the bedroom of Fliss’ daughter. Their home was set ablaze, and Obik… he was crispy. The temple was also set on fire, so he wasn’t the only one who burned. I think Tyla Kinall’s death
was the saddest. Wedge found her at the bottom of the hill that Fliss’ house sat on. She was burnt, bloody, had broken bones, and chunks of wood embedded in her limbs. And to top it off, she was shot in the head. Can you imagine surviving all that, just to be shot by a monster?"

“So, Obik burned to death. My god. That man didn’t deserve that end.”

“Nor the one he actually got.”

Aletha frowned.

“Due to the circumstances, autopsies were ordered for all of the slaughtered Jedi. Obik’s post-mortem revealed he burned after he died.”

“Then how was he killed?”

Diego closed his eyes, struggling to push the horrifying sight he saw that day from his mind. “Diego?” Aletha asked coming around to his side, but she wasn’t sure she wanted an answer. “He was beheaded.”

Aletha nearly threw up, “Oh god! No!”

Diego grabbed her hand, “I’m sorry. I know he was a friend.”

“Acquaintance more like. Our relationship was mainly crossing paths during suspicious intakes, and me nagging him to quit smoking. Wonder if he ever did?”

“He did,” Diego chuckled. “Luke wouldn’t give him a lightsaber until he did. Also married Reine Agim like he always wanted.”

“I’m glad to hear that. They have any kids?”

“Not to my knowledge. I think I heard Reine had some problems that prevented it. I don’t know. We weren’t close.”

“And what about you?” Aletha asked. “Any Diego Juniors running around?”

“No. What about you? Any kids?”

“I was pregnant once, but it didn’t make it past first term,” Aletha had no idea why she was telling him something so intimate. “Otherwise, no biological children. I did serve as a kind of stepmother to my ex-boyfriend’s daughter. Sweet girl. Heartbroken when I left, but sacrifices sometimes have to be made.”

“I hear that.”

“Did you want children?”

“Not really. I mean, I don’t hate them, and I’m not intentionally childless, but I don’t regret not having them,” Diego answered.

“Same with me,” Aletha said. “My one pregnancy was a MisCalc, but I don’t mourn not having kids. Part of me thinks I missed out on something, but I am okay with never having had my own child.”
“Frankly, being a parent sounds exhausting.”

“I fully agree. I’d rather be the fun aunt who helps rebel against their parents.”

“Well, you seem to be doing a good job of that,” Diego pointed behind Aletha, and she turned to see Kaydel. “Looks like you’ve got company.”

“Aunt Ally?” Kaydel’s eyes lit up when she saw Aletha. She ran to her aunt and pulled her into a tight hug, “You’re okay!”

“I’m fine, Darling,” Aletha laughed, holding Kaydel tightly. “I’m okay.”

“How’s your arm?”

“Evan fixed it all up.”

“Looks like Hot Shot really does have something behind him,” Diego chuckled. “That was some great leadership he showed today.”

“Well don’t tell him, it’ll go to his head,” Aletha laughed. “Kay, you remember Commander Nalto?”

“Of course,” Kaydel smiled at him. “How are you feeling, Commander?”

“As best as I can hope in the circumstances. You’re in Communications, right?”

“Right. Doing nothing too special at the moment, but Brance says I have promise.”

“Well, I suppose I’ll be joining you for the next little while,” Diego said. “I’m certain that General Organa will be grounding me for my little stunt.”

“You bet I will.”

The group turned to see Leia Organa marching towards them with Threepio, BB-8, Poe Dameron, Zev Senesca, and Taslin Brance following behind her.

“What were you thinking?” Leia demanded.

“Kill Phasma?” Diego shrugged. “I’m sorry, General. I shouldn’t have disobeyed orders. I just can’t stand the thought of her going unpunished.”

“And you think I can? I understand you had a close relationship with Fliss, but she was my sister-in-law, and her daughter was my niece. You think I don’t remember the moment I watched that footage of her torture and confession of what happen to her daughter? You think I don’t remember that horrible walk from my office to the Millennium Falcon to tell my brother that his toddler daughter was dead? You think I don’t remember the moment my husband told me that our own son had murdered Fliss?”

Aletha frowned. Hadn’t Diego said Phasma killed Fliss?

“You think I don’t remember the morning that I found Luke was gone, unable to handle what had happened to his family? Or that day we found him frozen in shock surrounded by the dead bodies of his students? I understand why you charged her, but I don’t understand why you disobeyed orders. That is the best thing about you, you stick to the rules no matter what. Don’t let your hubris be your downfall, Nalto.”

Diego bowed his head, “Understood, General.”
“Doctor Kymeri?” Leia turned to Aletha. “How long until his injuries heal?”

“He should be on his feet today, but I recommend taking him out of action for at least a week.”

“Very well. Commander Brance,” Leia turned to the Head of Communications, “Commander Nalto will be serving on your team for the duration of his grounding. He will be grounded for three weeks. Commander Senesca, you will be in charge of the Air Force and Rogue Squadron until then.”

“Three weeks?” Diego objected.

“One for your injuries, and two for your stupidity,” Leia said. “We lost a good man today. I’m not angry at you because he chose to do it… but this all could have been avoided, Diego.”

Diego bowed his head, “I understand. Has his husband been informed?”

“Yes, Ceren has. We’ll be sending Wedge’s body home to Yavin IV tonight.”

“How was he told?”

Poe answered for Leia, “We messaged my father, who told him in person. Ceren asked for Wedge to be returned home for proper burial. Thought it fitting he be buried in the shadow of the Death Star.”

“Good. Ceren was told in person,” Diego took a deep breath. “What about everyone else?”

“Rogue Squadron heard it over the comm,” Zev said. “We’re currently contacting the rest of the squad who aren’t currently serving with us. Ceren should take care of the rest.”


All eyes turned to Leia.

She sighed, “I’m certain my brother already knows. As Threepio said, he was a close friend. Surely Luke felt it in the Force… beyond that, it’s out of our hands. We will be having a memorial service for Wedge tonight. I would like all of you to attend. Zev, Diego, you were close to Wedge. If either of you would like to say anything-”

“I’ll think of something,” Diego promised.

“So will I,” Zev nodded.

“Alright then.” Leia took a deep breath, “Come on, there’s much to be done. We did just win a battle after all.”

“You’re right, General,” Brance said respectfully. “May I?”

“Of course,” Leia nodded and gestured for him to take his leave. She turned her gaze back to Aletha, “Doctor Kymeri, before I go, I would like to present you with something.”

All eyes turned to BB-8 as he produced a small box from his body. Aletha frowned as Poe bent down to take it, and then passed it to Leia.

“I’m impressed by your fearlessness of charging headfirst into the battle after Diego,” Leia said. She opened the box, and presented Aletha with a small medal in the shape of a silver falcon’s head, “For your actions I would like to present you with the Han Solo Medal of Ingenuity.”
A suspicious chuckle arose from the group.

“General,” Diego groaned. “Did you really have to give her one of those?”

“She earned it, Diego,” Leia chortled.


“The Han Solo Medal of Ingenuity is a bit of a gag medal,” Poe explained.

“What do you mean?”

“My husband,” Leia started, “is a very… unique person. Drives me crazy, but don’t think I don’t love that man. After him, as well as my brother and his wife, putting me through so many insane things, I decided to create this so-called award. It’s presented to someone who does something so insanely stupid that there’s no way in hell they should succeed, yet somehow they make it work. For example, escaping the Death Star by charging headfirst into a troop of Stormtroopers, screaming and blasting at them, and yet somehow making it back to Luke and I in one piece. Or in your case, charging headfirst onto a battlefield with only a sniper rifle to go save the life of a pilot who is as good as dead, and then fending off Captain Phasma herself with a pistol. You truly deserve this medal, Doctor Kymeri.”

Aletha couldn’t help but blush as Leia pinned the medal to her uniform.

“You know, it reminds me of something my sister-in-law once did,” Leia said in a low voice so only Aletha could hear. “Several months pregnant she managed to singlehandedly break herself out of a First Order prison and outrun a legion of Stormtroopers… I miss my sister very much. I love seeing sparks of her in other people.”

Aletha smiled, “Thank you, General.”

Leia placed a hand on her arm and watched Aletha for a minute. Then without a word, she turned and exited. The others followed, but BB-8 blocked Poe from leaving.

“Hey, what’s up, buddy?” Poe asked. He hadn’t noticed the way BB-8 had been analysing Kaydel the whole time.

*Bop beep chirp.*

“This isn’t nothing.”

*Cheep chip bee.*

“Acting casual is nowhere in your programming.”

Kaydel laughed.

“Hey, don’t let him fool you,” Poe said. “He may be cute, but he is devious.”

“I’m sure he is, Commander Dameron,” Kaydel smiled. She offered Poe her hand, “Lieutenant Kaydel Ko Connix.”

“That’s an unfortunate name,” Poe shook her hand.

“You should hear the rest of us. Aunt Ally’s maiden name is Aletha Anthea.”
“Please stop telling people that,” Aletha said. “Half the reason I married Antar Kymeri was for the surname.”

“She’s your niece?” Poe asked.

“Long lost niece I didn’t even know I had until Commander Nalto introduced us. Kaydel and I are apparently the Rebels of the family.”

“Well, I can certainly see the resemblance between you two lovely ladies,” Poe took a appreciative look over Kaydel.

Kaydel couldn’t help but blush.

“Flatterer,” Aletha scolded playfully.

“You should have seen the way I used to work Mrs. Skywalker. Pretty sure I was about a year away from convincing her to run away with me.” He looked Kaydel over significantly, “I wonder if I could beat that time?”

Kaydel grinned, “We in Communications are always looking for efficiency.”

Diego scowled, half wondering how Poe Dameron could charm a woman to be smitten in about three seconds.

“Thank you, Poe,” Diego said.

“Huh?” Poe snapped out of his musings over Kaydel. He dropped her hand, “For what?”

“Having Kes tell Ceren in person.”

“Oh, it’s nothing.”

“It is something,” Diego insisted. “I’ve seen families get informed in very terrible ways. Don’t ever do that to your troops. I’ll never do it to mine.”

“I promise, Sir,” Poe bowed his head.

“Um, Aunt Ally, are you almost done?” Kaydel asked. “I was thinking we could go grab some lunch.”

“Oh, you haven’t eaten yet, Kay?” Aletha asked.

“I wanted to wait for you.”

“Sorry Darling, I think it’s going to be a while yet before I’m free. How about lunch tomorrow?”

“Alright, but don’t be late.”

“Wouldn’t dream of it,” Aletha chuckled.

BB-8 rammed into Poe’s legs.

“Oh! What?”

Beep beep beep.

“That was absolutely not an accident! What is your problem?”
BB-8 rolled back and stared at his master. Did he seriously have to spell it out for Poe?

Fine.

*Beep beep beep beep.*

BB-8 nodded to Poe.

*Beep beep beep boo.*

He nodded to Kaydel.

*Beep beep beep bop. Bo beep beep bo.*

“Oh!” Poe’s eyes went wide.

Diego snorted, understanding Binary, but Aletha only had a vague idea what had been said.

“Hey, Kaydel,” Poe said slyly, “if you haven’t had lunch yet, I could always join you. I just got back and there’s nothing like a battlefield to make you work up an appetite.”

“Uh, sure,” Kaydel smiled. “Sorry, I’m a little surprised. I don’t really get handsome pilots asking me out.”

“My gain then.” He offered his arm, “Shall we?”

“You go on, I just want to talk to my aunt for a second.”

“I’ll get us a good seat,” Poe winked and exited the Medical Center.

Kaydel couldn’t stop grinning after him. The second he was gone, she crouched down and patted BB-8 on the head.

“Thanks,” she said. “I don’t think I could have done that without you. And thank you for calling me pretty. It really made my day.”

BB-8 rolled back in shock.

*Beep bop che beep?*

“I’m in Communications,” Kaydel laughed. “Of course I speak droid.”

Aletha was honestly surprised Kaydel didn’t skip out of the room as BB-8 followed her.

“Wow,” she simply said, staring after her niece.

“Yeah,” Diego said in equal shock. “I don’t think I’ve ever had something go that smoothly with a girl. Damn Damerons making us all look bad.”

“Well, I’m sure you have your own charms,” Aletha laughed. “Now, I’m not on call tonight, but if you need anything-”

“No, you get your sleep. Don’t you worry about me.”

“Those statements are mutually exclusive, Diego.”

“I suppose they are.” He then remembered something, “Hey, were my clothes changed?”
“Shirt, yes. Pants, no. Why?”

Diego dug a small, very flattened red flower out of his pant pocket, “For you.”

Aletha shook her head in disbelief, “Diego—”

“I told you I’d bring you flowers from every planet I visited. I’m a man of my word.”

“Yes, you are,” she sat on the bed and took his hand. “Are you going to be okay?”

“Physically, yes, but… I hate when I’m grounded. Piloting is the only thing I’m good at.”

“I’m sure that isn’t true. I think you could do anything that you wanted.” Aletha stroked his arm, gathering her courage, “Diego, when we were in the cockpit, I lied to you.”

“Yes, I know. It was a sedative, not a painkiller.”

“I didn’t mean that.”

Diego frowned.

Aletha took a deep breath, “I lied about dying with no regrets. I do have one.”

“And what’s that?” he leaned forward.

He brushed a hand along her cheek, and Aletha shuddered. His lips were so close to hers.

“Doctor Kymeri!” someone called. “We need you over here!”

“Of course,” Aletha answered. She smiled at Diego, stroking his arm one last time, “I suppose you’ll have to find out.”

And then she left him. He reached for her as she did, but she was too far out of his grasp. Diego sighed, falling back against the bed with a thud.

Yep. It was official. He was definitely in love with Aletha Kymeri.

Luke sat on a sand dune, staring out at the setting sun. He had been fighting it all day, but he couldn’t fight any longer. He had to know who was gone.

And there was only one person who could tell him.

Luke took a deep breath, focused all of his energy on the action, and reached out in the Force. He reached far, so far, further than he supposed he had ever reached before. The action was exhausting, but he knew where to reach.

D’Qar.

There were many familiar Signatures: Diego Nalto, Poe Dameron, Meredyth Kalonia, many of his Rogue Squadron, and even to his surprise, he could have sworn he felt Aletha’s presence among the Resistance.

That brought a smile to his face. She had indeed made it there.
But Aletha was not the one he was looking for; no it was another woman who he searched for. Someone much closer to him.

“She was not the one he was looking for; no it was another woman who he searched for. Someone much closer to him.


General Leia Organa was standing before the assembly giving her eulogy for Wedge Antilles.

“I remember the first time I met Wedge,” she said with a smile. “It was shortly before the Battle of Yavin. My brother had just wiped his high score right off the board, and Wedge wanted to know who this random kid I had picked up off a backwater planet was. Surely he must be an Imperial spy with years of training. And I just looked at him and said, Wedge—”

“Leia,” Luke called out to her. “Leia, do you hear me?”

Leia’s face froze.

“Luke,” she whispered, forgetting where she was as she heard her brother’s voice for the first time in… how many years had it been? Ten?

With one simple name, Leia sent the Resistance members a chatter. Poe Dameron and Meredyth Kalonia shared a wide-eyed look. Diego Nalto went perfectly stiff, and Threepio cried, “Oh Goodness!”

Leia just held up a hand to silence everyone, and closed her eyes to concentrate.


Luke let out a breath of relief at his sister’s voice, “Oh, Leia. I have so missed you.”

“I miss you too. I miss you so much,” Leia admitted. “Please, Luke. Come home. Come back to me. We can figure this out together. With Han too.”

He wished he could tell her everything, here and now. About Rey. About Jakku. Even about the Millennium Falcon being right there with him.

But he couldn’t. He couldn’t put Rey in that position.


“Please, Luke,” Leia fought back tears. She really wished she didn’t have an audience to this, “I forgive you. We all forgive you. Han might hit you upside the head for running away, but we’ll take you back with open arms.”

Leia heard him sigh, “I can’t. Not right now, but… someday, I promise.”

“If this is because of what Ben did to Fel—”
“It’s not about Felicity. Not anymore.”

Leia frowned.

Luke took a deep breath, fighting back the urge to tell her about Rey.

“That’s not why I’m calling to you, Leia,” Luke continued. “I… I think we both know why I’m calling to you now. I know what happened. I felt the disturbance in the Force.”

Leia sighed, “I’m so sorry, Luke.”

“Who is it?”

“It’s Wedge.”

It was a blow to the gut.


“He died a hero.”

“How?”

“Saving the life of a friend. It’s okay Luke… he wanted this.”

It took a while for Luke to calm down, but Leia waited for him.

The assembly on D’Qar waited on edge as they heard only a single side of the conversation. No one dared to ask Leia questions or to pass a message on to Luke. In fact, no one even dared to speak. Snap Wexley made the mistake of coughing, and he was met with so many glares he seriously considered leaving the Resistance altogether out of humiliation.

After several minutes of silence, Leia opened her eyes and looked around at the assembly.

“I know my eulogy has not been finished yet, but there is another who desires to speak,” Leia announced. “My brother, Luke Skywalker, wishes to say a few words.”

Not a sound was made.

Leia took a deep breath and closed her eyes again.

Luke took a deep breath and gathered himself.
What could he possibly say about Wedge Antilles? Someone so brave and dear to him? Someone who had been there for him through thick and thin. From the first battle to the last.

Well, Luke supposed. That was a start.

“What can I possibly say about Wedge Antilles?” Leia repeated, her eyes squeezed shut. “Someone so brave and dear to me and so many others? Someone who had been there for me through thick and thin. From the first battle to the last.”

“Wedge Antilles was a great man.”

“Wedge Antilles was a great man.”

“One of the best friends I’ve ever had.”

“One of the best friends I’ve ever had.”

“A friend and confidante.”

“A friend and confidante.”

“He stood by my side on my wedding day, and I stood at his on his own.”

“He stood by my side on my wedding day, and I stood at his on his own.”

“He cherished my daughter, supported my friends, and one time put my wife into the hospital from a drunken game of truth or dare that we probably shouldn’t have been playing at age thirty.”

“He cherished my daughter, supported my friends, and one time put my wife into the hospital from a drunken game of truth or dare that we probably shouldn’t have been playing at age thirty.”

The crowd laughed at that.

On and on the speech went, Leia repeating Luke’s words. It was moving speech for how on the spot it was, but the words were clearly from the heart, and Leia did her utmost to convey the proper emotion.

Finally after sometime, Luke came to the end of his speech.

“Rest in Peace, Wedge Antilles,” Leia concluded the eulogy. “Now you are one with the Force, and so you are now a part of it, and a part of me. So truly, I say, may the Force be you all, and may it be with me.”

“I’m finished now, Leia,” Luke told her.

“Thank you, Luke for your speech.”

“Goodbye, Leia. We’ll see each other again.”

“Wait, Luke, please stay and just talk to-” Leia stopped as she sensed it in the Force. She struggled to fight back tears as she quietly declared, “He’s… He’s gone now.”

Leia couldn’t bring herself to finish her own eulogy so passed the floor along to Diego Nalto next.
Doctor Aletha Kymeri helped Diego up to the stage, and sensing the General’s need for comfort, took her hand and kindly led her down the platform and off to the side for a little privacy.


“I understand,” Aletha replied gently. She stroked Leia’s arm, “If you need anything-”

“I need my family back,” Leia couldn’t stop her words. “All of them. Han. Luke. Ben. Fliss. Re… What’s the point in even uttering her name? I’m not getting them any more than Han will ever get back the Falcon.”

Aletha smiled, unclipped the medal from her lapel and pressed it into Leia’s hands.

“You will someday get them back. All of them. I don’t know how, and I don’t know when… but you’ll get them back General. I promise.”

Leia looked down at the medal in her hands.

“And when you do,” Aletha said, “give yourself the Han Solo Medal of Ingenuity. Because if there’s anyone who can do something so insanely stupid that there’s no way in hell they should succeed, yet somehow they make it work… it’s you.”

A new hope sparked in her chest that had long been quelled.

Leia smiled, “You’re right… I can.”

There was no way she could get back Rey or Felicity from death, and she hadn’t actually lost Han, Chewie, or Threepio in the first place. But there were three members of her family that were MIA that she still had hope for.

Luke had promised her to come home, and Artoo would naturally wake when he returned, but Ben… He was a challenge, but not one Leia Organa herself couldn’t overcome.

Somehow, someway, she would get her son back.

Even if it meant trading her life for his.

Luke cried long after he broke his connection to Leia. He couldn’t believe that Wedge Antilles was truly gone. Luke had never even said a proper goodbye, and he now never would.

He felt the hand on his shoulder, but he didn’t look up. Luke was glad Rey was silent because he had no idea how to explain it to her. It must have been a good ten minutes of Luke crying with a hand on his shoulder before he could gather himself to face Rey.

But when he looked up, it wasn’t Rey’s hand on his shoulder.

“Don’t let grief consume you, Master Skywalker,” Alyla Kene smiled down at him. “Wedge Antilles is now one with the Force.”


His mind was still open, reaching for Force Signatures, so before he could control himself, he found it: the horrifying thing he had no way to explain.
Alyla Kene’s magenta Signature, now nothing more than a speck, had returned to the world of the living… and it was tightly bound in Ben Solo’s dark forest green.

Luke didn’t have time to ask questions, because the second he touched it with his own presence, Alyla and her signature completely disappeared.

He was left reeling, confused at what it meant, but one thing was clear to him.

Alyla Kene wasn’t alive anymore.

…but she certainly wasn’t dead.

---

Here’s another rule: **Don’t talk about salvage.**

* - Rey’s Survival Guide

---

It was plain to Teng that the group knew he could hear every word they were saying. In fact, it seemed like Toras Kern and his lackeys had picked this wash table specifically because Teng was seated there.

Still, Teng just tried to ignore them as Luke had urged, tuning out the group as they crudely joked among themselves.

“I mean, I know Erso is only fifteen but in another year or two, I’m telling you that girl will be begging for a piece of me,” Toras said loudly.

Teng glanced up and glared at him. Toras’ eyes met his, and Toras grinned at Teng. He had the boy’s attention as he clearly so wanted.

*Eyes down. Focus on work. Don’t listen to them.*

Over and over, in his mind, Teng repeated the mantra Luke had give him.

“She really is a sweet little thing,” Toras continued. “And very flexible I hear.”

*Eyes down. Focus on work. Don’t listen to them.*

“I bet a girl like that has really good stamina too.”

*Eyes down. Focus on work. Don’t listen to them.*

“Of course, a girl who looks like that can’t possibly be pure. I bet she’s an expert by now.”

*Eyes down. Focus on work. Don’t listen to them. Don’t listen to them!*

“Malar here’s probably the one who got first honours.”

Teng gritted his teeth.

“Come on, Kid. Is she as sweet as she looks?”
Eyes down. Focus on work. Don’t listen to them. Don’t picture punching him in the face.

Toras gave a throaty laugh, “Oh I bet she is. I bet she would do anything you wanted.”

Eyes down. Focus on work. Don’t listen to them. Okay picturing punching him in the throat is fine. Just don’t say anything.

“I bet she wants it so bad. Has to be wanting if she’s running around in clothes as tight as hers.”

“Shut the hell up,” Teng snarled.

Toras laughed, “Oh, look, he’s got something to say. You know he said he didn’t like to share her, but I bet she likes being shared. I heard she spent a lot of nights with you and that Vrogem.”

Teng threw everything into his satchel and shot up from the table.

“Come on, boy, where are you going? To take a turn with little Miss Erso if Tinadar lets you have a chance?”

“Vrogem aren’t biologically compatible with humans, you idiot,” Teng called as he stormed away.

“No, I guess Tinadar doesn’t take his turn, but you know who probably does? Luke.”

Teng stopped dead in his tracks.

“Ooh, struck a nerve,” Toras grinned at his friends. “The Ersos are rather close, aren’t they? Almost sinfully one would say.”

“Shut up,” Teng gripped the strap of his satchel tightly, the only thing anchoring him to the spot.

Deep breaths. He just had to ignore them.

Eyes down. Focus on work. Don’t listen to them.

“Oh, I bet she loves it,” Toras taunted. “I bet she and Luke just love their precious Daddy daughter-”

Teng tackled Toras to the ground. In a mad frenzy he punched the man over and over. Blood was staining his knuckles as he hit Toras dozens of times. Toras gave pathetic cries for help, but Teng’s free hand closed over his throat. Teng started to squeeze, and slowly Toras’ face faded blue as he gasped for air.

No one had seen this side of Teng before. No one on Jakku at least, but the pirates had taught him well. Loathe he was to admit it, Teng had taken a life before and he was hellbent on ending the one of Toras Kern.

Strong arms wrapped around Teng’s body and wrenched him away.

“No!” Teng kicked and clawed at his assailant, forcing the man to throw Teng back away from him.

“Teng! Stop!” Luke demanded as Teng realized who had pulled him off.

“No! He has to pay!” Teng exclaimed. He rushed forward to throw himself at Toras again, but Quom blocked his path.

“Oh no, you do!” Quom stood guard between Teng and Toras.

“But he said—”


Even though he had been in the losing position, Toras still had the gall to taunt Teng.

“Oh come on!” Toras egged as his friends helped him to his feet. “Face me like a real man!”

Teng tried to rush forward, but Luke grabbed his arm and hauled him back.

“Be the bigger person, Teng,” he said. “I know you can do it.”

Teng looked Luke right in the eye, “But he was saying that you were… You and Rey were…”

He didn’t need to say anymore. Quom winced as Luke’s face turned a unique shade of pale green.

“I… I don’t care,” Luke struggled to say. “We know the truth. I would never… do that to my daughter. You know that. Don’t let them get to you, especially with a load of blatant lies.”

“Don’t listen to him!” Toras yelled at Teng. “Show me you’re a real man and face me like one.”

Teng didn’t break eye contact with Luke.


Teng nodded and stepped forward, away from Toras.

Toras was not happy about that.

“Come back here!” Toras called. “Face me! Face me!”

None of the three even glanced back at him.

“Alright then,” Toras was giving up. “I guess you’ll all just go back to your tent to take turns with the girl! Wouldn’t blame you, she’s delectable little thing.”

Teng faltered, but Luke had a hand on his back and just urged him forward.


“Yeah, well, between you and me… I probably would have done the same. Thanks for letting me be the sensible one.”

Teng laughed.

“That was a good punch,” Luke complimented. “Where did you learn that?”

“The pirates. They always thought – AHH!”

Pain exploded in Teng’s leg as a blaster bolt hit his retreating form.

Luke whipped around in an instant, his right hand pulling out his blaster, and his left instinctively reaching behind himself to the lightsaber tucked in his belt.

But it wasn’t necessary. A loud growl ripped through the market, and a blur of black tackled Toras.
The scavenger gave a bloodcurdling scream, and the blur of activity settled into a horrifying image.

Quom Tinadar pinning Toras Kern to the ground. He was on all fours like a feral animal, his eyes pitch black like he had no irises, nor any soul. And his sharp fangs were buried into the flesh of Toras’ neck.

Luke exclaimed, racing forward, “Quom! No!”

He had never seen Quom like this, so feral. This was his friend who had his fangs buried in the neck of Toras Kern. Testing his suspicions, Luke reached into the Force and found that Quom’s usual rusty grey Signature was completely black.

This wasn’t Quom Tinadar, his friend. This was a Vrogem possessed by the Dark Side.

But it didn’t make sense. Luke wasn’t channeling the Dark Side, and there was no one else around who could channel such levels. Why was this happening?

“Quom!” Luke grabbed his shoulder.

The Vrogem ripped around, snapping his bloodstained teeth at Luke’s hand. If his reflexes had been a second later, Luke would be the owner of two mechanical limbs.

As Toras held his bloody neck, putting pressure on the wound, Quom’s eyes met Luke. There was no light in the deep darkness of black, but something changed in them. Quom sniffed the air, locking on Luke’s scent. Luke carefully started to back up, but Quom stalked him on all fours, growling viciously. He could smell the Light Side that consumed Luke.


The second he landed the step, Quom lunged at Luke. Instinctually, Luke struck at Quom, using a blast of the Force to send him flying back. Thankfully Quom had been close enough that it just looked like Luke had elbowed Quom in the face.

Instantly, Quom shot to his four limbs. Luke looked back at Teng, and Quom let out a terrifying snarl. He was nothing more than a blur as he shot towards Teng.

“No!” Luke cried out, racing to protect Teng. But he skidded to a stop in shock when he saw what Quom did.

Quom turned his back to Teng and advanced on Luke, drawing him away from the boy. He wasn’t attacking Teng… he was protecting him.

And then Luke understood. The Dark Side wasn’t coming from Luke; it was coming from Quom. It had been triggered because someone had attacked his kit.

Luke knew what it would take to defuse the situation, so when Constable Zuvio’s men arrived, he ordered them to stay back.

“I can do this,” he said. “No one has to get hurt.”

The men looked at each other uncertainly, but withdrew.

Luke turned his attention to Teng, “Don’t move. You’ll be okay. He won’t hurt you, but for
everyone’s safety, don’t move.”

Teng swallowed hard, fear in his eyes.

“And you,” Luke turned to Toras, “get out of here while you still can. And if I ever see you near Teng or Rey again, I’ll let Quom finish the job.”

Toras nodded and he and his friends scampered away as quickly as possible.

Now Luke’s attention could fully be on Quom.

“Hey, look at me,” he said gently to his friend. “I’m not going to hurt you, and I’m not going to hurt Teng.”

Quom snarled as Luke took a step forward.

“I’m your friend. You know me, Quom. You know I’m not going to hurt him.”

Quom’s growling remained.


He reached into the Force to touch Quom’s Signature. He harnessed the Light in himself and poured it into Quom’s Signature, guiding memories of happiness and love Quom shared with Luke, Aletha, Rey, and Teng into Quom’s mind.

Slowly, Quom started to relax and the whites of his and grey irises started to return.

“You know me,” Luke repeated. “You know me, Quom.”

Quom looked up at him and whimpered.

“No one is going to hurt, Teng. I promise.”

Quom looked back at Teng, and then to Luke.

Luke took another careful step forward. Quom gave another loud whimper and submissively dropped to the ground, burying his face in the sand. Luke took his time with each step, and soon he was right next to Quom, watching him. Quom was taking deep, shaky breaths into the sand.

He hesitated, and then put a hand on Quom’s back.


And Quom knew he was safe.

“So… that was odd,” Teng declared as they patched each other up in Quom and Teng’s tent. “What happened?”

“Why?”

“You’re my kit. No one messes with my kit.”

“You…” Teng was shocked. “But I thought you hated me.”

Quom shrugged, “What can I say? You grew on me. You hurt Rey, though, and I’m still tearing you to shreds.”

“After today, I believe you.”

“Why don’t we just agree to forget this whole thing?” Luke suggested.

“I can’t,” Teng said. “What did you even do there? That was amazing. Is it part of the powers you and Rey have?”

“I thought I told her not to tell you about that.”

“Sorry,” Teng sheepishly smiled. “But what was that? That was amazing. Almost like a… Like a…”

“Like a Jedi?” Quom smirked.

“Quom!” Luke scolded, horrified he would say it so bluntly.

Teng looked between them, “What’s a Jedi?”

“What’s a- Are you serious?” Quom exclaimed. “You don’t know what a Jedi is?”

Teng scowled. “What part of raised by a cult, lived with pirates, and then sold into slavery do you people not understand? My education isn’t the best! I didn’t know multiplication until three months ago!”

“Ok, I am mandating that we have to get this boy a proper education,” Quom ordered Luke. “I want him to be able to spell his name before the year is over.”

“I can spell my name!” Teng paused, “How many Leths does Malar have in it?”


“I can spell my name.”

Luke just shook his head.

At that moment, the tent flap was dramatically thrown open. When Rey stormed into Quom and Teng’s tent, it was clear from her face that she was furious.

“Hey, Rey,” Teng said carefully, smiling widely but fear shining in his eyes.

“Is Quom okay?” Rey demanded.

“I’m fine,” Quom answered.

“Good.” She glared at Teng, “I’m going to kill you.”

“We’ll give you two some privacy,” Luke said, packing up the first aid kit he had been using to fix up Teng.
Teng looked up helplessly at the men, “But-”

Quom just patted him on the shoulder and exited with Luke.

Accepting his fate, Teng took a deep breath and looked up at Rey. She looked like she was trying to see if she could choke him with her mind…and he could have sworn his throat felt a little tight.

“Rey. I, uh…” Teng had no idea what to say.

“What were you thinking?” she demanded. “You know what? No. Don’t answer that; it’s clear you weren’t thinking.”

“I’m sorry, Rey,” he looked down in shame. “It’s just he was saying such awful things about you. I couldn’t help myself.”

“Well, because of you, now no one in this town thinks I can protect myself. Instead they think I have to call on my attack dogs. Literally in the case of Quom! I get enough of that with Dad and Uncle Quom; I don’t need it from you!”

“If you heard the things he was saying-”

“You think I haven’t? You think I can safely walk through this market without someone commenting on my body, or propositioning me, or saying things to me that no fifteen-year-old should have to hear? By the Force, don’t you get it?”

Teng scowled, “Get what?”

“You’re a man!” Rey exclaimed. “Your biology grants you the privilege to not be questioned on your strength, or harassed for your looks!”

“You think men don’t have to go through that same thing?”

“Of course they do, but it’s not to the degree that women do! There’s a reason why when my mother was fighting to keep us alive she offered herself as payment to Quom.”

“Excuse me?”

“Yeah, don’t tell my dad,” Rey quickly added. “People aren’t going to stop ogling me, Teng. People aren’t going to stop harassing me.”

“So what am I supposed to do?” Teng shot. “Ignore it? Get used to it? Let it happen? It’s not like I’m telling you to sit still little woman while the men deal with it.”

“I know you’re not.”

“Then what do you want me to do?”

“I… I…” Rey stuttered. “I don’t know. I just…”

“Just what?”

“I just don’t want you to think I’m weak!”

“Weak?” Teng’s jaw dropped. “I believe I would think you’re weak? You? The most amazing and badass woman I have ever met?”
“Don’t butter me up with lies, Teng.”

“I’m not. Don’t you get it? Don’t you understand how amazing you are to me? Are you perfect? No, of course not, but in my eyes…”

Rey’s face relaxed. Her heart felt like it was beating a mile a minute in her chest, “You think I’m perfect?”

“In all the ways that truly count,” Teng confessed. “I know you have faults, but I don’t care. You’re my everything, Rey. The reason my life now has meaning. I can’t just sit there and listen to them say such crude things about you because of the way I feel. And I don’t want you to think that I don’t feel them, or that I wouldn’t stand by you united, or I wouldn’t do everything in my power to protect you… the way you’ve protected me.”

Rey bit her lip, her fury gone, and her heart in her hand, exposed and ready to take a risk.

“And…” Rey swallowed. “How do you feel about me?”

Teng sighed, “The truth be told, Rey… I like you.”

“Like me? Like ‘like me’ like me?”

“Yes. I’m very attracted to you. Your mind, your soul, your heart, your spirit… your body.”

Rey blushed.

“I would do anything you asked of me, Rey,” Teng confessed. “If you wanted me to go to the ends of the universe, I would. If you asked me to pluck a star from the sky, I’d burn my hands doing it. You’re my Starshine, Rey. I’m sorry if this ruins our friendship, but I had to tell you… I understand if you don’t feel the same way, but I needed to say it.”

Silence filled the room as Rey stared at Teng in shock, overwhelmed by the words she never thought he’d actually say to her.

It was a weight off Teng’s chest, but the silence from Rey terrified him. Clearly he had just made a total fool of himself, and probably ruined their friendship in the process.

Teng bowed his head, unable to look her in the eye, “I should go.”

He turned to leave Rey, no doubt in his mind that she didn’t reciprocate his feelings and now probably wanted to end their friendship. Who had he been kidding? How could he ever think that Rey Erso wanted him?

“Teng?”

Her voice stopped him in his tracks.

Rey took a deep breath and walked around to Teng’s front. They stared at each other, Teng’s brow creased as he tried to figure out what was going on. He struggled not to give in to the hope budding in his chest.

She looked into his eyes; such vibrant pools of green. It seemed so impossible for something to be that fresh, that lively. All she had known was greys, browns, and tans. On Jakku, nothing grew. It was a planet of dust, death, and solitude.

But something had grown; something that Rey couldn’t name. Or at least something she never dared
Something more to life, something that had awoken when she found Teng on that roadside four years ago.

Something so much different that Quom, Aletha, Dirk, or anyone else had made her feel.

“Teng,” Rey whispered, looking up into those refreshing eyes. Those eyes that proved to her that there was a world out there somewhere of life and growth beyond this dust ball. Somehow he had brought a little piece of that world to her.

“Rey,” he whispered.

She placed a hand on his cheek. It felt coarse and prickly from the beginnings of his five o’clock shadow. His lips were chapped, but they parted ever so slightly. Teng bent his head down fractionally, a subtle attempt to be close to her. His breath was upon Rey’s skin – slow and hot against her newly crested flush – and his brilliant green eyes hungrily stared at her lips.

Gathering her courage, Rey lifted herself up on her toes and pressed her lips to his.

Their lips were rough and awkward, neither knowing quite what to do in this act. But a surge of adolescent hormones told their bodies that this was good, and a pounding in their hearts told their souls this was right.

Emboldened by the taste of Rey Erso’s lips, Teng wrapped his arms around her waist and pulled Rey tight against him. She made a small, surprised noise, but wrapped her arms around his neck. Rey melted against his touch.

They kissed for as long as their lungs let them hold out, and perhaps a moment or two longer than that. When they pulled apart for air, they were panting. They stared at each other, shocked at what had just happened.

Then Rey smiled, and so did Teng. They started laughing, their grins creasing across their faces flushed not from heat.

“Wow,” Teng said.

“Yeah,” Rey couldn’t wipe the smile off her face. “That was… I liked that.”

“I did too. It was so much better than I’ve ever imagined.”

Rey looked down liked she hadn’t just been making out with the boy in front of her, “You’ve thought about kissing me?”

“Uh… yeah,” Teng admitted. “Quite a lot actually.”

“Me too. Kissing you, that is.”

They just stood there grinning, not quite sure of what to do next, but now that it was all in the open, there was no pressure to know that answer.

“So…” Teng said.

“Yeah,” Rey laughed.

“What does this mean? You know, for us? Are we… together now?”

“I think so.”
“Oh… good.”

They stood there just grinning like goofy teenagers in love.

“Teng?” Rey said. “Could we try that kissing thing again?”

“Hell, yes.”

She shrieked happily as he suddenly pulled her into his arms. In a moment their lips were upon each other, and they were lost in their passionate embrace.

And as Rey would look back on that memory in the years to come, she would always remember that as one of the happiest moments of her life.

Chapter End Notes

Coming Up Next Chapter…

Survival of the Fittest
An encounter with Kylo Ren brings Aletha and Diego closer together. Rey learns from an unlikely source how to defend herself.

You know, I didn’t start this chapter with the plan to kill off Wedge. It just sort of… happened. Whatever, he didn’t actually have a role in the story after this, and his absence would have been notable. I just couldn’t think of a plot that would suit him, and then this idea popped up, so RIP Wedge Antilles. You will be missed…but not enough for me to do anything about it.

Just do be warned, this story will be containing several character deaths. Not Game of Thrones level of killing, but definitely Prequel Trilogy levels of significant characters dying. This will involve not only OCs dying, but canon characters of both major and minor character status. Literally the only people I will promise to make it out of at least TLJ territory is Luke and Rey because this is a story about their relationship. And there will be some significant characters dying off. I don’t kill characters without purpose, but I do kill characters.

Serious question time: I’ve really been thinking a lot about how I’m going to portray the physical relationship between Rey and Teng when it comes to sex. Yes, naughty things will happen between them, and if I had my way, I would just go all out like I did with Luke and Felicity. There’s just one problem.

Rey is fifteen.

I am not writing porn involving anyone under the age of eighteen. However, a lot of the significant physical stuff happens between them under that age. Now, I’ve decided to push back the really major stuff to ages 16 and 17, but it’s still awkward to think about. So I wanted to get feedback from you guys as to how far do you want things to be displayed with them. Do you want a full scene with clear labels, maybe a scene that’s a might vague and a little clinical at times (what I’m leaning towards), fade to black, just
implication, or something else? Please let me know.
Midnight Musings

Chapter Summary

Rey seeks girl talk, Diego makes a life-altering taunt, and Poe gets laid.

Chapter Notes

Note: I’ve edited out the mention of Rey wanting to do something for Luke’s fifty birthday, because it contradicts something that happens during TFA that I wrote which I really like and don’t want to cut.

I’ve listened to all the feedback about Rey and Teng’s physical relationship, and it was mostly saying that people would rather have things be a little more vague. However there was a vocal group saying they didn’t care if the characters were 16 (the age of consent in most places) and that was actually the reason why I made Jakku’s age of majority be 15 because of that very thing. I think I’ve decided to be more vague on fanfictiondotnet, and then on ao3 have a more adult version, however definitely not to the level I’ve done with older couples. I really do want to go through the awkward motions of the first time, so I think this way will be best for those who don’t want to read that.

But be warned, I do have more adult plans for other characters including two couples in this chapter, one of which is some Kaydel/Poe stuff. Speaking of, really, no one had any love for matchmaker BB-8? You guys suck! (Just kidding.)

Funny little thing I thought I’d share with you all considering how many jokes I make about Luke’s hand. This year for vacation I’ve decided to go to Seattle (so March 17-27 is either going to have several updates or none at all) and I’m going to go the Museum of Pop Culture where they have a lot of movie and tv memorabilia on display, including some things from Star Wars. Lo and behold, what have I discovered to be housed in the MoPop? Luke Skywalker’s severed hand.

Also, I split this chapter because what was supposed to be Act 1 was taking up the entire chapter. Hence why this one is called Midnight Musings instead of Survival of the Fittest.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.
“Teng and I are dating!”

Aletha was not too ashamed to admit she squealed upon hearing that news.

“Oh my goodness, Sunshine! I am so proud!” Aletha said excitedly into the comm.

It was evening time, not long after dinner. Aletha was sitting on her bed in her room, casually parsing some medical texts as she commed with Rey. A vase of blue Devoorian roses sat on her desk, given to her by Diego after his last mission. Kaydel was supposed to stop by later after her first official date with Poe, so the girl chat was well-timed.

“How long has it been?” Aletha asked.

“Since last night,” Rey’s glee was as bright as if she were standing in front of Aletha with a grin.

“Well, tell me everything! Who made the first move? What prompted it? How did it happen? Did Quom finally try to kill Teng for it?”

“Actually the weirdest thing happened with Quom that led to all of this. So that gross Toras Kern guy and his friends decided to annoy Teng while at the washing table. They were saying some… rather awful things about me and-”

At that moment, the door to Aletha’s room slid open.

“Aunt Ally, I just had the most wonderful date of my life!” Kaydel exclaimed, barging into the room. “Oh, I just have to tell you all about it.”

Kaydel didn’t register Aletha’s frozen horror as she hopped onto the bed to have some carefree girl talk with her aunt like they had shared so many times before.

It was so commonplace between the two that that was the reason Kaydel had the code to Aletha’s room and didn’t feel the need to knock. Honestly, if Aletha wasn’t spending her nights off-duty chatting with Rey, she spent them chatting with Kaydel, sometimes while doing her niece’s hair.

Understanding the need for discretion of Rey’s very existence, Aletha had always tried to keep her mentions of Rey very vague, limited, and never mentioning a name. There was a reason Luke Erso had decided keeping Rey on Jakku was the safest course of action, and so Aletha would uphold her vow of not telling anyone about them. It was for this reason Aletha had carefully coordinated that Kaydel’s nights with her so they never happened the same time as her chats with Rey.

Until tonight, when the inevitable collision happened.

Of course, Aletha wasn’t the only one being vague and discrete about the situation. However, the other side of the story wasn’t intentional. Aletha had yet to hear the name of Luke and Fliss Skywalker’s daughter uttered. She had mentioned it to Doctor Kalonia once, who explained that it was a sort of unspoken rule to keep the name unspoken. There was some sort of significant meaning to the name that became very painful after her death.

No one in good conscience could ever talk about how Luke Skywalker and Felicity Rhiaon’s literal Rey of light and hope had been snuffed out.

Don’t get me wrong, the name was spoken, but it was in hushed voices by loved ones of the Skywalker family, and Aletha had not gained the prestige of hearing Rey’s name spoken.

Yet.
But Kaydel had just accidentally gotten the prestige of hearing Rey’s voice spoken.

“Aunt Ally?” Kaydel frowned, finally taking in the expression on Aletha’s face.

“And it was so romantic, Aletha,” Rey concluded her story, oblivious to what was happening in the background of the other end of the comm. “I can’t believe it happened to me. I mean sure, I wouldn’t have picked that whole Quom tries tearing out a guy’s throat part, but.”

Kaydel looked at the comm, “Aunt Ally, who’s that?”

Aletha’s eyes widened in fear, “Uh…”

“Aletha?” Rey’s voice sounded on the comm as she clued into the situation. “Is someone there with you?”

Aletha just stared in horror at her niece and the comm; her worlds colliding uncontrollably. Aletha’s first instinct was to shut off the comm and pretend to Kaydel nothing had happened, then later explaining things to Rey. But Aletha didn’t want to panic Rey with the sudden cut line, and Aletha was fairly certain Kaydel was too smart to pull that on.

What in the galaxy was she supposed to do?

And then she realized the answer with horror: the only way to protect Rey in this situation… was to tell Kaydel the truth.


Uh, yeah, Sunshine. I’m still here,” Aletha answered into the comm. “Sorry, my niece, Kaydel just entered the room. Remember? I told you about her?”

“Oh… yeah,” Rey’s voice sounded a little shy. “Hi Kaydel.”

“Hello,” Kaydel looked at the comm in concern. The comm was a single press version, so Aletha didn’t have to hold a button down for Kaydel to answer, which was why Rey could hear Kaydel’s interruption in the first place. “Who is this?”

“My name’s Kira,” Rey lied about her name just as her father had taught her to when confronted with a stranger she wasn’t certain of. She knew Aletha would recognize the code name and play along with her. “I’m a friend of Aletha’s.”

“From Jakku,” Aletha said. “She’s the daughter of that guy I used to date.”

Kaydel raised a brow, “The one-armed pilot? Oh wait… Sorry with you I have to be specific. The one-armed pilot from Jakku?”

“That’s right,” Aletha nodded. “Uh, Kira sometimes contacts me with questions and for a little girl talk. She doesn’t have any other women to do that with on Jakku, so I lend an ear.”

“You still talk with your ex?”

“Just his daughter.”

“Dad doesn’t know she talks to me… At least I think he doesn’t. I don’t know. Dad’s weird sometimes. He pulls out so many insane abilities that I swear he could probably lift a boulder with his mind if he wanted to.”
"I would believe it," Aletha agreed.

Kaydel stared at her aunt and the comm, unsure of what to make of the situation.

"You know, I can leave if you want," Kaydel awkwardly offered. "Come back later when you two are… done?"

"Well, I mean…" Aletha bit her lip, "if you girls want, no one has to leave."

"What do you mean?"

"Yeah, what are you saying?"

"Well, Kira, you were saying a couple months ago that you’d maybe like to meet Kay." She explained to Kaydel, "I’ve mentioned you quite a lot to her."

"And yet, I haven’t heard a word about Kira yet," Kaydel said politely, a little uncomfortable with the whole situation.

"Oh, don’t worry, my whole past is some huge secret," Rey said casually. "Even I’m not allowed to know it."

"Really?"

"Yeah, top secret First Order conspiracy. Only on a need-to-know basis, and apparently I don’t need to know."

"And yet Quom does," Aletha shook her head.

"Wait, what? Quom knows?"

"Yep."

"Okay, now I’m mad at Dad. Quom, really?"

Kaydel frowned, "Who’s Quom?"

"Friend of ours from Jakku," Aletha answered. "I got some good stories about him. Remind me to tell you later."

"Sure…" Kaydel got the same awkward and antsy look of her face that Aletha had had when Kaydel first burst into the room.

But Aletha’s frown hardened, "Kay, we’re serious about this whole top-secret thing. Promise me you won’t tell anyone about Kira."

"Sure, I guess. Does that mean I’m not allowed to ask any questions then?"

"I’m open to questions. It’s kind of weird that someone would even have questions for me. Life on Jakku is relatively boring… if you don’t count the time I dropped an X-Wing on my boyfriend."

"Don’t ask about that one," Aletha advised.

"Okay," Kaydel was glad to change the subject. "So, Kira, how long have you lived on Jakku?"

"For most of my life. Got here when I was five I think. Again, don’t have all the details. Aletha has
“Really?” Kaydel looked at Aletha.

“Stop digging,” Aletha said firmly. “I’m only telling you so much.”

“Fair enough,” Kaydel let herself smile. “Alright then, Kira would you mind if I asked, I don’t know… how old you are?”

“I’ll be sixteen in a few months.”

“Sixteen, huh,” Kaydel nodded working out the situation in her mind. “And your best source of girl talk is with a woman who is fif-”

“Say my age and you’re banned from late night talks with me forever, Kay,” Aletha threatened, pointing towards the door.

Kaydel grinned, “Sorry, Aunt Ally. I’m just curious why Kira turns to you? There can’t really be no one her age around, can there? Or even remotely close.”

“The closest girl is Devi who is a year older, and she just challenged me to duel her in the Fighting Ring.”

“She what?” Aletha exclaimed.

“What’s the Fighting Ring?” Kaydel asked.

“People fight each other in front of an audience to win a prize. It’s a good way to make money.”

“Re- Kira!” Aletha caught herself before speaking Rey’s name. “You are absolutely not going to fight Devi in the Ring!”

“I didn’t tell her yes! …Yet. I don’t know. It’s good money. Maybe I should give it a shot. Might fix this harassment issue I’ve been having.”

“Young lady, you are not doing it, and that’s final!”

Rey laughed, “Aletha, how are you going to stop from the Resistance?”

“Easy. I’ll call your father, and he’ll do it for me,” Aletha countered.

Kaydel looked to the comm, “Would that work?”

“She makes one call to the comm station, and I’m undergoing another month of psychological torture.”

“It’s what she calls her father’s punishments,” Aletha explained. “Not actual psychological torture.”

“Could have fooled me. And come on, Aletha, you can’t pretend it isn’t a viable idea to put a stop to this harassment.”

“What harassment?” Kaydel asked.

“The men in Jakku are starting to realize Kira’s all grown up and got the body to prove it,” Aletha grimaced.
“Oh, I remember that age,” Kaydel laughed. “Some the idiot neighbor boy from next door decided to spy on my bedroom from a tree in his yard, and my brother, Keth broke the thirteen-year-old’s jaw.”

Aletha frowned, “Wouldn’t Keth have been in his early thirties when that happened?”

“What’s your point?”

“Remind me never to cross your family,” Rey shuddered.

Aletha grinned, “They’d have to go through me first, Sunshine. And we both know I shot a woman in the knee once for you.”

Kaydel raised an eyebrow, “What’s this story?”

“Tell you later,” Aletha promised knowing that Rey probably didn’t want her abuse brought up at the moment. “But that’s why Kira and I have been talking a lot lately. She’s had to put up with a lot recently and needs someone with experience to lend an ear… I mean not that I have a lot of experience with this. Not a lot of people have given me a second look in their life.”

“I don’t know,” Kaydel grinned, her eyes going to the roses on the table, “I think Commander Nalto’s been taking a lot of second looks. Third and fourth ones too. Didn’t Diego bring you those flowers?”

“Kaydel-”

“Is Diego the special admirer she’s trying to hide from me?” Rey asked. “Has anything happened with them? I’m morbidly fascinated in Aletha’s love life when it doesn’t involve my father.”

“Oh things have happened,” Kaydel grinned evilly.

“Nothing has happened!” Aletha exclaimed wondering how she had gotten these two to team up against her.

“You charged into an active battlefield to save his life!”

“Aletha did what now?”

And so Aletha lost control of the conversation, it turning to fend off two young women’s teasing and prying into her love life.

Talking with Kaydel and Aletha became almost a nightly routine for Rey. They discussed boys, family, puberty, education, stories of battles and adventures, and subjects Rey didn’t have the pleasure of participating with in real life. She looked hearing Kaydel and Aletha tell her all about hair, makeup, fashion, and other such feminine luxuries Rey hoped to enjoy someday. Aletha made sure Rey didn’t take on such subjects with the idea that one used such items to impress men, but rather to express their creativity and to make one feel good, but at the same time know that she still could look and feel good without them.

But that didn’t mean that men didn’t star in a lot of their conversations. Teng, Poe, and Diego were frequent subjects of conversation. Aletha kept insisting that nothing was going on with Diego, while Kaydel provided facts to the contrary. Rey and Kaydel would gush about their boys, and loved regaling the rest with how their suitors proposed said suits.
Rey got a huge laugh out of Kaydel’s story of Poe not being able to think of a way to officially declare his affections for Kaydel – even though they had already been out on about seven lunch dates over the past two months. It seemed even Dameron’s got flustered. He had been saying all of this to Jessika Pava – a pilot in his squad – as well as some rather embarrassing in hindsight things about how beautiful and charming he found Kaydel and how a girl had never made him feel so confident yet self-conscious at the same time. All this rather embarrassing lovesick display you’d find in a thirteen-year-old, much less a man pushing thirty, unaware that BB-8 was recording the entire thing.

BB-8 had apparently decided that this girl was to be his master’s mate, and so just rolled himself over to Communications and played the recording to Kaydel… The very embarrassed Kaydel who had been in a meeting with her boss and an amused General Leia Organa.

People in Communications were still yelling across the mess hall excerpts from Poe’s declaration of affection. Poe to his credit just leaned in to the whole mess and made the speech into a running joke the Resistance would never forget. It did take him nearly a week for him to work up the courage to face Kaydel afterwards, and word around the base was he put BB-8 into low power mode for a day to teach him a lesson.

It was Leia Organa who requested he not use low power mode as a method of punishment on his droid. Poe instantly reverted BB-8 to normal mode when he saw Leia glance forlornly toward the corner R2-D2 was tucked into.

“Who knows?” Kaydel laughed along with Aletha and Rey at the story a few weeks after ‘meeting’ Rey. “Maybe Commander Nalto will give you his own speech when he gets back. Or send his droid to do it… Then again he doesn’t actually own his own droid.”

“Your Poe will never live that speech down, will he?” Rey asked.

“No, and if you ever meet him, don’t you let him either.”

Aletha’s stomach shifted at the idea of Rey and Poe meeting.

Rey, however, didn’t see the harm in joking about it, “I’ll be sure to ask him if my eyes sparkle like shining pools of water lit by the fullest moon.”

A few years later, Rey would, and Poe would be horrified.

“So, where is this famous Commander Nalto?” Rey asked. “Do I get to meet him soon?”

“No, thank goodness,” she added the last part to herself. “Diego- I mean Commander Nalto – stop looking at me like that Kay – is away on a mission. I think he’s wanted to soak up as much time in the air as possible after that three-week suspension.”

“You should have heard him in the Communications Center for those three weeks,” Kaydel grimaced. “He kept saying that if he was ever grounded permanently, just save us all some time, take him out back and shoot him. We’d be happier all around.”

“I did hear him. General Organa specifically request I come talk some sense into him before she slapped it into him.”

“I’m pretty sure it was a bluff. General Organa doesn’t slap people without very good reason.”

“Wait, General Organa? Aletha, you met Princess Leia!”
“She would slap you if you called her Princess, though,” Kaydel added.

“Yes, I’m working with Leia Organa,” Aletha said. “Also my direct boss is the former doctor of the New Jedi Order. Worked with Luke Skywalker and Rogue One themselves.”

“Have you seen Han Solo?”

“No, but I’ll keep an eye open.”

“Fan of Solo’s?” Kaydel asked in amusement.

“He’s my hero,” Rey confessed. “Aletha, if you do meet him, could you get me his autograph?”

“I feel like he would either adore that or hate that, so we’ll see, but I’ll try,” Aletha promised. “I just still can’t believe the General called me down of all people to get Diego under control.”

“You can’t be that surprised,” Kaydel laughed. “Even if you refuse to admit you’re totally in love with him, it’s obvious he’s in love with you.”

“He is not.”

“He is so. In fact, I bet you anything he’s thinking about you right now.”

---

Aletha Kymeri was the absolute last thing on Diego Nalto’s mind in that moment. What was on his mind were the men lined up on either side of him, all forced to their knees and hands bound behind their back, faces bloody and beaten, with many sporting electrical burns and stab marks from the half-taser half-knife Electra was using on them.

And he was especially focused on how if Ben Solo didn’t move so he and his mask were more than an inch from his face, Diego was going to choke the little brat with his bare hands.

He was not explaining that one to Leia upon return to the base. Diego wondered if they made a “sorry I murdered your psychopathic son because he doesn’t understand the concept of personal space” greeting card.

“Diego Nalto,” Kylo Ren chuckled from behind his mask. He was crouched in front of Diego, his head cocked to the side slightly, “Yours was not a face I thought I would ever see again.”

Diego did not break eye contact, “Ben Solo, if you do not back out of my breathing area in the next three seconds, you won’t be seeing anything ever again.”

A jolt of electricity shot through his back and he let out a scream as his body succumbed to the pain. When he started to fall forward, a metallic glove pulled him upright.

“You will address Master Ren with respect, as well by his proper name,” the mechanical voice of Captain Electra seethed into his ear.

Diego screamed as another shock of electricity bit into his thigh. He looked down to see a black BB unit sitting at his side with a metal appendage sticking out.

“Go work, BB-9E,” Electra nodded to her droid.

_Bwa ba bwee._
Diego could only describe the black droid’s sounds as exactly what he thought BB-8’s evil twin would sound like.

Maybe this was BB-8’s evil twin.

“So what now?” Diego demanded. “You’re going to kill us? I am the second-in-command of the Resistance, after all.”

“No,” Kylo rose to his feet. “We will be releasing you. I want you to bring a message to General Organa. Tell her to give up this silly fight, lay down your arms, and join the First Order in our mission to bring peace to the Galaxy.”

“Somehow I don’t think she’ll go for it. AH!” Diego glared at the droid who had just shocked him at an even higher voltage, “You’re a sadistic little thing, aren’t you?”

Bwa bah bwah.

“Make her understand, Nalto,” Kylo demanded. “With her bloodline, with her lineage, with the power that runs through her veins, she could have a place with me to stand beside the Supreme Leader and serve him well.”

“Kid, you know as well as I do that your mother has always been a leader, not a follower. It’s sad to say her son does not have the same ambitions.”

“I have ambitions!” Kylo snarled.

“Composure, Master Ren,” Captain Electra scolded. “I can’t keep Phasma around all the time to keep you in line.”

“Silence!” Kylo snapped.

“So Phasma isn’t here?” Diego asked. “Good. I think things would be very difficult all around if she were here in front of me right now.”

Electra gave an electronic laugh, “Oh, I’m sure that if Phasma were in front of you right now you’d be over the moons to see her.”

“Captain, the only woman I wish to see right now is the woman I’m in love with. She’s in the Resistance. Amazing woman. As beautiful as a Goddess and a million times more intelligent than me. Soft spoken and kind, but there’s a fire that smoulders beneath the surface. Hell of a shot too. Meeting Doctor Aletha Kymeri was one of the best things to ever happened to- SON OF A BITCH!”

Diego screamed out as Electra coursed the full voltage of electricity through his body that her equipment could handle. It took Kylo Ren far too long to call Electra off, but when he did the pain was so much for Diego, he instantly fell face first onto the cold tile of the large grey room the First Order was holding their prisoners.

“Look at him cry,” Electra chuckled as Diego let out a very small whimper of pain. “And to think this is who the Resistance has in charge. Are you sure I can’t kill him? I would take a lot of pleasure in ending his life.”

Kylo stared at Diego. Feeling Ren’s eyes, Diego lifted himself and met his gaze. For a long time they stared at each other in a battle of wills seeing who would break first and look away submissively. They fought to see who was the stronger of the two and would maintain the gaze.
It would be Kylo who looked away.


The Resistance soldiers let out a breath of relief.

Kylo added, “After you execute half of them.”

“No!” Diego cried out desperately.

There was nothing to be done. In a second, a flurry of blasts filled the room. Half the Resistance soldiers hit the tiles with a sickening *thwack* and never moved again.

“We’re done here,” Kylo declared.

Electra stood and signalled the Stormtroopers to withdraw, her little BB-9E following obediently after her.

Lying on the floor next to his dead friends, Diego’s blood boiled, the anger building inside of him. He watched Kylo Ren stalking away, fury filling his heart. He wanted to hurt Kylo; not just momentarily, but dig down deep into the most tender and exposed of wounds and hurt him to his core.

And Diego knew just how to do it.

“You will never be like Darth Vader.”

Diego’s words stopped Kylo Ren dead in his tracks.

“Excuse me?” Ren whispered, his back to Diego but not moving an inch from the doorway.

“I said,” Diego slowly got to his feet, “you will never be like Darth Vader! I would know, I’ve met Darth Vader. I’ve fought Darth Vader! I’ve seen him kill and I’ve seen him rule, and I can safely say that you walking around in the cheap knockoff Vader mask, playing dress up and pretend in your grandfather’s clothes… you will never be like Darth Vader.”

A terrifying silence filled the room. No one dared to make a sound or movement, all watching Kylo Ren with absolute fear. Still Diego Nalto stood there, challenging him, unafraid of what would come next.

“You are wrong, Diego Nalto,” Kylo finally said.

He whipped around with sudden gusto, a hand outstretched, and Diego was thrown back into the wall by the Force. The wind was knocked out of him when his back made contact, and pain riddled his body. Kylo pinned Diego to the wall and used the Force shift to Diego’s right arm so the lightsaber scar was facing outwards.

Kylo crossed the room in only a few steps, and ignited his lightsaber. He could see the fear in Diego Nalto’s eyes when he reached him, having trapped the man like an animal.

“I will finish what my grandfather started,” Kylo declared. He raised his crackling lightsaber above Diego, “Beginning with this.”

And he swung down.
Diego Nalto’s screams filled the room as he was wheeled into the Medical Center.

“I need the operating room prepped stat!” Kalonia ordered as she and Leia ran alongside the gurney. “You’ll be okay Commander Nalto. The painkillers should kick in any moment.”

Diego couldn’t manage any other sounds but pained moans as he clutched his mutilated arm.

Leia’s voice was calm and commanding, but there was a twinge of fear in her eyes, “Nalto, please, what happened?”

“Ben,” was the only word he could manage.

Leia winced, yet there was no surprise to the statement.

“Oh, lightsaber wounds, I know how to deal with those,” Kalonia said. She warily glanced down at Diego’s arm, “Though I haven’t seen such a mess like this one. Usually people with lightsabers just lop the thing off. This is something new.”

“Will the arm have to be removed?” Leia asked.

Diego wanted to throw up. Leia’s question was something out of a nightmare; this whole situation was. A flurry of blood and death and confusion and fear. And pain. Above all pain.

He looked around the room, scanning for the someone who would calm him. The someone he so desperately wanted to see. The one he knew he could true and would make him feel safe as the doctors discussed life altering medical decisions without his input.

Where was Aletha?

“Diego!”

His head snapped instinctively towards the sound of her horrified scream. Diego couldn’t help but smile when she raced to his side, literally pushing Evan Tharel out of the way to get to him.

“Oh my god, Diego!” Aletha exclaimed as she reached him. “What happened?”

She looked so afraid as Kalonia explained the situation, punctuating it with medical babble Diego didn’t understand. But her presence at his side made Diego breathe easy again. He was safe. If Aletha was here, he was safe.

“Is there anyway we can avoid amputation?” Aletha asked, oblivious to the look Leia Organa was giving her.

“Believe it or not, I think it’s a possibility,” Kalonia said. “We’re getting him into surgery ASAP. I think it’s best we put him under for the procedure. General Organa, do you have someone to step into command?”

“I’m sure we can manage to scrounge up someone,” Leia answered. “I would like you to perform the procedure. You are our expert on lightsaber injuries.”

“Of course. Shall we delay our proceedings? Or will you be taking someone with you in my place?”

“Due to the possible complications of this injury, I would prefer you to stay on base with Diego to monitor his recovery. I’ll have to take another doctor with me, but I have an idea on who to bring.”
Aletha frowned as Leia looked at her. What were she and Kalonia talking about?

“Very well,” Doctor Kalonia said. “Diego, before I put you under, I have to ask you a few questions about your arm. Can you move it?”

“Only a little and I have immense pain when I do,” Diego groaned.

“Can you bend your fingers and your joints?”

He winced as he tried, “Joints a little. Fingers no.”

“How is the sensation of touch?” Aletha clasped his hand. Her face fell when she saw his flinch.

“The motion of that action hurt but… I can’t feel a thing. I have no sensation of touch whatsoever.”

Aletha struggled to fight back tears. She was a doctor. She saw this sort of thing all the time. Why did she want to cry?

“Can you fix it?” Diego asked, his voice desperate but soft.

“Yes,” Aletha promised without thinking. “I’ll fix you.”

“Please, fix me…” Carefully he reached out and caressed her cheek, pain riddled across his face as he did it. But he spoke her name like a prayer as his stroked the skin that should feel so soft beneath his fingers, “Aletha, there were things I still wanted to feel.”

She said nothing to him, their eyes locked together with emotions that need not be spoken.

“Doctor Kymeri,” Leia suddenly interrupted. “Please remove yourself from this surgery.”

Leia’s words went through Aletha like a jolt. It was only then she recognized the highly inappropriate nature of her actions with Diego, her patient.

“Forgive me, General Organa,” Aletha moved Diego’s hand from her face. “I am not compromised. I can perform this surgery.”

“Doctor Kymeri,” Leia said politely, “do not mistake an order for a request. Remove yourself from this surgery, and remove yourself from the Medical Centre. Immediately.”

Aletha looked down at Diego and his helpless eyes, pleading her to stay. But then she saw the look on Kalonia’s face – kind but encouraging her to obey – and the authoritarian look on General Organa’s face.

“Yes, General,” Aletha bowed her head.

She touched Diego’s arm one last time and then retreated. Kalonia instantly whisked Diego off to surgery, and Aletha fought back tears as she marched towards the exit.

“I’m sorry I had to pull rank,” said Leia.

Aletha didn’t even realize until that moment that the General had been following her, “Is there something I can help you with?”

“Something of great importance. Come. Let’s go to your quarters to discuss it privately.”
“Pack a bag,” Leia ordered when they entered Aletha’s room. “Quickly. Bring all you’ll need for the next two months, but keep it light.”

“General?” Aletha frowned, grabbing a bag she always kept semi-packed for sudden missions.

“I was going to bring Kalonia on this mission with me, but since I need her here with Diego, the burden falls to you. What I am about to tell you is top secret. Not even most of the Commanding officers are aware of this. Commander Nalto knows of this plan, as does my third-in-command, Vice Admiral Amilyn Holdo. Have you met her?”

“I don’t think so.”

“She has purple hair. You would know it if you met her. I believe Diego likes to refer to her as that condensing stepmother that thinks she needs to parent you by setting you up to fail so she can teach you a lesson.”

“No, but he has mentioned a, uh… purple-haired bitch.”

Leia sighed, “That would be her.”

Aletha raised an eyebrow.

“Amilyn had a very intense feud with my sister-in-law, and Diego tended to side with Fliss when it came to her various rivalries,” Leia explained. “I think Fliss’ feud with Amilyn was her worst after the one with Ben. Then again her one with Amilyn actually resulted in criminal charges at one point, but thankfully my brother talked Amilyn into dropping them. But that’s a long and rather personal story.”

“With all due respect, General Organa,” Aletha said, packing her things in a hurry, “it sounds like your sister-in-law had a lot of rivalries.”

“Oh she did. Fliss could either be your fiercest ally or your worst nightmare. Poor Luke faced both ends of that deal on a regular basis. I was genuinely surprised to see them go the distance.”

“Especially to the degree that Master Skywalker would… you know, do what he did after her death.”

Leia sighed, “I believe it was my niece’s death that mostly motivated that, but he went through a lot in a very short period of time.”

“General Organa, I’m truly sorry about what happened to your niece.”

“Thank you. I would give anything to talk to her just one more time.” Leia picked up a silver commlink off Aletha’s bedside table and handed it to Aletha, “Don’t forget this.”

“Thanks,” Aletha smiled, accepting the commlink she used to communicate with Rey. “So what’s going on?”

“Diego and I decided we needed an emergency base to escape to if the First Order is really giving us problems. We found an old, uncharted Rebel base that is badly in need of repair. I am taking a group of high commanding Rebel vets to this base to fix it up so that if we ever need it we can use it. Since Kalonia is busy, you as the only other Rebel Medic vet need to take her place. I need you to help work with the old medical equipment and get it running into something workable. It’ll be a lot of sort
of scavenging work and repair. You think you can do that?"

“General, I spent two decades on Jakku. Scavenging is easy. Where are we going?”

“It’s called Crait,” Leia said. “And like I said, it’ll be for two months. Just so you know, that
commlink I gave you… you can’t use it.”

Aletha frowned, “Why not?”

“There will be no communications to or from Crait while we’re there. This is top secret, not even
most of the High Council knows where I’m going or why. I only gave you the comm because I don’t
want that sort of thing just left behind in case we’re raided by the First Order and they have to
evacuate.”

“But… Commander Nalto-”

“We’ll have to wait until we return to hear what happened to him.” Leia saw the look on Aletha’s
face, “Will you be alright?”

“Uh, yeah,” Aletha struggled to fight back tears.

What if something happened? What if he needed her? …Or what if she needed him?

“I’m finished packing, General,” Aletha declared. She grabbed her bag, “Are we moving out right
n-”

As she moved forward, she knocked the bag off her bed onto the floor. The zipper was undone, so
her possessions spilled all over the floor. Aletha cursed and dropped to her knees. Erratically she
packed the bag, throwing items in as she fought against her tears.

Diego’s injuries and helpless face burned in her mind. She couldn’t leave him. Not now, not like this,
not for two whole months where she didn’t know if he’d be okay.

Aletha didn’t realize she had broken down crying until she felt Leia’s arms wrap around her. The
General was knelt on the floor next to her, holding her while she wept.

“I’m sorry,” Aletha sobbed. “I’m so sorry.”

“Shh, it’s alright.” Leia repeated words she carried in her heart, “Crying is natural. Especially for
someone who has been through as much as you.”

“But Diego… We’re not even-”

“He’ll be okay,” Leia insisted. “It’s just his arm.”

“What if they have to cut it off?”

“Well, from what I’ve heard from Kaydel, I don’t think that’ll be a problem with you,” Leia smiled.

Aletha laughed at that.

After the threat from Alecta Anthea, Leia had kept a close eye on Kaydel and felt a strong
connection to the girl. There were even some people who had mistaken Kaydel for Leia’s daughter a
few times. It didn’t help that Kaydel did bear a striking resemblance to Leia and had recently adopted
a version of Leia’s infamous Death Star hairstyle.
“Diego will be okay,” Leia assured her. “He’s always been a fighter, and now… Now he truly has something to fight for.”

Aletha smiled, “Really?”

“He’ll be back bringing you flowers before the week is over.”

“Promise?”

“Promise. Might want to get someone to tend to them while you’re gone, or you’ll come back to a maze of dead bouquets in this room. Diego Nalto does not have a green thumb whatsoever.”

Aletha laughed, “No, he doesn’t. You know, I’m surprised he didn’t bring me any from this trip.”

Leia grinned.

“What?”

“Poe Dameron found a bouquet in Nalto’s cargo hold. I think he and Kaydel are trying to make them look as uncrushed as possible before bringing them to you.”

“Is that the excuse the kids are using these days?” Aletha grinned. “I remember the code Antar and I used for running off to make out was doing the supply closet inventory.”

Leia laughed, “Han and I used to call it checking the hyperdrive.”

Aletha chuckled, mentally cataloguing it to later tell Rey.

Leia smiled and patted Aletha on the shoulder, “Come on. Our transport should be ready soon.”

“Alright,” Aletha nodded, zipping up her bag and getting to her feet. “I just wish that I didn’t have to wonder about Diego’s condition.”

Leia thought about it for a minute, “I suppose one transmission from Kalonia to Crait wouldn’t hurt.”

“Thank you so much.”

“Anytime,” Leia’s mind went to the phrase her brother held so precious.

Aletha frowned, but shook it off. What possible connection could Leia Organa have to Luke Erso?

As the women exited the room, they casually chatted about Kaydel. Neither of the pair noticed that a small silver comm was left lying on the floor.

“Aunt Ally?” Kaydel frowned as she looked around her aunt’s room in confusion. “Aunt Ally are you in the fresher?”

Kaydel set Diego’s bouquet in the vase on the table – it was the same vase that he had put her first flowers in. Kaydel then stuck her head in the small en suite fresher. As a doctor, Aletha got the privilege of her own tiny toilet, sink, and shower, though she had to punch in a code to activate the water of the shower, and it would only run for ten minutes every other night.

Unable to find Aletha, Kaydel frowned. Where could Aletha have gone?
Kaydel headed towards the door to check the Medical Centre. The Medical Centre was not her first stop as Kaydel had heard from Poe, who had heard from Jessika, who had heard from Snap, who had heard from Bastian, who heard from Ello, who had been in the Medical Centre as one of the injured hostages, that Aletha had been kicked out by General Organa.

She was almost at the door when she felt her foot land on something. Kaydel backed up instead, careful not to put pressure on it and break whatever possession of her aunt’s she was stepping on.

Kaydel recognized the silver commlink instantly. What was Kira’s comm doing on the floor?

Without a second thought, Kaydel picked it up and placed it in her pocket, intending to give it to Aletha, who she knew never liked to be far from it.

“Doctor Kymeri?” Kaydel knew to address her aunt formally while in the Medical Centre. “Doctor Kymeri, are you here?”

She wasn’t, but there was someone Kaydel was happy to see.

“Poe,” Kaydel grinned, approaching the pilot who was talking with someone lying in a hospital bed.

“Hey Babe,” Poe’s whole face lit up as he saw Kaydel. Without a second thought, he pulled her in for a kiss on the forehead.

“Don’t mind me,” a thickly accented voice came from the bed. “Just in the middle of important Resistance chain of command business.”

“Sorry, Commander Nalto,” Poe bowed his head. “Was there anything else you needed to tell me?”

“No. I just don’t appreciate being interrupted.”

“My apologies, Commander,” Kaydel smiled at Diego. “I was just wondering if either of you had seen my aunt?”

Diego frowned, “Aletha’s missing?”

“Aletha’s fine,” Kalonia announced, joining the group. “Sorry, Kaydel, but she was called away on a sudden mission. It’s a long-term, top secret mission. She wasn’t allowed to say her goodbyes to anyone, not even family.”

“What mission?” Diego asked.

“The one General Organa was going to take me on until I had to deal with your injuries.”

“Makes sense. Aletha is the only other Rebel.” Diego sighed, “Am I to take command then?”

“When you’re better. Vice Admiral Holdo is coming in to cover for you until then.”

Poe and Diego groaned in unison.

“Hey, I don’t like her either, but she is third in charge,” Kalonia said.

“Only because Felicity Rhiaon is dead,” Diego shot. “Purple haired bitch must have loved that news.”
Kaydel frowned at the group, “I’m sorry, what’s going on? Who’s Holdo and why do we hate her?”

“Uh, well you know how I told you that Felicity Rhiaon Skywalker was a very aggressive person?” Poe reminded.

Kaydel nodded, “She liked punching people in the throat.”

“She liked threatening to punch them in the throat,” Poe corrected. “Well, Holdo… is the reason we took those threats seriously.”

“What happened?”

“Holdo and Fliss never got along,” Diego said, “but after an incident between Fliss and her child while Fliss was suffering from postpartum depression, Holdo’s stance on Fliss got worse.”

Poe said, “After Fliss returned from treatment at a mental health facility for her depression, Holdo didn’t want her anywhere near the kidnapped children rescue missions, which was what Fliss was in charge of. When Fliss went on leave from the Resistance for her pregnancy, Holdo took it over. General Organa had to play peacemaker between the women over their argument, and Fliss backed down, accepting that with a new infant at home, she wouldn’t have time to do that sort of mission.”

Diego glowered, “But that wasn’t enough for Holdo.”

Kalonia sighed, “At a fundraising event for the Resistance on Coruscant, the women had a few too many to drink. Fliss confronted Holdo over the matter, and Holdo made a few disparaging remarks about Felicity’s fitness to be a mother, and…”

“Fliss attacked her,” Diego said bluntly. “If Luke hadn’t been there, I’m fairly certain that Fliss would have been facing murder charges. But Holdo was furious, and the police were called. Fliss got arrested, and Holdo wanted to have charges pressed for assault and battery.”

“Unfortunately, this had huge consequences for Felicity,” Kalonia continued. “After the… incident we don’t speak of that involved Felicity almost harming her daughter, Child Protective Services paid the Skywalker family a visit over their daughter being in a potentially dangerous environment. Since Felicity was going to a mental health facility and under my direct supervision when she returned to Rornian, they decided to give Luke and Felicity a warning. If either of them stepped one foot out of line, their daughter would be taken from their home.”

“The assault charges ended up qualifying as stepping out of line,” there was no humor in Poe’s voice. “The family told Holdo what continuing to press charges would mean for them, but Holdo refused to withdraw her statement. She believed Fliss to be an unfit mother, and thought the child better off elsewhere.”

“Thankfully Luke and Felicity had a lot of support from their family,” Kalonia said. “Han and Leia were prepared to take the girl, so was Luke’s maternal family, and even Felicity’s maternal family offered to take the girl… though that might have just been them seizing the opportunity to raise a member of their family under the way of life they perceived to be their version of right.”

“It took Luke going to Holdo’s apartment and literally begging her not to let him lose his daughter that got Holdo to back down,” Diego concluded. “The charges were dropped, the CPS allowed Luke and Fliss to retain custody as long as she took an anger management course, Holdo got a restraining order from Fliss, and since then, Fliss and I always referred to Holdo as the purple haired bitch.”

Kaydel stared at the group, “You know, the Skywalker family sounds like they would only be fun if
you watched them from afar.”

“It’s true,” Diego held up his mangled – but better – arm, “get too close and this thing happens.”

“Will you be okay?” Kaydel asked.

Diego and Kalonia exchanged a look.

“There’s… complications,” Kalonia answered. “Now why don’t you and Commander Dameron go off and let me get some work done on Diego?”

“Yes, Ma’am,” Poe nodded. He offered his arm to Kaydel, “Shall we?”

“Lead the way,” Kaydel nodded.

Diego sighed as he watched the two walk off, chatting happily and enjoying each other’s presence.

“You know, Commander Nalto, I can’t have you violating Resistance rules while in my hospital,” Kalonia chuckled as she performed some tests on his arm.

“What do you mean?” he asked.

“Doctors are not allowed to be involved with their patients, and yet you were feeling my doctor up right in front of the General.”

“I wasn’t feeling her up! I was…” Diego sighed, “I don’t know what I was doing.”

“Well, whatever it was, it was working. Come on, it’s clear what’s going on between you two.”

“I know, it’s just…”

“What?”

“She just finished a long-term relationship. Whatever this thing is between us, I don’t want it to just be a rebound.”

“From what I understand,” Kalonia wrote something on her chart, “that long-term relationship ended almost a year ago.”

“But it was why I took things slow,” Diego said. “I was going to try to progress things when I returned, but there was this arm injury and now she’s gone. I can’t believe she just left without saying a word to me. Without letting me say anything to her.”

Kalonia smiled, “You wanted to tell her goodbye?”

“No… I wanted to tell her something else entirely.”

“I still can’t believe she didn’t even say goodbye,” Kaydel sighed as Poe walked her to her room that night.

“The life of a soldier, you never know when you’re going to be called up,” Poe said, kissing her cheek. “Or come home in a box.”

Kaydel shuddered, “Don’t say things like that. The thought of losing you or Aletha like that makes
my stomach turn.”

“Losing me like that?” Poe grinned. “Oh, have I broken through to that boyfriend level?”

“Since when have I said you were my boyfriend? All you know is that you’re at the level of I hope this guy doesn’t die.”

“I’m flattered you care about me to that level. But I also know that we’re at the level of we’re totally going to make out on your bed if your roommate isn’t in, and I’m probably not going to be wearing a shirt while doing so.”

Kaydel punched in the code to her room, and the door slid open.

“Oh look,” Poe grinned, “your roommate isn’t in.”

She shook her head, “Get on the bed.”

Poe didn’t need to be told twice.

“How long until Paige gets here?” Poe asked, pulling his shirt over his head and tossing it aside.

“She’s with her sister, so we have some time,” Kaydel knelt next to the bed as Poe sat down. She looked up at him when she heard his chuckle, “What?”

“Sorry just you in that position is making me… think about things I’ve been wanting to do for a while now.”

“We don’t have time for that!” she playfully smacked his knee. Kaydel started rummaging under her bed, “Besides, we’ve talked about this. With us both having roommates, it’s more been a logistical issue than a preference one.”

“So, you’d be up for it?”

“Only if you returned the favor.”

“I’d gladly return the favor for however long and in whatever way you wanted,” Poe chuckled. He saw her shirt ride up a little as she was bent over. Poe ran a hand across the exposed flesh, “What are you doing under your bed?”

“Trying to find it. Here it is!” Kaydel pulled out a box from under the bed. She sat next to Poe and gave it to him, “I know it’s not a special occasion or anything, but I got you a present.”

“Kay, you didn’t have to.”

“I know, but I saw it and thought it would look great on you. Don’t make me feel weird about giving my boyfriend a gift.”

“Alright, but only because you admitted I’ve hit boyfriend level.” Poe opened the box to find a beautiful garment of brown leather inside. He lifted it up to admire it, “A jacket?”

“I thought it would look good on you,” Kaydel shrugged. “Try it on? Please?”

“Alright, but it’s going to look funny without a shirt on underneath.” Poe slipped on the jacket that would soon become his signature and admired himself in the mirror, “Dang this does look good.”

“What can I say?” she got up behind him and wrapped her arms around his torso. “I have great
taste.”

“I know. You picked me to be your boyfriend.”

She swatted at him and he caught her hand, laughing. Kaydel shook her head and held him tight as they stared at their entwined embrace in the mirror.

“It looks good,” Kaydel brushed her hand across his hard abs, the jacket splayed open to display his well-sculpted body. His skin was so warm beneath her touch.

“Yeah, the jacket does,” Poe agreed.

“Not the jacket… Us.”

He smiled and kissed her head, “You’re so beautiful. I’m lucky to have you.”

“Because I’m pretty?”

“Because you’re amazing. Your passion, your kindness, your humour, your taste in clothing. And when you’re in action in the communication centre… I just want you so badly.”

“And what about you, Commander Dameron? Your charm, your courage, your leadership skills, your forwardness, your unfairly attractive bare torso with muscles in just all the right places. I wouldn’t change a thing about you.”

“I’d change something about you.”

“Oh?” Kaydel’s tone was dangerous.

“Your hair,” Poe laughed, kissing her scowling lips. “I’ve never seen it down.”

“I don’t like it down.”

“Why’s that?” He frowned when she said nothing, “Kay?”

Kaydel took a deep breath, “Did I ever tell you that I’m an aunt?”

“No.”

“Katha, Keth, and Kaydel – the first one – all have children. Kaydel had two boys, Deek and Dacken, who hate me.”

“Deek and Dacken? That’s it, I’m going to send your family a book of baby names. You people have to stop it with the alliteration.”

Kaydel was glad of a moment to laugh, knowing the story to come.

“So, what does that have to do with your hair?” Poe turned Kaydel around so he was the one with arms wrapped around her. He nuzzled her neck, “They jealous of it?”

“No, they’re not jealous of me,” Kaydel sighed. “But they hate me. They’re older than me, and hate me because I was named after their dead mother and feel like I’m trying to replace her. Swore to get rid of me any way they could.”

“Okay, seriously, what is with your family trying to murder each other? You’re worse than the Skywalkers.”
“It’s sad that that’s true.”

“What happened with your nephews?” Poe asked. “They dye your hair in your sleep? Cut it? Pull it out?”

Kaydel took a deep breath, “One night when I slept… they lit it on fire.”

Poe froze.

“That’s why I keep it up now,” Kaydel quietly added. “I loved having my hair down but after that…”

She was caught off-guard by a passionate, and somewhat painfully crushing kiss.

“I’m not going to let anyone hurt you again,” Poe vowed desperately as he held the little bit dazed Kaydel in his tight embrace. “I won’t let anyone touch you again.”

“Poe,” Kaydel panted as he pushed her down on the bed.

His hands were on her and so was his hot mouth. At some point his jacket ended up on the floor, and her legs around his hips.

Kaydel moaned as he pressed her down into the mattress, his body solid and protective. It felt so wonderful to be in his arms, to have his body on her like this. But she wanted more; so much more.

And more was what she got.

She gasped when he pressed it against her, that hard lump against her thigh.

“Yes, please, Poe,” Kaydel begged.

Moving his lips to her neck, Poe shifted his hips so his erection was against her most sensitive spot. Kaydel moaned and panted, urging him on as he ground against the dampening apex between her legs. With her pleased moans, he moved faster trying to find just the right spot to make her lose herself to pleasure.

And with a sharp gasp, he knew he had found it.

“Right there,” Kaydel panted, holding his head to her neck as her hips moved up to grind with him. “Oh just right there.”

“You’re making me so hard,” Poe’s hand slid underneath her shirt to stroke her spine. She shivered at his touch, “I don’t want the fabric to be between us.”

“I don’t either, but Paige could walk in any moment. Just please don’t stop. I think I’m going to…”

Something gleamed in his eyes, “Challenge accepted.”

There were no sounds in the room but impassioned moans, fevered grunts, the smack of sloppy kisses, and the brush of friction between fabric. Kaydel’s hands were locked on Poe’s hips, directing his movements against her, while his played under her shirt, pawing at her brasserie clad breasts.

“Can I take it off?” Poe whispered into her ear.

“Only if you leave my shirt on,” Kaydel moaned as he brushed against her clit. “If Paige walks in-”
“Stop talking about your roommate.”

“Right.”

Their lips were back on each other’s, Kaydel burying a hand in Poe’s hair as he fumbled with the clasp of her bra. He had gotten the first hook unlatched when her breath started to hitch frantically.

“Poe, I’m almost… I’m going to-”

The door slid open and a pair of giggles filled the room. Kaydel and Poe made a mad scramble to pull apart, but the sight of them on the bed made Paige and Rose Tico stop in their tracks with wide, horrified eyes.

“Evening, Ladies,” Poe grinned innocently, grabbing his jacket off the floor and holding it over himself in an attempt to hide his erection. He had to think of something unsexy and quick.

General Organa’s stern gaze. Ben Solo’s haughty smirk. His father in a bath towel.

Oh, there we go.

“Hello, Commander Dameron,” Paige grinned knowingly at Kaydel. “Molesting my roommate again?”

Rose just looked horrified at the scene.

“I wasn’t molesting her.” Poe smirked, “Quite the opposite in fact. Kay was most agreeable with my actions.”

He was promptly hit in the face with his shirt.

“I should go,” Rose awkwardly tried not to look at Poe as he got himself dressed.

“I’m see you in the morning,” Paige gave her sister a hug.

Kaydel smiled at her, “Good night, Rose.”

“Good night, Kaydel,” Rose said.

Poe grinned at her, “Good night, Rose.”

Rose’s eyes widened, she gave a high-pitched squeak, and ran out the room.

Poe just laughed, “I’ll get her to speak to me one day.”

“Good luck with that,” Paige started to rifle through her dresser drawers for pyjamas. “She thinks of you on the level of General Organa and that lot, so she gets star struck.”

“I’m working on it. No one can resist the charms of Poe Dameron.”

“Speaking of, Kaydel, can you take your boyfriend and his charms into the hallway? I would like to get some sleep tonight.”

“We’ll go say good night.”
“So,” Poe said as the door slid behind them, “that was a lot of fun.”

“Yeah it was,” Kaydel wrapped her arms around his neck and pressed her body against his. “I’m sorry we got interrupted.”

Suddenly picturing Kes Dameron in a bath towel wasn’t cutting it for Poe.

“Seems like you’re sorry too,” Kaydel grinned as she felt the return of his erection.

“I’m going to have a lot to tell BB-8 tonight, that’s for sure,” Poe replied stiffly. He couldn’t start this up again, her body against his and all the feelings that brought with it. If he got cut off again tonight, it might just kill him.

“Not Snap?” Kaydel asked.

“No, Snap went with General Organa on the super secret mission. I have no roommate tonight.”

Kaydel’s eyes lit up, “You have no roommate tonight?”

It clicked in his mind a second later.

With a burst of energy, Kaydel opened the door to her room and shouted at Paige, “Don’t wait up for me!”

Before Paige could say a word, Poe slammed the close door button, grabbed Kaydel’s hand, and they took off running down the hall.

They stumbled into Poe Dameron and Snap Wexley’s room in a frantic embrace of lips and limbs. Poe barely had the sense to close the door behind him as they started pawing at each other’s clothes.

**BEEP BEE BEE BOP BOWH!**

The angry beeping knocked them to their senses as BB-8 rolled up to them squawking loudly.

“BB, shush!” Poe ordered.

*Boo boip bee bew!*

“I know, but I don’t care. Give us some privacy, okay?”

*Boo bew bohw beep!*

“Excuse me? You were the one who made it his mission to get us together. Apparently she checked all the boxes of your relationship match analytics, which by the way, I do not remember programming in you.”

*Bep booip be.*

“I doubt that’s in the defaults.”

*Bee bee bop!*

“We’re going to revisit the definitions of respectful to women and acceptable things to do in a relationship in your programming tomorrow.”
“BB-8, just get out here for tonight. Go bug Threepio, or something.”

BB-8 let out a loud raspberry and beeped angrily at Poe as he opened the door and exited the room.

“Yeah, you were going to tell my father anyway!” Poe shouted after his droid before closing the door. He shook his head and turned back to Kaydel, “Sorry about him, Babe.”

“Don’t worry,” she grinned, walking up to him. Kaydel wrapped her arms around his neck and gently kissed his lips. “I think it’s charming the way you two are such close friends. Not many people treat droids like equals and sentient beings. It’s sweet.”

“Not as sweet as you.” Poe enjoyed the taste of her lips once more. Their breath was hot and their embrace close. “Are you sure you want to do this? We’ve barely been officially going out for a month. If you don’t want to make love yet-”

“Make love to me Poe Dameron.”

That was all the signal he needed. He pulled her in close to him, savoring the delicious taste and feel of her lips against his. That soft, smooth skin against the coarseness of his own. They way her hands grasped and embraced him, guiding him to mutual pleasure.

He loved the way her body responded to him. Her skin flushed, her breathing erratic, her heart beating like a drum.

As their kisses became more frantic, so did their hands. Kaydel pushed his jacket off his shoulders. Poe unbuckled her large waist belt and threw it across the room. Kaydel yanked his shirt over his head, her hands running over his broad chest. Poe ripped open the little decorative mustard coloured half shirt thing Kaydel had to wear over her uniform shirt that Poe had never understood. They stumbled against each other as they tried to take off their boots and socks without detaching lips.

It didn’t work.

“Careful! Steady!” Kaydel laughed as Poe stumbled forward, shaking his boot off. He had managed to pin her against his work desk. “You okay?”

“I’m good now,” Poe laughed as he steadied himself. He took a moment to catch his breath and admire Kaydel’s dishevelled state, “Well, I know it’s not the bed, but this position has its promises.”

“Oh really?” Kaydel grinned, her hands massaging his tense shoulders. “Aren’t all your important work items and Holos of personal significance on this desk?”

He smirked, pulled Kaydel forward and dramatically shoved everything off the desk with a flourish.

She just stared at the pile on the floor, “You’re going to regret that in the morning, aren’t you?”

“Already regretting it now,” Poe admitted. “Oh well.”

Kaydel squealed as he pushed her back against the desk. She moved to sit on it, but he stopped her.

“I want you standing,” he had a wicked gleam in his eye.

Poe ground himself against her, and Kaydel felt herself getting wet and aroused against his erection. In ecstasy, she rubbed her small breasts against his chest, her nipples hardening against his touch.
“Can I take your shirt off this time?” Poe’s words were nearly muffled by her lips on his.

She drew back and smiled, “The real question is why haven’t you yet?”

Kaydel barely had the time to lift her arms before Poe was pulling the shirt over her head.

“Oh God, you’re beautiful,” Poe took in an eyeful of smooth, pale skin. It took all of his restraint not to rip off the very simple black bra she was wearing.

Kaydel flushed, the redness spreading down her chest, “You really think so?”

“I want my lips and hands all over you, and I don’t know where to start.”

She grinned, “Maybe start with the neck and work your way down?”

“Sounds like a plan, Lieutenant.”

Kaydel arched her neck as his lips found it. His breath tickled her ear with heat, and his jaw scratched her with short hairs in need of a shave. Down and down he moved. When he was at her collarbone, Kaydel leaned down and kissed his hair. It was slightly greasy, in need of a wash, but she knew better than to mention to Poe Dameron that something was wrong with his hair.

He smelled of sweat and motor oil. Kaydel kind of wished she had let him take a moment to squirt himself with the bottle of cologne she could see on top of his dresser with all his hair products and hygiene items. For a man who had greasy hair and smelled like sweat and motor oil, Poe Dameron had an astounding collection of hygiene items.

Kaydel was brought back to his touch when she felt Poe fiddling with the clasp of her bra.

“I can perform some of the most complicated aerial maneuvers ever invented. Why can I not unclasp this bra?” Poe grumbled.

She stayed his hand, “Here. Let me.”

It popped open in a second.

“I loosened it for you,” Poe insisted.

“Of course you did.” Kaydel looked down at her bra and bit her lip, “Poe, if I had known this was where tonight was leading, I would have worn underwear more alluring.”

“Kaydel, to be blunt, I don’t care what underwear you have on. It’s what’s underneath that I’m interested in.”

She swatted at him, but he made a well-timed duck.

“Maybe I don’t take it off,” she said.

“Does this encourage you?” he ground his erection against her.

“Oh fuck!” she gasped.

Poe pulled back, “Wow, I think that’s the first time I’ve heard you swear… It’s kind of hot.”

“Why do you think I like hanging around you when you’re fixing your X-Wing and swearing up a storm? Cursing and Yavinese. Two things from your mouth that turn me on.”
“Oh really? Take off that bra and I’ll speak all the Yavinese you want, Mi Amor.”

Slowly, Kaydel pulled down the straps and pulled off her bra. Kaydel had always been very sensitive about her breasts, barely more than an A cup. But when she saw the desire in Poe Dameron’s eyes as he first looked upon those small, but perky breasts, she felt like an absolute Goddess.

“Quiero besar todas las partes de tu cuerpo,” he declared in Yavinese.

Then his mouth was on her breast. Kaydel gasped as he went to work, sucking and licking. She wasn’t overly aroused by breast stimulation, but Poe Dameron knew how to get his job done. Her hand buried in his hair again, urging and guiding him as he licked long, flat strokes along one breast, then down into the valley and up to the other, repeating the action several times.

Kaydel groaned and panted as he lavished her. He spoke in his native tongue, letting his accent slip out every once and a while. Being a communications officer, Kaydel had some grasp of Yavinese, so she could generally understand what was being said and how to reply.

“So siento rico,” Poe said as she raked her nails across his shoulders. He urged her, “Un poco más fuerte.”

“¿Te gusta?” Kaydel asked as he circled her nipple with his tongue.

“Si, Mi Amor. It feels really good. But what about you? Am I making you feel good?”

“Me estás poniendo muy caliente,” she answered in Yavinese as he sucked her nipple, his hand thumbing the other. “Quiero resgar apagado toda su ropa. Quiero hacerte el amor toda la noche.”

Poe stared at her, “Damn. I didn’t know you knew that kind of Yavinese. What the hell does Threepio cover in basic training?”

“Actually I asked Commander Nalto if he could teach me a few things to say to you,” Kaydel confessed. “He wrote them on a slip of paper, refused to look me in the eye as he handed it to me, and then made me swear I’d never tell Aletha he taught me this.”

“I owe Diego Nalto a thank you.”

“Poe?”

“Yeah.”

“Quítate los pantalones y follame.”

“I owe Diego Nalto a huge thank you.” He stopped her hands when they went to his belt, “No, Darling. Not yet. There’s something else we’re going to do first.”

“And what’s that?” Kaydel tried to breathe normally as he started to unfasten her pants.

Her pants opened but still upon her, Poe looked Kaydel in the eyes, “Now, for the record, you do want to proceed with sexual activity? You consent to me performing acts of a sexual nature upon you, and you’ll inform me at any point if you withdraw said consent?”

“Yes, absolutely.”

“Okay, and for the record I am consenting to sexual intercourse with you, and will inform you if I withdraw said consent. Now, let’s talk protection. I’m not looking for any MisCalcs at this time in
my life. You on anything?"

“I have an IUD. What about you?”

“Your aunt made sure I was fully supplied in case something like this happened. She insisted on it… Brought a large box to me of it the morning after our first official date and threatened to castrate me if I ever touched you sans protection. I think she’ll do it too.”

“Oh good,” Kaydel blushed. “That’s not embarrassing at all. So we’ve got protection and consent. I think it’s time.”


He kissed her passionately to seal their agreement. As she wrapped herself in his embrace, Poe’s hand stroked between her thighs. She moaned as he caressed her damp clothed mound.

“You’re wet,” he smiled to himself. “Did I do that?”

“You mean did constantly grinding against me turn me on?” Kaydel said. “What do you think?”

“The only question is how wet?”

She cried out when he slipped his hand down her pants, beneath her underwear to her bare, wet pussy.

“Oh,” Poe chuckled, swirling his fingers around her folds. “Very wet. You want me inside of you bad.”

“Not if it means you’ll stop touching me like this.”

“Good. That was the plan.” He couldn’t help but smile to himself when he withdrew his hand and she whimpered. He brought his fingers to her mouth, “Suck.”

“Why?”

“A little extra lubrication. Now suck.”

She took it as a challenge. Kaydel stared Poe straight in the eyes as she sucked his fingers and licked like as if it were a different appendage of his.

“That’s enough,” Poe declared after a lot longer than necessary. His cock had hardened even more at the visual and feeling of her mouth on his fingers, craving that mouth elsewhere. “Keep that up and I’m not going to have the ability to do anything to you before having you do something to me. But I must say, if that’s a preview of what’s to come for me, I’m a lucky man. Now let’s get to work on getting you to cum for me.”

He shifted her pants down a little more for better access, but did not remove them entirely. Poe had always been turned on by keeping some clothing on his partners, the ability to just create and watch their pleasure without focusing on the bared goods.

Poe slid his hand down her pants and began to stroke her. His caresses were strong but not painful. He used her natural lubrication and her salvia on his fingers to ease the movements.

At first, he kept on her panties, playing with her lips and brushing against her clit through the cotton barrier. He watched her face and listened to her cries to pleasure. When those moans reached a sharp pitch, her eyes squeezed shut, and her hips started to jerk up against his hand, Poe pulled aside her
panties and openly stroked her flushed, wet pussy.

“Yes, please,” Kaydel groaned as he toyed with her clit. “Oh, don’t stop.”

“Sorry, Babe,” Poe’s hand drifted down to fondle her gushing opening. He dipped the tip of his middle finger ever so briefly into her passage, and then stroked back up to her clit. “But I had something else in mind for you.”

“Do what you want. I just want to cum on your hand… your large, skilled hands and those thick fingers that are making me so wet.”

“I hope it’s not just my hand you cum on,” Poe dipped his middle finger deeper into her and Kaydel gasped. “I’ve got something larger, thicker, and harder to make you cum.”

“Oh Poe, yes,” Kaydel felt herself get even wetter at his words. “I want you to fill me with your cock. Please give it to me.”

“Sorry, Babe, you’re not ready yet. You’re very tight and I’m not sure I would fit just yet.” He bent down and sucked her nipple, “But don’t worry. I know a way to make it fit.”

Kaydel cried out in pleasure when he sunk his middle finger all the way into her pussy.

“Yes, Poe! Yes!” Kaydel moaned as he pumped his finger frantically in and out of her. She was so wet and aroused, Poe found little resistance to pumping her quim. His mouth was on her breast, kissing, biting, and straight up slobbering on her nipples as he tasted her hungrily. A wet squishing sound filled the room as he pumped her faster, Kaydel’s breaths panting in harmony with his thrusts.

Poe slipped in another finger and smiled to himself when the action made her shriek.

“Yes, Poe. Please!” she thrust her hips up to meet his fingers. Her body so hot and primal as he had her pinned against the desk, the presence of her pants putting more pressure on his movements and on her clit.

When Poe’s other hand reached down to stroke her clit, it was too much. She let out a loud shriek and came hard, her legs clamping down on his hands to keep the pleasure on her as her muscles convulsed.

“Fuck,” Poe said, his voice dark as he watched Kaydel finish her orgasm. “Quiero come tu chocho.”

Before Kaydel could realize what was happening, Poe had yanked her pants and underwear to the floor. She gasped as she felt a wet pleasure on her cunt, and looked down to see Poe on his knees, lapping up her juices.

It was so pleasurable… too pleasurable after having just cum.

“No, no, stop,” Kaydel pushed him away.

Poe looked concerned, “I’m so sorry. Did I do something-”

“You did something very good,” Kaydel struggled to catch her breath, realizing she was naked and on complete display to him. How she was not on that floor with him, tearing off his clothing with her teeth was a mystery to her. “But I’m too sensitive. Not right after orgasm… but damn, Dameron you really know how… what do you say in Yavinese? Comer la coño.”
“Well, how about while you calm down, we see how well you can… what do you say in Yavinese? Metértela en la boca y mamar.”

Kaydel frowned at him, “What?”

“Blowjob.”

“Oh, sure. Stand up and I’ll take off your pants.”

Poe grinned, stumbling to rise to his feet. He was barely balanced when he had Kaydel’s arms around his neck and naked body pressed against him.

They kissed for a while, Poe running his hands all over her soft, bare skin. Their kisses were sloppily, tongues dancing together as she ran his rough palms down her spine. Kaydel gave him light sighs and moans that filled his heart with something warm. She pressed her body against him, complete and utter trust in him to care and pleasure said body.

There was something almost pure in the faith she had in him.

Her hands drifted down and unfastened his belt.

“You know,” she said with a coy smile, “I don’t think there’s any sound sexier than the clink of a belt being unfastened. There’s just something about it that gets me wet and ready.”

“Kay, Babe,” he stroked underneath her chin, “didn’t we agree to put your mouth to better use than talking?”

She playfully smacked his chest, but unzipped his fly. His cock was already struggling to escape their clothed confines before she had even unbuttoned him.

“You weren’t kidding about being hard,” Kaydel said very businesslike as she worked on ridding him of his pants, carefully avoiding his throbbing cock. “You know I didn’t picture you as a briefs kind of man. Thought you’d be all about boxers.”

“It’s easier to wear in a flight suit,” Poe admitted, his hands palming her ass. He was trying to be respectful, but his hips were attempting a mutiny as they made small jerks forward to press his hard, hot staff against her oh so soft skin. “Kay, please.”

“Patience Poe,” she teased him. “What you think I’m going to just start playing without getting you undressed?”

Kaydel stroked a fingertip quickly across the head poking out of his briefs. Poe gave a strangled cry, and his hands tightened their grip on her ass, trying to pull her against him.

“Uh uh,” Kaydel pushed away. “You touch me with that thing bare, and my aunt will have your head on a platter.”

“Kaydel, please, I need you to touch me. I don’t care how. I need you.”

“You that eager for sex?”

“No… I need you.”

It made her pause and a lovely smile stretch across her face, “Me? Like only me?”

“Only you,” he nodded.
“So if there was another girl in the room offering all I refused-”

“I want you. Everything else is incidental.”

Kaydel wasn’t entirely convinced, “So if I said no blowjobs ever?”

“If it’s part of the package, then I’ll give them up.”

“What about sex under the covers with all the lights off?”

“I’d learn to appreciate the sensation of touch over all others,” Poe countered. “What sense is more important in sex after all?”

“What about if I said missionary position only?” Kaydel shot.

“Face to face in the most intimate of positions? Sign me up.”

“What if I took a vow of chastity?”

“Okay, let’s not get carried away.”

Kaydel laughed and leaned into his strong, caring embrace.

“I want you, Kaydel,” Poe held her close. “I know things haven’t been going on for very long with us, but I’m excited to see what comes next… Especially if it involves you on your knees, sucking me off.”

“Alright, I think I’ve been torturing you long enough.” Kaydel directed Poe to the bed nearest to them and placed pressure on his shoulders, “Have a seat and get those pants off for me. Where’s the condoms?”

“My sock drawer,” Poe dropped onto the bed and worked his pants and underwear off. “Top right dresser drawer. Not the left. That’s Snap’s.”

“Well, we don’t want to defile any of Snap’s things, do we?” Kaydel found the box and removed two foil packets. As she walked back to the bed, she saw Poe Dameron waiting and ready from her, completely on display, “Wow.”

“Think you can work with this?” Poe stroked his cock to get it hard enough to put on the condom.

“Shouldn’t be a problem,” Kaydel knelt down and placed the condoms on the bed. She started to unwrap one of them, “I’m just a little surprised. I’ve never seen a guy shaved before. You really are all about maintaining your body.”

“I thought it better than my partner always spitting out pubic hair. There, that should be hard enough for the condom. Do you want me to put it on?”

“I can do it.” She kept eye contact with Poe as she unrolled the condom on his twitching shaft. “Good thing she went with the lubricated kind. Condoms admittedly aren’t ideal for blowjobs, but until I have paperwork declaring you aren’t going to give me an STI, latex is our friend. Now here’s hoping it’s not the disgusting tasting stuff.”

“Well, why don’t you give it a taste?” Poe winked, “Just to be sure.”

She coyly gave a tiny lick of his tip.
Poe grunted at all too brief action, “So?”

“I think it’s okay.”

“Well, why don’t you make sure? Give it a long lick to be certain it has a good taste.”

Kaydel smiled and licked the full length of the underside of his cock. Poe threw his head back, burying a hand in her pinned up blonde waves.

“Yep,” she wriggled her eyebrows, “tasty.”

“You’re going to kill me, Kay.”

“Then give me that cock, Poe.”

Poe gently but firmly pulled her head forward onto his shaft. She immediately went to work lapping at his cock. The plastic sheath separating them made Kaydel crave the taste of his silky skin, but safety was important. At least it was a rather thin condom, probably of the variety that boasted that it felt like nothing was even there.

“You’re so long,” Kaydel cooed as she licked him eagerly.

Her fingers gently toyed with his swollen testicles, which did have a small covering of black hair on them. She ran her tongue across them, playing between them and back to his shaft.

“Suck the head,” Poe groaned, trying not to just fall back on the bed and enjoy.

She did as she was told, and it let something almost animalistic rumble from Poe’s throat.

“Fuck, you’re so good at this,” he gently pulled her head forward to engulf more of his shaft. “How far can you take me?”

Kaydel pulled back to catch her breath, “Let’s find out.”

Slowly he guided her head as she bobbed back and forth on his cock. His hips jerked to take control, but she put her hands on his hips to restrain him. Poe worked her mouth further down onto him, more and more until she choked.

“Alright,” Kaydel coughed, Poe rubbing her back as she took a few deep breaths. “That’s how far.”

“You alright?” he toyed gently with one of her nipples.

She moaned at the soft caress, “Yes.”

“You want to get back to work?”

Kaydel grinned at him, “Yes, Commander, Sir.”

“I’m not your Commander,” Poe chuckled and moaned she started bobbing up and down on his cock, her tits bouncing along with the rhythm. “If I was your Commander, I’d have you on your knees doing this to me while I was filling out paperwork.”

“I feel like General Organa would view that as an inappropriate and wasteful use of resources.”

“Do not talk about General Organa or any of my authority figures while my cock is in your mouth.”
“Yes, Commander.”

The sloppy sound of a cock getting sucked reverberated off the walls. Poe casually pawed at her breasts as she licked and sucked and fucked him with her mouth. His hands would drift to her sides, then across her back, and up her spine. He toyed with the short hairs on her neck, and then his hand slid up but into her hair to guide her closer to his cock.

“You’re really good at this,” Poe groaned, her tongue messily coating the condom in a layer of saliva for better lubrication. “I don’t want to know why.”

“Because I love blowjobs,” Kaydel grunted as she tongued the head of his cock. She could see beneath the condom, the precum pearling out of his slit. “I love just getting on my knees, sucking a hard, thick, long cock, and bringing a man – especially one of authority – to his most base and primal senses. To just watch a man lose control to my mouth…”

“Touch your pussy,” he ordered.

“What?”

“I want you to fondle yourself as you suck my fat, hard cock. Play with those little folds, and that hard nub, and make yourself wet with your sweet juices.”

“Why?”

“Because I’m going to shove my big, hard cock into you very soon, and I want you ready to take me.”

Poe’s words turned Kaydel on like no other. She doubled her efforts to bob and suck on his cock while she reached down and played with her pussy.

“No,” Poe snapped with he saw her slide a finger inside her begging canal. “The one who gets to put anything into you tonight is me. My tongue, my fingers, my cock. You don’t get to finger fuck yourself. Now play with your breasts.”

Kaydel obeyed. Her hands were covered in salvia and her feminine juices, leaving shiny trails across her breasts.

“Fuck, I want to taste you,” Poe stayed her head for a moment to lick the glistening juices from her breasts.

She moaned, weaving a hand through his hair, and directed him to all the wet spots on her chest. When she was clean, Poe licked her all over once more to make sure of it. Then he gently bit down on her nipples, placing tender kisses after immediately to balm the pain.

“You make my breasts feel so good,” Kaydel cooed.

“It’s not hard. These are the most beautiful breasts I have ever tasted. So soft and sweet-”

“But they’re so small.”

“All part of the package, Babe,” Poe grinned. “I mean, sure, would I like to be able to slide my cock between them? Maybe. But I can live without. Besides, everyone knows it’s the nipples that are the best part of the breast, and these… so brown, so hard, so long. Fuck, I could run my tongue over these all day.”
“So, you wouldn’t want anything different on me?”

“Not a damn thing. Well… maybe the ability to let me continue tasting you after an orgasm. And well…”

“What?”

Poe moved his hands to her shoulder and looked her in the eyes to show her how serious he was, “I want to take your hair down.”

Kaydel hesitated, reaching up to touch her hair.

Poe caught her hand, “Please… I know why you don’t like it down but please, I won’t let anything happen to you. Can you please trust me with this and let me see that-”

“Beautiful river of golden honey?” Kaydel smirked.

“Damn it, BB-8. Did he really have to record that speech?”

Kaydel laughed, and Poe smiled at her. They stared into each other’s eyes, smiling at each other. She reached out and stroked his cheek.

“Okay.”

Poe blinked, “Really?”

“I trust you.”

Kaydel reached up and started unfastening her hair. One by one, ties and pins that held up her hair came out, and small strands started falling down her shoulders. Poe helped, mesmerized as each golden wave fell upon her milky shoulders.

When it all was down, Poe was surprised to see just how much Kaydel looked like her aunt. It was no secret that despite her age, Aletha was perceived around the Resistance to have a sort of ethereal beauty, the kind found in religious paintings of Goddesses. It was probably her age and the fact that Diego Nalto most likely had the ability and willpower to snap a rival’s neck, that he was Aletha’s only suitor.

Kaydel had the same hair, long, golden waves that creased down her shoulders and fell down her back. Soft and wispy. Poe couldn’t help but run his fingers through it.

“This was a bad idea,” Poe whispered.

She frowned slightly, “Why?”

“I don’t know if I can ever stand to see you with your hair up now.”

Kaydel just smiled and rose to her feet. She climbed into his lap, arms wrapping around his neck, lips pressed sweetly against his as her breasts pushed into his chest and his cock rested against her thigh.

“You are an absolutely amazing woman, Kaydel Ko Connix,” Poe whispered against her lips. “Stupid name and all.”

“You name has the word damn in it. You wanna start this?” Kaydel laughed. She leaned forward and pressed her forehead to his. “Poe?”
“Yes?”

“Make love to me.”

He nodded, his throat feeling dry, “Lay on the bed.”

With slow movements, Kaydel climbed out of his lap and laid down on the bed. Poe didn’t watch her, too busy removing the old condom and replacing it. When he turned back, he was met with a breathtaking sight. Kaydel laid out on the bed, golden haired fanned all around, her chest moving up and down with steady breaths, her legs spread for him, her tender sex wet and flushed, and her brown eyes locked on his with utmost trust.

He crawled atop her, kissing her tenderly as he positioned her legs around either of his hips. Her quim was pressed against his erection, and her pelvis made small thrusts to rub against him, both to give them pleasure, as well as to further lubricate the condom for their impending coupling.

“Are you sure about this?” Poe whispered, his eyes not breaking from those deep brown pools.

She gripped his shoulders and nodded, “Yes.”

“Okay… Out of curiosity, you’re not a virgin, right?”

“No,” she smiled. “I’ve done this before. You don’t have to ease me into this.”

“Good.” He kissed her. “Because Babe… I’m about to rock your world.”

Kaydel laughed as he reached down and positioned himself at her entrance. He kissed her once more, deeply, passionately, and full of the initial stirrings he was feeling in his heart. The ones he had yet to admit to her.

And then he pushed inside of her.

“Poe!” Kaydel cried out as his slid his entire length into her in one go.

“Hey, one try,” Poe grinned. “That’s a good sign.”

“Shut up and fuck me.”

Poe did as he was told.

A duet of moans, gasps, and groans filled the room as Poe Dameron thrust eagerly in and out of Kaydel Ko Connix. Her legs were spread wide for him, and she clung onto his shoulders to keep up with the increasingly passionate pace.

His mouth was hard against hers in a suffocating kiss as he slid deep into her tight wetness. One of his hands gripped the headboard as an anchor to drive himself hard, but not brutally. The other was dancing along her soft belly and liked to peak down at her clit.

“Oh, Poe,” Kaydel moaned, her eyes lulling backwards as she enjoyed the feeling of him moving in and out of her, stretching her, his balls slapping against her. “Oh my god, that feels so good. Don’t stop, please don’t stop.”

“It feels good,” Poe bent his head down to nibble at her collarbone. “I’m not hurting you or too big or thick?”

Poe didn’t actually believe himself to be overly big, maybe even average if he had to wager, but he
loved his partners telling him he had a big, thick cock as he rammed it into them.

“No, it feels fantastic,” Kaydel groaned, her breasts bouncing with his thrusts. “I feel so full with you inside of me.”

“It’s made for you, Babe,” Poe licked up her neck and kissed under her jaw. “Yeah, I bet it was. Made right to fit this beautiful pussy. You’re so tight, Babe. Moan for me.”

Kaydel’s moans pitched across the walls, serenaded by a frantic wet slapping, and the squeak of the bedsprings.

“Yeah, kiss my chest, Kay,” Poe groaned as her mouth explored his biceps.

He would admit during a much later sexual encounter that he really liked the way she sucked his nipples. The sensation made him seek out her own hard tips, the pair suckled each other as Kaydel’s hands gripped his ass, urging him in closer.

“You want me deeper?” Poe’s hot breath tickled her ear. “Get on your hands and knees.”

She eagerly turned over once he had withdrawn, and Kaydel presented herself to him like a nexu in heat. Kaydel put a pillow underneath her to support her position, and Poe grabbed the headboard for purchase. He lined himself up and slammed into her. A frantic squelching filled the room as he gripped her hip and humped her like a barghest stud taking his bitch.

Poe and Kaydel cried out in such pleasure that he was fairly certain that his neighbors on all sides – one of which was Admiral Akbar he realized with horror – were going to give him an earful of lectures in the morning about noise complaints and respect for your fellow soldiers.

Of course, he didn’t give a shit about anything in that moment but fucking Kaydel Ko Connix until she screamed his name loud enough that Luke Skywalker – wherever the hell he was – heard it.

“Talk to me, Kay,” Poe smugly urged Kaydel – whose face was buried in her pillow, absolutely lost to pleasure. “Does it feel good? Does my cock feel good inside of you, slamming in and out so hard?”

“Poe Dameron,” Kaydel weakly lifted her head from the pillow, “shut the fuck up, and fuck me.”

He went hard and fast, her pussy so wet and willing for such abuse. The pleasure was just so good, Poe wanted to cum then and there, but he was a gentleman and would wait for Kaydel. But as the time stretched on and she showed no sign of orgasm, Poe started to get tired.

“Kay, Babe, I don’t know how much longer I can last,” his thrusts started to taper off.

Kaydel scoffed teasingly, “Men are so weak. Fine, I’ll finish the job. Sit in the middle of the bed.”

He withdrew, and they shifted around the bed. Kaydel crawled into his lap again, this time carefully positioning her weight against his and lowering down onto his shaft.

“Now,” Kaydel ordered as she wrapped her arms around his neck, “kiss my breasts and fondle my clit. That should get us there.”

The tables turned, Poe obediently followed Kaydel’s instructions, savoring her gasps as his mouth, fingers, and cock pleased her most sensitive spots. It only took a few more minutes before Kaydel felt the beginning twinges of her orgasm.
“I’m about to cum!” she exclaimed, gripping him tightly and getting as much of him as possible. “Poe, I’m… I’m…”

“Say my name,” he urged finding the strength to slam up into her. “Say my name when you cum.”

“POE!” Kaydel screeched.

The second she started to climax, Poe shoved her down onto the bed and slammed himself into her. Poe let himself go, climaxing as Kaydel climaxed. He emptied himself inside of her violently, his hand gripping the headboard again as he pressed himself deep inside her.

When their orgasms abated, they were left panting. After a moment, Poe kissed Kaydel, rolled off, and laid down beside her. He removed the condom, kissed her again, tied it up, and threw it in the trash. Poe then grabbed a box of tissues from the bedside table and offered them to Kaydel for her to clean up.

Everything mopped up, tied off, cleaned up, and disposed of, they laid on the bed together, taking in what they had just done. Poe and Kaydel stared up at the ceiling in a little bit in shock. They were breathing heavily, and Poe couldn’t wipe the proud and satisfied smirk off his face.

“Wow,” said Kaydel simply, the smell of Poe’s musk clinging to her bare body.


She grinned, “Good… because I think I love you too.”

Suddenly Poe burst out laughing.

“What?” Kaydel frowned, suddenly feeling a little self-conscious. Had he not truly enjoyed their lovemaking? Had he been fooling her this whole time and now was going to turn on her after hearing her confession of love?

But Poe’s laughter was for nothing of that sort.

“It’s nothing,” he rolled back on top of her and kissed the worries away. “I just realized… this is Snap’s bed.”

The bedsprings squeaked and the moans sounded rhythmically to the pace of his thrusts. They sounded fake, Kylo Ren bitterly thought. Of course they were fake; the women who visited his bed merely put on a show for him. Everyone knew that it didn’t matter if they enjoyed it, or even if he enjoyed it. As long as he ejaculated, Snoke was happy.

The only upside to the visits was that no First Order officers would bother him for a good thirty minutes.

And sex, Kylo supposed. He guessed even getting sex this way wasn’t so terrible.

Frankly, at this point the whole mess bored him. Since he was nineteen, Snoke had been badgering Kylo to produce an heir and carry on the Skywalker bloodline. Every month, the potential mothers would be waiting in Kylo’s bed ready to do their duty. If Kylo liked a particular mother, he would call for them more often. But he rarely called for supplemental visits.

The Supreme Leader mandated that Kylo use the female Knights of Ren as his vessels to conceive.
They were strong with the Force and would obey Snoke’s command to go to Kylo’s bed. Female Knights of Ren were either fanatics who adored the Supreme Leader and jumped at the chance to be the mother of the next Skywalker Heir, or else they were displeased but consented to their duty without giving Kylo fight… or eye contact.

Kylo hated visits with those women.

There was only one woman who ever fought Kylo on the act, and that was Nera Ren. She made it clear to him that she was not going to couple with Kylo. They conspired against Snoke; the two of them would go into Kylo’s bedroom for half an hour and secretly play Sabacc while Nera made a series of overly false moans and declarations of his sexual prowess while Kylo desperately tried not to burst out laughing.

It was a nice little arrangement, a break from all the pressure… until her “mysterious death” two years ago. Women didn’t last long in the Knights of Ren, not while Tara Ren – Kylo’s second-in-command – was determined to be the mother of his child. Kylo could never prove she was behind the mysterious deaths of all the other female Knights of Ren; Tara was far too cunning to be found out.

Kylo wouldn’t want to prove it anyway. Tara was tall, dark, beautiful, cunning, a great warrior, and also the woman who took his virginity. Two years older than him, Tara had been granted the honour of the first shot at motherhood. Tara would visit Kylo’s bed multiple times a month, sometimes even pulling him into empty rooms or closets for an impromptu attempt. He knew her desire for him was all an act, but truth be told, Kylo had a crush on her. She was beautiful, knew just the right things to say to seduce him, and he liked the attention he got. If she wanted sex, Kylo was willing to give it to her.

But Tara was not the woman in his bed that night. Actually, he had forgotten the name of the newest Knight of Ren. All he knew about her was that she was lithe, strong in the Force, had long copper hair splayed on the sheets, and forest eyes he was desperately trying to avoid.

And that she was nineteen – old enough to be bred as if she was nothing more than a mare to Snoke.

To her credit the girl was trying to make an effort with their coupling. Moans, roaming hands, enthusiastic foreplay, moving her hips in what she probably thought was a pleasurable way for him. Of course, it was the girl’s first visit. She didn’t yet understand how it went in Kylo Ren’s bed; only Tara Ren got the pleasure of effort from him.

Still… he had to commend her on her optimism.

Kylo decided to grace her with honour of eye contact. He looked down and found the girl’s eyes squeezed shut. In pain? Pleasure? He couldn’t tell, but he doubted the latter.

He sighed, trying not to let it be too loud. At least the girl was making an effort; it was more than he could say. Besides, it wasn’t like it didn’t feel kind of good to have his cock sliding in and out of a wet and willing woman.

Deciding to reward her for her efforts, Kylo lowered his lips to her breasts. Good nursing breasts, Kylo thought; not too big, not too small, and she did have what Snoke would call excellent birthing hips. It made sense; this newest recruit was from Snoke’s personal stock of Force Sensitives rather than the almost Force Sensitive children they pulled out of the Stormtrooper classes. Snoke had picked her out himself, and probably thought her a good match after eight years of Kylo failing to provide an heir.
He glanced over at the clock on the wall and remembered the stack of paperwork he had to do. It was time to put both of the Knights of Ren out of their misery. Kylo bit her nipple hard, and his cock stiffened at her gasp of pain and what he could have sworn was a hint of pleasure. Spurred by his dominance over her, Kylo gave a few more rough pumps. He closed his eyes briefly to picture maybe Tara being there with him, raking his nails hard down her hips, and then ejaculated into the girl.

She looked surprised when he pulled out of her and rolled to the other side of the bed.

“Your pleasure is not the goal of these encounters,” Kylo told her bluntly. “Maybe if you impress me I might consider it some other time.”

“Of course,” the girl blushed, unsure of what field he desired to be impressed in.

“Here,” he pushed the blankets aside and got out of the bed. Tara was the only one he coupled with above the covers. Kylo pulled on a black night robe, and procured a cloth for her. He tossed it on the bed, “If you need to clean up a little. But not too much. We don’t want to defeat the purpose of this encounter.”

“Yes, Sir,” the girl quietly said, reaching beneath the covers with the cloth.

And then the awkward silence that Kylo always hated during these encounters. He wished the women didn’t come to his bed, that way he could just leave them as quickly as possible. But no, he had to wait until she dressed and returned to her own room.

“So,” Kylo made an attempt at small talk as she cleaned herself. He kept his back firmly to the girl, “That wasn’t terrible.”

The girl frowned, “Thank you, Sir?”

“Master Kylo to you,” he corrected. “I have people call me Master Ren, but as you are Master Ren yourself, you must call me Master Kylo.”

“Yes, Master Kylo. Did I please you, Master?”

He paused as he was pulling on his boot, “I’ve had worse.”

Kylo sensed that may not have been the right thing to say.

“You need more practice,” Kylo elaborated, using the Force to summon his other boot. “It takes a while to get used to a new partner. We’ll work on it.”

“Anytime you wish, Master,” the girl said.

He winced, “Try not to use the word anytime around me. It reminds me of… someone.”

The girl frowned, but did not press for answers.

Kylo sighed and turned to face her, “I suppose I should ask you your name.”

“Sasa Ren,” she answered, placing the now soiled cloth on the bed stand.

“And your trueborn name?”

“Sassa. Just an extra senth. No surname. Collected by the Supreme Leader as an infant. And yours?”
Kylo didn’t know whether to be amused or angry, “You don’t know?”

“I know the Solo part,” Sasa answered. “Not the given name.”

“Because I was named after a traitor. Jedi scum. I don’t wish to defile my tongue with that crude name.”

“As you wish, Master.”

Kylo had to admit that her calling him ‘Master’ was sending an odd twinge through his body. None of his lovers had ever referred to him as simply ‘Master’ – Tara would dig the eyeballs out of his sockets if he ever told her to – and he had to admit, he rather liked it.

“Keep calling me, Master,” Kylo ordered. “You may call me Master Kylo everywhere else, but in my bed, I am your Master.”

That brought a mischievous grin to her face that sent more twinges through his body. If he hadn’t just finished cumming, they would have hardened his cock.

“As you wish, My Master,” Sasa cooed.

She laid back on the bed and pushed off the covers so he could see the entirety of her naked body sprawled and enticing. A hand drifted to her breast, and long, manicured fingers started playing with the nipple he bit. If Kylo wasn’t going to pleasure her, apparently she was going to do it herself.

“May I ask you a question?” Sasa’s other hand slipped down to caress her thigh.

“Depends on the question,” Kylo swallowed as her finger stroked up her wet sex to her clit. Her finger glided so easily through the lubrication of her wet arousal and his essence oozing out of her sore passage.

She avoided touching the nub that would pleasure her so, instead swirled around her glistening folds, “How often will I be called for this duty?”

“At least once a month. More if I desire it.” He’d be damned if he said he wasn’t desiring it right now as she fondled herself so boldly in his bed in front of him. “Though, you aren’t exactly first on the roster if I get an urge.”

Something sparked in those deep green eyes, “Tara is, right?”

He scowled, “Where did you hear that?”

“The male Knights of Ren had a few things to tell me about all of this.”

“Oh really?” He knelt down on the bed. Sasa smiled mischievously as he reached out and placed a hand on her thigh. She was so soft. “What else are they saying?”

Sasa arched her back slightly, raising her breasts invitingly to his mouth, “Tara kills the other women who try to conceive with you.”

“It’s never been proven,” Kylo bent and took her nipple in his mouth. “What else?”

She moaned, her fingers increasing their tempo across her pussy lips, “That she would kill anyone who carried your child.”

“You would be protected should you conceive,” Kylo assured.
“That Tara is incapable of carrying a child since after eight years there’s been nothing from her.”

“She will cut your throat if you say such things to her face.”

He grasped her wrist as she attempted to slide one of her long fingers into herself. Kylo pulled her hand from her cunt, and she whimpered at the sudden loss of sensation. He gave her a hard, forbidding look and bit her nipple cruelly again.

With a soft moan, there was no denying she enjoyed the abuse.

“Unless I will it, you must never interfere with your womb after I have given you my essence,” Kylo admonished. Slowly he used his grip on her wrist to place her hand back on her desperate pussy. His middle finger forced hers forward, and he pressed it down onto her throbbing clit. “Not a drop must be spilled. Now, play with your clit and tell me what else they’ve been gossiping about my bedmates.”

Sasa shuddered as he guided her finger across her clit, keeping his hand on hers as they mutually pleasured her through one finger, “That you’ve been known to call more than one female Knight into your bed at the same time.”

“It happens,” Kylo admitted, suckling at her breast, this time more tenderly. He loved flicking his tongue over her small, pink nipples. “I recommend that you just enjoy the experience.”

“They also said that I wouldn’t enjoy coupling with you.”

Kylo raised an eyebrow, his fingers stopping their movements, “Were they right?”

Sasa’s eyes darkened, “That wasn’t terrible.”

A small grin crossed his face as she parroted his words from earlier.

“You have a sharp tongue, Sasa,” Kylo said.

“I would love to see how sharp your tongue is.”

Kylo considered it for a moment, “Lay back.”

“What?”

“Lay back.”

“But Master, you said a drop must not be spilled,” Sasa gently challenged. But from the buzz of arousal clinging in the Force around her, Kylo knew she didn’t mean her words.

“Then it’s a good thing that I am ready again to bless you with another chance to conceive. Now lay back and spread your legs,” he ordered. “Or do you not want to be satisfied yourself?”

She hesitated, surprised that he had taken her up on her innuendo. Then she understood; he was calling her bluff to test her. Would she be some limp sack of bones he did to as he pleased? Would she take control and put him under her heel like Tara? Or would she be the balance, obey his every order, but was unafraid to push him and be rewarded for her efforts?

“I’m ready for you,” Sasa spread her legs and smiled.

He knelt down between her legs and got to work, his hot mouth sucking and lapping her tender sex. If Snoke knew what Kylo was doing, he would be furious. Not a drop of Kylo’s essence was
allowed to be wasted, and here he was eating it right out of her.

“Oh, Kylo,” Sasa moaned, her hand buried in his hair.

He couldn’t help but think that that moan actually sounded real.

Using the Force, Kylo knew exactly what spot to hit in which order. It didn’t take Sasa long before she was cumming on his mouth.

“Thank you, Master,” Sansa panted, he emerged from between her legs.

“We’re not finished yet,” Kylo pushed her onto her side, bending her knee and lifting her leg. He grunted as he tried to find a position where he could hold up her leg, but still stroke himself to make his cock hard enough to enter her. Kylo couldn’t find one, so he ordered her, “Stroke me.”

She nodded, dragged her palm across her pussy for lubrication, and wrapped her fist around him. Sasa’s strokes were awkward, and he had to direct her to ease up on her grip.

It was her first time touching him like that. In fact, this whole set of play was a bit of an adventure. Their first coupling had gone the same way all of Kylo’s couplings went with anyone who was not Tara. The woman would arrive to find him already sitting naked on the bed. She would undress for him, and he would sit on the bed stroking himself to the image of her naked body. When he was ready, he would have her lay on the bed, and he would finger her with the dollop of lube. Kylo would quickly decide she was ready, put some more lube on his staff, and then mount her. He would have sex with her with very little touching and never any kissing on the lips until he ejaculated. Then they would awkwardly go about their own business.

But Sasa was taking things a way only Tara ever made them go.

“Put me inside of you,” Kylo ordered.

“Yes, Master.”

He gave a grunt that was part animalistic and part pathetic when she guided his cock inside of her. Kylo instantly went to work, thrusting inside of her frantically, biting and scratching her back and shoulders.

Sasa moaned but her breath hitched in a little bit of pain every now and then. She was loving the duet of pain and pleasure he was giving her, but decided she still needed a little revenge. Sasa grabbed a fistful of hair and yanked hard, her teeth baring down into his lip sharp enough that Kylo felt the coppery taste of blood.

He came immediately.

“That was wonderful,” Sasa moaned as he rolled away from her.

“It’s not an every time occurrence,” Kylo warned, reaching for the cloth. “Don’t set an expectation. I don’t usually couple with a vessel more than once during a visit.”

“Then why did you take me again?”

Kylo gave her a small smirk as his hand closed on the cloth, “Because you wasted the first attempt. Needed to leave you with some sort of hope.

That was when he noticed the blood on the cloth.
“Did I hurt you?” he looked over at her. He remembered the way his attacks on her body had riled her up. “Non-consensually?”

“Oh, no,” Sasa blushed. “That’s not why there’s blood.”

He scowled and then it clicked, “Were you a virgin?”

“Yes, Master Kylo. It’s an honour though, to be deflowered by someone as powerful, and if I may say, handsome as you.”

Kylo just stared at her. The girl had shown no sign; sure her moves weren’t the greatest but nothing to suggest it was her first time, and he hadn’t felt a barrier… and at least he thought he hadn’t. Sometime when he started his coupling there was a little resistance because there wasn’t enough lube and she was too dry for him. He had just thought that’s why the first couple of thrusts their first round had been difficult.

“Why didn’t you tell me?” he demanded.

Sasa sat up, unashamed of herself, “I didn’t think it was important. Is it?”

“Well no, but…”

“But?”

He couldn’t meet her eye, “I would have made it… better.”

Sasa dared to touch his cheek. Kylo stared at her in absolute shock as she brought her face close to his.

“There is only one way to make this better, Master,” Sasa said gently. “You’ve kissed all parts of my body… except my lips.”

Before Kylo knew what was happening, she was leaning in to kiss him. He was about to pull back when their lips touched, and… And…

Oh.

This was nice. Soft and sweet, her lips hesitant against his, but… nice.

When she pulled back, a trace of fear was in her eyes.

“Was that okay?” Sasa asked.

Kylo lost all ability to form words.

“Uh…” he barely choked out. “I’ve had worse.”

But truth be told… he hadn’t ever had better. The only one who had really kissed him before had been Tara, and that was a lot different than Tara’s.

His words made her smile, “Thank you, Master Kylo. I hope you seek me out again soon.”

“We’ll uh… we still train together. You know. Knights of Ren and all. We’ve got stuff scheduled tomorrow. I’m teaching my lightsaber class, and testing FN-2187, and…”

Why the hell was he babbling like an idiot?
“I’m going to go take a shower,” Kylo stood from the bed. He had the urge to grab his helmet so she wouldn’t see his flustered face. “You may leave once you are dressed.”

“As you wish, Master,” Sasa replied.

He reached the door to his private fresher when he stopped. Kylo turned back to see the pretty, naked girl in his bed looking at him like he wasn’t an evil master of the Dark Side.

“I’ll call on you again,” Kylo said. “Before a month has passed.”

“As you wish,” Sasa bowed her head.

He stared at her for a minute, then looked over at the curtained off corner, concealing a pedestal with a Sith’s helmet (because who wanted to have sex in the same room as their dead grandfather’s charred Sith Lord helmet?)

Kylo looked back at Sasa with interest, “You’ll make a good vessel for my heir.”

Weirdly enough, Sasa was flattered.

At first nobody took me seriously. But I had help, even though I didn’t want it – Unkar Plutt told the others to leave me alone and sent his thugs to make the other scroungers back off.

- Rey’s Survival Guide

Rey knew what she was supposed to be doing. She was supposed to be checking this area of the Star Destroyer for valuable haul while Luke and Quom were a little ways away down another corridor.

She was not supposed to be lying on the sand, making out with her shirtless boyfriend atop her, his hands roaming wildly.

“Teng!” Rey breathlessly moaned her hands memorizing the muscles in his back.

Her pale arms were a striking contrast to his dusky olive skin. The lowest of her hair buns had been undone, leaving a splash of brunette to fan out among the sand. As his chapped lips and the beginnings of a scruff of facial hair found her neck, she let out a delighted moan. One of Rey’s hands slid up his body and buried itself in his ever growing longer black hair.

“Rey,” Teng panted, trailing small kisses along her neck, and gently nipping her collarbone. “Rey, you feel so good. You just make me feel like… Like…”

“We can wait if you need to think of an adjective,” Quom’s voice said.

“I’d be happy to hear the end of that sentence,” Luke added dryly.

“Dad!” Rey exclaimed, pushing Teng off.

“Quom!” Teng exclaimed, grabbing his shirt.

“Rey. Teng,” Luke nodded at the duo casually as they scrambled to dress themselves. “I thought we
asked you two to explore the body of the ship. Not each other’s bodies.”

“Yeah, just because we’re okay with the two of you dating, doesn’t mean we approve of this sort of thing,” Quom added.

“Not while we’re trying to get work done anyway,” Luke said.

“I’m sorry, Sir,” Teng nodded. “I’ll go check the north passage. Rey you want to go south?”

“Meet back here in an hour.”

They scurried off in opposite directions, embarrassed, yet both totally thinking it had been worth it.

“First love,” Luke chuckled, resting an arm on Quom’s shoulder. “You remember when you were that young and in love?”

Quom blinked, “No. I didn’t get my first girlfriend until I was twenty.”


Rey winced as Roke knocked out another opponent in the Fighting Ring.


“Not yet,” Teng sighed. “And he’s been through every single goon Plutt has… today alone.”

“Yeah, if we wanted to start an uprising against the Blobfish, today’s the day,” Quom said as they watched Roke’s opponent get dragged out of the ring. He glanced towards the sun and shrugged, “Eh. Too hot.”

“I’d love to see someone knock him out,” Rey grumbled. “I swear, Aletha was the only thing keeping his ego in check and now she’s gone, he’s insufferable.”

“Hey, Luke, why don’t you fight him?” Quom suggested. “I bet that would be a good show.”

Luke glared at Quom, “Yeah… Too good a show.”

“Oh,” Quom understood.

“I think it’d be fun,” Teng said. “You’re a good fighter, but nothing ground-breaking. Enough to take Roke, but not on the level of a Jedi.”

“Sweetheart,” Rey patted his arm, “just because you learned what that word means, doesn’t mean you have to use it in every sentence.”

“I don’t use it in every sentence.”

“You woke up this morning and said your dreams were as vivid as a Jedi’s,” Quom reminded. “You then used Jedi in a sentence sixteen times today. Teng, boy, I love you, but knock it off before I smother you in your sleep.”

“Quom, don’t kill Teng,” Luke ordered. “And Teng, for the record, Jedi have dreams just like everyone else. It’s Force Visions that get complicated.”
“Alright, who’s next?” Roke called to the crowd. “Who wants to take me on and win the prize?”

Rey rolled her eyes.

“Come on, there’s got to be one of you lot who thinks they can beat me.” Roke smirked, “What about you, Erso? Want to go a round?”

“And embarrass you in front of a crowd of people?” Luke said simply. “Perhaps some other day.”

“Tinadar?”

“I’m going to try to keep my biting people in the throats to once a month. Check back in a few weeks.”

Roke grinned at the younger pair, “What about you two? Think you can take on me?”

“No,” Teng said bluntly. “I’m not an idiot. I can take Toras Kern, but I sure as hell am not going to take on the Blobfish’s big fish.”

Rey chuckled.

Roke narrowed his eyes at her, “What about you, Girl? You’ve been mouthing off a lot lately. Show me what you’re made of.”

Luke gripped her eyes, “Absolutely not.”

She glowered at her father as the crowd chuckled, “Let go of me, Dad.”

“Rey,” he chastised.

“How am I supposed to get any respect around here if you three won’t let me fight my own battles?”

“Roke is not someone to prove your point with.”

“Come on, Princess,” Roke jeered. “Let’s go a round.”

“Leave her alone!” a voice called across the ring.

A simmering fury set upon Roke’s face as he turned to face the person who dare challenge him, “Something to say, Dirk?”

Usually that look on Roke’s face would send Dirk scurrying for cover, but not this time.

“Leave her alone,” Dirk firmly repeated.

Roke blinked, unable to process what was happening before him. *Dirk* of all people was challenging him? The thought literally made him laugh.

“Leave her alone?” Roke chuckled. “What, am I messing with someone under your protection?”

“Yes.”

Rey scowled. In all her years on Jakku, not once had she seen Dirk challenge anyone, not seriously anyway. Dirk was a wall of muscle, but honestly, one never used. If Plutt needed someone to throw a punch, Roke was his go-to. If he could fight, no one in Niima had ever seen any evidence of it.

“Well, then,” Roke leaned casually on his staff, “why don’t you show me what you’ve got?”
Something fearful and panicked flashed in Dirk’s eyes.

He looked to the ground, “I can’t.”

“Come on, Big Guy,” Roke laughed. “Let’s go a round.”

“Leave him alone,” Rey shouted.


Roke looked back to her and grinned, “Alright then, if you two want to keep running your mouths, how about a little deal? Either Dirk comes and fights me like a man, or I drag Princess her by the hair into the ring and fight her myself.”

Luke’s eyes narrowed, and a growl came from Quom that made everyone take a step away from him.

“Don’t do this, Roke,” Luke warned. “If you touch my daughter-”

“You’ll do what?” Roke challenged. “See, here’s the thing Erso, I don’t think you’re going to do anything to me. At least not much. Concealing your true identity is far more important than a scavenger’s squabble. You may kick my ass, but you’re not going to make me pay. Besides, how is she ever going to learn on her own how to fight?”

“Let me do this, Dad,” Rey insisted. “I can prove myself to this town-”


“Then fight me yourself,” Roke said.

Luke took a deep breath, “No.”

Roke just shook his head, “And they call you a hero.”

“Because I know when not to fight,” Luke replied. “Come on, Everyone. Let’s go back to the shop.”

Luke and Quom started to make their way through the crowd, but suddenly Teng’s voice called out.

“Rey, no!”

They whipped back around to see Rey climbing into the fighting ring.

“Rey, stop!” Luke ordered, racing forward.

She had closed her hand upon a staff from the weapon rack the fighters were allowed to use for matches when someone grabbed her shoulder.

“Go to your father,” Dirk sternly ordered. “I’m doing this.”

Rey opened her mouth to object, but the serious look in his eyes made her stop. She nodded, gave him the staff, and exited the ring to meet her very unhappy father.

Dirk took a deep breath and turned to face Roke.

“So you’re actually fighting me,” Roke laughed. “That’s a first. I’ve been here over a decade, and I don’t think I’ve ever seen you fight.”
“Boss didn’t want me to.”

“Nah, I suppose it’s all about image with you. All muscle but no brains. I’m surprised you have the mental faculties to be protective of someone.”

Dirk narrowed his eyes, “You don’t touch her.”

“Maybe not today, but let’s see what you get. I bet this will be easy; too easy. Why don’t we play this fair and you take the first shot?”

“Are you sure about that?”

“Be my guest.”

The pair stood before each other, staffs ready to clash, eyes locked tightly. Kerlos Slarga – recovering from his own injuries after fighting Roke – made the usual announcements. When he told the pair to ready themselves, Dirk gave a small head bow and gestured to Roke with his fore, middle, and ring fingers pointed out and fitted neatly together.

Luke frowned. Where had he seen that gesture before?

Kerlos looked between the pair, “Annnndddd…. GO!”

Rey blinked and missed everything. It was one blurry but fluid motion. Dirk’s staff cracked against Roke’s skull, hip, and then took out his knees. In two seconds, he landed three perfect hits.

And he was only getting started.

The crowd watched in stunned silence as Dirk savagely but efficiently took Roke down. There was no time to reaction, nor defend himself. Roke was just scrambling to dodge blow after blow. It was dramatic the way Dirk fought, and something mechanical.

And it Luke, it was also very familiar. But where had he seen it before? It was a person for sure, but as much as he wanted to say it was a man, half of his mind insisted it was a woman.

The match was very short, maybe five minutes tops. The next thing anyone really knew was that Roke was unconscious on the ground, and Dirk was standing awkwardly over him.

Dirk looked shyly over Rey for approval, “Did I win?”

The entire crowd burst into applause.

Dirk smiled as he took in the adoring crowd. He especially loved the way Rey was jumping up and down and hollering. A few people even started to chant his name when Kerlos proudly declared Dirk the winner. No one had ever taken down Roke physically before, only Aletha had managed to beat him through cunning. It filled the people of Niima Outpost with joy to see the towel bully finally defeated.

Looking around the ring at the cheering crowd, Dirk let the adoration get to him. Luke clapped loudly as Dirk held up a fist in victory. Then Dirk gave a bow, stretching his arms out to the sides with each hand having his fore, middle, and ring fingers pointed out and fitted neatly together.

Luke stopped clapping. He knew where he had seen that gesture before. Not only that gesture, but the one he had made to Roke before the match, and the fighting style he had used during the match.

He had seen them whenever Alyla and Gavyn Kene fought, a remnant from the slave days.
Dirk had been a slave in the Zygerria Fighting Pits.

Luke felt a hand on his shoulder, and he turned to see Alyla Kene standing next to him.

“It is as you believe,” Alyla said softly. “Dirk was one of us.”

And then she walked away.

“Alyla!” Luke called out, chasing after her as she disappeared behind a tent.

Teng and Quom frowned at each other as Luke took off.


Rey shrugged, “Just chasing after a ghost.”

Teng opened his mouth and then closed it, “Oh.”

“Just another day with the Erso insanity,” Quom patted Teng on the shoulder.

________________________


She had disappeared behind the group of tents where Quom’s workshop was. When Luke arrived among the row, he saw her duck into the workshop. Maybe if he ran fast enough he could reach her before she disappeared.

Luke threw open the tent flap and came to a screeching halt. Sitting there on a work bench was the last person he thought he’d see.

“Ben?”

To be clear, it was not Ben Solo. Rather it was a very young-looking Obi-Wan Kenobi glowing blue with longer ginger hair and beard.


Luke glanced behind himself, looking for whom, he wasn’t certain. He stepped into the tent and joined Obi-Wan on the bench.

“I’m sure you have many questions,” Obi-Wan began.

“Several.”

“I will try to answer what I can, but I am not here to reveal all to you. There are some parts of this that you will need to learn at a later time, some parts which Alyla must explain to you herself, and some parts which no one yet has the answers to. But I will try, Luke.”

The corner of Luke’s mouth lifted, “No certain points of view?”

Obi-Wan smiled, “Not this time. Now, which question presses most on your mind?”

As a man nearly fifty, Luke hoped he had gained decorum and self-control with age. Yet he found himself blurting out the first and most ridiculous question in his head.
“Why do you look young?”

Obi-Wan laughed, “You have your father to thank for that. I decided that if he got to go around visiting people in his prime, so do I. It just… took a while for me to figure out how to alter my appearance. I always did say your father was a natural with Force Abilities.”

“Admittedly this family is also very vain with their appearances.”

“Yes, that too. You should see Padmé. I do not understand how one can be in the netherworld of the Force and yet still has more outfits in a month than I had in a lifetime.”

Luke paused, waiting for the voice of Anakin Skywalker to mock his old mentor’s wardrobe, yet nothing came.

“Where is my father?” Luke asked.

“Anakin is… unhappy with these developments,” Obi-Wan answered. “He thought it best to direct his attentions elsewhere as to not reveal anything he shouldn’t.”

“Is Alyla where he’s been spending all his time over the past few years?”

Obi-Wan shifted awkwardly, “…Among other things.”

Luke sighed, “Even when you come to give me answers you’ve always managed to be vague.”

“There are things you cannot always share with those you care about. You’re going through with the same situation with your daughter.”

“Honestly, I’m surprised she hasn’t figured it all out yet. I mean, she knows I have a sister, whose name she would know, a brother-in-law, again who she would know, that owned a Corellian freighter where a Wookiee was employed. That we have visions and do something that is quite clearly a mind trick. I have a mechanical hand, lived on a desert planet, and am named Luke. People fear me, and we have money. She has a cousin, she knows the names Brendan and Felicity Rhiaon… seriously, how has she not put it together yet?”

“The Force will not allow her to uncover the truth until the time is right. Just like how you could not truly sense that Leia was your sister until I told you about your twin.”

“So the Force is basically waiting for my go-ahead before my daughter’s mind puts together something that at this point should be a very simple mystery?”

“There are downsides to being so strong with the Force,” Obi-Wan said. “Such as this. The Force can have quite the hold over your mind. If the Force doesn’t want her to figure it out until the lull is over, then Rey unfortunately will not learn it until then.”

“That’s… actually kind of a relief,” Luke admitted. “I’m glad she won’t find out until I tell her myself.”

Obi-Wan was silent.


“The future is still in motion, but there is a chance that she might not exactly hear it from you.”

“Excuse me?”
“Honestly, there are about seven different ways this could go. It’ll be interesting to see which one plays out.”

“Oh good. That weight’s back on.” Luke sighed, “Alright, I suppose we should focus on what you came here to discuss. What is going on with Alyla?”

“I’m afraid you’ll have to be more specific.”

“Is she a ghost like you?”

“No, not like I am. Nor like what Qui-Gon Jinn became. This is something different altogether… and I wouldn’t quite call her a ghost.”


“Perhaps a phantom. There but not quite… it’s very complicated.”

“Did you seriously just come here to tell me that you can’t actually answer my questions and I should let this go until the Force wishes it and just deal with this phantom menace?”

“I am quite happy you ended up with your mother’s intelligence.”

“Obi-Wan,” Luke sighed, “I can’t just let this go. Not when she’s talking to Rey and telling her about Ben.”

“Master Yoda and I have already spoken to her about the need for restraint. She will not be revealing anymore personal history of Rey or Ben to each other.”

“Each other? Does she visit Ben?”

“It’s…”

Luke raised an eyebrow, “Complicated?”

“You’ve seen what remains of her Signature,” Obi-Wan said. “She’s… bound to him.”

“Why does she visit Rey and I, then?”

“I believe she’s made an arrangement with Ben Solo.”

Luke’s eyes widened, “He knows of us?”

“No,” Obi-Wan assured. “As far as Ben Solo knows, Luke Skywalker is on Ahch-to, Leia Organa is on Hosnian Prime, Han Solo is who knows where, and both Rey and Felicity Rhiaon Skywalker are dead.”

“Wait, you just discussed someone’s living status.”

“In the context of another’s point of view, yes.”

“Then in Ben’s point of view, is Alyla one with the Force?”

“I cannot answer that,” Obi-Wan shook his head.

“Come on, Obi-Wan. Is she dead or not?”

“You know I cannot reveal the current living status of another person.”
“Oh, please,” Luke rolled his eyes. “Do I have to go throw myself off a Star Destroyer to be on the bridge between life and death to get some actual answers?”

“Luke, if I could discuss the living status of a person, you and I would be having a very different conversation right now.”

“Ben, please-”

“Enough,” Obi-Wan said calmly but firmly. “This is not your story, Luke. This isn’t even Rey’s. In time you will learn the truth, but you are just a footnote here. Leave it alone, and one day the Force will reveal all.”

And with that, Obi-Wan Kenobi disappeared.

Luke sighed, “Well… That was kind of pointless.”

“I still can’t believe it,” Rey and Teng were busy congratulating Dirk as Quom went off to go find Luke. “That was amazing. Where did you learn to fight like that?”

“It’s a… long story,” Dirk shifted uncomfortably as two scavengers fought each other in the ring behind them.

“Well, I tell you what, if I fought like that no one would mess with me.”

“I could teach you,” Dirk offered.

“Really?” Rey asked.

“If you want. You’d be good with a staff.”

“She is very nimble,” Teng nodded.

Rey frowned, “Is that an innuendo?”

“Honestly I don’t know. The furthest we’ve gone is clothed minor groping.”

“Yeah, because you said you wouldn’t do anything more until I was sixteen and a ‘more reasonable age’ or something like that.”

“You can wait two months, then you can have all the non-minor groping you want… Please, God don’t let your father be standing right behind me.”

“No, you’re safe,” Dirk said. He pointed behind Teng, “But there is someone else.”

Rey frowned and turned to see Devi and Strunk approaching them.

“Oh good,” Teng slung an arm around Rey’s waist, “your favorite person.”

“Rey!” Devi waved, racing up to her. “Wasn’t that amazing?”

“Dirk was wonderful,” Rey stiffly answered. “Hello Strunk.”

“Hey,” Strunk nodded.
Devi grinned as she looked between Rey and Teng, “What’s this? Didn’t you insist to me that Malar wasn’t your boyfriend?”

“At the time, the report was true,” Rey replied. “Developments have happened since then.”

“I’d say. Atta boy, Malar,” Devi winked. “Guess I can’t get my claws in you anymore.”

Teng had to hold back a laugh as Rey suddenly wrapped her arms around him possessively like he was a toy Devi was about to snatch away.

“Just cut to the chase, Devi,” Rey held Teng tight.

“I’m really surprised about today,” Devi said. “I thought you didn’t want to fight in the ring, and yet there you were about to fight Roke. Does that mean you’ve thought about my offer?”

Teng frowned, “What offer?”

Before Rey could stop her, Devi launched into an explanation of her fighting ring proposal.

“Wow, that’s… admittedly a good idea,” Teng said. He looked down at Rey, “You wanna take her up on it?”

“No! …Yes. Maybe? I don’t know. Today was just a heat of the moment thing, but if I could get people around here to take me seriously on my own merits… But I don’t want to drag you in on anything you don’t want.”

Teng shrugged, “I’m game. Strunk, you wanna go a round?”

“Sure,” Strunk nodded. “I get portions for it, right?”

Devi patted his arm, “We’ll talk about it later.”

“If you wanna do it, Rey, I can help you,” Dirk offered. “We could start those lessons as soon as you want.”

Devi bit her lip, “You’re going to teach her?”

Rey narrowed her eyes, “Is that a problem?”

“No,” Devi said quickly. The gears were turning in her mind, recalculating plans of action. “That would be fine.”

Rey had a bad feeling about this.

“So, do we have a deal?” Devi asked.

Rey looked over to see where Roke had been dragged to get his wounds tended to. She had come so close to showing this town what she was made of, and yet what had happened? Another man had once again stepped in to save her. She had to put a stop to this. Rey had been working so hard to get her fighting skills up, and if Dirk helped her perfect it, she just might have a chance.

But still, she knew she couldn’t trust Devi, and she remembered the way Luke and Aletha had both reacted to the idea of her in the fighting ring. Maybe this wasn’t such a good idea.

Yet it was a tempting one.
“Can I give you an answer tomorrow?” Rey asked.  
Devi’s face lit up, “Of course. Take all the time you need. Want to talk to your father first?”  
“No… I had someone else in mind.”

Kaydel woke to find the blankets over her and Poe smiling down at her.  
“Good morning,” Poe murmured.  

“Morning,” Kaydel blinked, trying to get her bearings. As her mind took in the mess of clothing on the floor, flashes of pleasure from the previous night entered her mind. She was laying in Poe’s bed, both still naked under the sheets and tangled in the other’s warm and soft embrace. “Were you watching me sleep?”  

“I woke up a few minutes ago and didn’t want to wake you.”  

“It’s still creepy, Poe.” Kaydel sat up and smoothed down her hair, “What time is it?”  

“It’s morning. Don’t worry, neither of us have shift yet,” he placed a set of three kisses upon her bare shoulder. “You look just as beautiful in daylight as moonlight.”  

“Aren’t you charming this morning?”  

“I’m Poe Dameron. I’m always charming,” he sat up and pulled her into his arms.  

“Charming, really?” Kaydel wrapped her arms around his neck. “Because last night there were certainly a lot of moments I would have used the term vulgar over charming.”  

“And the vulgarities that came out of your mouth were quite astounding. You kiss your mother with that mouth?”  

“No, but I kiss you,” Kaydel leaned forward and pulled him into a kiss. Their tongues danced as Kaydel wove her hands in Poe’s hair, pulling him in closer for more of that delicious taste of his lips. She murmured against his lips as they broke for air, “How much longer do we have until the point where we would miss breakfast?”  

“About thirty minutes,” Poe slipped a hand beneath the blanket, and stroked her thigh. He tried not to shudder as Kaydel gently rubbed her bare breasts against his chest.  

“Thirty minutes, huh? I bet we could manage something in twenty.”  

Poe chuckled, “Well, you lot in Communications are always looking for efficiency.”  

He wasted no time in bringing her lips to his once more and claiming her mouth with his tongue. Kaydel moaned as Poe slowly pushed her back on the bed, peppering kisses from her lips to her jawbone, neck, collar, and down the tops of her breasts.  

Kaydel’s breath hitched as his mouth moved lower down her chest until he was just about to take her nipple between his lips. He drew a tongue over her sensitive nub, and Kaydel lifted her back to offer her chest more to him.  

The door slid open and an elegant woman with bright purple hair waltzed right into the room without
“What the hell?” Poe exclaimed as he and Kaydel scrambled for composure. There was nothing they could do about their clothing all over the room – to his horror, Poe realized he had accidentally flung Kaydel’s bra over the bedside lamp – but thankfully they were covered by the blankets and could protect some level of modesty.

“You must be Commander Poe Dameron,” the woman said pleasantly, completely unaffected and unashamed of having walked in on such an intimate moment.

“Yeah, I am,” Poe snapped at her. He pulled up the blankets to shield Kaydel a little more, “Who are you, and what the hell do you think you’re doing? These quarters are private!”

“I’m Vice Admiral Amilyn Holdo,” the woman introduced. “I’m your commanding officer until Commander Nalto recovers. I know it’s a little early to get the day started, but I always like to run things a little tighter and little more on schedule than General Organa. I know she has Commanders report to her between nine and ten, but I expect all Commanders to be cognisant enough to report at exactly nine. Since it was 9:20, and you are now acting Head of Air Force, I thought it prudent to come find you and discuss the latest reports. As acting head, I have the master code to sleeping quarter doors and let myself in.”

Poe just stared at her in utter amazement, “Forgive me. No one informed me that we weren’t running on the same schedule as everyday where I report in at 10:30, regardless of if I’m acting in Commander Nalto’s position or not. I will report in at 9 am tomorrow if you wish, but you can’t just go barging into my sleeping quarters uninvited. I could be busy with… exactly this situation.”

“Yes, on that subject,” Holdo eyed Kaydel, “what is your name, rank, department, and position?”

Kaydel blinked, horrified that she was being interrogated by the Resistance’s Third-in-Commander, while naked in bed with a commanding officer.

“Speak up, Dear, we don’t have all day,” Holdo urged.

“Lieutenant Kaydel Ko Connix, Junior Controller, Communications under Taslin Brance.”

“Oh good, not a pilot then,” Holdo said pleasantly.

“What can I say?” Poe chuckled. “I like my adventures in the sky, but my bed and women on the ground.”

The deathly look Kaydel gave him in response made Poe think she wouldn’t be joining him in said bed for a very long while.

“Commander Dameron,” Holdo smiled, “not to overstep my bounds, but I advise you reconsider this arrangement. I’m not certain if this is a committed relationship or a one night stand, but sleeping with your subordinates – regardless of the department – is never a good idea. You don’t want things to get messy or abuse your position of power.”

Poe narrowed his eyes, “You’re saying I can’t have consensual sex with my fiancée?”

Kaydel’s eyes widened.

“Oh?” Holdo asked. “She’s your fiancée? I suppose it’s not a problem then.”

“No, she’s not my fiancée,” Poe said. “But why would that make a difference? You said committed
relationships aren’t a good idea. Throw marriage into the mix and somehow that makes it okay?”

“I don’t mean to meddle.”

“Then don’t,” he cut off coldly.

Holdo’s eyebrows knitted together; she bristled at being challenged, “Commander Dameron, I am your commanding officer. You can’t speak to me like that.”

“And you can’t barge into my room, tell me you’ve switched the reporting schedule without telling me, lecturing me about tardiness according to your standards and not the ones to which I have been previously been held to, and then criticize my relationship with the woman I love, and then tell me I shouldn’t make love to my own girlfriend who is not my subordinate in any respect. Kaydel does not report to me, nor work in my department. Are you going to go around to every couple in this organization and tell them they have to split up? I’m sure General Organa and her husband, Captain Solo would love to hear that.”

“No, I’m not going to tell married couples to split up.” Holdo shot. “But I was going to have a chat with a few interdepartmental couples about how unwise it would be to pursue a relationship. My first couple was actually going to involve Commander Nalto. Apparently he’s been flirting with a nurse.”


“Oh.” Holdo smiled at Kaydel the false political one she saved for people she did not like. “That explains a few things.”

Clearly she wasn’t taking a liking to Poe and Kaydel.

Which was good, because both would be absolutely comfortable to say they did not like her.

“Well, Commander,” Poe tried to keep the bitterness from his voice, “if you would like to discuss the paperwork with me, I’d be happy to report to you. Allow me to make myself presentable, and I’m come straight to you.”

“Alright, but don’t take too long,” Holdo said. “I’ve heard how long you can take to perfect your appearance. Remember, war is no place for vanity.”

“Of course,” Poe grinned at her. “I’m sure you were glad to be naturally born with eyeshadow and purple hair.”

Holdo scowled at him, “Twenty minutes, Dameron. I’ll be waiting.”

“Yes, Ma’am,” Poe saluted as she stormed out of the room. When the door locked, he sighed and hit the pillow.

“Poe?”

“Yeah, Babe?”

“Can we start calling her the purple-haired bitch too?”

“You read my mind.”
Kaydel couldn’t stop smiling as she and Poe exited the room and said goodbye. They must have kissed a thousand times before, yet his lips always tasted so good.

Too good.

“Are you wearing lip balm?” Kaydel frowned.

“You would not believe how chapped my lips get in atmosphere,” Poe explained. “We got drills later.”

“But flavored lip balm?”

“If this relationship is going to work, you’ve got to understand I have no notions of masculinity restricting me from indulging in skincare, haircare, and other such things. I actually put on makeup when I know I’m going to be photographed.”

Kaydel smirked and fixed his collar, “You know, I got bored a couple weeks ago with Aunt Ally. We decided to look up the meanings of the names in our family to see if we could at least justify some of our names. Weirdly enough Aletha means truth and Alecta means honesty.”

“How is this relevant?”

“Because I looked up your name,” she ghosted her lips over his, gripping his shirt lightly. “Dameron means Lord or Master, very fitting for a commanding officer. But Poe… means peacock.”

Poe chuckled, “Oh no.”

“You, Commander Dameron are quite the peacock,” she gave him a peck on the lips. “No, go, my peacock, and try not to peck out Vice Admiral Holdo’s eyes.”

“I make no promises,” Poe gave her one last kiss before setting on his way. He was surprised when Kaydel set him off with a light swat on the butt. Poe shook his head, “I love you.”

“I love you too,” Kaydel called.

He waved right before disappearing around the corner, and she sighed in contentment.

“Someone’s doing the walk of shame,” Jessika Pava chuckled as she walked down the hallway.

“More a strut of pride,” Kaydel grinned. The pair weren’t friends, but they were friendly enough.

“Hey, I gotta ask,” Jessika eyed the hallway Poe had disappeared down. “For all his egotism… he any good?”

“Jess… I think he may have ruined me for other men.”

Kaydel was walking down the hallway alone, planning on changing before getting something to eat and reporting in for the day. She was lost in thoughts of love and memories of the previous night. She wished that Aletha was here to discuss it with her, but at least she had Paige to talk to, provided Rose wasn’t also in the room. The girl wouldn’t stop the conversation, but she would blush up a storm in the corner, making Kaydel want to stop for another time.

Rose was a nice girl, but she had some growing up to do.
Who could Kaydel really talk to about this is Paige were unavailable?

A beeping suddenly came from her pocket.

Kaydel frowned and dug a silver comm from her pant pocket. It was Kira’s comm. She had completely forgotten that she found it in Aletha’s room yesterday. Must have fallen out of her bag.

Taking a quick look around that no one was present, Kaydel pressed the talk button, “Hello?”

“Kaydel?” Kira asked from the other end.

“Morning,” Kaydel smiled. “Or whatever time of day it is for you.”

“It’s the afternoon. Why are you answering Aletha’s comm?”

“Oh, Kira, I’m so sorry,” Kaydel winced. “Aletha’s not here right now. Yesterday, she got called away on a super important mission for two months. I found the comm in her room, on the floor and meant to give it to her, but she was gone by them. I think she dropped it. I know she wouldn’t abandon this on purpose.”

“Could you send it to her?”

“Sorry, Kira. No communications in or out. You’ll have to go without her for two months.”

“Oh… that’s too bad.”

Kaydel frowned, “But hey, if you need someone to talk to, I could always lend an ear. How about I keep the comm on me until Aunt Ally gets back?”

“Could you?” Kira asked. “That would be great! This whole talking with females thing is the only thing keeping me sane at the moment, I swear.”

“Anytime you want… well, except if I’m getting lucky. Then you can wait.”

“How about we cross that bridge when you and Poe actually get at it?” Kira teased.

“Actually as of last night, I got it… a few times actually.”

“Really? Tell me everything. Or at least what you’re comfortable with.”

“Will do, but first let’s deal with you. Why’d you call?”

“Oh, Devi made me the fight offer again, and I think I might want to take it,” Kira said. She then explained all the new developments to Kaydel, and asked, “What do you think? I know Aletha was against me fighting, but if Dirk trains me, I might have a shot.”

“You might,” Kaydel thought about it. “The problem is Devi. Sounds like the girl is up to something, and do you really want to start getting in the rink with other scavengers? It sounds like a good way to make enemies. Plus, if I tell you to go for it, my aunt will strangle me.”

“She won’t strangle you… She’ll drug you, lie about it, and then reveal the truth when it’s a moment too late.”

“Aunt Ally does drug people a lot. I should probably report that… but then she’ll drug me. You know, my family doesn’t handle conflict well.”
“Neither does mine. I think that might be how I ended up on Jakku.” Kira sighed, “I just wish I could get an outside opinion on how this sounds. Someone who doesn’t know about gangster dynamics and can just tell me at face value if it’s a good idea to fight Devi.”

“You mean someone whose opinion isn’t affected by the knowledge their aunt would kill them and/or drug them if they told you yes?”

“Exactly.”

“Actually…” Kaydel glanced down the hallway. “I have an idea.”

“I say kick her ass.”

“Jessika!”

“Don’t you Jessika me, Paige. It’s the only way to assert her dominance.”

“Please there’s the whole keep your enemies close aspect,” Kaydel agreed. “If Devi is going to pull something, at least you’ll be expecting it.”

Jessika looked to the girl on her left, “What do you think, Rose?”

“Honestly, I don’t know,” Rose admitted. “I was just in the room when you two came in.”

Rose and Paige Tico had been very surprised when Kaydel suddenly entered her and Paige’s room, dragging in Jessika Pava, and demanding their opinions of fighting matches on Jakku.

Even weirder was the voice coming from the small silver comm the four girls were seated around on Kaydel’s bed.

“Well, if you were in my position,” asked the voice on the comm, “what would you do?”

Rose sighed, “What’s her name again?”

“Kira,” Kaydel supplied.

She nodded, “Kira… I think I’d do it.”

Paige blinked in surprise, “You would?

“You wouldn’t?”

“Of course not.”

“What did Mom and Dad teach us?” Rose said. “Never stand idly by and let someone take advantage of the people and places around you. Stand up for yourself and stand up for others.”

“Yeah, that’s why we’re in the Resistance, Rose,” Paige replied. “I don’t think they meant duels on Jakku. Besides, violence should always be the last resort. Honestly, if I had my way, violence wouldn’t be used at all.”

Jessika scowled, “Paige, you’re on the bomb squad.”

“I said if I had my way, not that I was actually a pacifist.”
Then you’re all agreed?” Kira asked. “I should take up Dirk’s offer and fight Devi?”

“Show of hands for those agreed?” Jessika directed.

She and Rose raised their hands.

“Those opposed?”

Paige raised her hand.

“And those for it but voting against in fear their aunt will tranq them if not?”

Kaydel raised her hand.

“There you have it,” Jessika smiled at the comm.

There was a long silence from Kira.

“You... you guys know I can’t see you, right?”

“Oh,” Jessika deflated. “Rose and I are yes, Paige is no, and Kaydel fears tranqs.”

“Then I guess I’m doing it,” Kira chuckled. “You know, I really appreciate this. I think I’ve never literally spoken to these many girls my age. It’s nice.”

“Well anytime you need a council of girl, let me know,” Kaydel said.

“Kira’s Council,” Paige laughed. “I like that. Kaydel’s right, anytime you need some big sisters or whatnot, I’m game.”

“Same,” Rose nodded. “It’s nice to meet a girl actually my age... even if you’re just a voice on a comm.”

“It’s agreed then,” Jessika declared. “We’re Kira’s Council. Now, let’s discuss the fact that a certain Lieutenant Connix is wearing the same uniform as yesterday.”

“Oh, let’s hear it,” Paige chuckled. “How was Poe?”

Rose shifted, “Do I... Do I have to stay for this?”

“Do you believe that sex belongs solely within the confines of marriage?” Jessika asked.

“No.”

“Do you believe that sex should never be discussed outside the people who did it?”

“No.”

“Are you just embarrassed that it involves someone with the status of Poe Dameron?” Kaydel asked.

“Yes.”

“Then you have to stay.” Paige patted her sister on the knee, “It’s the only way to get you to lighten up. Now... let’s talk foreplay. What did he choose, how long did he do it, and was he good? And keep in mind that if he treated you poorly, I’m going to kick his ass.”

“Based on the smile she had coming out of his room, I think he treated her very well,” Jessika
smirked. “She told me he ruined her for other men.”

“I gotta hear this,” Paige grinned.

Kaydel played coy, “Oh, I don’t know… maybe I shouldn’t.”

“Come on, Kaydel,” Kira laughed. “Spill.”

So, that day “Kira’s Council” formed; a group of four young women in the Resistance happy to give advice and girl talk of any nature to a voice on a comm. Their voice, their Kira, their secret little scavenger on Jakku that no one in the Resistance knew they talked to on a regular basis. A voice they had no clue belonged to the long thought dead Rey Rhiaon Skywalker.

And when General Leia Organa found out four years later that they had secretly been communicating with her “dead” niece… she was pissed.

“Hey Dirk?”

He smiled when he saw Rey approaching him in the market the next day, “Hi, Rey. What’s up?”

“I just finished talking to Devi,” she said. “Teng and I are taking up her offer and will fight them in the ring on the day of my sixteenth birthday. Will two months be sufficient to train with you?”

Dirk grinned, “Let’s get started.”

Chapter End Notes

Coming Up Next Chapter…

Survival of the Fittest
The big day of the fight arrives, and Rey is not at all surprised when Devi screws her over. Kaydel is shocked by her aunt’s reaction when Aletha returns and discovers Kira’s Council.

Yes, for those who figured it out, I have made Yavinese just be Spanish. Sorry if there’s any errors, I’m just pulling phrases from websites.

And don’t ask where the sudden Kylo Ren smut came from… I have no freaking clue.
Survival of the Fittest

Chapter Summary

Diego considers his career options, Devi screws over Rey, and Kira’s Council plots mutiny.

Chapter Notes

So, a while back I picked up the book Poe Dameron Flight Log which is a counterpart to Rey’s Survival Guide. I’ve decided I’m also going to start pulling quotes from it now that Poe has become a central character. I promise not to add 17 more chapters of information I find in the book. Note, in quotes I will refer to it as Poe Dameron’s Flight Log instead of Poe Dameron Flight Log because it sounds better.

I will not be purchasing Cobalt Squadron because I know I would end up adding in 17 more chapters with information about Paige and Rose.

I saw TLJ again finally. I definitely like it better the second time, but I’m glad to see that the plotlines I decided on will make the story truly epic. I’ve mixed around some events, added meanings to others, put in new characters in some places, and put in some new storylines. It’s going to be amazing.

Dirty version on AO3.

TRIGGER WARNING: In this chapter Dirk does give a brief speech about slaves getting sexually abused. If you find this sort of thing triggering, please skip the first scene after the words AGE SIXTEEN.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The Long Way Home

Chapter Forty-Two

Survival of the Fittest

Commander Dameron’s inspired efforts in this operation reflect his incomparable devotion to the principles of the Resistance and freedom-loving individuals across the galaxy. In this regard, the Resistance recognizes Commander Dameron with the Rieekan Ribbon for Bravery in Battle.

1. O. Statura
“My life is amazing.” Poe declared.

It was nearly midnight. His uniform was hung up in the closet with his brand-new ribbon proudly attached. His blankets were pushed on the floor, lying beside the clothing hastily discarded between the bed and the door. And wrapped around his naked body was the equally bare and breathtaking form of Kaydel Ko Connix.

“Great career with the promise of advancement, the best droid a guy could ask for, my mentors are my heroes, my squadron are fun people who generally obey my every command, my dad is the best dad a man could ask for, and I’ve found the girl of my dreams,” he sighed in contentment, playing with a lock of Kaydel’s golden hair. She had gotten into the habit of letting her hair down while they made love, and Poe loved running his fingers through her soft tresses. “What more could one ask for?”

“Not much,” Kaydel listened to the steady beating of his heart. “But I suppose there are a few things more you could have in life.”

“Kay, for the last time, I know it turns you on, but I am not doing that.”

“Don’t worry,” Kaydel laughed. “I gave up that fight two months ago. No, I meant more that… don’t you think there’s someone missing in your life?”

His happy moment crumbled inside, “Yeah, there is… I wish you could have met her.”


“My mom.” Poe looked down at her, “That’s who you meant, right?”

“No,” Kaydel sat up, angry at herself for not being more careful with her words. “I didn’t mean that.”

“It’s true though, she should be here.”

“She should, but her sacrifice is the reason this all happened. The reason we happened. If she didn’t die, there wouldn’t have been a Resistance, and who knows if we would have met?”

“We would have met,” Poe answered confidently. “The Force brought us together, and if I know one thing, it’s that when the Force decides to put people together, it won’t stop trying until they’re together.”

“What are you saying?” Kaydel ghosted her fingers over his chest. “That… we’re soulmates or something?”

“I know I love you more than I’ve ever loved someone before. It might be too soon to stamp soulmates on this, though. After all, we’ve only been going out for…”

Poe scowled.

Kaydel’s fingers stopped, “Did you forget how long we’ve been going out?”
“Uh… my life before you is nothing more than a distant dream?”

Her eyes bore into him.

“Sorry.”

“Four months, Poe,” Kaydel said. “We’ve been dating for four months.”

“Officially, yes,” he sat up. “But in my defense we were sort of unofficially dating for at least two month before that.”

“Alright, I’ll give you that.”

“So what were you meaning?”

“Hmm?”

“About someone missing?” Poe reminded.

“Oh, I was just thinking…” Kaydel considered her words. “Poe, do you have a best friend?”

“Yeah. BB-8.”

“Other than your droid?”

“Well… I don’t know. I haven’t really thought about it. Maybe… maybe Snap or Jessika. Although you’ve taken over Jessika lately.”

“That’s exactly what I mean,” Kaydel said. “I’m frequently spending time with Paige and Rose and Kira and Jessika, and you’ve got… a droid. Something literally programmed to like you and do what you want.”

“BB units have protocol that if they’re mistreated by masters, they stop obeying them.”

“Poe… Come on. Who are the people you spend time with? Who are your friends?”

He thought about it for a long time, “I guess if I had to pick, my closest friends are Snap, you, BB-8, General Organa, and my father.”

“And that’s the problem.” Kaydel sighed, “Your subordinate, your girlfriend, your droid, your boss, and your parent. Do you have anyone who is just… your friend? Someone who has your back without any other motivation whether it be professional, computer directive, or non-platonic love?”

“I… I never really thought about it,” Poe confessed. “I don’t… I don’t think so. It’s hard to make friends around here because I’m the son of the woman who died for the Resistance to form, and I’m also the boss of a lot of people. You can’t just set aside rank when you live on a military base.”

“I know, but I just want you to have someone.”

“Well, until then, maybe I can at least have you.”

“Alright, but I’m not doing guy talk with you,” Kaydel teased. “It’s sort of hard to objectively discuss things like your girlfriend’s skill in bed when you’re talking to said girlfriend.”

“Is that what you girls talk about?” Poe laughed. “My sexual prowess?”
“If it makes you feel better, the girls are really impressed. I think Kira’s been taking notes for when she and her boyfriend get down to it.”

Poe shook his head, chuckling. Then he stopped. Kira, the name registered in his mind. Kaydel had said it just a few minutes earlier, but his brain didn’t process it until just now.

“Who’s Kira?” Poe asked. “Are you talking to your sister?”

“What? Kyra? No,” Kaydel replied. “No, this is Kira with an isk instead of a yirt. She’s a girl on Jakku that Aunt Ally talks to. She’s going to be sixteen in a few days, and there’s no other girls on Jakku her age, so I have the girls talk to her about girl things. Kira’s Council we call ourselves.”

“That’s sweet, but how did this start?”

“Aunt Ally has a comm and Kira has the other. I’ve spoken to Kira a few times with Aunt Ally through her comm. On her way to her mission, Aunt Ally dropped the comm and I found it. Kira needed some advice, so I rounded up Jessika, Paige, and Rose, and the rest is history. But this is a secret, okay? Don’t go around telling people.”

“Why?” Poe asked.

“I’m not quite sure,” Kaydel shrugged. “Something to do with Kira. I don’t have all the details, but she’s in hiding from bounty hunters or something I figure.”

“What kind of trouble can a sixteen-year-old get into that would get bounty hunters after her?” His heart froze as he remembered the actions one sixteen-year-old boy had taken that destroyed the Galaxy, “Never mind.”

Kaydel placed a kiss on his cheek, “Thought about Rey again?”

“I just can never shake the feeling that somehow I played a part in Ben… Kylo doing what he did. Maybe if I hadn’t antagonized him so much that summer-”

“Stop,” she put a finger to his lips. “It’s not your fault.”

“I know it’s not, I just wish I could pretend it was. General Organa hurts so much over everything that happened.”

“It’s not your job to be her replacement son.”

“Says the one trying to bring in a replacement mother,” Poe teased.

“My mother threw me out of the house, and Aletha welcomed me with open arms despite knowing the risks,” Kaydel retorted. “I’m not going to call her mom, but she’s been far more a mom to me in the past nine months than my mother ever was. For goodness sake’s, my mother reused my dead sister’s name for me.”

“What are you talking about? Kaydel Ko is so much more different than Kaydel,” Poe teased.

“Ugh, don’t you start,” Kaydel rolled her eyes. “My sister Katha refuses to call me anything but Ko, and Keth loves to torment me by calling me Koko.”

“Koko,” Poe laughed. “Oh, I’m stealing that.”

“Whatever you say, Peacock.”
“Hey, I am very proud of the way I take care of myself.” Poe shifted his body over hers, “And if I remember correctly, so were you earlier tonight.”

“I guess I was,” Kaydel laughed, placing her hands on his shoulders as he shifted her legs apart, and placed his legs on either side of her hips. “I do have a very attractive boyfriend, don’t I?”

“I’m the one with the beauty in my bed.” Poe reached down and started to rub the head of his shaft across her lower lips, exciting them both.

Kaydel gasped as he hit her clit, “You do? Do you?”

Her nails tightened, digging into his shoulders. Kaydel’s slick desire was smeared along his quickly hardening cock.

“And what would you do to that beauty?”

Poe bent down and kissed her neck, “You’re sure that Doctor Kalonia said we’re both clean, and that we’re in the clear and we can forgo condoms?”

“If not, then the sex we had earlier was a big mistake.” Kaydel moaned and made gently thrusts up with her hips to rub her sex eagerly against his teasing cock. “My IUD will hold up. Please, Poe… Te deseo.”

“Fuck. You know I can’t resist it when you speak Yavinese,” Poe lowered his lips to her breast.

“Nor can I resist when you speak it,” she wove her fingers through his hair and cradled his mouth against her breast.

“Then hagamos el amor, Mi Amor.”

And he pushed inside of her.

“It was very hot,” Kaydel recounted the story to her friends the next night. “I don’t know what it is exactly, but there’s just something about him that would just make any girl succumb to his, uh… pleasures.”

There was a knowing chuckle from a pair of sisters and a voice on a comm, but Jessika Pava just frowned.

“I don’t know, Kay,” Jessika said, “I’m a lesbian, so it would take a lot to get me to succumb.”

“How are things going with Tallie, by the way?” Paige asked.

“Tallie?” Rose nibbled on some fruit from a large plate of snacks resting on the small table between Kaydel and Paige’s beds.


Rose gasped, “Is that even allowed?”

“No clue,” Kaydel grinned, “but I would love to see the love on Holdo’s face when she found out.”

“She still giving you and Poe trouble?” Kira asked from the comm.
“I cannot wait General Organa returns in the morning,” Kaydel said. “She and Poe are about two minutes away from tearing out each other’s throats. But I will be sad that Snap comes back.”

“Poe seemed pretty unhappy too,” Jessika teased. “You know, it’s nice that the girl I’m sharing my room with happens to also be the one I want alone time with.”

“Okay, I have to ask,” Paige said, “Tallie is only eighteen. When exactly did you two start up with all that?”

“What, you think people can’t do things until they’re eighteen?” Kira objected.

Paige stared straight at Jessika, “Yes, when their girlfriend is twenty-three.”

“Tallie is turning nineteen next week,” Jessika snapped. “And we’ve only been together for a couple of months. I wasn’t grooming her or anything. In fact, she approached me.”

“You’re lucky, Jess,” Kaydel sighed as she bit into a cube of cheese. “I’m going to miss having an empty room with Poe.”

Kira said, “I remember what that’s like. I was so disappointed when Dad and Quom found the X-Wing Teng and I were making out in, and wouldn’t let us got there alone anymore.”

“Ok, Kira, but it was also the X-Wing of Aletha’s dead husband,” Paige reminded. “It was kind of creepy.”

“Poe’s X-Wing,” Kaydel mused. “Now there’s a possibility.”

Rose scowled.

“If you have sex with Poe in his X-Wing, I tell my supervisor and he gets Poe’s ship blacklisted from the maintenance roster,” Rose threatened, sitting on Paige’s bed eating a cracker. She eyed the comm, “You know, Kira, I feel bad that we’re all snacking on this end and you’ve been eating nothing but rations for ten years.”

“What can you do?” Kira casually dismissed. “You know, I think I’ve literally never had fruit.”

Rose blinked, “That’s it, when you join us at the Resistance someday – which you totally are if I have to come find you myself, so don’t argue which me on that – I’m giving you a pear and a hug.”

“Deal,” Kira laughed. She wouldn’t admit which item she wanted more.

Kaydel shook her head, “You know, maybe it’s a good idea that Poe and I take a bit of a break from all the… physicality.”

“You mean all the sex?” Paige grinned.

“Fine, yes, all the sex.” Kaydel stretched out her legs, nearly kicking the comm off her bed, “With his room free and Holdo driving us nuts, Poe and I have been at it so much my… legs hurt.”

Jessika and Paige shared a gleeful look while Rose tried to hide a giggle behind her hands, and Kira openly laughed.

“Kaydel,” Jessika looked like she was about to cry from hilarity, “are you saying that your legs are stiff from spreading them too much?”

The girls couldn’t hold it back anymore, and all five burst into hysterical laughter. Kaydel’s face was
a deep crimson, but still she laughed. However, she chucked a pillow at Jessika’s head for good measure.

“Well, you know what they say about Yavinese men,” Kaydel grinned wickedly. “Poe’s stamina is astounding. Plus he’s still pissed at Holdo for walking in on us and insulting me. Whenever he has the opportunity to clearly pull me away in front of her for some type of sex, by God does he take it.”

“You’re not exactly refusing it, Key,” Jessika teased.

“You don’t even know the half of it,” Paige grinned. “Tell them the desk story.”

“Oh God, not the desk story.”

“If you don’t tell them, I will.”

“I’m not telling it!”

“Paige?” Kira prompted.

“So one day Holdo comes into Communications-”

“Alright, fine!” Kaydel interrupted. She took a deep breath, “So one day Holdo comes into Communications, and she is mad. You see, Poe had done a mission and I worked coordination. Originally, it was supposed to be Commander Nalto, but he had a medical complication with his injury and Kalonia had to pull him in for another surgery.”

Jessika winced, “Geeze, how many surgeries is Nalto up to now? Seven?”

“I think nine,” Paige said. “You’ve heard what they’re saying about his position, right?”

“Girls, this isn’t the time,” Rose interrupted.

“Oh no, they can continue,” Kaydel offered.

“So one day Holdo comes into Communications absolutely raging about conflict of interest and broken promises, and how Poe stepped way out of line with this. Brance tries to explain the situation and how I was the only one available to run coordination at the time, but Holdo is having none of it. To make it worse, Poe was visiting my workstation at the time and we may have been in the middle of a stolen kiss or two.”

“Didn’t Nalto ban Poe from visiting you at your work station because he was,” Paige used air quotes, “proving to be too much a distraction?”

“That’s not… Shut up,” Kaydel replied. “So Holdo is mad, going on and on and not listening to explanations or even apologies. Poe was willing to concede that in that situation, he should have handed off command to the next in line if I was the only one available. But Holdo won’t hear it. Of course, this is making both of us mad, and I start getting defensive over Holdo saying that I apparently can’t be impartial enough to coordinate communications when my boyfriend is involved.”

“So I understand the story better, what exactly does that involve?” Kira asked.

“Basically I connect the comms from the base to the pilots, as well as between the pilots themselves,” Kaydel explained. “I monitor the integrity of the line connections, reroute and add in lines that are requested. So if Poe wanted to speak to the Bomb squad, I would connect the Bomber Commander
in on the conversation. I also monitor that there are no enemies hacking into the lines, and monitor conversations for any signs of disobedience, mutiny, or violation of Resistance rules. I do not in anyway determine the actions of the flight crews, nor does Poe have any say in my position.”

“But what about the monitoring of the conversations?” Rose asked. “Would that be a place you could be biased?”

“That was Holdo’s sticking point,” Kaydel said. “What she refused to hear was that we had another, more junior officer doing the monitoring of the communication content. I was just the only one who could run the rest. It wasn’t good enough for Holdo, and she just goes on about how she called this, and it was a blatant show of disrespect to her considering our previous conflict. Poe at this point was getting riled up, and my focus turns to just getting him under control and not killing her. Then Holdo says something like I’m not going to stand around and let some insubordinate flyboy blatantly disrespect me, so he can disregard the rules and give benefits to his sidepiece of the week. I don’t care how good in bed she is Dameron. Keep it out of the workplace.”

The other girls gasped.

“Poe lost it,” Kaydel said dramatically. “Suddenly, I’m literally holding him back with the help of Brance as Poe is screaming until he is red in the face. He and Holdo are raging at each other, accusing each other of disloyalty, inability to lead, and even the word treason gets thrown around. Everything in the Communications Center comes to a stop as everyone watches the two of them nearly coming to blows. We get pilots, security officers, members of the High Council, everyone we can think of to break the two of them apart. Someone even almost called Kes Dameron at one point.”

“Kes Dameron?” Kira asked.

“Poe’s father,” Kaydel answered. “Since Holdo is third-in-command, and absolutely believes she has earned the position, she refuses to listen to anyone and disengage, insisting that she is in charge here and Dameron should be demoted and even arrested. I hear this beeping and look over in the corner of the room. Nine BB units have formed a barricade around BB-8 to stop him from going in and attacking Holdo to defend Poe.”

“Oh, okay, seriously, how have I not heard this story?” Jessika asked.

“You were away on a mission,” Paige answered. “Rose was off on a supply run herself.”

“How the hell is the Resistance still in one piece and Poe not only still in-charge, but recently just got a ribbon for his heroics?” Jessika shook her head.

“Why do you think they sent Poe off on that mission?” Paige grinned. “They were getting him away from Holdo.”

“But how did things end?” Rose questioned, a little excited by the story.

Kaydel laughed, “They had to pull rank on Holdo, and literally get Diego Nalto out of his hospital bed, recovering from surgery to come into the room and call Holdo and Poe off. Nalto gets them to calm down. He takes Holdo back to his office to have a conversation about all of this, and Poe gets taken off duty for the rest of the day to think about what he did.”

Paige chuckled, “And he thought about it all right.”

“What do you two do?” Kira asked knowingly.

“Well, Diego was actually kind of sweet about the whole thing to me,” Kaydel said. “He found me
at dinner, took me aside, and we had a little chat. We agreed that the way things went weren’t exactly appropriate, and we’d take precautions in the future to avoid such incidents. He then told me that what Holdo said about me was not appropriate, and he wouldn’t let her, or anyone else treat me like that again. Diego said that since Aletha was gone, he would watch out for me, and that even when she got back, he was going to protect me.”

“Of course he is,” Rose laughed. “He’s going to be your uncle someday.”

“They’re not even dating,” Kaydel shook her head, but a smile was plastered on her face.

“You,” Kira said.

“Face it, Kay,” Paige said, “it’s only a matter of time.”

“Hey, Commander Nalto has always been very nice to me.”

“Yeah, but Poe hasn’t. Tell them what he did.”

“It was consensual,” Kaydel objected. She couldn’t wipe the mischievous smirk off her face, “But no, Poe wasn’t very nice that night… especially to Holdo. You see, he wanted some small form of revenge, but he wanted it in a way that Holdo wouldn’t know. That way whenever he looked at Holdo, he could remember and smirk. When she would ask him what the smirk was about, he’d say, nothing.”

“So?” Jessika pushed, getting impatient.

“So,” Kaydel gathered her courage to admit what happened, “Poe called in a few favors. He got a pill from Evan Tharel to help with… a certain form of endurance so he could last for a long time. Then he called in a buddy to cut the security feed to Holdo’s office, and had BB-8 as a lookout. And then Poe and I… broke into Holdo’s office and had sex on her desk.”

The girls gasped.

“For three hours,” Kaydel laughed hysterically, clutching a pillow to her chest. “We were running out of ideas of what to do.”

“I don’t believe this,” Kira said.

“I do,” Jessika said flatly. “If you told me that Poe Dameron broke into someone’s office and had revenge sex, I’d buy it.”

Rose frowned, “Didn’t she actually just say it?”

Jessika shrugged.

“So what happened?” Kira asked. “Did you two stay there all night? I didn’t even think a guy could go that long.”

“Hence the pill,” Kaydel answered. “And no… things sort of went off-script.”

Paige giggled, knowing what came next.

“What happened?” Jessika demanded.

Kaydel bit her lip, “We broke her chair.”
Rose gasped, “You didn’t!”

“She did,” Kaydel’s face had gone red. “Poe was really turned on by the whole revenge thing. Like almost to a frightening degree, and while I was more than okay for things to go that hard and rough… He went a little too hard at one point and I ended up on the floor with broken chair pieces.”

“What did you do next?” Kira asked.

“We handled it like any two mature adults would,” Kaydel said simply.

Jessika raised an eyebrow. “Got dressed, got the hell out of there, and denied any knowledge when confronted for answers?”

“Yep.” Kaydel shook her head, “Poe apologized to me for it, but I wasn’t all that unhappy. I knew that he just really hated Holdo and wanted to find a way to get back at her.”

“Well, in all fairness, Kay,” Paige said, “you hate Holdo too.”

“We all do,” Rose dared to say.

All the girls grinned at that.

“I’ve never met her and I don’t like her,” Kira agreed.

“She really is a bitch,” Jessika said. “I don’t care if she is some sort of war hero, I’ll never bow to her so-called form of leadership. I say that if, the Gods forbid, something major happens to General Organa and Commander Nalto, and Holdo is put in permanent command, we just mutiny.”

“Jessika!” Paige scolded. “Even saying that could get you arrested.”

“It’s true though, I don’t want her in charge.”

“Who would be in line after her?” Rose asked.

Kaydel answered, “It’ll depend on the circumstances, but I think Poe would actually be next in line.”

“All in favor of committing mutiny to put Poe Dameron in charge?” Jessika said.

Everyone raised their hands, even the reluctant Paige.

“So it is passed,” Jessika declared.

“What in the Seven Corellian Hells is going on here?”

All heads turned to see a completely confused, tired, and somewhat mortified Aletha Kymeri standing in the doorway.

She stared at the girls, “I go away for two months, and when I come back you’re planning a mutiny?”

“Aunt Ally!” Kaydel exclaimed, racing to the door to capture her aunt in a hug.


“It’s just a joke, Aletha,” Kira said.

Aletha frowned, “Who said that?”
“It’s just Kira,” Rose pointed to the comm.

Aletha’s heart stopped.

“Kaydel,” she whispered, “what is going on right now? Is that my comm? Is that… other people talking to Kira?”

At the look of horrified fury on Aletha’s face, Kaydel’s stomach dropped.

“Well,” she said nervously, “yeah.”


“No, I got it from your room—”

“You stole it?”

“No! You dropped it on your floor and I almost stepped on it when I was dropping off Commander Nalto’s flowers for you.” Kaydel paused, “Crap, I forgot to water those. Sorry about the dead bouquet.”

“Dead flowers are not the issue here, Kaydel!” Aletha snapped. “What is going on? Why are there people talking to Kira? How did they find out?”

“When I found the comm I put it in my pocket to give to you, but I couldn’t find you,” Kaydel explained. “When I learned you had left, I sort of forgot about the comm. The next morning, it went off in my pocket, and it was Kira wanting to talk to you. Since you weren’t here, I offered to lend an ear.”

Aletha frowned, “Why was it still in your pocket the next morning?”

“Because she banged Dameron that night and was wearing the same uniform the next day,” Jessika grinned.

“Jess!” Kaydel snapped.


Kaydel blushed, “Thanks.”

“Two, he treat you well?”

“Very well… and every time since. You know what they say about Yavinese men.”

“Or she will soon enough,” Paige whispered to Rose.

Aletha’s icy glare broke them into a fit of giggles.

“Stop that,” Aletha said shortly, a twinge of pink rising to her cheeks as she desperately pushed thoughts of Diego from her mind. “Third thing, you two are being safe, right?”

“Used protection until our screens came back clear,” Kaydel nodded. “We’re clean, monogamous, and shouldn’t have to worry about any MisCals.”

“Good. Fourth…” Aletha exploded, “How the hell does this lead to these girls, who I don’t even think I know, learning about Kira?”
“Well, actually, we’ve met,” Paige raised her hand. “You patched me up at the Battle of Valra. This is my sister, Rose that I told you about.”

“Hi,” Rose waved awkwardly.

“Hello, Dear,” Aletha sighed and gave Rose a small smile. She looked to Jessika, “And you are?”


“Hello, Jessika,” Aletha shook her head. “You better have a good reason for this, Kaydel. I am beyond mad right now. You know what I wanted to do tonight? Get something to eat, take a shower, see my niece, stalk what I could of Diego Nalto’s medical file – wipe that smirk off your face, Kaydel Ko Connix – and then get a good night’s sleep in a soft bed, because you can’t imagine my sleeping conditions for the past two months. Instead I have to deal with this. Now how the hell do they know about Kira?”

“It’s my fault, Aletha,” Rey spoke up from the comm. “I needed some advice, and wanted a second opinion other than Kaydel’s, so she rounded up some friends to provide feedback. I liked talking to girls my age, so I asked Kaydel to let me talk with her and them on a regular basis.”

“We’re Kira’s Council,” Rose tried to be helpful. She was not.

“A regular basis?” Aletha practically growled. “You’ve been letting a group of strangers talk to Kira on a regular basis?”

“Aunt Ally,” Kaydel took a step back. She had never seen Aletha this angry.

“Girls, could you please leave the room?” Aletha’s eyes didn’t stray from Kaydel. “I need to speak to my niece alone.”

Rose frowned, “But it’s Paige’s room too.”

“Come on,” Paige urged Rose up from the bed.

Aletha watched carefully as the trio exited the room. Kaydel could feel the tension grow with every footstep.

“You know they’re going to listen outside the door?” Kaydel said.

“Good,” Aletha replied. “I’ll want to speak to them after this.”

The happabores would be well cared for, with as much clean water as they wanted to drink, fodder to eat, and a cool pen out of the sun.

**Sounds like a good life.**

- Rey’s Survival Guide
“Aletha, should I go too?” Rey asked.

“Oh, no, we’re having a talk, young lady,” Aletha answered coolly. “I’m at you dropping an X-Wing on Teng levels of pissed off right now. Kaydel, how could you do this? What was the one thing I asked you to do about Kira? The only thing I have truly of you?”

Kaydel blanched as she remembered Aletha’s simple request, “You asked me… not to tell anyone about Kira.”

“Then why am I dealing with this situation?” Aletha folded her arms.

“Aletha,” Rey said nervously, “so I understand the context because I haven’t been fully informed of your relationship history with Kaydel, how bad is this situation? On a scale from Jarex kidnapping me to that time Quom accidentally shot you in the foot?”

Kaydel raised an eyebrow, “I have so many questions, but I’m legitimately afraid Aletha might kill me right now.”

“Kira…” Aletha answered, “we’re at Roke violating the black sheet rule level.”

“E chuta,” Rey whispered.

“Language!” Aletha scolded. She turned her attention back to Kaydel, “Kaydel… I’m not going to kill you. That would be very hard to explain, and I’m not cleaning up that mess.”

Kaydel gave a small flinch. She wasn’t sure whether or not she was supposed to laugh, but the idea of a family member hurting her wasn’t something she found funny.

Aletha’s eyes softened at the flinch, “Darling… Our family is screwed up. Between Alecta’s vendetta, Adrinna throwing us to the dogs, and what Deek and Dacken did to you simply because you have their mother’s name… we’ve got issues. And I’m fully aware that Adrinna’s beliefs of disciple were by no means sparing the rod. So, I want you to know that I will never lay a hand on you. This in-fighting and abuse has to stop. But that means I need to be able to trust you.”

Kaydel looked down in shame, her hand subconsciously pulling back her hair.

“Darling,” Aletha made a step forward and took Kaydel’s hands, “I love you. I am so happy that you found me. I want to be there for you more than anything… but I also promised that I would be there for Kira. I’ve known this girl since she was a scared five-year-old with the worst sunburn I had ever seen. I’ve literally shed blood for her, given her the food off my plate, and the clothes off my back for her. I love her like she was my own daughter. I left Jakku where I had a family and people who loved me, simply so that this girl could be safe. The fact that I brought you into the fold of that life shows how much I love and trust you.”

“I know,” Kaydel struggled not to cry. “I’m sorry.”

“I need to know that you won’t betray me.”

“I never meant to! I just forgot that you asked and thought I was doing what was best for Kira.”

“You can’t forget things like that, though. Kaydel, we’re in a war. This type of thing could literally cost lives. If I brought this forward to your commanding officer, the fact you couldn’t withhold confidential intel and protect an ally’s identity, not only could you be stripped of your rank, but you might be thrown out of the Resistance.”
“No, Aunt Ally, please don’t,” Kaydel begged.

“I won’t,” Aletha assured her. “And not just because I need to hide this to protect Kira. I forgive you this, Kaydel. But I need you to swear to me that you will never pull something like this again. If I say hush, you hush. You need to be more responsible. Listen to commands, pay attention to the subtle things… Not screw your boyfriend on a Vice Admiral’s desk because you’re mad at them.”

“…You heard that part, did you?”

“Yeah, I’ll be having a chat with this Holdo in the morning. No one messes with my niece.”

“Thanks, Aunt Ally,” Kaydel smiled. “Oh, and ask her what happened the morning after you left… and what she said about you.”

“You’ve piqued my interest, Kaydel,” Aletha said. “But Kaydel… I need you to keep this whole business a secret. Get the girls to be quiet, and no more Kira’s Council.”

“Aunt Ally!”

“No, Aletha please!” Rey cried out. “Please don’t cut them off.”

“Kira, you know that we have gone to incredible lengths to keep you safe,” Aletha said. “I made your father a promise to keep your identity secret and safe. Tapping down on this will contain the leak of information.”

“No, please!” Rey sobbed. “Aletha, I need my friends. You know how… boring and lonely it is on this planet. I don’t have a best friend anymore, he’s my boyfriend now. The dynamic has changed. And I only put up with Dad being mysterious and Quom pulling his antics for so long. Talking with these girls… it makes me feel normal. It makes me think there’s hope of some life beyond this dusty desert. I can’t live in the fantasy of Rebel heroes and harsh reality of a dangerous life of scavenging.”

Aletha closed her eyes, fighting back tears.

“I’m hungry, Aletha,” Rey wept. “I’m so hungry. I want something more than polystarch and vegmeat. At nights I freeze beneath a worn-out survival blanket, and in the day I sweat under a sweltering, unforgiving sun, my throat parched for water that there’s never enough of. I have thoughts and ideas I can’t share with the others, questions I need answers to – nothing major but just small things like are my breasts supposed to get sore around my period or is the thing my boyfriend likes weird? But when I talk to them… it all goes away. I’m a normal girl, sitting on a normal bed, feeling a normal temperature, wearing normal clothes, living a normal life, with normal levels of food and water, snacking on fruit and cheese and crackers just because I’m bored.”

Kaydel glanced at the platter of snacks on the table and felt guilty.

“Fruit, Aletha… I don’t even know what that tastes like. But for one stolen hour every night, I get to be that normal girl. I get to pretend. They’re my friends, Aletha. They truly are. Kaydel helps me with boys and hair. Paige is the big sister who frets too much but for your own good. Rose is almost exactly my age and we’re going through the same beats of boys and puberty but can still talk shop. And Jess is no nonsense, go out there and stand up for yourself, Kira, and talks about flying with me. They’re my friends, Aletha. I need them… please don’t take them from me.”

Aletha took a deep breath and locked eyes with Kaydel.

“Can they be trusted?” Aletha asked.
Kaydel nodded, “With our lives.”

Aletha sighed, “Alright. Girls? I know you’re listening at the door. Everyone get in here!”

There was a bit of a commotion on the other side of the door, scrambling to take position. It was an awkward re-entry into the room, a mix of pretending not to have been listening, apologizing for listening, and commenting on what they had listened to.

Aletha didn’t need to instruct them to do it, somehow the girls ended up standing in front of her in a straight line, hands folded behind their backs, standing at perfect attention.

“To be blunt, if I could control it, I would never have allowed this situation to happen,” Aletha started. “That said, it did happen, and something good has appeared to have come from this. I’m not going to stop this… Council. I won’t force friendship apart, but if this truly is friendship, I need you girls to honour that relationship. Kira’s situation is a precarious one. I don’t understand it fully myself. Maybe she’s part of a royal family that defied the First Order and they decided to kill them for it. Maybe she’s a child from the Stormtrooper program, whose parents rescued her and are hiding her from recapture. Hell, maybe she’s the long-lost daughter of Han Solo. I don’t know. What I do know is that the First Order killed her mother, and her father will do anything to stop the First Order from taking her away. By insisting upon keeping this Council, you make a vow to support this endeavour. To conceal her identity and draw people away from finding her. Anyone who isn’t prepared to fight to protect her, let me know now.”

The girls didn’t even flinch.

“Good,” Aletha smiled. “I want all of you to swear to me here and now that you will protect Kira, you will tell no one of her, and you will consider her need for safety in any action you take regarding her. Will you promise this?”

Four voices made positive and confident replies.

“Doctor Kymeri?” Rose asked. “Could this get us in trouble? Maybe with General Organa?”

Aletha gave a sly smile, “Perhaps. But I promise you girls, if this does end up blowing up in our faces, I’ll stand by you and protect you. If General Organa has a problem with this, I’ll take the blame.”

“No,” Jessika shook her head. “We stand together. Always.”

“Always,” Paige nodded.

“Always,” Rose and Kaydel agreed.

“Always,” Rey said.

Aletha smiled, “Alright… always. Now I do have one question… do I get to be part of Kira’s Council?”

Kaydel laughed, “You’re already in.”

“Good,” Aletha wrapped an arm around Kaydel’s shoulders and hugged her.

“Just be warned,” Jessika grinned, “Poe Dameron’s sexual prowess is a frequent topic of conversation.”
“Hey, I’m not her mom,” Aletha chuckled. “I’m her cool aunt. You can talk about that stuff with your cool aunt, right?”

“Please don’t make this weird,” Kaydel begged.

Aletha laughed.

“Hey, Aletha,” Rey said, “nothing’s happen yet, but I was kind of hoping to discuss future stuff I did with Teng. You’re not going to tell Dad or Quom, right?”

“Sunshine, I would never tell your father anything you wanted to keep private,” Aletha answered. “You know that. We had this conversation after the uh… masturbation conversation?”

“Well, that’s out there,” Paige said.

“I’m a doctor, if you girls want to talk about sex we’re going all out,” Aletha said bluntly. “Stop blushing, Kira. No one can see you.”

“How do you know I’m blushing?”

“I’ve known you since you were five. You were blushing, Kira.”

The girls laughed.

“What about Quom?” Rey asked. “You’re not going to tell him anything?”

“I won’t have to. I swear to God, Vrogems must be able to smell it on humans. Your father and I would walk into his tent and he’d know everything. And I mean… everything.”

The room was silent.

“This kind of got uncomfortable,” Kaydel said.

“You started it with the banging Poe discussion,” Jessika pointed out.

“And yet, I have no regrets.” Kaydel paused, “Hey, Aletha, if you’re back does that mean that Snap is back too? Cause if not, I might have time to sneak in a quick-”

“We all arrived about an hour ago,” Aletha laughed. “We ended up finding a shorter route back. We actually ran into Poe, and he was… disappointed at having a roommate again. I think he had the same plans for you. He was actually the one who told me you were in your room and I should say hi. You know, I really like that boy. He been treating you well?”

“They’re in love,” Rey teased. “They already said it and everything.”

“Really?” Aletha sat down on the bed and helped herself to some fruit. “When did you two decide to say it, and what prompted it?”

The girls took it as a sign to climb back on the beds and resume their girl talk.

“Um, it was the night you left,” Kaydel asked.

Aletha raised an eyebrow, “Really? Didn’t one of you ladies say something else happened that night between them?”

“We didn’t say I love you because of sex!” Kaydel exclaimed. She paused, “Okay, we said it right
after we had sex, but that’s not why. It was a very close and intimate night. I told him the story of what the boys did to my hair, and just the way he responded to it, with such care and devotion to me… and when I realized I was able to trust him enough to literally let my hair down, I knew I loved him. I wasn’t sure if I could tell him, maybe he didn’t love me too. But we made love, and afterward he said, ‘damn Kaydel, I think I love you.’ I knew I could tell him back.”

Aletha smiled and placed a hand on Kaydel’s shoulder, “You really love that boy, don’t you?”

“I do. I love him more than I’ve ever loved someone. His charm, his passion, his kindness, his devotion, his optimism, the way he’s dedicated to BB-8, I could trust him with anything.” Suddenly the lovesick smile fell off Kaydel’s face, “Uh oh.”

“What?” Paige asked.

Kaydel looked at Aletha in horror, “I just remembered… I sort of told Poe about Kira.”

Aletha sighed, “E chuta.”

“I swear to you Doctor, I won’t tell a soul,” Poe promised the next day in the cafeteria. He sat across from Aletha, and had his arm wrapped around Kaydel’s shoulders as the three of them ate breakfast.

“Good, because if you do, I will kill you,” Aletha threatened. “Do you have any idea how many things can accidentally go wrong during a surgery? Don’t think I’m kidding around.”

“No less than I think you would legitimately castrate me if I got Kay pregnant or give her an STI,” Poe shuddered. “I won’t do either, by the way. Well, the latter for sure. The whole having kids thing might be a conversation for later in the relationship.”

“Get it out of the way as quickly as possible,” an unexpected voice came from behind. It was very odd to see someone as legendary as Leia Organa standing in the middle of a cafeteria, holding a breakfast tray, grinning at them with the normal level of comradery as any soldier. “Han and I were slow on that one and ended up having it when there was already a child on the way.”

A painful awkwardness clung to the false smiles projected at her.

“Oh, don’t look at me like that,” Leia admonished. “Let’s not hide the truth. My son is second-in-command of the First Order, my husband is a smuggler who is almost never home, my birth father was a Sith, my real father was blown up, my sister-in-law was brutally murdered by my son, my toddler niece died a horrible death, and my brother is a hermit on a hidden Jedi planet. Did I miss anyone?”

“R2-D2 is in permanent low-power mode?” Poe suggested.

“Ah, knew I missed one,” Leia smiled. “May I join you?”

“Aletha scooted over to make room.

“Thank you, Doctor Kymeri,” Leia took a seat. “I must say, it’s so good to be back here.”

“I know, real base, real bed, real food,” Aletha laughed. “Felt like I was on Jakku all over again.”

“Where exactly were you, if I may ask, General?” Poe smiled.
“Now, now, Commander Dameron,” a voice tsked. “It’s a need to know basis, and you don’t need to know.”

Poe’s smile fell off his face, “Vice Admiral Holdo… I was hoping you had left already.”

“I see you two got along while I was gone,” Leia chuckled.

“Oh, not in the least,” Poe said bluntly.

“I’m surprised, Leia,” Holdo sat down with invitation. Apparently she was going to have breakfast with them, “This is the one you and Nalto have been grooming for a leadership position?”

“It’s a work-in-progress,” Leia replied.

She gave a small smile when she saw Poe brighten at Holdo’s words. Her heart warmed at the way Kaydel rubbed his shoulder in a show of affectionate support. Poe and Kaydel together always made Leia’s heart lift a little. Both were destined for great things, and she had taken both under her wing. Poe and Kaydel filled a small part of the hole left in her by the loss of Ben, Luke, Rey, and Felicity. Leia was truly glad to see the pair not only found each other, but that their relationship appeared to have the kind of strength to go the distance.

Most people would laugh at the idea of a couple knowing so quickly they were meant to be, but that sort of thing had always been easy for Leia to spot. It had taken herself five months before she realized she was screwed and destined to fall in love with Han Solo. Seven months was all it took for Leia to realize Luke and Felicity were meant to be – and those two hadn’t even realized they liked each other romantically yet. And it took about twelve minutes for Leia to realize Lando Calrissian had met his match in Alyla Kene.

As she watched Poe and Kaydel from across the table, Leia knew it was time to place her bets.

“I’m glad to see the two of you going strong,” Leia told them.

They looked surprised at the declaration.

“Thank you, General,” Kaydel looked down at the table with a blush, fiddling with her hair.

“We’re glad of it too. It’s hard work with the crazy lives we live, but we believe in what we have is a wonderful thing,” Poe grinned. His eyes narrowed at Holdo, and the smile dropped off his face, “Unlike some people.”

“Yes, Dameron, you’ve made your thoughts clear, as have I,” Holdo replied. “Can we drop this?”

“You’re the one who keeps bringing it back up!” Poe exclaimed.

Kaydel grasped his arm, “Poe, settle down.”

“He’s been like this the whole time,” Holdo shook her head, trying to make her contempt clear to Leia. “Typical flyboy.”

“Oh, that’s it,” Poe slammed his fist on the table. “Since Commander Nalto has only been on partial duty, I have been unable to do this until now. But now that the General has returned, I can proceed.”

“Great,” Kaydel groaned, rubbing her face in exasperation.

Aletha reached across the table and rubbed her arm.
Poe flashed Holdo a charming smile. “General Organa, I would like to formally lodge a compliant against Vice Admiral Holdo for misconduct.”

Leia raised an eyebrow, “Is that so?”

Holdo rolled her eyes, “Oh boy.”

Poe put on his most formal tone as possible, “General Organa, as you know, I am currently engaged in a romantic relationship with Lieutenant Kaydel Ko Connix. Upon the night you departed for your latest mission, since my roommate, Temmin "Snap" Wexley was away on the same mission, I invited Lieutenant Connix to spend the night in my room… with me.”

Kaydel slumped down in her seat, wishing the ground would swallow her up.

Leia smirked, “I expected as much. Continue.”

Poe then proceeded to regale them with the tale of his first meeting with Holdo, censoring down exactly what they had been doing upon Holdo’s intrusion. Kaydel was as bright as a tomato as Poe so easily told the person in charge of the entire Resistance of their sexual excursion. She kept glancing at her comm, silently willing it to call her away on duty. Kaydel wasn’t ashamed she was having sex with Poe Dameron – in fact, she was quite proud – but she didn’t need Leia freaking Organa to hear the details.

“And she’s been making snide comments about my relationship with Lieutenant Connix ever since,” Poe finished. “She’s even accused me of giving Lieutenant Connix special privileges in exchange for sexual favors.”

“I did no such thing!” Holdo objected.

Leia held up her hand before another fight broke out, “That one I did hear about. Apparently, you two had a yelling match so loud you roused poor Nalto out of his hospital bed.”

Aletha tried to not react to Diego’s name.

“Well then,” Leia sighed and pushed her breakfast tray away. She eyed her eggs sadly, having wanted a few more bites before duty came calling. “Since I can’t have you two at each other’s throats all the time, we’re going to settle this once and for all. Amilyn, why don’t you, me, and Poe go discuss this in your office?”

“Could we do it in yours, Leia?” Holdo asked. “Somebody broke my desk chair.”

Kaydel and Poe avoided eye contact.

“Very well, I’ll be right behind you,” Leia nodded.

Holdo bowed her head with a smile, and then set off for Leia’s office.

Poe was in the middle of giving Kaydel a quick kiss and getting out of his seat when Leia smacked him upside the head.

“I have the Force, Numbskull,” Leia reminded as Poe sulked and rubbed his head. “You leave Holdo’s office alone. Both of you.”

Kaydel looked down, her face flushing again, “Yes, Ma’am.”

“My office, Dameron,” Leia ordered pointing towards the door. “March.”
Poe didn’t need to be told twice.

Kaydel’s comm started beeping and she looked down at it.

“Oh, of course now Brance calls me. Bye Aunt Ally. General,” Kaydel nodded to the women and then pressed a button on the in-ear piece she always wore. She headed to the door, all business, “Talk to me, Brance.”

“That’ll be fun to deal with,” Aletha chuckled. A dishwashing droid joined them at the table, and she handed over her plate to it, “The antics of children are always amusing.”

“It’s nothing I haven’t seen before,” Leia helped stack the plates for the droid. “My husband, sister-in-law, and brother put me through the ringer. After those three fools, I can handle anything.”

Aletha’s smile fell as Leia sighed sadly.

“I’m sorry about what happened to them,” Aletha reached out and clasped Leia’s hand.


Aletha blushed, looking not unlike Kaydel, “I think someone as grand as Luke Skywalker wouldn’t give me a second glance.”

“Luke is a man, not a God. Don’t ever think of him as one, and if you’re having trouble, I have tons of embarrassing stories about him to knock that image down a peg. You know he once got stuck in a window for three hours?”

“You’re kidding.”

“He was leaning out the window to yell something to Han down below when it fell down on him. Luke was about twenty at the time and really into the lifting things with the Force phase of Jedi training. He would not let me pull up the window, insisting he could do it himself with the Force. Blamed me making him nervous when he couldn’t manage. And every time I tried to put my foot down and just do it whether he liked it or not, whenever I got near he would make these little kicks at me. If there is one thing I will give my brother, the man knows how to kick you so you feel you are going to die from it.”


“My brother is an… interesting man,” Leia laughed. “Alright, I’ve got to go deal with Holdo and Poe, and you’ve got your patient waiting for you.”

“Patient?” Aletha frowned. “I thought I had the day off?”

“There was an accident involving a shipment of thermal detonators, and Kalonia’s swamped. She thought you wouldn’t mind subbing in on one appointment. The details should have been transmitted to your datapad.”

“General, with all due respect,” Aletha pulled her datapad out of her bag, “I really don’t think I want to-”

Her eyes fell on the patient’s name.

“Well, I guess one patient isn’t the end of the world,” Aletha tried to sound casual.
Leia laughed, “Give Diego my best.”

“Well, look what the nexu dragged in,” Aletha grinned as she saw Diego seated on the med-bay bed.

His entire face lit up when he saw her, “Aletha!”

He wanted to run to her. He wanted to sprint across the room, take her into his arms, spin her around, and see if her lips tasted as good as they had that day upon the battlefield.

But there was a time and place for such things, and when she was acting as his doctor was not one of them.

“I’m glad to see you’re back,” Diego grinned as Aletha approached the bed. “I almost feel naked without a flower to offer you.”

“You know, I almost brought one back to you, but flowers don’t grow on Crait. Salt planet, you know.”

“Try not to discuss it with anyone,” Diego advised. “Remember, Crait is confidential.”

“I know when discretion is required,” Aletha said.

Like when that devastatingly charming and handsome man she had been missing every night and wanted nothing more than to throw her arms around and cry that he had survived Kylo Ren’s attack was seated before her as her patient.

Stupid doctor/patient rules.

“How have you been, Diego?” Aletha asked.

“Much better now that you’re back.”

“You flatter me.”

“Good. I intended too.” Diego grinned, “You know, you blush just like your niece?”

“Oh?” Aletha teased, “Have you been making Kaydel blush a lot? Should I be telling Poe Dameron he has a rival suitor?”

“Maybe if Kaydel was thirty years older and had a medical degree.”

Aletha gaped at him. Sure, she and Diego had been doing their back and forth flirtation for months, but he had never been so blatant before.

“Oddly specific type,” Aletha swallowed. “Of course, I don’t know anyone who matches that description. I think I’m the only blonde in the department and I don’t technically have a real degree.”

Diego shrugged, “I could lower my standards.”

Okay, now they were really getting into dangerous territory, and Aletha had a job to do.

“I’m here about your arm,” Aletha went back to business. “Doctor Kalonia’s been called away, so I’ll be tending to this appointment. Now, Kalonia’s notes say all the testing has been done, and all the
available surgeries, so… by the Gods. Have you been through *eleven surgeries in two months*?”

“What can I say?” Diego shrugged, his head low to his shoulders. He was clearly uncomfortable with the question, “Ben Solo really knows how to make an unfixable mess.”

“Oh, Diego,” Aletha wanted nothing more than to wrap her arms around him. She had forgotten how broad his shoulders were. He was wearing a tattered brown leather jacket that Aletha could have sworn was Alliance issue.

“I’ve regained the ability to move my fingers and joints. My sense of touch is restored. Pretty much everything is back to normal… but my hand hasn’t stopped shaking for two months, and my reflexes…”

Aletha winced. She knew what loss of reflexes meant to a pilot.

Diego took a deep breath, “I know what this appointment is about. I know what you’re going to tell me. We’ve tried so many ways to fix it, but my hand… it’s never going back to the way it was. Ben was right; he finished what Vader started. I’ve gotten myself ready for this. Just say it, Aletha.”

Why did she have to be the one to say it?

“There is still hope, Diego,” she wanted to sit down on that bed next to him and steady his perpetually shaking hand. “Kalonia has one option left to try.”

“I know, amputation,” the word was like poison on Diego’s tongue.

“It’s not so bad, I’ve known many a man with a prosthetic arm. They look just as real as flesh, have the same motility, and sure, maybe there is a battery to recharge. Actually, my ex-boyfriend once had the battery burn out in his arm before he could change it out with the other set. That was a funny story. My friend, Quom—”

“I’m not going to cut off a perfectly healthy arm, Aletha,” Diego said shortly.

Aletha met his eyes, “But it’s not perfectly healthy. Diego, do you understand what happens if you don’t get this surgery? You’ll never fly again. Not in battle. You will be permanently grounded. I know that’s not what you want.”

“You’re right, I don’t, but amputating my arm for the chance to fly?”

“You said it yourself, Diego. Flying means so much to you that if you ever were permanently grounded you’d rather we just take you out back and shoot you because flying is all you have.”

Diego sighed, looking down at the ever-shaking limb he so desperately wanted to control.

“What are the chances amputation will fix me?” Diego asked.

“It’s mostly an issue with the nervous system, so there may be some issue with getting a new arm. I’m sure Kalonia didn’t estimate very high odds of—”

Aletha stopped as she saw the number on the datapad.

“That can’t be right.” She frantically scrolled through all of the notes and calculations. Her heart fell when she saw Kalonia had done the math right, “There’s a thirty-two percent chance of success.”

Diego looked devastated, “So the probability of failure is—”
“Sixty-eight percent,” Aletha winced. She allowed herself to sit on the bed and place a palm over his shaky hand, “Diego if I had known, I wouldn’t have made such a fuss. But if you really want to continue flying, I recommend the surgery, risk of failure aside. This is your only chance of getting back in a cockpit.”

Diego thought about it for a very long time.

“Forty years,” he whispered. “I’ve been flying for over forty years. Since I was fifteen years old. I’ve made my life, my military career out of what these hands could do… It was all I had.”

Aletha’s breath caught as he turned to lock her eyes; such deep, pleading, loving eyes that felt like they bore into her very soul.

He hesitated, then brought up that shaking hand to her face the way he had done on that gurney.

“Just as soft as I imagined,” he breathed, stroking her cheek and never moving his eyes from hers.

Aletha felt herself shudder, “Diego… please.”

He sighed and removed his hand.

“I’m not going to do the surgery,” he declared.

“But Diego,” she started.

“This was a sign from the Force,” Diego cut her off. “I’ve become reckless. My mind is too focused on the thought of vengeance, and I’m making poor decisions. This injury didn’t have to happen. Wedge Antilles didn’t have to die. Those were consequences of my rash decisions. I won’t let there be further ones.”

“But flying.”

“It was all I had… It’s not now.”

Aletha couldn’t help but smile. She felt Diego’s shaking fingers sneakily entwine with hers.

“I will report to General Organa straightway and tell her that I am stepping down from the Air Force,” Diego decided. “I think it’s time for the new generation to be in charge of the fight. Poe Dameron should make a fine replacement.”

“Kaydel will be thrilled.”

“I’m not writing her anymore Yavinese phrases.”

Aletha frowned, “What Yavinese phrases?”

“Nothing,” Diego said too quickly. He cleared his throat, “The General will move me permanently into Communications. Brance won’t be happy I’m taking over his position, but he’ll understand as second-in-command of the Resistance, it is my right to take the role of Head of Communications. As a warning, Aletha, my first act as Head of Communications may be banning Dameron from the floor. When he’s visiting Kaydel, you have to pry them apart with a crowbar to get any work done.”

Aletha chuckled, “Well, you know what they say about Yavinese men.”

Diego grinned, “Oh, I do. The real question is, do you know?”
Aletha blushed.

“Are we done here?” Diego asked.

“If you’re refusing surgery, then yes,” Aletha stood up and typed the new information into a nearby computer.

Diego watched her very carefully. He enjoyed their little song and dance and had truly missed it in the past two months. Every encounter left him wanting just a little more, and his craving had grown great over the months.

What would he give to be able to have that beautiful, intelligent woman all to himself?

Oh, screw it! He was fifty-eight. He didn’t have time for this teenaged will they won’t they crap.

“You know, it’s unfortunate that you’re my doctor,” Diego said.

Aletha frowned and turned to face him, “That’s not the best review for a doctor to get. Might I inquire why you don’t like me being your doctor?”

“Because the Resistance has a rule that I can’t ask out my doctor,” he answered boldly.

And there it was; finally, the clear declaration of affection they had been dancing around for months. He wanted her, and she wanted him. The only thing standing in their way was a pesky sentence in a rulebook.

“Well,” Aletha bit her lip, “you know… Kalonia is actually your personal doctor. I’m just filling in today. So, hypothetically once this appointment has ended, I’m not your doctor anymore.”

Diego grinned, “Hypothetically, if I asked you out would you be interested?”

“Hypothetically I might be.”

“I’ve got duties today, but tomorrow I’ll be off. When are you hypothetically off tomorrow?”

“Hypothetically, I have the early morning shift, so I’ll be off around noon.”

“Then I’ll hypothetically meet you on the path to the sniping meadow at one.”

“I’ll be there,” Aletha beamed. “…Hypothetically.”

Diego chuckled, got out of the bed, and marched across the room, out the door with the confidence of a man who had just shot Darth Vader out of the sky.

He was about three steps down the hallway when he came to a stop. Quickly, he backtracked and stuck his head back into the Medical Center.

“To be clear,” Diego said uncertainly to Aletha, who had been changing the sheets for the next patient. He looked very nervous as their eyes met, “We are going out tomorrow?”

Aletha just laughed.
“Everybody stop squealing!” Jessika exclaimed as the girls gathered around the comm that night. “Or at least give me some aspirin!”

The news of Aletha and Diego’s date had elicited squeals so loud the local wildlife was lifting their heads.

“Sorry, Jess,” Kaydel laughed. “We’re just so excited.”

“Yeah, it’s about time,” Rose joked. It was a wonder what the past two months of regular girl talk had done to her confidence.

“But Kaydel’s right, we’re sorry, Jess,” Rey said on the comm. “No, wait. Not sorry. N’eparavu takisit. How was my pronunciation, Kaydel?”

“Almost flawless. Good job.”

“Oh?” Aletha raised an eyebrow. “What’s this?”

“I found someone who shares my love of languages,” Rey answered excitedly. “Kaydel’s been teaching me Mando’a. That was sorry in it.”

“Cheaper than an actual birthday present,” Kaydel shrugged.

“That’s right, your birthday is tomorrow, isn’t it, Kira?” Paige asked.

“Oh, the big day,” Jessika teased. “You ready?”

“I think so. I’m really nervous.”

“Turning sixteen is a pretty big deal,” Aletha chuckled. No one had been kind enough to fill her in on what Rey was doing on her sixteenth birthday. “I can’t believe it, though. It’s the first birthday of yours in ten years that I won’t be there for. I remember the first one we celebrated. It wasn’t your actual birthday because we missed the real day.”

“Oh right,” Rey laughed. “Quom got offended at the thought of a Vrogem singing and refused to do so. You got that cheap little cake thing, and everyone got teary eyed when I decided to share. To this day, that is the best thing I’ve tasted.”

“That just makes me sad,” Aletha said. “I wish I could get you a real cake.”

“Well, why don’t we?” Rose suggested.

All eyes turned on her in surprise.

“What? Get her a cake?” Jessika asked.

“Yeah!” Rose grinned. “Maybe some other stuff? Dig up some Holos of Han Solo from the archive, give her some fruit, crackers, cheese, maybe actual meat. Maybe… a nice hair brush and googles and some military grade adventuring boots. I don’t know.”

“Like a care package?” Kaydel asked.
“For a birthday present. She always says she wants to join in on the stuff we take for granted. Why don’t we treat her for once?”

“I like it,” Paige said. “Maybe some nail polish or lipstick. A little luxury in the desert. Teng might be happy about those.”

“Lipstick melts in the desert, better go with a tinted lip gloss,” Aletha advised. “This is a great idea. Might be hard for Kira to explain where she got it all, but she could always say I sent it.”

“You like the idea?” Rose was eager.

“I love it!” Aletha looked to the comm, “Kira, what do you think?”

“I can’t believe what I’m hearing. Fruit, nail polish, Holos of Han Solo. It sounds amazing.”

“Then we’ll do it,” Kaydel declared. “I don’t think I could get you any koyo melons though. Poe might actually break up with me if I stole from his stash.”

Paige frowned, “Doesn’t he live on an actual koyo melon orchard?”

Kaydel shrugged, “It’s not like he gets weekly shipments from his father.”

“Yeah, they’re bi-weekly,” Jessika said. “Geeze, Paige. Aletha do you have a way to get this all to Kira?”

“I have some contacts,” Aletha nodded. “This is exciting. I always wanted you to get a real birthday gift.”

“I’m especially looking forward to the nail polish. I have a feeling it’s going to freak out Quom and induce a why is this a thing rant.”

“Oh, I wish I could see that,” Aletha lamented. “I wish I could see you.”

“I wish I could see you too… All of you.”

“Why don’t you?” Rose asked. “Let’s take a Holo of us and send it to Kira. Then she can put faces to the voices. We could do it right now.”

“We’re in our pyjamas, Rose,” Paige reminded.

“Yeah, and if she were actually with us in person, she’d be seeing us like this anyway. Come on, when else is the perfect time?”

“Anyone have an empty Holo disc chip?” Jessika asked.

“I do, but nothing to take the Holo with. Oh, wait a second.” Kaydel scrambled to her nightstand and flicked on a comlink, “Poe? Are you sleeping?”

“I’m up,” Poe’s voice crackled back. “What’s going on? Did Paige fall asleep and you wanted me to come over and fool around while she’s out? Hey, did she ever find out about that time?”

“No,” Paige said loudly. “But she did now.”

Poe chuckled nervously, “Hey Paige. Nice night, right?”

Paige crossed her arms and fixed the bright red Kaydel with a glare, “Poe Dameron, you and Kaydel
are animals.”

“I have no complaints about that,” Poe chuckled. “So what’s up, Kay? What are you guys doing right now?”

“We’ve got the girls over for our chat with Kira,” Kaydel answered.

“Oh.” Poe paused. “Hi, Kira.”

“Hello, Poe,” Rey answered awkwardly. “Congratulations on the ribbon.”

“Uh, thanks,” Poe sounded surprised. “How did you-”

“Kay mentioned it. It’s nothing.”

Aletha looked between the comms, very nervous at where this was going, “So why did you comm Poe?”

“Right,” Kaydel remembered. “Can we borrow BB-8 to take a picture?”

There was a long silence.

“You know,” Poe said, “I want to ask questions, but I fear your aunt, so I’m going to send along BB-8 and leave it at that.”

“Good boy,” Aletha laughed.

“Thanks, Poe,” Kaydel grinned. “I’ll send BB-8 right back when we’re done.”

“Anything for you, Babe… Except that one thing.”

The girls looked at her.

“I’m not explaining that one,” Kaydel refused. She looked back at the comm, “Sweet dreams, Peacock.”

“Sweet dreams, Koko.”

“I hate you.”

“No, you don’t.”

“Yeah, you’re right, I don’t. Good night.”

“I’ll see you in the morning.”

BB-8 arrived soon enough, and he provided to be a little bit of a snobby ball of mechanics when it came to photographing things. He needed the positioning to be perfect, the lighting just right, the angle at just the proper-

“Take the damn picture, Droid or Poe’s getting you back in pieces!” Jessika yelled after half an hour of BB-8’s adjustments.

BB-8 looked to Kaydel, who he recognized to be his Master in this situation as his true Master’s
chosen mate.

**Beep bop beep bee bep!**

Kaydel smiled kindly at BB-8, “I’m sure you’re taking it because you want to and not because of Jessika.”

**Beep boop bip.**

“Yes, I’ll stop repeating everything you say.”

**Beep beep beep!**

“Sorry.”

“Alright,” Aletha pulled Kaydel in close, “everyone say D’Qar is a much better place to live than Jakku.”

The girls laughed, tripping over their words to repeat Aletha’s saying.

BB-8 got a wonderful Holo out of it. Aletha and Kaydel were on Kaydel’s bed, arms wrapped around each other. Rose and Paige were similarly hugging each other on Paige’s bed. Jessika was knelt on the floor between the beds, Kaydel’s hand on her shoulder and clasping Paige’s lowered hand. She held up Rey’s silver comm to act as if Rey was there among them in body as well as spirit.

“Thanks, BB-8, it looks great,” Aletha patted BB-8 on the head. “Tell Poe I said thank you.”

**Bip beep.**

“Wait, BB-8, before you go…” Kaydel pulled something out of her nightstand – a small chip – and gave it to him. She told BB-8 in a low voice, “Give that to Poe. It’s, uh… something to get him through long trips away from me. Tell him if he looks at it in front of anyone, I’ll kill him. Oh, and if we ever break up, he better destroy it. Got it?”

BB-8 flicked his lighter in a thumbs up.

“Good boy,” Kaydel patted him on the head and sent BB-8 on his way. “Tell Poe thanks, and I love him.”

**Boop bep boo!**

BB-8 closed the door behind him.

Kaydel turned back to see the others staring at her in amusement.

“I’m going to pretend I didn’t hear that,” Aletha said.

“Like I said,” Paige chuckled, “animals the both of you.”

“In my defense, Paige, have you seen my boyfriend?”

“No,” Rey answered. “He sounds hot, though.”

“I’m sure Teng would be happy to hear that,” Rose teased.

“That can be our little secret.”
“Oh stop looking at me like that all of you!” Kaydel chastised. “I’m a grown woman and can make my own choices. If I want to give my boyfriend a picture like that, I will. For goodness sakes’, Kira’s fighting in a gladiatorial match tomorrow, and we egged her on to do that.”

“Wait, what?” Aletha exclaimed.

“Oh, did we not tell you?” Jessika asked. “Kira’s going to kick that Devi girl’s ass. Someone named Dirk has been training her.”

“You’re training with Dirk? Do you want to get killed?”

“Just let me explain, Aletha.”

“I’m all ears, Sunshine. This better be good.”

So Rey explained, but unfortunately it was not good.

“No,” Aletha refused. “You’re not fighting tomorrow.”

“Yes, I am. You can’t stop me.”

“Yes, I can. You fight tomorrow, I’ll call your father. Right now.”

Rey chuckled, “You can’t do that.”

“Why not?”

“It’s night time here. Dad and I are miles from the comm station, and he’s going scavenging tomorrow. After that, I’ll just have Teng keep him away from the comm station while I fight Devi. You won’t reach him in time.”

Aletha chuckled darkly, “Oh, is that how you want to play it, Sunshine? Three words for you little girl. Bring. It. On.”

AGE SIXTEEN

“Again,” Dirk ordered.

The staff was a flurry of swings and blocks as Rey parried once more with Dirk as she had done dozen of times a day for the past two months. At first the staff had been heavy and cumbersome, but her muscles adjusted, her grip tightened, and her moves became powerful and fluid.

True, she was still but an amateur, but something flowed inside of her. A strength and power that boiled in her blood. Dirk dictated her moves during warm up and practise, but when they fought each other it was this force inside her that guided her actions. The world became colours around her and her soul was one with the energy of the world.

Or maybe she was hallucinating from the heat.

“Match!” Dirk declared when Rey had subdued him, knocking him to the ground.

He went easy on her, and she knew it, but his words still brought a smile to her face. Rey offered him her hand, and Dirk gratefully accepted the help up.
“So, how did I do?” Rey asked as Dirk brushed the sand off his clothing. They had been duelling about a mile out from Niima Outpost so that Devi wouldn’t see Rey’s moves and plan accordingly.

“You’ll beat that girl no problem,” Dirk grinned. He squeezed her hand, which was still clasped with his. “You’ve even got the callused hands to prove it.”

Rey laughed, “I’ve had calluses since I was seven, Dirk.”

“Yeah, but now they’re fighter’s calluses. Speaking of, I got you something.”

“Oh, Dirk, you didn’t have to.”

“It’s your birthday, of course I do.” He pulled out of his pocket a pair of brown leather gloves. They were ratty and had holes in some of the finger tips, “For you. To protect your hands.”

“Dirk,” Rey smiled taking them from him. “Thank you.”

“I’m sorry they’re not nicer,” Dirk said bashfully. “But Boss doesn’t give me much of a cut. I don’t pull my weight, he says. Don’t like to fight and I’m not smart. Waste of money he says.”

“You’re not a waste of anything.” Rey frowned, “But what do you mean a waste of money? Does he… own you?”

“Kinda. Used to before slavery became illegal on Zygerria. Here the laws are unclear, like how your boyfriend belonged to Meru.”

Rey leaned on her staff, intrigued, “You’re from Zygerria?”

“A slave from the Fighting Pits,” Dirk confessed shyly. He looked to the ground and fiddled with the stuffed acklay in his pocket. It was ratty and leaking sand, but it still brought him great comfort. They do bad things to the slaves in the Pits. It’s why I don’t like to fight. Reminds me of the days I was forced to fight people who didn’t stand a chance. It was horrible for the losers of the matches, taking a brutal beating and then facing their Master’s wrath… but they did bad things to the winners too.”

“What kind of bad things?” Rey was almost too afraid to ask.

“They called it renting. You could rent an attractive looking winner for an hour. Do… terrible things to them. I even heard that relatives sometimes got rented together: brothers and sisters, sometimes cousins… sometimes parents and children. They had to watch, but sometimes… sometimes they were forced to do something worse.”

Rey wanted to throw up, “That’s horrifying. Did you-”

“Don’t think so. I don’t know who my family is. Or where I came from. Used to, but that was before Master…”

“Before what?”

Dirk took a shaky breath, “I’m not… I’m not handsome, but I’m strong. The real money in the Pits was the renting. I can win fight, but no one wanted to rent me. So Master – not Plutt – put a lot of money into training me up. He thought if I became really, really strong I could be a… what’s the word? Novel? Nobility?”

“Novelty?”
“Yeah, that. But no matter how strong I got… I was just too ugly.”

Rey sighed. He was covered in wrappings as all of Plutt’s goons were, but she remembered what he looked like. She was uncertain what species Dirk was: he looked a lot like a human, but a strange green ting to his skin, abnormally sharp teeth, and what looked like two torsos atop each other before his waistline declared a half-breed at best. His back was hunched, his eyes too large, his nose was like mottled clay. Dirk also had very strange hair, thick, matted black patches interspersed with this white hair balding patches made the hair look something of a quilt. There were also many terrible scars on his body, the most prominent being across his forehead.

“But Master had an idea,” Dirk continued. “He liked reading about science experiments and got the idea that he could make me think of only fighting and I would get better. So he knocked me out, opened up my head, and cut up my brain.”

Rey shuddered.

“They did a slice her, cut out a part there, my did really bad things to me. I don’t remember much of my life cause of it. I couldn’t remember how to read or write, and after the surgery… it took months before I could walk or talk or fed myself. And I hurt a lot.”

“Oh, Dirk,” Rey placed a hand on his arm.

His voice shook, “He did a bad thing, Rey. Master was mad that it didn’t work, so he decided to just sell me off. Plutt sometimes went to Zygerria to buy cheap slaves and snapped me up. I think he felt sorry for me, because he treated me better, and helped me get back to being somewhat normal… but my memories haven’t come back, and it’s hard to learn stuff. I know I’m stupid, Rey, but before… I don’t think I was dumb. Not a smart man, not a handsome man… but something better than this.”

“Dirk, I am so sorry,” Rey fought back tears. “They shouldn’t have done that to you. Why does Roke and the others treat you so horribly?”

“Only Boss and Roke know. That’s how I like it to stay. The other don’t know, but Roke… you know he don’t care. He always needs someone to laugh at.” Dirk took a deep breath, “You know what’s the worst part?”

“What?”

“I do have some memories… fuzzy ones. Ones of a little brown-haired girl. I remember the day the slavers took me. I don’t remember where or when it was, but I remember the little girl. I protected her. I protected a little girl with brown hair.”

Rey understood what he wouldn’t say, that that was why he had taken care of another little girl with brown hair all those years ago. Why he had stood up for her and taught her to fight.

The tears free flowing from her eyes, Rey threw her arms around Dirk and pulled him in for a tight hug.

“I’ll protect you, Rey,” Dirk promised, holding her snug like his lifeline to something normal. “I protect you like I protected my sister.”

It was nearly an hour later when Teng pulled up in Quom’s speeder. He found the two still embracing.

“Rey? Dirk?” Teng asked, hesitant at his interruption of the moment. “It’s time.”
Dirk pulled away from Rey, “You ready to kick some butt?”

Rey grinned, “Let’s do this.”

“You’re seriously letting Rey and Teng go off on their own… alone today?” Quom shook his head as he and Luke pulled up into town in Luke’s speeder. The trunk was packed with their daily haul.

“It’s her sixteenth birthday and she wants to celebrate with her boyfriend,” Luke answered, shutting off the ignition. “I trust them not to do anything they shouldn’t.”

“You trust them?”

“Alright, I trust Teng.”

“That’s more like it,” Quom chuckled, opening the trunk. “So what are we going to be up to today? Didn’t you tell Rey that we were going to be scavenging until almost sundown?”

“Well, she sounded a little too excited about that, so I figured I better stay in town in case she gets up to trouble. Maybe we could work on your speeder?”

“Honestly, at this point I’m seriously considering asking Rey just to build me one.”

“In the interest of public safety, I encourage you to pursue that train of thought,” Luke chuckled.

“You know, I still don’t trust leaving Teng and Rey alone today.”

“Come on, Quom, what trouble could they possibly get up to?”

“Hey Tinadar!” Ivano Troade caught their attention. “The guys at the comm station are looking for you. Apparently you got a call.”

Quom frowned, “Who in the Galaxy would call me?”

“Aunt Ally, please don’t do this,” Kaydel begged as Aletha placed the call to Jakku. “Kira needs to fight.”

“Enough Kaydel,” Aletha ordered coolly. “You don’t understand Jakku like I do, and that Devi girl is up to no good. I guarantee you that Kira’s not going to end up fairly fighting Devi today. Poe back me up.”

“Sorry, Doctor Kymeri, but gotta side with my Sweetheart in matters such as these,” Poe watched the aunt and niece place a private comm in Diego Nalto’s office. He stood in the doorway with arms crossed and a frown on his face, “That reminds me, Kay, why am I even here?”

Kaydel answered, “Aunt Ally asked Nalto to use his personal comm, but he was busy with drills. He couldn’t just give us the door code as we don’t have the proper security clearance. You were the only person available with the code to his office that wasn’t Holdo, and she would ask too many questions.”

“And I would ask none?” Poe shot.
Kaydel grinned, “You make the perfect watchdog, My Peacock.”

“Alright but you owe me for this.”

“Well, Aunt Ally’s room will be free during their date.”

“I will spray you two with water, so help me God,” Aletha threatened.

“Yes, Ma’am,” Poe nodded, but winked at Kaydel when Aletha’s back was turned. “So are you calling Kira’s father?”

“No, a mutual friend.” Aletha answered. “I would rather her father not know we’re communicating, and if I called Kira’s father, I would have to explain how I came by my information about Kira. Poe, do you mind watching the hall so that no one will come in?”

“Yes, Doctor.”

He kissed Kaydel on the cheek and exited the room.

“For the last time, Aunt Ally,” Kaydel pleaded, “let Kira do this on her own.”

“Someday you’ll understand, Kay,” Aletha sighed. “Let’s just hope Quom does right now.”

“Doc?” a familiar voice crackled over the comm.

It made Aletha smile, “Hey Quom. We gotta talk.”

“Deep breath, Rey,” Teng instructed as they stood at the edge of the ring, waiting for the day’s fights to start. He cupped her cheek tenderly, “Are you sure you want to do this? This is the last chance to back out.”

“I’m ready,” she declared. “I’m going to show them what I’ve got.”

“I know you will,” he grinned. “Kick her butt, Starlight.”

“And you take down Strunk like there’s no tomorrow, Moonshine.”

Teng pulled her in for a kiss: a hot, passionate kiss. His hand fistng through her hair to crush her lips to his, his arms locked around her waist pulling her tight to his sturdy body. Rey wanted to melt there in his embrace.

They pulled apart panting.

“Wow,” Rey gasped. “That was… That gets better every time.”

“Yeah, it does,” Teng stroked her cheek.

Rey bit her lip, debating whether or not to utter her next words.

“I know we’ve had some worries, Teng. I am a little young, even on Jakku.” Rey coyly traced a finger across his chest, “But we did have an agreement about my age… When I turned sixteen, what with you being seventeen a few more months and then after that, eighteen doesn’t seem too bad. After all the age of consent is sixteen, so I would thinking-”
“I am more than happy to uphold our groping agreement, Rey,” Teng grinned. “And whatever else you would like.”

“Good.” Rey wrapped her arms around his neck, “I just… I have things that I want to do. Experiences I want to enjoy… and I want you to be the one I… do them with.”

Teng cleared his throat, “Well, you know all I really strive for in this universe is making you happy. Seriously, I have no life beyond making you smile, so if that will make you smile-”

“I hope there will be smiles from you too.”

“Oh, I guarantee there will be smiles on my end.”

“Good,” she stroked the sides of his face, the pads of her fingers pricking against the short hairs of his face which he hadn’t shaved that morning. “Because I was thinking if you won your match, I would give you a little reward of my own.”

Teng swallowed thickly, “And what exactly is that reward?”

Rey lifted up to whispered something in his ear that made his eyes go wide, his mouth dry, and his cock hard. She pulled back to observe the effect her words had on his. He stared at her gobsmacked as she smiled coyly at him.

He could barely manage a sentence, “All of that?”

“Unless you have any objections?” Rey toyed with him.

“Well, I suppose it is your birthday,” he answered magnanimously.

She pulled him in for another playful but passionate kiss. Teng’s fervour was more ravenous this time, pulling her against him as if he wanted to crush her into dust. She shuddered as she felt his erection press against her thigh. Every inch of her body screamed out for her hips to roll against that hardness.

“Whoa, let’s keep the R rating here for violence and gore,” Devi’s words broke them apart.

“Devi,” Teng cleared his throat, pushing Rey in front of him to block his erection from Devi’s view. He really needed to settle down.

“Teng,” Devi grinned. She nodded to the other girl, “Rey.”

“I was just wishing him luck,” Rey hastily said.

“I’m almost too afraid to ask what a goodbye looks like,” Devi teased.

Rey couldn’t believe she was blushing. She wished her girl friends were here to support her. Jessika would know what to say to put Devi in her place.

“Are you ready for the fight?” Devi asked.

“I’ve been ready for weeks,” Rey declared. “You paid up?”

“No turning back. You?”

“We’re in. No way out of the fight.” Rey looked around the crowd, “Hey, where’s Strunk?”
“Oh, you didn’t hear?” Devi answered in a tone that no one was surprised to hear.

Rey’s heart fell in an instant. She knew Devi was bound to pull something, and here it was. Since all three of them were paid up, there was literally no turning back. In the Fighting Ring, if you paid, you fought. End of story. If you changed your mind, you would literally be dragged back into the ring and pummeled by your opponent. Devi had made sure Rey couldn’t back out until she pulled her gambit.

The only question was what was it?

“Poor Strunk had a fall yesterday and broke his collarbone,” Devi pitched her story. She pointed into the crowd at Strunk who was wearing a contraption of bandages that didn’t exactly look like they would help heal a collarbone. “He can’t possibly fight, so it looks like Teng doesn’t have an opponent.”

“You schutta,” Rey shook her head in disbelief. “You planned this all along.”

Devi shrugged, “Now why would I do that? I’m still going to fight.”

“Hey Roke!” Rey turned to face the ring where the Goons of the day were talking. Roke always fought, so it was easy to guess who she could address. “How many fighters today?”

Roke grinned, “Three and three. We’ll have to draw lots.”

Rey narrowed her eyes at Devi, “Of course we will.”

There is was: the answer. Usually the way it worked was that if a volunteer didn’t directly challenge a goon, the volunteers would be paired off to fight each other and the goons would be paired to fight each other, ignoring the volunteers altogether (unless it was one of those days Roke decided he just wanted to fight everyone in town.) When there was an uneven number of goons and volunteers fighting, they would draw lots and one goon would fight one volunteer.

That was Devi’s gambit. With an uneven number, there were three possible results Devi could encounter.

One – Devi fought Rey. It was her original plan, so other than pissing off Rey, there wasn’t a whole lot of harm in it. The only downside is that if Rey won, she wouldn’t share her winnings with Devi anymore.

Two – Devi fought a Goon. She knew she could probably take some of the goons, so it was a risky play but possibly beneficial. If she had to fight someone like Roke, then she could easily throw the fight. The bonus to the situation was that Rey and Teng would have to fight each other, and then it became a test of which lover was willing to harm the other. If you signed up for the Ring, you had to give your opponent a fair fight. Teng was unlikely to try putting his all into harming Rey, and Rey would never let him throw the fight. Rey and Teng would both lose no matter the outcome.

Three – Devi fought Teng. She thought she could take the boy, and then Rey would be forced to fight a goon. There was no way Rey could win against a goon.

It hadn’t been her plan to pull this trickery when she first challenged Rey, but once Dirk had demonstrated his abilities and started to train Rey, Devi knew her best bet was to gamble this way.

“I don’t believe you,” Rey was surprisingly calm towards Devi. Perhaps it was months of expecting a cheap trick that kept Rey in check. “I thought this was our way of showing the town what we were made of. To earn its respect.”
“We live on Jakku, Rey,” Devi shook her head. “There’s only one rule here: survival of the fittest. It’s just good business.”

“Indeed it is,” Rey said coolly.

Teng looked between the girls, but didn’t know what to say, “I, uh-”

“Oi, you three!” Roke barked. “Get over here. Time to draw lots.”

“Coming,” Devi called. She smiled pleasantly at the pair, “Shall we?”

Teng glared at Devi.

Rey raised an eyebrow, “You know if I draw you, I going to kick the poodoo out of you?”

“You can try,” Devi shrugged.

“Come on,” Teng nodded towards the awaiting goons.

Devi started forward, but Rey caught Teng’s arm.

“What is it?” Teng asked.

“I’ve changed my mind,” she answered.

“About what? The fight?”

“Your reward. I’ve decided that if you win your match, I’m also going to…” Rey whispered something in his ear that literally made his jaw drop.

“Okay, I might kill a man for that,” Teng declared.

Rey looped her arm around his, “I’m glad to hear it.”

“MOVE! MOVE!” Luke yelled as he and Quom raced towards the Fighting Ring.

Quom shouted, “EVERYONE GET OUT OF OUR WAY! OUR CRAZY TEENAGERS ARE BEING IDIOTS!”

Surprisingly that didn’t make anyone move. In fact, Luke could have sworn he heard someone mutter *Damn Ersos and their theatrics.*

He was getting way too much of a reputation in this town.

They reached the Fighting Ring right as the contestants were about to draw lots. Rey was sizing up the goons when she heard her father shout out her name.

“Rey Rhiaon Erso!”

Her head snapped to the side and she saw her father and Quom looking furious.

“Damn it, Aletha,” Rey muttered.

Teng just squeezed her hand reassuringly.
Luke started forward to duck into the ring when Sarco Plank of all people blocked his path.


Plank chuckled, “Roke paid me a heafty sum to keep you from interfering with business. He thought you and Tinadar might try to ruin things, and I’m the only one in town who can give you a fair fight.”


“That’s not happening.”

“I will sic my Vrogem on you.”

“Hey!” Quom objected. “I am not some Hothead attack dog!”

“So if he doesn’t get out of my way and as a result Teng gets his skull bashed in?”

“I didn’t say I don’t have my limits.”

Luke rolled his eyes.

“He is almost as amusing as the golden droid you owned,” Sarco says. “Though I’m struggling to figure out which was more annoying.”

“You leave Threepio out of this… and the correct answer is Threepio.” Luke narrowed his eyes, “Get out of my way, Plank. If you force my hand, I will attack you.”

Plank shook his head, “You won’t do any such thing. I’ve got the upper hand here.”

“How so?”

“Because if you do one thing to annoy me, I shout out in front of this entire town that you are Luke Skywalker.”


Quom frowned, “Really?”

“I am not risking the exposure of my identity because teenagers want to be teenagers,” Luke said simply. “Plus we can always go talk to them when they’re in the waiting area for their fights. Oh, and Plank? For the record, my legal name is Luke Rhiaon Skywalker.”

Plank smiled, though they couldn’t see it behind his mask, “And no one in this town, or pretty much the Galaxy actually cares, Nobody’s Padawan.”

Quom couldn’t help but shrug, “He’s got a point, Luke.”

“Nobody asked you, Quom.”

“Love you too, Buddy.”

“Wow,” Teng watched the scene from afar. “What in the Galaxy could Plank possibly say too stop those two from charging over here and dragging us out of the Ring?”
“Probably the same sort of blackmail that makes Dad pay him three portions a day,” Rey replied. “I’m glad though. It delays their murder of us for a little while at least.”

“Ladies and Gentlemen!” Kerlos declared to the crowd. “You all now how it works. I have two bags here, each with three coloured stones inside. My associates will draw at random from the bag in my left hand. Two will draw yellow stones, and the other a red stone. Our brave volunteers will draw at random from the other bag. Two will draw blue stones, and the other a red stone. Each person will fight the one who has the matching stone. No switching or backing out. None of you leave this ring until your match is over. Contestants, let’s draw!”

“So which kid do you think is going to draw the red stone?” Quom asked Luke.

Luke shot Quom a look, “Quom, Rey is a Skywalker. Of course, she is going to draw the red stone.”

“Well, if you’re so sure you’re going to draw the red stone because of the *Curse of being an Erso,*” Teng repeated Rey’s words, “who do you think will get the other one?”

Rey raised an eyebrow and simply pointed to the evitable opponent.

“Contestants, reveal your stones!” Kerlos ordered.

Quom and Luke winced as they saw the completely expected conclusion.

“Just for once could things not go horribly wrong for my family?” Luke groaned.


“But I can dream, Quom. No one can stop me from dreaming.”

“Ladies and Gentlemen,” Kerlos announced, “Rey Erso has drawn the red stone and will face off in the Ring against Roke!”

“Teng… I think I should have listened to Paige.”

“What do you two think you’re doing?” Luke demanded once he and Quom were able to get over to the area where the contestants awaited their matches.

Rey grinned innocently, “Enjoying the fight?”

Luke narrowed his eyes.

“Sorry,” she muttered.

“What were you two thinking?” Luke demanded. “This is dangerous!”

“In all fairness, we were screwed over from our original plan,” Teng pointed out.

“Teng,” Quom glared at his charge, “have I taught you nothing? This is Jakku. *Of course* you were going to get screwed over. Honestly. Trust no one outside this group, and even then keep reasonable suspicion over our sketchier members.”

Everyone stared at Quom, confused and too afraid to ask who he was referring to.
“I’ll just move on from that,” Luke said. “Rey, please… why would you do this?”

“I wanted to prove myself to this town,” Rey answered.

“You don’t have to do it like this.”

“Yes, I do! I push and I push, and I try to stand my ground but as long as the three of you are around, I don’t get my chance to show what I’m capable of.”

“Have you ever thought that might be the whole point?” Luke asked.

She frowned, “What do you mean?”

“Rey, I could easily come into this ring everyday, fight, win, and make sure no one ever even looked at us the wrong way again. But I can’t, Rey. We can’t. We have to keep our heads down, not draw attention to ourselves.”

Rey scoffed, “And what? Let people push me around? Let them harass me? Attack me? Grope me?”

Luke lowered his eyes, “Has anyone-”

“Yes,” she said bluntly. “It’s usually visiting merchants who don’t know about you guys. I get grabbed, pinched, occasionally pulled aside by someone stronger than me. I’ve always managed to get free before anything really happened, but still it happens all over again. I can’t keep being the little girl who can’t protect herself or has to run to Daddy, Uncle Quom, or her lover.”

Quom raised a brow at Teng, and the boy blushed worse than a sunburn.

“Besides,” Rey folded her arms, “I’ve paid up. I have to fight now. There’s no way out.”

“I’ll take your place,” Luke said.

“Dad, no!”

“Rey, this isn’t up for debate.”

“You’re right, it isn’t. I’m going to fight and you can’t stop me.”

“Sweetheart, I am your father,” Luke repeated his words from years ago, “until the day you turn nineteen, I can make you do anything I want.”

“No, you can’t!” Rey exclaimed. “I’m sixteen now.”

“That doesn’t make you an adult.”

“I know it doesn’t. I’m not an adult! I’m not done puberty, I still play with my dolls sometimes, and I don’t know how taxes work.”

“In all fairness, I don’t understand taxes either,” Luke admitted.

Rey sighed, “But I’m not a child either. I can throw a punch, I barter on my own, I have breasts, and I want to do sexual things with my boyfriend.”

“Somebody kill me, please,” Teng begged.

“I got you, Buddy,” Quom said.
Rey took a deep breath, “I’m not a child, Dad, and I’m not an adult. I’m sixteen, old enough to hold my own. I’m not the length of your forearm, and I don’t call you Daddy anymore. But I still need you, I still love you, and I don’t want you to go anywhere.”


“I know. And I know this is a mistake, but sometimes a person needs to make a mistake.”

Luke smiled and remembered what he said long ago.

_Sometimes you have to let a kid hurt themselves in order to learn the concept of danger._

“I know, Sweetheart,” Luke sighed, rubbing her hands under his palms. “And I know you need independence, but I don’t want to see you go off and fight people in a spectator sport. Is this really the only way you believe you can prove to everyone what you’re capable of?”

“It is,” Rey squeezed her father’s hands. “But with this whole growing up thing, I need you to have my back, Dad. Not stand in my way.”

Luke took a deep breath and accepted what he had to do.

“Okay,” he agreed.

Rey’s eyes lit up, “Really?”

“Yes. Go kick Roke’s butt as best you can.”

“Thank you, Daddy!” Rey threw her arms around him.

Luke smiled and held his little girl tight. He struggled to fight back the fear in his heart as her stroked her hair. He kissed the crown of her head.

“I trust you, Rey,” he whispered. “But if it looks like it’s too much for you for even a moment, I’m jumping in there to protect you.”

“That’s all I want from you,” Rey smiled, savoring her father’s embrace. “Just a chance to fight by myself before you go all Daddy Nexu on me. Just don’t cut off Roke’s hand, okay?”

“I make no such promise.”

“Malar! We’re up!” Devi called as the pair of goons exited the ring after their match. She was making a few practise swings of her shortened shock stick, her weapon of choice for the match.

“Mind if I borrow your daughter for a moment, Mr. Erso?” Teng asked.

“She’s all yours,” Luke chuckled, releasing Rey. He smacked Quom when the Vrogem started making gagging noises at the kiss, “Stop that.”

Teng was breathless when they broke apart, “Wow. That was a good kiss.”

“Not bad yourself,” Rey winked. She glanced towards Devi in the ring, “You ready?”

“I’ll make her pay for what she did,” Teng promised. “Now, which of Plutt’s weapons should I pick? Axe? Mace? I prefer something shorter against her. Shorter and sharper.”

“Her,” Rey pulled her own knife off her belt. It was a carved blade she made from a droid arm
“Take mine.”

“Really?”

“Make sure you bring it back in one piece. Well… the knife and yourself.”

“Hey, if I’m getting the reward you offered, you don’t need to worry about that.”


“Nothing,” Rey and Teng said immediately in unison.

“I don’t even want to know,” Quom shuddered.

“Malar!” Kerlos yelled. “Come on, you’re up!”

“Coming!” Teng called. “Wish me luck, guys.”

“Go show them what you’re made of, Son,” Quom patted him on the shoulder.


He frowned, “Are you going to tell me to go easy on her because she’s a girl?”

Luke grinned, “No. I was going to say I don’t believe in double standards when men fight women. Kick her butt, Teng. Make me proud.”

And he did.

Then there’s the threat of other scavengers. I have a reputation in Niima Outpost for being willing to use my staff, which keeps most of the riffraff from bothering me.

- Rey’s Survival Guide

“That was impressive, Teng,” Luke laughed when the match was over. He was fairly certain the boy wasn’t listening, too busy kissing Rey to pay attention to her father.

“What can I say?” Quom chuckled, clapping Luke on the shoulder. “He’s a chip off the old block.”

“Quom, until a year ago, you kind of hated the boy.”

“I’m not a perfect being, Luke.”

“Understatement of the century.”

“Oh you want to go, Erso? I have many examples of you being far from perfect.”

“Bring it on, Tinadar.”

Quom and Luke frowned at each other, the same thought hitting them.
“Usually Aletha would have interceded by now,” Luke said.

“Yeah.” Quom sighed, “I miss her.”

Talking to her on the comm had both made his heart soar and break. Quom wished she was a fixture in his life still. He would give anything to see her smile and shake her head at his antics once more.

“Alright, Erso, you’re up!” Kerlos called.

“Good luck out there, Rey,” Dirk brought to her one of the staffs the contestants were allowed to borrow. “This is a little heavier than the one you’ve been training with, but you should be okay.”

Rey smiled as she accepted the staff, “You think I can win?”

Horror filled Dirk’s face, “Oh no. It’d be a miracle to beat Roke. Just be quick and try to tire him out. Also avoid headshots.”

“Oh good, because she didn’t know to avoid those already,” Teng smirked.

“Teng!” Rey snapped. “What have I said about disparaging Dirk?”

“Sorry, Dear.”

Luke and Quom looked at each other.

“When did they become an old married couple?” Quom asked.

“About the time you two did,” Dirk said nicely.

Luke frowned, “Quom and I are not-”

But he couldn’t even finish the sentence.

Quom patted Luke on the arm, “Don’t let Dirk bother you, Mrs. Tinadar.”

“Cut that out, or I’ll start calling you Mrs. Erso, and you know this town will pick that up like no tomorrow.”

“Would make the whole Luke/Felicity/Aletha love triangle even weirder.”

“There’s no way that could get weirder.”

He had no idea how weird it would get.

“It’s true though,” Dirk said. “It would take a miracle to beat Roke.”

“Well, good thing he’s about to fight the Miracle Girl,” Quom slung an arm around Rey’s shoulders. Considering how much taller she was than him, it pulled Rey down to an awkward and uncomfortable angle. “You go kick his butt, MG.”

“Thanks, Quom,” Rey smiled, but it was a nervous sort of smile. She looked to her father next, “Can I do this, Dad?”

Luke rubbed her shoulders, “I believe in you. If not the ability to win, at least the ability to fight. You’re not just my daughter, Rey. You’re the daughter of Felicity Rhiaon, and if there was one thing she was known for… other than sarcasm and intentionally screwing with people, it was that if she
wasn’t going to succeed, she was going to at least have people remember she went down fighting. Drawn on your strength, Rey. I know you have it as sure as you stand before me.”

“But how do I draw on it?”

Breathe, and reach out to the strength inside,” Luke smiled. “Just remember every lesson you’ve been taught on fighting, and you’ll be fine.”

Rey nodded, and with one last kiss on the forehead from her father, she entered the ring.

“Breathe. Just breathe,” Luke’s words echoed in her mind as clearly as if he were whispering them in her ear. “Close your eyes and breathe.”

As she settled before Roke, she obeyed. Kerlos’ announcements were drowned out, and so was the roar of the crowd. The inhalation and exhalation of her lungs filled her senses as loud as a drum banging inside of her.

The world was black but warm as she listened to her father’s voice.

“Breathe. Just breathe.”

She had never taken such clear and satisfying breathes as something more than air filled her body. Rey felt it buzzing from the tips of her fingers to the soles of her feet to the top of her head. Something warm, strong, and… lilac coloured.

“Breathe. Just breathe.”

A sky blue colour accompanied the words, drawing a hold on her. He filled her, comforted her, and offered up its own strength.

Then another colour reached out to her.

“Breathe. Just breathe.”

The voice was feminine, and the colour magenta, but bound with a twinge of forest green. Her soul screamed to stay away from the green, but something tied her to it. She knew that green, and her strength – at least part of it – came from the same place as the strength of the green.

“Remember every lesson you’ve been taught on fighting,” the magenta repeated Luke’s words.

Something tugged in her mind, bringing forth memories of Luke, Dirk, Aletha, and Quom. But there was more, something else calling for her.

There was another face.

“Breathe. Just breathe,” the sky blue instructed. “Now reach out.”

Rey did. She grasped onto the other face – no, faces. She pulled them to her.

“What do you see?” the sky blue whispered.

Rey opened her eyes.

But she found she hadn’t truly opened them. Though she was staring eyes wide open, the image before her was wrong. The world was silent and black, and all that existed in the universe was Roke and Rey standing with staffs at the ready in this blackness.
What was she supposed to do?

“Remember every lesson you’ve been taught on fighting,” a voice said. Female but different from the voice of the magenta voice.

From behind Roke, a woman stepped forward. She had black hair, brown skin, and seven slashes across her face. Rey knew the woman, but her name escaped Rey’s memory.

But it does not escape ours.

“Remember what I taught you, Rey,” Reine Agim smiled at the teenager. “Your very first lesson of fighting. What did I teach you?”

Rey found she couldn’t speak, not because she didn’t know what to say but that her mouth wouldn’t work.

As if she sensed the dilemma, Reine nodded, “Open a fight with a strong stance. Look fearsome and stand solid. Fights are all about footwork. Strong footwork gives you a fighting chance.”

Rey nodded.

“But it’s not all about footwork,” another voice, this one male said. A tall man with narrow grey eyes, and parchment coloured skin stepped forward. Obik Kenu said, “Analyze your opponent. Find his weakness and exploit it.”

“But it’s not all analytics,” came another man. Tan skin, black hair, and too handsome for his own good, Gavyn Kene grinned at Rey, “Strength is required to defeat your opponent. Strong moves, Rey. Strong moves.”

“But what’s strength without passion?” a woman life. She had pale skin, blue eyes, and ice blonde hair. Tyla Kinall had a smirk on her face, “You gotta have some fire behind your fight. And you come from very fiery stock, Rey.”

“And don’t forget speed,” a grey woman with catlike features appeared. Zena Halcorr had her usual nonsense look on her face, “Quick moves. Tire out your opponent. He can’t move fast. You can.”

“But above all, do it with grace.” Rey did know this voice. Alyla Kene stepped from the shadows and smiled at Rey, “Bring it all together with fluidity and grace.”

Rey found she could finally speak, “Will you help me?”

“Help you?” Roke roared with laughter.

Rey blinked finding herself back on the familiar terrain of Jakku. Yet the vision still bled in the back of her mind, stuck somewhere between the two realities.

“We’re here for you, Rey,” Alyla promised, but her form was nowhere to be seen. “Just listen to us, listen to yourself, and listen to the Force.”

“Alyla we talked about this,” the voice of Obi-Wan Kenobi groaned.

Luke frowned. He hadn’t heard Alyla say anything. Had Rey? She did have a strange look in her eye and had weirdly asked Roke for help.

Something was going on.
“Opponents get ready,” Kerlos ordered.

“Now, be nice to your opponent, Rey,” Gavyn said. “Give him a bow.”

Rey smiled at Roke and made the bow Dirk had taught her.

“Make the first move, Rey,” Reine ordered.

“A strike at the head,” Zena elaborated.

“Annnnddd… GO!”

Rey swung straight for his head. It took Roke by surprise but he managed to dodge and swing at her himself.

“Block!” Obik said.

Her staff clattered against the impending force of Roke’s.


Rey threw her full weight into throwing himself forward. Roke again was surprised and stumbled back.

“Now go for the knees,” Tyla’s smirk could almost be heard.

She fought, obeying the phantoms. Sometimes the vision bled over and she can see her mentors. Usually it was when they were demonstrating a move Rey didn’t quite understand. But when their encouragement and instruction – as well as unknowingly drawing on the Force – Rey was a sight to be seen.

The odd thing though was that Alyla’s voice had ceased to speak.

“Wow, she’s good,” Quom observed the scene in amazement.


Luke closed his eyes and reached out to Rey’s mind. As it was preoccupied with the fight, she didn’t have the defenses to block him and he slipped in easily. Immediately he saw the world of darkness where his students were guiding Rey.


Quom whispered, “What is it? Force Ghosts?”

“No, not ghosts,” Luke shook his head. “Rey’s experiencing purely a vision. Except for… There’s something different with Alyla. Something drawing on her.”

“But what?”

Rey’s cry of pain brought his attention back to the match. Roke had slammed his staff against her fingers, and in her pain had wretched away her weapon. He tossed it aside, out of the ring. The crowd booed. Once a weapon was out of the ring, the contestant could not fetch it or a new one. Rey was on her own against Roke and his staff.
“The answer is simple, isn’t it?” Tyla asked. “Take his staff.”

Rey narrowed her eyes and grinned. She liked that idea.

She had been knocked to the ground by Roke, so she started to stand up. As she did her arm knocked into something, but it happened so quick she thought she simply imagined it. It wasn’t until she was thrown backwards by Roke again that her back definitely touched something.

“What the?” a man’s voice different from the other grumbled.

Rey didn’t have time to dwell, too busy with her fight to pay attention.

But Luke was paying attention. He didn’t sense Rey feeling anything, but something was happening. The forest green Signature surrounding Alyla’s was flaring stronger.

Rey was trapped in Roke’s hold, his arms holding her still as she grasped onto his staff trying to wretch it from his grip and escape from him. She struggled, all the voices yelling different options and Rey didn’t know who to listen to.

Then something slammed into her back. Rey twisted in Roke’s grasp, ready to figure out what he was doing that caused such an odd sensation. Her heart stopped when she saw what was behind her.

It wasn’t Roke. It was another man.

He was tall, so very tall. He had pale skin and dyed black hair, and dark clothing. He was probably in his late twenties, and he burned with the forest green colour that called to her.

She knew him.

But how?

“Rey!” Zena called out.

The man was gone, and Roke was back in his place. That didn’t stop her heart from pounding a mile a minute.

Zena proceeded as if she didn’t know anything was wrong, “Grab his arm over with yours and twist until he drops his weapon.”

Though her mind was reeling, Rey did as she was told. Roke cried out as he tried to resist the attack, but he dropped the staff and was forced to let go of Rey. She dove to the ground and grabbed the staff. She turned back up, thrusting his own weapon towards him, making contact with his lunging face but the victory was hollow.

When she looked back up, her mind was in another place. They were in a shiny metal and chrome training room, and Alyla Kene was standing next to the boy Rey had seen before. But this time he was looking down at her. She could see his long face and dark familiar eyes. Rey could see that she knew this man.

And worse yet, he could see her.

The man frowned, his face a mixture of shock and confusion, “Rey?”

Luke’s mind moved with Rey and saw the same room. He observed with horror, his nephew, Kylo Ren staring down at the living form of Luke’s daughter.
Horror filled Luke’s heart, and panic flooded his veins. Stretching out from Alyla Kene’s form, there was a magenta thread tied to Rey’s lilac Signature, and several others wound together to form a thick rope connected to Ben Solo. It was through Alyla their Signatures were bonded, and Luke knew that this connection was happening in real time.

In the briefest moment of pure instinct, to protect his child, Luke attacked the bond. But to do so was to attack Alyla. He made his choice; he threw the felt power of his Force abilities into Alyla breaking the thread from Rey and banishing the vision from her mind. Luke pulled back, and both Alyla and Ben were gone.

And Rey had no idea what had happened.


Rey did as her father instructed and then fought once more.

All of her instructors were there still, except for Alyla. The vision she had of the strange, familiar man, was separate from her vision of guidance. She listened to them, following their every moment and throwing in some of her own.

“Hit.”

“Block.”

“Kick.”

“Swing.”

“Head.”

“Knees.”

“Swing.”

“Block.”

Then of her own accord, when Roke was in the right position, Rey cracked the staff across his head with her full strength and then some she didn’t have.

Roke hit the ground, knocked out cold.

The crowd fell silent.

“Whoa,” Quom whispered.

“Is he dead?” someone asked nearby.

Rey gripped Roke’s staff tightly as Kerlos slipped into the ring to check on Roke.

“He’s out,” Kerlos declared in amazement. “Ladies and Gentlemen, I can’t believe I’m about to say this, but… Rey Erso wins!”

A loud cheer came from the crowd, mostly lead by Quom and Dirk as Teng ducked into the ring to rush to Rey’s side. She squealed as he picked her up and spun her around in victory. Wolf whistles sounded every which way when Teng set her down and pulled her into a passionate kissed.
“Congratulations, Miss Erso,” Kerlos came back up to her when they had dragged Roke off. He offered her five portion packets, “Your winnings. I can take the staff and give it back to Roke for you.”

“Oh right,” Rey released Teng and accepted the portions.

She was about to hand over the staff when she looked down at it. Pride filled her. She had just defeated Roke. She, Rey Erso, fought and won against Unkar Plutt’s top goon. Aletha was going to be so proud. And not only that, she had managed to wrangle away the weapon that had brought misery to so many.

“Actually…” Rey grinned. She looked up at Kerlos and slung the bloggin-leather and wool strap of the staff over her shoulder, “You can tell Roke that this staff is mine now.”

And that was how she got her staff and showed Niima Outpost that no one messes with Rey Rhiaon Skywalker.

In all the celebration and applause there was one man who was deathly silent. Luke stood motionless in the crowd with absolute terror in his eyes. He reeled as he processed what had just happened.

His sobriety was not unnoticed by his best friend.


“Yeah, I’m okay,” Luke lied, not wanting to drag Quom into the mess. “Just the stress of everything. I’m glad Rey is okay. We should figure out a way to celebrate. It is her birthday after all.”

Quom just stared at his friend.

“No,” he declared after a while. “You’re lying to me. What’s going on?”

“Nothing.”

“Don’t, Luke. I know when you’re lying. Something happened when you pressed onto Alyla’s presence. Something that scared you. Something that broke the connection. What did you find?”

Luke took a deep breath and made sure no one was listening.

“Fine. When I pushed into Alyla’s presence, I found someone else also there. Someone else saw this fight.”

“Who?”

“… I think Ben saw Rey.”

Chapter End Notes

Coming Up Next Chapter…
Secrets of the Past
Rey gets on the wrong side of Sarco Plank, Aletha learns something shocking about Diego, Poe gets a promotion, Kaydel meets Kes Dameron and learns an odd fact about her boyfriend, Holdo asks Lando a reckless question, and Kylo Ren has a secret that will change everything.

Just a head’s up about the next chapter, the timeline is a little wonky. There are three sort of major storylines that occur on Rey’s sixteenth birthday: Rey’s fight with Roke, Aletha and Diego’s date, and Kylo interacting with Tara and Sasa. Since the chapter was running a little long, I decided to move the Aletha and Kylo storylines to the next chapter. The beginning of the next chapter starts before the segment on Jakku that occurs after the header of AGE SIXTEEN. So don’t get confused that we’ve jumped back in time.

Chapter Question: I’ve been having Poe call Kaydel “Babe” because that feels like the right thing for him to call her. However, when writing Kaydel calling Poe something like that publicly (she’s not going to call him Peacock in front of Holdo,) I’ve been drawing a blank. What should she call him? Darling? Babe? Sweetheart? Dear? Love? I’m leaning a little towards Honey, but I want to make that into a thing Holdo calls him when she’s being condescending… or at least more condescending than usual. Any suggestions would be great.
The crackle echoed through the room as their lightsabers locked. Even with a mask on, Kylo Ren’s hatred was clear to FN-2187.

FN-2187 let himself think for a microsecond, then spun around and slashed at Kylo’s knees. Kylo jumped back and FN-2187 took advantage of the action. He slammed his body forward into Kylo – whose saber was tilted to the side. FN-2187 put his full weight into the move and sent Kylo to the floor. FN-2187 only barely caught himself from falling with Kylo.

Victory in sight, FN-2187 swung the red saber down at Kylo, only to suddenly go flying backwards into the wall. He hit it with a sickening crash, and his body inflamed with pain.

Like some sort of jungle cat, Kylo put one hand on the floor and launched himself forward into a giant leap that shouldn’t have been humanly possible. Landing perfectly upright on his feet, Kylo stood before FN-2187, whose helmet was slightly askew. Kylo glowered at the boy and slowly brought the tip of his lightsaber merely an inch from FN-2187’s throat.
FN-2187 tried not to scream as the heat burned into his neck. As the crimson blade crackled, threatening death, FN-2187’s heart beat like a drum and he dared not breathe too loudly. His saber was across the room, out of his grasp. There was no escape from the menace in the mask; FN-2187 was nothing more than his prey.

“Match!” Cern Ren declared.

Kylo Ren extinguished his saber and clipped it to his belt.

The shiny metal and chrome training room filled with quiet mutters as the other forty-nine members of Kylo Ren’s Beginner Lightsaber Class discussed FN-2187’s impressive match.

Kylo never gave the group any feedback from their matches. Just taught them, tested them, and if you couldn’t keep up, you were out of the program.

And that was nothing compared to what Tara Ren did to the failures in the Expert Class.

But there was one thing Kylo would do when he was impressed by a match. It was considered almost impossible to get and the highest honour if you did. When a Stormtrooper saw it happen to a comrade, they would never see their fellow officer in the class again. Achieving this honour got you an automatic upgrade into Wln Ren’s Advanced Class.

The room fell silent when Kylo extended a gloved hand to help FN-2187 to his feet.

FN-2187 blinked. Was he really seeing this? Had Kylo Ren really offered to help him up?

He took Kylo’s hand and was pulled to his feet. Kylo didn’t release FN-2187, instead holding his hand tightly and staring at the Stormtrooper for a long time.

Then he released FN-2187’s hand and went across the room to speak with Cern.

Standing in the corner of the room, Sasa Ren watched the scene with interest. She had vaguely heard the story of FN-2187, if not the full details. She curiously observed the prodigy, trying to figure out the measure of the man.

FN-2187 had far over proven his worth in combat. He regularly tested in the top 1% of the cadets, and he was a natural born leader. Still, something held him back, and if you were to ask around what, the answer would be Phasma. She recognized something inside of FN-2187 and held him back from advancement. The only question was what was holding him back?

Sasa was attempting to probe the borders of his mind when she felt a resistance. She wasn’t entirely surprised – everyone in the saber classes had strong Force potential – but she was surprised at the power of it.

It was easy to see why Kylo was so interested in him… personal reasons aside.

Then she felt the subtle tug on her mind from a forest green Signature, and she caught Kylo’s faint nod.

“Cadets, you are dismissed!” Sasa declared to the crowd.

A few snickers sounded. Sasa didn’t have the same fearsome presence as the other Knights of Ren. While not petite, she was lithe and beautiful, always showing off her assets. Her voice was soft and soothing, and she always held herself submissively and demure. Everyone knew her purpose in the Knights of Ren was not to be warrior or a General, but one simple thing: a bride and mother for Kylo
Ren.

Snoke had become frustrated with Kylo’s disenchantment of producing an heir, and sensed Tara’s true intentions over the situation: a mere platform for power. He needed to find a true match for Kylo: a vessel to extend the power of his apprentice, a way to reward his student, and a way to control him as Snoke was finding it a struggle as of late. Kylo had been too sensitive to his affections for Leia Organa; he had been feuding with Hux and Electra; and then there was the whole mess with Alyla Kene that had gone very against Snoke’s plans.

Enter Sasa Ren, the perfect way to bring Kylo to heel.

Her clothing and appearance were distinctly feminine. Soft flowing fabrics of charcoal grey and as well put together as Padmé Amidala or Leia Organa. Leggings paired always with either long tunics or even dresses. Her copper hair always looking perfectly styled, never in the same way two days in a row. Her nails manicured and the Supreme demanded she always wear makeup and perfume. Tara Ren made fun of her horribly for it, but the idea was to seduce Kylo, not made with the battlefield in mind.

Snoke was very deliberate in his selection of Sasa. She had been modelled to invoke the idea of Padmé Amidala. True, she did not resemble her physically, but that would have been too obvious even for Ben Solo. Kylo idolized his grandfather, so when he thought himself the new Vader, what did he picture beside him but his very own Padmé Amidala. Or rather, a better version of Padmé Amidala – every bit as passionate, stylish, and beautiful as Padmé, and a strong advisor but one submissive to the whims of her husband. Even her name, Sasa – meaning Princess – was chosen to emulate the role he had in mind for Kylo’s consort.

And of course, there were other benefits to Sasa that made her a good consort for Kylo in Snoke’s opinion. Certain strengths that played off Kylo better than Tara’s abilities. Plus Sasa had been rigorously tested to ensure she was very fertile and could easily carry Kylo’s child.

Sasa herself was unaware of Snoke’s plans to manipulate Kylo through her, but she had been raised entirely under the control of Snoke. He had been modeling her according to his designs ever since the death of the last Skywalker Heir, and merely let Kylo entertain himself with Tara until the time came. By the time she had reached the age of twenty some weeks ago, Sasa Ren’s second nature was exactly what Snoke had designed it to be.

But as much as one can design and shape and living thing, a human is not one that can be fully controlled. Pairing Kylo and Sasa was a very dangerous gamble for Snoke, and one that could prove to be his downfall.

And yet, none of this mattered, because the Stormtroopers in Kylo’s Beginner Lightsaber Class thought her as no more than a joke.

Kylo’s head snapped directly to the perpetrators of the laughter.

“RH-4689 and BK-9362,” Kylo said coolly. “You are dismissed from this class.”

“But, Sir-”

“OUT!” Kylo barked. “All of you! Cern, see RH and BK are disciplined.”

Kylo was the only Knight of Ren who wore a helmet, so everyone could see the bone chilling grin that split Cern’s face.

“With pleasure,” Cern grabbed the two Stormtroopers’ shoulders and led them out of the room.
No one would be surprised if RH-4689 and BK-9362 were never seen again.

Slowly the Cadets began exiting the room, talking quietly among themselves. FN-2187 replaced his training saber – honestly a glorified flashlight as it didn’t act like a blade but rather sent a small shock when it made impact with something – upon the wall and turned towards the door.

“Not you,” Kylo ordered, not even looking at FN-2187. “You stay.”

FN-2187 couldn’t suppress the grin behind his helmet.

“Congratulations,” MK-6093 patted FN-2187 on the shoulder as he passed by.

“Thanks,” FN-2187 nodded to the Stormtrooper sometimes known as Marks. He and FN-2187 were somewhat friendly, their squads working together often. They were both natural born leaders, and Phasma had nearly as much praise for Marks as she did FN-2187.

“Sasa, come,” Kylo ordered as the room emptied. He outstretched his hand for her.

She nodded, quickly crossing to him and taking it. Kylo casually pulled her in close so their bodies were almost pressing against each other as they spoke in hushed tones. FN-2187 watched curiously at the comfortable intimacy between the pair. They were not above exchanging gentle touches on the arm or Kylo’s chest. FN-2187 could have sworn he even saw Kylo briefly play with a strand of her hair. Their hands remained tightly clasped as they whispered to each other.

At one point, Kylo seemed to get worked up over something. His voice rose, and his head turned towards FN-2187, Kylo gesturing towards the Stormtrooper. With a startling amount of comfort and calmness, Sasa reached up to Kylo’s cheek and eased his head back to look her in the eyes. Kylo unconsciously tilted his head down, almost pressing his forehead to Sasa’s. Her hands stayed where they were for the rest of the conversation, squeezing his own and gently stroking his cheek.

If it wasn’t already public knowledge in the First Order that Kylo Ren was sleeping with his female Knights, FN-2187 absolutely would have figured out they were lovers.

As weird as it sounded, FN-2187 was a little… jealous. He wished there was someone he could be that close with. Stormtroopers weren’t forbidden from relationships among themselves, but FN-2187 had yet to find himself any prospects.

He had to admit that Kylo and Sasa Ren looked nice together.

Abruptly they broke apart, and Kylo snapped at FN-2187, pointing next to them. FN-2187 recognized the sign calling him over.

“I want to talk to you,” Kylo said.

“Yes, Sir,” FN-2187 saluted.

Kylo stood with his hands behind his back, looking quite imposing. Sasa stood to his side and a few steps back, clearly acting as his wingman.

“You did well today,” Kylo began.


“How long have you been in my Beginner Class?”

“Since I was sixteen.”
“And you are now?”

“Twenty."

“Huh.” Kylo looked back at Sasa, “Same age as my lover.”

That statement made FN-2187 uncomfortable on multiple levels, but he was fairly certain that was the point.

“Do you know why you’re in my class?” Kylo asked.

“Stormtroopers who test high on the necessary skills are chosen to-”

“No. Do you know why you are in my class?”

FN-2187 lowered his head, “No, Sir. I did not think I had a reason beyond the norm.”

“There are multiple reasons I chose you,” Kylo said, “but the most important reason I chose you is this. Sasa?”

Sasa went over to the computer, and FN-2187 was shown a projection of a graph.

“What do you know of Midichlorians?” Kylo asked.

“Nothing, Sir,” FN-2187 answered.

“Midichlorians are a measurement used to determine a person’s Force potential.” Kylo nodded to Sasa, and she made a red line appear in the middle of the graph, “That line is what separates the Sensitives from the Non-Sensitives. If you test above that line, you are taken to the Supreme Leader personally and trained with him. Such as the case with Sasa.”

A dot appeared on the graph labeled Sasa. It wasn’t too high above the line.

“My own measurement is here,” Kylo signalled to Sasa, and a dot labelled Kylo appeared near the top of the screen.

“Are you saying that I’m above the line?” FN-2187 asked.

“No,” Kylo answered. “You are here.”

A dot labeled FN-2187 appeared just barely underneath the line.

“You are not Force Sensitive,” Kylo said. “Not traditionally, anyway. But there is another line.”

A green line appeared about two inches under the red line.

“This zone,” Kylo gestured to the space between the lines, “is what we call Force Potentials. If you fall in this zone, you may learn certain powers. Maybe not master them, but learn them to some degree. You, FN-2187 measure just barely underneath Force Sensitive, just barely ineligible. You will never be the Master of the Knights Ren, but you can learn to use the Force about as well as Sasa here.”

FN-2187 blinked, “You… You want to teach me the Force?”

“I have a personal interest in seeing you in a position at my side,” Kylo said. “And you’ve proven yourself over these past few years. I will be advancing you to a higher class of saber skills, and we
will begin training you in the ways of the Force. Not me personally, I don’t have time for that, but the Knights of Ren will help your progress. Sasa I find has a very…”

He smirked at her.

“Delicate touch,” Kylo ended suggestively.

FN-2187 seriously wondered if Kylo Ren was getting off on making overt sexual moves towards Sasa in front of him.

“Thank you, Sir,” FN-2187 bowed his head, hoping this wouldn’t end with him being ordered to witness the conception of Kylo Ren’s heir. “I am honoured to be added to the Advanced Class.”

“Forget the Advanced Class,” Kylo waved off. “I’m sending you straight to the Expert Class.”

“The Expert Class?” FN-2187’s eyes went wide, and he was thankful the look on his face was obscured by his helmet.

Kylo smirked, “Tara will whip you into shape in no time.”

“But, Sir-”

“Silence.”

“Master,” Sasa interceded. “I think he’s worried about the fact that those who are in the Expert Class are the ones you select new Knights of Ren from. The boy may be skilled, but he is not ready for that honour yet.”

“He won’t be selected within the year,” Kylo assured her. “But I have every intention of making you one of my Knights, and one of the best ones at that. Probably only rivalled by Tara. Apologies, Sasa.”

“I know my saber skills aren’t the reason I was selected.”

Kylo raised an eyebrow, “Depends on the saber.”

Okay, FN-2187 was certain Kylo was getting off on this.

“I’ve even already picked out his name,” Kylo said.

“You have?” FN-2187 asked.

“Yes. You shall be Fyrn Ren,” Kylo declared. “Now, you are dismissed. If your next assignment’s instructor asks why you’re late, tell them I held you back. If your next instructor is Captain Phasma… say it was Hux.”

Sasa raised an eyebrow.

Kylo shrugged, “That woman can, has, and likes to kick my ass.”

“Fair enough.”

FN-2187 looked between the two, a little bit confused, “Ok. Uh… Thank you, Sir. Ma’am. I won’t let you down.”

“I kill you if you do,” Kylo threatened. “Don’t betray me, FN-2187.”
“Never, Sir,” FN-2187 promised.

It was a promise he would not keep.

“Fyrn Ren?” Sasa shook her head when FN-2187 had left. “Are you serious? The first and last letters of Felicity Rhiaon’s name?”

“What can I say?” Kylo chuckled. “I love pissing that woman off, even beyond the grave.”

“You’re terrible, Master.”

“That is my aim. I was thinking about practising my sparring. Wish to join me?”

“Oh, no, I have a meeting with Hux. I’m going to need all of my strength if I’m going to be able to resist for an hour not throwing him out a window.”

“Why do you think I delegate my meetings to the Knights?” Kylo grinned. “Are you sure you don’t want to practice? A little one-on-one time might do you good.”

“Has Tara been complaining about me again?” Sasa asked.

Due to Sasa’s lack of skills with a saber, Snoke had dictated that she join Tara Ren’s Expert Class. The other Knight was unimpressed about teaching her cohort, fiercely believe she should not be a Knight until she was fully ready, and Tara was not quiet about those feelings.

“Endlessly,” Kylo sighed. “Has quite the variety of insults about you and your incompetence. I’ve seen what you do. It’s not all that bad. A lot of it could be improved if you worked on your stance and footwork.”

“What’s wrong with my stance?”

“Here, let me show you.”

Kylo unclipped his saber from his belt and pressed it into her hands. Sasa had her own, but he was more comfortable with his own, and liked the image of her gripping it.

“Hold it like this,” Kylo took off his gloves, dropping them to the floor, and guided her hands to the proper spots. He stood behind her, Sasa’s back pressed firmly to his chest, his body dwarfing hers. She fit very nicely in the nook between his arms. “Now, feet apart… Little more.”

His foot nudged her legs, guiding them apart. Sasa’s breath started picking up speed.

“Breathe, just breathe,” Kylo whispered in her ear. His mind reached in the Force, calling forth memories of what his former mentors had taught to him. “Close your eyes and breathe.”

Sasa’s eyes slipped shut.


Her body was so soft against his, prone and trusting as he stood so close.

"Breathe. Just breathe."

His hands slid up her bare arms. Something electric passed through him as skin slid against skin unimpeded. Kylo didn’t notice when he started holding his breath.
"Breathe. Just breathe," the voice of Alyla Kene whispered to Ben. He startled for a moment and looked around for her. Kylo was surprised she wasn’t there, but her voice was. “*Remember every lesson you've been taught on fighting.*”

“I’m going to tell you the most important things about fighting,” Kylo whispered his Sasa’s ear. He caught a whiff of some floral perfume dancing on her neck. He was going to have interesting thoughts whenever he smelled flowers in the next little while. “*Breathe. Just breathe. Now reach out.*”

Kylo could feel a piece of magenta reaching out for something in the Force. His forest green that entrapped drew it back to its rightful place. With him.

No, why was Alyla doing this right now? He was kind of busy.

“Kylo? Sasa whispered, drawing back his attention. Her eyes were shut, but he felt a cerise presence reaching out in the Force.

“What do you see?” his breath was hot on her ear.

“Power. Great power.”

“Harness it.” His hands drifted down her sides to her hips and then caressed towards the middle, “Bring it in, and settle it in your core.”

He was drawing her back against him, excitement and arousal burning in their blood.

“Draw on that power by drawing on your core,” Kylo instructed.

“But how?” Sasa’s eyes fluttered open. Those forest green orbs were drawn like a magnet to his lips. “Show me.”

He felt the words flow from the Force.

"*Remember every lesson you've been taught on fighting,*" Kylo said. “*Remember what I taught you, Sasa. Your very first lesson of fighting. What did I teach you?*”

“Tell me.”

"*Open a fight with a strong stance. Look fearsome and stand solid. Fights are all about footwork. Strong footwork gives you a fighting chance.*"

Sasa straightened her back and settled her feet confidently.

"*But it's not all about footwork,*" Kylo continued. "*Analyze your opponent. Find his weakness and exploit it.*"

Her leg shifted, brushing against his thigh for a moment before settling back into position. Kylo did always have rather sensitive thighs. And the burgeoning hardness against her back supported that claim strongly.

"*But it's not all analytics,*" Kylo shuddered. "*Strength is required to defeat your opponent. Strong moves, Sasa. Strong moves.*"

She boldly rolled her hips back against him.

Kylo groaned, "But what's strength without passion? You gotta have some fire behind your fight.”
His fingers reached up and played with a lock of her copper hair, “And you come from very fiery stock, Sasa.”

“What do I do with that fire?” Sasa bit her lip.

"Don't forget speed," Kylo swallowed. "Quick moves. Tire out your opponent. He can't move fast. You can."

She had spun around in an instant, her body pressed against his and his lightsaber clattering to the floor.

"But above all, do it with grace,” Kylo panted as she gripped his shoulders. His arms were locked around her waist, pulling her as close against his body as possible. "Bring it all together with fluidity and grace."

She pulled his head down and his lips were on hers without hesitation.

It was passionate and hungry, lighting their blood aflame and yearning from more like a delicious poison was drawn from the other’s lips. In the Force Darkness and Light mixed wildly, pushing and pulling the pair towards the brink of destruction. They hadn’t shared a kiss out of the confines of their coupling since Sasa’s request their first time. But was they stand there desperately taking in the other’s taste, lips, and tongue, both knew in their hearts that this wouldn’t be the last kiss.

"Will you help me?" a voice asked in the Force.

Kylo broke apart from Sasa rather suddenly.

“What did you just say?” he questioned.

Sasa frowned, confused by the sudden loss of his lips, “Uh… nothing. I didn’t say anything.”

He scowled, “But if you didn’t, then who…”

His eyes went wide, and his head shot to the side. Standing on the other side of the room was the ghostly form of Alyla Kene with a disappointed look on her face.

“Oh, come on,” Kylo exclaimed. “Not now. I’m busy.”

“Sorry, how dare I be so discourteous to the man who murdered me?” Alyla shook her head.

“For the last time, I’m sorry! It was an accident, and I did try to save you.”

“I know, that’s how we got in this mess.”

“Kylo?” Sasa’s voice sounded small. He had honestly forgotten about her for the moment, “Who is that?”

“Oh, sorry.” Kylo gestured to Alyla, “Sasa, this is Alyla Kene, my former Jedi mentor. Alyla, this is Sasa, my… well, it’s kind of complicated.”

“If there’s anything I understand, it’s a complicated relationship,” Alyla’s mind went to Lando. “Both of you are consenting, Ben?”

“Yes!” Kylo exclaimed. “And stop calling me, Ben!”

“So that’s your first name.” Sasa paused, “Wait, Jedi? Aren’t they dead?”
“It’s, uh… complicated,” Kylo answered. “I sort of killed her, then saved her, then she died, and now she’s my own personal ghost, but I sometimes let her go off and do her own thing. Speaking of, is that what you want right now? I feel you trying to yank free. Are you trying to secure yourself to someone else?”

“Perhaps,” Alyla shrugged. “It’s complicated.”

Kylo groaned and opened his mouth to reply when he felt something elbow him in the ribs, “Ow! Sasa, did you just hit me?”

“I haven’t touched you.”

“Not with anything but her lips.”

“Quiet, Alyla,” Kylo ordered. Something hit his back, “What the?”

“Kylo?” Sasa touched his arms.

“Alyla, what is going on?”

If it was possible for a sort of ghost to do, Alyla paled slightly, “Wait, can you feel… Uh oh.”

“What?”

“Nothing,” Alyla answered him too quickly.

Kylo reached out into the Force, gripping their bonds pieces of Signature tightly. He poured strength into it to see if he could reach in further and discover what was going on.

Then he felt it, another colour probing their bonded Signature. A familiar colour, one the Kylo knew, but he couldn’t determine it yet. Oh, what was it? It felt so familiar. It was… It was…

It was sky blue.

Kylo’s eyes shot wide, “Are you connecting to Uncle Luke?”

Alyla swallowed, “Uh… maybe a little?”

Fear pounded in his temples. The last time he had seen his uncle, Luke had wrapped his hands around Kylo’s throat and squeezed to kill. The only reason he was alive right now was because of Chewbacca. He felt it come flooding back, that terror that filled him with his own uncle attempted to murder him.


Kylo stumbled a step back and he slammed into something hard. Not from the back but rather his front. Dazed, Kylo blinked and gathered his bearings, letting his vision settle. His heart stopped when he saw what was in front of him.

It wasn’t Alyla or Sasa. It was another woman.

She was thin, so very thin. She had pale skin and brown hair tied up in three buns, and light clothing. She was probably in his late teens, and he burned with purple sort of colour that called to him.

He knew her.
But how?

“Kylo!” Sasa called out.

The girl was gone, and Sasa was back in her place. That didn't stop his heart from pounding a mile a minute.

Sasa proceeded as if she didn't know anything was wrong, “I’m talking to you. What is up with the ghost? Am I supposed to be seeing her?”

Though his mind was reeling, Kylo answered, “Uh, yes. You're Force Sensitive so you can see her. It’s really complicated, and I’m sort of occupied.”

“With what?”

When Kylo looked back up, his mind was in another place. They were in a dusty desert fenced off ring, and Alyla Kene was standing next to the girl Kylo had seen before. But this time she was looking up at him. He could see her round face and familiar hazel eyes. Kylo could see that he knew this girl.

And then it clicked in his mind; the girl appeared to be about sixteen and her Signature was lilac.

Kylo frowned, his face a mixture of shock and confusion, "Rey?"

It was his cousin, he was on Jakku.

…This was the manifestation of his guilt, seeing what his precious cousin should have grown to be. Of course, that’s what it was, he realized. It was her sixteenth birthday. He and Luke were having a shared vision through Alyla of what could have been.

Rey was beautiful… and way too much like her mother.

This wasn’t a vision, it was a nightmare.

For a second, he hesitated, and then he reached out for the lilac Signature. For what, he wasn’t certain, but he had to connect to her. Her Signature called out to him.

In the briefest moment of pure instinct, something sky blue – Luke, Kylo knew – slammed into Alyla and Kylo’s bond. Kylo understood; Uncle Luke didn’t want Kylo laying eyes upon his precious stolen daughter. But to do so was to attack Alyla. Somewhere out in the world, Luke had made his choice; he threw the full power of his Force abilities into Alyla breaking the thread from her and Kylo and banishing the ghost from the room. Kylo pulled back, and both Alyla and Rey were gone.


“I have no idea,” Sasa declared.

“…Ok then.”

She nervously glanced at Kylo, “Look, I know this is bad timing, but we were kind of in the middle of something.”

He couldn’t believe what he was hearing, “Are you serious right now?”

“Look, it’s either have sex with you on the training room floor or go to a meeting with Hux. I know which I’d prefer.”
Kylo seriously considered it.

“No, I- I can’t,” Kylo shook his head. “I’m sorry, but I need to go clear my mind.”

And with that, he raced out of the training room, leaving behind a very confused Sasa Ren.

“Did I just get cockblocked by a ghost?”

---

You’ll run into people on Jakku who say they were there when the ships fell out of the sky. They’re either lying or crazy. The Battle of Jakku was before there was a Niima Outpost or much of anything else on this miserable planet. So unless you’ve gained magical powers and are talking to a ripper-raptor or a nightwatcher worm, they probably weren’t there.

- Rey’s Survival Guide

---

“Can I open my eyes yet?”

“Not quite yet.”

“Diego, we met on the path to the sniping range. I know where we’re having our date. You don’t need to cover my eyes as you lead me there.”

“It’ll be worth it, I promise.” Diego brought her to a stop at the edge of the meadow and removed his hands from her face, “Alright, open your eyes.”

As Aletha expected, they were at the meadow of the sniping range – thankfully no one was around shooting – but what she didn’t expect was that all the sundrops were in glorious full bloom. It was breathtaking, all the yellows and the oranges gleaming in the sunlight.

On the far side of the meadow by one of the trees, Aletha spotted a blanket laid out and picnic perfectly set up for them. A pair of battered old Rebellion era sniping rifles were propped against the tree.

“You left your gun just outside where anyone could find it?” Aletha frowned. “And is that my rifle?”

“I thought we could do some shooting after lunch if you were up for it,” Diego clasped her hand with his left. “I figured no one was going to steal a pair of forty-year-old weapons when we’ve got a rack of younger ones back at base. Kaydel helped obtain your rifle for me.”

“I really have to change the code on my door,” Aletha chuckled. “That girl keeps breaking into my room. I’m surprised I haven’t walked in on her and Poe going at it on my bed yet.”

“I wouldn’t be surprised if you did.” Diego offered his arm, “Shall we?”

“We shall,” she wrapped her arm around his. As Diego led her through the meadow, Aletha admired the scenic picture before her, “How long ago was this set up?”

“About an hour. Your girls were very eager to help, adamant that I give you a proper date. Dameron, I kid you not, offered to be my hype man.”
“Your what?”

“He offered to come to me before I met up with you and hype me up for the date. Making sure I was charming and excited or something. I had to remind him that she had drills to run,” Diego shook his head. “I don’t know what goes on in his head sometimes. It’s a good thing he’s dating Connix; she’s very good at keeping him in line.”

“And who keeps you in line?”

Reaching the blanket, Diego brought her to a stop with a grin, “I was hoping you.”

“We Anthea women have a talent for commanding a certain presence,” Aletha touched his muscular arm. Her fingertips stroked the cracked leather of his jacket. He was certainly very strong.

“Must be how you managed to capture my attention in an instant.” His fingers brushed her hip, “You’re quite the thief. I don’t think I’ve managed to get them back since.”

“Well, that explains a few significant idiotic moves you’ve made over the past few months. Are you usually this reckless?”

“No,” his breath was hot against her lips. “But what can I say? You just… do something to me.”

She definitely was going to do something if they didn’t stop this right now. Unfortunately for her, Diego proved to be a master tease and suddenly stepped away from her.

Diego bent down and rummaged through the picnic basket, “If you’re done for the day with your medical duties, might I interest you in a glass of wine?”

“Of course,” Aletha settled on the blanket. She smoothed out her skirt, feeling a little self-conscious about her outfit. It was a simple long white skirt, and she was wearing the same top she had the first time she had made love with Luke. She didn’t really have any clothes beyond her uniforms and Jakku attire that was now inappropriate for the moderate climate. “I didn’t know we had wine at the Resistance.”

“We usually don’t,” Diego began to prepare the wine with quite a flourish. “I had to pull a few strings.”

Aletha watched Diego with an amused smile, “You’re making a show of that, aren’t you? Are you an expert decanter?”

“I occasionally worked for the intelligence department of the Alliance,” Diego explained. “A few undercover missions here and there. It’s why they picked me for Operation Citadel. And one time, I went undercover for eight months as a sommelier for the Coruscanti elite. Served the Emperor himself a few times. It’s a skill I decided to expand upon after the war. As a significant military figure, I was forced to so many high-class events that it was nice having knowledge about something the upper crust found interesting.”

“Oh poor little pilot having to wine and dine the elite after the war. I was just on Jakku practising frontier medicine. Absolutely incomparable.”

“True,” Diego said. “It is incomparable, and I admire you so much for it. It takes an amazing person to sacrifice their prime years simply to help people.”

Aletha sighed, “I wish that’s why I did it, but… truth be told it’s because I didn’t have anywhere else to go. Nothing to do.”
Diego reached out her hand, “You do now, and I’ve never seen Kaydel as happy as she’s been these past few months. Admittedly Dameron probably is playing a large part, but it’s amazing what you’ve done with your life.”

“You barely know a thing about my life, Diego.”

“Then tell me about it.”

“What do you want to know?”

Diego smiled, “Everything.”

Jessika was happy to see Tallie waiting on the landing strip with Kaydel and a few others when Black Squadron’s drills were done for the day.

“Alright, good job everyone,” Poe told the group as they passed off their ships to maintenance. “Let’s break for lunch and then we’re going to meet in Conference Room Besh to go over the new formations. Seventy minutes. Don’t be late.”

“Please, if anyone’s going to be late, it’s because of you two going at it,” Jessika chuckled as Poe and Kaydel met in an embrace.

Beep bop boop.

BB-8 agreed with Jessika and projected the image of a timer counting down from seventy minutes.

“Alright, put it away, Buddy,” Poe’s face got a little red as Kaydel laughed.

“Hey,” Tallie came up to Jessika as she was handing her helmet off.

“Hey,” Jessika grinned.

She moved to pull Tallie in for a kiss, but Tallie stepped back and just clasped her hands. Jessika frowned, “What is it?”

“Come on, Jess,” Tallie squeezed her girlfriend’s hands. “Not here.”

“Why not? Those two seem just fine with an audience,” Jessika gestured to Poe and Kaydel who were rather unabashed about their making out.

Rose Tico was trying to get to Poe’s ship, and kept exchanging annoyed looks with BB-8, “I’ve got work to do, guys!”

Tallie smiled, “Is Poe Dameron really a good reference for appropriate levels of PDA?”

“Considering some people call that acronym Poe Dameron Audacity, I suppose not.” Jessika grinned and moved her hands to Tallie’s hips, gently pulling her forward, “Come on, Talissan. Just one kiss?”

Tallie made a show of thinking about it, “Oh, alright. Just one.”

Sharing a smile, Jessika and Tallie moved in to share one of those soft, sensual kisses.
“General coming!” Snap shouted.

About seven couples sprang apart in an instant.

“Oh come on,” Leia shook her head as she traversed the landing strip, Threepio, Zev Senesca, Holdo, Akbar, and Statura following close behind. “I’ve been around pilots for years, I know what you people were doing. And you two.”

Kaydel flushed as she and Poe were picked out the crowd.

“You two do that sort of thing behind closed doors, or I’m getting you shock collars,” Leia threatened. “I’m here to announce that Black Squadron’s duties are dismissed for the day.”

The group muttered to each other in confusion.

“Why is that, General?” Poe asked.

“Because this morning, Commander Diego Nalto handed in his resignation from the Head of Air Force,” Leia answered. “So, you and I are going to have a little chat about the direction of the department.”

“Me?”

“Yes, you. Congratulations, Poe. You’re moving up in the world.”

As Poe’s face lit up, BB-8 started beeping wildly in excitement, and Kaydel’s arms wrapped around his torso. The only thing that made such an announcement truly perfect for Poe was that they were there to share it with them.

“Okay, that’s enough about me,” Aletha finally declared after what had to be a good forty minutes of interrogation. She was sitting upright, but her legs were lounging across the blanket, sometimes playing footsie with Diego’s long and surprisingly bulky shins. “Now it’s your turn. Tell me your tragic backstory.”

“Alright, but I warn you, it’s about as stereotypically tragic as any other Rebel,” he very carefully was stroking the exposed skin of her back. Diego concentrated on her reactions, ready to disengage if she spooked. A thumb stroked across her camp tattoo, “You might find a few familiar elements.”

“Oh, the more tragic, the better,” Aletha teased. “Now come on, spill. Why’d you join?”

“Parents murdered by the Empire.”

“You know it’s really sad that we live in a world where that is a cliché. So what’s the story?”

“Honestly… I’m uncertain,” Diego sighed, reclining against the tree trunk. “I was fifteen when it happened. I came home one day to find my parents executed and Imperials waiting for me. I think Padre got involved in circulating pro-Rebellion propaganda. Next thing I knew, I was grabbed by Imperial officers and sent to a work camp.”

“So, you weren’t even a Rebel?”

“That path was chosen for me… my parents weren’t even members of the Alliance.”
“What were their names?”

“Mateo and Sofía Nalto,” Diego answered. “Madre was beautiful, and Padre a lucky man. Very lean, very unargumentative, not the kind of man who would win a fight. I would have been like him if it hadn’t been sent the to work camp.”

“How long were you there?” Aletha remembered Diego mentioning at some point he held the record for Rebel who spent the longest time in a work camp and survived. Usually if you were there past six months, you were never coming home. Eight months was a miracle, and ten months was the longest she had ever heard.

“Three years.”

Aletha went deadly silent.

Diego sighed, “It is not a pleasant story. I barely made it out, and when I hit about the two-year mark, I wasn’t sure I wanted to. Kes actually led the raid where I was freed. He himself was barely twenty and risking it all to free his brothers and sisters in arms. The mission was where he met Shara, her being part of the evacuation pilots. I remember when Shara, Obik, and I returned from a four-month undercover mission and heard that Kes had been captured in one of the camps. We called in the cavalry for that one and didn’t even wait for High Command’s permission before our teams were off. That was actually the first time I ran into Fliss and Riz, but it was brief and of no note to me until a few years later we got assigned Operation Citadel.”

“I heard about that one,” Aletha said. “That was the largest camp liberated, right?”

“Correct. It was so satisfying to know I had saved people from the hell I went through.”

Aletha considered her next question carefully, “When you say the hell you went through-”

“I was sexually assaulted,” Diego said bluntly. “It happened for three years. You would be surprised how many Imperial officers got their kicks from dominating young boys. I wasn’t the only teenager there, but by the time my liberation happened, I was the only one who made it out alive. People do not like to discuss sexual assault done to men, so I am very open about what happened to me.”

“I’m so sorry that happened to you.”

“I’ve used my experiences as a force for change. I’ve worked with many sexual assault organizations, help raising funds, supporting fellow victims, and giving speeches.”

“But still, that must have really affected you.”

“It still does,” Diego admitted. His eyes never moved from her, “It took a very long time before I was open to having relationships, sexual and otherwise. I was very reserved for years and closed myself off to the world. It was actually why I hated Fliss at first. When we met, she joked about my attitude being like I had a stick lodged up my…”

Aletha winced.

“I never called her out on it,” Diego said. “Not even years later when we were friends and she would joke about my old attitude. I knew it would horrify her if she realized what she had said. It would do no good, only make both of us hurt, so I kept my mouth shut.”

“I’m so sorry,” Aletha touched his shoulder. “I wish that didn’t happen to you.”
“It seems we both had rough introductions to sexuality then.”

“Don’t even pretend like what happened to me even compares to the horror you faced. If you don’t mind me asking… do you have any issues because of what happened?”

“Not physiological ones,” Diego admitted. “But I have… dislikes. Perhaps this is a conversation better had when we’re closer to committing such acts.”

Aletha raised an eyebrow teasingly, “Oh? Do you intend on committing such acts on me?”

“To be perfectly honest,” Diego said bluntly, “if you let me do it, I would push you on your back right here and now and have my way with you.”

It was a risky gamble, one that would either pay off or send her running for the hills. Considering the way she shuddered at his words and the goosebumps that raised on her arms, Diego felt it paid off.

“Well,” Aletha cleared her throat, “that’s not going to happen for a multitude of reasons.”

“I can’t think of one,” Diego kidded. He knew very well that it was too early, but that didn’t mean he couldn’t play.

“For starters, I’ve never have sex without condoms. So unless you have some hiding in that picnic basket, it’s not happening.”

“Wait, wait. Never? Weren’t you married? Heck, didn’t you get pregnant at one point?”

“Condom broke,” Aletha answered. “As a Doctor I am way too freaked out about STIs and pregnancy. Even in monogamous relationships, I’m not willing to gamble.”

“I suppose I can’t scold you for that.”

“Not if you want a second date.”

“So, my decency in not assuming to bring condoms on a picnic first date is the only thing holding us back?”

“Of course not.” Aletha shook her head, “Diego, we still don’t know so much about each other. I want to know you, to get close to you. I’ve never had a relationship like… Oh, this is going to sound so sad, but like Kaydel and Poe.”

“You’re envious of your niece’s four-month long relationship?”

“They seem to know everything about each other. I want that. I’ve never had that. I barely knew a thing about Antar, and my last relationship…” Aletha respected Luke’s request to hide his identity by never uttering even the name Luke. “He was pretty open about his past, but he had lots of secrets and didn’t want to trust me with them.”

“Sounds terrible.”

“I know he has good reasons, but I just wish I knew what they were. It’s part of the reason we broke up, he wouldn’t let me understand why he had to stay on Jakku, so when the threat of Alecta grew, I left him.”

“I don’t want secrets,” Diego said. “I do not intend on keeping secrets from you.”

“And what if I had things I couldn’t tell you?”
“Do they affect me at all?”

“No.”

“Do they affect our potential relationship?”

“No.”

“Are they decisions you personally made, or is it a secret you have been entrusted with?”

“Entrusted with,” Aletha answered.

“Then it doesn’t matter to me,” Diego professed. “If there’s anything you need to withhold from me for the sake of someone else, and it does not affect us, then by all means. As long as you promise honesty and full disclosure should a secret be forced to light.”

“Promise?”

“Promise,” Diego kissed her hand. “Now, what is it you wish to know about me? I’m an open book.”

“I don’t know,” Aletha blushed. “I’ve already learned quite a bit from our flirting before today. Marriage, kids, career, family, all the big bullet points.”

“Well, if I have any mystery, feel free to ask.”

Aletha thought about it, “Actually, there is one. What is with you and notifying people in person that their loved ones have died in battle?”

Diego was surprised she remembered that, “I’ve seen some terrible ways of learning it, so I vowed not to let the families of the people I’ve been left in charge of but told inappropriately.”

“What were the terrible ways? As a doctor, I have to tell bad news like that a lot, so any advice on avoiding those would be great.”

“I don’t think you’d manage the ways I’ve seen.”

“Tell me.”

“Alright,” Diego shrugged. “The first example is obviously how I learned my parents had died. I came home to their bodies and a legion of Stormtroopers.”

“Yeah, can’t pull off that one.”

“Another was how I was forced to tell Ji-Dan’s son that his father was dead. Fliss and I had gotten into contact with the Alliance, and they already knew things had gone wrong. Since there was so much to say, the High Council asked to go with the traditional report of statuses. Unfortunately, Ji-Dan’s son was in the room, so as I went down the list, he had to hear the Council ask Status of Rogue Three and my reply of Killed in Action.”

“That’s horrible.”

“He got off easy compared to Riz Drayson’s parents,” Diego said. “Apparently Alaric – Fliss’ father – had Riz’s body sent to his parents. I think he was guilty over killing the boy.”

“I can see why you would be passionate after those experiences,” Aletha shook her head. “Is there
anything worse?”

“Not worse, but I do have a fourth brutal story,” Diego replied. “A story of what was supposed to be a proper telling, gone very wrong.”

“Do tell.”

“It involves a war widow,” Diego began. “She was a Rebel and her husband was a pilot. After the battle, we all returned to the Alliance, and as I was getting out of my ship, I saw a woman looking around for her husband. She’s alone in the middle of the hanger, ready to celebrate the end of the war and a new future.”

Something microscopic passed over Aletha’s face, “What battle?”

“Battle of Jakku. She was looking around eagerly, but she couldn’t spot the ship she was seeking. Then she saw the Pilot Commander walking towards her with the small silver box every Rebel knows. I watched from afar as he spoke to her. I couldn’t hear what he said, and I don’t think she heard either. Her face was so white, her eyes wet, and I don’t think she realized she was trembling. She was just all alone among the surviving Yellow Squad.”

Her eyes widened.

“It was inappropriate to do it right there in the middle of the hanger,” Diego said disgusted. “He should have taken her aside to somewhere private. Let her sit down and have dignity to mourn. She should have had someone by her side to comfort and support her. Once the Commander was done, he just gave her the box, and left her all alone.”

She scowled, confusion riddled over her face. Was she hearing this right?

“I remember her scream,” Diego closed his eyes. “That harrowing, desperate scream of grief. There, in front of everyone, she dropped to her knees and wept on that cold floor. I just… couldn’t help myself.”

Aletha couldn’t breathe.

“I ran forward and dropped to my knees behind her. I locked my arms around her and pulled her upright into my embrace.” Diego shook his head, eyes still shut, lost in the memory, “It was so… ridiculous. I didn’t know this woman, and yet there I was holding her during one of the worst moments of her life. I just… didn’t want her to be alone.”

She swallowed hard, words caught in her throat.

“I never asked for her name-”

“And you never told her yours,” Aletha finished.

Diego’s eyes shot open. He finally could see the shock but understanding that filled her face. How could she possibly know that? Unless…

“Names didn’t matter,” Diego said quietly. “It wasn’t about that to him.”

Aletha’s mouth felt so dry, “Instead he just held her and told her he was sorry for her loss.”

“She wept on his chest… even hit him a little.”

“But he took it in stride.”
“They just knelt on that cold floor together–”

“Sharing a simple moment of pure human connection.”

The memory replayed in their minds, but this time the other figure was clear. They knew that the widow was Aletha, and that kind pilot was Diego.

_Aletha was screaming so loudly, she was fairly certain that starships a galaxy away heard her._

_Diego fell to his knees behind her. His arms wrapped around the golden-haired beauty, and he pulled Aletha up into his embrace._

_She clutched at him tightly, tears streaming down her face as she cried out the name of Antar._

_I'm so sorry,_ Diego whispered that that accent so familiar, holding her tightly. _I'm so sorry for your loss._

Diego took a deep breath, “When she was done crying, she thanked him.”

“He said it was his honour,” Aletha whispered. “And then he departed.”

His hands were shaking, and it wasn’t from his injury, “Never to see her again.”

“Until years later when he saved her from asking stupid questions to General Organa about Jakku.”

“It was you… You were the one I held that day.”

“I never forgot you,” Aletha confessed, tears shining in her eyes. “I never forgot that selfless pilot who comforted me when no one else would. Diego, we…”

“I don’t know what to say.” Diego stroked her cheek, “I don’t believe this.”

“It’s impossible.”

“It’s… destiny.”

Aletha blushed, “Now there’s a bold claim.”

“No, it isn’t,” Diego declared. “On the Yavinese moons, we have a saying: if the Force decides to bring two people together, it will make them cross paths as many times as it takes to get them together.”

“So the Force brought us together twenty-seven years ago.”

“And now it’s taking a second try.” Diego shifted forward onto his knees and placed his hands around her waist on the skin of her exposed back, “Let us not squander the opportunity.”

“Let’s not… But there is one more mystery about you I wonder,” Aletha sighed. His rough hands on her bare skin felt so good.

Diego whispered, “What’s that?”

“When are you going to kiss me?”
He didn’t use words to answer her.

Kylo Ren stormed to his room that night in utter turmoil. He couldn’t shake that image of Rey from his mind. She felt so real, but it was impossible. Rey Skywalker was dead! She had to be!

He opened the door to his room and stopped dead in his tracks when he saw what was inside.

“Good Evening, Master,” Sasa smiled at him, seated on his bed.

“Uh… good evening,” Kylo looked behind himself, though wasn’t sure what he was looking for.  
“Did I forget about something? Isn’t your designated night next week?”

And didn’t the girls usually come to his room when he requested rather than enter of their own accord? And on that note, how had she even gotten into the room?

“Yes, it is,” Sasa bowed her head, cheeks a little pink. “Forgive me, Master, but I sensed your mental turmoil and thought I would come see if I could do anything for you.”

“Is this about the ghost? I can explain.”

“Perhaps some other time. I had something else in mind to take care of you.”

Kylo hesitated, “With all due respect, I’m not really in the mood-”

“I meant spiritually.” Sasa paused, “Although the Supreme Leader has made it very clear that if you do have such physical desires, I am to take care of them.”

“What?” Kylo’s eyes went wide. “No, no, no. That’s not… I may do some bad things, but I’m not going to force you into that. If you say no, then the answer is no. Have you wanted to say no but went along with things?”

“Every encounter we’ve had so far has been consensual. I promise.”

“Good,” Kylo let out a breath of relief.

“Will you accept the offer?” Sasa asked.

Kylo frowned, “I thought we just established I’m not up for sex right now.”

“Not sex,” Sasa tried to be tranquil but exasperation bled through her voice. “Spiritual help. Would you like to be rebalanced?”

“What do you mean?”

“Rebalancing. Would you like to do a rebalance to settle your mind?”

“I… I don’t follow,” Kylo scowled. “What rebalancing?”

Sasa blinked, “Has… the Supreme Leader not yet taught you it?”

“No,” Kylo balled his fists tightly. He tried not to get angry at the thought that this random girl had been shown a power he had not.

Sensing his anger, Sasa thought it best to defuse the situation.
“Perhaps the Supreme Leader wished for me to be the one to teach you. A method to draw us closer. Come,” Sasa reached out her hand and patted the mattress with her other, “join me.”

Eyeing her suspiciously, Kylo grasped her hand and allowed Sasa to direct him onto the bed. They sat on the edge, side-by-side. She did not release his hand, rather also taking a hold of the other. He met her eyes, cautious but curious at the lesson before him.

“Rebalancing,” Sasa began, “is a mental ability used to stabilize the emotions of two disturbed Force users. The Dark Side is a powerful tool, as is the Light, but sometimes you can have too much of an emotion. Too much joy is just as blinding as too much hate. Both sustain you, but they can also cloud your judgement and burn you out. Rebalancing is the tool you must use to keep yourself in control; to keep us both in control.”

“If it’s such a powerful tool, why wouldn’t the Supreme Leader teach me this sooner?”

“You must have two Force Sensitives with strong mental abilities to perform this. You’ve asked me on our nights together multiple times why the Supreme Leader would choose someone with such weak physical abilities as a Knight of Ren. It’s true, I cannot jump or push or block as well as Tara, but that’s not what the Force is truly about. You know the truth; the Force opens our minds to something even greater beyond our physical strength.”

Kylo couldn’t help but give a sly smile, “And that’s why he chose you for me. Not the beauty or the submission, all of that can be shaped however he desires in any woman… But raw strength of mind…”

“Just as you have. Yes, you are physically strong,” Sasa drifted a hand down his bicep.

His breath caught at the touch. It was different from Tara’s, not a manipulative power play but more a gesture of worship. Both touches had the same goal, to please him, seduce him, and win him over to her whims, but the end goals were opposite. Tara intended to take Kylo under her control, but Sasa intended to offer herself up to his. Much like the battle between Dark and Light, the two women were contending between his call to subservience and dominance.

Her hand slid up his arm, along his shoulder, across the side of his neck, and her fingertips came to a rest at his temple.

“But your true strength, the strength of your bloodline is what comes from this very handsome head.”

Kylo stroked a hand up along her jaw and settled at her temple, “Show me.”

She smiled gently, “Claim the answer yourself.”

He closed his eyes and with his hand still upon her face, he reached into the Force, seeking her presence. Kylo found her Signature easily, a not especially strong cerise, but the closer he pushed to the cerise, the more power overwhelmed his senses. He could feel her reaching for his forest green, drawing him in closer and guiding him to her mind.

“Do you feel it?” Sasa whispered. “Do you feel my strength?”

“Yes, I do.” Kylo opened his eyes and studied her, “You’re stronger than I thought.”

“Any fool with a touch of the Force in their blood can move an object or block a blaster bolt, but the power of controlling another’s mind… that is something truly special. You are strong of mind, Kylo. I am strong of mind.”
“Our child will be unstoppable.”

Sasa smiled, “All as the Supreme Leader as foreseen… but only if you let me in.”

Kylo winced and looked away, “I can’t forsake, Tara.”

“You fear her.”

“No!” Kylo knew that wasn’t entirely true. “But Tara and I have a history. She is my second-in-command, she is strong where I am weak. Her physical Force Abilities are matched only by the Supreme Leader. She understands the politics of the First Order, and she has the soldiers’ respect.”

“And I do not,” Sasa said simply. “To them, I am a pretty little girl, simply around to warm your bed. But I can be so much more.”

“Sasa-”

“Where is it you truly struggle? Your mind. Is it not important you have someone who can help you when you have turmoil? Or would you rather someone who pushes and kicks while you wept in the corner?”

Kylo yanked his hands out of her grasp, but Sasa pulled them back. Her grip was soft but firm; not painful but communicating that he was not going to be released.

Sasa took a deep breath, “Put it all out of your mind. I am not here tonight to demand a decision. The Force will make it for you when it chooses to bless either Tara or myself with your child.”

“You know, things might get complicated if you both get pregnant at the same time.”

“Well, it is your family after all,” Sasa teased.

Kylo couldn’t help but smile.

“So,” he dragged a thumb over her hand, shifting his into a more comfortable entwinement, “what is rebalancing?”

“We grasp hands like so and allow the Force to flow between us, settling our minds until we are once more at peace,” Sasa explained. “You bring whatever is weakening you to the forefront of your mind, and I bring a tumultuous memory to my mind. They will bring a surge of Dark Side into our souls – conversely, we can also do it with Light Side. The thing about your memories, is that I do not have any attachment to them, and you do not have any attachment to mine. We reach out to the other’s memory and siphon off the excess of Darkness while offering up our ambivalence.”

“So not ridding each other of Darkness, but rather… regulating it?”

Sasa grinned, “Now you’ve got it. Would you like to give it a try?”

“It’s worth a shot. Do you have a memory to regulate?”

“I do.”

“What is it?”

“What’s yours?”

Kylo looked away, “I killed my five-year-old cousin. Today I had a vision of what she would look
like now, had she lived... She was supposed to live. The grandchildren of Anakin Skywalker were meant to be unstoppable, and yet... I stopped her.

“That does sound distressing,” Sasa shifted closer to him. She pretended not to hear how ragged his breaths had gotten. “My turmoil is my parents.”

“Your parents?”

“I was collected by the Supreme Leader as an infant. Using the Force I have a very vague memory of my parents. I know it’s hard to believe, having been so young—”

“I believe it. My mother has one such memory of her mother, who passed mere minutes after giving birth.”

“The Supreme Leader said that my parents were very important, very wise,” Sasa said. “I want to know more. Surely, I most come from very high and noble stock to have been selected to unite with your bloodline.”

Kylo frowned, “How old were you when the Supreme Leader chose you for me?”

“I was nine and you were sixteen.”

“That’s a little... strange but given my grandfather picked out a fourteen-year-old when he was nine, not too wrong. And we only met when you were nineteen, so I guess that’s okay.”

“Seven years isn’t all the much. Come, let’s try rebalancing.”

Kylo smiled and gripped her hands, “Let’s do it.”

He followed her instructions carefully and was surprised to find how easy rebalancing came to him... Or perhaps it was her mind that was so natural a home to him. Kylo showed her the memory of Rey, and at once Sasa got to work regulating his memory.

“It won’t work unless you regulate me too,” Sasa reminded. “This is an open circuit. We need each other to be truly balanced.”

Kylo took a deep breath and reached into her mind.

It was a mess of dark blurry shapes. He could barely make out the images of three people: two women and a man. One of the women held an infant, which puzzled Kylo. If it was Sasa’s memory, how could she see herself?

“It’s a high honour,” said the woman not holding the baby.

“Come on, it’s a good deal. The right thing to do,” said the man.

A smell clung to him, but Kylo couldn’t put his finger on it.

“She’ll be looked after, right?” asked the woman holding the baby.

“She’ll be treated like a princess,” answered the other. “She has a great destiny before her. If she stays with you, she won’t achieve it.”
“Come on, Hon,” the man urged. “How could we turn this down?”

How was memory painful to Sasa? Was it the separation from her parents? The fear of the unknown? Whatever the cause, he felt the Darkness throb in the Force. Following Sasa’s movements, he drained her of the Darkness.

They sat with eyes closed and hands clasped, drawing ever closer, both mentally and physically. By the time the calm had swept over Kylo, and he was opening his eyes, they were sitting so close, their knees were actually against each other.

Oddly, neither felt the need to draw back.

“Wow,” Kylo blinked, feeling a calm over him he hadn’t in years. “That was… quite something.”

“A valuable tool?” Sasa smiled, shifting forward so his knees were nestled between her thighs, though not actually touching him.

“A very valuable one,” his hands found the small of her back and pulled her forward so she was kneeling and straddling his lap. Kylo couldn’t stop staring at her lips. “Being in your mind was… intoxicating.”

“How intoxicating?”

Kylo leaned forward.

The image of Rey cracked through his mind like a bolt of lightning. He drew back, but did not release Sasa.

“What is it?” Sasa frowned as Kylo clutched his head. “Are you not rebalanced?”

“I am rebalanced but… I still can’t get the image out of my head. My mind is fixated on the vision, and Alyla, and Uncle Luke, and nothing else. I don’t know how to ease my mind.”

“I can take your mind off all of this.”

Kylo laughed, “I highly doubt that.”

Sasa grinned.

Twenty-Seven Minutes Later…

They laid under the sheets, nude and panting, Kylo a little stunned and Sasa with that same Cheshire grin on her face.

“I stand corrected,” Kylo declared.

“I guess you were in the mood after all,” Sasa sounded very proud of herself. “You’re not thinking of those horrible visions anymore?”

“All I can think of right now is how good you’ve gotten at this since our first time.”
“I’ve had a very good teacher,” Sasa chuckled and rolled over to lay on his chest.

Kylo grinned and wrapped his arm around her, “How good?”

She looked up into his eyes and ran his fingers across his hairless chest. Kylo wasn’t the most cut, but he was strong and freakishly broad. His skin was smooth and sensitive. He shuddered at her very touch, but in fair turnabout, so did she.

“The best,” Sasa whispered.

Kylo stared into her shining eyes, as deep a forest green as his Force Signature – another subtle piece of manipulation for Snoke. He reached out and stroked her cheek, his hand as tender as he wished he had been their first time.

Something inside of him was an fire; not the same destructive blaze Tara caused that always fizzled out quickly. Sasa was an ember in his soul, a quiet simmer sometimes, but ever burning and at no danger of quelling.

He reached forward and before he knew what he was doing, he was kissing her. Sasa startled against the sudden action, but quickly melted into his touch. His hands were pulling her taste in closer like he was trying to devour every inch of pleasure she could provide. And Sasa was only too happy to prove.

When they broke apart, they were stunned.

“I…” Ben was at a loss for words. “I’m… sorry.”

“No, it’s… quite alright,” Sasa swallowed hard. She tried to stuff down these strange new feelings delighting in her body. She looked down submissively, “I’ll take my leave now.”

Kylo grabbed her arm as she started to move, “No, wait!”

She froze, looking back at him in confusion.

“St- Stay,” he could barely manage the word.

Sasa smiled gently, “Really?”

He scrambled for an excuse, “I might… need you. The visions. They might return. I could use the mental rebalance. Stay with me tonight.”

She reached out and stroked his cheek, “As you wish, Master.”

He seriously considered kissing her again, but released the idea when she pulled the blankets back over top them and snuggled into his embrace. Though they were both nude, the action felt very non-sexual, a different sort of feeling filling them up inside.

Kylo reached out with the Force to the room control panel to shut off the lights. He smiled as Sasa relaxed in his arms. She was so warm and soft. Tara was cold and distant, always leaving him quickly after they were finished, even if Kylo wanted more. But Sasa fit in his arms perfectly, and she loved resting her head on his chest as if it were a pillow.

It was kinda of peaceful to have her in his arms.

“Sasa?”
“Yes, Kylo?”

“This is just for tonight,” Kylo warned. “Don’t get used to sleeping in my bed with me.”

“I won’t, Master. I promise.”

---

_One Month Later…_

It was almost hilarious to see Phasma storming down the hallway grumbling to herself angrily. Everyone knew that this was one of her most hated duties, but she was probably the only person who could successfully complete the task and do it without mockery or maiming. Though she loath to admit it, Phasma had grown somewhat fonder of Kylo Ren over the past few years and she liked being able to add a personal, human touch to their relationship every now and then.

But for the love of the Gods, Ben Solo was twenty-seven years old. What the hell was she doing acting as his personal alarm clock to get him out of bed?

“Kylo!” Phasma yelled, barging into his room unannounced and uninvited like she owned the Star Destroyer and every room aboard the _Finalizer_. “For the love of the Gods, get your lazy ass out of bed. You have a meeting with Snoke in thirty minutes, and I will drag you out of bed by the ankle and present you to him in your pyjamas if I have to.”

Phasma stopped dead when she saw that Kylo wasn’t alone.

“What’s going on?” Sasa Ren groaned. She was cuddled up to Kylo, his arms wrapped protectively around her, the two clearly bare beneath his thick black blankets.

And if the bare shoulders didn’t give away their nudity under the sheet, the fact Kylo’s underwear was less than a metre from Phasma’s foot certainly did. She shuddered and took a step back.

“It’s nothing, Sasa,” Kylo rubbed his face. “I must have overslept my alarm.”

Sasa couldn’t help but give him a mischievous grin, “Well, I did tire you out quite a bit last night.”

Kylo chuckled and stroked her cheek, “You seem to be getting quite proficient at that.”

He leaned in to kiss her.

“Stop that!” Phasma snapped. Her glare was evident behind her mask, “Snoke in twenty-eight minutes, Kylo. Move it!”

Kylo narrowed his eyes, “Captain Phasma, you will do well to remember to speak to your superiors in a-”

“Oh, cut the crap, Kylo!” Phasma rolled her eyes. “We have no pretense of formality anymore. I can say whatever I want to you, and you let me. Even Sasa knows that.”

He looked to his lover, “Did you know?”

“Quir Ren told me my first day,” Sasa admitted. Her copper curls were spilling down her pale skin in a very enticing way.

“I’m glad he died last week then.” Kylo wanted to reach out and tangle his fingers in those curls,
then slowly drag his fingertips down that soft spine.

“Twenty-six minutes,” Phasma reminded. “I say this with all due respect, Kylo, but move your ass.”

“Alright, I’m getting up,” Kylo started to shove away the blanket.

“Stop,” Phasma held up her hand. “Are you wearing pants right now?”

Kylo grinned back at Sasa, “We found them inconvenient last night.”

“If I didn’t have to take off my helmet to do it, I’d be throwing up right now,” Phasma said flatly. With far too much routine in the motion than she ever wanted with Ben Solo, Phasma located some clothes from his closet and threw them to Kylo, “Here. Put that on. I think me seeing you naked would be legitimately traumatizing.”

Sasa bit her lip and smirked, “Clearly you haven’t seen him naked.”

Phasma gagged, “I actually did throw up a little bit that time.”

Kylo glared at her, but Sasa’s hands massaging his strong shoulders fanned his ego enough not to retaliate.

“Twenty-two minutes, Kylo!” Phasma snapped. “We gotta move, now.”

“She’s right,” Sasa used the Force to summon her clothing. She began to dress, “I have to meet Cern for training in fifteen minutes.”

“Watch your back with him,” Kylo advised. “I think he helps Tara bump off female Knights of Ren. I don’t want you going anywhere right now.”

“Good because I overheard something in the mess hall that I really want to try with you sometime.”

“You know, maybe we have enough time to-”

“Twenty minutes, and I am standing right here you ingrate, so pants, shirt, boots, and move!”

Kylo sighed and Sasa rubbed his arm.

“Don’t leave the Supreme Leader waiting,” Sasa bade.

He was still pretty slow getting dressed, but soon enough Phasma had him halfway out the door.

“Lunch,” Kylo stopped at the doorframe causing Sasa to bump into him at the abrupt stop. He turned to face her, oblivious to what had happened, “You’re having lunch with me today. Forward me your schedule and I’ll set the time.”

“Yes, Master,” Sasa smiled.

Kylo hesitated, and then he impulsively leaned forward and planted a kiss on her lips. His unshaved face scratched her skin, but Sasa didn’t mind.

Phasma raised an eyebrow behind her mask.

“Alright,” Kylo turned back to Phasma, putting on his mask, “let’s go meet with the Supreme Leader.”
“So,” Phasma said as they marched down the hallway. As they passed, soldiers sprung to attention and saluted, “Waking up with Sasa… again.”

“The Supreme Leader is determined to see the next generation arise,” Kylo answered, but smirked behind his helmet. “I am simply performing my duty to ensure that happens.”

“Oh poor you, what a hard duty indeed.”

“Is that jealousy I detect in your voice, Captain?” Kylo teased.


It was a pleasure to see him deflate a little at that.

“Look Kylo, what you do with those women, I don’t really care,” Phasma said. “As long as they’re consenting, if they want to sleep with you that’s their business. I may think that’s a poor life choice, but it’s their mistake to make.”

“My, someone’s bitchy this morning. Did I piss you off during the wrong time of month?”

He felt the fist smash into his face quicker than he could sense it. If her glove wasn’t littered with metal, making the punch hurt like hell, Kylo might have been impressed by the speed.

“Don’t ever ask a woman that,” Phasma snarled. “You’re in the First Order High Command, not a middle school locker room. And for the record, no it’s not PMS, and never PMS with me. Menopause is a real bitch, Kylo, and I can regale you with the details if you’re so interested in my reproductive system.”

“I’ll pass,” Kylo said quickly.

“Good,” Phasma said. “As for Sasa, I meant more that she’s spending the night in your bed. Literally. She’s sleeping with you in your bed. What’s that all about? I thought the women were supposed to leave after you… blessed them with the opportunity to carry your seed. By the Gods, I’m not having breakfast this morning.”

“Sasa… helps me.”

“Too many details, Kylo.”

“Not that way. Mentally,” Kylo confessed. “Her mental powers are strong and help balance me. It can be soothing, so after we couple, I ask her to stay. It’s really not that big a deal.”

“I suppose that not the worrying part,” Phasma admitted. “It’s how often she’s visiting you that is a problem.”

“I don’t see how.”

“That’s the third time this week, Kylo. Tara’s starting to notice, and we both know what happens when Tara notices there’s a threat to her position.”

“I suppose I’ll have to reason with her.”

Phasma raised an eyebrow, “Oh? So you’ve really taken a liking to this one. You didn’t even
attempt to reason on behalf of Nera, and you weren’t even sleeping with her.”

“Do you think Snoke knew?”

“Definitely. He probably was behind Nera’s death because of it. Shame. Kind of liked that one. Didn’t put up with your drama.”

“Neither do you.”

“Okay, seriously are you hitting on me, because absolutely not.”

“No,” Kylo sighed. “Besides I see you almost like…”


“Well, not a mother. Honestly, I’m fine with the one I have, even if she’s misguided. I will get her to see the right side.”

“Yeah, good like with that one. So, what am I to you?”

“My bitchy aunt?” Kylo chuckled. “Kind of what I would hope Felicity Rhiaon would have been like.”

“All right, I am treating you too nicely if that’s how you see me. I’ll try to be more of a hard ass.”

Kylo chuckled and they walked a long time in silence.

“So,” Phasma side eyed Kylo, “what’s going on that you need mental balance? Have you stopped drinking my sleeping cordials?”

“No, and I thank you for making them for me. They really do knock me right out,” Kylo confessed. He didn’t acknowledge that his mind was so overwhelmed by the weight of his sins he had taken to drinking Phasma’s sleeping cordial every night for several years now. “I just had a vision last month that is messing with my mind.”

“What vision?”

“Of Rey Skywalker alive.”

Phasma stopped in her tracks, “Excuse me?”

Kylo halted, “It was Rey Skywalker, sixteen-years-old and… alive. It felt so real-”

“It isn’t.”

“Excuse me?”

“It isn’t real,” Phasma insisted. “Come on, the First Order searched all of Jakku. You saw in Felicity’s memory that Rey Rhiaon Skywalker died from heatstroke. You saw her dig the hole. This vision is false, perhaps… perhaps a test. Or maybe Sasa is projecting it to you in order to bring you closer to her.”

Kylo frowned, “That… does make sense timing wise.”

“Put it from your mind, Kylo. Entertaining this notion will lead you nowhere good. Accept the truth and move on. I failed to get Rey off Jakku alive. End of story. Understood?”
“Understood,” Kylo nodded. He sighed, “I just… it felt so real.”

“Listen to me very carefully, Kylo,” Phasma said slowly. “Rey Rhiaon Skywalker is dead.”

Rey Rhiaon Skywalker had never felt more alive. He swung her staff magnificently, taking down the pair of rival scavengers in an impressive show of force. She was graceful and powerful. No one could defeat her, not since she had beaten Roke in the Ring. Now people didn’t quake at the name Luke Erso, they quaked at the name Rey Erso.

“Let’s get out of here!” one of scavengers said to their buddy as they scrambled to their feet.

“And don’t come back!” Rey called after them as they ran back out from the twisted metal into the hot desert. “This is my ship now! And don’t you forget it!”

She was still laughing when she looked back and saw Teng watched her uncomfortably.

“What?” Rey leaned casually against her staff. “Does the sight of me kicking butt get you excited?”

Teng had his arms crossed and his face scrunched a little, “Not… this time.”

Rey frowned, sensing something was off, “What? What’s going on?”

“You don’t think that was a little… much?”

“No. Why would it be?”

“You beat up two guys who were peacefully scavenging a part of the ship we weren’t even working on, and then called dibs on the whole ship.”

“Yeah.” Rey shook her head in confusion, “What’s wrong with that? It’s standard practice.”

“Rey… this is a Super Star Destroyer. You can’t call dibs on a Super Star Destroyer.”

“And who’s going to challenge me?” Rey grinned, crossing over to him. She ran a playful hand across his chest, “I’m the talk of the town. No one can beat me.”

Teng just looked at her, “No one has beaten you. That doesn’t mean someone can’t. Keep playing games like this, and you’ll give someone a reason to do it.”

Rey winced, and Teng instantly regretted it. He knew what this power kick meant for Rey; it was more than having proven herself to all the lusty dullards of Niima Outpost. She could fight back now, she could defend herself… she can save herself the way she hadn’t been able to from Jarex.

Teng sighed, and slung an arm around her shoulders, pulling her in for a quick kiss, “Come on, you Narglatch. I think I saw some fuel injectors in pretty good condition somewhere around here.”

But as Teng led Rey away, he couldn’t help but feel something unsettled in his stomach.

Chapter End Notes
Ok, not the best line to end on, but there wasn’t a really dramatic spot to split this time.

And yes, I’m sort of transferring the whole Rey Nobody/clinging to parents thing to Sasa. It’s going to work much better in this version with her.
Secrets of the Past

Chapter Summary

Tara Ren is not impressed with Sasa's relationship with Kylo, Aletha and Diego take their relationship to the next level, and seventeen-year-old Poe found a weird way to waste taxpayer money.

Chapter Notes

TRIGGER WARNING: In the Alyla section, rape, sexual abuse, self-harm, and suicide ideation are discussed.

I know I said I wouldn’t do this, but since these several chapters just juggle so many stories and so many characters at the same time, I have decided to split this chapter again. So, I’m sorry I promised Luke and Rey stuff in this chapter, but that entire storyline is going to be its own chapter in the next one. There’s literally going to be nothing but Jakku stuff. This does however mean that the Resistance storyline gets wrapped up for a while. The focus will be going back to Jakku for a while with some secondary focus on the First Order. Thank you for your understanding. I just was staring at 25k for this chapter and was still not done, so knew I had to split it.

After a lot of thought, I have decided to go back through my outline and majorly cut up some chapters. As we move closer to TFA, more characters are coming into play and things are starting to clash and pay off. A bunch of things are about to get set up that really affect how TFA goes, particularly character motivations on the side of the First Order.

I have realized that my chapter lengths have become unmanageable for me. It’s just getting very hard on me because I’m literally sitting for two days straight at my computer and still not finishing chapters. I feel like a hamster running on a wheel, writing more and more but never getting anywhere.

So, I have decided for the sake of myself that I will be adding in four more chapter splits and try to keep them under 20k. If I keep at it like how I currently am, I might run myself into the ground and quit, which I have no intention of, but I’ve been down this road before where I take too much on. For everyone’s sake, I will be transitioning back into something easier on myself.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.
FN-2187 didn’t have a lot of time to get an impression of the Expert Saber Class taught by Tara Ren before he was getting yelled at.

“Everyone do your warm-ups!” Tara strode into the room with very little patience for pleasantries. “I should not have to ask.”

FN-2187 wasn’t sure what he was supposed to do. In the Beginner Class it was easy to fake it until you figured things out as you were one of fifty classmates. It was impossible in the Expert Class as only ten people were in the class at any given time.

He was sure in the Advanced Class of twenty people, you got used to it, but FN-2187 haven’t been given any time to develop such habits. In the month since his advancement, Kylo had been giving him private sessions to teach him the skills he was supposed to learn in the Advanced Class before FN-2187 attended his first Expert Class. If FN-2187 had to admit it, he would tell you that he had gotten very good against Kylo’s personal fighting style.

FN-2187 tried to discretely look around to see what everyone was doing when he noticed something. He knew in the Expert Class that all the Knights of Ren attended, in addition to the ten students. He also knew that currently one of the Knights of Ren was one of the students. But as he looked around he only saw six Knights of Ren and nine students.

Kylo and Sasa Ren were missing.

FN-2187 was about to grab one of the practice sabers from the wall when he heard someone call his name. He turned to see Tara Ren unlocking a few boxes that Cern Ren was taking from the supply closet. She was waving him over.

“Yes, Ma’am?” FN-2187 approached quickly but not too eagerly. He didn’t want to look uncontrolled in front of her.

Tara Ren stood above average height, but not what would be considered a tall woman. She was quite pale, very muscular, had piercing grey eyes, thin lips, high cheekbones, and the straightest, blackest hair FN-2187 had ever seen.

Her nails were also particularly sharp, and unlike Sasa Ren, they weren’t painted. If she wore makeup, FN-2187 couldn’t tell to what extent, but he would guess maybe a little mascara, very sharp black eye liner, and some sort of pale lip product.

She wore all black, but rather than the dresses of Sasa Ren, she wore pants, a tank top, and some sort of sturdy hiking boot. FN-2187 assumed she had more layers of clothing for the actual battlefield.

Tara had very little curve to her body, her small chest and hips working in better harmony to her athletic form than Sasa’s pronounced curves could. She also stood with a posture so straight that FN-2187 didn’t realize humans could stand that way.

FN-2187 had never seen another female Knight of Ren other than Sasa and Tara, but it was clear the type could be whittled down to deadly beauty. There was certainly no mistaking one woman from the other, but they both exuded the same confidence and danger.

Kylo Ren was lucky to have either on his arm; let alone both.
FN-2187 however, did not consider himself lucky for getting to have Tara Ren turn those sharp, judging eyes on him.

“I have very little patience for explanations and questions in my class,” Tara said shortly. “By the time you reach the Expert Class you should be an actual expert. I will not make concessions for your circumstances. Am I clear?”

“Yes, Ma’am,” FN-2187 saluted.

“No saluting in this class, and take off that ridiculous outfit. You’re not training to be a Stormtrooper here. You’re training to be a Knight of Ren. You need the mobility. Armor off.”

FN-2187 didn’t like the way everyone watched him strip down to his underclothes. Phasma’s instructions of *never let anyone see beneath your mask* pounded in his head. He would have to learn how to make a mask with his bare face.

“Good,” Tara was not subtle in examining his body. “Not bad. Sturdy, muscular, good bone structure, even a little handsome.”

He couldn’t stop the red twinge that warmed his cheeks.

“Stop that!” Tara snapped. “I’ll slap any blush right off your face. Let me make it very clear, because we’ve had issues in the past with potential Knights. You know Sasa Ren?”

FN-2187 nodded.

“And you see me?”

FN-2187 nodded.

“Do you think us beautiful?”

He was going to stick to nodding until forced to speak.

“Are you attracted to either of us?”

FN-2187 tried with all of his might not to blush.

“Would you like to touch either of us?”

FN-2187 so desperately didn’t want to nod to that.

“Then let me make myself clear,” Tara said slowly, “the female Knights of Ren… are *not* for you. The only person who gets to touch us is Kylo Ren. Your bloodline is worthless. To be saddled with his child is the highest honour. To be saddled with yours is a disgrace. If you touch any female Knights of Ren, the sentence is a very swift and very painful death. Understood?”

FN-2187 nodded.

“Good.” Tara took a silver tube out of one of the unlocked boxes and handed it to him, “Here.”

FN-2187 frowned, “Ma’am?”

“We don’t use those children’s toys in this class,” Tara explained. “We use the real deal. That weapon you are holding is a *very* dangerous one. You can kill someone with it. You can maim or dismember. This is a *weapon*; treat it as one. Understand its power.”
“I do,” FN-2187 bowed his head.

“No… I don’t think you do,” Tara smirked. “I need you to hold very still for a minute.”

“Ma’am?”

“Hold still,” she repeated. “I do this to every single person who joins my class. You are not special, and this is not a threat. You must not move. If you do, you will die. Am I understood?”

“Yes, Ma’am.”

“Good. Do not move.”

FN-2187’s eye shot wide when Tara ignited the saber on her belt and pointed it barely an inch from his throat.

“Don’t move,” Tara ordered as he started to breathe heavily. “Don’t move, I won’t hurt you. I just have to show you. Demonstrate how dangerous this weapon is.”

FN-2187’s body was betraying him. He couldn’t stop shaking and panting as the tip of her blade scorched the skin of his throat.

“You feel that heat?” Tara whispered. “You feel that burning your skin? That is how powerful this weapon is. I don’t even need to touch you to injure you. Imagine it, FN-2187. Imagine it getting closer and closer, hotter and hotter. Imagine the blade biting into your skin and your screams echoing all around as this burns and cuts and numbs you all at once. See how close this blade is to your throat? Isn’t it so simple? How little effort it would take from me to end your life right now. Twitch but an inch, you’re dead without even a drop of blood spilt. See how confidently I hold this? How controlled I am? How I understand the weight of this weapon? Do you understand now?”

“Yes, Ma’am,” FN-2187 tried to keep his voice under control. “I do.”

He let out an enormous breath of relief when she flicked the saber off.

“Where is Kylo?” she called as if she hadn’t been seconds away from murdering a student.

It took all of FN-2187’s strength not to pass out on the floor.

“Doxl? Berd?” Tara approached two other Knights of Ren. “Where is Kylo?”

“I don’t know,” Doxl answered. “Last I heard he had a conference call with Snoke. But that was before lunch.”

“And what of Sasa?” she asked.

“Had a meeting with Hux.” Berd grinned at Doxl, “You know, if they’re both missing that means they’re probably-”

Tara’s lightsaber was at his throat.

“You want to end that sentence?” she asked coolly.

“Not particularly,” Berd held up his hands in surrender.

Tara sighed and extinguished her saber, “Cern! Wiln! I’m going to go find Kylo. You start running drills. Give FN-2187 no quarter!”
“Yes, Tara!” Cern grinned at FN-2187.

FN-2187 swallowed hard.

“Come on, Kylo, where are you?” Tara hit the call button on her comm when she got outside, but Kylo didn’t answer.

Sighing, Tara started to reach out into the Force to find him when she heard a woman’s giggle carry down the hall.

“Come on, Kylo. Not now. We’re already late!”

“Just a few more minutes.”

Tara pressed herself against the wall into the shadows when the figures of Sasa and Kylo Ren came into view.

They looked… ridiculous. They were laughing and dishevelled and was Kylo playfully chasing Sasa? She was only an arm’s length away from him, both lightly running as Kylo tried to hook an arm around her waist.

Sasa squealed as he managed to get a hold of her and pulled him into her embrace. Grins were plastered on their faces and they were laughing as Sasa feigned trying to escape his grasp. She squirmed and giggled as Kylo planted kisses all over her neck.

When Sasa made a move that almost got her free, Kylo gently pushed her against the wall. The pretense of a fight dropped, Sasa wrapped her arms around his neck and leaned forward to kiss him. Kylo gave something of a mix of a moan, growl, and chuckle as he pinned her against the wall and greedily took in the taste of her lips.

The two made out shamelessly against in an empty hallway, unaware of the woman watching them in disgust.

Tara uncaringly crushed the commlink in her hand until it was bits of wire and metal.

What the hell was going on? Did those two have no respect? No dignity? What if a Stormtrooper saw? Kylo Ren needed to be a masked, fearsome leader with no heart. Not the kind of guy people found groping his girlfriend in a broom closet.

But that wasn’t the disturbing part. It was how much he was enjoying it.

The way he touched Sasa… it was something Tara hadn’t seen before. There had been plenty female Knights of Ren who turned his head and took his attentions before. But those had always been just about lust, desire, the end goal. Those hadn’t been of any concern before.

But this… this was genuine affection. Kylo wasn’t about to pull down Sasa’s panties and have her right there in the hallway. He was just kissing her… because he wanted to. There was something in their eyes, they way they didn’t break contact and stared deeply into each other. His hands caressed his shoulders and neck, buried themselves in her long, copper hair. They weren’t groping her breasts or sliding down her hips or up her skirt.

Kylo had an actual connection to Sasa beyond lust.
Tara gritted her teeth. This wasn’t how it was supposed to go. This wasn’t supposed to happen. This was against the plan. The plan they had had for eleven years…

FIRST MEETING

They met a few days after the Burning of Rornian. She was practising her saber skills in the training room when she heard his voice for the first time.

“Not bad.”

Tara turned to see an unmasked Kylo Ren standing at the door with arms folded.

“You have very good sparring form,” he said to her.

Tara extinguished her lightsaber, “I have to be to teach the Expert Saber Class. Or have you come to take that from me?”

Kylo put up his hands innocently, “I merely wanted to see the woman who was so good that the Supreme Leader put her in such an honourable position.”

“I am good,” Tara answered simply. “Used to kick Cade Ren’s ass all the time. I promise you, if I had been at the Burning of Rornian it wouldn’t have been a slaughter. Not for the Knights of Ren anyway.”

“You aspire to the Knighthood?”

Tara pointed to a patch on her uniform, “I’m one of the Blessed. Of course, I have aspiration to the Knighthood. Only thing that held me back was my age. Cade didn’t want the liability of underaged teenagers. As soon as I turned eighteen, I was first in line for a spot… until you came along. Word is that the Supreme Leader forced him to seek you out when the last spot freed up.”

Kylo’s eyes darkened, “Are you questioning my abilities?”

“Of course not. It’s an honour to have the grandson of Darth Vader among our ranks. Your blood alone ensures you worthy of a spot… To lead the Knights, however—”

“So you question my leadership. I earned my title of Master! I was the only one left standing after the massacre!”

“Yes, it’s so very easy to advance through ranks when your uncle clears the competition. Is it true he killed Cade?”

“It is.”

Tara shook her head, “I’m not surprised. Cade was skilled, but his passion clouded his judgement. Taking on Luke Skywalker by himself? Insanity.”

“You think Skywalker that skilled?” Kylo scoffed.

“I know he is,” Tara answered simply. “He was trained by Jedi Masters, has years of experience, and subdued Darth Vader. Don’t underestimate your enemies. That’s what Cade did. Now, admittedly that type of arrogant leadership would be fine as long as you had a second-in-command to reel you in and bring you back to reality. But Baku? He was a hype man, plain and simple. Not one of those so-called Knights kept him in line.”
Kylo stared at her for a long time, and then came a small smile, “Perhaps you’re right. Maybe if you were around, Cade wouldn’t have gotten all his men killed. I’ll take a lesson from that when choosing my team.”

“Any idea when you will be choosing from the Blessed?” Tara asked.

“Not until we’ve found Rhiaon and the daughter of Skywalker.”

“Well, then let me be the first to say, I’m glad to throw my name in the ring.” Tara was one of the highest ranking Blessed – the group of Force Sensitives Snoke trained in secret. “I excel at keeping the heads of pompous, self-important officers on their shoulders and in their place. You should see the number I can do on Hux.”

“Now, that I would like to see,” Kylo chuckled. “Of course, there is the question of your fighting abilities. Practising sparring forms is one thing, but actual fighting… That’s a whole other game.”

Tara grinned and ignited her saber, “Then would you like to play?”

Kylo raised an eyebrow, “What’s your name?”

“Tara. Short for nothing. Simply lucked out in already having the standard four letter Knight of Ren name.”

“Tara,” he tested the name. “And where do you come from, Tara?”

“Oh, well it’s this big dramatic story of it doesn’t go damn matter. I’m here and I’m ready to win.”

“Well, then,” Kylo unclipped his saber and ignited it, “let’s play.”

That was the first time Tara met Kylo Ren.

…and it was also the first time she kicked his ass.

---

**FIRST IMPRESSED**

“I still stay she’s hiding on Tatooine!” Captain Roan slammed his fist on the table. “There are dozens of cities and settlements. She could easily hide there for a long time.”

“She is not an idiot, Roan.” Hux rolled his eyes. “Rhiaon would not hide on somewhere as obvious as Tatooine. I say we send another team to Valra and pay the Andromias family a visit.”

Phasma shook her head, “With all due respect, Rhiaon would more likely go to her parental family than her maternal one.”

“But the only one alive on the Rhiaon side is Garvan Rhiaon,” Hux frowned. “And she would never contact Garvan.”

“I believe that is precisely the point, General Hux,” Electra said politely.

“Well, if you were to ask me, I think she just punched in a random coordinate and is hiding on a planet to which she has no connection,” Sigma input.

Seated at the table of squabbling high command, Kylo Ren was rubbing his temples, trying to fight off a headache. The First Order had as little an idea where Felicity and Rey Rhiaon Skywalker had gone as Luke Skywalker and his family did.
He glanced up across the table and found Tara giving him a sympathetic smile. A few of the high ranking Blessed had been invited to the meeting so Kylo could evaluate them in a tactical setting. The pressure was not on yet for Kylo to make his selections, but the competition certainly had begun.

“Master Ren,” Tyche said, “back me up on this.”

Kylo groaned, “Only an idiot would think that Felicity Rhiaon would go to Faclov. She gets panic attacks from loud bangs sometimes. But sure, go to the place where they literally found her brother’s arm hanging in a tree. Does anyone have any idea useful beyond this inane game of hide and seek?”

Tara rose her hand.

“Go ahead,” Kylo allowed.

“The question here is not where did Rhiaon go,” Tara said. “The question is how to draw her out, specifically how would Skywalker draw her out? We all know the nauseating depth of their bond. They’re not about to go their separate ways.”

“Especially since Felicity cannot handle Rey Skywalker’s powers on her own,” Phasma added.


“A comm,” Phasma said.

“Correct,” Tara replied. “Kylo, do they have any private comms between them?”

“No, but they do have a code. Physical signs to each other, but I wouldn’t put it past them to have a verbal one as well.”

“But if they would simply comm each other,” Sigma asked, “why haven’t they yet?”

“We’ve been jamming them,” Hux answered. “Blocking out their lines with false tips and hacking into message boxes so that they secretly wouldn’t clear out. If Rhiaon did try to call Luke Skywalker, Han Solo, or Leia Organa, it’s very unlikely she would be able to get through or leave a message.”

“Good, so from there what are Rhiaon’s options?” Tara directed.

“Call someone else,” Kylo simply said.

Tara pointed to him, “Good. But she wouldn’t call a friend, it’s too simple.”

“We’re watching their lines as well,” Electra added knowingly.

“So what lines aren’t we watching?” Hux asked.

“We can expand the list,” Tyche suggested.

“We have to think outside of the box,” Tara shook her head. “Think like Rhiaon thinking like us.”

She was met with half a dozen frowns.

“What would Rhiaon think we would do?” Phasma clarified. “What wouldn’t we go after? A line that would be hard for us to hack?”

“A governmental line,” Kylo said. “She’s got many contacts in there.”
“Should we check the Emissary department?” Hux asked.

Kylo shook his head, “She knows we hacked that one. It would be someone secure, but close to her.”

“Mothma?” Electra suggested.

“No,” Kylo rejected. “Rhiaon doesn’t trust easily. She has a fondness for Mothma, but when it comes to her life and that of her child, there’s a very limited-”

Kylo stopped, his eyes meeting Tara’s across the table.

Tara understood, “Organa’s office.”

“Of course,” Hux said. “Secure but family. What information do we have on Organa at the moment?”

“She’s taken leave and left things in control of her assistant,” Sigma checked a report, “Jaina Fel.”

“That’ll make things hard,” Kylo said. “Jaina may not be formidable, but she’s meticulous. If even one message disappears, she’ll know.”

“How long until we can tap into the line?” Hux asked.

Sigma answered, “It’ll be tricky, but we can probably do it in-”

“No,” Kylo interrupted. “We can’t do this remotely. If the Senate finds out one line has been tapped, they’ll lockdown everything. One wrong move and we’re screwed.”

“Then what do we do?” Phasma inquired.

“We have to get someone in there and personally check,” Tara answered.

“But the security is some of the best in the galaxy,” Roan said. “Who could even get it?”

Kylo and Tara’s eyes met.

Tara grinned, “What do you think, Master Ren? Think you could get in?”

“I know a few tricks about the building,” Kylo smirked.

“Absolutely not,” Phasma shook her head. “Your face is everywhere right now. If you got caught-”

“Him getting caught is why he’s the perfect choice,” Tara chuckled. “Think you could conjure a few crocodile tears?”

“My mother is soft-hearted and Jaina a fool,” Kylo laughed. “A few tears, a couple lies about being pressganged into the First Order, maybe even make Jaina think I see her as a sister.”

“You should also make them think you fear Snoke,” Tara suggested. “That you want to be free of him but can’t get him out of your mind. Make it dramatic. Hurt yourself a little.”

“I’ll second that idea,” Hux said too quickly.

Kylo glared at him.

“Then we have a plan,” Phasma declared.
“Yep,” Kylo nodded. “We’re going to Hosnian Prime.”

FIRST AGREEMENT

“Jakku, really?” Tara asked as he walked down the hallway towards mess with Kylo. “Any idea why?”

“It’s where she and Nalto hid after Operation Citadel,” Kylo explained. “Phasma is on her way with a squadron right now.”

“Upset that the Supreme Leader didn’t allow you to go?”

“I don’t dare question the judgement of the Supreme Leader.”

“A little questioning is healthy every now and then.” Tara reminded, “Remember. That’s what makes a good second-in-command.”

“I suppose, but he’s right about this,” Kylo said. “Rhiaon and I facing each other during the extraction wouldn’t end well. Besides, I need to focus on selecting my Knights of Ren. I’ve got five slots to fill and no idea who to fill them with.”

“Six slots. There’s six slots, Master Ren.”

Kylo pulled them to a stop, “Not anymore.”

Tara arched a brow.

“You’ve proved yourself in combat and now in tactics. I need someone by my side to guide me better than Baku guided Cade. If you still have aspirations of Knighthood, I am happy to grant you it.”

“I would be honoured, Master Ren,” Tara smiled. “Would I be called Tara, or something new?”

“Tara Ren rolls off the tongue well.” Suddenly he grabbed her wrist and pulled her in close to him, “But let me make myself clear: I am the Master of the Knights of Ren. I am in charge. I make the final call. Is that understood?”

Tara chuckled darkly, “Kylo, I have no intention in taking your title. Second-in-command is where I aspire. All the power, but without the messy complication of taking the blame when you’re in charge. All the benefit, without the drawbacks. But let me make myself clear.”

She twisted her arm out of his grip, grasped his hand, and dug her nails into his wrist.

“I am your second-in-command,” Tara growled. “You do not set me aside for anyone. Not even Rey Skywalker. And if you ever betray me, I’ll make your dreams to be like Grandfather Vader come true and cut off your god damn hand.”

Kylo wrenched his arm out of her grip, but her nails dragged down his wrist, leaving long white lines. They stood there, staring at each other, something heavy and bold in the air. Kylo’s wrist throbbed from the scratches, but if Tara was sensing the emotions in the Force right… he wasn’t complaining.

“I very much believe in a you scratch my back, I’ll scratch yours policy,” Tara grinned darkly.

Kylo swallowed hard and for a split second the image of her nails dragging down his bare back
flashed through the Force.

Hormonal teenaged boys were so predictable.

“Do we have a deal?” Tara asked.

He smiled and extended his hand, “Deal.”

They shook on it.

As they let each other’s hand go, Tara reached up and twirled a lock of Kylo’s hair. He couldn’t detect the intentional way she was making his heart beat ever so slightly faster.

“You know,” she said carefully, “you should keep dying your hair. It looks really good black. Handsome even.”

The idiot actually smiled at that.

---

**FIRST COMFORT**

She found him curled up in the corner of some abandoned hallway, knees clutched to his chest and hyperventilating. The news had traveled quickly around the Tonides Base.

“I heard the Rhiaon bitch is dead,” Tara stood several feet away, just watching him. “Thought you would be prouder. Celebrating the victory. Maybe even popping a bottle of champagne with Hux and setting aside your differences for just a moment. Then again, you’re sixteen. You probably shouldn’t be drinking.”

Kylo said nothing, shaking as he rocked back and forth, and his eyes elsewhere.

Tara sighed and came to sit next to him. She placed a hand on his knee and rubbed it gently.

“Oh, calm down,” Tara’s voice was softer than it had ever been before or since. “It’s not that bad.”

“Rey is dead,” Kylo’s voice was full of the trembling sorrow he wouldn’t let fall from his eyes. “She… she died hot, tired, thirsty, hungry, and wanting her dad. And now… now she’s buried under hot sun and baking sand for all of eternity.”

“The true Skywalker nightmare.”

“This isn’t funny!” Kylo snapped. “When Uncle Luke finds out what happened… What I did to Felicity… Oh god, I can’t believe I did that. All I could think was how to make the situation worse. What would it take to make me feel better, to make it as poetic as possible?”

“I still can’t believe you actually did it. That was cold… and very admirable.”

“Uncle Luke is going to kill me. Then when he’s done, he’ll give what’s left to my mother, and then… well, my father would get what remained, but after my mom, there’s not going to be anything left. Bail Organa will have had a more tangible corpse to bury than what will be left of me. And Luke’s on his way now. Oh God. What do I do? What do I do? What do I-”

Tara slapped him.

Holding his face, looking very dazed, Kylo stared at her in shock and fear.
“Pull yourself together,” she growled.

“You hit me!” Kylo wanted to sound fearsome but came across as nothing more than childish.

“I’m sorry,” Tara resisted the urge to roll her eyes. “But this isn’t what a Knight of Ren does, let alone a Master. Get a hold of yourself!”

Kylo just stared at her, something worrisome spreading over his face. When he slid a few scoots away from her, Tara knew she had messed up.

Tara sighed, “I’m sorry. Truly. I’m not good with comforting sorrow. I shouldn’t have hit you.”

“That’s, um, okay,” Kylo said quickly.

Tara replaced her hand on his leg and back to stroke his thigh. The shudder he made was how Tara learned of his sensitivity in that area.

“I’m a little overwhelmed right now,” Tara lied. She followed it up with a truth, “In Snoke’s training, pain is used a tool to discipline softness. Like how punching a tree trunk over and over will make your fist tough and less susceptible to pain. I just don’t know how to deal with this sort of… emotion.”

Kylo relaxed, “It’s alright. My father is quite emotionally stunted. I’ve had a lot of experience in terrible comforting styles. Sure, never hit me, but I dreaded the times my mother would go away for her work and leave me alone with my father.”

“I pity that you endured Han Solo as a father.”

“I pity myself.”

“About a great many things, I suspect.”

Kylo couldn’t help but smile at that, “Insubordination.”

“Keeping your ass in line,” Tara bumped against him playfully.

“And I’m thankful.” Kylo sighed, “What am I going to do when Uncle Luke gets here?”

Tara lifted his chin and made Kylo look her in the eye, “You’re going to do one very simple thing. You look Luke Skywalker in the eye, you tell him that worthless schutta wife of his is dead… And you laugh in his face.”

FIRST MANIPULATION

“He can’t just be gone!” Kylo exclaimed.

Cern Ren and Tara Ren exchanged a look, unphased by their Master’s temper tantrum.

“I don’t know what to tell you, Sir,” Cern said. “Skywalker has disappeared. Rumours say he went to find the first Jedi Temple-”

“And where is that?” Kylo snarled.

Cern raised an eyebrow, “If people knew, he wouldn’t need to find it.”
He barely dodged the water glass Kylo threw at his head. Tara sighed as it smashed against the wall and glass littered the floor.

“I suggest you go try to find it then, Cern,” Tara said politely. She shot him a look to get the hell out as quickly as possible.

“By your leave,” Cern bowed his head, and took her unspoken advice.

Kylo let out something that sounded like an animal growl and dropped down hard into his desk chair.

“Okay, if I can’t kill people in my Expert Class, you can’t throw things at the Knights,” Tara said, sitting down in the chair across.

“Who are you to direct me?” Kylo snapped.

“Your second-in-command,” Tara shot back instantly. “You wanted me to keep your ass in line, so I’m keeping it there. Cern is doing his job.”

“Cern is an idiot!”

“Actually, he’s one of the few in command who isn’t. It’s like you and Hux are constantly in some sort of pissing contest over who can infuriate the Supreme Leader more.”

“We lost Luke Skywalker!”

“And you think that’s a defeat?” Tara scoffed. “We broke Luke Skywalker. We destroyed him. We made him crawl into a hole like a disgusting rodent. We won. There is no one standing in our way. What? You think your mother can take us down? The one who doesn’t give a damn about her powers and never trained them? All of the power is ours! Light Side is dead! The Force is dead! Let’s take advantage of that fact.”

“The Force isn’t dead. Merely… hibernating. It will awaken someday.”

“Then we prepare for that day.” She reached across and took his hands in hers, “You’re one of a kind, Kylo Ren. You’re in charge now. Give us your orders. There’s nothing in your way. Not even Snoke.”

Kylo frowned, “Those are dangerous words.”

“I’m simply saying that Snoke won’t be around forever. When that day comes, you’ll need someone at your side… I’m glad to throw my name in the ring.”

He swallowed, something new starting to grow in the air.

Tara smiled and reached out to stroke his cheek. Then, to his surprise, she kissed him.

“Master Ren, please excuse me,” Captain Alecta Anthea suddenly entered the room, “but we have reports of-”

She stopped when she saw the pair disengaging from a kiss.

“Forgive me,” Alecta bowed her head. “I didn’t realize-”

“It’s alright,” Tara smiled when Kylo didn’t respond. He was far too dazed to speak. “What is it?”
“We have reports of some Force Sensitive children that need to be collected,” Alecta informed. “I was hoping you might spare a Knight or two, Master Kylo.”

“Uh,” Kylo blinked, trying to gather his mind from the current situation and not that lovely kiss. “Right. Knights. You can, uh… You can take…”

Tara glanced at Alecta, “I can go.”

“Right,” Kylo nodded a little too eagerly. “You can take Kara. Tara. Go on. I have work to do.”

“Of course,” Tara grinned. She looked to Alecta, “Shall we?”

“What was that about?” Alecta asked as they walked down the hallway from Kylo Ren’s office. “You know the boy isn’t even seventeen, right?”

Tara shrugged, “I’m eighteen. I fail to see the problem.”

“So, you have affections for Kylo Ren. I think I’m going to have to inform the Supreme Leader about this.”

“Oh, please, that petulant child?” Tara laughed. “I’d much prefer a real man to Kylo. Wouldn’t you?”

“I’m not a sexual being. Asexual, I believe the term is.”

“Really? I would have thought you would want a child you can groom to carry your legacy.”

“God knows that the Anthea family has provided the world with more children than it needs. Just met my youngest niece, and I have never met an eleven-year-old more insufferable. Ugh, she’ll probably end up being like my youngest sister, and the world does not need another Aletha. But I don’t understand. Ben Solo is where you want to lay your cards?”

“A few of them,” Tara grinned. “Maybe a few elsewhere. That’s the thing about men, they’re so easy to manipulate. Especially First Order ones. They’re all so power hungry and wanting to prove themselves that when a pretty girl offers them attention—”

“You keep them under your thumb,” Alecta finished. “Trust me, I know all about it. You don’t climb rank in the Imperial Military as a woman without making a few… sacrifices.”

“I tell you, Captain, get close to one of those idiots in charge around here, and you can do whatever you want.”

“You know… I might just do that.”

FIRST TIME

“Have you made your choice yet?” Tara asked one day while she sparred with the almost nineteen-year-old Kylo Ren.

“No,” he grunted, swinging his blade down. He frowned when she blocked his blade, “The Supreme Leader says I have until my birthday. Two weeks isn’t that much pressure, right?”
“Huh, two weeks to find the girl to take your virginity. Sounds like a fairy tale.”

“This isn’t funny.”

“It is to me.”

“Tara!” Kylo exclaimed.

She sighed, “Alright, fine, it’s a big deal.”

“It’s a huge deal. This is me choosing the mother of my child. My consort. My-”

“Forever second-in-command.”

Kylo paused, “It’s not like that.”

“Oh, yes, it is,” Tara extinguished her saber. “Whoever is the mother of your child will be your right hand for the rest of your life.”

He turned off his own blade, “Tara, I promise your position is not compromised.”

“Yes, it is… but it doesn’t have to be.”

“What do you mean?”

“Pick me.”

Kylo frowned, “You? You’re interested?”

“Are you joking? Being the mother of the heir to the Skywalker legacy is one of the highest honours one could achieve. I’d take it far more seriously than the Rhiaon, Amidala, or Organa bitch.”

She felt something invisible slam into her.

“Don’t insult my mother,” Kylo growled.

Something more powerful slammed into Kylo sending him stumbling a few steps.

“And don’t use the Force against me,” Tara warned.

Kylo put up his hands in surrender, and she returned the gesture.

“Come now,” Tara slowly walked towards him. There was a sway in her step, “Think about it. What do you need in a mother? Someone beautiful; which I am.”

“Arrogant much?”

“Don’t think I haven’t noticed you staring at me for three years. And that’s another point in my favor; you need someone as arrogant as you. As strong, as powerful, as endeared by the Supreme Leader. And you need someone who is loyal to you unconditionally. I can be that… I can be what you want.”

Kylo didn’t know what to say, “I… I don’t believe this. Are you saying you’re in love with me?”

That made her laugh, “Love is not part of this deal, Kylo. I am everything you need. Who cares if love isn’t part of it? Did love save Felicity Rhiaon? Did love save Padmé Amidala? Did love save Alyla Kene?”
Kylo swallowed.

She was standing directly in front of him. Her hands were on his shoulders, very deliberate in every gesture. There was something missing in her words, but still they made his heart pound and his blood boil.

“You think about that kiss, don’t you?” Tara whispered. “The one I gave you years ago.”

“Yes,” he whispered, looking down into her burning grey eyes.

“You want to feel it again, don’t you?”

“Yes.”

“Then pick me, and taste it again.”

So he did.

That was the night she made him a man.

---

**FIRST FIGHT**

“If I have to get chewed out by the Supreme Leader one more time about this issue-”

“Gee, and here I was wondering why Kylo asked you to leave the meeting,” Cern said dryly as they sparred.

Tara swung her saber at his neck and just barely missed cutting open his throat.

“I’m just sick of it,” Tara growled. “Who cares if I’m not pregnant after a year? Do you really want a nineteen-year-old Skywalker to have a baby anyway?”

“No, that is a smart move,” Cern grunted as their blade clashed. “You know, this is probably a bad situation in which to do it, but can I ask you a serious question?”

“Fine,” Tara sighed. “But you piss me off and I decapitate you.”

“I believe it.”

Cern had been the first Knight to join after Tara, and throughout the years they had built a comfortable rapport. It was the reason Cern could ask a serious question without Tara actually cutting off his head… which she had actually done once to a Knight of Ren and would later do to four others. Not at the same time.

Okay, two at the same time. But she had warned them.

“You’re not… preventing it, right?” Cern carefully asked. He blocked her blade from his neck, “I mean just to delay it a few years. Come on, I know you. You want to lock him down as quickly as possible, but having a kid with him at nineteen isn’t what you want. You’re not waiting a few years before you let it happen?”

“No,” Tara answered honestly, “because I’m not fool enough to believe that Snoke will allow us to raise our own child. I won’t have to worry about our child for a very many years, and even then Snoke will probably have it primarily taught by Kylo over me. I’m a means to an end, and as long as I get my end of the rewards, then so be it. I’m not interested in diapers and screaming babies
anyway.”

“I think that’s a very realistic view. You know, Kylo probably doesn’t realize any of that.”

“I’m not sleeping with the son of Han Solo for his intelligence. Speaking of men being idiots, are you still pursuing Dyna?”

“Trying,” Cern spoke of the newest Knight of Ren. “She’s really interested in Kylo, though.”

“Well, that’s not happening. I promise you.”

“He ordered you to do what?” Tara screeched.

“Tara, let me explain,” Kylo barely got the words out before he got slapped. “This wasn’t my choice! It’s an order!”

“Oh, and what a hard order it is,” Tara spat. “Poor me, I have to have sex with my new female employee.”

“The Supreme Leader wants as best a chance as possible at producing an heir. It’s not just Dyna. Any female Knight of Ren from now on has… has to…”

“Has to fuck you?” Tara ended crudely. “Damn it, Kylo. We had a deal!”

“It’s not going to change,” he promised. “You will always be my second-in-command. And you said it yourself. This isn’t about love. Unless…”

“Get that hopeful look out of your eye. No, my feelings towards you haven’t changed.”

“And neither have mine,” Kylo said quietly.

Oh fuck, what had she gotten herself into?

“Look,” Tara took a deep breath. She had to get this back under control, “I don’t love you, but I… I do care about you. Dyna doesn’t know you. Doesn’t see the real you. I do. I know what you want and need, and I can give that to you. No one else can.”

“What I need is an heir,” Kylo said slowly. “So far, you haven’t given me one.”

“And what am I supposed to do about that? You know I’ve been trying everything to help us. We’ve both been examined several times. We should be able to have a child easily, but…”

“But it never happens.”

Tara sighed, “What if this is a test? What if the Force wants you to recognize who the true mother of your child should be?”

“And what if the Supreme Leader is testing my loyalty? I have to follow his orders.”

Tara knew when to admit defeat. She would never be able to overcome Kylo’s loyalty to Snoke.

“Fine,” she conceded. “What exactly were his orders?”

“I must couple with every female Knight of Ren at least once a month.”
“Fine, once a month. But I get once a week. If I have to compete with that airhead, then we’re stacking the deck in my favor. Do we have a deal?”

“Deal.”

They shook on it.

**FIRST ASSASSINATION**

Dyna Ren was insufferable. By God did she love hanging off Kylo’s arm and flirting with him endlessly. It was shameful to do in front of the Stormtroopers, and just flat out annoying.

“You know, I get her going for the guy in charge,,” Cern muttered to Tara one day. “But did she really have to reject me publicly and then flaunt her so-called relationship with him in front of me and the soldiers?”

“Ben Solo loves his ego stroked,” Tara said coldly. “But at the end of the day, he knows what he really wants is someone to keep his ass in line.”

“Just wait. Word is we’re getting another woman as the newest Knight. Once Kylo is enamored with his new toy, Dyna will be forgotten.”

“And you’ll be there to pick up the pieces.”

“What can I say? I’m a man who knows an opportunity when he sees it,” Cern chuckled.

But that opportunity wasn’t meant to be.

“You’re just jealous,” Dyna scoffed at Tara. “Because Kylo doesn’t care about you anymore.”

“Funny, that’s not what he had while having sex with me last night,” Tara shot back. “Face it, you’re the shiny new toy. An easy fuck. His attention won’t last, and then his focus returns to me. I always have been and always be his right hand.”

“You’re a dried-up womb,” Dyna shot. “A year you fucked him and not so much as a late period. Face it, Honey, you’re going to be a bitter old spinster, and I’ll bless him with a dozen sons. And when I do have our first child, I’ll have him be rid of you.”

Tara stared at her for a very long time.

Then she made her decision.

“Well, good luck with a dozen labours,” Tara said coolly. “You might want to ask Alecta Anthea about raising large families. I know she’s got a few horror stories. Now, if you’ll excuse me, I have something to attend to.”

Alecta Anthea was surprised to find Tara Ren at her door so late at night.

“You said you did things to climb the ranks,” Tara got to the point. “You ever get caught?”

Alecta crossed her arms and leaned against the doorframe, “My idiot Rebel sister still doesn’t know the miscarriage she had during the war was me managing to pull strings and get a aborifact patch on
“Well, I’m not looking for a miscarriage. I’m looking for a murder.”

“Now that,” Alecta grinned, “is something I can help you with.”

FIRST SANCTIFICATION

“It’s unfortunate what happened to Dyna,” Tara told Kylo as they sparred a few days after Dyna’s cremation. “Poisoning is such an awful way to go.”

“Indeed, it is,” Kylo spun around and swung. He hissed in pain as Tara’s saber bit into his arm.

“How many times do I have to tell you to stop with the fucking spinning? Going to lose an arm one day.”

“I thought that was a life goal,” Kylo grinned.

“Look, I know you get off on pain, but you get dismembered, and I’m not fucking you until you get a new limb.”

“Fair enough.”

Their sabers locked and they fought, pressing their weight forward, trying to make the other stumble back.

“So… anybody figure out who poisoned Dyna?” Tara asked casually.

“No. But it would have to be someone very cunning to pull it off.”

Tara almost thanked him for the flattery.

“Remind me, where were you when it happened?” Kylo asked.

Tara raised an eyebrow, “You suggesting something?”

“If you’re innocent, there’s nothing to worry about.”

“I was with Hux and Phasma all day. You can ask them.”

“I have. I just… it’s overall suspicious.”

“Break your heart, your girlfriend is dead?”

“Truthfully,” Kylo confessed, “no. She was an idiot and annoying. Not even that good in bed. She’s not… a great loss.”

Tara cocked her head to the side, “So, will there be an extensive investigation?”

“…No. I’ve ordered the investigation closed. No point in wasting resources on someone who is unlikely to be found. I just hope it doesn’t happen again.”

“And if it were to happen again?”
“Well… if they’re as annoying as Dyna, I don’t think I’d be bothered.”

Tara smiled.

_FIRST MISTAKE_

“I suppose I can move some things around,” Tara sighed, going through the lists of soldiers in the saber classes. “Are you sure that FN-2187 is ready for the Expert Class?”

“Positive,” Kylo answered. “I don’t care what his test result was. We should have been training him as a Blessed from the start.”

“His midichlorians aren’t high enough.”

“He is seventeen short.”

“But still seventeen.” Tara sighed, “Though, he is far more impressive then that Sasa.”

Kylo rolled his eyes, “Leave her out of this.”

“She’s pathetic. I don’t care if her breasts are big; she never should have been chosen as a Knight of Ren.”

“That was out of my control.”

“Yes, but you’re certainly not objecting to it now. Heard from Cern that things got pretty steamy after class yesterday.”

“I was helping her with her saber skills.”

“Oh, I’m sure you were.”

“Lightsaber,” Kylo snapped. “Just stances and footwork.”

“So you didn’t kiss her?”

Kylo was silent.

Tara shook her head, “You just give it up to anyone. You have fun screwing her on the training room floor?”

“Nothing more happened in the training room. We got… interrupted by Alyla,” Kylo admitted awkwardly.

“For once, I am thankful you have a weird ghost thing following you around. What’s even up with that?”

“We’re getting off topic.”

“Right, we’re discussing the problem of Sasa. You know it reflects poorly on us if I have her in the Expert Class and she’s performing at the bottom. That girl is not strong in the Force.”

“Not physically, but she’s powerfully mentally,” Kylo objected.
“Mmm, mentally… And how good does she taste between her thighs?”

“Tara!”

“Oh forgive me, did I cross a line?” Tara seethed. “Am I wrong about that so-called mentally powerful tart who can barely move a pebble with the Force?”

“She is strong mentally,” Kylo said sternly. “She… showed me last night.”

Her eyes burned into his skin, “Showed you… And what exactly is she showing you?”

“It’s called rebalancing, and it’s very helpful to me. I need that. I need someone to help keep-”

“Your head on your shoulders,” Tara finished coldly.

Kylo sighed, “Your position is not compromised.”

“It better not be. Or else I might have to intervene.”

“And if I don’t want you to intervene?”

Tara raised an eyebrow, “Then prove to me she isn’t a problem.”

Kylo met her gaze, “Fine. I’ll show you. But give her a chance.”

“She’s not the one who’s getting a chance here. Don’t screw this up, Kylo. We both know how dangerous I am.”

“Is that a threat?”

“Merely a statement of facts.” Tara crossed the room, heading towards the exit, “I have a report to get to Snoke tonight, so I won’t be able to join you as planned. I’ll come to you tomorrow night.”

“Actually, tomorrow I was going to have Sasa join me.”

Tara stopped in her tracks and turned to him with a scowl. She studied his nervous face. There was a worry in his eyes, but still they were strong and commanding.

Was he testing her?

“Fine,” she finally said. “But you’re on thin ice. Don’t make me worry about this.”

“I won’t.”

Tara was worried. How could she not be as she watched that little redhead with her hands and lips all over Kylo?

“You know we have actual things to do today!” she rudely interrupted.

The pair sprung apart in an instant, looking genuinely shocked at her presence. Tara scoffed at that. Two Force Sensitives and neither knew she was standing right there.

“You’re cold,” she said coldly before they could make excuses.
“I’m the Master of Ren,” Kylo offered as he smoothed out his clothing. The idiot didn’t realize he had Sasa’s lipstick on her face. “I can’t be late.”

“No, but she can.” Tara narrowed her eyes at Sasa, “You want to fuck Kylo, do it on your own time. I’ve got a class to run. Inside, now.”

“Yes, Tara,” Sasa bowed her head. She nodded to Kylo, “Master.”

She scurried quickly into the training room trying to smooth down her hair.

The second she was gone, Tara hit Kylo in the stomach.

“Ow! Tara! What are you doing?”

“Keeping your head on your shoulders,” Tara growled. “Someone around here needs to. Honestly, ever since she came around you’ve become pathetic.”

“Don’t speak to me that way,” Kylo snapped.

“And don’t forget our agreement,” Tara shot back. “I get it: she’s young, she’s lithe, she’s new. You want to stick your cock in her. I don’t give a shit. Just remember the promise you made. I am your number two. I am the mother of your child. I am loyal to you above all else. That girl is none of those things. If Snoke orders her to cut your throat, she’ll do it. I’ll only cut your throat if you betray me. Do not betray me, Kylo.”

“I never have. I never will. I keep my promises. I’m no Felicity Rhiaon.”

“Then don’t act like her. Don’t come in cocky and confident and lay your bets on some girl who makes your heart pound faster. You want to end up with a bolt in your brain too? Passion fades, Kylo. And when that’s gone, you see the people who are still standing at your side. And I have always been at your side.”

Kylo lifted an eyebrow, “Only because anyone who stood a chance mysteriously always dies. I am not responsible for that.”

“And yet you never condemn it,” Tara grinned. She grabbed his arm, nail piercing through his sleeve, “Come. We’ve wasted enough time. I’ll deal with you later.”

“Deal with me?”

Tara grinned and dug her nails in deeper, “It’s my night, isn’t it?”

Kylo chuckled suggestively. He couldn’t wait to feel those nails dragging down his bare back.

---

“We’re fighting in pairs today,” Tara announced, leading Kylo in by the arm.

When she released it, he casually slung it around her waist, hanging his wrist over her hip. He did not pull her in closer, but his claim of possession was clear. Tara delighted in seeing Sasa’s confused frown. The girl may have had Kylo tongue down her throat mere moments ago, but the pull of a single string and Kylo was her puppet instantly.

No amount of bodily curves or eye shadow could train Kylo out of that so quickly.
“The most important thing about fighting as a Knight of Ren is that we all must move as a perfect, cohesive unit,” Tara announced. “Master Kylo?”

The pair of them unclipped their lightsabers and ignited them. In the corner, Cern flicked on half a dozen blast remotes which surrounded the pair and started firing.

In perfect unison, Tara and Kylo blocked and slashed, defending both of them from the blasts. Not a word exchange between them, but they moved in perfect harmony. If Tara went left, Kylo went right. If Tara went up, Kylo went down. If their backs were to either other, Tara would take a step back and Kylo would move forward at the same time without a glance at her.

“They’re perfect together,” Sasa whispered.

“They do look amazing,” FN-2187 whispered back.

Sasa smiled nervously at him. She never liked when she saw Tara and Kylo together, but she was happy that someone in the class actually wanted to talk to her.

The last of the remotes beaten, Kylo and Tara ignited their lightsabers and clipped them back on their belts in perfect harmony.

“And that’s how you do it,” Kylo grinned arrogantly. “Now we’re not expecting you to be as good as us.”

“We’ve build that sort of harmony after eleven years of working together,” Tara continued. “But we’re going to train you to read the signs as such teamwork. Focus on instinct, focus on how your teammate moves, where they’re looking, what they’re focusing on. The most important thing to remember though, is when you’re in a team setting, you are only as strong as the weakest link.”

“Now pair up,” Kylo ordered. “Each team of two will face two of us. Tara will pair with both myself and Cern to even out the numbers.”

“Move quickly!” Tara barked.

Having paired a dozen times before, the class went for their usual partner. FN-2187 looked around awkwardly, trying to figure out who was left to be stuck with me.

“First day?”

He turned to see Sasa Ren smiling at me.

“Yeah,” FN-2187 admittedly a little shyly. “First time holding a saber too.”

“Tara point it at your neck?”

“Most terrifying moment of my life.”

“Good. Trust your gut. The woman will slit anyone’s throat in this room with no hesitation.”

“Except Master Kylo.”

Sasa looked over her shoulder to make sure Tara wasn’t watching. Tara was busy talking to Kylo and made no notice of the girl. Sasa turned back and gave FN-2187 a small smile.

“If you say so,” Sasa winked.
FN-2187 couldn’t help but grin at that.

“Need a partner?” Sasa offered.


“Kylo has very high hopes for you. Captain Phasma too. I want to see what we can make you into. Don’t worry,” Sasa touched his arm, “I have a very gentle touch.”

FN-2187’s eyes widened. Was Kylo Ren’s girlfriend flirting with him?

“Have you found a partner?” Kylo Ren was of course standing behind him at that moment.

“Oh, yes, Sir,” FN-2187 spun around abruptly. He felt like Kylo’s eyes were boring actual holes into his skull. “Sasa here offered-”

“Master Sasa,” Kylo corrected coldly. “And I’m interested in what exactly she was offering.”

“Oh stop it you,” Sasa chuckled like the situation was nothing at all. “You literally sleep with another woman on a regular basis, but I can’t touch another man’s arm? Oh, 2187, this man is terrible. Don’t you think?”

FN-2187 swallowed hard, “I would rather not answer that Master Sasa.”

“Hey, ignore him,” Sasa made a playful swat at Kylo. “Call me Sasa.”

Kylo bent his head down and whispered in her ear, “What do you think you’re doing?”

“Making you jealous,” Sasa answered simply.

“And why would you do such a thing?”

She arched a brow at him and answered in a low enough voice that FN-2187 couldn’t hear, “Because immediately after you fingered me to climax in a supply closet, you came into class all over Tara. Fair is fair, Kylo.”

Kylo cleared his throat and said lowly, “Well, yes, it is. But just remember what I taught you about your stance.”

Sasa gasped as his hands locked around her waist and slammed her hard back against his pelvis.

“Center your power in your core,” he growled in her ear. He rolled her hips back against him and she could feel him getting hard.

“Sasa!” Tara snapped. “You and your partner are up! Move!”

Kylo released her, and Sasa stumbled forward a little. Thankfully FN-2187 caught her before she fell.

“Thanks,” Sasa gasped, a little dazed from what just happened. Kylo was already sauntering away like it was nothing at all. “Sorry you had to see that.”

“Oh no, it’s okay,” FN-2187 said awkwardly. “The second-in-command of the entire First Order just ground against you because you touched my arm. No bad deal.”

Sasa couldn’t stop her blush.
“Had fun?” Tara said coldly as Kylo joined her side.

“Did it make you mad?” he asked.

“Kylo, I don’t give a shit who works you up,” Tara replied. “I’m the one who gets to work you down later.”

Cern moaned, “Why wasn’t my grandfather Darth Vader?”

He kept looking at her. Tara pretended she didn’t notice, but she noticed alright. As Tara was trying to fight the Stormtroopers with Kylo, his eyes kept going to Sasa talking in the corner with FN-2187.

It was disgusting. It was infuriating. It was insulting.

That schutta was undermining every single move of hers, and Kylo was just letting it happen. She was late for class. Hell, Sasa had to be in the class in the first place. She was making out with Kylo like some horny teenager, risking his perception of authority. Then she was intentionally baiting him with jealousy so he groped her in front of the entire class. And now she was stealing his attention in the middle of a training session.

Tara was right; Sasa was nothing more than a little snake come to usurp her. She should have seen it the moment Sasa sunk her claws in Kylo’s chosen prodigy.

No, Tara tried to keep Kylo’s attention as he glanced away once more, leaving her to fend for herself against the two Stormtroopers. Focus on me, Tara willed him. Focus on me.

But his eyes flicked to Sasa, who was grinning that she had caught his gaze. Kylo was so unfocused that he barely dodged a slash RT-2854 made at his knee. He stumbled backwards right into Tara, nearly knocking her into the blade of PQ-9443.

Tara slashed at PQ-9443’s chest, forcing him to jump back, but she was beyond pissed. In a final attempt to get him back on track, Tara pushed gently into his mind to send the image.

She stopped cold when she saw the thought in his mind.

Hands and lips, sighs and moans, thighs and breasts, forest green eyes and copper hair. He was thinking about his body entangled with Sasa’s as he made love to her passionately.

But that wasn’t the thought that made their stop.

It was the thought of Sasa with arms wrapped around him as he held a child with brown eyes and copper hair.

*Their* child.

Rage exploded inside of Sasa. All the anger and hatred she could muster was poured into the Dark Side, and she swung his saber hard.

The decapitated heads of RT-2854 and PQ-9443 hit the floor with a wet thud.

The entire room went silent. All eyes were on Tara Ren, panting hard, eyes flashing, and gripping her lightsaber tightly.

FN-2187 took a step in front of Sasa.

Then Kylo switched his lightsaber off.
Damn it, Tara!” he exclaimed. “How many times do I have to tell you to stop killing the recruits! This is the third time this month.”

Tara pivoted hard and pointed her saber at his throat. Instantly the Knights of Ren ignited their sabers ready to move and defend their leader. Kylo’s hand gripped the hilt of his saber, but he didn’t move just yet.

“How dare you?” Tara growled. She lowered her saber before anyone attacked, “You come in here late and focused and undermine everything I have fought so hard for. You make concessions for weaklings and need your ego stroked like a petulant child. You make inappropriate scenes with students and pit me against other women like we’re nothing but your personal harem. I am a Knight of Ren! I have fought for this title and I have earned it! I was chosen by Cade Ren himself, and you were forced in like a mother insisting you have to take your little brother with you when you go out with your friends. You flaunt your powerful bloodline, but you don’t do a damn thing with it. You want to be known as the grandson of Darth Vader. Then be the grandson of Darth Vader. You know what he did when a woman compromised his power? He strangled the bitch.”

Kylo lit his saber and had it at her throat in an instant, but her blade locked with it and pointed at his throat.

“Do not insult Padmé Amidala,” Kylo seethed.

“I will if I have to get my point across,” Tara growled. She pointed at Sasa, “That girl is dragging you down. Dragging all of us down. We put her out in combat with the rest of us and she will get us all killed, I guarantee it.”

“That’s not true.”

“Oh, but it is.” Tara turned to face Sasa, “You want to know why she’s so weak with her physical attacks? You want to know the dark truth? Because she draws on the Light Side, like a god damn Jedi.”

The Stormtroopers muttered among themselves, but Sasa was unmoved.

“And that is why the Supreme Leader desires me for Kylo’s mate over you,” Sasa smiled at Tara. “Yes, I draw on the Light Side, and yes, I draw on the Dark. Do you know why? Because I am a Knight of Ren, not a Sith. Not a Jedi. A Knight of Ren. Both are beneficial tools, so is are the mental powers where I am strong and you are weak.”

“You think I’m weak?” Tara pointed her saber at Sasa.

FN-2187 gripped his lightsaber hilt.

Kylo Ren noticed.

“Mentally,” Sasa replied. “Sure, you are doubtless strong physically, but once you are tired out there’s nothing left behind that flash and bolster.”

“You talk a lot, little girl,” Tara said, “but why don’t you prove yourself? Show me that you can be a valuable member of this team. Show me why the Supreme Leader picked you.”

“Sasa, you don’t have to do this,” Kylo said.

She held up a hand, “It’s okay. I’ll do it, but on one condition.”
“What’s that?”

“Winner gets Kylo tonight.”

Cern chuckled a little too loudly.

“Shut up,” Kylo told him.

Tara smiled, “Deal. Cern, you’re with me. Kylo with Sasa. Let’s see how good a team you two truly are.”

It wasn’t a fair fight. All FN-2187 could do was cringe as he watched Tara and Cern drive Sasa back hard. Kylo tried to help her out, but he had to focus on the attacks towards him as well as her, pulling double duty. For the two supposedly mentally strong Sensitives, they weren’t able to read each other well. They constantly bumped and crashed into each other, and once Sasa even accidently tripped Kylo sending him to the ground.

Sasa fought desperately trying to draw on the strength inside, as Tara was something possessed. Blow after blow crashed down hard on her lightsaber. If they weren’t made of light, the blade surely would have been broken in half.

This had been her gamble, her one shot at proving to everyone in the room that she was worthy of the title of Knight of Ren. Yet here she was failing and dragging Kylo down with her.

Sasa tried to jerk out of the way, but as she turned, Tara’s blade caught her ankle. She screamed and fell to the floor.

“Sasa!” Kylo yelled. Without thinking, he Force Pushed Tara and Cern away from her, sending them stumbling back. He dropped to his knees and check over her wound and comfort her, “Are you alright?”

“Pathetic,” Tara spat. “Look at you. Look at both of you.”

“I’m fine,” Sasa gently pushed Kylo away. “I’ll be fine.”

“I told you she wasn’t worthy,” Tara said. “I told you she’d drag us down.”

“Tara,” Kylo rose to his feet, “back down. Now. That’s an order.”

“But don’t you see, Kylo?” Tara continued. “She’s worthless. There’s not a single, notable thing about her that proves to anyone that she deserves to be a Knight of-”

That was when the lightning hit her. A blast of electric blue shot through her system and knocked her to the floor screaming. It was just a single shock, not a very powerful one at that, but enough to make everyone stare at the wielder in stunned silence.

Sasa panted, lowering her hand, “Sorry, Tara. Did the Supreme Leader not teach you that one?”

Tara lunged forward, ready to rip out her throat. Sasa pushed herself to her feet to do the same.

They instantly froze in spot.

Kylo held his arms out at the women, straining to keep them in place, “Everyone out! Now!”

No one needed to be told twice. When they were all gone, Kylo dropped his arms and the women hit the floor hard.
“Now *that* was pathetic,” Kylo spat. “What the hell were you two thinking?”

Sasa glared at Tara, “She wanted to know why the Supreme Leader chose me. I’m the only Blessed who has managed to conjure Force Lightning. You think me so inclined to the Light Side? You don’t know me. You don’t know how cold my soul can be. Only those completely who can completely devoid themselves of compassion can summon it. Can you, Tara?”

Tara said nothing.

“You don’t want to see me give into Darkness,” Sasa shook her head. “You don’t want to see the horrors inside of me.”

Kylo glanced down uncertainly at Tara. Neither knew quite what to say to that.

“And you?” Kylo’s throat was surprisingly dry. “What were you thinking, Tara?”

Tara pushed herself to her feet, “I was keeping your ass in line. The same thing I’ve done for eleven years. But it seems like that doesn’t matter to you, you ungrateful koybotto. You’re just interested in the newest, pretty thing. So fine. Have her in your bed tonight, because after today I sure as hell am not getting in it anytime soon.”

Kylo glanced nervously down at Sasa, “Well… uh, I guess, are you free tonight?”

With the looks on the women’s faces at him actually instantly turning around and saying that, Kylo was honestly surprised neither tried to claw his eyes out.

Sasa then glanced over at Tara and smiled, “Why, yes, Kylo. I am absolutely free tonight.”

Tara glared at her, “Well, enjoy yourself then, Sasa… while you can.”

Then she turned on her heel and stormed out of the room, ready to find Alecta Anthea and plot another murder.

“I should probably stick pretty close to you for the next while,” Sasa stared after Tara.

“Don’t eat anything without someone taste testing it first,” Kylo suggested. “See if you can get Hux to be your Guinea pig.”

“Well, I should got get my ankle checked out,” Sasa unsteadily get to her feet. Kylo helped her up.

“Are lightsaber wounds serious?”

He glanced at Sasa’s ankle, “Nah, you should be good by tomorrow. Just get a med droid to wrap it up and you’ll be fine. Do you want me to send Max to your room?”

Sasa frowned, “Max?”

“My medic droid. MX-1418. I call him Max.”

“Oh, sure.”

Kylo hesitated, “Just as a warning, Max is a bit of a… character. He uh… well I think you’ll like him. Just don’t tell anyone what he calls me.”

Sasa stared at him for a moment, but then thought it might be better to find out the answers to his cryptic questions firsthand.
“I’ll see you tonight,” Sasa kissed him on the cheek. “Usual time?”

“Sure.”

“Good. I’ll put on something… nice.”

Kylo bit his lip. He was always in for a lot of fun whenever Sasa decided to wear something nice.

But still, something about the lightning Sasa had used unsettled. He remembered Uncle Luke telling him how excruciatingly painful it felt. How could Sasa manage to conjure something so Dark… And what else was she capable of?

“Sasa,” he called as she was about to exit the training room.

She stopped and looked at him.

“The lightning,” Kylo asked, “…would you use it on me?”

Sasa just shrugged, “Don’t give me a reason to.”

And then she was gone.

Honestly, Kylo didn’t even know what to say.

Cern Ren, who had been merely hanging out on the other side of the doorway and spying, decided to come back into the training room.

“What?” Kylo barked.

“I just wanted to say that I take it back,” Cern leaned against the door. “I do not want to be the grandson of Darth Vader.”

Kylo sighed.

INTERCEPTED FIRST ORDER CASE FILE

MOST WANTED

NAME: Poe Dameron

SPECIES: Human

GENDER: Male

HOMEWORLD: Yavin 4

BACKGROUND: The New Republic Defense Fleet regarded Rapier Squadron Commander Poe Dameron as one of its ace pilots, yet also considered him a bit of a “loose cannon” due to his outspoken political beliefs.

Disappointed by the New Republic’s lack of urgency in confronting the First Order, Dameron left the NRDF to join the Resistance. He now commands an elite starfighter unit under the call sign “Black Leader,” and also engages in solo espionage missions that Resistance leaders deem highest priority.
“And so it is with great pleasure that we pass on the title of Head of Air Force to one of the greatest pilots of this generation, and the son of the woman who began this all, Commander Poe Dameron,” Leia announced to the assembly.

As Diego Nalto pinned the crest onto Poe’s uniform, everyone clapped, Kaydel and Aletha the hardest in the front row while Kes Dameron tried to control the wildly bleeping and rolling BB-8 losing his mind with pride not far off.

“Congratulations,” Diego told Poe in a low voice. “You truly deserve this. Your mother would be so proud.”

“Thank you, Sir,” Poe replied, unable to stop smiling.

Diego shook his head, “No more, Sir with me. We’re equals now… Well, actually, no we’re not. Forget that. I’m still Sir.”

“Yes, Sir,” Poe laughed as Diego stepped back.

He lifted his hand to give the former Head of Air Force one last salute. All around, every pilot lifted their hand to do the same.

Diego hesitated and glanced to Aletha in the crowd. She knew that worry on his face, how he so desperately wanted to his arm to stop shaking for just a moment. Aletha smiled at his gently and gave an encouraging nod. They had been through this a dozen time that day, Diego fighting his fight of this moment. It was okay to draw attention to the injury. There was no need to be ashamed.

Lifting his trembling hand, Diego made a clumsy and slow salute. The pilots finished theirs and the assembly clapped again. Diego and Poe were then directed off the stage to where their Anthea girls were waiting.

“You did great,” Aletha held his trembling arm as Leia began to speak.

“You both did,” Kaydel lifted up on her toes to kiss Poe. “I’m so proud of you.”

“I think we should both be pretty proud,” Poe hooked an arm around Kaydel’s waist. “Nalto and I certainly have the prettiest dates.”

“I’ll proudly take that,” Diego chuckled. “Kaydel, you look almost as breathtaking as your aunt.”

“Almost?” Kaydel teased.

“Well, it’s a good effort, but look at my Darling,” Diego gestured to Aletha. “Not even the stars could compare to her beauty.”
Kaydel leaned in to her aunt, “How can it be that your boyfriend goes around saying things like that to you, and you still haven’t let him get laid?”

Aletha blushed and swatting the laughing Kaydel away.

“Although, I do say Lieutenant Connix,” Diego grinned, “you do look stunning tonight.”


“So,” Kaydel asked, “are we just never going to discuss how my extremely similar aunt and I basically ended up with the exact same charming, impulsive, passionate, hot-headed Yavinese pilot?”

“That’s the plan,” Diego answered

“Sounds good to me,” Poe shrugged.

Kaydel sighed.

“Hey,” someone next to them said, “do you mind keeping it down?”

“Sorry,” Aletha apologized and they turned their attention back to Leia’s speech.

Leia was explaining how they were going to restructure the Flight department under Poe’s leadership. All squadrons would be dissolved in favor of a more unified approach. Poe would be the only one who held a permanent title of Black Leader, named in honour of his ship, *Black One*. There would be two main flight squadrons on the D’Qar base: Blue – the primary line of defense, and Red – focusing on support. Pilots would be assigned a callsign based on the mission. So during one flight they might be Blue Three, but another they could be Red Seven.

The title of Rogue Squadron was also going into semi-retirement. Since most of Rogue Squadron were getting to be too old or too busy to fly for the Resistance, Leia and Diego decided to put the name on hiatus until another generation wanted to pick up the gauntlet.

“We will also permanently retire the callsign, Rogue One,” Leia announced. “The title of Rogue One has been held by two of our boldest, bravest, and most beloved Rebellion veterans. We honour our heroes, Commander Diego Nalto, and Lieutenant General Fel-”

The microphone chose that moment to let out a loud squeal of feedback.

“-aon Skywalker,” Leia finished. She considered repeating Felicity’s name, but decided to just continue on with the speech, “They dedicated their lives to fighting for justice and freedom. Tragically, one paid the ultimate price for this fight, and the other has fought until he is incapable to continue serving in a physical capacity. For these sacrifices, we forever give the name of Rogue One to these true heroes.”

Catching sight of an old friend in the crowd, Aletha leaned over to her niece.

“Hey, Kaydel,” Aletha whispered. “I hear tonight’s a big night.”

“Yes, Aunt Ally,” Kaydel blushed. “I know you and Diego plan to finally-”

“No that!” Aletha looked to make sure Diego wasn’t listening. He had a very suspicious smile for someone who apparently didn’t hear. “I meant for you. Kes Dameron’s here.”

“Yeah, he is,” Kaydel glanced at Poe. He had a similar grin to Diego’s. “Poe’s introducing us tonight. I’m kind of nervous. Do you have any advance?”
“Well, I’ve never actually met a boyfriend’s father before; they’ve all been dead. But I have met Kes, and he’s a good man. Think of him as a slightly less charming, and significantly more serious Poe. Just don’t take him too seriously. Kes does like to have his fun.”

“Speaking of people you should meet,” Diego nudged Aletha and pointed to someone in the crowd. “There’s someone who you might find fun to meet.”

“Doctor Aletha Kymeri, meet Lando Calrissian,” Diego introduced at the reception.

“This is Diego’s girlfriend and our newest doctor on staff,” Leia – who had been speaking with Lando – explained as Lando and Aletha shook hands. “Aletha is a Rebel veteran.”

“It’s an honour to meet you,” Lando kissed her hand. “Now, Diego, I didn’t figure you a man with such eloquent tastes.”

“Hey, back down, she’s mine,” Diego warned.

“Stop it,” Aletha swatted Diego. “The honour is all mine, General Calrissian.”

“Don’t you worry,” Lando said. “I lost my heart to another many years ago. You know, Leia, if I had know you had such beautiful women walking around this base, I would come by for more than just the parties.”

“Lando’s involvement with the Resistance is generally financial support,” Leia explained.

“Hey, running Cloud City isn’t a part-time job.”

“You know, General Calrissian, I’ve actually met you before,” Aletha said. “During the war, I fixed you up… You hit on me while I was doing so.”

“Wait, what?” Diego scowled.

“Then how is it that I did not take a creature as lovely as you to dinner with me?” Lando asked.

“Because you hit on me while my now late husband was literally standing in the same room,” Aletha grinned.

Lando’s smile froze, “Yeah, that would do it. My apologies.”

“It’s ok,” Aletha waved off. “It’s a fun story for me now. So you come to the Resistance for the parties.”

“Yes. Unfortunately, there are far too few of them. But there is always one thing I can guarantee at them. I always see the Resistance officer who parties the best.” Lando waved over someone, “Come on over.”

To Aletha’s surprise, Lando was talking about Amilyn Holdo.

“Amilyn, My Dear,” Lando hugged her and gave her a kiss on the cheek. “How are you? How’s the Ninka?”

“Ship’s doing great,” Holdo replied. “Your people worked wonders on her.”
“Repairs and security are our foremost promise for ships on Cloud City,” Lando said.


“Okay, sometimes things slip through the crack,” Lando dismissed. “Han still not found it?”

“I think Chewie’s given up at this point,” Leia shrugged. “But it’ll be back. Like a horrible rash you can’t get rid of.”

“Isn’t that the truth,” Lando chuckled. “So, Amilyn. How have you been?”

“Great ever since I get off D’Qar,” Holdo answered. “I had to hold down the fort for a few months, and there was this pilot that drove me up the wall.”

“Amilyn, please don’t insult Poe Dameron at his own promotion ceremony,” Leia requested politely.

“Who’s insulting my son?”

“Kes!” Diego’s face lit up. He hugged the man who had joined their group, “It’s good to see you.”

“Good to see you,” Kes smiled. “Sorry about your arm.”

“Eh, it’s my own fault,” Diego dismissed. “You remember my girlfriend, Aletha?”

“How could I forget?” Kes hugged Aletha. He then punched Diego in the arm, “Told you you were in trouble.”

“Oh, and it’s a trouble I hope never to be rid of,” Diego chuckled.

“Speaking of trouble,” Kes said, “anyone seen my son? I’m supposed to be meeting his girlfriend tonight.”

“Poe’s just right over there,” Leia pointed towards Poe and Kaydel talking with Snap Wexley. “I’m surprised he’s introducing you to Kaydel tonight. That’s a big step.”

“I’m still not buying that relationship,” Holdo shook her head. “I think he might be carrying it on just to spite me.”

Kes smiled too sweetly at her, “You must be Amilyn Holdo.”

“Whatsoever Poe told you about her is a lie,” Leia interrupted.

“Well… mostly,” Diego muttered.

Holdo glared at him.

“So, can anyone tell me about this Kaydel girl?” Kes asked. “I want to scope her out before I meet her.”

“Well, she’s Aletha’s niece,” Diego nodded to his girlfriend. “I’ve worked with her a lot. Very lovely girl.”

“Kind but spirited,” Leia smiled. “She adores Poe, but also keeps him in line.”

“Good,” Kes said. “That sounds good. I was hoping to find out a little about her from someone other than Poe. Take away the rose-tinted glass and get some actual information about her.”
“Coddle him much, Kes?” Lando chuckled.

“He’s my only child,” Kes replied. “A parent can be very wary when they hear about their son getting involved with some strange girl you have no idea about.”

“Oh, I know all about that,” Leia took a very large drink from her champagne.

Lando leaned over to Aletha, “You should hear some things that come out of the First Order about hers.”

Leia glared at him, “For the last time, Lando, my son does not have a harem.”

Lando said nothing to that.

“So… Kaydel,” Kes brought the conversation back. “Is she good for Poe?”

“Kes, I’ve literally never seen your son happier,” Diego said.

“That’s good,” Kes said. “I still don’t know though…”

“Hey, if you want more intel, I’ll gladly go collect some,” Lando offered. “Go turn on the Calrissian charm. See if she stays true.”

Kes raised an eyebrow, “Is it wrong I really want to see that.”

“Ladies and Gentlemen!” Lando announced, grabbing another glass of champagne from a passing waiter. “I’m going in. Amilyn? Shall we?”

“Why not?” Holdo sighed. She didn’t like Poe Dameron and Kaydel Ko Connix but damn it did she love to party with Lando.

Leia frowned as the pair made towards Poe and Kaydel, “I’m going to go… stop him.”

“That sounds good,” Aletha said.

Quickly Leia departed.

“Well,” Kes said, “I think I’m going to talk to some other friends, and then I’m going to dive in. Wish me luck.”

“Good luck, Kes,” Diego laughed.

“Go easy on her,” Aletha called after his retreating form. She turned back to Diego, “Well, look at us all alone.”

“Huh,” he placed his hands on her hips. “It looks like we are. I wonder what we could get up to tonight?”

“Well, I have a few ideas.”

“Are you sure you want to do this tonight, Aletha?”

“I’m ready. I want to make love to you, Diego Nalto because… I love you.”

Diego smiled, “I love you too. Thank you. Thank you for being there for me tonight.”

She lifted up and kissed his lips.
“Anytime,” she whispered.

Diego frowned a little.

Huh. Did she just say…

Oh, it was probably nothing.

“And they’ve been fighting ever since,” Leia finished the story of Poe and Holdo’s first meeting for Lando.

Lando chuckled, “That’s certainly a bold move to barge into someone’s room like that.”

“At least we weren’t doing worse,” Kaydel couldn’t believe they were actually discussing this.

“But since then, Vice Admiral Holdo seems to have a vendetta against our relationship,” Poe narrowed his eyes.

“Why?” Lando frowned. “They’re in different departments, and it’s by no means the first case we’ve had. Didn’t a pilot just marry someone from maintenance last month? I remember sending a gift.”

“That reminds me, they wanted me to tell you that thank you notes are going to be a little bit delayed,” Leia said. “Apparently we’ve been running so many missions with his X-Wing squad that they haven’t had the time to get together and write them.”

“War waits for no one, not even thank you notes,” Lando chuckled, sipping at some champagne.

“So, Amilyn, what is so wrong about these two kids being together? They seem to be a pretty good fit.”

“Thank you, General Calrissian,” Poe nodded, wrapping an arm around Kaydel’s waist. He wondered how he and Kaydel even ended up having a conversation with Holdo in the first place.

“And I second that query. Why are you so against us?”

Holdo sighed, “You want the truth?”

“If you can manage it.”

“Poe,” Leia warned.

“Sorry, General.”

“Fine.” Holdo took a deep breath, “Besides the fact the two of you make it your mission to antagonise me at every turn, I’m mostly against it because I very much dislike large age differences. It feels like someone is taking advantage of the other. Maybe an older man poaching a naïve young girl. Maybe some pretty young thing going after a man’s money. But anything past three years difference, I don’t approve.”

Poe frowned, “You don’t like us because I’m seven years older than her?”

“Don’t you think you should be dating girls your own age? Not a twenty-two-year-old?”

“I got involved with Han when I was twenty-two,” Leia cut in. “And Han’s ten years older than me. True, we didn’t really get off the ground until a year later. Thank you very much for that, Lando.”
“Twenty-eight years later, and I’m still apologizing for carbonite. Unbelievable.”

“But the point still stands,” Leia finished.

Holdo smiled at her friend, “Well, in all fairness, Leia, your relationship with your husband is… special. Not really one to aspire to.”

“Well, with all the relationships I’ve seen that do fit the idea of what people aspire to, between my brother, my real parents, my birth parents, and countless friends – two of which are even here tonight – either one or both parents end up getting murdered, so I think Han and I are doing something right.”

“Hey, don’t jinx it,” Lando joked, trying to push the image of Alyla’s murder out of his mind. “You know Han going to end up getting himself killed at some point.”

“Undoubtedly, but we’ve certainly made it far longer than most relationships I know,” Leia said. “Small doses do wonders for love. Once you start feeling like you’re going to kill the other person, take a break.”

“Well, if that’s what you and Han do, I’m amazed you spend more than a day together,” Lando joked. “How long was the last run?”

“Four months. Actually we should actually be coming up on another run pretty soon,” Leia sipped at a glass of wine sounding as casual as if discussing something as simple as trade taxation rates. “Age differences do work.”

“Yes, but there’s many cases where they don’t,” Holdo insisted. “Take General Calrissian for example. He had a young girl on his arm for years, and that ended in disaster. How much younger was Alyla again?”

The group went dead silent.

Holdo scowled, “Was that not her name? Alyla Kene?”

Lando cleared his throat, “Uh, yeah that was her name. She was fourteen years younger than me.”

“See,” Holdo said. “The girl spends years leading Calrissian on – funny how she never seemed interested in marriage or solid commitment – but gladly accepted whatever expensive gifts you lavished on her. Exchanged, what? A little sex in return. Then she just disappeared, leaving you high and dry and broken hearted.”

Everyone just stared at her in open mouthed shock.

“What?” Holdo frowned. “Wasn’t that what happened?”

“Something like that,” Lando looked deeply wounded, but managed to hold himself together. He downed the last of his drink and glanced around the room. “I’m going to go talk to Nubb. It’s been ages since I’ve seen him. Hey, Nien! Long time, Buddy!”

“Wow,” was all Poe could say as Lando went off to see his friend.

“Yeah,” Kaydel shook her head in disbelief.

Leia had a hand on her face, “Amilyn…”

“What?” Holdo exclaimed. “Why are you all looking at me like that? Wasn’t Alyla Kene just after
his money and then ran off with another man without a word?"

“Alyla Kene was murdered,” Leia said. “By my son… while she and Lando were in the process of adopting a child. And she never married Lando because she was a former slave and didn’t want another legal document out there stating she was legally tied to another person.”

“Oh my goodness,” Holdo gasped. “I had no idea. I just heard she was gone and that no one wanted to discuss the details, so I assumed… I have to go apologize to him.”

Leia caught her arm, “Maybe wait until tomorrow. I think you’ve done enough for tonight.”

“Leia, I am truly sorry. I didn’t mean-”

“I know you didn’t, but for the love of the Force, why am I having another conversation with you like this? First this whole Poe and Kaydel thing, then insulting my own marriage, and now insulting Alyla? …I think we need to go have a discussion. In my office.”

“Of course,” Holdo nodded. She looked to Poe and Kaydel, “Good night, Lieutenant Connix. Commander Dameron, congratulations. I hope you two have a pleasant enough evening.”

Poe smirked, “Well, I’m going to introduce Kaydel to my father, because things are truly that serious with us, and then we’re going to go back to my new quarters and make love over and over, all night long. I love the way girls younger than me react in bed. It should be a pretty good night.”

He enjoyed the look of shock on Holdo’s face and the glower on Leia’s far too much.

“Good night, Ladies,” Poe nodded.

“Night, Dameron. Try to have some dignity,” Leia warned. “It reflects badly on myself and Nalto if our new Head of Air Force doesn’t know when to shut up.”

“Duly noted, General,” he grinned.

Leia looked to Kaydel, “Lieutenant Connix, I trust you’ll deal with Commander Dameron appropriately?”

“Of course, General,” Kaydel smiled and bowed her head.

When Leia and Holdo departed, Kaydel smacked Poe upside the head.

“Ow!”

“Really, Poe?” Kaydel scolded. “You couldn’t have handled that with a little more decorum?”

“You know, you hit a lot like the General,” Poe rubbed his head.

“Poe!”

“Sorry,” he mumbled. “I’m sorry, Babe, but she riles me up.”

“Yeah, I got that when we broke her desk chair,” Kaydel rolled her eyes. “I’m starting to think the only person who can actually keep you in line is Jessika.”

“In my defense, that girl scares me a little.”

“Good. I have a secret weapon. Honestly, Poe, that was so embarrassing.”
“Hey, I didn’t call a murdered woman a gold digger.”

“That was awful,” Kaydel shuddered. “I don’t think you could possibly top that with something even more embarrassing and awful.”

“Then on that note, I think it’s time you meet my father,” Poe chuckled. “Although, I have to warn you, if you don’t get his stamp of approval, I may break up with you.”

“Alright, but I’m warning you, if he’s even more charming and handsome than his son, I may break up with you. Come on, Peacock. Think you could call me Mommy?”

“After the things I’ve done to you, I don’t think it’d be legal.”

Kaydel laughed, and Poe led her in search of his father.

Paige Tico bit her lip as she watched Evan Tharel flirting with some redhead.

“I see you staring,” Rose said from her side.

“Staring?” Paige asked innocently. “Staring at what?”

“Evan Tharel. You haven’t moved your eyes from him all night. Look if you like him, just go talk to him.”

“Oh, I couldn’t.”

“Yes, you can. And you will. Here, just take a deep breath, drink something, calm your nerves, and go get him.”

Paige took a deep breath, “Ok. Okay. I’ll do it. But… Oh where did I put my glass of water?”

“Take a sip of my drink,” Rose passed her the glass.

Paige took a drink and instantly spat it out.

“Rose!” Paige coughed, the surprise of unwelcome alcohol hitting her system. “You’re way too young to be drinking this!”

Rose grinned, “Who’s going to stop me? You?”

Paige sighed, “Give me that.”

She downed the rest quickly, and Rose laughed.

“Alright,” Paige crackled her knuckles and rolled her shoulders, stretching out like she was about to run a marathon. “Let’s to this.”

Rose held up her half moon pendant, “May luck be on your side.”

Paige raised her necklace in a cheers gesture, “May it help me.”

And she marched towards Evan Tharel.

Rose laughed and grabbed another glass of champagne from a passing waiter.
“Oh, I so have to tell Kira about this,” Rose grinning, told the droid who happened to be passing her at that moment.

C-3PO had no idea who Kira was.

They found Kes Dameron in the corner of the room, having a full-on conversation with BB-8.

“Yeah, the crop is good this year, but Drexin is still trying to con me out of a good price.”

*Bop quip boo.*

“Hey, hey, watch the language. Oh, and did you search this databases for me? I’m still trying to battle the jerk bugs in the west orchard. I can’t find something that will get rid of them without destroying the fruit of the trees.”

*Bip bee beep.*

“Good idea. I’ll try that. So, how’s Poe doing? Behaving himself?”

*Bwah beep boop boo!*

“He used you as a lookout to do what?”

*Bee bow beep bop.*

“You little traitor,” Poe exclaimed.

*Beep bip!*

BB-8 spun around in shock to see his Master. He rolled forward to Poe and began to speak quickly.

*Bip boop bop beep.*

“No, no, no,” Poe shook his head. “Don’t pretend you weren’t ratting me out to my father. I heard you.”

*Bwah bip.*

“Little too late for sorry, the damage has been done,” Poe shook his head. “Dad, I can explain-”

“Stop!” Kes held up his hand. “I don’t actually want an explanation.”

Poe frowned, “Really?”

Kes just looked at his son, “Do you want me to discuss my sex life?”

“Hell no,” Poe knew his father had been celibate since his mother’s death.

“Likewise, I, your father, do not want to hear the details of yours.”

“That sounds logical enough,” Kaydel admitted.

“Besides,” Kes gave his son a teasing grin, “if what BB-8 has been telling me about you two is correct, then going over that topic will take all night.”
“Dad!” Poe’s jaw dropped.

“We don’t just…” Kaydel stammered, blushing a little that the very first thing her boyfriend’s father ever discussed with her was how frequently she was banging his son. “Oh God. This is horrifying.”

“Okay, knock it off, Dad,” Poe glared at Kes. “I’m sorry, Babe. Dad and I are very casual and candid, and he loves teasing me. It just means he likes the person he’s making fun of.”

“Does that mean you like me?” Kaydel asked nervously.

“Why don’t you find out?” Kes smiled warmly. “Now, Poe, stop being rude and properly introduce your girlfriend to me.”

“Yes, Dad,” Poe shook his head. “Kay, this is my father, Kes Dameron. Dad, this is Kaydel Ko Connix.”

“It’s a pleasure to meet you, Sir,” Kaydel shook his hand.

“Pleasure’s all mine, Dear,” Kes replied. “My boy been treating you well?”

She couldn’t help the mischievous grin that split her face as she glanced at Poe.

“Only when I want him to,” she answered coyly.

Poe’s eyebrows shot higher than she thought they could go. But thankfully, Kes just laughed at the innuendo.

“You’ve got some snap to you, don’t you?” Kes chuckled. “Poe always has liked a girl with a sharp wit. Points there to you.”

“Are you assigning points to see if I add up to be eligible for the Kes Dameron seal of approval?”

“Don’t knock the Kes Dameron seal of approval. Gets you discounts at select restaurants.”

BB-8 looked up at Poe.

_Bee beep bop?_

“No, Buddy, they’re just joking,” Poe explained. “There’s no discount.”

“Well, I hope I can rack up the points high,” Kaydel casually clung onto Poe’s strong arm. His palm automatically rested on her hip, “I rather enjoy my time with your son, and I know how much your opinion means to him. I would hate for this to come to an end because of this.”

“You are off to a good start,” Kes said, briefly giving his son a gentle punch in the arm, which Poe knew was for giving Kaydel the impression he would dump her if Kes didn’t approve. “A good, firm handshake like yours is triple point digits alone.”

“Her handshaking skills were the thing that made me ask her out,” Poe grinned.

“Oh? Not any of the ten thousand other assets of hers you go on and on about?” Kes smiled at Kaydel, “I can’t get this boy to shut up about you. Every call, it’s all _Kaydel said this_ and _Kaydel did that_, and always with the biggest grin on his face. The boy is mad about you.”

Kaydel squeezed Poe’s arm and leaned against him, “I’m mad about him too, Sir.”
“Oh, stop calling me Sir. You can call me Kes. Sir makes me feel old.”

“Really?” Poe lifted his eyebrow. “Not that you have a son who is pushing thirty?”

“If you want to act old, Poe, I am absolutely willing to start nagging you for grandchildren.”

Poe’s eyes shot wide. His face reddened as he glanced nervously at Kaydel and sputtered out a nonsensical reply.

But Kaydel wasn’t perturbed by it at all.

“I guess I have a lot to live up to if he’s been talking me up,” Kaydel said.

“Well, you’re certainly as pretty as he claims,” Kes winced.

“Hey, back off, Dad. She’s mine.”

“Don’t worry, Poe, she’s not my type,” Kes laughed. “His mother is really the opposite of you. Tall, dark, curvy. No offense.”

“None taken. Though I would like to reach higher shelves.”

“But she’s got the same fire as Mom,” Poe said proudly.

“Good, you need someone to keep you in line,” Kes joked.

Bop boo bwah bee!

“Don’t worry, Bud, I know you do your best,” Kes patted BB-8 on the head. “What about you? What do you think about this Kaydel Ko Connix?”

BB-8 immediately launched into a long series of beeps, whistles, and excited body wiggles. He was only to proud to proclaim how much he liked her and how perfect she was for Poe, and how it was all thanks to him.

“I do owe you one, Buddy,” Poe chuckled when BB-8 finished. “You bashing me in the leg was one of the best things to ever happen to me.”

Boop boop bee?

“No, that doesn’t mean you can do it more often,” Poe replied.

Beep bop boo.

BB-8 replied sadly, his head sinking forward.

“Oh, it’s alright,” Kaydel chuckled. “I’m sure he’ll give you more than enough cause sooner or later.”

“Hey,” Poe frowned. “Don’t you two team up on me.”

“Too late,” Kaydel grinned, “I may know everything about you, but I trust BB-8 more.”

“Wow, you two move fast,” Kes shook his head. “What? Five months in and you already think you know everything about him?”

“Well, not everything, but the juicy stuff at least.”
“I admire your optimism, Kaydel,” Kes said.

“No, it’s true,” Poe input. “I have no secrets from Kaydel. Any embarrassing fact or story you can throw at her, I’ve already told.”

“So you took the fun from my meet the son’s girlfriend night, did you?”

“Exactly why I did it.”

“No,” Kes shook his head, “I don’t believe it. You didn’t tell her everything.”

Kaydel arched a single, perfectly groomed eyebrow, “Try me.”

Kes grinned at Poe, “Challenge accepted.”

Poe frowned, “Have a bad feeling about this.”

“Who was the first girl to break Poe’s heart?” Kes quizzed.

“Myra Alondra,” Kaydel shot back instantly.

“Why did she break his heart?”

“She had a crush on you and dated Poe to get closer to you.”

“First time Poe went to the Med Office at the Academy, and why?”

“Two weeks into his first year. Seniors hazing freshmen. Poe ended up glued to his steering mechanism.”

“What did he have an irrational fear of until he was fourteen?”

“Staplers.”

“What happens to Poe whenever it starts to rain?”

“He starts smelling burning toast and no one – several doctors included – can figure out why, but at this point you’re too afraid to ask.”

“How did he find out Jessika Pava was a lesbian?”

“He asked her out while she was on a date with a woman.”

“What was his first word?”

“A rather vulgar Yavinese swear he overheard you yell when you got your arm caught in a sliding door.”

“What present did I promise for his 18th birthday?”

“His first tattoo. The symbol of his mother’s squadron on his shoulder.”

“What was his actual first tattoo?”

“His squad got him drunk on his birthday and he got a tramp stamp of BB-8. Still has it, actually. Looks nice.”
Beep bop bee.

BB-8 sounded too proud.

Kes narrowed his eyes and thought for a long while. Then his eyes lit up, and he got a grin that Poe knew meant no good.

“False tooth,” Kes said slowly.

Poe’s eyes shot wide.

Kaydel frowned, “False tooth? I don’t think I know that one.”

Kes chuckled and placed a hand on her back, “Oh, Honey, grab yourself a drink and maybe take a seat. I’ve got a good one for you.”

“Dad,” Poe said nervously as Kes waved over a waitress and got the three of them new flutes of champagne. “She- She really doesn’t need to hear this one.”

“Poe, I am your father. It is my responsibility to embarrass you to your girlfriend. I will break out the baby pictures if I need to.”

“Oh, I bet you look adorable,” Kaydel laughed, patting Poe on the arm.

“Also bathtub videos.”

“Tell her the tooth story!” Poe exclaimed.

Kes grinned, “I love being a father. Alright, so here’s the story of Poe’s false tooth.”

“Hold on a second!” Poe grabbed a glass of champagne from a passing waiter. He downed it in one and slammed it back on the tray before the waiter had even finished passing. “Okay, I’m good… Oh, I shouldn’t have done that.”

Kaydel laughed, giving Poe a quick hug as he rubbed his head, “Go on, Kes.”

“Alright, so you know how Poe is really into maintaining his appearance?” Kes asked.

“I’m familiar with Peacock’s habits.”

“Peacock,” Kes laughed. “I’m stealing that. But what I was saying is that there is a reason Poe is so particular about his appearance.”

Kaydel grinned, “Oh this is going to be good. I just thought he was a pretty boy.”

“No, Poe’s always been a pretty boy. I swear to God, the first thing he did out of the womb was check his hair.”

“I’m going to need more champagne.”

“So, here’s the false tooth story. When Poe turned sixteen, he joined the New Republic Defence Force. Being underage, he wasn’t a combat member yet. It’s was something more like a glorified part-time job. Poe, no matter how talented he was, was not supposed to fly in combat. Unfortunately, three very unfortunate things happened to him: one, he is an extremely talented flying. Always has been, and I swear he had better moves at sixteen than I saw on thirty-year-olds during the war.”
“Why can I already guess where this is going?” Kaydel sighed.

“Two,” Kes continued, “his instructors were… ultimately they ended up demonstrating poor judgement in valuing talent over requirements. Now I get breaking and bending the rules sometimes. I was in the Rebellion after all. But when you’re dealing with teenagers, you have to give very little leeway to them. That is because of item number three: Poe was a sixteen-year-old boy… and sixteen-year-old boys are idiots. They’re hormonal, they’re impulsive, and they’re at the age where they think they’re the most mature and intelligent person in the world but are actually really stupid and don’t understand how the world actually operates.”

“So, what stupid thing did Poe do?”

“For the record, I do not blame my son for what happened. This was the fault of his instructors. There were two officers – the ones he interacted with the most – who recognized his talents. They wanted him in combat immediately, but there was the pesky little age restriction in their way. Now they couldn’t just go to the heads of the Academy and the NRDF because at the time, Wedge Antilles and Diego Nalto sat on the board. If they got even a whiff of the officers wanting to put my son, the son of Shara Bey into combat against the First Order before the age of eighteen, that would have been shut down so fast and they probably would be suspended a semester for suggesting it. So the officers decided to put Poe into combat, but in secret.”

Kaydel frowned, “How is that even possible?”

“They made up a fake profile of a cadet that they would put on manifests whenever they sent out Poe.”

“But,” she looked to Poe, “why didn’t you say anything?”

Poe looked sheepish, “Here comes the stupid teenager part.”

“His instructors managed to convince him to go along with it,” Kes said.

She stared at Poe, “How?”

He sighed, “Basically they convinced me that if I secretly was going out and doing these missions, that when I turned eighteen, we would come out and announce all of my accomplishments, and I would immediately be promoted to a high rank rather than an entry level one.”

“But… why would they reveal that they had been sending someone underage into the battlefield?”

“That’s the part I didn’t think through. I just thought it was a fun secret and something Dad would be proud of.”

“Naturally, I was not,” Kes said. “He didn’t even tell BB-8… though students weren’t allowed to have their droids with them at all times at the academy so he had ways to hide it.”

“Why would you hide it from BB-8?” Kaydel frowned.

“Dad’s been using BB-8 as a way to spy on me from day one.”

“It’s not spying if you’re aware of the surveillance.”

Kaydel stifled a giggle.

Kes smiled.
“So, where does the false tooth come into play?” Kaydel asked, leaning casually against Poe.

Kes noticed the way Poe’s arm unconsciously wrapped around her waist.

“Well, sooner or later, even the best pilot will have an accident in combat,” Poe explained. “And when I was seventeen, I got hit and went down hard. Like… a horrible sort of crash. Blood and smoke and fire.”

“It’s literally a miracle that Poe is alive,” Kes said. “Wedge Antilles was in the battle and landed to check him out. He said that when he found Poe in the cockpit, his face was just… raw, beaten, meat. Like the kind a butcher with throw out. His hair had partially burned off. He broke so many teeth, and dozens of bones. The doctors were amazed that all the injuries were physical. He should have been paralyzed and had mental difficulties after that kind of crash. I thank the Force everyday because I know the only reason he survived was through the grace of the Force. The doctors said that if Wedge had intervened even two minutes later, he’d be dead. Plain and simple, my son would have been dead.”

Kaydel gasped. She sunk back into his embrace and turned her face to rest against his chest. Her heart trembled at the thought of not having this warm, firm body holding her. She couldn’t bare the thought of Poe being taken before she ever got to meet him, let alone call him her own.

Poe stroked her arm and placed a kiss on the top of her head.

“I’m okay, Babe,” he whispered. “I’m okay.”

BB-8 and Kes exchanged a look.

“I’m fine,” Kaydel hated how her voice shook. “Really, I’m okay. Continue the story.”

“Well, since to was Wedge who found him, the instructors ended up in a lot more trouble and a lot faster than they might have been had someone else went down for Poe. To be clear about how badly injured Poe was, Wedge and Ceren lived very close to us, so Wedge could probably have picked Poe out of a line quicker than he could have Luke Skywalker. Poe was so horribly mangled, that Wedge did not recognized him until he looked at Poe’s dog tags.”

Kaydel shuddered.

“To say Wedge was furious is like saying Darth Vader had a little bit of a temper. He immediately called Diego and reported what happened. Those two moved so quickly with their investigation and punishment that when Diego called me twenty-three minutes after Wedge saw Poe’s dog tags, the pair of instructors were already found, terminated, and had warrants for their arrest being petitioned.”

“Their arrest?”

“They ended up being charged with a few things like child endangerment, delinquency of a minor, conspiracy, and some sort of fraud for making up a false cadet,” Poe explained. “They were also dishonourably discharged from the military. One of them tried to actually join the Resistance last year, and Diego told him in no uncertain terms that if they did not leave D’Qar immediately, Diego was going to end up doing something that would get himself criminal charges.”

“Needless to say BB-8 and I were on my way to Hosnian Prime within thirty minutes,” Kes said. “I will never forget the sight of Poe in his hospital bed. He had finished one surgery and was about to head in for another surgery. Wedge and Diego gave me a personal apology for the situation and were ready to support us throughout the entire process. Han and Leia let me stay at their apartment through the whole thing. Admittedly, Han wasn’t really around, so I think Leia just didn’t want to be alone
with Threepio all the time. Be- *her* son was living on Rornian with Luke and his family at the time, so the apartment was pretty quiet… well, as quiet as C-3PO can be.”

In unison all their heads turned towards C-3PO conversing with R2-D2 in the corner as if the other droid wasn’t still in low power mode. It wasn’t an unusual sight at all, as Threepio insisted Artoo could still hear him and really, he just *had* to keep his friend up-to-date with new developments. Artoo would be so lost when he woke up if Threepio didn’t. They could hear the golden droid’s voice all the way across the room.

“So, false tooth?” Kaydel asked.

“Right,” Kes cleared his throat. “Naturally, I sued the New Republic. We came to a… *very nice* settlement.”

“How do you think we can afford me being full-time with the Resistance?” Poe grinned.

“But in addition to the monetary pay out, as this whole thing was a PR disaster for the New Republic they decided to pay all of Poe’s medical bills,” Kes explained. “Which was good because Poe went through… how many surgeries?”

“Fifty-four surgeries and bacta immersions equalling about 217 hours,” Poe answered. “And that’s not even mentioning the physical therapy and time it took for my hair to grow back. I had so much plastic surgery, you might as well slap a *Made in Dandoran* label on me. *Ow!* Kay! What was that for?”

Kaydel patted the spot on his arm where she had punched him, “Sorry, Poe. I was just expediting the process of you getting punched when I tell Jessika about that comment later.”

“Fine,” Poe grumbled. “But only because she hits harder.”

Kes chuckled, “This girl is something, Poe.”

“There’s a lot less domestic abuse usually,” he replied.

“So, false tooth?” Kaydel asked.

“We’re just getting to that,” Kes said. “Since the New Republic was paying the bills, Poe was allowed to select basically whatever treatments he wanted at whatever cost. If he wanted the good anesthesia, he got the good anesthesia. Private luxury hospital room? No problem. Went to his head a little bit, I certainly had to reign him in a few times. And one place I probably should have paid more attention to was the dental work, because Poe made one of the most ridiculous choices I have ever seen. Poe’s teeth generally just needed a little surgery to fix them up, but one of his back right molars got completely knocked out. So, Poe goes through the catalogue and finds the most expensive and ludicrous replacement tooth I have ever heard of. Like, seriously, I do not understand why this technology exists.”

Kaydel glanced at Poe, “…What technology?”

His scratched his neck, “I sort of… have a Holo projector in my tooth.”

Kaydel stared at him.

“I’m sorry. *You what*?”

“Poe has a Holo projector in his mouth,” Kes repeated. “One of his back right molars can easily be
popped out of mouth. It’s hollowed out, and inside is a tiny Holo projector that can store and project three small images. My son literally walks around carrying pictures of myself, my wife, and his droid… in his mouth.”

Kaydel just stared at Poe, “…Why?”

“Look, it’s for if I ever get taken prisoner!” Poe exclaimed. “When you get captured, they take everything off your person. They take personal Holos, they take dog tags, they take everything. I chose it because I want to know that if I’m in a situation where I’m stripped of everything, I can still have a safe image of my loved ones to comfort me. Because seriously, who is going to check my tooth?”

“And that, Dear Kaydel, is the most insane thing about my son,” Kes said. “He carries pictures of his family in his tooth.”

There was a very long silence from Kaydel.

“That…” she looked stunned, “has got to be the absolute… sweetest thing I have ever heard.”

Poe blinked, “I’m sorry what?”

A large grin split her face, “It’s just your loved ones mean so much to you that you’d go to an insane length to make sure you always have a small part of them with you. I love it!”

Poe and Kes said nothing.

“Wow,” Poe whispered. “I did not expect that reaction.”

“Me neither,” Kes agreed.

Beep beep boop.

Kes, Poe, and BB-8 stared at her in silence for a very long time.

After a while, unnerved by the silence, Kaydel bit her lip, “So, do I get the Kes Dameron stamp of approval?”

“Honey…” Kes answered, “I think I like you better than Poe.”

“Kay! Kay!” Jessika suddenly ran up. “Hey, Kay can I talk to you?”

“Uh, kind of busy, Jess,” Kaydel nodded to Kes. “You know Poe’s father, right?”

“Sure,” Jessika nodded. “Nice to see you, Kes.”

“Pleasure is all mine,” Kes smiled. “You needed Kaydel?”

“Yeah, Kay’s roommate, Paige is trying to flirt, and I think I need back up on it,” Paige explained. “I don’t understand the whole attraction to the male sex thing. No offense to you two.”

“None taken,” Poe said.

Jessika continued, “I’d ask Rose, but she’s clueless about that sort of thing. Meanwhile Aletha seems to have disappeared, as well as Commander Nalto.”

“Attaboy,” Kes chuckled.
“So, can I steal Kaydel from you guys?” Jessika asked. “To be clear, I’m asking as a courtesy. I’m taking her with me regardless of what you say.”

“Alright,” Poe agreed. “But I want her back. We’ve got… ahem plans later.”

“Paige wasn’t expecting Kaydel to come back to their room tonight,” Jessika smirked. “Shall we, Kay?”

“I think we have to,” Kaydel answered. “Paige couldn’t flirt her way out of a paper bag. It was nice meeting you, Kes. Maybe we can have dinner sometime, just the three of us.”

**BEEP BOP BEEP BEEP!**

“Four of us. Sorry BB-8.”

**Boop.**

“Name the place and I’ll be there,” Kes smiled. “I like this one, Poe. You should keep her for a while. Have a good evening, girls.”

“Have a good night,” Kaydel grabbed Jessika’s hand and they took off.

“Quite a girl you found yourself, Poe,” Kes said.

“So, you really like her?” Poe asked eagerly. “You approve of Kaydel?”

“Son, if you don’t marry that girl, I’m adopting her,” Kes declared.

Poe chuckled, watching Kaydel across the room with her friends, “Dad? …Challenge accepted.”

---

“Here we are,” Diego declared as he led Aletha into his private quarters. “What do you think?”

There were uniforms hung neatly in the closet, Holos sitting on the dresser, and most importantly a large bed with freshly changed sheets.

“I think I had one too many glasses of champagne if I ended up in your room tonight,” Aletha chuckled.

Diego grinned, something heady in his eyes, “Well, you might as well make yourself comfortable then. Your room is pretty far away. You could get ravished by a despicable man in your condition.”

“Then I should stay here and sober up a little,” Aletha sat down on the bed. She knew she hadn’t actually drunk to a level of impairment. “I’ll be safe here with you. Your intentions are honourable, are they not?”

Diego pressed a button on the room control panel, dimming the lights, “If you say so.”

With a wicked spark in his eye, Diego joined her on the bed’s edge. Their hands and lips were on each other in an instant, the tension of their yet to be consummated relationship driving them wild. Diego ravaged Aletha like a man on the brink of madness. Tongue driving into her mouth, lips on her neck, teeth on her collarbone, hands on hair and hips and thighs.

Aletha moaned in ecstasy as his tongue claimed her mouth. Her nails dug into his shoulders as one
hand gripped it tightly while the other fumbled with his tunic belt. His hand was on her breast, openly thumbing the nipple he had made erect beneath his touch, and the other was on her thigh, slowly drifting up until it-

She gasped as Diego stroked the thin, wet fabric concealing her tender and readying sex.

“How does that feel?” his breath as hot in her ear.

“Please don’t stop,” Aletha begged.

“You know what’s been in my mind all night? The only thing I could think of was peeling this dress off of you and worshipping every inch of your body. I want you, Aletha. I can’t… I can’t wait another day. I want to make love to you, right here, right now. I think I might die if I don’t.”

Aletha moaned as his lips suckled her neck. She had never had a man want her this desperately before.

“Then I think you’re a little over dressed,” Aletha unbuckled his belt and threw it across the room. She made quick work of his shirt, Diego only too eager to help it off. The second that Diego’s shirt hit the ground he pushed her back onto the bed.

Diego continued to be a man of little patience for taking things slow. His thumbs had already hooked her underwear and were dragging them down as his lips were gliding up her thighs. She barely registered the moment her panties hit the floor because his lips were already on her tender sex.

Aletha actually shrieked when his tongue hit her clit. She panted, unable to make sense of anything but her dress pushed up her waist, Diego Nalto’s hot breath, and expert cunnilingus skills driving her to pleasure. Her thighs contracted, holding his mouth to her and her head lulled back as that wet, wide tongue lapped roughly at her clit.

But the pleasure didn’t end there; the second he had gotten her wet enough, a thick finger plunged into her without much fanfare. It was too much for her, that tongue licking her clit and his middle finger pumping in and out of her. There was something about the passion, the fervor, the desperation of their desire.

It was the quickest orgasm Aletha had ever had.

When the aftershocks subsided, they didn’t move. For a while they just stayed in position – Aletha boneless on the bed, Diego giving small kisses to her thighs, and his middle finger buried deep into her glistening sex.

She whimpered when he slowly withdrew that finger from her. Arousal flashed in her eyes as she saw her wet desire coating his digit. Catching her eye, Diego used his mouth to clean her off his finger.

“You taste amazing,” Diego told her.

Aletha panted but gave him the best sultry smile she could manage, “I wonder how you do?”

Diego chuckled, “I guess it’s my turn.”

He bent down, and Aletha wrapped her arms around him as they shared a passionate kiss. He lifted her ever so slightly so his hands could work the zipper of her dress.
“Please, Diego,” Aletha begged as he slid the zipper down.

Naturally, that was the moment Leia Organa knocked on the door.

“Diego?” Leia called. “Diego, open the door.”

He looked down at Aletha.

“Let’s pretend we’re not here,” he whispered. “Maybe she’ll go away.”

Sounded like a good plan to Aletha, and she pulled Diego down for another kiss.

“Diego, I know you’re in there,” Leia said. “I will open this door if I have to. I know Aletha’s in there with you, so please, make it better for all of us and just open the door.”

He sighed, “Fine. Give us a second.”

Aletha was surprised to find to find out how many languages Diego could grumble in as they redressed. He didn’t even smooth down his hair as he marched to the door.

“What?” Diego demanded, not caring he was speaking to his commanding officer.

“Look, I’m sorry to bother you two, but you snuck away too soon,” Leia informed him. “We still need to get some photos of you and Poe for the press.”

“Can’t it wait for tomorrow?”

“The reporters have their deadlines. If it makes you feel better, Poe had a similar reaction when I hunted him down in his room before this. Although to your credit, he and Kaydel didn’t stop and I actually had to open the door on them. Turns out when Kaydel blushes, it goes everywhere.”

Aletha shuddered, “I didn’t need to know that about my niece.”

“Sorry, Aletha,” Leia said kindly. “I’m very happy to see you don’t have your niece’s views on exhibitionism though.”

“Please, the last thing I want is a member of the freaking Skywalker family seeing me naked.”

“Come on, Diego, we have to get those pictures,” Leia said.

Diego sighed, “How long will it take?”

“Twenty minutes at the most.”

“Fine.” He turned to Aletha, “Would you mind waiting here, or-”

“I can wait,” Aletha nodded. “I’ll just freshen up in the fresher, set the mood of the room, snoop through your personal items. The usual.”

“Snoop away, My Dear. I have nothing to hide. Shall we, General?”

Aletha actually had no intention of snooping but after primping in the fresher, lighting a few candles she found in his nightstand, and ten minutes of trying out different seductive poses on the bed for him to return to, Aletha got bored.

She was surprised to see how many Holos Diego kept in his room. Aletha had seen his office, and it
was barren of personal touch. But in his room? If there was a flat surface, there was a Holo.

Aletha browsed through them casually, flipping ones on at random, reading the labels he had put on all of them, and studying them carefully.

**First Resistance Mission – 10 ABY: Solo, Skywalker, Fliss, Kes, Antilles, Agim, Chewbacca, and myself.**

That Holo was posed in the lounge area of some ship – the *Millennium Falcon* if Aletha remembered the details of the story just right. Diego and Kes were sitting in the corner cleaning weapons. Two women – one who Aletha remembered as Reine Agim from the Rebellion, and a somewhat familiar brunette – were sitting at a dejark table. A man Aletha figured most be Han Solo was standing behind the brunette giving her pointers while Chewbacca was laughing with Reine, who was clearly winning. Seated on some storage crates were Wedge Antilles talking to Luke Skywalker. Not that Aletha would have been able to tell it was Luke through anything but process of elimination. His back was completely to the camera.

**Mateo, Sofía, and Diego – 21 BBY**

A very young Diego stood under a tree with his parents; Sofía looking a beauty and Mateo every bit the man his son had described.

**Rogue Boys – 0 ABY: Riz, Gunner, Ji-Dan, and myself (Fliss makes me say for the record she took this Holo and that’s why she’s not in it.)**

Diego stood at a conference table deep in conversation with a man twice as large as him. A lanky goggled man was discretely tinkering on something in the corner. He shocked himself a little, looked around quickly, and went back to work. It was only the blind man resting his weight on a staff that was staring straight at the camera and waving.

**Rogue Flight Squadron on Hoth – 3 ABY: See manifest. I don’t have enough space on the side of this disc to list them all.**

About twenty men in orange flight jumpsuits modified for snow conditions stood in a line with their helmets on their hips. They were all laughing at someone’s joke – Wedge Antilles from the look of it. Diego was easy to spot, and Aletha had to admit he didn’t look the greatest in orange. He was standing next to Luke Skywalker whose shaking head was in his hands, blocking his face. Clearly the joke was at his expense.

Faced with another obscured image of Luke Skywalker, that was when Aletha remembered Kaydel telling her that pictures of Skywalker generally weren’t kept around base. They would either make everyone mad or sad, so it was an unspoken rule to hide images of him.

The next image she didn’t have the chance to read the label on, because the second she flicked it on, she gasped and dropped it to the floor.

It was Diego in his military dress uniform with his arm around a woman in a wedding dress.

Aletha’s stomach dropped and she started to hyperventilate. She felt like she was about to throw up. Diego with a woman in a wedding dress. Why was Diego with a woman in a wedding dress?

Now, the rational part of Aletha would have realized that the woman wearing said wedding dress was the same woman in the first Holo talking to Han Solo. It also would have made her pick up the Holo and read the label to see that it was Diego with Fliss on her wedding day.
But rational Aletha had left the building after the third glass of champagne.

As tears splashed down her face, Aletha was consumed with memories of Luke and Antar telling her that she wasn’t enough. That they loved her but would always the woman who came before her. Second best. Second best. She would always be the second.

She couldn’t do it again.

She \textit{wouldn’t} do it again.

She couldn’t bear it… not with Diego.

When Diego returned to the room five minutes later, he expected to find a very sensual image of Aletha Kymeri on his bed wanting and waiting for him.

He did not expect to find her sobbing hysterically clutching one of his personal Holo.

“My love,” he closed the door and raced to her side. Diego took her into his arms, “What is wrong?”

“Don’t you dare!” Aletha used all her might to push him away. “Don’t you dare touch me! You lied to me! You’re despicable!”

Diego was seriously confused, “What? No… Okay, maybe I don’t like flowers all that much, but-”

“I know you were married!” she threw the Holo at him. “I found the picture! Why did you lie to me? Why did you tell me there was never anyone else?”

Diego just stared at her.

“I can’t do it,” Aletha sobbed into his hand, mascara running down her face. “I can’t. Not again. Never again. I can’t do it.”

Ok, seriously. What the hell was going on?

Slowly, as Aletha wept on the bed next to him, Diego bent down and picked up the Holo. He flicked it on, honestly expecting to find he had somehow been married at some point and just forgot about it.

When he saw the image it all made sense.

“Uh… Aletha? That’s Fliss.”

Aletha sniffed, “Wh- What?”

“Fliss,” Diego repeated. “That is Fliss on her wedding day to Luke Skywalker. I walked her down the aisle. That’s why we took this picture together. I’ve \textit{never} been married. Not even close.”

It took a while for Aletha to gather herself, but she honestly couldn’t say she had ever been more relieved in her laugh.

“Oh, Diego, I feel so stupid,” Aletha laughed, wiping away her tears. “I’m sorry. I didn’t mean… That was stupid of me. Oh, let’s just forget this and get back to things. Where were we?”

She leaned forward to kiss him, and Diego put out a hand to stop her.

“Aletha,” he said stiffly. “What is going on?”
“What do you mean?”

“You just had a panic attack at the thought of me being married… Why?”

Aletha took a deep breath, “It’s just ex-boyfriend stuff.”

“What kind of ex-boyfriend stuff?”

“It doesn’t matter.”

“Yes, it does,” Diego insisted. “Now, tell me, or you’re not getting any of this.”

Aletha laughed as he gestured to his body. It broke the ice, and Diego chuckled along with her.

“My Darling,” he wiped a tear from her cheek. “Please. I love you… Please, tell me.”

“Oh, alright,” Aletha took a deep breath.

So, she told him the stories of Antar and Luke. She avoided names, perhaps not to subtly, but Diego didn’t question her on it. He listened, patiently, silently, and respecting her need to no interruptions. His face had minimal but sympathetic and pained reactions. At some point their hands twined together and during especially rough parts he would squeeze hers.

“I’ve never been a first choice, Diego,” Aletha came to the end of the story. “I’ve never had someone who wanted me above all others. Then I met you, and I found someone who was to me like the other women were to them. I found my first choice above all. And then to see that picture and think that there was someone else you could love more than me… I couldn’t do it. Not this time. I need you to want me as much as I want you. I’ve never wanted someone this much. Never loved someone this deeply. It broke my heart.”

Diego didn’t say anything for a long time. Her words weighed on his mind as he processed what heartache this woman, the love of his life had been through. He knew that when he did speak, it had to be something grandiose.

“In my language,” Diego started, “we have a word. Querida. It’s a word we use like Darling or Sweetheart.”

Aletha sniffed and looked at him, a little bit confused.

“Querida comes from the verb querer, which is to want or to desire,” Diego explained. “Essentially, Querida means ‘most wanted one.’ Aletha, I have never felt the way I do about you for anyone before. True, I have known love, or at least some shadow of it. But you… you are my beginning, my end, the sun in my sky, and the breath in my lungs. You are my most wanted one. Never before and never again will I feel about someone the way I do you. You, Aletha Kymeri, will always be my Querida.”

Aletha started to cry again, but this time not from sorrow.

Diego stroked her tear away, “Just tell me how to prove it to you.”

She kissed him.

No other words were exchanged. Just lips, hands, sighs and moans.

She pulled the shirt from over his head and unbuckled the belt from his waist. He pushed her on the bed and tugged that dress from her body. His pants were soon to follow, and after that their
undergarments.

It was soft and sweet, yet still passionate. Hands and mouths explored and claimed the other skin in their own. His hands were heavenly on her body, and she even found some pleasure in the slight shaking.

He didn’t argue with her when she insisted they use a condom even though both hadn’t had sex in years and Aletha was post-menopausal. Diego just enjoyed the sensation and sucked on her breast as he guided her hand to roll the latex down his aching shaft.

Diego laid her down on the bed and must have spent an eternity kissing every inch of her skin. His soft lips contrasted the scratch of his facial hair and it make her shudder as it scratched her thighs. Just when she thought is was about to melt into nothingness on his bedsheets, Diego’s lips reclaimed hers. His warm, sturdy body was over hers, and he guided her legs over his hips.

And then… he was inside of her, and Aletha felt like she had never truly lived until that moment.

Under the blanket, Aletha and Diego laid in each other’s arms, breathless, satisfied, and in complete emotional ecstasy.

“Wow,” Diego chuckled, his hands lazily drifting over her bare skin. “That felt even better than your cheek.”

Aletha rolled over to lay on her stomach and brush her fingers through his chest hair, “What is with the Resistance and their weird accolades for me?”

“You’re one of a kind, Aletha Anthea,” his eyes shined with tenderness and love. “Don’t you forget it.”

She lifted herself up and kissed his lips. When they broke apart smiling, she rested her head on his chest. As he kissed his shoulder, Aletha sighed in contentment.

“So this is what it feels like,” Aletha said softly.

“What what feels like?” Diego asked.

“To be someone’s first choice.”

“Oh, Querida, you are not my first choice.” He lifted her chin to look her in the eyes, “You are my only choice.”

Not too far down the hall, Poe Dameron and Kaydel Ko Connix were lingering in bed in a similar embrace.

“Ok, my father really can’t adopt you after we did that,” Poe declared, a little dazed from their lovemaking. “Damn that was good.”

“Yeah, I could not do that with my brother,” Kaydel chuckled. “I guess if we’re doing the meet the family thing, he’s next on the list.”
“What, meeting Keth?” Poe frowned at the mention of her brother.

“No, Deek and Dacken,” she rolled her eyes.

“Alright, but I’m punching them for the hair thing.”

“I get why you’re so sensitive about that story. Why didn’t you tell me about your accident?”

Poe shifted uncomfortably, “I just… don’t want things to change between us. I’m seriously in love with you, and I don’t want to lose you.”

“Why would you lose me?”

“Come on, what are two of my best qualities? My piloting skills and my looks. I feared that the story might change how you view those qualities on me. Maybe think I’m not as good a pilot or that my looks were only from my surgeries and I’m actually ugly.”

“Poe Dameron!” Kaydel sat up. “Do you honestly think I’m so shallow that I’m only with you because of your looks? You being incredibly attractive is just a bonus. If anything happened to you that changed your appearance, I’d stay. No, I don’t think you’re ugly, and if you were, that wouldn’t matter. I love you for who you are, not how you look.”

He smirked, “Is that permission to let myself go? Huh? Stop working out, gain a bunch of weight, never shave, stop showering, never even brush my hair?”

“Okay, let’s not get carried away,” Kaydel teased. “You stop showering, you stop seeing me naked.”

“Deal.” Poe’s smile faltered, “What about the pilot thing?”

“Grown men took advantage of the ego of a seventeen-year-old boy. If I find who did that to you, I’m going to beat them up.”

“You’re going beat them up? All five foot one and 110 pounds of you?”

“107 thank you very much. And I’ll certainly try.”

“You get em, Babe,” Poe kissed her cheek. “But piloting-”


“Really? Nothing would change?” he asked dryly. “In sanitation?”

“Okay, I’d make you take more showers but otherwise, no. I’d still love you.”

“I love you too,” Poe ran his fingers through her hair. “So what’s this about meeting your brother? I thought Aletha was the only family member you were in contact with?”

“Keth didn’t agree with Mom throwing me out, so he took me in for a while,” Kaydel explained. “I stayed with him and his family for a few months – not that either of us told Mom – and he’s actually the one who financially supports me. His act of rebellion without pissing off Mom. Anthea women are scary when you piss them off.”

“I know, I’ve met Aletha and Alecta. If anything happens with our relationship – which I absolutely never would intentionally hurt you – I might just fake my death to escape Aletha’s wrath.”
“Not to mention she’s now got Commander Nalto wrapped around her finger.”

“Funny, I think he’d be wrapped around something else tonight.”

Kaydel slapped his chest as Poe laughed loudly.

They settled back down, just enjoying each other’s company for a while as they thought to themselves about the events of that night.

“I wasn’t lying to your dad,” Kaydel admitted, frankly a little out of nowhere. “I really think the tooth thing is sweet.”

Poe shrugged, “With Holos in dog tags there’s always the risk of them getting taken from you during capture. I want to know that if I’m stranded somewhere in a desperate situation, I can still have a small comfort and look at my loved ones. Give myself a little extra strength to get through the night when all hope is lost.”

“I don’t want you to ever be in that situation. I want you to be safe in my arms.”

“I want that too, but General Organa won’t let me bring you as my carry-on luggage. Plus I don’t think my hatch is the most comfortable place.”

Kaydel grinned, “I guess I’d just have to sit on your lap.”

“That would be one hell of a ride.”

“Oh, I’ve had better,” Kaydel teased.

Poe chuckled, remembering that night in Holdo’s office, “You certainly have.”

Kaydel considered her next words, “Poe?”

“Yeah, Babe?”

“Could I… Could I see it? Your false tooth?”

Poe looked surprised, “You wanna see my fake tooth?”

“I’d like to see the pictures,” Kaydel clarified. “Can I?”

He hesitated, “Alright, but to warn you, my dad may not have exactly known what pictures are in my tooth now.”

“They’re different?”

“The BB-8 one is the same, but I don’t have single ones of my parents.”

“Then what do you have?”

“Promise not to freak out?” Poe said quickly.

Kaydel narrowed her eyes suspiciously, “Alright.”

Poe sat up and took a deep breath. He reached into his mouth, and with a bit of a grunt, he yanked out on of his back teeth. It was kind of a weird image if Kaydel was being honest. Poe held out the tooth, and Kaydel was surprised that there was a bit of blood on it.
“There are tiny hooks that grasp onto small implants I have in my gums,” Poe explained, flipping it over pointing to four hooks the size of a pin head. He pointed to a button on the inside of the hollow tooth, “This is the Holo projector. Really advanced tech. Inside the button is the projector, you can see the lens on the middle of the button. It’s got a small transponder that sends signals between another one programmed inside of BB-8. I use him to update the photos, but it will still work if I’m apart from him. I just can’t change the photos without him.”

“That’s fascinating,” Kaydel examined the tooth with interest. “Could you tweak some stuff and make it a comm?”

Poe chuckled, “I wish. That would be helpful. You want to see the photos?”

“Absolutely.”

He pressed the button, and Kaydel was kind of amazed his large fingers could handle a button that small. A tiny blue projection lit up from the button, and they were viewing a rather magnificent Holo of BB-8.

“Little buddy won’t let me put anyone first but him,” Poe grinned. “I guess after that time he saved me from pirates, I do kind of owe him.”

“I love that story,” Kaydel laughed. “And I love that droid.”

“I do too. He’s the best friend I could ever ask for and one hell of a wingman. In combat and in love. He picked you out, after all. So far that’s been a remarkable success.”

“It’s got the Kes Dameron stamp of approval on it. That counts for something.”

“Discounts on restaurants for sure.”

“So, what’s the next picture?”

He clicked the button and Kaydel found herself staring at a picture of a young Poe with his parents.

“This was taken shortly before Mom died,” Poe said a little sadly. “I really miss her. We were such a happy family. Dad did his best to hold things together after Mom, but there was always something missing.”

Kaydel bit her lip as she stared at the picture, “You all look so happy… That’s what a family is supposed to be like. You won’t find pictures like that of my family.”

He touched her shoulder, “Yes, you will.”

“How do you know?”

“Because BB-8 and I are going to start taking pictures of you and Aletha for you. I’m sure those ones will be happy.”

“You are the sweetest man alive,” Kaydel kissed him.

“Nah, not the sweetest… but certainly in the running.”

She swatted him again, “Next picture.”

“Alright, but uh… don’t get mad.”
He pressed the button, and Kaydel was shocked to see a picture of her. It was a simple Holo, hair down and laughing, but it was her. Poe had replaced two separate pictures of his parents with a single just to make room for a picture of her.

“You… carry a picture of me around in your tooth?” Kaydel stared at it dumbfounded.

“I’m sorry, I know I should have asked,” he said quickly, “I just didn’t know how to ask. You don’t think it’s weird, do you?”

She looked at him, “Poe Dameron, it’s one of the weirdest things I’ve seen in my life… and I love it.”

“Really?”

“Really,” she grinned. “I can’t believe a picture of me brings you that much comfort. Do you put all your girlfriends in your teeth? …Is that really a sentence I just said?”

“Actually, you’re the first one. I’ve never changed the pictures before.”

Kaydel blinked, “Are you serious?”

“Absolutely. I’ve never changed the pictures before, and I don’t intend to change them again.”

“But Poe… what if we don’t…”

She couldn’t finish the sentence.

Poe looked her in the eye and simply asked, “What if we do? I’d love to be able to freak out my grandkids in forty years, just pop out my tooth, and say this is what your grandmother looked at twenty-two.”

Kaydel blushed, “You want grandkids?”

“Marriage, kids, grandkids, house with a backyard and white picket fence after the war. A happy little life, but not too mundane. Don’t want things to get boring. What about you?”

“That all sounds wonderful,” she admitted. “I’d love to have all of that.”

Poe watched her, “And what about… having it together?”

Kaydel took a deep breath, “I… I would like that. Someday.”

“Someday,” Poe nodded. “Doesn’t have to be today but… we’re in it to win it.”

She smiled, “We’re in it to win it.”

Unable to wipe the grin from his face, Poe pulled her in for a joyous kiss.

Kaydel abruptly broke apart from him.

“If you propose to me in a public setting, I will slap you,” she threatened.

“Alright,” he laughed. “We know where we stand.”

“The girls are going to flip when I tell them,” Kaydel chuckled.

“Not as hard as my dad. Actually, let’s not tell him for a while. He’ll literally start bugging us for
grandchildren tomorrow.”

“Geeze, he’d have to give me nine months at least. And I’m not having kids at twenty-two in the middle of the war.”

“Agreed. We don’t need two generations of MisCalcs. Oh, and for the record, I know your family has a tradition, but we’re not having five kids.”

“And we’re not giving them alliterative names,” Kaydel shuddered. “Can you imagine that? Dara Dameron? Devan Dameron? Dilan Dameron?”

“Actually, I kind of like the sound of- OW! I was joking, Kay!”

And so they spent the rest of the night discussing the future they would love to have together.

After all, some people did get their happily ever after.

But some people did not.

Lando sighed as he entered the room Leia had offered him to stay the night. He tried not the let the bitter sting of Holdo’s words dampen the mood, but things had taken a turn that night for him after the subject of Alyla had been breeched. It was true, their odd relationship had had its distractors from its age difference and unconventionality, but after her murder, no one had dared bring up Alyla in a negative light to him.

Weirdly, it was almost refreshing to get that familiar scolding. For a moment he could almost pretend she was alive again.

The reception was like so many of the fancy dinners he had attended before – Cloud City sure knew how to live it up, and such receptions happened at least once a month. Lando would call up Alyla and casually ask if she was interested in accompanying him. He would always try not to sound too eager, but he was fairly certain Alyla knew how badly he wanted her to join him. They had an easy chemistry together, and it was always positively a delight when he attended a dinner with the most beautiful Jedi on his arm. She would always turn up in Cloud City looking elegant and absolutely gorgeous.

There was no denying Alyla’s beauty; her body was as if sculpted by a master artist and he had always joked to her that one day he literally was going to get a statue of her made so generations to come could remember her beauty. Her self-inflicted scars did not detract from that beauty, at least not to Lando. In fact, they read as a testament of her courage in Lando’s eyes. The story of her scars was a dark one, and thankfully not one Alyla needed Lando to explain too much.

Their relationship had started that day Luke invited them to watch Drystan’s podrace in his apartment. While Luke and Felicity were bonding over her dead brother, Lando and Alyla had gone to the grocery store to pick up some things for dinner.

While Alyla enjoyed the novelty of seeing a grocery store for the first time, Lando had gently prodded her for further answers about her past on Zygerria. Alyla was surprisingly open to him about it, which he later learned she did because she was a very open advocate of destigmatizing the victimizing and secrecy of sexual abuse. Lando later would help her and Diego Nalto run many charity fundraisers with an organization – The Alliance Against Sexual Victim Secrecy, which Lando still worked with extensively and donated to even to that very day – who fought against such
things, the two using their experiences as a way for the organization to outreach with stories of abuse and the shame placed upon the victims.

Lando listened respectfully as Alyla told him her history in that grocery store. He knew what happened in the Fighting Pits on Zygerria, having previous done non-slave trade business on Zygerria. In fact, he had once unknowingly served as a go-between Zena Halcorr and Luke Skywalker as she anonymously selling Jedi artifacts she purchased with her family wealth to Luke for his Order. Lando had never participated in the business of the Fighting Pits, but he was well-informed what happened after the fighting was over for the day. How the winners – particularly the attractive ones – got “rented out” for a high fee.

Alyla did not hide her history of abuse from Lando, how she was one of the most requested slaves to be rented. How she and Gavyn were drugged with ysalamir based products so they couldn’t use their Force Abilities to fight back. How she would be forced to “entertain” at least four men – or sometimes women – a night. How one time she had once been “rented” twelve times in one night. How if she decided to throw a match because she couldn’t stand to be “rented” by another man that night, that she and Gavyn would be beaten within an inch of their life.

The choice was the same every night: beaten or rented. As Force Sensitives, Gavyn and Alyla rarely unintentionally lost a match, so it would always come down to their choice. Gavyn wasn’t “rented” as often as Alyla, but it did happen. The worse nights were when a couple would “rent” both twins, and the brother and sister had to watch what happened to each other.

Years later, Alyla confessed the horrifying story to Lando about the event that led to Alyla’s body being riddled with scars. How one night after a line was crossed when a couple rented she and Gavyn, Alyla had finally had enough. She decided the abuse needed to end, so she stole a knife to bring that termination. Originally, her plan was just to end her own life and be free of the pain of this world, but she changed her mind deciding to continue on for Gavyn’s sake. But the abuse still needed to stop, so she decided to make herself not be beautiful anymore. She dragged the knife across every inch of exposed skin on her body, scarring herself, and trying to make herself ugly.

Gavyn had been the one to find Alyla, unconscious and bleeding on the floor. Their owner had been furious and decided to punish Alyla by breaking both of Gavyn’s legs. But the plan had worked, and people stopped “renting” Alyla as often.

The “renting” had come to a full stop about a year later when one of the Halcorr family slaves tried to force himself on Alyla. She fought back and he ended up beating her so badly that she couldn’t fight in the Pits for a month. The rules of the Pits were that if one family’s slave damaged another family’s property – aka slave – the families must switch slaves to compensate the earnings lost by the damaged property being unable to fight. Alyla was given to Zena Halcorr, and after Gavyn made a fuss and refused to fight anymore, their owner sold Gavyn to Zena. And thus began the story of Zena’s conversion to the Light Side and Anti-Slavery movement; how Zena and the Kenes started rescuing Force Sensitive slaves; and Zena and Gavyn’s eventual romance and marriage.

But that was not something Lando was focused upon that night.

The thing that had always amazed Lando about Alyla is that even though she had seen the darkest parts of humanity, she still managed to be an optimist and see the best in people. Perhaps that’s why she was so drawn to mentoring Ben, and perhaps why she had been so drawn to Lando. She could see past that smooth talker scoundrel image Lando hid behind and see the real Lando Calrissian inside. The fun, generous, responsible, business man who loved to indulge his fine tastes.

And Alyla had been his finest taste of all.
At first it was a simple invitation. Alyla wanted to see the world, so Lando offered to have her be his plus one to a reception at Cloud City. She arrived a few days early, and he acted as her tour guide around the city. There was something so special about getting to see his home and world from brand new eyes, seeing her take delight in the most mundane things. A decorative fountain, getting a suite all to herself, getting to eat whatever and how much of it she wanted, seeing new species of aliens, and even hearing elevator music brought so much joy to her.

He let her pick out whatever she desired from the various shops and vendors, loving the way her eyes lit up as she found something she thought beautiful or wonderful. Alyla was modest about her purchases, not wanting to take advantage of his generosity, but Lando insisted. If he saw her eye something, but then insist no, that’s too much, you couldn’t, he could and would. Ultimately dresses proved her downfall, and Alyla, delighted by the bright colours, pretty designs, and luxurious fabrics, ended up returning to Rornian with two trunks full.

A flower vendor had caught her eye the day of the reception. Lando had watched in pleasure as she spent a full hour talking to the flower man, asking all sorts of questions about the different types he had, the origins of the flowers, and the meanings behind them. After hearing the story of the morning glory – the one owned by the vendor a wonderful purple-blue colour – blooming in the morning but dying at night, Alyla became somber and attached to the little bloom before her. Lando had tried to buy the flower for her, but the vendor, touched by Alyla’s passion for botany, had given it to her free of charge.

That night when he arrived at her suite to pick her up for the reception, Alyla looked stunning. A long midnight blue dress with a swishing skirt and a bit of sparkle, a simple glimmering necklace – Alyla refused to let him buy her actual diamond jewelry until they were well into their relationship – and that little morning glory tucked behind her ear. In hindsight, Lando knew that moment she smiled at him looking so excited and thankful for the opportunity was the moment he had fallen for her.

She was an absolute delight at the reception, taking to high society like a fish to the water. Alyla knew how to charm anyone at the drop of a hat – unfortunately something she had developed in her slave days as a survival technique. The other guests were fascinated at meeting a real-life Jedi – Luke had been the only Jedi to attend events on Cloud City, and he usually avoided appearance because without fail someone just had to bring up that this was where his hand got cut off. Alyla was even allowed to openly carry her lightsaber and enjoyed making a display of showing off her skills when a crowd had begged her to.

The only thing she held back from was that she lied when asked the origin of her scars. To this day people on Cloud City believed it was from Alyla fighting in the Pits. Alyla also wouldn’t dance with anyone but Lando. He couldn’t complain though, Alyla was a marvellous dancer. She never knew the official steps, but Lando swore up at down that she turned to the Force to guide her through waltzes, tangos, and everything in between.

Alyla didn’t dance with others because she was reluctant to trust strange men with physical activities. She didn’t withdraw from men, but she did flinch at their touch sometimes. If an action seemed too intimate, she would immediately retreat from the situation. She would not let Lando put an arm around her waist, but she loved to cling to his arm. Alyla felt protected by having a grip on someone she knew had her back, but it still allowed the freedom to escape if she desired it.

That night when Lando brought her back to her suite, Alyla gathered her courage and kissed him on the cheek. She passed it off as a thank you, but years later he learned that she had never kissed someone on the kiss other than Gavyn after they escaped the Fighting Pits.
Lando wanted to show Alyla the botanical gardens where they grew morning glories, but Alyla had to leave the first thing the next morning. She asked if she could come see them some other time, and she hadn’t even finished her sentence before he was saying yes.

Luke had been the one to pick up Alyla. When he saw the two of them together, Luke got a look that was way too knowing for a man who was in the middle of not realizing he was in love with his best female friend.

Lando was reluctant to ask Alyla to return to Cloud City once more. He didn’t know why, confused about the feelings the young Jedi had stirred inside of him. Lando feared that it had been some sort of magic about the city and situation and perhaps this hadn’t been as special as he thought. Besides, he was fourteen years older than her and had a certain reputation. Surely she didn’t want such things with him.

But he was starting to admit he wanted them with her.

When people around Cloud City started asking after that lovely young Jedi and when they would be able to see her again, Lando gathered the courage to comm her and ask for another visit. Alyla was busy with Jedi business and had to turn down the invitation, but the two started talking on the comm on a regular basis.

That was when Reine Agim started her pool.

A few weeks later, they ran into each other when they both were visiting Han and Leia at the same time – Alyla accompanying Luke. It had been Lando who suggested to Alyla that she take a further interest in Ben as he had started acting up since Luke’s attentions were drifting to Felicity. While Alyla and Ben were friendly enough before, it had been during that visit where Alyla officially took Ben under her wing… Literally. She had actually announced to Han, Luke, Leia, and Lando that she was going to take Ben under her wing. Ben had been so confused.

When Lando got the invitation to Reine and Obik wedding – and no, to this day he still wasn’t sure why they invited him – Lando had decided if Alyla couldn’t come to the morning glories, he would bring them to her. Alyla was delighted with the flowers, and together they decided to plant them in the Meditation Gardens. So Lando Calrissian, a man of pomp and circumstance, got down on his hands and knees in the dirt with a lovely young Jedi, and planted flowers.

He still remembered the way she had stroked a smudge of dirt from his cheek, softly and slowly, their first bit of intimate contact. It lit a fire inside of him, and Lando knew he wanted more. Throughout the visit as they spent far more time than they probably should have together, Lando looked for any excuse to touch her. A hand on her back to steady her as they hang decorations for the wedding. Pressing quickly against her as he passed by in a crowded room. Pulling a loose thread from her clothing or smoothing out bunched up fabric. And he received all the same types of hesitant touches from her too.

Judging that Alyla was interested in him, at the wedding when no one was paying attention, Lando decided to try to kiss her.

That was the wrong move.

Alyla spurted out some scared nonsense and made a quick retreat from him for the night. She avoided him for the rest of the visit, and their regular comm calls came to an end. Lando felt horrible about the whole thing and tried to talk with her about it, but Alyla gave him radio silence.

After a month of their silence, Lando confessed to Luke what had happened, and Luke told him that
he already knew. Alyla had spoken to Luke several times for guidance on the situation, which Lando understood as Luke was her mentor but at the same time asking Luke Skywalker for romantic advice was like asking Han Solo to fix your toaster. Sure, he knew a little bit about the theory and had somewhat successful experience in related things, but there were probably better people to ask.

Luke explained to Lando – with Alyla’s permission as she had anticipated Lando talking to Luke at some point so gave her consent – that her history had made her very wary of pursuing a romantic relationship and wasn’t sure she wanted to go ahead with this. Luke advised Lando to wait it out, and if Alyla wanted to be with Lando, to let her come to him on her own terms.

That wait it out theory was probably why Luke himself didn’t end up married until he was thirty-three.

Eventually Alyla did reach out to Lando. Apparently, Ben had sensed her inner turmoil about the situation and talked Alyla into giving it a shot with Lando. The origin of Alyla’s nickname of Killer for Ben was because he allegedly made a killer argument for dating Lando, though Ben denied it vehemently and insisted it was just that he was so awesome at fighting.

Naturally, Alyla calling Ben “Killer” had taken a horrible turn in recent years.

Lando had been in the habit of sending Alyla invitations to various events on Cloud City in hopes she would at least talk to him again. One day, she accepted the invitation to a formal business dinner, and when she arrived on Cloud City they talked it all through. Lando accepted her reservations and they agreed to take things slow. After the dinner, Lando walked her to her suite, and then came something he would never forget.

“Lando?”

“Yes, Alyla?”

She hesitated, “…close your eyes.”

He obeyed and the next thing he knew there were a pair of soft, but hesitant lips upon his. Lando was startled, so he made no move to return the kiss. When he eyes flew open, her lips were gone from his and she was staring at him nervously.

“Alyla-” he started.

“Slowly,” she simply said.

Lando smiled and nodded, “Slowly.”

The next day, Lobot couldn’t figure out why Lando couldn’t stop whistling happily during all of his meetings.

And so their story went, Alyla and Lando attending events together, Lando lavishing praise upon Alyla. They moved together in perfect harmony, like a never-ending dance. She had fire and spirit, but beauty and kindness. Charm but penetrating eyes that could see one to their core. And she never gave up on someone, not even at their lowest point.
Their nights together were their secret. The next time, Alyla let him return the kiss. Three times later she let him put his hand on her cheek to bring her in closer and savor the taste of those beautiful lips. Two times later her hands woven into his hair. The time after that his hands found her hair. Four times later they began an adventure of tongues.

Three times after that, Alyla invited him into the room. They moved slowly in the comfort and safety of that suite that became Alyla’s. She straddled his lap as they kissed and caressed. One day she began to rock against his lap, and a new level of intimacy was reached.

In no time, grinding became the norm, and Lando became well acquainted with the feeling of wetness between her legs rocking against his begging erection. Shirtless sessions were frequent, first Lando while Alyla explored with hands and later lips, but soon Alyla was shrugging off the shoulders of her dresses.

They explored each other, slowly breaking down barriers and experiencing new forms of pleasure together. Nine months after that first kiss, Alyla and Lando made love. It was nerve-racking and imperfect but they came out with no regrets.

He had loved her so much, but they never said it. About a year after their first kiss, Lando tried to say so, but she stopped him. She would always shushed him before he spoke those powerful words. Many times he thought she was going to say it to him, but she always stopped herself. He didn’t need it uttered, though. He saw it in her eyes.

At Luke and Felicity’s wedding, she explained it to him. She was traumatized by her time as a slave, so she was afraid to utter the word. The conversation was spurred by a joke from Lando about how as a groomsman and bridesmaid, they were going to walk down the aisle together.

“This is the only time that’s ever happening,” Alyla said, fear in her voice but confidence in her face. “I don’t ever want to get married.”

Lando raised an eyebrow, “Oh, really? I just thought-”

“You assume every girl wants a wedding?”

“Not until I met your sister-in-law. If Zena Halcorr wanted a wedding, I thought anyone would. Besides, you love a good party, a pretty dress, and a dashing Calrissian.”

Alyla smiled that sweet little grin she got when bashful, “I do lo-enjoy all three of those things.”

Lando sighed.

“But marriage… I can’t do that. I can’t ever be in a position where there’s a legal document demanding I stay attached to another person. I’m not saying that marriage is slavery-”

“You really should make this as a toast later tonight. Luke and Fliss will be thrilled.”

“Lando, please.”

He smiled at her.

“I don’t want to ever get married… but I do want to be with you. It’s just if I’m with you, I want it to be of my own accord. So, if you think that marriage is so important and you have to have it, then
maybe I should let you find that."

Lando was very quiet for a long time, taking it all in. Then he made his choice. He smiled and lifted her chin.

“My Darling,” he wiped away a lone tear with his thumb, “who do you think you’re talking to? I’m Lando Calrissian. You say, I don’t want to get married. I say, oh thank God.”

Alyla laughed.

“Just promise me that you’re not going anywhere,” Lando said tenderly. “I love… spending time with you.”

Alyla nodded, “I love… spending time with you too. I’m not going anywhere.”

“Neither am I. Now… do you think it’s unlucky for a groomsman to kiss a bridesmaid before the groom kisses the bride?”

“We’ll just have to test that theory, won’t we?”

“Indeed, we will.”

Turns out it was bad luck, because they got walked in on by her brother a minute later. Enduring Gavyn Kene’s annoyed looks that rest of the day was worth it though.

And so their relationship continued. They moved at a snail’s pace, but when called out, they were more than happy to be a pair of snails.

The only problem with their relationship was they tended to avoid major discussions. He later learned than Alyla wasn’t certain he was exclusive to her until the night Rey Rhiaon Skywalker was conceived (how Alyla knew the timing of that, Lando was too afraid to ask.) It was shortly before Rey’s birth that Alyla had told Lando the horrifying reason she inflicted her scars. The secret so repulsive and desperate that the only people who were ever told had been Zena Halcorr and himself.

Lando was the one who brought up the idea of the adoption. Alyla had been reluctant at first, fearing Ben’s reaction. So, Lando had the idea that the three of them would sit down and discuss the idea. Ultimately, Ben wasn’t thrilled with it, but he gave them his blessing. His only request was for it to be Force Sensitive, which Lando had never told anyone, but he and Alyla had agreed they were going to find one.

And they had decided to find themselves a son.

The memory cut Lando deep. Out there, somewhere was a disadvantaged, Force Sensitive boy who never got the parents he deserved. Lando had truly tried to continue the adoption. He had spent a year meeting with children, Leia secretly accompanying him, but Lando just couldn’t see it through. Not without Alyla.

Still, Lando knew out there somewhere was his and Alyla’s son. And maybe one day Lando have the courage to find him.

But it wouldn’t be today.

He remembered the last time he saw her. They were in Cloud City, waking up in bed together. She
woke him with a kiss and told him her goodbyes. Lando did their usual routine of playfully trying to convince her to stay with him a little while longer, but Alyla had to go. They spoke of their next meeting, how they were going to go pick out their son. Lando asked her to pass on a hello to everyone at Temple Village, and they promised to call each other every night.

Alyla was at the doorway when she said something he never thought he’d hear.

“I love you.”

Lando sat up straight, “What?”

“I love you,” Alyla repeated, a small smile on her face. “I’m ready to say it. I love you, Lando Calrissian.”

He had never heard more beautiful words in his life.

“Alyla, I… I lov-”

“Shh,” she climbed back on the bed and put a finger to his lips. “I’m ready to say it, but I’m not ready to hear it.”

He gently moved her finger from his mouth and kissed the back of her hand, “Alright. But when will you be ready to hear it?”

Alyla stroked his cheek, “The next time we see each other, I’ll be ready. But I want it face to face.”

“Alright, I promise. The next time we see each other, I’ll say it, but you have to hurry back now. Promise?”

“Promise,” she leaned forward and gave him the last kiss they would ever share. “I love you, Lando Calrissian. We’ll see each other soon.”

“I’ll be counting the seconds, My Darling.”

There was a holo of Alyla on Lando’s dresser. He carried it everywhere, holding it as precious as the mourner’s armband he wore every day. It was Alyla smiling, a blue morning glory tucked behind her ear and eyes filled with such life.

Lando gripped the dresser as he fought back a shaky sob.

He remembered the night Han called. Lando was waiting for his nightly comm from Alyla and was getting a little annoyed with how late she was.

He had called her home earlier, but there was no answer. Getting worried, Lando called Gavyn’s house to see if Alyla was visiting her brother. Alyla’s niece, Miri answered the call, and Lando was surprised to find she was babysitting Rey, who was playing in the background. Miri said there was some emergency Council thing at Reine’s house but wouldn’t answer questions when Lando pressed for more details. Miri promised that Alyla would call as soon as possible, but it might not be until the morning. When Lando asked if Alyla was in any danger, Miri wouldn’t give him a straight answer.
That was when Miri had whispered to him that *it's something to do with Ben*.

His heart dropped at those words. Alyla had kept him abreast of the difficulties Ben Solo was going through. Lando had experienced some first hand. He had made Ben a promise that if he ever got himself in trouble and needed non-judgemental help – like he was underage drinking and got stranded – Lando would help, no questions asked, and not tell Han and Leia.

They still didn’t know to the night of Poe Dameron’s promotion ceremony that Lando had bailed Ben out of jail and paid off various criminal charges four times before he ran away to the First Order.

And a few times since.

Lando was so relieved when he heard the beeping of the comm, that he didn’t glance at the name of the caller before he answered it.

---

“Alyla. Darling, you’ve kept me up all night,” Lando said in a hurry, not even bothering to switch to visual, “and not in the good way. Think I gotta come up with a way for you to make it up to me. Anyway, the adoption agency called me today. They said that we-”

“Lando?” came the voice of Han Solo, more anxious and fragile than he had heard before.

Lando frowned, “Han?”

“Yeah… Uh. I… I gotta tell you something. Something important.”

“Can it wait? I’m waiting to hear from Alyla.”

There was a terrifying silence.

“Buddy… Alyla’s not going to call.”

Lando could have sworn he physically felt his heart break.

“What- What do you mean?” Lando’s voice shook. “Why isn’t she going to call?”

“Lando… I think you should sit down.”

---

He stared at the image of Alyla Kene with glassy eyes. She was so full of life, so kind, so trusting. Alyla Kene had every right in the world to live a life of bitterness and anger. Instead she chose one of love and warmth.

She didn’t deserve to die.

---

“Gavyn hasn’t left her side at all,” Leia said as she led Lando up the stairs of Alyla’s home to the bedroom where Alyla… was. “Never gets out of the chair. We have to bring him food, and don’t ask me how he’s managing to use the fresher. I swear, his avoidance of a shower had gone on so long, I think Zena literally sponged him off yesterday.”
“I’m very grateful that they chose to wait,” Lando’s throat felt like it was about to close up.

“Of course they waited. Gavyn only ever gives… gave you a hard time when he got bored or you two did something that he didn’t like seeing.”

They came to a stop in front of the bedroom door. Han was waiting in front of it.

“Hey,” Han said softly.

“Hey,” Lando nodded to him. He opened his mouth to say more but nothing came out.

Han sighed and clasped Lando’s shoulder, “Buddy… I’m really sorry about Alyla. I wish I could have done something.”

“Han,” Leia simply said.

He nodded.

Lando took a deep breath, “I’m sorry about Ben. Any… word on him?”

“I… I don’t even want to think about him right now. We’ll deal with that later. Much later. When he stops being an idiot.”

“Don’t call him an idiot,” Leia snapped. “He’s our son. We need to find him and bring him home.”

“Bring him home? So he can kill someone else? He did this, Leia! If he can do this to Alyla, none of us are safe. Not you. Not me. Certainly not Fliss. And what about Rey? What if he goes after her?”

“Stop!” Leia said firmly. “We’re not doing this again. Not now.”

Han opened his mouth to argue but sighed when he caught sight of Lando.

“Alright.” Han turned and raised his fist to knock when the door slid open to reveal Luke, “How did you… Ugh, I’ll never get used to you sensing things.”


“Arguing about Ben again,” Leia answered.


“Literally nothing could have stopped me,” Lando replied. “Is she… in there?”


“Sure, just, uh… give me a minute.”


“I think I’m going to cut out here,” Han said to Luke. “Things are getting heavy, and I need to focus on something actually good in this world. Where’s Rey? I think I need to hug her for a while.”

“At home with Felicity and Threepio,” Luke answered. “It’s probably about time Felicity tags out from Threepio or I’m going to come home to a pile of golden mechanics. Can you tell her I’m going to stop by and check on Reine before I come home?”

“You got it.” Han looked to Lando, “Chewie’s downstairs if you need anything. Did you want me to
“I think I’ll be fine without you,” Lando smiled. “Go on. Tell the girls and Threepio I said hi.”

Han clapped Lando on the shoulder and left.

“Alright,” Lando took a deep breath. “It’s time.”

He remembered the way his heart lurched when he saw Alyla’s body. Her eyes were closed, and someone had changed her from the bloody clothes of her murder. It’s often said that a dead person simply looks like they’re sleeping, but Lando didn’t agree. She was too still, too pale, too limp.

Lando Calrissian never planned to settle down and fall for one woman, and yet how he found himself staring at the love of his life, lying dead on the bed where they had first made love.

Gavyn was sitting in a chair next to her, looking absolutely terrible. Zena was standing behind him solemnly, her hands firmly on his shoulders. Miri was nowhere to be found, and Lando would later hear that she was in the kitchen, crying in Chewbacca’s arms.

Lando stood in the doorway just staring, not knowing how to possibly ever deal with the scene before him. This wasn’t supposed to happen. They were supposed to be picking out their son, and painting his bedroom, and working out college funds, and reading parenting books.

He was supposed to tell her that he loved her.

Gavyn surprised everyone when he announced he was going to go take a shower. Making excuses about comm calls and making lunch, everyone made the unspoken agreement to give Lando a few minutes alone with her.

As Gavyn came to the doorway, he stopped for a moment and placed a hand on Lando’s shoulder. Lando understood: Gavyn hadn’t left Alyla’s side because he had been guarding her for Lando. He loved his sister dearly, but he knew that there were two important men in her life. Gavyn wanted to make sure the other got the same respect he had.

Lando sat in Gavyn’s chair for a long time just staring at her. Several minutes passed before he clasped her hand in his. It was so cold and limp. The tears mutinied against his senses and dared to stream as he lifted the back of her hand to his lips.

What would he give to hear her laugh once more? See her smile? She had such a lovely smile.

Lando reached into his breast pocket and pulled out a small blue morning glory, gifted to him by the same vendor – not utterly heartbroken at that lovely girl’s death – who had first introduced them to her. With the gentlest touch of his life, Lando placed it behind her ear.

“Well, it seems you were truly the morning glory, My Darling,” Lando fought a losing battle to his sobs. “You deserved so much better than the life you got… so much better than me.”

Silence clung to the room as one of his tears splashed onto her cheek.

“I made you a promise,” Lando whispered. “I’d do it face to face the next time we saw each other.
I’d finally say it to you… Alyla Kene, I love you. I have since the day we met, and I think I’m going to love you until the day I die. You changed me, made me a better man. Thank you.”

He squeezed her hand.

“If you could speak to me now, I know what you’d say. What you would want from me. I promise I’ll do it. For you, I will. I will forgive Ben Solo for taking you away… and I will do whatever it takes to bring him back to the Light Side. I won’t give up on him. I promise. If you can hear me, I promise.”

Lando bent down and gave her on final kiss, knowing he’d regret it if he didn’t.

“I love you, Alyla Kene.”

And for a moment, Lando could have sworn he heard her whisper, “I love you, Lando Calrissian.”

Lando sighed, fighting back his tears.

“I love you, Alyla Kene,” he whispered as he did every night. He knew somewhere out there she was listening to him, and he would make damn sure not a day passed where she didn’t hear the words he never told her in life.

That night he dreamed of Alyla Kene safely wrapped up in his arms once more, sharing those utterances of love they never voiced. It was a dream so warm, so gentle, so perfect that it couldn’t have been anything but.

But if a Force Sensitive had walked into the room that night, they would have told Lando it wasn’t a dream at all.

Sky blue eyes burned with hate above him and those strong hands crushed his throat like a vice.

“No, Uncle, please!” Ben Solo begged as Luke Skywalker held him down.

Rage, murder, and revenge filled Luke’s heart, and Ben felt fear. He tried to fight Luke off, but his uncle was just too strong. Ben gasped desperately, the little air that managed to flow in and out of his lungs coursing in rough gasps. Tears pricked in the corners of his eyes as he begged his uncle for mercy.

“Please, Uncle. It’s me! You promised never to hurt me!” Ben sobbed. “Uncle Luke!”

A cold voice laughed on the air, and Felicity Rhiaon was standing behind Luke, laughing at Ben.

“Well, what did you expect?” Felicity taunted. Utter glee filled her soul as she watched her husband murdering his nephew. “After what you did? You think you were going to get away with it? You think he’d still love you? That your parents would love you? Your father hates you. Always was ashamed of you. He’s happy and better off without you.”

“Please,” Ben begged her, “call him off.”

Felicity’s laughter was hysterical, “Why would I do that? I begged you for mercy, and you showed...
me none. Why should you get the courtesy you denied me?"

“Please, Uncle Luke. Please stop. I’m sorry.”


“No.”

“You killed Alyla.”

“No.”

“You killed me!”

“No! No!” Ben screamed as his uncle’s hands tightened against his windpipe. He wept as the world faded to black. “No! No! No!”

“No!” Kylo screamed, shooting upright in bed.

“Kylo?” Sasa moaned blearily at his side. She was half asleep but roused by the strength of his panic, “What’s going on?”

“It’s nothing,” Kylo gasped, trying to regulate his breathing. Luke’s hands were gone, his lungs were unimpeded. He was safe. He was safe.

“Kylo?”

“It’s okay…I’m okay,” Kylo answered in a soothing tone when he could breathe normally again. He stroked Sasa’s cheek tenderly, smiling slightly at the sight of her. He was safe with her. Though she was not fully conscious, her mind reached for his instinctually in the Force to calm him, which it did at the very touch of her cerise Signature. “It was just a nightmare. Go back to sleep.”

“Do you want me to rebalance you?”

“You at my side is enough to rebalance me. Go back to sleep.”

“Are you sure?” Sasa asked.

“Sleep,” he bent down and kissed her lips. He whispered against them, “Sleep and dream of me.”

She smiled at him, “I always do.”

Then she settled back down for sleep.

Kylo sighed; if only he could settle so easily. Though Sasa soothed him, there was nothing that could fully quell the fear in his heart as he remembered the way his uncle’s hands had wrapped around his throat. There was only one thing that could possibly get him back to sleep.

“Phasma?” Kylo called into a comm.

It was a while before Phasma replied, “*What, Kylo? Are we under attack or about to be?*”

“No, everything’s calm right now.”
“Then what do you want? I’m sleeping.”

“I need more of the sleeping cordial.”

He heard a heavy sigh on the other end, “Is Sasa in bed with you?”

Kylo glanced at the copper haired beauty curled next to him, “Yes.”

“You better be wearing pants when I get there.”

“Do you have any idea what time it is?” Phasma demanded sleepily but still threateningly. Apparently even Stormtroopers enjoyed their beauty sleep. It was two in the morning, but she was still in full armor, even though she was just delivering the cordial. She offered the bottle to him, “Here you go. I had to make a quick one dose batch for tonight, but I’ll have your full bottle ready in the morning. You know, when it’s a reasonable time to make things like this.”

“Give it,” Kylo had no time for pleasantries. He grabbed the bottle and chugged it in one good. Though it did make him drowsy, the images wouldn’t leave his mind.

“Well?” Phasma asked. “If you fall asleep right here, I’m leaving you on the floor.”

“It’s no good.” Kylo clutched at his head, “I can’t forget his face.”


“I wish I could forget it. He was so angry, so powerful. He wanted me dead, and it just makes me feel weak. I need something that makes me feel strong, that cuts down Luke Skywalker, that-”

Kylo’s eyes brightened.

“I need to see it,” Kylo exclaimed. “I need to see the footage of Felicity Rhiaon’s death.”

Phasma stared at him, her expression unreadable behind the mask and very muted in the Force. She had learned a long time ago how to conceal her feelings moderately from the Force Sensitives around her.

She then glanced over at the altar in the corner of the room. Darth Vader’s charred helmet, Alyla Kene’s lightsaber, and a vial of Felicity Rhiaon’s bloodied hair sat on a blanket of ashes.

“Fine,” Phasma sighed, pulling out the HoloDisc she was requested to bring to Kylo so often she just permanently kept it upon her weapons belt.

They watched it together, the exact same footage that had been given to Luke Skywalker to torture himself with. Kylo and Phasma watched the shock on Felicity face, the way she begged for her life, the way she had refused to give up the truth about her child while faced with death (not that Kylo had any idea about that.)

They watched the blast go off, the way her body hit the face, the kicks Kylo had made at her body, and what he had done to her afterwards.

“This hurt him badly,” Kylo said as they replayed the footage a second time.

“Yes, it did,” Phasma whispered. “So badly that he did something I never thought Luke Skywalker
would ever do… give up and run away. He’s not a coward. I don’t understand why he left, not when there was still something to fight for.”

“It just hurt him too much. Too much, too fast. But it’s better this way. Right? Better he’s off in hiding.”

“No, it’s not good at all.”

“Why not?”

“Because then we have to live with the torture of wondering when he’ll come back.”

Kylo paused the footage as the gloved hand lifted the blaster to Felicity Rhiaon temple.

“When it happened…” Kylo began. “When she died, what did you feel? Victory?”

“Victory?” Phasma repeated, her voice serious. “No, I didn't feel victory when she died. I always thought I would. For years I believed that the moment she died would bring me peace and satisfaction. Instead it only brought me fear.”

“Fear?”

“Of the reckoning that would follow. Of what the world would bring me when they learned what happened. Of what Luke Skywalker would do when he learned the truth.”

“No one can ever know the truth about what happened that day,” said Kylo, his hands shaking with fear. “Swear it to me, Phasma.”

“I have your back, Kylo. It would be the end of both of us – of this bond we have – if the truth were to be revealed.”

“If Uncle Luke found out… If my mother did…” Kylo shook his head. “No one can ever know I lied about that day. They can never know that you were really the one who killed Felicity Rhiaon.”

Chapter End Notes

Coming Up Next Chapter…

A Father’s Love
Rey’s pride over her staff skills have gotten her over confident, and Teng is worried. Luke finds he has to step in when she crosses the line with Sarco Plank.

So the BB-8 saved Poe from pirates thing is a reference to a fic I adore. It’s called Strong Loyalty Subprogram by wordslinging on AO3. I just imagine this happening at some point in my story, and asked the author if I could have permission to make it canon in my work (full disclosure, they never replied.) Give it a read. It’s a delightful story.

Anyone who is wondering if Tara’s mysterious backstory will end up being a big thing… No. It’s not. That whole exchange was just me being meta about how not every character needs a big, dramatic backstory.

You know, in the chapter where I explained like five dramatic backstories.
Also, no I’m not saying at any point in the story what happened to make Alyla scar herself. If you really want to know, I have left clues. Just pay attention to what Dirk said last chapter, and you should be able to figure it out.
A Father's Love

Chapter Summary

Teng loses his shirt at the worst time, Rey finds herself in a duel she can't win, and Aletha gives overboard with her care package.

Chapter Notes

So, I lied. I bought Bomber Command. Haven’t added anything new because of it, but I may go through the book and pull quotes from it later.

Credit for the Threepio and Jessika scenes in this chapter go to Jason Fry. They are literally copy and pasted from The Weapon of a Jedi and tweaked only a little bit as a bit of a framing device for something in this chapter. Sorry for breaking the promise of only featuring Jakku in this chapter. Also, I edited out the fact Threepio has his red arm in the book as that has yet to happen in this fic.

Dedicated to R2_D2106 who actually has written wonderful fan fiction of my fan fiction. Quom’s fleet line is from that fic, and the character of Lyra is a nod to it.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The Long Way Home

Chapter Forty-Five

A Father’s Love

Or That Time Aletha Went Really Overboard with the Concept of a Care Package

I’m writing this to pass the time – and to pass on what I’ve learned so you have a chance to survive too.

- Rey’s Survival Guide

“Ok, I understand a care package, but this? This is a care shipment!” Luke groaned as he, Teng, Rey, and Quom struggled to drag the two enormous wooden crates into the workshop.

“Well, you know, Doc,” Quom grunted as he pushed the crate with Teng. “She likes to go
overboard.”

“It’s why you two made such a good couple,” Rey teased.

Luke shook his head, “Quit sass ing and keep shoving.”

There was a myriad of grunts and groans, but when the crates were inside fully, there was a giant exhalation of relief as three humans and a Vrogem collapsed on the sandy ground.

“There!” Quom gasped, panting like a dog, his tongue hanging out of his mouth. “I am never moving anything heavy again. Isn’t that why I bought Teng?”

Teng shook his head, “Thanks, Quom.”

“No problem, Pup,” he patted Teng on the arm. “That Lyra girl was nice, though. Didn’t know why you wanted me to stay away from her, Luke.”

“Because I don’t trust you near anyone new without supervision,” Luke replied. “…Or just being unsupervised in general.”

“I’ll back you up on that one,” Rey laughed. “I’m just surprised that Jedek sent his daughter to deliver it rather than himself.”

“Maybe he was busy,” Luke shrugged, got up and searched for a crowbar.

“You know, I love how your birthday present shows up on my birthday,” Teng eyed Rey. “You’d think Aletha would at least send me something too.”

“Oh, stop whining, we can share,” Rey rolled her eyes. She leaned over to Quom, “Honestly, he’s been like this all morning.”

Teng was still a little disturbed by the Super Star Destroyer incident from that morning, but he hadn’t mentioned it to Luke and Quom, too occupied with just how freaking heavy the crates had been and trying to pretend like he and Rey didn’t know Aletha was going to send a present.

“He has?” Luke raised an eyebrow as he pried open the crates.

“She’s been…” Teng eyed his girlfriend. “Difficult.”

Luke understood, “Rey, were you beating up other scavengers again?”

“No!”

Luke raised an eyebrow.

“…Maybe,” Rey weakly confessed.

“She called dibs on the Super Star Destroyer,” Teng ratted out.

“Teng!”

“Sorry, Honey, but you gotta stop with all of this.”

Rey shrugged, “If all three of us work together.”

“Three?” Teng questioned.

“I’ve given up on Quom at this point.”

“Fair enough.”

“Sweetheart,” Luke tried not to sound exasperated, “scavengers have been stripping that ship since long before you were born and will continue to do so long after you’re dead. We cannot strip that whole ship.”

“I don’t see what she’s doing wrong,” Quom said.

“You can’t see what’s wrong with claiming the entire Star Destroyer?”

“It’s the biggest item in the desert.”

“That’s my exact point, Quom.”

“It’s a power play, Luke!” Quom exclaimed. “No one thinks she would actually be able to call dibs on the full thing, but by staking her claim, she’s cementing herself as the most powerful person in town.”

Luke groaned, “And that opens a whole new set of problems.”

“Look, she’s doing exactly what I taught her. When you encounter a strange scavenger, claim the spot, threaten them, and establish your dominance quickly. Make yourself seem as dangerous and unscrupulous as possible, and maybe tell a few lies to get things going. It’s how I ended up with you lot after all.”

“Yeah, but that didn’t go according to your plan anyway,” Luke reminded. “You barged in on Felicity, only to instantly back down the second she pointed a blaster at your face. You threatened to leave a child to die, even though, judging from the fact you spent two months of portions to save Teng, you absolutely never would do it. Then you proceeded to give away far more in trade than what my wife’s wedding rings were actually worth, and in fact you knew that they were worthless on Jakku because what can anyone do with a ring around here? You gave all of that out of guilt, and then you ended up apologizing and returning said rings. Not to mention you lied about Plutt having something called a cool down pill, which was actually a pill you found in the survival kit of an X-Wing that helped a person adjust to a sudden extreme environment. The pill just made Rey adapt to Jakku’s climate; it didn’t do a thing about her heat stroke. Getting a drink of water and some ice packs did.”

“That explains so many things,” Rey said.

“Alright, then I’m out of this argument,” Quom declared. “MG, you’re on your own.”

“Damn, didn’t think that through.” Rey frowned at Luke, “Aren’t you going to scold me for using bad language?”

Luke shrugged, “You’re sixteen, old enough to decide if you want to curse. Besides, I would be a fool to stop a Rhiaon from cursing. I literally couldn’t get your mother to wait until you were twenty-four hours old before she swore in front of you. What I am going to scold you for is calling dibs on the Star Destroyer, or rather more specifically for constantly getting in fights.”
“Ok, that’s not fair! You taught me to fight.”


Teng frowned, “Isn’t the syntax on that a little off?”

*Yoda gave his mischievous laugh in the Force, “Know what of grammar the cult-born boy does?”*

It took all of Luke’s strength not to respond to Yoda, “It’s just… something I was told, Teng. But it still applies.”

Rey huffed, “But tell me why-”

“No,” Luke cut off, reminded once more that she truly was his daughter. “Enough. There is no justification to claiming a Star Destroyer. You want to claim Antar’s X-Wing? Be my guest. No Star Destroyers! …This is not a lecture I ever thought I’d give.”

Rey narrowed her eyes and crossed her arms.

“You can’t stop me,” she said sternly.

Luke gave an involuntary shudder. That was the exact pose and tone of voice Felicity would use when he had done something to colossally piss her off. It was the kind of pose she had used during their arguments about Tyla being an Inquisitor and Ben as a potential danger to Rey.

If there was one thing Alaric Rhiaon had truly passed on to his daughter, it was that terrifying pose that had kept his children in line for the first sixteen years of his daughter’s life.

And Luke thought taking after the Skywalkers was bad enough.

“No. You’re right,” Luke struggled not to cow to a glare from his sixteen-year-old daughter. He may be her father, but damn, he and that stare had a history. “But I can guide and mentor you into taking the right path.”

“The right path,” Rey scoffed. “Oh, please, that’s a lot coming from a pacifist. Face it, Dad, you never even so much as throw a punch. Can you even fight? Like actually winning in combat sort of thing?”

Teng and Quom exchanged a look, and in perfect harmony took a step back from the father and daughter.

Luke raised an eyebrow, and then slowly gave her his own narrowed-eyed and arm-crossed glare. Rey may have got Alaric Rhiaon’s stern and disappointed look, but damn it, he had been graced with Padmé Amidala’s and he would use that to his advantage. He could get Obi-Wan Freaking Kenobi to cow to that look.

He could also Anakin Skywalker to submit to it in an instant, but that was for vastly different reasons. In fact, the only person who it didn’t work on was Leia, and that was only because she could do it, and do it better.


She didn’t back down, “Yes. Face it, Dad. I’ve never seen you take on someone like that and win.”

“That you remember, and believe me, you should be thankful that you don’t. You don’t want to know what I’m capable of, Rey. I would never ever use it against you, but that doesn’t mean you
should take me for granted. I saved you from Jarex Zolhar after all.”

The name dropped in her stomach like lead, “J- Jarex?”

“He’s missing a hand if you remember. True, I did face off with that gang with the help of Quom and Aletha, but what happened to Jarex… that was all me. I have great power, Rey, and so do you. It’s our responsibility to use it for the good of others, not our own selfish reasons. With great power comes great responsibility.”

Quom frowned, “You know, I feel like that phrase belongs somewhere else.”

“But I am being responsible,” Rey insisted. “I’m not baiting someone into a fight simply to fight them.”

“Are you sure?” Luke questioned, his tone even. “That’s not your true motivation?”

“Yes!” Rey insisted. “I just don’t want people bothering me; nothing more.”

“Fine. Then how about this?” Luke offered, “I drop the subject on the condition you stop claiming the Star Destroyer as your territory. And you do not ever use your skills to attack someone. Only to defend yourself or if need be, Teng.”


“No problem,” he replied.

“That’s it?” Rey asked.

Luke nodded, “That’s all you have to do.”

“Fine, deal.” Rey shook her father’s hand, “But no more comments from you on the subject.”

“I’m a man of my word, but Rey, please remember that if you do ever get yourself into trouble… if a situation gets out of hand, please just comm me. I will come, and I will protect you.”

“You don’t need to protect me.”

“I’m your father, of course I do. You can take care of yourself, but I will always be there to pick up any slack. Any time, any place, no matter what. Even if you defy me, or do something you shouldn’t have, my first priority is taking care of you.”

“And that’s why you won’t answer questions about our past?” Rey teased.

Luke grinned, “You’re a big girl now, Rey. I might be open to more questions now.”

“Really?” her eyes lit up.

“But later,” he patted her hand. “For now, let’s see what in the Galaxy Aletha sent you.”

“I think it is the Galaxy,” Quom eyed the nearest crate. “These boxes are big enough to hold it.”

“And none of you knew she was sending this?” Luke asked suspiciously.

“Nope,” all three said in perfect harmony.

He knew they were lying, but Luke decided not to press the issue.
“Alright, Rey, since it is your present, why don’t you unpack these… crates,” Luke eyed the way the boxes nearly came to his waist, “and show us what you got.”

“Oh,” Rey approached the crates and looked inside. “Wow.”

It was… not what Rey had been expecting. She thought the girls were going to send her a little box with a few things, but that was not what was before her. No, she was looking at two giant crates crammed full with dozens of smaller bags and boxes. This apparently was what happened when Aletha Kymeri, Kaydel Ko Connix, Jessika Pava, Rose and Paige Tico, and Poe Dameron (Kaydel mentioned the project to him and he insisted on helping) worked together.

She now understood what Jessika meant last night when she said if Kira couldn’t come to civilization, then they were going to bring it to her.

Thankfully Rey didn’t have to be overwhelmed on where to start because there was an envelope at the top of one of the crates which read OPEN ME FIRST.

Rey grabbed the envelop and teared it open to find a few pages stapled together and Aletha’s familiar writing filling them. She read aloud what it said.

To my Jakku Family,

My lovely and sorely missed Rey, Luke, Quom, and Teng,

First off, I would like to say, I love you all, I miss you so much, I think about each of you every day, and I can’t wait until I get to see you again. I fight for all of you, and I do not regret my decision to leave. I truly am making a difference in the universe, and I wake every morning with a smile on my face.

The group smiled at Aletha’s words, and Rey couldn’t help but grin wider than them all. She had to resist making a joke that she knew the reason Aletha was smiling when she woke up was that a certain Diego Nalto was waking up in bed with her.

I know the Force will reunite us, or at least I pray it has that mercy.

Secondly, I will say this: Luke, do not panic. I am literally writing the names on this letter immediately before handing it off to Jedek. Your secret is still safe.

Luke couldn’t help but laugh at that.

I know you’re going to be surprised about the gift I have sent, and I know I went a little overboard. I wanted this to be a gift for all four of you, and I wanted the supplies to last you a few years. But please, do not ask how much this all cost or how I paid for it. It was a mix of donated products, my own personal funds, and some other sources I will keep close to my chest.

Rey grinned. It was also known as Kaydel Ko Connix, Rose and Paige Tico, Poe Dameron, Jessika Pava, and if her suspicions were correct, Diego, Evan, and Tallie had chipped in a little bit.

I have included a list of everything contained in these crates, and an explanation for a few of these. And I don’t want to hear anything about price or going overboard. Tough. I know what kind of life you people live on Jakku, so while I go to sleep on a nice mattress – or as nice as a military base gets – and under soft blankets, I can at least throw you a few bottles of hand lotion as recompense for hammocks, cots, and I swear to God, Quom, you better not be making Teng sleep on the ground.

“Yep,” Quom chuckled, “that’s our Doc, alright.”
Finally, before you start digging in – okay, I can’t guarantee Quom hasn’t already started snooping, but I know Luke raised Rey and Teng right – let me say one thing.

Everyone turned to look at Quom.

He put down a box he had been inspecting.

The purple box directly under this letter is for Rey’s eyes only. Sorry Boys, but we girls have to keep a secret every now and then. If Rey wants to share the contents, she may… though I doubt you boys would have use for bottle of menstrual cramp relievers.

“You would be surprised,” Quom said seriously.

Teng had lived with him long enough to know not to ask.

So, Rey, please open this away from Quom and your father. If you do, I wash my hands of the consequences.

Luke raised an eyebrow, but Rey just shrugged, avoiding his eyes.

Enjoy this, all of you.

And happy birthday, Rey and Teng. I wish I could be there to tell you in person,

With the full depth of love my heart is capable of,

Doctor Aletha Kymeri née Anthea

Rey handed off the letter to her father and pulled out the purple wooden box, “I’ll open this later.”

“Anything I should be concerned about?” Luke asked gently.

“No,” Rey grinned. She winked, “But Teng should.”

Teng seemed to get an instant sunburn.

“Alright, let’s see what’s in this sucker,” Rey set aside the purple box. She looked between the crates which were packed with a myriad of smaller boxes and bags. “What should I open first?”

“The letter says black carry bag.” Luke squinted at the letter, “She also says to consume immediately as these are very perishable. Consume?”

“Black carry bag,” Rey reached for it. She gasped and drew her hand back, “It’s cold!”

Luke winced. When he was young he had promised himself that his children would never be so unfamiliar with the concept of cold things, and yet here he was.

Rey eagerly pulled the black carry bag – a rather nice square thing with insulation, a zipper, and a long sturdy strap – out of the crate. She unzipped it and gasped.

“Woah,” Teng’s jaw dropped. “Is that-”

“Real food,” Quom marvelled. “It’s been so long since I’ve seen it.”

Various clear containers were covered in melting ice packs. Food that very few people in that tent recognized, but the smell of it… and the colours…. 
“Anyone else extremely hungry right now?” Teng asked.

“I’ll grab the plates.” Quom hurried away.

“Start up the ration cooker,” Luke advised. “Some of this will need to be heated. Oh, Aletha Kymeri, you never cease to amaze me.”

“Dad, what is this all?” Rey asked as everyone worked to set the table and unpack the carry bag.

“Well, it’s food,” Luke glanced at the letter. “Aletha says that there’s more food in boxes 1-3. Teng, grab them, will you?”

“Yes, Sir,” Teng began to dig through the crates, sorting the boxes in numerical order.

“Ration cooker is ready,” Quom announced. “What are we cooking?”

“Alright, the first thing is,” Luke looked at the list and froze. “Oh my god.”

“What?” Rey asked.

Luke glanced at Quom and read the letter, “I hope you guys don’t think some of my choices are weird. I discussed this care package with General Leia Organa – who really loved the idea, so you’ll see some touches from her throughout the box – and she gave me some ideas of food to send you guys. She based it on things she remembered her brother, Luke Skywalker, consuming on the desert planet of Tatooine, thinking food would hold up similarly on Jakku.”

Quom chuckled, “Well, how about that?”

“That is so cool,” Rey grinned. “We’re going to be eating like Luke Skywalker!”

“Think you can perform such a feat, Mister Erso?” Quom winked at Luke.

It took all of Luke’s will-power not to throw something at Quom.


Luke scowled as Quom laughed hysterically, “Don’t make me strangle you, Quom.”

“The Jedi Grandmaster,” Rey explained. “He’s off on some great quest to bring balance to the Galaxy. Facing his greatest challenge yet.”

Luke had to admit that raising a teenager on Jakku with Quom Tinadar was significantly harder than facing the Emperor and resisting the Dark Side.

“Neat,” Teng simply replied. He got into his seat, “So what are we eating?”

“Well in that container,” Luke pointed at one as he scanned the list, “that’s deep fried gorg. It’s a Tatooine street food. A small amphibian creature sometimes called a chuba – no I don’t know why it has the same name as the Huttese word for you, languages are weird. Don’t worry about the amphibian thing; it tastes great.”

Teng frowned, “It says all of that in the letter?”

“Parts of it,” Luke held the letter close to his body.
“Dad?”

“Yes, Rey?”

“What’s street food?”

“Food sold at a vendor like the shops in the marketplace,” Luke explained, his heart hurting a little that Rey didn’t know that you could just walk up to a shop and buy food. Plutt’s monopoly had really messed with her worldview.

“That’s amazing,” Rey watched intently as Quom began to heat up the deep fried gorg on the ration cooker. It wouldn’t do an amazing job, but something was better than nothing. “What else is there?”

“The biggest container,” Luke pointed at it, “is a roast nuna. It’s cut up already, but Aletha says it’s a whole one.”

“Nuna,” Teng grinned. “I remember nuna. It’s from Naboo, right?”

“Among other places.” Luke looked at the list and his jaw almost dropped, “Whoa.”

“What?” Rey asked.

“Um,” Luke struggled how to cover his amazement at the next item. He couldn’t believe Aletha had put in that of all things, “I was just thinking how hard it will be to heat up this next item. The thing in the little bowl is a recipe from a very high-end restaurant on Coruscant. Roast leek soup.”

Rey peeked at the letter and gasped, “Aletha says that this was something Rogue One adored!”

Luke chuckled, memories flitting through his mind, “Yeah. It was… Apparently.”

Quom raised an eyebrow, and Luke waved him off.

“Let’s see what else there is.” Luke shook his head, if the soup hadn’t already tipped him off, then this next item proved Aletha had truly consulted Leia on this care package, “She sent cake.”

“For our birthdays,” Rey grinned at Teng. “What kind of cake? There are different kinds, right?”

“Yes, there are,” Luke smiled at the four containers, each holding a slice of very familiar cake. It was the exact cake he would have on his own birthday every year before his life on Jakku. “This is Sic-six-layer cake made from a place on Coruscant called Dex’s Diner. Apparently a favorite restaurant of Leia Organa’s.”

“I’ve heard of Dex’s Diner,” Teng piped up, surprising everyone. He saw the looks he was getting, “What? Even pirates have to eat. They said it was good.”

“Anything else perishable?” Quom asked.

“A few more things,” Luke answered. “The small box is cheese made of Narglatch milk, the thermos is filled with blue milk – now that brings back memories – and Box 1 back by the crate is filled with… What the? What does that mean?”

“What?” Rey asked in a panic. Was her secret out somehow?

“Listen to this.” Luke read the letter, “Box 1 is filled with koyo melons. Freshly picked and packed, they come from the Dameron ranch. The Dameron ranch is operated by Kes Dameron, a war veteran I am acquainted with. His son, Poe Dameron, has become a pleasure to work with – most of
Everyone stared at Luke, too afraid to ask for clarification in fear they would tip him off to their secret communication with Aletha.

Luke wanted to tell them all that he knew Kes and Poe Dameron and was amazed to receive fruit from their ranch, but instead he settled on, “What niece?”

“Oh,” Rey cleared her throat, deciding she had the best chance at covering for them, “didn’t you talk to Lyra? She said that Aletha apparently found one of her nieces was working in the Resistance and they’ve reconnected. Aletha consulted her a little on the care package apparently.”

“Well, that’s uh,” Luke cleared his throat in the exact same manner, deciding it was best to move on from the point. “That’s nice. Teng, why don’t you open Box 2?”

Teng frowned, “Aren’t we going to eat?”

“It’ll be a while, Pup,” Quom answered. “Let’s unpack everything and by the time we’re done that the food should be ready.”

So, they unpacked the next crate of food products with Luke reading out what they were.

Aletha had sent a box of energy bars that were standard in the Rebellion that Luke had fond memories of, three cans of fruit (Jogan Fruit, Thorn Pear, and Durang Fruit), a can opener, a few packs of Bantha jerky, what Rey recognized by the brand name to be Rose’s favorite saltine crackers, and a few bags of trail mix that Luke was quick to push away.

“Sorry for the kind I sent you,” Rey read the letter, “but trail mix goes surprisingly quick in the Resistance. The Resistance likes to theme them around planets as a way of letting people have a small comfort of home. Poe’s droid, BB-8 has literally gotten into fights over the Yavinese variation. The only kind left I was able to get you guys was the Dagobah themed one. Apparently, Han Solo had it made as a gag for Luke Skywalker during one mission, but after the Food Director learned how much nutrition and energy was packed in it, she demanded it become a permanent variation. Now the teams fight over who gets stuck with that kind, but hey, I figured it had to be better than a decade of polystarch. It has Galla seeds, Sohli bark, and dehydrated mushroom spores.”

It was as terrible as Luke remembered. He’d take ten years of stale expired rations on Jakku over those awful two months of eating the food of Dagobah any time.

Box 3 was more food, and Luke was actually quite excited over what was in it.

“Drink mixes?” Rey frowned at the packages. “What does that mean?”

“You mix these packages of powder into water to make a different tasting drink,” Luke explained. “Usually you use hot water.”

Rey frowned at a package, “Hot chocolate?”

Luke’s eyes widened, “Hot chocolate?”

“Yeah, some weird brown thing if the picture is right,” Rey squinted at the packet. “It looks like mud. Sounds terrible.”

Luke cleared his throat, “Yeah, it probably is. Why don’t I just take it off your hands?”
“Take it all,” Rey pushed the box into her father’s hands.

Luke grinned. Sometimes he was a bad father, and he was okay with that.

“Ugh,” Teng made a face as he inspected another package, “instant caf. Can we just toss this?”

Rey frowned, “Oh, but I’ve always wanted to try caf.”

“Starlight, I love you too much to let you drink that,” Teng said simply.

She froze, “You what?”

Luke and Quom exchanged a look.

“What?” Teng blinked, clearly missing something.

She watched him with a careful smile, “You said… you love me.”

Teng’s face regained its sunburn, “Oh! Uh, yeah, well… ahem I uh… I do.”

He could not believe this was the situation in which he first told her that. Digging through crates, Luke and Quom staring at them, while Teng warned her about the dangers of instant caf. Usually this sort of thing would send Teng trudging back home to slam his head against a tent peg over and over calling himself an idiot, but he was already home.

Would it be rude to ask everyone to leave?

Luke smiled kindly and patted Teng on the shoulder, “Why don’t you two discuss this later?”

“Sounds good to me,” Teng said quickly. “Rey?”

She hesitated, “Oh, alright. But we will talk.”

“Promise,” Teng smiled.

“Well, you continue to prove to be no fun,” Quom declared, glaring at Luke. He was inspecting a tin of powder, “That is this?”

Teng frowned, “Looks like something the pirates would smuggle. Probably illegal and possibly hallucinogenic. If you use it, don’t expect me to take care of you while you’re under the influence. Or, you know… hit me for not doing so.”

“The more you tell me about your life, Pup, the more I want to hug you.”

“Please don’t. You actually cracked one of my ribs with the power of one of your sympathetic hugs.” Teng glanced at Rey, “He hugs hard.”

“Believe me, I know,” Rey laughed, pressing a kiss to his cheek. She then checked the letter, “Let’s see… Oh, this is interesting. She says it’s a Vrogem drink powder called Uzaka used to calm and regulate the mind after an episode of darkness… whatever that means.”

“I’ll take that,” Luke snatched it from Quom. “I have a feeling I’ll need to medicate you one of these days.”

Teng muttered, “He probably already needs medication of some sort. Ow! Rey! What was that for?”
“Same rules I have with Dirk I apply to any mental health joke. Do not make fun of mental illness.”

“Sorry, Dear,” Teng rubbed his side.

Quom grinned at Luke, “Those two make a good couple. They keep each other in line… even if she does occasionally use violence to do so.”

“Eh, worked for Felicity and I,” Luke shrugged, and they unpacked the rest of the third box.

The box included three kinds of tea bags – hearthwood, tezirett, and yarum, which was a seed from Dagobah that actually tasted really good. Aletha also had sent some bottles of Chadian and Ubese dressing – the most common flavorings in the galaxy, something used like salt and pepper were on the Yavin moons. There were various packets of spices that Aletha hoped would make rations taste better, and some sauces, one of which Rey knew to be an extremely potent hot sauce that Jessika Pava used on everything, and the taste of which had once made Poe Dameron cry. And he was from Yavin IV, moon of spicy food.

Box 4 was a small one, and it clearly was dedicated to Rey. It had a few bottles of the promised nail polish – blue, red, lilac, metallic silver, and a clear top coat that made her nails look glossy. There were also the lip glosses: one clear and two tinted ones – red and pink. Three retractable pencils of eyeliner – black, brown, and silver for fun – and a few tubes of black mascara that Aletha swore up and down could withstand the desert because she had actually sometimes used the same brand while living on Jakku.

She also had sent two small bottles of fragrance: the kind of perfume that Kaydel wore which would guarantee a Poe Dameron attached to her neck, and the kind of cologne Poe used that he was passing along to Teng.

“Told you she would send you stuff too,” Rey grinned as Teng curiously sniffed at the cologne.

“But even better, Rey got Quom’s expected reaction to the nail polish.”

“What is that?” Quom grabbed the bottle of red nail polish. “Paint for your nails? Why is this a thing? What would you need this for? Nails are claws! They should be sharp tools to aid you in scavenging and fighting! The only time they should be red is if they are covered in blood!”

“Then I’m glad what’s in this next box,” Teng lifted up a bottle of hand sanitizer.

The next eight boxes were jam packed with a frankly ridiculous number of medical supplies, including five giant bottles of hand sanitizer.

“Well, what did you expect from, Doc?” Quom said. “Oh, breath mints.”

“Keep them,” Teng said quickly. “Please… I beg you.”

Quom swatted at him.

The next box was a joint present for Rey and Teng. Three thick blank notebooks – Aletha sent an uneven number because Rey already owned the one from Quom – a translation guide, a mechanic manual, and a book about the art of Naboo. Luke flipped through it and discovered his mother’s ex-boyfriend Paulo had a few pieces in it, which did not make Force Ghost Anakin happy, but made Force Ghost Obi-Wan laugh at Anakin’s reaction.
Aletha also had sent a few teaching manuals, math workbooks, classic novels, history books, and science texts.

“These two children have a poor enough education,” Luke read the letter. “Let’s change that, shall we? Also, use on Quom if you need to, Luke.”

“Hey!” Quom objected.


“Alright, fair enough.”

In the box, she had also sent a few boxes of pencils, a package of erasers, two boxes of coloured pencils, two pencil sharpeners, a package of nice black ink art pens, and a deck of Sabacc cards.

The next few boxes were dedicated to hygiene items, and it was clear that she wasn’t just treating the teenagers this time.

*Luke and Quom, for men who are surprisingly into their appearances, particularly their hair, you are dusty, dirty, hermits. We’re fixing that. So, I turned to the experts about grooming and appearance in the Resistance: Leia Organa and Poe Dameron.*


This was the part where Aletha’s explanation about wanting to take care of all of them for several years came into play. She sent four toothbrushes, seven tubes of toothpaste, three hair brushes, a special hairbrush for Quom’s fur, ten boxes of floss, a few packages of new hair ties for Rey, nail clippers, a nail file/emery board, a beard trimmer, ten packages of washing detergent, two bottles of dish soap, three bottles of the body wash Kaydel liked to use, six bottles of the body wash Poe used, ten bottles of a shampoo/conditioner made for Wookiees, twenty bottles of lotion, fifteen sticks of deodorant for the humans, a few packages of razors, three bottles of shaving cream… and one tube of chapstick.

No one ever actually finishes a chapstick.

But what surprised Luke most of all were the ten bottles of shampoo and ten bottles of conditioner that Aletha sent.

*Of all the things in this care package, this was probably the most expensive. This is really good stuff, so use it wisely because I’m not sending you any more. The shampoo and conditioner I sent was recommended to me by Leia Organa. This is the stuff that she, Luke Skywalker, and Poe Dameron use on their hair. This is the best of the best… so don’t let Quom touch it. I sent him the good stuff for fully hairy species. Don’t waste an entire bottle on just washing him.*

“It smells really good,” Rey declared holding the bottle close. “Like really good. Almost something… comforting.”

“It does, doesn’t it?” Luke smiled sadly.

Aletha was right, this was the stuff Luke had used back in his old life. He had started using it because Rey loved the shampoo Aunt Leia would use on her when she stayed with her aunt. It made Aunt Leia’s hair so shiny and soft and smell so good. Luke remembered coming into Leia’s apartment one night to find Rey had fallen asleep on the couch in Leia’s arms, just loving the scent of her aunt’s hair.
Luke gave the shampoo a small sniff, and Leia’s warmth flooded his soul as her scent filled his nostrils. He missed her so much.

“If you guys are done sniffing things, the food is almost ready,” Quom declared. “Let’s hurry this up.”

“Right, Teng, next box,” Luke ordered.

The next box was clothing. Four sets of goggles, four sets of military grade adventuring boots – how she got their sizes perfect, Luke had no clue – some proper work gloves for Teng, seven scarves for the delighted Quom, three black right hand gloves for Luke, several packages of socks, and several packages of underwear which was quickly passed to the correct people without much eye contact.

There was one thing in the box that surprised Teng: a pair of leather wrist cuffs.

When I mentioned to Poe that Teng was turning eighteen and that no coming-of-age thing was planned, he insisted we send him these wrist cuffs. On the Yavinese moons, eighteen is the age of majority, and it’s tradition to give a gift of something made from Runyip leather. Poe himself has a jacket made of it, and I must say that when he wears it, Kaydel can barely keep her hands off of him. I think it’s actually Kes’ old jacket as it has a faded red Starbird patch on the shoulder.

Actually, the whole coming-of-age aspect is the reason for Rey’s gift here. On my home planet of Mallarex, sixteen is the age of majority. When you turn sixteen, you receive a bracelet such as this, wound with five bronze coloured cords. The five cords represent five mythical sisters that supposedly bring luck and protection to women everywhere. It’s said on my planet that having five daughters is the most ideal set of children.

And yes, I do see the irony in the fact that I am one of five sisters, and our relationship has developed into death, disorder, and disowning.

“Well, now that she points it out, it loses all its fun,” Quom pouted.

“Alright, there’s not much left,” Luke declared looking around the disaster of the tent. The ground was absolutely covered in products and empty boxes. “Just two left. Well, three if you count Rey’s private box.”

“The letter says the next box is for Teng,” Rey said. “It’s his birthday present from Aletha. Told you she’d get you something.”

Teng opened the box and was impressed, “Whoa. She got me a utility belt.”

“A nice one from the looks of it,” Luke appraised the belt sitting on some green fabric. “Good sized pockets, nice leather, and the buckle is secure.”

“You know a lot about utility belts?” Teng teased.

Luke grinned, “I’ve had a few in my day. My first had a grappling hook. Came in surprisingly handy.”

“Looks like this one does too,” Teng started to lift the belt out of the box when he felt something odd underneath the green fabric, “Is there something else in the box?”

Rey scanned the letter and gasped, “Why don’t you take a look?”

Teng lifted out the utility belt and pulled aside the green fabric. His jaw dropped when he saw what
was sitting underneath.

Rey read out the letter, “As you are now an adult on most planets, I thought it was time you had
your weapon. A real weapon. A new weapon. I bought you your very own blaster. Along with a few
power cells and extra gas cartridges, you’ll find a brand-new DL-44 blaster. This comes highly
recommended from several Resistance soldiers, especially General Leia Organa. Apparently, the
DL-44 model is exclusively what Han Solo carries. They’re great to modify and customize, and last
time she counted, Organa claims that Solo has owned at least twelve of these over the years. Take
care of it, Teng, and use it to take care of the others.”

“I guess I have to get better at shooting,” Teng checked over simple but sturdy black blaster.

Luke shook his head at the sight of it; it certainly brought back a lot of memories. That was the same
kind of blaster that Han had taught him to shoot on. Or rather, spent months correcting Luke’s
technique on.

And then Luke’s heart fell.

It was also the same model Han had given Ben for his tenth birthday.

Luke wondered if Ben still carried the weapon – there had been no trace of it in his room when he
ran away. If so, how many lives had Ben Solo taken using it? Worse yet, how many of his mother’s
soldiers had he used it on?

There were some questions Luke never wanted an answer to.

“Alright, food is almost ready,” Quom declared. “Let’s open that final box and dig in to all of this.”

“Ok, final box,” Rey opened it. “Oh my god. I don’t believe it.”

She pulled a glossy photo out of the box, and scrawled across a corner in black ink and a familiar
handwriting were the words:

To Aletha’s Ray of Sunshine.

May the Force Be with You.

General Leia Organa, Princess of Alderaan.

“She got me Leia Organa’s autograph!” Rey exclaimed excitedly.

Luke just stared at the photo in shock. Leia didn’t like signing autographs; she always thought it
undercut her accomplishments to just be some poster girl. She especially hated signing anything as
the Princess of Alderaan for the same reasons.

Han hated them too and probably wouldn’t have even given Ben one. Luke tolerated autographs, but
Lando, Chewie, and Felicity adored giving them. Lando because he loved the attention, Chewie
because he loved making people smile, and Felicity because she so rarely got people who knew to
ask.

Felicity did refuse to sign them as Felicity Rhiaon Skywalker. You either got Felicity Rhiaon or you
got nothing. She would not let her notoriety be based on the fact she was married to Luke, and
insisted the Rhiaon part got as much respect as the Skywalker name. Felicity would even correct
people like Phasma and Hux whenever they called herself and Rey “Skywalker” and not “Rhiaon
Skywalker.” Not that either of them had ever picked up on that habit.
“That’s not all that’s in this box,” Teng pulled out a disc-shaped machine. “Is this a Holo projector?”

“Let me check the letter,” Rey looked around where to set the photo down.


Rey handed the photo to her father without a second thought.

Luke tried to make his hands stop shaking as he held the picture of his sister. His twin sister full of confidence and a bittersweet love for the antics of their ridiculous family.

It seemed to be a stock image, one sent out to the media with announcements involving her. Her hair was different, up in a Alderiaan twist as demanded by royal tradition. But at the base of her skull was a small bun, no doubt a small tribute to her supposedly late sister-in-law and niece.

Luke’s heart broke when he saw the ring prominently displayed on the ring finger of her right hand. Another Alderiaan tradition: a mourning ring, and its placement on her ring finger symbolizing a child lost. Two stones were set with twisted gold symbolizing two lost children: her two lost sons. Ben, who was corrupted and twisted, and the baby, Jacen, she had miscarried.

Jacen, the reason Han Solo had pulled away from Ben. Han couldn’t handle the guilt of lavishing a lot of attention on one son when he knew he never even got the opportunity to spend time with his other. They didn’t really speak of Jacen in the family, but the wound his death left had never fully healed.

Luke fought back a tear as he looked down at the picture. Leia looked no nonsense in her photo, but still looked approachable. And good… his sister looked good.

Making sure Rey wasn’t watching, Luke stroked two of his natural fingers across Leia’s visage. He remembered their brief connection after Wedge died. He remembered her plea to stay and talk with her. Luke missed her so much. He wished he could just tell her the truth, but Rey had to be protected.

And then he reminded himself that every day that passed was another that brought him closer to their reunion… and he would see her again. He was sure of it.

“Here we go,” Rey broke Luke from his thoughts. “Aletha’s explanation. Teng, are there little computer chips in that box?”

“Uh yeah,” Teng counted them, “twelve. What are they?”

Rey read out the letter.

_This last gift I send is one of memories. I have included a small but sturdy Holo projector that can also take Holos. I’ve included three blank chips that will hold one image each. Please use them so we can always remember this odd little family on Jakku._

_The rest of the Holos I will explain now. Please, pop them in and look at them as I detail them._

They followed Aletha’s instructions, and every image brought Luke both joy and sorrow.

_The images are as follows:_

_A snapshot of the human medical team: Myself, Doctor Meredyth Kalonia, and Nurse Evan Tharel. Kalonia is a Rebel veteran, and she was the doctor for the Jedi Order before it fell. Evan, I call Hot_
Shot and he calls me Grandma. We had a bit of a generational clash when we met, but we soon became friends. Fairly good with a sniper rifle now, all thanks to me. He’s got a bright future ahead of him.

“She looks good,” Quom whispered as they stared at the picture of Aletha.


Rey grinned as he took in the image of Paige Tico’s crush. Tall, lanky, dirty blonde hair that bordered on brown. Nice enough if you were into that sort of man.

Next is a picture I’m told was actually taken by Luke Skywalker. It’s of Han Solo, shortly after the Battle of Yavin, and Solo was helping Skywalker tune up his X-Wing. According to General Organa, Solo did more harm than help.

Luke had to resist a chuckle. He remembered that day so well.

This is a picture of Chewbacca. Apparently, it was only taken last year. It’s hard to tell ages with Wookiees, but I think he looks good.

Luke smiled. Same old Chewie. He wondered if Chewie was keeping Han in line.

Lando Calrissian at a recent reception. He’s hung up his blaster for a while, busy running Cloud City. He does come down and pitch in every now and then, but Calrissian keeps his distance for reasons unknown to me.

Luke winced when he saw that Lando was still wearing his mourner’s armband. Whatever was going on with Alyla Kene, Luke wouldn’t be moved to tell Lando about it unless he had all the facts. No need to hurt Lando further.

This is Leia at the same event. She looked just as lovely as you would expect. I think she was really proud of Diego and Poe for what they did.

Luke frowned. What had happened to Poe Dameron and Diego Nalto?

Speaking of, this is Poe Dameron and Diego Nalto. Kaydel was so proud of Poe that night. He has a lot to live up to as Head of the Air Force. Diego’s not thrilled about having to step down due to his injury, but at least he can continue to serve.

Luke’s heart dropped. Diego had been injured? Was it his arm? Why hadn’t he sensed it? He and Diego weren’t the closest, but he would have at least thought… Luke just wished he could know more.

And Poe the Head of the Air Force? Luke almost thought the boy too young, but he was picturing him as an eighteen-year-old. Heck, he still saw Poe as sixteen sometimes. But the man was something like twenty-nine now, and Luke had seen much younger was such power. Heck, he had been much younger with that power before.

This is a candid image Poe managed to snag the other day. It’s Kaydel talking to Leia and C-3PO. Leia adores Kay almost as much as me (though I think Poe’s got us both beat in that category.) She’s got a bright future ahead of her. I’m so glad I get to see it.

“So, that’s the niece,” Quom said. “She really looks like Doc.”

Luke frowned, “And weirdly enough, a lot like Leia.”
Finally, this is a photo that was taken not long after I arrived. It’s everyone in the Resistance who fought in the Rebellion. I’ll list as many as I know. There’s me, Leia, Kalonia, Diego, Threepio, R2-D2, Admiral Akbar, Nils Arlos, Kes Dameron, Wedge Antilles, Zev Senesca, Nien Numb, and I don’t actually know the rest. Sorry.

So many familiar faces, Luke smiled. He missed them but was glad they chose to continue the fight. He vaguely wondered why Artoo was powered down in the photo but pushed it from his mind. Luke would see them again someday.

His eyes fell on the image of Wedge Antilles.

Well… not all of them.

That final image viewed, Rey read out the final part of the letter.

*I hope you all enjoy the gifts I have given you. Make them last, and think of me. I hope we all see each other someday, and I hope this provides at least a marginally better life than the one you all lead.*

*May the Force Be with You, and My Eternal Love,*

*Doctor Aletha Kymeri*

*P.S. Please don’t get robbed.*

Everyone laughed at the comment.

“She’s right,” Luke said. “We should divvy this out, pack it up, and hide it.”

“We can do that later, for now, let’s eat,” Quom pulled up a chair.

No one could argue with that.

Chatter filled the tent as they took their seats and started dishing out the food. Comments were made on what looked and smelled good and bad. Luke tried convincing Teng that deep fried gorg was actually good, Quom tried to hide the nuna only to be stopped by Rey, Teng tried to no avail to sweet talk his girlfriend into giving him her helping of the roast leek soup, and Rey chastised Luke for hogging all of the blue milk when Quom dared her to eat a spoonful of hot sauce.

“Hey, Dad?” Rey whispered as Teng and Quom bickered over whether or not Vrogem had to eat vegetables. Sometimes it was hard to tell who was raising who.

“Quom, set a good example and eat them,” Luke said sternly. He leaned over to Rey, “Yes, Sweetheart?”

“Would you mind if I stayed overnight here tonight?” She looked down shyly, “I want to make sure Teng has a happy birthday.”

Luke chuckled, “Don’t do anything I wouldn’t.”

“Considering what I’ve walked in on you and Aletha doing, that’s a pretty low bar.”

“I know it’s going to be easier to give in than to try to stop you two from running around. Besides, Quom already told me what you two did on your birthday.”

Rey’s face was redder than the time she got third degree sunburn.
When they had everything set to eat and were about to dig in, Rey suddenly jumped out of her chair.

“Wait,” Rey raced over to the Holo projector. “We should take a picture of this. The four of us happy and actually going to get real food.”

“I think that’s an excellent idea,” Luke agreed.

Rey set it all up and returned to her seat. She had set the projector on a timer and propped it against a well-positioned toolbox. She sat next to her father, the pair hugging and smiling. Teng sat across from Rey and reached out to clasp her hand lovingly. At the very last second, Quom yanked Teng in a playful headlock, and the photo captured Holo their laughing faces and playfully fight, though Teng never let go of Rey’s hand.

They would cherish that Holo far more than they ever expected.

“Teng? Teng?” a voice whispered.

He groaned in his cot, the warmth of his blankets nearly lulling him to sleep, “For the last time, I don’t care if you itch, Quom. I am not checking you for fleas before bed more than once a week. You asked two nights ago. Bugger off for five days.”

Rey’s head suddenly popped up from where she was sleeping on the ground next to him. It was her own offering to take the ground as it was Teng’s birthday. Besides, she wasn’t planning on being on the ground for long.

“Actually, I was talking to you,” she grinned at him, elbows resting on the cot as Teng sat up.

“Well, I’m happy to check you for fleas any time,” Teng grinned. “You look like you need a good thorough pat down.”

“That’s exactly what I had in mind.”

“Get up here.”

Rey let out a small squeal as Teng pulled her up into his arms.

“Quiet,” Teng scolded softly as he positioned her over his reclining form. “Careful. Quom might hear.”

“Quom’s asleep,” Rey kissed his neck in the way that drove him wild. “Don’t you hear the snores?”

Teng wouldn’t be surprised if the people three tents down heard the snores.

“Quom can weirdly snore and have cognisant conversations at the same time,” Teng explained as he helped Rey unbutton his shirt.

“Oh, I thought he stopped that,” Rey pulled it over his head.

Their lips locked passionately, hands roaming over each other’s bodies. Moans and soft sighs filled the tent as they tangled together trying to be close, but not fall off the cot in the process.

“That feels so good,” Rey moaned as Teng kissed the exposed skin of her chest, getting lower and
lower to her cleavage. The gauze wrap that criss-crossed her body had been thrown to the floor.

“I want more,” Teng whispered. He toyed with the hem of her white tunic, “Can I take it off?”

“Yes,” she grinned.

He kissed her forcefully and started to pull the tunic up.

“Rey keeps her shirt on or you sleep outside, Teng,” Quom said at the same time he let out a loud snore.

They scowled at each other.

“There goes that fun,” Teng slumped back on the cot. “Sorry.”

Rey glanced towards the tent flap, “Actually… I have an idea.”

“We shouldn’t be here,” Teng looked around the lounge room of the Millennium Falcon as if someone was about jump out from the shadows.

“No one watches this ship,” Rey rolled her eyes. Her gauze was back in Quom’s tent with Teng’s shirt. “I’ve been here a thousand times. No one cares.”

“Yeah. It’s hard to care about this ship.”

Rey eyed the purple box Teng was carrying, “You know, I could have brought that myself.”

“Mom didn’t teach me much, but she taught me to be a gentleman and to never join cults.”

“Well, then, would you do me the courtesy of putting the box on the table?”

Teng grinned.

Rey yelped as Teng dropped the box on the ground and hoisted her up to sit on the dejarik table. His lips and hands were on her in an instant, pulling off her tunic with little fanfare.

“Teng,” Rey beamed as his hands ran up her bare skin and across her somewhat muscular stomach. “What happened to being a gentleman?”

“Screw it; it’s my birthday. I want my present.”

Rey moaned as his lips recaptured hers. She pressed his body against his, reveling in the feeling of skin against skin as his tongue played in her mouth. He was so warm and solid.

“Oh, Teng,” Rey gasped when they broke for air. “Teng, I love you.”

Teng grinned, “Really?”

“Really,” she smiled back, her hands resting on his shoulders, her knees gripping his hips and he stood before her seated form. “I’ve been in love with you for a long time. I don’t even know when I fell in love with you. Maybe it was when you told me that you were being sold. Maybe it’s when you told me about your family. Maybe it’s when you tried to talk me through my problems with Aletha. Or maybe I’ve always been in love with you. Maybe I fell in love the second you handed me
that happy-bore pamphlet. I don’t know when I knew it, but I know that this is real. This is what my father felt for my mother. What he felt for Aletha.”

“I knew when I realized I was in love with you,” Teng smiled. “It’s when I passed out from hunger. When I woke up, all I could think about was you and how long until you would be at my side. Rey… literally, the only thing I want in my life is your happiness. I know that this isn’t really the best way to live my life, but when you live the life I have, there’s not much more to it. Whatever it takes, whether it’s something I do, or even the thought of stepping back and you living life without me, what makes you happy makes me happy.”

“Don’t you dare leave me, Teng Malar.” She bowed her forehead to his, “You make me happy, Teng. I never thought I could be this happy.”

“I don’t know what I did to deserve you.”

“I’m a pretty poor prize to be honest.”

“Then I will gladly enjoy my consolation prize.”

“You cad,” Rey playfully smacked his chest. “Now, come on, let’s open up my box. I have a feeling that we’ll find something handy in that box.”

Teng groaned, but helped her off the table and they put the crate on top. Inside they found a few items and another envelope, this one Aletha had labeled Kira.

---

Dear Kira,

The girls – and Poe – wanted to send you a few extra items, but we needed to keep it under wraps from your father. We’ve included in this box a solid four-year supply of tampons, pads, and panty liners so you’ll be covered. There’s also some feminine wipes for the messier days and a few bottles of menstrual cramps reliever.

The girls also sent a few gifts. Jess and the Ticos wanted you to have tokens from their homeworlds like Kay and I gave you a bracelet.

Rose and Paige sent the necklace. It’s simple enough that you can just tuck it under your clothing. The sun pendant has a very small bit of Haysian gold in it.

Jessika sent you the Dandoran teardrop earrings. Don’t worry, that clear stone is not a diamond. It’s a mineral called luyrian. It’s not a cheap material, but it’s not on the level of diamonds. And yes… Jessika had bought them before I could inform her your ears aren’t pierced. Hang on to them for now, Kira. Don’t you dare let anyone on Jakku pierce your ears.

We also sent a few more Holo chips. There’s the one BB-8 took that night we thought of the care package. There’s also one of Rogue Squadron, as well as Diego with Rogue One, whose name I have learned to be Fliss. We also put in a picture of Rose and Paige, one of Tallie and Jessika, and one of Kaydel and Poe.

And Poe wants it to be known that he thinks they look damn good in that photo. I don’t know if I can handle these two much longer. I may have to break them up.

The final item, well… all I can say is you’re welcome. Let me know when you need more, and I’ll
send Jedek on another run.

Be careful, be safe, and be protected. We’ll see each other again someday. I promise.

And Teng, if you’re reading this, I want you to know that if you get Kira pregnant, I will kill you, and then if Kira chooses to have the baby, I’ll kill her once she had given birth to it. Don’t be idiots and screw up your life over a moment of fun… no matter how fun it is.

Sending you our love,

Aletha Kymeri

Kaydel Ko Connix

Poe Dameron (P.S. It’s a lot of fun.)

Jessika Pava

Paige Tico

Rose Tico (Sorry, I couldn’t find any pears.)

Rey grinned and pulled the final gift out of the box. There were a few boxes of them, and Rey was grateful.

“Aletha is so thoughtful,” Rey held up the box of condoms.

“Truly wonderful,” Teng chuckled. “Though judging by the number of these she sent, I’m nervous about the kind of stamina she thinks I have.”

“I’m sure we can make good use of all of them. After all, you don’t just use them for the main event.”

Rey set the box down, and looked away, biting her lip.

Teng clasped her hand, “What is it?”

“I’m not ready,” Rey confessed. “I want to do things, but… sex. Making love. I’m not ready.”

“Ok,” Teng nodded. “I respect that. Just… let me know when you are. And let me know what you are ready for. We’ve already done a few things, but if you want more-”

“I do. I just… don’t know what.”

Teng smiled and kissed her hand.

“Well then,” he grabbed the box of condoms and led her to the bunk against the wall, “let’s find out.”

And they did.
“Is anyone watching?” Teng whispered as they hid beside the door to the ramp, peeking their heads out to see if the coast was clear.

“I don’t think so,” Rey squinted as the sun shone brightly in the sky. It was barely even morning anymore, probably more near noon. “I can’t believe we overslept.”

“I can’t believe I left my shirt back at the workshop.”

“Well, I am enjoying the view,” Rey grinned as she glanced at the shirtless Teng, holding up the purple box to his chest to black himself in some pitiful attempt at modesty.

“Rey, this isn’t funny.”

“It is to me.”

“You need to stop hanging out with Quom.”

“Yeah, but I need to figure out how to get rid of him in the first place,” Rey joked. “He’s harder to get rid of than a steelpecker who sees you as prey.”

“Come on, Rey this is serious,” Teng said. “If we get busted sneaking around on this ship, we’re going to be in a lot of trouble. And since I don’t have a shirt on, it’s going to be a lot harder to stay unnoticed.”

“Alright. How about I go first, and then you follow in a few minutes? If anyone questions you being shirtless, just say it was hot out and you took it off to work.”

“Well, I can’t think of a better plan. Let’s give it a try.”

Rey snuck out when the coast seemed clear. She raced across the shipyard and then slunk from tent to tent, trying not to be seen. Eventually, she reached the town well, and casually splashed some water on her face to wipe away the non-existent sweat and dust from her “scavenging” that morning. She was rubbing the water on her neck, when Teng came slowly strolling up to her, whistling.

“Oh, hello my dearest Rey,” Teng said far too loud and far too stiffly. “However are you doing upon this fine Jakku morning?”

Rey shook her head; he was such a terrible actor.

“I’m fine, Teng,” she fought back a giggle.

“Wonderous. I have been out scavenging all morning in an effort to return home early to spend the rest of the day with you as I have not seen you at all this entire day. No, Sir. You have been completely absent from my side all this sun risen day. And if you’re wondering about my lack of shirt, I was scavenging in the Star Destroyer and took my shirt off because it was too hot. I was high up and accidentally dropped my shirt, and later could not find it, forcing me to return home sans shirt. I do not have a sunburn as my skin has built up a tolerance to the sun’s rays, and I believe the science would check out if you looked that up, but please do not for I am not lying. Also, I found this purple box in the Star Destroyer, and it contains my recovered items for the day. This box absolutely does not contain any of your possessions as I have not seen you at all today as previously established. Not one bit. Shall we share a passionate embrace to mark the reunion of our parting for one whole night?”

Nyx Terrin, who was letting her happabore drink from the well, just stared at the pair, “Everyone saw you two sneak off Plutt’s freighter five minutes ago.”
“Damn it!” Teng exclaimed.

“Well, it’s not like you’re a very good actor,” Rey giggled as Nyx led away her happabore.

“I thought it was convincing,” Teng refuted.

“It was not,” a different voice replied.

They both stiffened, and as they turned to face Sarco Plank, Teng took a step protectively in front of Rey.

“What do you want?” Rey cut to the chase.

Sarco was a man with little patience for small talk, “I’ve come to collect my daily portions.”

“Take it up with my father. You know I’m not involved in that.”

“I get three portions a day. I don’t care which one of you gives it to me.”

“Well, I do,” Rey snapped. “How do I know you haven’t already collected from my father and are now trying to get an extra three.”

Sarco sounded amused, “You don’t trust me?”

“No.”

“Good.”

Teng looked between the pair, “We don’t have any portions on us anyways, Plank.”

Sarco gave a low chuckle, “Why don’t you let your girlfriend do that talking, boy? She’s the one here who actually poses a threat.”

Rey scowled. Sarco Plank thought her a threat? Why? Had her reputation really gotten that out of hand?

“Teng’s right, Plank,” Rey said. “We don’t have portions on us.”

“Well then, what about that box?”

The pair of teenagers frowned and glanced at the purple box in Teng’s arms.

“What’s in it?” Sarco asked.

“Why would we tell you?” Teng asked.

“Because I asked,” Sarco leaned casually upon his weapon. He carried a staff like Rey, but clear tubes on either end worked with wires inside to deliver an electrical shock to his victim. “And because I saw those large crates your little band of heroes were hauling into that pitiful workshop yesterday. Not scavengings from the Graveyard, that was delivered by a pilot. You’ve got something of value. Now tell me, what was delivered?”

Rey narrowed her eyes. Aletha’s post script warning not to get robbed wasn’t a joke. Receiving that kind of haul brought scrupulous figures out of the woodwork, and returning home to find your tent ransacked wasn’t unlikely.
She was unarmed – her staff left back in Quom’s tent – so she couldn’t fight her way out of this. Not against Plank. If she had her staff, she could probably take him. For now she had to figure out a way to get out of there in one piece. If she had to resort to fisticuffs, then so be it.

Though she doubted her father’s advice to always go for nose first would work in this case.

Rey glanced at Teng, hoping to become inspired with a plan.

And she was.

_Maybe I fell in love the second you handed me that happy-bore pamphlet._

“Happabores,” Rey said. “We’re getting into the happabore trading business. That was feedstuff and harnesses we received yesterday.”

Behind his full face mask, Sarco raised an eyebrow, “Happabores? Really?”

“Really. Don’t you trust me?”

“No.”

“Good,” Rey smirked.

Sarco studied her for a long time, and then chuckled, “Well, your father does know a thing or two about happabores. Let him know if he needs any advice, he knows he can come to me. I was the one who first introduced him to the creatures. I might drop by later and… check you have all the proper supplies.”

“I’ll let him know,” Rey didn’t let it show that his words had surprised her. “Have a good day, Plank. Come on, Teng.”

He followed her like the faithful little puppy he was.

“Your dad and Plank raised happabores together?” Teng muttered to her.

“I doubt it,” she answered. “Something happened between those two, the only question is what?”

“You know, it’s pretty late in the morning,” Teng said when they arrived at the tent. “Maybe Quom and Luke have already gone out scavenging.”

“Maybe,” Rey pulled the tent flap open.

Luke and Quom were waiting with arms crossed and identical scowls.

“Or maybe not,” Rey added awkwardly as she and Teng faced their doom.

“Good morning,” Luke said simply, his expression unchanging.

“Morning, Daddy,” Rey replied sweetly.

“Morning, Mister Erso,” Teng grinned nervously. “Quom.”

“Missing something?” Quom held up Teng’s shirt.
“You too, Rey?” Luke held up her gauze.

Rey glanced at Teng, “Before we die, I just want to tell you once more that I love you.”

He clasped her hand, “Maybe won’t be too painful.”

“Do you have any idea what time it is?” Luke asked. “Look, I understand sneaking off for a little privacy, but we’ve been worried sick. It’s one thing for you two to spend alone time, it’s another when you leave your comms behind.”

“And your shirt,” Quom added.

“We’ve been waiting all morning for you two,” Luke finished.

Rey scowled, “Wait. Have you two literally been standing in that exact spot and pose for hours just so when we walked in you two would have a dramatic pose?”

Luke and Quom looked at each other nervously.

“You guys are weird,” Teng said.

“I have to be,” Luke said. “I somehow made him my current best friend.”

“All time best friend,” Quom corrected.

“We are not having this discussion again.”

“Dad, we’re sorry, we really didn’t mean to make you worry,” Rey said.

“I know,” Luke sighed, “but come on, Rey. Please see this from my perspective. Every time you’ve disappeared, something terrifying and dangerous happens. One time I thought you were dead, another you had been kidnapped by a child abuser, another time you almost killed Teng. Anytime I wake up and find I have no idea where you are, I am terrified. You can have your freedom – heck, I don’t much mind that you two probably did things last night I shouldn’t approve of – but please, just make sure you have your comms.”

His eyes turned to Teng.

“And your shirt,” Luke added. “I have to say, though, those core workouts we’ve been doing are very beneficial.”


Teng chuckled, “Oh, come on, he’s not checking me out. He’s straight.”

“No, he’s not. He’s bi.”

“Oh.”

Luke held up his hand, “Don’t worry, I’m not into someone that much younger than me. Besides, you’re not sarcastic enough for me. Once you hit Quom levels and stop dating Rey, then maybe we’ll talk.”

“Quom, can I have my shirt back now?” Teng asked quickly.

He grinned, “Where would be the fun in that?”
“Quom!” Rey snapped.

“Alright, but on one condition,” Quom said. “Tell me, could anything you two did last night result in pregnancy?”

“Not to my knowledge,” she replied.

“Are you certain?”

“Positive,” Teng agreed.

Quom paused, studying them for the moment, and then loudly sniffed the air.

“Nope,” Quom reported to Luke. “They’re not lying. Can’t get pregnant from any of those things… Well, maybe the last one, but Teng wiped his hands first, so you should be good.”

Rey would have been very happy to die in that moment as her father’s eyes widened and he shuddered at the mental image of his daughter… well, doing what she did.

Teng wasn’t doing much better.

“Can you all please leave the tent so I can smack my head against the tent pole?” he asked.

Quom chuckled, patted him on the shoulder, and handed him his shirt.

“So,” Luke asked as Teng and Rey redressed and fixed their appearances, “where were you two this morning?”

“We snuck into an empty tent,” Rey lied. “We just overslept.”

“Sweetheart, if you think I don’t know you and Teng sneak out to your uncle’s freighter on a regular basis, I’ve got some bad news for you. Don’t lie to me, Rey.”

“Sorry, Dad. You’re right; we were on the freighter.”

“Since you two came back so late, we’re going to have to stick near Niima if we want to get back before sundown,” Luke said. “Quom will stay back, and I’ll come out with you two. We should hit near that A-Wing we found last week.”

“Sounds good to me,” Teng replied. “I can use my new utility belt.”

“We can all use our new things,” Luke started to pack his bag.

His words made Rey pause, “Dad?”

“Yes, Sweetheart?”

“When Teng and I were coming back here, we ran into Sarco Plank and he started asking questions.”


Rey told her of their encounter. When she finished, Luke had a very troubled expression on his face. He glanced at Quom who was equally as solemn.

“I think we need to change our plans,” Luke said. “I’m going to stay back at the tent with Quom in
case Plank tries to raid our supplies. You go with Teng to scavenge today. Don’t worry about how much you bring back, we have plenty of food from Aletha. Take your weapon, both of you. If there’s even the slightest sign of trouble call me immediately.”

“Yes, Sir,” Teng nodded, retrieving his new blaster from the crates.

“Yes, Dad,” Rey slung her staff on her back.

Luke crossed the tent and pulled Rey in for a tight hug.

“Be safe, my Rey of Light,” he said gently, pressing a kiss to the top of her head. “And may the Force be with you.”

“And with you, Daddy,” she whispered.

He smiled, stroking her cheek as he lifted her chin, “It always is.”

A lot can go wrong on foot in the desert.

- Rey’s Survival Guide

“Black market animal smugglers,” Teng’s voice echoed through the ship. It was no Star Destroyer, but it was a tall thing, having three levels, the furthest being a long, painful drop down.

“Teng, I’m really not in the mood to play what’s my Dad’s secret today,” Rey sighed as she rappelled down from the top level to the middle where Teng was waiting for her.

He helped her settle back to the ground and unburdened her of her salvage.

“Sorry, but it would explain the happabores,” Teng said as they started to inspect the gear in better light. The top level was almost completely pitch black. It was a miracle that Rey could find anything up there. “How do you think Luke and Sarco met?”

“Teng, I don’t want to talk about it,” Rey snapped.

She turned to walk away from him when he grabbed her arm to stop her. She nearly slapped him for it, but she stopped herself when she saw the concern in his eyes.

“What’s wrong?” he asked gently.

Rey sighed, “I’m just nervous. Something feels wrong.”

“Is there anything I can do about it? Did I aggravate you somehow?”

“No, it’s… this whole Sarco Plank thing makes me feel uneasy. I don’t know what danger there is in my past, but I do know that there’s something about him that threatens our safety here. I didn’t mean to take it out on you.”

“It’s okay.”
“No, it isn’t,” Rey snapped. She paused and took a deep breath, collecting herself, “There’s just... there’s something inside of me, Teng, and when I get mad or nervous or sad, it fills me. It’s powerful and intoxicating. I want to let it take over, be my strength, but I can’t. I know I shouldn’t... It scares me, Teng.”

“Hey,” he pulled her in close, hands wrapping around her hips. He reached up and touched her cheek and Rey gave a sigh of relief, eyes slipping shut as his presence comforted her. Teng was her lifeline as she fought against the fear in her heart. “I’m here, Rey. I promise. I’ll help you. I’ll protect you. I promise. I will always protect you.”

She buried her face in his chest, “Don’t let me go.”

“Never.”

It was a peaceful moment, Rey and Teng just standing there, holding each other. If the world could stop for just a moment, forever to be captured and held in more than just Rey’s heart, she would have picked that moment.

Then something tugged in the back of her mind.

“What is it?” Teng frowned when Rey suddenly pushed him away.

She readied her staff, “Someone’s here.”

His arrival was projected with the sound of his footsteps, too quiet for Rey to have heard when she pushed Teng away, but ever increasing with each passing moment. Teng scrambled to ready his blaster, but he was too nervous and too embarrassed to admit he wasn’t quite sure how to set the model.

“I know how it is,” Rey whispered as a shadow began to emerge from the day hallway of the ship. “It’s Plank.”

Sure enough, Rey was true about the shadow’s identity, and they found themselves alone with Sarco Plank.

“I knew if I said I would stop by the tent, that your father would hang back,” Sarco chuckled. “He may be formidable, but Marcus is so predictable.”

Rey held her staff defensively across her body, “What do you want, Plank?”

“The truth, Little One,” he answered. “You’re going to tell me what you received yesterday and from whom. And then you’re going to give it to me.”

Her grip tightened on the staff, “And why would I do that?”

“Because one call from me, and the First Order is here to kill your father, take you away, and put a bolt through the boy’s temple like they did your mother.”

The Darkness flared inside Rey, but this time she wasn’t upset to let it fill her.

“That’s not happening,” she growled. “I’m not going to give you anything. And if you touch even a hair on Teng’s head—”

“I’m not afraid of you, Youngling,” Sarco cut off. He drew his staff from his back and assumed the same defensive position as Rey, “You may be a threat, but a negligible one. You’ll be easy enough
“Then go ahead and try,” Rey challenged. “I’m not weak. I’m the strongest, fastest, best fighter on
Jakku. I can defeat you no problem.”

“What are you suggesting?”

“You what our things? You’re going to have to fight me for them. And I will defeat you. I know I
can.”

Sarco flicked a button on his staff, and the ends crackled with a charge of electricity, “The
Padawan’s daughter, as bold and arrogant as her pitiful father. And where did that pride lead him?
You say I have to fight to take what I want from you? Then so be it. Care for a duel, Youngling?”

Rey felt her anger rising. Sarco had proposed the one thing she wanted most—a chance to show off
her new skills and show the arrogant alien what a mistake he’d made. She exhaled slowly, staff held
at her waist, as Sarco spun his own in a blur of deadly purple.

“Let’s dance, Plank,” she seethed. “Teng and I will have you beaten before high noon.”

Teng swallowed as he watched the scene before him. He did not have Rey’s confidence, and he
didn’t believe this was going to end well at all. Despite the two of them being strong and having
proven themselves in battle, Sarco Plank was something different altogether. They couldn’t defeat
him themselves.

But there was someone who could.

“Where, Rey’s claimed another ship?” Quom chuckled as they cleaned up the workshop. They were
between jobs at the moment, waiting for Rey and Teng to bring their next project. “You’ve got to be
careful, Luke Erso. One day she may have a fleet.”

Luke kneaded his forehead and groaned at the thought.

Quom laughed.

Before Luke could reply, his comm started to beep. Frowning, he pulled it out and saw the words
LINE TWO – Teng lighting up the screen.


“Luke,” Teng whispered into his comm. “We need your help.”

He didn’t need to Force to sense something was very wrong.

Jessika Pava couldn’t stop staring at her X-wing fighter. She pushed her black hair out of her eyes
and sighed, forcing herself to turn around so she could no longer see the compact, deadly starfighter
where it sat on its landing gear in the center of the hangar. Her fellow pilots knew she wanted
nothing more than to get back into space as Blue Three.

But Jessika was on droid duty that week. Her job was to inventory the base’s astromechs and make
sure they were ready for duty—programming updated, flight instruments tested and confirmed as operational. It wasn’t the worst job in the squadron—assisting the maintenance techs with a fuel-system cleanout was much dirtier—but Jessika was sure it was the most boring.

Worst of all, Tallie was off on some mission. Jessika never really did fret about whether or not her girlfriend would return home safe from her missions alive and well. In general, Jessika just never bothered with such thoughts one way or another. But she did miss waking up in Tallie’s warm and soft embrace. Honestly, the fact their room had two beds was just wasteful.

Her datapad beeped for her attention, and she looked down at it with a sigh, then at the cone-headed R4 unit rolling by on its three stubby legs. The droid was painted in a green-and-white checkerboard pattern, probably the work of a bored tech with time to kill.

Now that she thought about it, weren’t Rose Tico’s hands mysteriously covered in green and white paint last week?

“You there, droid,” the young pilot called out. “Need you to hold up a sec for operations check.”

The astromech whistled mournfully, no happier than Jessika about the need for an inspection. But it came to a stop and popped open a panel on its dome to expose a diagnostics port. Jessika aimed her datapad at the port and the pad blinked, beginning to exchange data with the droid’s systems. She sat down cross-legged on the hangar deck and resigned herself to wait.

“Excuse me, but might I be of assistance?” a voice asked brightly.

Jessika looked up into the expressionless face of a protocol droid with a gold finish. It was an older model—practically an antique—with dozens of dings and dents.

“I don’t think so, but thanks,” Jessika said. “It’s droid duty—the diagnostics program pretty much runs itself.”

“But not terribly efficiently,” said the droid, sounding disappointed. “But where are my manners? I am See-Threepio, human-cyborg relations, at your service, Miss…?”


“It is an honor to meet you, Miss Pava,” Threepio said.

“Call me Blue Three,” Jessika had vaguely recognized the name of General Organa’s protocol droid and knew the last thing she would want is him remembering her name… Not that it was easy to make a droid forget something.

“Oh. As you wish, Miss—I mean, Blue Three. As I said, perhaps I could be of assistance. I just installed a very exciting new Tranlang database and am fluent in nearly seven million forms of communication—including, of course, the relatively primitive languages spoken by astromechs and diagnostics readers.”

The R4 unit squawked indignantly at Threepio.

“Insult you?” Threepio said, drawing back in surprise. “I did nothing of the sort, you hypersensitive little dustbin. Your method of communication is primitive—I was merely stating a fact. Why, you don’t even have a proper vocabulator.”

The R4 unit honked and swiveled its dome to stare at the protocol droid with its single electronic eye.
“Don’t move,” Jessika said. “You’ll break the data link and then—”

Her datapad beeped plaintively.

“Now we have to start all over,” she sighed.

The astromech hooted accusingly at Threepio.

“My fault?” Threepio replied. “Don’t be ridiculous. She told you not to move. Blue Three, might I suggest—”

“You know what, See-Threepio? I’ve got this. It’s a simple procedure, really. I’m sure you have many more important things to do.”

“You would think so, given that my specialties include communications and protocol,” Threepio said. “But it so happens I have completed all my tasks for the day. And I’m afraid that when I pressed Commander Nalto for further duties he told me to, um… Oh dear, get out of his communication center before he switched me into low power mode and chucked me under a tarp next to my friend.”

“Sounds like the Commander,” Jessika chuckled. She couldn’t wait to hear from Kaydel that night what Threepio had done to annoy Diego so much.

“He is rather abrasive at times,” Threepio’s head drooped a little in disapproval. “I was going to suggest that this R4 unit might benefit from a memory wipe. When they start taking offense at every helpful suggestion, it’s often a sign of flux in the motivator cortex.”

The R4 unit blew an electronic raspberry at Threepio, but this time remained still while the diagnostic program ran. Jessika rolled her eyes as the golden droid continued to chatter away.

“Why, I often told Master Luke that Artoo’s behavior would have been improved by a memory wipe. His eccentricities have been more than I can bear for decades now. One time we were on a diplomatic mission to Circarpous when—”


She had never really paid attention to General Organa or her retinue. She never even gave thought to the droid that sat in the corner of the communication center. Jessika always figured that General Organa’s protocol droid must have been something she purchased after the war. Why would someone need a protocol droid during one?

But at the mention of Luke Skywalker, Jessika lit up as much as Kira did when discussing Han Solo. Luke Skywalker was her childhood hero, and she had joined the Resistance to be like him. Secretly she hoped to one day even meet him.


“Do I know Luke Skywalker?” Jessika asked incredulously, scrambling to her feet. “Of course I know him! Well, I mean, I’ve never met him, but everybody knows Luke Skywalker. He defeated the Emperor, and they say he’s the best star pilot in the galaxy.”

“You’d have to ask Artoo about that. That might be difficult with the low power mode situation he’s experiencing, but he’ll break out if it sooner or later. Though I must warn you that Artoo has, shall we say, an inflated view of his own accomplishments. I myself find space travel most unpleasant—”
“Wait, do you mean R2-D2?” Jessika asked in amazement. “The astromech that assisted Skywalker when he destroyed the first Death Star?”

Holy crap, was the droid they kept under a tarp in the communication center really the R2-D2? Jessika had half a nerve to march into there and give Kaydel and Diego a piece of her mind. How dare they just shove the R2-D2 in a dusty corner! He should be in a place of honour and freshly polished each morning.

Threepio cocked his golden head slightly.

“Well, yes,” he said. “Artoo and I have been eyewitnesses to many momentous events during the Galactic Civil War, though he was usually off squabbling with a computer while I was performing some vital diplomatic service. With regards to the Death Star, Artoo was inoperative at the critical moment. So not even he can try to take credit for the outcome of that mission.”

The datapad beeped, indicating the diagnostics program had finished running. Jessika ignored it.

“Tell me about the Death Star mission,” she said. “How did Skywalker wind up destroying it?”

“It would be my pleasure, Blue Three,” Threepio said. “Though that adventure began in rather dreadful fashion for me. We had crash-landed on Tatooine, with Artoo pursuing a secret mission for the Alliance in his typical stubborn manner. If not for my advice, he might still be wandering that dreadful Dune Sea—”

“On second thought, why don’t you tell me that one later?” Jessika asked hastily, sensing this version was shaping up to be mostly about Threepio. “Tell me a different story about your master—one that hasn’t been told a million times already.”

The R4 unit chirped inquiringly at her, and she patted its dome absently.

“Your programs are up to date—report to the droid pool,” she said, turning back to Threepio. She added as an afterthought, “Tell Rose that Jessika says hi.”

The droid beeped affirmatively.

“There are so many stories,” Threepio mused. “Where to begin? I know—Artoo and I were present when Master Luke first used a lightsaber in battle, not long after the Battle of Yavin.”

“Tell me about that one,” Jessika said.

“Very well,” Threepio said. “It all began above the planet Giju, with a mission for Red Squadron. …”

Their staffs clashed as violently as they did frantically. Rey’s arms ached as she batted off attack after attack, desperately trying not buckle to Sarco’s conquest. Her lungs were straining with pants and her body dripped with sweat, but still she did not back down.

Teng wasn’t in sight anymore, and that terrified her. Sarco has draw her away to a large gash in the ship where the gun of a ship had blasted the side clean off. When she first clashed with Sarco, Teng joined her in the fight using his blaster the best he could. But Sarco made quick work of Teng; one blow to the head with the end of his staff, and with a sickening crackle of electricity, Teng was out cold on the ground.
Rey never even got the chance to check if he was breathing.

Sarco drove her back, closer and closer to the exposed part of the ship and a horrifying doom. She could she just how high up they were; her speeder was a mere dot below. One stumble backwards from that height and she’d be dead before she even hit the ground.

Rey looked back to her opponent. She didn’t like the way his mask blocked his face; she couldn’t read his expressions and plan accordingly. He was not much for banter as they clashed. Sarco knew his goal: drive her off the ship so when he killed her it could look like an accident.

Would her father believe that story?

Fear gripped her heart. Luke and Teng’s warning about cockiness flitted through her mind. She had been vain about her abilities, and now there was a very good chance she would die for that arrogance.

She couldn’t remember a time she wanted her father desperately.

Rey didn’t recognize what she was doing, unaware of the strength of her abilities. She didn’t know that Luke heard it when she thought the words Help me, Daddy. I’m scared.

A bash to the knee made her stumble, and she almost fell out of the ship. She was close enough to the border of the hole that she managed to grip the jagged metal of the ship. Rey screamed as it pierced her skin, blood staining her hand and tears her cheeks as she was forced to cling ever tighter onto the blade like material, simply so she wouldn’t fall.

Her staff was in one hand. She struggled to hold it from the weight and the way her body shook from fear, exhaustion, adrenaline, and pain. Sarco recognized her weakness and went for her hand. Over and over he bashed his staff down on the fingers clutching her staff. Rey screamed and held onto it as long as she physically could.

Then her hand betrayed her. With a whimper of pain, and the blood from her knuckles staining Sarco’s staff, she dropped her own. It fell out of the ship, down, down onto sand below. It was so far down she didn’t even hear the thud of impact.

She began to hyperventilate. Her fingers dug into the jagged metal of the wall even more. She could have sworn she felt metal hit bone. Exhausted, scared, alone, and weaponless, Rey couldn’t deny it anymore: she was about to die.

Sarco grabbed her shirt the threat of what one shove could do dangling in the air, “Shall I do it here? Or take you back to Niima Outpost so your worthless father can watch?”

That was when the tears began to fall.

“Please,” Rey begged. “Don’t let him see.”

“Very well,” his hand tightened its grip on the fabric of the shirt.

Rey shut her eyes, cried as she waited for death.

“Shhh, it’s okay, Sweetheart,” a woman’s soothing and familiar voice sung on the air. “Please don’t cry. Mommy doesn’t like when you cry.”

Rey’s heart skipped a beat. Was it a dream or was her mother actually calling to her? Perhaps her mother was here to escort her to the next plane of existence.
“I’m scared, Mommy,” Rey sobbed but only let the words play in her mind.

“Mommy’s going to protect you,” the memory of Felicity that Rey had forgotten, promised her. “But she gets needs you to be brave.”

“How?” Rey whimpered, again keeping the words in her mind where Sarco couldn’t reach them.

“You are strong, Rey,” Alyla’s words echoed in Rey’s ears. “Draw on that strength, and do not give in to fear.”


“Let it in, Rey,” she didn’t recognize the voice of Anakin Skywalker, but her grandfather’s words filled her with strength. “Let it take over.”

Slowly, comforted and strengthened by the words of those who loved her, Rey did as they said. She stopped crying, she breathed, she drew on her strength, she barred the fear from her mind.

And she let the Force in.

He pushed her.

Something instinctual lashed out, like a rope that tied her to the ship and stopped her fall. No matter how hard he pushed, Sarco couldn’t get Rey to fall backwards. She drew on the Force and defended herself as powerfully as a Jedi like the daughter of Luke Skywalker she was.

Then she got herself out of her predicament in a way only the daughter of Felicity Rhiaon could.

She kicked him as hard as she possibly could… right in the control panel.

Sarco hit the ground as hard as Darth Vader had. Taking her chance, Rey sprung forward and grabbed at Sarco’s dropped staff. But when her hand closed over it, the blood pouring her hand – adrenaline being the only thing stopping it from shrieking in pain – made it slip out of her grasp.

Then his foot met her face, and Rey was on her back. The adrenaline failed her, and the pain and fatigue pinned her to the ground. She couldn’t move. She couldn’t stop him as he got to his feet, grabbed his electrostaff and aimed for her head.

“You’re just like your father,” Sarco sneered. “Pretending to be something you’re not. I would have loved to collect the reward the First Order would offer for you, but you’re too troublesome for me to bother. I’m going to kill you now. Five seconds’ contact and your heart will stop. At least you’ll be with your mother.”

He swung it hard down on her head.

Only for an emerald blade to block him mere inches from her face.

In unison, Rey and Sarco looked up in shock. Both had missed his entrance, but there was no denying his presence. Not a phantom or a vision or a projection, standing there before them in flesh and blood.

“Leave…leave her alone,” Luke Skywalker seethed, his lightsaber protecting his daughter from death with the strength of the Force, but more so the strength of a father’s love.

Sarco beheld the man standing over his precious daughter, looking more animal than human. Almost as feral as Quom Tinadar had the day Toras Kern had threatened his pup.
“Well, it’s about time, Marcus,” Sarco chuckled. “I’ve been waiting for this.”

Rey was stunned, disbelieving of what she was seeing. That strange cylinder her father always carried around was projecting a beam of emerald light that was lightly burning her face from the proximity but protecting her. Her father was immoveable.

That which had filled her with such strength was now flooded with sky blue. She felt loved. She felt safe. She felt protected.

She felt very confused.

Luke’s eyes burned with anger, but not with the Dark Side. He didn’t draw on the hatred he felt for Sarco, but rather the love he had for his daughter. It filled him with strength of the Light Side of the Force.

He shoved Sarco back and firmly planted himself in front of Rey.

“Dad?” she tried to get to her feet.

“Stay down,” Luke ordered, not turning to look to her. He was focused on setting his footwork and grip on his saber. “You’ll be safe.”

Rey trusted her father.

“I’m surprised, Marcus,” Sarco said. “I would have thought you would have used your blaster before that weapon. Different one from before. Wasn’t it blue last time?”

“I got a new one,” Luke answered. “And my blaster seemed inefficient for saving my daughter before you bashed her skull in. But don’t worry, you know I can do better damage with this.”

“Of course you would go for that weapon. You couldn’t stand to do a fair fight. At least your daughter was honourable enough to go staff against staff.”

Luke simply held out his hand, and like it was nothing, Rey’s staff flew up through the air into his hand.

“I can fight with this if you’d prefer,” Luke spared a brief self-indulgent glance back to see Rey’s reaction. He really wished he had a camera to record the shock on her face.

Sarco considered Luke’s offer and then shook his head, “I want to see what you can do with that ancient thing now. You say you’re trained now. Prove it.”

“I told you. I warned you that if you ever touched my daughter, I would kill you. You had a chance to stop this. My daughter is the most important thing in my life, and I will kill to protect her.”

“You’re a determined one, Marcus,” he said. “But it’s a little too late for that Force of yours. Enough foolishness—time to end this.”

Luke’s eyes darkened, “Yes, it is.”

And then his blade clashed with Sarco’s staff in a furious and breathtaking display.

“Teng! Teng!” Quom shouted, frantically searching for his pup. He had split off from Luke when
Luke sensed Rey and Teng weren’t together. “Teng! Where are you? Talk to me! TENG!”

His heart stopped when he saw Teng’s unmoving body.

“TENG!” he screamed with only the terror of a parent.

He raced to Teng’s side and dropped to his paws. A few touches and Quom confirmed it: Teng wasn’t breathing.

Fear flooded his heart and tears pricked his eyes.

“No, no, no, no!” Quom exclaimed, shaking Teng. “Wake up. You gotta breathe, Pup. Come on, Rey needs you… I need you. I need you, Pup.”

He didn’t know what to do.

And then the Force blessed him with a memory.

“If you try one more time to stop me from resuscitating my daughter, I will kill you,” Felicity coolly threatened.

Resuscitation. How did it go again? Quom’s paws shook has her tried to find the right spot to press down. Was he pressing hard enough as he pumped down on Teng’s chest. How many pumps? How many breaths? How hard was he supposed to breathe?

Quom didn’t have to worry for long. As he began his second set of compressions, a loud gasp filled the ship and Teng began to breathe again.

The Vrogem burst into a flood of tears he had not wept this hard since the day he returned to find his home destroyed. But this time it was tears of joy as he pulled his precious pup into a rib cracking embrace.

Teng struggled to collect his bearings as the mass of fur and tears engulfed him. When the staff had cracked against his skull and the darkness took him, he thought he would open his eyes to his father and mother.

As he gathered himself, Teng couldn’t help but give a cheek splitting grin. He hadn’t opened his eyes to a mother… but he had opened them to a father. His hairy, embarrassing, weirdo of a father, whose title he would never speak aloud.

But Quom didn’t need to hear Teng say it.

“Don’t you ever do that again to me, Pup,” Quom begged. “Do you hear me? Don’t you dare leave me.”

“I won’t,” Teng promised, hugging his Vrogem father as tightly as he was held. “I swear, I won’t.”

There was nothing quite like the protection one felt being held in the arms of a father, and in the safety of a father’s love.

Rey would never again say her father was a pacifist. She could only lie there in stunned silence as saber crashed against electrostaff. It made a lot of sense now why Luke never fought in the ring. Talent like this would not go unnoticed, and talent like this clearly read there was a reason Luke
didn’t want to be noticed.

He was amazing.

It wasn’t as easy as it looked for Luke. For starters, it had been over a decade since Luke had a proper duel, and his moves from a technical standpoint were slow and rusty. Of course, Luke had been practicing in secret over the years to keep his skills up – he would go off and do that when Rey had her secret comm chats with Aletha she didn’t know he knew about. But clearly fighting invisible opponents weren’t going to cut it. If her were to be prepared to face the First Order someday soon, he was going to need to find himself a blast remote.

Secondly, every time his blade clashed against the staff it sent a small shock up his arm. After his exposure to Palpatine’s Force Lightning, he had become very sensitive to electrical based attacks.

It did help though that there were three Force Ghosts shouting in his ears.

“Go for the face! Hit him hard!” Anakin whooped with pride when Luke did just that, “Yeah! That’s my boy!”


And Yoda was… well, Yoda.

“For the knees you must go.” Yoda gave his mischievous chuckle when Luke sliced open Sarco’s knee cap.

Luke sighed, and muttered to them, “Remind me why you lot couldn’t do this when I was battling someone important like say, Vader?”

“I feel my answer to that doesn’t need to be said,” Anakin chuckled.

“We had to let you learn and grow on your own,” Obi-Wan answered. “Now that you are a Master in your own right, we can offer you advice.”

Luke frowned as he forced Sarco to stumble back, “But why are you helping me now? In this fight of all fights?”

“Bored, we are,” Yoda simply answered. “Entertaining is not always, the netherworld of the Force.”

Luke sighed, “You people are ridiculous.”

The electrostaff just narrowly missed his head, and Luke was drawn back into the fight.

The bottom of Sarco’s staff curved up towards Luke’s head, but Luke drew down on the staff, batting it away. Luke swung straight down again, but Sarco held the staff horizontal to deflect three powerful hits before he flipped the staff around to swing once more at Luke’s head. Luke naturally parried it away and then swerved down towards Sarco’s torso dropping to one knee.

The alien barely blocked that shot.

Knelt down Luke blocked a series of shots that pelted down on him. Over and over, drove down falling into a hard pattern of down, down, down.

Sarco’s arms were up, exposing his belly when Luke swung his belt into his torso. He gasped, the
blade slicing into him, but not all the way through. Luke pulled back out, and with a bit of a dramatic twist, spun back up to his feet and swung his saber clean through Sarco’s neck.

His decapitated head landed at the feet of the very surprised Quom and Teng who had just arrived.

“Oh Luke, you shouldn’t have,” Quom said. “I didn’t get you anything.”

Luke genuinely didn’t know if he was joking.

“Rey!” Teng exclaimed, clearly not taking in the fact Luke was holding a lightsaber.

“Teng!” Rey could breathe in relief as he raced towards her, living and breathing. He dropped to his kissed and they kissed fiercely, clinging to each other tightly. “You’re okay.”

“Of course I am,” Teng wiped a tear from her cheek. “I’m not done with you yet.”

She smiled and kissed him again.

“Hey Buddy,” Quom came up to Luke and patted him on the shoulder. “You okay?”

“Nothing I can’t sleep off,” Luke’s saber was still ignited, hanging limply by his side. He looked at Sarco Plank’s headless body with an ache in his heart, “I didn’t want to kill him.”

“Hey,” Quom rubbed his shoulder, “you were protecting your daughter. You gave him a chance to back down. It’s not your fault.”

“I suppose.” Luke looked over at Rey, whose hand was being fussed over by Teng, “Are you two okay?”

They looked up at him in silence and shock. Their stunned wide-eyed gazes flicked from his face to Sarco’s body, to his head in the corner, to the emerald lightsaber humming in Luke’s grasp, and then back to Luke’s awkward expression. He had as little idea of what to say as they did.

“Whoa,” Teng said, the situation finally setting in. “Is that a lightsaber?”


But she said nothing.

Rey stared at her father with new eyes; the eyes of a child, filled with wonderment and glory.

Standing before her in victory was not a man, but much rather a myth. A hero of legend. Not tall, but strong and powerful, gifted with the ability to do things beyond her wildest dreams.

His hair was greying and his face wrinkled, but a fearlessness was set in those wrinkles, and an emerald blade in his grip glowed bright.

This man was a warrior.

This man was a hero.

This man was a legend.

This man was a…

“A Jedi,” Rey whispered, looking upon her father with revere. “You’re a Jedi.”
Luke sighed and extinguished his saber, “Rey… I think we need to talk.”

Jessika Pava’s comlink chimed for the third time in the previous five minutes.

“Hold on a sec, Threepio,” she said with a scowl, activating the device. “Yes? It’s Pava. What’s that? All right—I’m on my way. Be there in a minute.”

She shut off her comlink and shrugged at Threepio.

“Afraid I’m needed in the command center.”

“I understand, Blue Three.”

She smiled. Maybe the droid wasn’t as bad as everyone made him out to be. Truth be told, he was an excellent storyteller, and the way he could do sound effects made it so much better.

“Call me Jessika. Before I go, I want to hear how you got off Devaron. The Empire found Skywalker’s Y-wing, after all. So how did you get away?”

“That is a tale,” Threepio said. “When we returned to Tikaroo—”

“I’m afraid I only have time for the short version, Threepio. The very short version.”

“Oh,” Threepio said, sounding disappointed. “Well, Miss Pava, Master Luke reclaimed his starfighter—which had been repaired quite capably by Kivas, I must say. On the way to space he dropped several bombs at the base of the spire, cutting off the paths into the jungle. I’m pleased to say that meant the end of those dreadful hunts.”

“And the alien? The one they called the Scavenger?”

“Just recalling that awful creature puts me at risk of a short circuit,” Threepio said. “Master Luke claimed he was alive. My sensors detected no trace of him, but he was quite insistent.”

Jessika’s comlink was chiming again.

“Stang! I said in a minute, didn’t I?”

“You did,” Threepio said. “And it has been one minute and two seconds exactly.”

“Right. I have to go. But…just tell me about Farnay. Did you ever see her again?”

“Oh, yes,” Threepio said. “Artoo and I were delighted to be reacquainted with Farnay when Master Luke kept his promise and returned to Devaron. He did so with Jedi Masters Reine Agim and Obik Kenu. She’d grown into quite a capable young woman. It would be my pleasure to tell you that story, Miss Pava. Master Kenu ended up making quite a fool of himself when he concocted a scheme worthy of Captain Solo in order to convince Master Agim to court him. But there goes your comlink again, the beastly thing. So, I suppose that tale will have to wait…”

“So, this is where you’ve been,” a voice came from behind. Jessika turned to see Poe Dameron smirking at her, “Why didn’t you tell me you got stuck with Threepio? It’s the quickest SOS we respond to. Even General Organa would step out of a meeting to help someone stuck with Threepio.”
“Commander Dameron!” Threepio objected. “The Princess highly values my contributions!”

“I’m sure she does,” Poe said politely.

Jessika crossed her arms, “How did you know I was here?”

“Droid told Rose who told Paige who told Kaydel who told me.”

“And why were you with Kaydel? Isn’t she on duty right now?”

“Yep, but Nalto isn’t,” Poe grinned.

“That’s it,” Jessika declared. “I’m going to have Rose program Peazy to keep you two apart.”

“Hey, don’t turn Peazy on Kay,” Poe frowned. PZ-4CO was the droid Kaydel worked with, and she rather liked Poe. They had a good thing going there. “Why are you even talking to Threepio, Jess?”

“She was asking me to share stories about Master Luke with her, Commander Dameron,” Threepio replied. “I told her of the Scavenger on Devaron.”

“Admittedly that is a good story, but Luke Skywalker? Seriously?” Poe raised an eyebrow.

Jessika punched his arm, “Shut up, he’s my hero. I didn’t know that Threepio knew him, or that the infamous R2-D2 is currently under a tarp in the communication center.”

“How did you not know that? You really do keep to yourself too much, you know?”

“Better than you galivanting all over the place. Look, I just wanted to hear a few stories about Skywalker.”

“Well, why didn’t you ask me? He’s a family friend.”

“Really?”

“Yeah. I spent the whole summer with him one time. Come on, Stang is waiting. I’ll tell you all about it on our way there.”

Threepio felt some odd process run a course through his system as he watched Jessika Pava and Poe Dameron go off speaking about that summer.

He really did miss Master Luke.

Nobody really spoke as Luke and Quom drove the kids back to the walker. But if they had, what really could be said? Their brains were running so frantically trying to process the shocking revelation that there probably was a burning smell coming out of their ears. Teng was lucky to have the distraction of bandaging Rey’s hand for a little while to take his mind off things. You know, about five minutes until it returned to the conundrum of Holy Crap My Girlfriend’s Father is a Jedi.

When Luke parked the speeder, nobody made a move to get out. Instead they got sat in silence for a very, very long time.

“It’s safer to discuss this out here,” Luke finally spoke. He popped open his door and began to climb out, “Come. There’s a lot to speak of.”
He led them to a sandy hill not too far from the walker. If someone screamed, you would be able to hear it from the AT-AT. It was the opposite direction of the graves, so there was no distraction there. When they arrived, Luke gestured to the ground, and all three sat down.

Luke continued to stand. He slowly walked down the hill and settled next to two rogue sprouts of some plant that had the nerve to thrive in the desert.


“Time it is for the truth to be revealed,” Yoda agreed.

“Just careful how you phrase things,” Anakin advised. “Being too blunt causes as many problems as being too vague.”

“Know that feeling, I do,” Yoda laughed his little mischievous laugh.

“Just don’t make my mistake, Luke,” Obi-Wan had regret in his voice. “Don’t tell her anything from a certain point of view.”

Taking a deep breath, Luke turned to face the group.

“I, um…” Luke cleared his throat, “I’m not sure where to start this.”

“How you know Sarco Plank might be a good idea,” Teng suggested, glancing to Rey sitting next to him.

Rey was just staring blankly at her father with wide eyes and an open mouth.

“That’s a good idea,” Luke nodded. He took another deep breath, “Alright, let’s just get this out of the way. I am a Jedi.”

He looked at Rey, waiting for her reaction.

She just stared at him, “Neat.”

“Alright,” Luke wouldn’t push her. “When I was nineteen years old, I had a vision of a Jedi Temple. At that time, all of the temples had been destroyed and I was searching for a way to develop my powers. My mentor had been killed, and I felt very lost. It’s a long story how I got there and why, but I found the temple on the planet Devaron. It’s actually the first place I saw happabores, which is why Plank mentioned them earlier today.”


“Right,” he nodded.

Teng frowned at Quom, “Why are you not surprised? I thought you would be ranting and raving about all of this.”

“Luke being a Jedi? I’ve known about that for years.”

“You what?” Rey exclaimed. “Since when?”

“Your dad used his lightsaber to cut off Jarex’s hand,” Quom explained. “He didn’t know I was there. He made it very clear to Jarex that he was a Jedi and used that to get Jarex and his posse to leave Jakku. When Luke saw he had done this in front of me, he explained everything and swore me to secrecy. And I mean everything. I know what happened to your mom’s body. And before you
“Well, it certainly explains why those two had to split up,” Teng said. “Her sister finding her is bad enough. Finding her with a Jedi would be horrifying.”

Luke held up his hand to signal Teng to slow down, “True, but we’ll get there. So, I needed to go to this Temple, but none of the guides around the town would take me because it was too dangerous. I think they also thought it was hunted. Can’t remember; it’s been a few decades. But I found someone to take me, or rather, he found me.”

“Sarco Plank,” Rey supplied.


“And he ended up on Jakku. Shocking,” Quom said.

“I told Sarco that my name was Korl Marcus and he agreed to take me to the temple. As it turned out, only Jedi could get into the temple, and he had been trying to for years.”

“Is he a Jedi?” Rey asked. “Er… Was?”

Luke laughed, “No. Not even close. He took me to the temple, and I was able to learn some things about lightsaber fighting. Unfortunately, long story short, I ended up battling a group of Stormtroopers, and Sarco came in and helped me defeat them.”

“So, the story about him killing Stormtroopers on a jungle planet is true?” Rey asked.

“Yes… but not the way he told it. I’ll tell you the full story some other time. After we beat the Imperials, Sarco turned on me. He planned to loot the Jedi Temple, and I wouldn’t stand for it. He also wanted to hurt a girl who was with me and steal some droids. He threatened to sell me into slavery and we battled. At one point, he temporarily blinded me, but it just drove me to tap stronger into the Force. I defeated him but didn’t kill him, and he got away. I put him out of my mind, figuring that was the last I’d see of him.”

“Until he shouted out your father’s name in the marketplace almost year ago,” Quom said.

“As you saw earlier, Sarco is- was a serious threat,” Luke had to remember the man was now dead. “I thought it wiser to pay him off than to fight him. We made our agreement, but I told him he wasn’t to touch you. He broke his promise today, forcing me to fight and kill him. Killing is my last resort, but I will do it.”

“Evidently,” Rey eyed her father nervously. “So… you have the Force?”

“That’s correct,” Luke nodded. He knew her next question, “You do too, Rey. You are extremely strong with the Force.”

“Oh,” she nodded. Her eyes wouldn’t move from him, and she barely blinked. The idea of her possibly also being something like a Jedi had been buzzing in her brain ever since she saw that emerald saber, so when she finally got the confirmation, it was a very numb reaction. “Stronger than you?”

“Uh…no,” Luke said politely. “But the connection between us is very strong. Remember how I told you the story of your conception was interesting?”

“I genuinely tried to forget that.”
“It’s interesting because I’ve literally sensed you from the exact moment of your conception. I’m sorry that this is graphic, but the second sperm met egg, there you were in the Force.”

“Okay. I’m going to go jump into some quicksand.”

“Rey,” Luke shook his head, a small smile on his face.

“Come on, Dad,” Rey smiled back. “I didn’t need to hear that part. Especially not in front of Teng.”

Teng shrugged but said nothing.

“Sorry, Sweetheart,” Luke chuckled, “but embarrassing your kid in front of their significant other is parenting 101.”

“Oh really?” Quom perked up. “Because I’ve got some things about Teng-”

“So, you’re a Jedi!” Teng loudly interrupted, trying to save himself. Getting embarrassed by a parent was humiliating. Getting embarrassed by Quom Tinadar was downright cruel. “Is that why you and Rey get visions?”


“So, when I saw my uncle?” Rey asked.

“Vision from the Force.”

“And the people I saw while fighting Roke, they were visions?”

“They were my fellow Jedi. You knew them, and they reached out to help guide you.”

Rey swallowed. She dare not ask about the tall man who had known her name because she hadn’t actually told her father about that.

“What about Alyla Kene?” Rey asked.

“Oh, I don’t know what’s going on there,” Luke admitted. “Apparently, she’s a ghost, but not really? I’m still trying to get answers.”

“From your father?”


“I don’t believe this,” Rey marveled. “You’re a Jedi. You can do Jedi things. The barter with Plutt, that’s a mind trick?”

“Yes.”

“And you hold out your hand when I drop things to lower them with the Force?”

“Correct.”

“And you can sense people, and read emotions, jump high, and break a long fall, and-”

Rey froze, blood draining out of his face as her eyes went wide and jaw dropped.

“The X-Wing,” Rey whispered. She looked at Teng, “I actually dropped the X-Wing on you.”
“No, come on,” Teng rubbed her knee, “you didn’t make the wing break.”

“But I did!” Rey exclaimed. “I was mad at Aletha and thinking about what it would be like to hurt her.”

Luke raised an eyebrow but said nothing.

“I thought about the wing breaking, and it did.” Rey looked to Luke in fear, “Did I do it?”

He nodded sadly, “Why do you think I was so angry?”

Rey gasped. Teng’s hands were on her shoulders, trying to calm her as she began to hyperventilate.

“Oh my god,” tears pricked her eyes, “I can’t believe I did that. I’m so sorry.”

“It’s okay,” Teng assured her. “It’s okay. I’m fine.”

Then Rey felt something. There was something reaching for her mind, calm, comforting, and sky blue.

She frowned at her father, “Are you… Are you doing that?”


So, she did.

The blue filled her body, warming her, consoling her, relaxing her. It felt so wonderful, and so familiar.

“Do you see that colour?” Luke asked gently.

“Yes,” Rey answered, taking a deep breath. “Sky blue.”

“Correct. That is what we call my Force Signature. Every person has a different colour. Do you see any others?”

Rey shook her head.

“That’s alright. We’ll work on it.”

“We will?” she asked.

“Now that you are aware of your power, it will begin to grow again,” Luke explained. “That’s why I kept you in the dark all these years. Since you forgot your powers, they’ve simmered under the surface, keeping you from detection. If your power is going to grow, you must learn how to use it properly. Safely.”

“And you promise you’ll help guide me?”

“I’ll be there every step of the way,” Luke promised.

Rey pondered it over in silence. There was just so much to take in, and yet so much she still didn’t understand.

“Is this why we live on Jakku?” she asked. “Because we’re Jedi.”

“It’s a very complicated situation,” Luke answered.
“Then tell me. How did we get here? Why? Who are you?”

Luke could breathe a little easier knowing she still didn’t figure out they were Skywalkers.

“You were born on a planet called Rornian, in the town of Temple Village,” Luke began. “You were the first one born there, so your arrival was joyous in the town.”

“Were my aunt and uncle there? Did mom have Force powers? Did my aunt, uncle, and cousin?”

“It’s called being Force Sensitive. Your aunt and cousin were, but your uncle and mother were not. Your aunt and uncle were in the waiting room when you were born. I remember when your aunt came to see you for the first time. Before she entered the room, she reached for you in the Force. You drew away at first, but because she was my twin, you recognized her connection to me and embraced her. She loved you so much… they all did.”

“So, what happened?” Rey asked nervously.

“When you were five years old,” Luke answered, “the student of Alyla Kene turned on the Jedi. A situation was handled poorly, Alyla ended up dead, the student fled from Temple Village, and he joined the First Order. A few months later, he came back with a group of other Force Sensitives who turned on Luke Skywalker when he announced he was marrying a Non-Force Sensitive.”


“Yes… they were. Skywalker was gone away on business when Alyla’s student returned. They… they burned down the Village and killed almost everyone.”

Rey frowned, “But we escaped.”

“Yes, but in the process, we were separated. Your mother took you and went to a place no one would think of. By the time I found out that you and your mother were on Jakku, the First Order had found you. Your mother sacrificed herself to draw them away from you, and she lied, saying that you were dead. Her performance was so good that even I believed her. I made the mistake of not verifying the claim. I went to go save your mother, but they tricked me, and she was killed before I was even told where she was. Losing everything, especially you and your mother devastated me. I went into hiding. I came to Jakku to find your body and bury you, but I was amazed to find you alive. I chose to stay here and protect you. We stopped talking about our past, and eventually you just forgot about it. And that’s how we got here.”

“But… why?” Rey asked. “Why did the First Order come to Jakku for me? Did they want to kill me?”

“They wanted to exploit your powers. Take you from me, turn you to the Dark Side, and make you a mindless agent of evil. I wouldn’t let that happen. I won’t let that happen.”

“What happened to my aunt and cousin? Were they killed?”

“Your aunt is… a story for another time,” Luke swallowed. “But I will say that my sister, try as I might to get rid of her, never will leave me.”

“And what about my cousin?”

“He…” Luke knew what he could do. It would be so easy to lie, to frame it as a certain point of view. But Rey needed to know the truth, “He was one of the students who turned against Skywalker. He’s serving Snoke in the First Order right now.”
Teng was suddenly regretting dating into this mess. He glanced at Rey.

Eh. It was worth it.

“He is?” Rey whispered, not noticing Teng.


Rey’s eyes narrowed, something clicking in her mind, “Huh.”

Luke frowned, not expecting that reaction, “What?”

“I understand.”

“What do you mean?”

“I know who you are.”


“You do?” Quom blurted out. He looked at Teng, “Is it that obvious?”

Teng shrugged, “I haven’t figured it out.”

Luke spoke quickly, trying to maintain control, “Rey, I can explain-”

“You’re Alyla’s brother.”

Everyone was silent.

“I’m sorry, what?” Quom said.

Rey grinned so wide it looked like it hurt her cheeks, “He’s Gavyn Kene.”


“He’s roughly the same age as Alyla,” Rey explained, “he has a twin sister that is complicated, but he can’t get rid of. Alyla’s student was obviously her son who burned down Temple Village and serves in the First Order. Dad told me during his telling of Alyla’s story that she had a relationship with a close friend of his, and one of his best friends was Dad’s brother-in-law and owned that freighter.”

Well, technically Lando did once own the Millennium Falcon, Luke conceded. He was just too much in shock to say anything.

“You’ve said to me in the past that Alyla Kene had a niece,” Rey continued. “You clearly know too much about Obik Kenu – a Jedi – and his demise. Your mentor was killed when you were a teenager, just like Alyla. There was a girl with you when you faced Sarco. Clearly that was Alyla. You were friends first with mom, which would make sense that you wouldn’t date your master from the get go.”

Hold on, did she think he used to be a slave in the Zygerrian Fighting Pits?

“You told me that long scar on your back was from an incident on Zygerria where you got whipped by some slavers.”
Oh crap, he had forgot about that.

“And you said that Alyla’s brother was a rather good pilot and loved restoring ships. His ship was his pride and joy. Come on, Dad. I’ve seen the way you handle ships, and I’ve seen you on the Flight Sim. You are Gavyn Kene!” Rey declared. “You must have taken the name Luke as a reference to Luke Skywalker, because who would believe Skywalker would walk around with his real first name? You’re Gavyn Kene!”

Luke just stared at his daughter.

This was a turn he had not expected nor wanted.

“Rey, listen,” Luke took a deep breath.

“No, no,” Rey shook her head. “Don’t say it, Dad. You don’t need to say anything. I don’t need to hear it. I know the truth. Come on, Teng. Let’s go say good night. I’m going to need to sleep nice and long tonight. Jedi training starts tomorrow. Right, Dad?”

“Oh… sure,” Luke was still too stunned to respond with anything else.

In the corner of his eye, Quom was turning purple and shaking from holding back his reaction so hard.

“You can’t tell anyone about this,” Luke warned. “No one can know you’re Force Sensitive. They can’t know the truth about us or the First Order might find you.”

“I promise. Come on, Teng,” Rey got to her feet, pulling Teng up with her. “Oh, I’m so excited about all of this. In fact, you might say I’m Kene.”

Oh God, what had Luke done?

“Rey Rhiaon Kene,” she tested out the name. Rey frowned, “No offense, Dad, but that is an awful name when you say it out loud.”


“Let’s go!” Rey pulled Teng away.

Luke just stared straight away in confusion and regret until he was staring at nothing but empty sand.

Then Quom burst out laughing.

“By the Force, she was so close!” Quom laughed hysterically, doubling over. His long, hearty guffaws elongated into literal howls.

It was too much for Luke, and he too burst into laughter.

“She thinks I’m Gavyn Kene,” his face was red as he marveled at his daughter’s guess. “She came so close to the truth, and then just way over shot it. Oh… for goodness’ sake, how does she reconcile my supposed slavery with my time served in the Rebellion?”

“Oh, Luke, she is truly your daughter.”

“You know what the worst part of that all is?” Luke shook his head. “Rey has seen Alyla. No blue tinge to her at all; she knows what Alyla looks like.”
“And?”

“I am blonde-haired, blue-eyed, and pale-skinned. Alyla is a raven-headed, dark-eyed, Yavinese woman. We don’t even look like we would be third cousins, let alone twins.”

“Hey, are you insulting your fictional parents’ mixed-race relationship?”

“It’s okay. Apparently I’m half-Yavinese. I can say things like that. Oh, this is just perfect. I can’t correct her without having her figure out who I really am, but I just know this is going to blow up in my face in a few years.”

“And I just hope I get to be there to see it.” Quom stood up and brushed the sand from his fur, “Alright, I’m going to go interrupt Rey and Teng’s goodbye before he gets her pregnant.”

“That’s unlikely,” Luke replied. “We both know that Aletha’s secret Rey box had condoms in it.”

“Of course, what else would Doc send? I’m going to take Teng home. We’ll see you guys tomorrow.”

“Good night, Quom.”

“Good night, Gavyn,” he winked.

Luke just shook his head as Quom trounced off, tail flicking happily side to side.

“Oh, boy,” Luke said. “What am I going to do about all of this?”

“Luke,” Obi-Wan Kenobi said carefully in the Force. “I know we agreed on no certain points of view. I didn’t think we had to say, don’t directly lie to the girl.”

“Wash our hands of this, we do,” Yoda said.

Luke sighed, “I know that was probably a bad choice, but she already knows so much now. Can’t we keep this secret just a little bit longer?”

“Alright, but word of advice, don’t cut off her hand when you do tell her,” Anakin advised. “According to your mother that’s a horrible thing to do, and how dare you do that to our child. Ugh, even when I’m dead I’m getting nagged for the Vader stuff. You should hear her rants about strangling pregnant wives.”

“I really should have taken you to a therapist as a child,” Obi-Wan sighed.

“Speaking of people in need of therapists, I’m going to go check on Ben,” Anakin said. “This whole two girlfriends thing is oddly entertaining to watch.”


“Oh, wait until you learn about it.” Anakin chuckled. “And he can barely juggle one of them to begin with. I’m glad I wasn’t that terrible with romancing Padmé.”

Anakin paused as if he heard some voice Luke could not.

“Yeah, well you still fell for me anyway!” Anakin called out. “Who’s that on?”

Luke frowned, “Is he… talking to my mother?”
They do this sometimes,” Obi-Wan replied. “Jakku has a spot on it that’s rather strong with the Force, so sometimes Padmé can tune into our conversations with you.”

“Are you talking about that cave in Carbon Ridge?” Suddenly Obi-Wan’s words processed in Luke’s mind, “Wait, my mother can hear me?”

“To some degree,” Obi-Wan answered. He paused and then said, “Padmé says she thinks you handled that situation with Rey quite well and is proud that you are putting your daughter first before anything.”

“Oh, well, thank you, Mother.”

“She also wants you to know that she wished she could have done the same, but there were extenuating circumstances that she is unfortunately not allowed to explain to you… But basically it’s Anakin’s fault.”

“Isn’t it always?” Luke chuckled. He then paused, “Obi-Wan, if my mother can hear me… can Felicity?”

There was a long silence.

“No,” Obi-Wan finally answered. “There’s… many factors into who can and cannot hear you. Strength of the Force, strength of relationship, and a hundred other things. Your aunt and uncle cannot. Obik Kenu, Gavyn Kene, and most of your students cannot. Zena Halcorr can, but that’s because she’s so strong with the Force, and Reine Agim because you two were so close, but your subconscious is blocking that particular connection. It’s complicated, Luke, but Felicity cannot hear your conversations with us. Qui-Gon Jinn can though, and I think your Darklighter friend might.”

“Oh,” Luke looked down sadly. “So, you can’t pass a message from me to Felicity?”

“We never said that,” Anakin interjected.

Apparently, Yoda had gotten bored with the conversation and left.

“Then can you tell her that…” Luke struggled to find the words. “That I love her, I miss her, and I’m so incredibly sorry that I couldn’t save her?”

Luke felt a warm hand on his shoulder.

“I tell her every time I see her,” Anakin replied. “…Which is a lot more often than you would think.”

“So, you two have mended bridges?”

“For the most part, and very much against her will. I even got her to stop trying to strangle me.”

“Thank you, Father,” Luke smiled. He glanced around casually, “You know, I kind of thought Alyla would want to see this unfold. Especially since Rey now thinks we’re family.”

“Alyla did, but unfortunately she is busy at the moment,” Obi-Wan replied.


“No. She’s off with her son.”

“Oh, ok,” Luke said casually. “…Wait! Her what?”
But Luke received no reply.

“Oh, Rey,” he sighed, once again dumbfounded by the mystery of Alyla Kene, “welcome to the insanity of being a Jedi.”

Chapter End Notes

Coming Up Next Chapter...
Lost and Found
Teng, Quom, and Luke tear apart Jakku to find Rey when she goes missing after a X’us’R’iia. But danger lurks inside when Luke takes Quom to a cave infected with the Dark Side.

…but, yeah. I totally didn’t actually plan for Rey to figure out Luke was a Jedi. It was actually only supposed to be Teng who learned it, and Rey was just unconscious. But the story keeps pulling towards Rey figuring it out, and I couldn’t fight it anymore. Plus, I didn’t want Teng to keep that sort of thing from Rey.

I’m still holding back the moment she learns her dad is Luke Skywalker because I’ve had that image and dialogue in my head for far too long. So, if it seems like the whole she thinks Luke is Gavyn thing feels a little weird and forced, I’ll confess, it’s just my last-ditch attempt to preserve the I am a Skywalker reveal for later.

Why did I give Rey eyeliner and mascara in a desert environment? Because I don’t care what JJ Abrams wants me to believe, Rey is absolutely wearing mascara and eyeliner during TFA.

Again, full credit to the character of Lyra, and the exchange between Luke and Quom about Rey having a fleet goes to R2_D2106.
Lost and Found

Chapter Summary

Luke gives Rey a manicure, Rose and BB-8's closeness gets them both in trouble, and Quom gives good advice for once.

Chapter Notes

The next several chapters will borrow heavily from the book Before the Awakening by Greg Rucka. There will be large sections copy and pasted, but most of the time altered in some way. Please note that continuity wise, I am rewriting the Rey section, anything not shown on screen (in in chapter I guess) is canon for the Finn section, and completely disregard the Poe section as I have shown a different origin for him joining the Resistance and learning about the map.

Trigger warning: Child abuse and violence towards a child is shown and discussed in this chapter. Also Rey has a traumatic flashback to the Burning of Rornian in which Obik Kenu’s murder is explicitly shown in horrifying detail.

HUGE SHOUTOUT to R2_D2106 who wrote a Poe scene so amazing I just had to add it into this story. Full credit for that scene goes to her, though I tweaked a word or two, some formatting, fixed a continuity error, and changed the scene from involving her OC to it involving Rose. Thank you so much for giving me permission to add in your scene.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The Long Way Home

Chapter Forty-Six

Lost and Found

The Teedos called the storm X’us’R’iia. It had a name because the Teedos believed there was only the one, the same one that returned again and again. It was the breath of the god R’iia, the Teedos said.

R’iia was not a benevolent god, and thus the storm was blamed for a great many things. It was the source of the famine that had plagued that part of Jakku for years. It was the reason the water had gone away. It was why their luggabeasts turned unruly. It was responsible for the interlopers who plagued their lands. It was, significantly, what had brought the great shards of metal filled with many,
many soft beings crashing to the sands so many years before. The ship graveyards were a monument to R’iia’s anger, the Teedos said. They were a warning, one that the interlopers in Niima consistently failed to heed, much to the Teedos’ annoyance. Most of the Teedos were harmless, scavengers in their own way, much like Rey and the others. There were orthodox Teedos, though, zealots who were known to attack both their brethren and the salvagers, claiming what they did was a blasphemy to R’iia. R’iia would punish them all for their sins. The X’us’R’iia would punish them all.

Rey didn’t believe a word of it, but she didn’t believe in much outside of herself.

That is until three weeks ago when she had discovered her own father had been one of the legendary figures called a Jedi Knight. He wielded great magic, as the Teedos would call it, though Luke Erso called it the Force. He could do things beyond her wildest dreams, see things that had been and had yet to come. He could bring the First Order to its heels if given the opportunity. He could be unstoppable, a Master that controlled Darkness and Light, and could balance the universe itself, heeding it to his own whims.

And she had that power too.

Now Rey didn’t know what to believe.

But what she did know to believe is that her father would love her, protect her, and train her. What she would do with that training, she didn’t know. She feared the future she now knew lay before her almost as much as she feared the X’us’R’iia about to hit.

She’d been high on the superstructure of one of the old battle cruisers half-buried in the sands, hoping to find something to salvage that the other scavengers had missed. Her father was down below going through the things they had found to determine what needed fixing and what was worthless, while no doubt worrying that her being up so high wasn’t good with her bandaged hand, still healing from her duel with Sarco Plank.

She looked out and saw the storm forming on the horizon. She knew immediately that it would be a big one. It was time to go.

“She spoke into her comm, finding it easier to do than shout down at him. Rey didn’t need to see Luke’s face to know he was scowling at her holding on with only one hand. It was not like her injured hand that was holding the comm was doing much anyway. “I see a X’us’R’iia on the horizon. Time to pack up.”


“You mean you would rather spend hours cooped up alone with your boyfriend than your father? Blasphemy.”

Rey laughed, “I didn’t say you couldn’t join us, Dad.”

“Oh yes, and spend days alone in a confined space with my hormonal teenaged daughter and her boyfriend. That sounds wonderful. Oh, for goodness sake, would you be careful?”

She’d been free-climbing the wreck, and it was—perhaps paradoxically—always quicker going up than it was going down. Going down, you had to worry about gravity in a whole different way, and
hurrying was a good plan to get yourself hurt. She knew that from experience.

“Why?” Rey smirked. “Can’t I just use my awesome Jedi powers to stop myself from getting hurt?”

“You mean the powers I haven’t taught you to use yet?” Luke dryly replied. “And you do remember that time I ripped open my side, right?”

She took it fast, anyway—almost too fast—then risked jumping the last three meters to the ground. The sand could be soft if you were close enough, but she wasn’t. From that height, it was like landing on metal. The shock of impact jarred her ankles and ran a sharp pain up her calves and into her knees.

As Rey screamed out in pain, Luke raced to her side and dropped to his knees.

“Are you alright?”

“Fine,” Rey groaned, waving him away from her. She used her staff to right herself, “You were just right about hurting myself. You can gloat about it when we get home.”

“Rey, I would much rather be wrong than to see you hurt,” Luke frowned, rising to his feet. He let out a sigh of relief when he saw that she wasn’t limping as she sprinted for her speeder. “Got everything?”

“All packed,” Rey secured the netting on the side of her speeder. “Race you home?”

Luke grinned as he threw his supplies in the trunk of his own speeder, “You’re on.”

Though they had their own speeders, the pair still liked to scavenge from time to time. There was safety in numbers, plus if they brought two speeders, they could haul twice as much home.

Then it was a race for home, Rey and the speeder shooting as fast as she could push it across the desert, the rising wind chasing her. She had built her speeder to be faster than her father’s, but he knew how to give her a good chase.

With one hand she tugged the end of her long, looped scarf from beneath her belt and wrapped it around her nose and mouth. Quom’s obsession with scarves had infected her at a young age. They truly were a great tool in the desert, and Rey was thankful for the Vrogem as she used her scarf to cover her face as the wind began to pick up.

As she pulled down her goggles – seeing her father doing to same from the corner of her eye – Rey thought of Aletha and Kira’s Council. Depending on the length of the X’us’R’iia, she wouldn’t be able to speak with them for a while. Not if she was going to be stuck with her father the whole time. Thankfully, the girls had come up with a system to preserve their secret from Luke. Only Rey would initiation contact, unless there was an emergency at which time the Council could be the ones to comm her.

The storm had almost caught them by the time the father and daughter reached the wreckage of the walker. It came in surges, strong enough to buffet the speeder from behind, and Rey had to fight to keep the vehicle steady on its repulsors. Glancing over at her father, Rey could see he was focusing intently on something she couldn’t see. He was probably using the Force to keep his own speeder in line. Luke had become more comfortable with openly practising the Force ever since Rey learned the truth.

Sand was swirling when she slid to a stop and dismounted. She stumbled a little from the wind, but strong arms caught her and steadied her. Rey smiled up at Luke gratefully. Her father had always
been a quick man, and now she was starting to understand why.

Together they struggled to shove their speeder between two of the broken, bent legs of the giant AT-AT to shelter it from damage as much as possible. The sound of the storm was growing deafening, the wind a near-constant shriek, mixed with the rasping, cruel noise of sand scraping the hull of the walker.

Thunder exploded above Rey, making her flinch. Luke locked his arms around her instinctively, protecting his precious little girl and making her feel safe. He remembered the sandstorms of his youth and the way he would bury himself into the protective embrace of his Uncle Owen.

His heart hurt as he remembered that Uncle Owen, as gruff and rough as he had been, always put Luke’s safety before his own. Owen literally protected Luke to his final breath, choosing to burn alive rather than let his nephew come to harm.

Luke looked down at his not so little girl hiding in his arms. He knew he would make the same choice to protect Rey if it came down to it. Just as Owen did. Just as Beru did. Just as Anakin, Obi-Wan, and Reine Agim had done for him.

And as Felicity had chosen to do so this little girl could grow into the tall, strong, beauty huddled in his arms.

“It’s okay.” Luke pressed a kiss to the top of Rey’s head. “It’s just the storm.”

Rey nodded, but said nothing. She hadn’t jumped because of the lightning, and her father knew it. It was because of the fear and control Jarex Zolhar still held over her that made her jump and flinch at times like this. She couldn’t remember the man’s face or voice anymore; but she remembered his ring, and she remembered the pain of it smashing into her face whenever she upset Jarex.

Sometimes Rey wondered what exactly had been Fallah Menuk’s breaking point that made her leave Jakku. Fallah Menuk, the coward who had fled rather than reveal to Luke what Jarex had been doing to Rey. The one who had escaped the confrontation where Jarex lost his hand. Was it seeing her boyfriend stoop so low that he would hit a child? Or was it what Rey suspected, that Jarex treated his lover with the same contempt.

Whatever the reason, Rey always did think there was something strange behind the eyes of the redhead whenever she beheld Jarex injuring Rey.

Rey squinted skyward in time to see the last of the sunlight being eaten away by the swirling dust clouds. Dry lightning arced and lit the sky as if daylight had returned at once, just for a second. When she closed her eyes, she could still see the lightning flash. She tried to focus on it so she wouldn’t remember the hateful green eyes of Jarex Zolhar and the way they burned with such manipulative hatred. Rey loathed to admit it, but his hold was so great over her that sometime Rey still thought the abuse was her own fault.

Something sky blue filled her up, warming and comforting her.

“It’s okay,” Luke whispered, holding her tight, “He’s gone. He’s never coming back.”

Rey hoped her father was right.

Without a word, the pair started for the entrance of the walker. Her skin stung with biting sand, the wind trying to take her by the feet and lift her, and she had to fight her way to the side of the hull using handholds. Luke was behind her, a hand on her back, pushing at her slightly to combat the power of the wind. Rey winced when her hand had to tightly grip the handles, but her wound had
healed quite decently in the past weeks. Rey barely managed to wrench the makeshift door open enough to stumble inside, pull her father in behind her, and then, just as quickly, slammed it shut again.

For a moment, Rey and Luke stood in the darkness of their home, catching their breath, listening to R’iia’s rage outside. The noise was diminished but still sunk through the walker’s armored hull. Though they couldn’t see each other, they sensed each other’s position. Rey didn’t know if it was a Jedi thing, a father-daughter thing, or just a thing that came from living with a person for so long. They looked to each other, and gave a small identical chuckle.


“Yeah, I’m fine,” Rey reached out, fumbled for a second, then found one of their lamps and triggered the key. The light flickered weakly at first, then stabilized into a warmer glow. “I just really hate sand.”

Luke laughed a little too much at that.

“What is it?” his daughter asked.

“Ask me again sometime.” He slung an arm around her shoulder and they walked deeper into the heart of their home. “I assume standard plan for the X’us’R’iia?”

“You ration the water, I ration the food, top left ankle is where we relieve ourselves,” Rey confirmed.

The pair got to work, settling themselves in for the long haul. They took off their boots, and emptied sand from them. They shook off their clothes, Luke hanging up his cloak on a peg. They shook out her hair and Rey made a sly comment about Luke needing to brush sand out of his beard that made Luke smile, shake his head, and say something about her taking after her mother. When they were finished, there was a substantial pile of Jakku’s desert at their feet.

“You know, I feel easily ten kilos lighter,” Rey declared.

“Well, you need the weight anyway,” Luke plugged their commlinks into the chargers. “I don’t like how pronounced your collarbone is.”

He didn’t notice the charge light on Rey’s comm didn’t shine.

Rey grinned, “Teng does.”

“Sweetheart, it’s not your collarbone he stares at.”

Rey wondered if back in Niima Outpost, Teng was having an uncontrollable urge to blush.

Thunder detonated overhead again, vibrating through the metal shell of the walker. Bits and pieces of various salvage jumped. Antar Kymeri’s helmet fell from where it hung on a makeshift hook. Rey carefully brushed it off and placed it back next to Dosmit Raeh’s helmet. She promised Aletha to take care of Antar’s helmet, and she would honour that promise.

They lived in what had once been the main troop compartment of the walking tank, but that had been when the thing was upright. The interior had long before been stripped of anything salvageable and now resembled a cluttered workshop more than anything else. Rey had traded for a generator a couple of years before, a great moment of pride for Luke to see her earn that much. Because of Rey, they had power when they needed it, mostly for the workbench where they would take apart and
reassemble and, more often than not, rebuild from scratch those pieces of usable junk they recovered.

Unkar always paid more for things that still worked.

Quom is not fond of Luke and Rey’s little homebrewed operation, preferring the group do all of their work in his workshop. Aletha had managed to get him to drop the subject years ago when she pointed out Luke and Rey needed something to do when they were stuck at home.

Rey was fairly certain Teng still secretly endured Quom’s rants on the matter, but if he did, the boy would never tell her.

“You know, I feel bad that Teng isn’t here with us,” Rey said.

“Sweetheart, you can live without your boyfriend for a few days,” Luke shook his head; though he knew he really had no leg to stand on with how much he had carried on over Felicity’s absence in his life.

Rey rolled her eyes, “I meant that he’s stuck in a small space with Quom and no escape.”

“Oh… You’re right, that is horrifying.”

She laughed, “I think one of the worst things I can remember happening to me was getting stuck with Quom in here for one of the longest X’us’R’iias on record. You must have been going crazy stuck with Aletha in her tent. There wasn’t even anything to distract yourselves with.”

Luke cleared his throat, “We found things to do.”

Rey watched her father carefully, a smirk sneaking onto her face, “Dad?”

“Yes, Rey?”

“I’m pretty much full grown, right?”

“I guess.”

“And that means the two of us can have adult conversations now, right?”

Luke narrowed his eyes, “Where is this going?”

“Did you and Aletha have sex during that storm?” Rey asked bluntly.

His jaw hit the ground, “Rey!”

“What? You said we can have adult conversations!”

“No. I asked where this conversation was going. I definitely did not say you could ask me such things.”

“Come on, I’m curious.”

“Why in the Galaxy would you be curious about that?”

“Because I’m just trying to settle the timeline of when you two got together,” Rey explained. “It was during then, right?”

Luke sighed. If this had been a few years earlier, he would have expected it to be a continuation of
the conflict that led to Teng getting an X-Wing dropped on him. But it was true, Rey had matured, and so had their relationship.

“Fine, yes, we did,” Luke confessed. “We kissed a year before and confessed our feelings a year before that. But it was during the first X’us’R’iia that we first made love.”

“Were you already together at the time?” Rey asked.

“Not really. That was what sort of kick started things. Does that make you uncomfortable?”

“Maybe a little, but it’s not my relationship to dictate. The choice was yours and Aletha’s alone.”

“Exactly.” Luke considered his next words, “And speaking of, may I ask if you and Teng have made such a decision?”

Rey blushed and looked down, “I’m technically still a virgin, Dad.”

“Technically?”

“We’ve done foreplay, but no, you know… penetration. At least none of the… fun parts.”

Luke was slightly curious about what sort of things the pair had been up to, but knew he’d regret it if he asked. His family had dabbled enough in incest; he did not need those images in his head.

“Alright,” Luke sighed. “Just promise me that if you do do that with Teng, the two of you will be safe. You don’t want any MisCalcs.”

Rey frowned, “MisCalcs?”


“Makes sense.” Rey paused, “Dad… was I a MisCalc?”

Luke smiled and wrapped an arm around her, “Definitely not. While your mother and I weren’t actively trying to have a child, we had decided to allow the possibility and dropped precautions. Not a miscalculation, but we weren’t calculating anything at all. And it was one of the best decisions of my life, no matter what it may have led to.”

Through a hairline crack in the hull, Rey saw a sudden flare of light, more dry lightning. She picked up one of the blankets on the floor and used it to cover the crack. She secured it using three of the rare magnets she’d recovered from a shattered gyro-stabilizer.

As Rey did that, Luke went to their stash, hidden beneath one of the side panels, unscrewed the plate, and removed one of the dozen bottles of water they’d left there. He took a drink to wash the desert out of his mouth, and forced himself swallowed with a grimace. Even though he kept them in a life of relative comfort, they still couldn’t afford to waste water during a sandstorm. He carefully recapped the bottle, and offered it to Rey to do the same.

While Rey returned the water to their stash, Luke began to pile the remaining blankets on the ground near the back of the hull. He sat down and beckoned for Rey to join him, which she did, settling comfortably in his arms. She rested her head against his shoulders, listening to the storm beat furiously against their home.

“Dad?”
“Yes, Rey?”

“Tell me the story of how Rogue One, Han Solo, Leia Organa, and Luke Skywalker destroyed the Death Star?”

He hugged his little girl tightly, “There was once a man named Alaric, who had a son, a daughter, a skill for mechanics, and pride perfectly equal for all three things…”

She closed her eyes, listening to the soothing sounds of sand and her father’s voice, feeling, for the first time in a very long time like she could be more than half-brave.

The X’us’R’iia lasted three and a half days.

If fate had been a little less kind to Rey – or if Aletha Kymeri understood the term care package didn’t mean two enormous crates – they might have worried about running out of water and food. But Luke kept them on track with the rationing of water, and Rey took pride in using Aletha’s gifts to give them varied meals. She even made a game out of who could manage the largest amount of Dagobah trail mix, that had ended with Rey almost dry heaving in the sand and conceding her defeat to Luke.

To keep themselves entertained, the pair talked. They shared stories, mainly those of the past that Luke knew, but Rey had a few of her own. There were a few projects they had on their workbench that they tinkered around with. Luke also would teach Rey using the books Aletha has sent, which he was very grateful for. He tried his best to give his daughter an education, but he had the sneaking suspicion that when she re-entered the “real world” there would be quite a few subjects she would be lacking in.

There was also their “computer” to keep them entertained. They’d jury-rigged it using pieces scavenged from several crashed fighters over the years, including a cracked but still-usable display from an old BTL-A4 Y-wing. There were no radio communications to speak of—no way to transmit or receive and it wasn’t like they really had anyone with a computer to talk to anyway. If Quom and Teng’s comms couldn’t reach through a sandstorm, there was no point in using a computer to do the same.

On the wreckage of a Zephra-series hauler, though, Rey had once found a stash of data chips, and after painstakingly going through each and every one of them, she’d discovered three with their programs intact; one of them, to her delight, had been a flight simulator.

So when they weren’t sleeping, eating, sharing stories, tinkering at their workbench, or just sitting and listening to the storm, they flew.

It was a good program, or at least Rey imagined it was. Luke wouldn’t answer one way or another, but secretly it was the very program the Alliance had once used to train him. They could select any number of ships to fly, from small repulsor-driven atmospheric craft to a wide variety of fighters, all the way up to an array of stock freighters. They could set destinations, worlds Rey had never visited and Luke imagined one day she would, and scenarios, from speed runs to obstacle courses to system failures.

At first, Rey been truly horrible at it, quite literally crashing a few seconds after takeoff every time. Luke like to joke that she had been cursed with the luck of Felicity Rhiaon, but soon enough the Skywalker side took over. With often little else to do, and with a perverse sense of determination that
she would not allow herself to be beaten by a machine that she herself had put together with her own hands, she learned. Rey learned so much that there was little the program could throw her way that would challenge her now. She’d gotten to the point where she would, quite deliberately, do everything she could think of to make things hard on herself, just to see if she could get out of it. Full-throttle atmospheric re-entry with repulsor-engine failure? No sweat. Multiple hull breach deep-space engine flameout? A walk in the park.

It was, if nothing else, a way to pass the time.

But she could never quite manage to beat Luke. The man could fly any course Rey set for him with his eyes closed… Literally. They bet the last of the koyo melons on it.

“That’s it,” Rey shut off the computer as her father bit into the melon. “I’m bored of this.”

“No need to be a sore loser, Rey,” Luke chuckled, wiping a trail of melon juice from his chin. It had been so long since he had tasted fruit, and he wasn’t about to throw away his last shot in likely several more years.

“Nice, Dad. Calling me a loser. Top notch parenting,” she teased.

“It’s just a term,” Luke shook his head, but smiled. “And it’s important I teach you how to deal with disappointment gracefully. But if you’re going to be that way, here.”

Luke reached for a knife and cut off a good portion of the melon.

“Don’t say I never treat you,” he gave her the piece of koyo.

“Thanks, Dad.” Rey winked at him, popping the melon in her mouth, “But isn’t this rewarding bad behavior?”

“I lied to you about being a Jedi for eleven years. I think I owe you a little melon every now and then.”

“It wasn’t a lie,” Rey corrected. “And I don’t hold it to you as one. I get why you didn’t tell me, and I’m not mad now that it’s all in the open.”

“Why don’t you hold off on such declarations for when it’s actually all out in the open?” Luke shuddered, “There are things I so don’t look forward to telling you. At least maybe this time I can have some dignity on how you find them out.”

He would not.

“Speaking of,” Luke reached for Rey, “let me see your hand. I think we can finally take the bandages off.”

Rey followed Luke to where they kept the first aid kit, and Luke got to work. She watched her father patiently, but honestly, she was tired of patience. She had been waiting and waiting ever since the day she got this hand injury to finally face head on the destiny he had been withholding from her. Now he seemed determined to continue to withhold it from her until her hand was long healed and the scar was nothing more than a memory to tell her grandchildren.

She could picture four or five children sitting at her feet, her hair grey but face still full of life as she looked down into innocent replicas of Teng’s eyes and told them stories of her youth.

Would they have her father’s power too?
“When do I get my own lightsaber?” Rey asked suddenly.

If Luke was surprised by the query, he showed no sign, “Rey, I’m not comfortable with you having a blaster yet. I’m not about to give you a laser sword.”

“It’s called a lightsaber, Dad.”

“Hey now, who’s the expert on Jedi here?”

Rey laughed as Luke unwrapped the bandage on her hand and started inspecting the wound. Thankfully sepsis had decided not to grace this particular injury, and she was able to bend her fingers again after a few days.

“Come on, Dad,” Rey said as he studied her stitches. “It’s been three weeks and all we’ve been doing is meditation. I want to do the real Jedi stuff.”

“Meditation is real Jedi stuff.”

“But you’ve been teaching me meditation for years.”

“Yes, I have. In an attempt to teach you balance and control so that when this day came you were ready to wield the Force properly.”

“Exactly!” Rey exclaimed. “I want to learn to control it!”

Luke narrowed his eyes, “Self control, Rey.”

“Oh,” she looked down. “Well, when do I get to learn to control the Force?”

Luke sighed and glanced over to the corner of the walker. Catching sight of the remnants of the care shipment, he got an idea.

“Look, your hand is pretty much healed up, and we’re clearly bored of the flight sim. Why don’t we do something else to pass the time? You never got to play around with some of your presents before your injury. How about I give you a manicure and we’ll discuss the Force?”

“Really?” her eyes lit up.

“Consider it a belated birthday present. Now, wash your hands and I’ll set things up.”

“Oh.”

The pair of them did just that.

“Hey, Dad?” Rey poured a little water from a bottle onto her hands. “How do you know how to give a manicure?”

“I learned that the ability to give you mother a manicure resulted in certain benefits,” Luke gathered his tools. “Massages too.”

“Massages?” Rey chuckled. “Like lie on the table, essential oils, aromatherapy, candlelight, and peaceful music full body massages?”

“Sometimes if I wanted to make a big deal out of it. But never underestimate the power of a good back rub. My back-rubbing ability was the only thing that made your mother let me live through the duration of her pregnancy. And my foot rubs… let’s just say that a foot rub almost gave you a little
“Remind me to never ask you for a foot rub,” Rey laughed, though secretly she was making plans for Teng later.

Luke looked down and regarded the colours of nail polish Aletha had sent, “Do you mind if we use the lilac?”

“I was kind of hoping for the silver,” she admitted, gently scrubbing her hands with soap.

“I promise to use the silver at another time, but for now I would like to teach you something, and I need the lilac.”

“Alright,” Rey shrugged, drying off her hands. “It’s my signature colour, after all.”

Luke paused, “Your what?”

“Aletha said a girl had to have a signature colour. It’s a girl thing.”

Actually, Paige had said it, but Rey wasn’t about to explain Kira’s Council.


“I dunno. I’ve always been drawn to it. When I think me, I think of lilac. Is something wrong with that?”

“Not at all.”

Luke pulled his cot next to a table that held things like their new Holo projector and the dolls Rey had outgrown sleeping with (though Luke had still seen her several times when she thought his back was turned, handling the dolls, and talking to the Felicity one in particular.) He deposited the tools on the table and patted the cot.

“Come,” he bade. “Sit here, legs crossed.”

“Why?” she asked.

“Because it’s easier to do your nails when we’re on the same level.”

“I meant…” Rey stopped when she realized his words had nothing to do with Force matters. “Never mind.”

He gently heated some water on the ration cooker, then poured in some room temperature water to cool it down. Luke put it in a bowl and had Rey put her hands in it to soak.

“This will help with the cuticles and such,” Luke explained. “Honestly, I’m not clear on the details.”

“It feels nice at least,” Rey smiled softly.

The look on her face made him smile back.

“Rey?” he removed her hands from the water and gently towelled them off. “What do you know about the Force?”

“It’s a power that Jedi have,” Rey answered. “That lets them control people, and…make things float.”
Luke raised an eyebrow as she awkwardly ended her definition.


“Really?” she brightened. Even she had known that last part wasn’t maybe quite right, but if her father was acting like that, then that must mean-

“Every word in that sentence was wrong,” he ended dryly.

Rey sighed. He was messing with her.

Seeing the way she deflated, Luke reached out and stroked her cheek. He smiled at her, fatherly affection shining for her in spades. He felt how it relaxed her, and her smile came back ever so slightly.

“It was a good guess.” He set her hands in her lap and set aside the towel, “But that’s not quite what the Force is.”

“Alright,” she replied ready to be attentive and studious. The look on her face really did make a good case for her being related to Alyla Kene. It was that patience and willingness to learn and understand that had helped keep Ben Solo in line for years.

Until that patience was no longer enough.

“The Force is not a power you have,” Luke explained. “It’s not about lifting rocks. It’s the energy between all things—a tension, a balance that binds the universe together.”

“Okay,” Rey nodded. His description could have characterized a thousand other mythical traditions. “But what is it?”

Luke sighed, “I wish I could explain it to you better. Show you what the Force truly is. Show you what balance truly is. But this planet… such death and heat and dryness. It’s not the right place. Someday, I will take you to a planet with birds in the sky, lakes on the ground, and trees in between. Where you can feel a cool rain on your face and breathe the fresh oxygen of a forest. There I will show you what true balance is. What the Force truly is. So for today, I will illustrate what we are to it, and that is what you must understand. It is not yours to possess, control, and own. We are part of it, and it is what we are truly made of. Made from.”

Rey stared at her father, “…Okay. But what is it?”

Luke groaned, “How about I just tell you what my mentor told me? The Force is what gives a Jedi their power. It’s an energy field created by all living things. It surrounds us and penetrates us. It binds the galaxy together. We do not have it; it gives us the gift of being able to use it to achieve our goals.”

Rey blinked.

“You’re going to ask what is it again, aren’t you?”

“You know me too well.”

Luke shook his head, “Of course you got the Rhiaon skepticism. Why wouldn’t you? Not getting it would have made my life too easy, and the universe wouldn’t want that.”

“And miss all the fun we have?” Rey grinned. “Come on, Dad. What were you going to show me?”
“I’m going to show you what we like to call a Force Signature. It’s how you can identify specific individuals in the Force. It’s why I don’t mistake you for Quom or Teng when you enter a room while my back is turned.”

“So that’s how you know!”


Rey did as instructed, the world becoming nothing but darkness before her. She could still sense her father sitting in front of her, hearing the familiar sound of his breathing.


She focused on following his instructions to the letter. In and out. In and out. Steady breathing exactly like how he had her do during meditation.

“Now reach out.”

Rey readied herself, and then reached out.

Literally. She literally reached out a hand in front of her like she was trying to grab onto the Force and hold it there.

Luke rolled his eyes. He couldn’t help but wonder if subconsciously some small part of Felicity Rhiaon residing in her soul was just trolling him.

His eyes then fell on the pilot doll sitting on the table. An idea that proved he was just as mischievous as his wife filled his mind. He glanced back at Rey, making sure she wasn’t peeking. Luke picked up the doll and tickled her fingertips with the head.

Rey loudly gasped as excitement and pride filled her, “I feel something!”

“You feel it?” Luke egged her on vaguely wondering if Felicity would love him or hate him for the joke. Considering Anakin Skywalker’s laughter in his mind, Luke knew at least he had his father’s support.

“Yes! I feel it!”

“That’s the Force.”

“Really?” Rey asked. She couldn’t help feeling pleased with herself—after all, she’d only been reaching out for a few seconds at most.

“Wow, it must be really strong with you.”

“Oh, I’ve never felt any-”

Something smacked her hand, not too hard but enough to make her cry out and retract her hand.

She opened her eyes to find her father smirking at her and holding her pilot doll. Clearly it had just been a joke.

One she didn’t find funny.

“You meant reach out like…” she tapped her heart, unable to put it into words.
Luke just nodded, setting the doll back on her table.

“Okay. Got it. I’ll try again,” Rey lowered her eyes submissively, her tone muted.

Luke frowned; something was wrong. Rey wasn’t embarrassed but… there was something else at work in her mind. Something very serious triggered by the smack on her hand.

“Are you alright?” he asked gently.

“I’m fine.” She wouldn’t look him in the eye, “I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to. I shouldn’t have… I’m sorry. I deserved that.”

Luke’s heart dropped to his stomach, it coming to him in an instant.

He had hit her… Like Jarex had hit her.

“Oh, Rey,” Luke reached out and grabbed her hand. He kissed the spot he had hit her, then kissed her head, forehead, and face over and over. “I’m so sorry. I was just playing around. I didn’t mean to remind you of him.”

“It’s okay. It’s my fault.”

“No, it isn’t. None of what happened to you is okay, and none of it was your fault. Don’t you dare ever think that it was.”

Rey held onto him tightly, and Luke’s heart broke when he felt her tears stain his tunic. He whispered apologies over and held her tight. Reaching into the Force, he enveloped her lilac presence with his sky blue.

“Do you feel that?” he whispered. “Do you feel me reaching for you?”

“Yes,” Rey answered softly. Safe in her father’s arms, she was relaxed enough to reach out into the Force. “I think I can feel you.”

“What does it look like, Rey? What do you see?”

“Something… sky blue.”

He pulled back from her and smiled.

“Exactly,” he wiped a tear from her cheek. He then started the promised manicure by massaging lotion onto her hands, proving to her he was as good at massages as he claimed, “That’s me. That’s my Force Signature.”

“So the sky blue feeling means there’s someone around,” Rey watched as he pushed back her cuticles. To her surprise, it didn’t hurt.

“Actually, the sky blue means that I’m around,” Luke corrected. He clipped and filed her fingernails, ragged from her habit of biting them. It took a lot of work to shape them nicely. “Each person has their own individual colour. It’s like a fingerprint, no two colours are the same between people. At least I assume it’s like a fingerprint. I’ve yet to encounter anyone with the same colours, and I’m fairly certain that after someone dies, colours probably get reused. Any time you sense that sky blue light, that means you’re sensing me.”

“Wow,” Rey grinned. “Are Force Signatures always colours?”
“To humans, yes. Other species perceive them differently. To Zygerrians it’s a certain scent. To Aqualishes, it’s a certain note of music. To Gungans it’s the taste of different kinds of water – salt, fresh, pond, lake, filtered water, polluted water. To Ithorians, it’s the form of different animals.”

“That’s amazing,” Rey smiled. “What colour am I?”

“Why don’t you reach into the Force and find out?”

So Rey closed her eyes and reached out, this time properly and not with her actual hand. It was a good thing, because Luke had started to paint her nails.

“I sense another presence,” she said, eyes still held shut. “Something that… is from the blue. But I can’t make out the colour.”

“Keep trying. You’re on track.”

“I see… I see… I see…”

Her eyes flew open.

“Lilac?” she declared in disbelief.

Luke smiled and held up her lilac painted nails, “Why do you think I got so startled when you said it was your signature colour? It’s literally your Signature colour.”

“I don’t believe it. How could I have possibly known?”

“Maybe a long-forgotten memory? Maybe you unconsciously sensed it? Or maybe you’ve just always known. I remember when I discovered my own sky blue colour, and how much sense it made to me.”

“Lilac and sky blue.” Her brow furrowed, “Purple and blue. Is yours being blue why mine’s purple?”

“Exactly,” Luke answered. “Force Signatures are usually influenced by the colours of their family members. I knew a family – actually the Royal family of Eswolla, the Nygwugen family – who had the father, Mwamba with a carnelian Signature-”

“Carnelian?”

“It’s a type of red. Then the mother, Lehana had the colour goldenrod – lovely woman by the way. You ever need any help, go to her and tell her you’re the daughter of Felicity Rhiaon. She’s a fierce ally of your mother’s.”

“Queen Lehana, got it.”

“And their son, Jabari, has a tangerine Signature. So you can see how with the red and the yellow it formed an orange Signature. Now, that’s not always the case. Their daughter, Idi has a mustard Signature, and I’m told that Prince Akron had a maroon Signature, but I never got to meet him before his death, sadly.”

“So what was Mom’s?” Rey asked.

“Crimson,” Luke answered. “You ended up being a regular old red plus blue situation. The blue is as strong with this family as the Force. My father had an azure blue, my sister has navy blue, her husband has yellow-gold, and their son has forest green.”
Rey’s heart lurched, but she dared not voice her thought. Forest green? Hadn’t she encountered that before?

Her mind flashed to the man who had known her name. The man she had known, those eyes she found so familiar.

Was that her cousin?

“Rey?” her father voice drew her mind back from the thought. Luke frowned at her, “Are you alright?”

“Oh, yeah,” Rey cleared her throat. “Fine. What were you saying?”

Luke eyed her carefully but continued with the lesson. They both knew he didn’t buy it.

When they finally ventured outside after three days trapped inside the walker, it took them an hour to get the door open. The sand was piled so high and packed so hard against it that they could move it only by centimeters at first. With each push, more of the desert rushed into they home.

“Can’t we use the Force to get outside and deal with all of this sand?” Rey groaned.

Luke narrowed his eyes, “We’re not going to get into the habit of using the Force to deal with every little mundane thing.”

“But Dad-”

“No, Rey. This is not up for discussion. I’m telling you the same thing I told your cousin when he tried to use the Force for his chores: it is not a toy, it is a tool. Treat it with respect.”

Rey arched a brow, “What kind of chores did he use it for?”

Luke warned, “Rey-”

“I’m just curious!”

“Fine, you really want to know? I once caught him using the Force to change your diaper. A ridiculously dangerous thing that was the result of him getting too lazy with using the Force.”

“Whoa…” Rey blinked, “Did it work?”

“That’s not the point.”

“So, it worked.”

“Let’s get back on topic; namely, opening this door.”

Rey chuckled, “It totally worked.”

When they finally did have the door open, she had to spend another hour cleaning up, but that was mostly because Luke wouldn’t help her at all, still sulking from their conversation. The sun was hot and mean when they finally emerged. Miraculously, their speeders had been spared the worst of the storm. They dusted them off, checked the power, started the engines, and were pleasantly surprised when they both responded without hesitation.
“Alright,” Luke declared, “I think the best course of action would be if I went out and scavenged this morning, while you go into town to trade with Plutt the things we worked on during the storm.”

“Wait, why do I have to go into town?” Rey objected.

Luke grinned, “Because I think you’ll want a little quality time with Teng.”

“Alright, fair point.”

“After you two have reunited, I want you and Teng head out and do some scavenging. We’ll meet back later at Quom’s workshop. Sound like a good plan?”

“Let’s do it.”

As Luke relayed the plan to Quom and Teng via his comm – and also checked that the two hadn’t managed to kill each other after three days alone – Rey headed back into the walker.

She went back inside long enough to get her staff and a few pieces from her workbench to offer Unkar. She then closed up, mounted her speeder, kissed her father on the cheek, and took the drive into Niima.

On the way there, she commed Kira’s Council to see if anyone was up and wanted to chat. Unfortunately, it was late evening back on D’Qar, and Rey interrupted Aletha, who very awkwardly had to vaguely explain to the Diego Nalto in her bed what was going on. Even worse was Aletha’s insistence that Rey speak to someone as she knew how rough and boring a X’us’R’iia could be.

As it turned out, Aletha was not the only one on a late-night visit.

Paige Tico had mysteriously disappeared, though Rose reported she had last been with Evan Tharel, who also was mysteriously missing from base. The next morning, they would arrive in mess hall with dirt on their backs, twigs in their hair, and some weak story about getting “lost” in the woods that would make Diego wink at Aletha and comment that it had been a while since they too had gotten “lost” in the woods.

When she went to Jessika Pava, Aletha found Jessika and Tallie had locked their door and straight up refused to answer any calls.

Kaydel was off showering, so Aletha asked Poe if she could borrow her niece or if Kaydel would be too busy. At that point Aletha knew well enough to check Kaydel’s plans with him if Kay couldn’t answer herself.

Turned out that Kaydel was apparently going to help Poe “test out” the new mattress that had been delivered to his private quarters that day – as Head of Air Force, Poe had been upgraded into a private room on par with Aletha’s room with en suite fresher and no roommate.

Kaydel’s overnight visit was no surprise. Kaydel and Poe were practically living together by that point, and in fact it would be a few months later that he would officially ask her to move in with him.

Aletha conceded defeat and went off to see if she could find Rose… Quickly, as Aletha had a certain Head of Communications waiting for her in her bed.
Poe whistled a happy tune as he entered his room. Snap was no longer his roommate, so he and Kaydel had made, ahem, plans. BB-8 disconnected from his power station and rolled over, beeping out a greeting.

“Hey, there buddy,” Poe affectionally patted the droid’s dome. “Holding down the fort?”


“That’s not good.”


“That was thoughtful.”

Now that he thought about it, he could hear the shower running. Remembering Aletha’s report on Kaydel’s whereabouts, a mischievous grin spread across his face. He stripped off his flight suit, dropping clothing as he went.

*Boo. Boop. Bee-*

Whatever BB-8 had been about to say was cut off as the fresher door slid shut behind him.

“Mind if I join you?” Poe could see a distinctly female form in the shower. Not waiting for an answer, he pulled back the curtain-

“What the hell?”

Poe jumped back from the aghast Rose Tico in his shower, and grabbed a towel to cover himself.

“Sorry!” the sorely familiar woman exclaimed, clearly horrified by Poe’s distinct lack of clothing.

The shower switched off, and Rose stepped out. Poe quickly averted his eyes. Rose couldn’t get a towel around her fast enough, but Poe still wouldn’t look her in the eye.

“Poe, I’m so sorry,” Rose began to ramble. “BB-8 said you were running drills and that usually takes a lot of time and the plumbing in my hallway shorted out-”

“No, it’s fine,” Poe still wouldn’t look at her barely covered by a towel, fifteen-year-old form.

Dead puppies. Getting blown up in his X-wing. His father in a bath towel.

Kaydel was going to kill him.

“I’m Rose, by the way.” She looked down shyly, “In case you forgot. People don’t really notice me. No one but droids like BB-8 anyway.”

Right. Names.

“I know you, Rose,” Poe assured her. “BB-8 offered up my shower?”

Rose thankfully had finally pulled on a robe, “Again, I thought I had more time. Kaydel has already hit up the other hallway’s shower and with your room empty, I figured it would be quicker than a bunch of us waiting on the two showers.”
She sat on the closed lid of the toilet to pull on her slippers.

“Kaydel knows I’m here so it’s not like she’s going to kill you. Or me… I think.”

“She let you in?” Poe had finally wrapped the towel around his waist and secured it.

“BB did. I’d say he was rather insistent. Kept pushing me here, as a matter of fact.”

“Well, I’m going to have to talk with him about acceptable droid behavior.”

BB-8 was cheerily dumping Poe’s flight gear on his bed as the pair re-entered the bedroom.

“Thanks for the shower, BB,” Rose patted the semi-circular head. “Just make sure you warn Poe next time, okay?


“I mean, send him a message. Don’t tell him when he’s already thinking of spending the night with his girlfriend.” Rose glanced at Poe. “Kaydel’s going to be over soon. She just has to finish showering herself, and then she’ll spend the night. Honestly, I don’t know why she didn’t come use your shower.”

“It was that leap of logic on my part that led to this very incident,” Poe replied.

“Oh, God, I am never going to live this down, am I?”

“I won’t tell the girls if you won’t.”

“Deal.”

“Okay,” Poe was seriously weirded out about by the whole thing. He honestly wanted Rose out before someone caught the twenty-nine-year-old Commander of the Air Force with a basically naked fifteen-year-old, and ended his career. “Good night.”

“Good night, Poe,” Rose still wouldn’t look him in the eye.

Honestly, Poe was going to be avoiding eye contact with her for a long time too.

Beet. Beep!

“Good night, BB-8,” Rose gave a cheery wave to the droid and then hurried out of the room as fast as possible.

“Buddy, we really need to talk about boundaries,” Poe collapsed on his bed, facing the ceiling.

Boop!

“I mean you need to stop making my room the go-to room when there’s something wrong.”

BB-8 rolled up next to the bed, beeping and whirring in fast binary.

“Slow down, what about Rose?”


“You think…BB, Buddy, that’s not how parenting works. First of all, she has Paige. Second, if she’s underage than it’s likely the General’s the one acting in loco parentis. Plus if Kaydel and Jessika
don’t count as adult supervision, she’s got Doctor Kymeri watching over her.”

_Bee Bee Booop?_

“In loco parentis means the General is responsible. Not me, not Kay. Not even Aletha. The General. Now, if you don’t mind, my amazing girlfriend is coming over and I’d like to get laid tonight. Preferably before Holdo discovers another reason to piss me off and cockblocks me again.”

_Bop. Beep. Bee?_

“Yeah, I know Holdo isn’t on base, but that’s not the point. I’m not going to see Kay naked if you’re here to kill the mood.”

_BEEP!_

BB-8 spat a binary raspberry before going over to the door. With a few choice words best left untranslated, the droid exited the room.

Kaydel appeared at the door a few minutes later. She was wearing pink pajamas with little hearts on them. A cute image, not so sadly undercut by the way she climbed onto the bed and over top him.

“Peacock,” she kissed him.

He reached up, cupping her neck. She moved to straddle him.

“See you got my message,” she whispered against his ear, reaching for his towel.

An image of Rose he never wanted but was now burned in his mind forever flashed before his eyes.

“Can we just cuddle tonight?” he asked, moving her hand away from his towel.

Kaydel sat up, still straddling him, “What brought this on?”

Poe groaned, “I think BB-8 wants me to have babies.”

“Mood officially killed, Dameron. Scooch over.”

So Rey found herself in the audio company of a clearly flustered Rose Tico and an annoyed BB-8 who had been locked out of Poe’s room.

_BEP BOPP BOOP BOIP BEW BEE!_

“And I’ll help you send it to Kes,” Rose told the droid. “I only hope Poe’s father can talk some sense into those two. I mean who just climbs into a shower without an invitation?”

Her promise of silence to Poe didn’t count Jakku scavengers who could never spread the news around a D’Qar military base.

“_In his defense,”_ Rey said, “_you were in his private shower, and Kaydel is the only other person with the code to his room. Well, her and BB-8, but he’s probably lost that privilege now._”

_BOP BEEP!_

Rose sighed, “I get being in love, but BB-8 is in my room so much that he might as well be my
There was an awkward beat of silence as Rey and BB-8 remembered that Rose’s actual roommate had recently been killed in action – a nice supply runner who was Rose’s age and had been shot down by the First Order – and Rose had been taking the death of her friend pretty hard.

“Well, that doesn’t sound too bad,” Rey said. “I would love to hang out with BB-8 in person.”

“Beep bo beep boop.”

“Well, aren’t you sweet?” Rey chuckled. “Come on, Rose, we both know this isn’t about Poe walking in on you showering. What’s going on?”

Rose sighed and pulled her knees to her chest, “I just feel… so alone. The whole Kira’s Council is fun, but it seems like everyone’s paired off and having romance and adventures while I’m sitting in an empty room every night with a box of crackers and a tech manual. Sure, a fun night every once and a while, but it gets so lonely. Even you, who lives in the middle of nowhere, have a far more vibrant social life. I was fine when it was just me and Paige, but now that she’s dating Evan, I’m left behind. We’re like our necklaces, each a piece of a set. Without her what value am I? I’m not… special. No one’s eyes light up when they speak to me. No one calls me a hero. No one even trusts me with the smallest secret.”

Rey was silent for a very long time, and then made a life changing decision.

“BB-8, could you please leave the room? I want to talk to Rose privately.”

“Bo beep bwep boo blo.”

“I know you can, but the whole point of this is to make Rose feel special.”

Rose frowned, “Point of what?”

“Come on, BB-8. Please?”

“Brep boop bo bee.”

“I’ll give you an oil bath when we finally meet.”

BB-8 was out of the room before Rey could draw another breath.

“Okay, are we completely alone?” Rey asked.

“Yes,” Rose answered. “Why? What’s going on?”

“You want to feel special? Know a big secret? I’ve got one for you. Something that none of the other girls know. Heck, something Aletha doesn’t know.”

“What’s that?”

“I’m going to tell you why my Dad and I are in hiding on Jakku.”

Rose gasped, “What? Really?”

“Really. But you have to swear you won’t tell anyone. It’s a huge secret, and if it gets out, I could be
in a lot of danger. Promise you won’t tell?”

“I swear it on my necklace,” Rose gripped the half-moon pendant. Then she hesitated, “But Kira, you don’t have to do this just to make me feel better.”

“I’m not. Honestly, I’m telling you because I’ve been bursting to tell someone.”

“But it’s a big deal. Why would you tell me?”

“Because you’re my best girl friend.”

Rose blinked, “What? Are you serious?”

“Completely,” Rey replied. “The other girls feel more like older sisters and are all busy being adults. You’re the one who still is a kid with me. And Aletha’s my second mom, so she totally doesn’t count. By process of elimination, you are totally my best girl friend.”

“…Oh. Process of elimination.”

In that moment, Rey so wished she could reach out and clasp Rose’s hand.

“And if you put a blaster to my head and made me pick between Paige, Kaydel, Jessika, and you… I would totally pick you.”

“Really?” Rose beamed, her hand feeling odd, like it was wrapped in a strange warmth.

“Really really,” Rey answered. “You talk shop, love ships and flying, fangirl over Rebel heroes as hard as me, and get what it’s like to grow up in a difficult situation. I know what it means for you and Paige to have gotten me that pendant, Rose. What the First Order did to your home… it’s unforgivable. And for your parents to have just sent you and Paige off to the Resistance so you can live, knowing it means they would die… It reminds me of what my mom did. You’re my best girl friend, Rose. No doubt about it.”

“And you’re my best friend too, Kira. Not just girl, but friend period. When I talk to you I don’t feel like I’m just tagging along with my sister’s friends. Kaydel and Jessika are Paige’s friends, but you? You’re mine.”

“Careful with those sorts of words. It might result in Teng challenging you to a duel.”

“I am not fighting an ex-pirate, ex-cult member, Fighting Ring champ.”

“Alright, let’s calm down. It’s not like you’d be fighting me.”

“Deluded with grandeur,” Rose teased.

“Just jealous of my awesome skills,” Rey teased right back.

“Didn’t that sort of thinking recently almost get your skull bashed in?”

“And we come to the secret,” Rey said. “I told you that my Dad saved my life from Sarco Plank, but I didn’t tell you guys why. Are you ready for the secret?”

Rose grabbed a pillow to hug and leaned in intently, “Hit me.”

“The reason the First Order is trying to hunt down my father, and why they killed my mother is that… My father is a Jedi… and so am I.”
Her jaw dropped, “No!”

“Yes!”

“No!”

“Yes!”

“No freaking way are you a Jedi!” Rose exclaimed. “Are you serious?”

“Dead serious. My Dad has a lightsaber and used the Force to summon my staff right into his hand. We’re Jedi, and he’s starting to teach me to be one like him.”

“I don’t believe this. You’re not pulling my leg, right?”

Rey frowned, “Why would I pull on your leg?”

“Oh… it’s a saying meaning you’re not tricking me.”

“Huh. I’ve never heard that before.”

“Really? They don’t say that on Jakku?” Rose paused, “Wait, you just said you were a Jedi, and I’m quibbling over colloquial phrases of Jakku? What is wrong with me?”

“Love you anyways, Rose,” Rey laughed.

“It’s just so amazing. You’re really a Jedi?”

“Jedi-in-training. You see the need for secrecy now, right?”

“Absolutely. Hey, speaking of, since I know you’re a Jedi, can I know your real name?”

“I guess that’s fair. My name is Rey Erso. The Erso part is a fact name, but the Rey part is true… I think. I’ve never actually asked my Dad. Huh, maybe when I get home tonight.”

“Rey,” Rose teased out the name. “My best friend is Rey from Jakku… That’s weird.”

“What, the name Rey?” Rey asked. “It’s spelled with an esk rather than an aurek in the middle. It was supposed to be this thing of significance as I was a ray of light in the darkness when my Mom went through postpartum depression. And now that I know I’m a Jedi, I realize it was probably also a reference to the Light Side of the Force.”

“No, not the name, Rey itself,” Rose replied. “There’s just something… familiar about it. I feel like I’ve heard it somewhere before, but I don’t know where.”

“Well, if you figure it out, let me know. I’m about to hit Nüma Outpost, so I’m going to have to cut you off. Promise me you won’t tell the girls, Rose.”

“Your secret is safe with me… Rey.”

And with that, the transmission ended.

Rose grinned, and giddily started getting ready for bed, her head abuzz with new developments and frantically trying to riddle out the secrets of Rey’s past. She was just about to crawl under the blankets when came three thuds of metal against the door.
She frowned, got out of bed, and opened the door to reveal BB-8 sitting outside.

The droid looked up at her and beeped out one simple question.

*You do know I'm still locked out of Poe’s room?*

Rose sighed, and nodded inside, “Come on.”

He rolled in, happily beeping behind her.

The little town—if you could call it a town, and Rey wasn’t certain you could, but she didn’t have much to compare it with—was still nearly deserted. The tarps over the washing station had been shredded by the X’us’R’iaa, and there were two sentries out working on repairs. Thankfully, neither were Roke, he probably off seeing if Old Meru had been swallowed by the sandstorm this time. It had been a while since Rey had seen her, maybe she should swing by with Teng later to see if Meru had any extra jobs for them. Unburdened from the fiscal responsibility of Teng, Meru had greatly improved her attitude regarding him and now would openly admit he was pretty handy.

Rey parked between the washing station and Unkar’s place and looked over at the little airfield out of habit, counting the ships. There were the same three ships parked there, the same three as ever. All of them looked like they’d survived the storm without damage. She was glad to see her Uncle’s ship was safe and sound. Maybe she and Teng would have another little adventure in there that night. After three days apart, Rey had needs.

She trudged over to Unkar’s window, feeling the sun pummeling her. He was already there, watching with swollen eyes in a bloated face. Jedi or not, some things never changed, and those eyes were leering at her the same way as ever.

“First one in,” he said.

Rey dug in her satchel, pulled out the three pieces of salvage she’d taken from her workbench, and set them on the counter between them.

“What’ll you give me?” Rey asked, secretly wishing her father had gotten around to teaching her the mind trick.

One of Unkar’s thick hands reached out, palming the pieces one at a time and pulling them through the opening so he could examine them more closely. Rey waited, glancing about. More people were arriving, venturing out after the storm. A couple of other salvagers apparently had gone out hunting first and were making their way to the washing station to clean up their finds. Rey cursed herself quietly for not having done the same. The storm would’ve shifted the sands in the graveyard. Who knew what it might’ve uncovered? By the time she got out there, there’d be nothing left. Was skipping an early morning haul worth a stolen moment with Teng.

Rey blinked in the burning sun, her eyes used to three days of nearly pitch black. Such thoughts were just her headache talking.

“What’s this supposed to be?” Unkar asked.

Rey looked at the piece in his hand, “It’s the actuator for a Kuat-7 acceleration compensator.”

“Not like this it isn’t. And this, this supposed to be part of a data buffer set?”
“Yeah.”

Unkar grunted.

Rey rolled her eyes, but only because Plutt’s were downcast again. Making him happy was priority. That was how you got more food; and Unkar Plutt didn’t care much about dealings with a staff. She had yet to find a way to put him in his place, but honestly, a part of her didn’t want to. She was proud at being able to negotiate big hauls for the boys… they just didn’t need to know the sacrifices that came with it. No touching had ever occurred, but still… there were sacrifices.

“This one is good, low-interference regulator for a Z-70, I can move this.” He spread the three pieces out between them, “Give you three portions, one for each of them.”

“The Z-70 is worth three alone, Unkar.”

“I’m offering you three, Rey. Take it or leave it.”

She winced. The sunlight was making her headache worse.

“Three portions, two bottles of water,” Rey said.

Unkar grinned that lecherous grin she hated so much; the one that would make Luke push her behind him when she was younger.

“That’s my girl.”

Rey shuddered.

He slid her prizes across the counter, but when her hand reached for them, he batted them to the ground.

“Oops,” Unkar chuckled. “Guess you’ll have to pick them up now.”

It took all of Rey’s restraint not to glare at him. She took a deep breath and gathered her strength. Rey could feel his eyes on her body as she bent over in front of him to gather the packets. She scooped them into her bag so quickly, she accidentally threw a handful of sand into the bag in the process.

“That’s my girl.”

Rey gritted her teeth.

As she bent and straightened up again, the lightheadedness returned and she had to steady herself with a hand on the wall of the Concession Stand.

“You okay?” Unkar asked, both knowing he truly didn’t care.

“I’m fine,” Rey grumbled, gathering her things. She went slowly, mindful that she wasn’t at her best.

“Alright, but if you need a hand-”

“I’ll ask Teng,” she cut off. Then she flashed him a smile, “Or maybe my father.”

But Unkar was unphased, “Of course. I’m sure he would love hearing what you’ve done – what you’ve chosen to do – in order to get more food.”
She knew he was wrong. It wasn’t her fault and she shouldn’t feel any shame over what she had done. He was in the wrong. He was the predator.

Then why did she feel safe.

“Have a nice day, My Girl,” he grinned. Then he shouted behind her, “NEXT IN LINE!”

An alien jostled her aside, and Rey got moving towards Quom and Teng’s tent. She tried her hardest to push Plutt from her mind, yet find she couldn’t shake his words… or her shame.

She really had to learn that Force Choking thing.

When Rey entered the tent, she was surprised to find Teng still lying in his cot.

“Is this your new come-hither look?” Rey teased. “I know my bar is pretty low, but you do have to make some effort.”

“Rey,” Teng smiled, sitting up slowly.

Too slowly. His olive skin was rather pale and his breathing slightly laboured. Rey sat down on the cot and placed her hand on his forehead. There was a sheer layer of sweat glistening across, but even more concerning was the temperature.

“You’re burning up,” Rey frowned. “Are you okay? What happened?”

“Quom and I ran out of water at the beginning of day two,” Teng groaned. “Turns out Quom forgot to refill the canisters. He tried to give me enough water, sacrificing his own portions, but Vrogem fare better without water than Humans do. He told me to stay behind and rest today while he went out and checked up on his village contacts.”

“Well, I can’t believe I’m about to say this, but that was very smart of Quom.” Rey bent down and kissed Teng’s forehead, “And he’s right. You should stay here today and just get some rest. Tinker if you’re feeling better, but mostly just gather your strength. I’m going to get you settled with water before I head out. And here.”

Rey set one of the quarter portion packets on the table. Not much, but she needed the rest in case she ended up stranded.

“Thanks.” There was something odd in his smile.

“What is it?”

“I just feel like a mooch.”

“I would rather have a living mooch than a dead boyfriend too proud for charity.”

“Hey, I wouldn’t call this charity.”

“You’re right,” Rey smiled. “It’s a family looking out for each other. We all take our turns, and this time it’s yours. That’s what you do in a family.”

“You know, if we’re family, us making out is really weird,” Teng pointed out.
“Would it trouble you to commit a little incest before I leave?”

“Not in the slightest.”

Rey couldn’t stop laughing as Teng pulled her down to ravish her with his lips.

“For the last time, Quom, the answer is no,” Luke said firmly as they walked through the marketplace having just traded in their portions.

“Why not, Luke?”

“Do I really have to explain to you why it’s a bad idea to send Rey to Tuanul?”

“Look, I have to go to Karica tomorrow to fix their generator, but Tuanul is offering a lot for me to come fix their fleet of speeders. We can do both, but Rey can’t go to Karica because she doesn’t know generators that well. Really gotta train her up on those.”

Luke looked around to make sure no one was paying attention to them, and then dragged Quom into the currently unoccupied tent workshop, “For goodness sake’s Quom, figure it out!”

“Figure what out? This is a great business opportunity. You scavenge, Teng runs the shop, I go to Karica, and Rey goes to Tuanul. Where’s the flaw in that plan?”

“For crying out loud, Quom, let me spell it out for you,” Luke exclaimed. He lowered his voice, “You cannot send the presumed dead daughter of Jedi Grandmaster Luke Skywalker to a branch of the Church of the Force.”

Quom blinked, “…Huh. Didn’t think of it in those terms.”

“Evidently. I might as well walk in there myself.” Luke shook his head, “Just send Teng to Tuanul.”

“No. I’ll go there myself, have you hit Karica, and the kids can scavenge like they did today. They’re young. They can do more athletic things than we can.”

“Speak for yourself. I can beat both of them put together any day.”

“Yeah, but you’ve got magic.”

“How many times do I have to tell you? It’s not magic!”

“I know. I just enjoy the look on your face when I call it that.”


“Blame your girls,” Quom shrugged. “Your wife started my association with your family, your daughter solidified it, and Aletha abandoned you to deal with me by myself.”

“And here I thought the women in my family were smart.” Luke sighed, “Speaking of the girls, where’s Rey? She and Teng not back yet?”

“Luke, I’ve been with you all afternoon. I know as much as you. What, do you think I stuck them in my pocket when you weren’t looking? You know, I bet if we started on dinner, those two will magically appear.”
“Quom, they’re not like that.”

“Wanna make it a proper bet? Winner works solo on my speeder for a month.”

“You’re on.”

Twenty minutes later when Luke was finishing off dinner, the tent flap opened and Quom let out a triumphant shout.

“Well, look at that!” Quom laughed as Teng looked between the men in confusion. “I told you. Wants nothing to do with us all day, but when it’s time to eat, there he is.”

“Yes, because out of all three of us here, I’m definitely the mooch,” Teng shook his head. “I’m feeling better by the way.”

“Oh, were you sick?” Luke asked.

“We ran out of water during the storm. Felt a little off this morning.”

“Glad to hear you’re better. Where’s Rey?”

“She went off scavenging by herself. Insisted I stay back so I could get better. I spent the day tinkering and just went and traded out some stuff to the Blobfish. Didn’t see Rey around, so I thought she was here with you guys.”

Luke frowned, “No… but I’m sure she’s on her way.”

But she wasn’t. First one hour passed, then two, then three. Still no sign of Rey.

“Alright, I’m sure she just went home,” Luke said to the worried men. “I’ll head out to the walker and check. Teng, see if you can find is anyone knows where she scavenged today. Quom, have you got her on the comm?”

“No,” Quom answered. “It’s weird; it’s not even ringing out.”

“Okay, nobody panic,” Luke said. “I’m sure she’s fine.”

Quom and Teng exchanged a look. The easy tone and relaxed look on Luke’s face was odd for the disappearance of his daughter. Usually Luke would be a wreck at Rey missing. But they understood: Luke pretending that Teng and Quom were in a panic was a cover for the terror inside of him. If he was distracted with keeping them calm, then he too would stay calm.

“I’m sure you’re right, Luke,” Teng smiled. “Rey is going to be just fine.”

But in the uncomfortable silence that followed, the men knew they couldn’t be sure of anything.

Luke was calling out Rey’s name long before he even pulled up to the walker. His voice desperate, Luke barely stopped his speeder when he jumped out.

“Rey? Rey?” he yelled as he stumbled into the walker. “Rey, Sweetheart, are you here?”

But Rey was nowhere to be found. He checked the walker thoroughly, every limb, every hatch, every nook and cranny. He even flipped the hammock over to make sure she wasn’t hidden inside of
it (after checking it first, but better safe than sorry.)

Rey wasn’t there.

That was when the fear took over.

Where was Rey? Was she safe? Was she unconscious? Dead? Why was it when he reached for her in the Force, she blocked him? It was weak enough that Luke was aware she was doing it and she was on Jakku. But why was she doing it? And why wasn’t she answering the comm?

And then Luke found the answer to the last question. When he plugged his comm into the charger, the slot he chose – which he remembered being the one Rey had used for hers during the X’us’R’iia – it didn’t light up. The port was broken, and if they hadn’t noticed, then Rey had gone out with a comm with almost no juice.

Rey’s comm had burned out.

He had no way to contact her, and no clue where to find her.

That awful wave of terror and helplessness he had experience when he once thought Rey was dead crashed over Luke. He couldn’t charge in with his lightsaber and save the day. Not this time.

His little girl was lost.

Luke fell to his knees and sobbed. Subconsciously he knew that Rey was capable and supplied to take care of herself, but that was not within his consciousness. What was was the sorrow of a father with the strength and grief enough to once tear bare metal from a dejarik board.

He couldn’t lose his little girl.

Then came the warmth on his shoulder. Luke looked up to see the blue visage of his father trying to comfort him.

“Find her,” Luke begged with tears in his eyes. “I know you can’t tell me where she is or if she’s okay, but please… go to her. She needs someone. Rey doesn’t know how to be alone.”

Anakin smiled and then he was gone.

There was a small smile on his face, but as Luke stayed kneeling and weeping in the sand, he just felt so empty.

The twin moons of Jakku were high and full when Quom checked on Teng. He had pulled a workbench outside the tent, and was seated upon it watching and waiting.

“Any word yet?” Teng asked without turning to face Quom.


“Luke senses her presence is still alive and on Jakku, he just can’t figure out where. She’ll be safe."

“You can’t promise that.”
Quom grinned, “I just did.”

Teng shook his head derisively, “I’m not in the mood for humour.”

Quom sighed and patted Teng’s leg, “Come to bed, Pup.”

“What until Rey is home.”

The Vrogem sighed again. He had no idea what to say, so he sat down next to his pup and rubbed Teng’s leg. They sat in silence for a long time, their eyes scanning and searching.

“You know the Teedos believe that a double full moon is a sign of luck,” Quom said after a while. “It lights the way home for those who are lost.”

“Will it bring her home to me?”

Quom grinned. “You know that girl will bring herself home. Probably along with a load of trouble that’s more of a headache than what she’s worth.”

“She’s worth the headache,” Teng smiled.

He chuckled, “Yeah, I guess she is… You really love this girl, don’t you?”

“More than anything in the word,” Teng fought to keep his eyes open.

“You should sleep, Pup.”

“I’m not tired,” he yawned.

Quom patted his leg again, “I know you aren’t. How about you just lay your head on my shoulder? I like it when you do that.”

“Alright,” Teng rested his head on Quom. “But only because you want it.”

“Of course. And your eyes look a little unfocused. How about you close them for a minute? Just to let them readjust to the darkness?”

“Ok… but just for a minute.”

A minute later, Teng was asleep on the Vrogem’s shoulder.

Quom chuckled and stroked his fingers through Teng’s nearly shoulder length black hair.

“Good night, My Pup. May the Force give you the sweetest of dreams.”

So, it did.

And check the chief engineer’s quarters – when I was a kid I found schematics for four different models of the New Republic Starfighter in a datapad.

-Rey’s Survival Guide
While Luke, Quom, and Teng were worrying all night about Rey, she was sleeping on her own for the first time in years. She had found a ship in the desert, and to her surprise it was in decent enough shape that she could probably fix it up. She had spent the day cataloguing everything needed for repair. When the sun started to set, she found she wasn’t done. Rey went to call her father and explain when she found her comm dead. Deciding the haul was too valuable to abandon, she decided to finish her catalogue, nip into town when she did, explain to the others what happened, and then the four of them would take turns guarding the ship.

She couldn’t wait to see the look on her father’s face when she revealed her surprise. And in order to maintain that surprise, she was trying her best to block her Signature in the Force. Admittedly it wasn’t very effective, her Dad could probably tell she was alive and still on Jakku, but she blocked him a little bit.

He was going to be so pleased with her.

To paraphrase Poe Dameron: sixteen-year-olds are idiots.

When she finally decided to admit defeat to the intoxicating power of slumber, Rey found herself a blanket and settled down in the quarters of some long dead crewman.

Up to that point, Rey had never thought about the fact that she hadn’t slept alone since her father found her when she was five. Luke had always been at her side, and when he had spent nights with Aletha, Rey had stayed with Quom. Even the nights she snuck off to sleep on the *Falcon*, Teng was sleeping at her side. But now, she faced the lonely darkness by herself for the first time in years, and she discovered that there was a reason she hadn’t slept alone.

*Rey is small – a child – and snuggly tucked into the sheets of a miniature bed. The room around her is painted pale blue and has all the trappings of a child’s bedroom. It has miniature furniture, a bookcase stuffed with storybooks, a playful artwork print of a silly looking tauntaun hung on the wall, a toy chest filled with all sorts of fun things, and a nightlight in the shape of a blue astronomical droid casts the room in a soft azure light.*

*She is warm and comfortable. Her hair is splayed out and has an unfamiliar feeling to it. It’s washed, she vaguely recalls the phenomenon. Rey wears pink pyjamas patterned with kiros birds – though where she knows that word from, she has no idea.*

*Rey is lovingly staring at a woman who seems to radiate love for her. The woman has pale skin, long brown hair, and warm hazel eyes smiles at her from the doorway. The woman is clad in a purple cotton tank top style pyjama top, with purple and white plaid pyjama pants.*

“Mommy,” the word comes to Rey.

She tries to pull back the covers and run to her mother’s arm, but she finds she can’t move, trapped by the memory of the past.

Felicity presses a button on the wall to turn off the lights and whispers, “Goodnight, Sweetheart. I love you.”

"I love you too, Mommy," Rey calls back in the darkness.

The words come unwilling from her mouth. She has so many questions for the woman who gave her life, so many proclamations of love, and pleas to stay here with her. But Rey is stuck to the script of
her memory, unable to change what happens next.

Rey hears the padding of footsteps on carpet, and she soon senses her mother gone. She’s surprised to find she senses it through the Force.

“No!” Rey can finally speak. “No, Mommy, come back!”

But she still can’t move.

Sleep falls upon her; not real sleep, dream sleep. More a paralysis as she waits for a scene change or a time skip or somehow to get to the next plot point of her dream.

Her eyes are closed, but she can see. She sees the three figures enter her room; tall, wearing dark clothes, and masks.

“Look at her,” the man who stands in the middle cocks his head to the side. His voice is too sickly saccharine to contain genuine sympathy. “Sleeping so sweetly. She won’t feel a thing.”

The three men stare at her. Rey is aware of everything, yet she knows to them she’s sound asleep, safe in her knowledge that her mother is not far away. She knows her father isn’t home, but she doesn’t know where he is.

The man to the left chuckles, “Now where’s the fun in that?”

He grabs her by the ankle and she screams as he drags her onto the floor. Her head lands with a thunk and shrieking in terror, she tries to squirm to her safety. She’s screaming for Mommy and Daddy as the middle man steps on her chest. It’s not just to secure her in place, but it feels like he’s trying to crush her like a bug.

The man lights a red lightsaber and pulls it back, readying for a fatal swing.

“MOMMY!” Rey screams out desperately.

“Go ahead,” the man grins. “I want to hear you scream when I do it.”

His name suddenly comes to her: it’s Zhane Varrs. Now, who Zhane is, is a whole other question to which Rey doesn’t have the answer to.

Zhane swings down. Rey shields her face but the blow doesn’t land. Instead her bookcase smashes into Zhane.

The sound of several snap-hisses fill the room, and then comes chaos. Three figures Rey knows as people who had guided her in the Fighting Ring clash lightsabers with the masked men.

The tall man with grey eyes and parchment coloured skin clashed his blue lightsaber with Zhane. Rey suddenly knows that he is Obik Kenu.

The women she doesn’t know. The woman with ice blonde hair also wields a blue lightsaber, and the catlike one has a green one.

There’s shouting Rey doesn’t understand, and faintly comes the smell of smoke.

“Where’s Felicity?” Obik yells, but to whom, Rey doesn’t know.

The man who had stood in the middle – Rey recalls the name of Cade Ren – laughs, “Trapped in the bedroom. Luke’s whore will burn.”
Rey doesn’t know what happens next to the adults yet. A voice with a Coruscanti accent tells her to run. She finds herself crawling towards the door, crying and trying to be quiet. She reaches out to Daddy in the Force, but she doesn’t find him with her Aunt. He’s supposed to be with her Aunt. Why isn’t Daddy with her Aunt?

So she chooses to reach to her Aunt instead. Instantly she’s enveloped by a navy blue colour.

“Daddy’s coming, Rey,” her Aunt whispers in her ear somehow. She sounds worried.

Someone grabs her ankle. It’s the last man – Bakura Torven she knows. Her drags her along the floor and Rey tries to fight. She’s too weak. Too small. She can’t escape.

Rey closes her eyes in fear. A commotion sounds and when she opens her eyes again, Obik is standing over her and Bakura is lying on the ground in pain.

“It’s okay, Rey,” Obik promises. “I’ve got you. You’ll be oka-”

Zhane’s lightsaber swings through his neck.

Rey screams louder than she has ever before as Obik Kenu’s decapitated head lands next to her.

The catlike woman is on her knees next to Rey.

“Sleep and forget,” she orders.

And then Darkness takes her.

Rey woke up screaming.

No one there to comfort her, Rey screamed and flailed and hyperventilated as she fought and failed to erase the image of Obik Kenu’s decapitated head from her mind.

Then something warm wrapped around her.

“Shh, it’s okay,” the blonde man whispered. “You’re okay. I’ve got you. It’s okay, Rey, you’re safe.”

She cried but she stopped flailing. Rey savored the warmth of the paternal embrace. She didn’t need the Force to know that she trusted the man. After all, he was her blood.

“It’s okay, Rey,” he guided her to lay back down on the ship bunk. “I’m here. You’re safe. I’ve got you. I’m not going to leave you.”

She sniffed, her sobs finally under control, but tears still falling from her eyes, “Promise?”

“I swear it,” he bent down and placed his lips to her forehead. They felt warm. He lazied a hand across her hair as Rey pulled the blanket back over body. “I’m not going anywhere, Sweetheart.”

Rey let her eyes fall closed, her spirit feeling safe under this man’s protection.

“Sweet dreams, my child,” he whispered.

“Thank you,” she murmured, “Grandfather.”
Anakin Skywalker smiled as he watched over his granddaughter’s return to dreamland. As he done all those years ago when Rey slept alone in the walker, desperate for her mother and father’s return, Anakin would stay vigil at her side throughout the long night.

When Rey was sound asleep, her breathing steady and her mind busy with loving images of Teng Malar, Anakin looked up. He looked straight ahead at the other woman who is watching the scene from far beyond this planet of dust and death.

Felicity Rhiaon smiled at the sight of her grown daughter, sleeping safely in the comfort of her grandfather’s vigil.

“Thank you, Anakin,” Felicity whispered, a tear in her eye.

He gave her a smile he had passed on to his son, “Anytime.”

“I don’t understand,” Teng’s face was red and raw. They were having a silent breakfast at the workshop before they set out to another day of searching. “It’s been three days. Where is Rey?”

“You’re sure she isn’t hurt?” Quom asked for the ten thousandth time.

“I don’t know!” Luke exclaimed, throwing down his fork. “I sense her, but I can’t connect to her. There’s something blocking me. I think it’s her, but I don’t know why she would do it.”

“Well, what if it’s a trick?” Teng suggested. “Is there anything or anyone who might affect your connection with Rey?”

“No!”


Teng frowned, “What cave?”

When I was just a kid, the Blobfish bought a used flyer that he made me fix – I always could figure out how a machine fit together or why it had broken. I unclogged one of the turbojets and rebuilt the other out of scrap from the front half of an airspeeder. Then off went six of Unkar’s thugs with a hired pilot to discover the secret of Carbon Ridge and bring back its buried treasures.

Four of the thugs came back with a stack of stormtrooper armor so brittle that Unkar threw it away. The thugs had shot a handful of dead-enders and lost two of their own in ambushes, but found nothing except empty caves and rockslides. The only life-forms that gained anything were the ripper-raptors of Carbon Ridge – their bellies were full for days.

Ever since Unkar’s treasure hunt failed, sensible folks leave Carbon Ridge alone.

- Rey’s Survival Guide
“And this special Carbon Ridge cave,” Teng asked after the explanation, “what’s so special about it?”

“It’s rumoured to be an old Imperial military base,” Luke answered. “But I believe that’s not its purpose. I’ve sensed something else.”

“It’s connected to the Force?”

“Within it there’s a connection to the Dark Side. I’ve encountered this sort of thing twice before. Once on Dagobah, my Jedi Master had me go inside where I was tested with the image of myself as my mortal enemy, unaware of the secret connection between us deeper than I could have ever imagined. Master Yoda told me not to bring weapons into the cave, but I defied him and failed the test as a result.”

“What about the second time?”

“There is an old Jedi Temple on a planet called Ahch-to. Felicity and I once visited there. There is a strong Darkness underneath the island, and as Felicity was not Force Sensitive, she could not resist its power. I woke to find her sleepwalking right too it. I was able to rouse her from sleep, but it was too late. There was a blowhole within the rock that led to the entrance of another cave, this one full of mirrors. Felicity slipped on the wet rock and fell down the blowhole. I tried to caught her, but didn’t grab her hand in time. I dove after her and rescued her, but she had been in the cave for a while by the time I found her as the cave sealed after her once she entered. She didn’t like speaking of what she saw inside, but I managed to learn that it was reflections of other people within herself. Me, her brother, her mother, her friends both alive and dead, and a girl who I know now to be the future image of Rey. But also her enemies, her antagonists, the evil within.”

Luke didn’t dare name them for the safety of keeping his past hidden. But he remembered how shaken Felicity had been after seeing the reflection of Alaric Rhiaon, Anakin Skywalker, Tyla Kinall, Ben Solo, and Captain Phasma within herself.

“So, Rey would be drawn to this cave?” Teng questioned.

“Exactly,” Luke nodded. “I’ve been keeping Rey from it until she was strong enough to resist temptation. Maybe she was called to it… I- I have to go there. I have to save her.”

Quom jumped up as Luke started gathering his things, “I’m coming too.”

“Absolutely not. I am not taking you into a cave infected with the Dark Side.”

“Luke’s right,” Teng said. “We saw what you did to Toras Kern for messing with me. I don’t want to see what happens when you’re actually possessed.”

“Come on, Luke,” Quom objected. “You can’t seriously tell me that you think Teng can handle his own against the dead-enders.”

Teng frowned, “The what?”

The biggest peril of Carbon Ridge is the dead-enders. They sound like a tale from the washing tables, but I’ve seen them myself, prowling the canyons. They’re old men with white beards and crazy eyes. If you run into a dead-ender he’ll chase you out of his territory, throwing rocks and babbling nonsense strings of numbers. Fortunately, if they ever had guns they ran out of power packs
a long time ago.

There’s a story in Niima that somewhere beneath Carbon Ridge the Empire had a base, and the dead-enders are still guarding it.

- Rey’s Survival Guide

Luke sighed, his bag slung over his shoulder, “Quom’s right, I can’t take you with me, Teng. You’re not strong enough yet against them, and I can’t take them alone. Quom has more fighting experience than you and better skills. Plus he’ll bite people in the throat.”

“But what about me?” Teng asked.

Luke put a hand on Teng’s shoulder, “Stay here. Keep an eye out for Rey. Someone needs to be here to give her an earful when she gets back. Please, Teng… wait for her?”

Teng smiled and patted Luke’s arm, “Till the moons are nothing but ash.”

“Good boy. Quom, let’s get going. We don’t want to be fighting the dead-enders during high noon.”

“Aye aye, Sir.” Quom smiled at his pup, “Keep your comm on, and try to think of how else we can get a hold of Rey.”

“I’ll see you soon. And don’t go crazy on Luke.”

Quom grinned, “I make no promises.”

Teng burst out laughing.

He would not be laughing that night when the pair returned.

As he watched the pair drive off, Teng sighed. He just felt so useless being left behind. Sure, he understood why he got chosen to stay back, but still, he had to do something.

In an effort to clear his mind, Teng gathered up some projects that he had completed while waiting up for Rey every night. When he joined the line to the Concession Stand, the eyes fell on him, and the whispers started. The disappearance of Luke Erso’s daughter didn’t go unnoticed.

“Girl not back yet?”

Teng was surprised to find Old Meru standing in line in front of him, “Uh, no. But Luke and Quom have got a new lead.”

“That’s too bad,” Meru said. “I’ve been needing you to come fix my water filtration system since the X’us’R’iia.”

“Can’t you get someone else?”

“You know you’re the only one I trust with that.”
“Yeah, I guess it’s the Quom Tinadar’s speeder of water filtration systems.”

“Hey, it’s not that bad!” Meru snapped.

“Yes, Ma’am,” Teng smiled lightly – his first genuine smile in days.

“Anyway,” Meru shook her head, “you tell me the moment that girl gets back. I want you in a speeder on the way to me the second she returns. I don’t care if you come to me with the girl sitting in your lap. She returns, you come to me immediately. Understood?”

Teng’s smile fell, “What if she doesn’t come back?”

Meru rolled her eyes, “Don’t be an idiot. Of course that girl’s coming back. Her sole purpose in life is to cause you trouble.”

The smile returned to his face, something oddly rousing and reassuring in her words, “I’ll be there, Meru. Promise.”

“Rey still gone?” Dirk came up to Teng when he was backing away from the window after collecting his portions. Dirk barely gave Teng the time to step out of the way before Devi and Strunk were crowding around the window.

“Oh, Rey’s missing?” Devi asked in surprise.

Teng shot her a quick glare, “None of your business.”

“Oh, come on, Teng,” Devi laughed, punching him in the arm. “You still sore about the Fighting Ring?”

Teng blinked, “… Yes.”

He grabbed Dirk’s arm and led the alien away, “Sorry about that. Yes, Rey is still missing.”

“I’m worried,” Dirk looked at the ground nervously. He played with a well-worn sand stuffed acklay in his pocket, “I don’t want anything to happen to her. She’s my friend. Who’s gonna look out for me if something happens?”

Teng patted his shoulder, “Buddy, don’t worry. I’ve got you.”

“Promise?”

“Promise. I just wish I could get in touch with Rey.”

“Can’t you try getting her on her comm?”

“We’ve tried,” Teng answered. “Her battery’s dead. None of our comms can reach hers.”

“No, not the four way ones,” Dirk shook his head. “Doesn’t she have one the goes to Doctor Aletha?”

Teng froze, “…To Aletha?”

“Yeah, I’ve seen it on her belt.”
The idea was like a bucket of ice water thrown in his face. Her comm to Aletha! Why didn’t they think of that before?

Teng grabbed his shoulders, “Dirk, you’re a genius!”

Dirk blushed, “No one’s called me a genius before.”

“Aletha,” Teng exclaimed. “I can get Aletha to talk to her. I don’t believe this… but wait, how am I going to get a hold of Aletha? I don’t have a number for the Resistance.”

“Didn’t Doctor Aletha call Quom a few months ago?”

“Would the comm station still have the number?”

“I think so. Let’s go find out.”

“Lead the way, Dirk,” Teng laughed.

He couldn’t believe it. Three days of worrying, and there had been such a simple solution the whole time!

…Except it wasn’t simple. You see, if you remember, Aletha hadn’t called Quom from her personal line or the medical office of the Resistance. She had called him from Diego’s office.

And Commander Diego Nalto, Head of Resistance Intelligence and Communications was very interested to know how and why some scavenger boy from Jakku had the number to his private office line.

Chapter End Notes

Coming Up Next Chapter…

The Cave of Darkness
Trying to get a hold of Aletha, Teng must explain to Commander Diego Nalto exactly how he got the private number to his office, while not revealing Rey’s identity in the process. Meanwhile, at the cave Luke struggles to keep Quom on his side in a battle of Darkness and Light. But when he gets too overwhelmed, the Force provides Luke with a surprising choice of aid.

Screw it, I cut this chapter in half. What happens in the cave is too epic for it not to get its own chapter.

Also, reminder that I am currently on vacation (I totally saw the Luke Skywalker hand prop and bought so much Star Wars stuff from the gift shop, so I may start quoting the cookbook and don’t you judge me,) so either there’s going to be several updates in a short period of time – which means don’t take that as the new norm – or else there’s going to be no updates for a while. Hopefully it’s the former.
The Cave of Darkness

Chapter Summary

The Force tests Luke, Aletha gets in a huge fight with Diego, and some grapes makes Paige cry.

Chapter Notes

Sorry for the wait of the update. Literally the last day of my vacation I got hit with a cold, so that dragged me down for a while.

For anyone who reads the ongoing comic entitled Star Wars, I am so sorry if this story has ruined the Luke and Wedge reunion scene in the latest issue where Wedge says he thought Luke forgot about him, Luke says he never would, and Han tells him that nothing lasts forever.

This was the wrong week for me to randomly pick up that comic.

Also the Poe Dameron comic has a piece of artwork that is an exact image from an upcoming scene between Aletha and Diego. Literally it’s so identical that when that scene plays out, I’m probably going to put in the image into the AO3 version.

And apparently BB-8 has a droid girlfriend named Iveye that is Jessika’s astro droid, and he’s as terrible as Poe with the whole separation of romance and the workplace. The two of them won’t stop talking to each other during the battle, and Poe scolds BB-8 for it.

WHERE DO YOU THINK HE PICKED IT UP, DAMERON?

(I like this too much, and I’m stealing it, ignoring the fact Iveye gets killed off. Fuck you, BB-8’s girlfriend will live.)

Final note, I’m going to start pulling quotes from Bomber Command by Jason Fry, but note that they will be referred to by the book’s subtitle of The Journal of Paige Tico.

Trigger warning: this chapter contains scenes of graphic violence and minor gore. Nothing too much on the end of gore, but it does include a brief moment where a character vomits blood.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

The Long Way Home
Chapter Forty-Seven
The Cave of Darkness

The Graveyard is where most of the ships came down, but not all of them. You’ll find wrecked fighters in Kelvin Ridge, blown-apart engine nacelles littering Carbon Ridge, and bits of metal and trash from one end of the Goazon to the other. Ships came down everywhere on Jakku, including places people have never thought to look.

-Rey’s Survival Guide

To be honest, Luke and Quom made very quick work of the Dead-Enders. A few swings of a lightsaber and a few bites on the neck – obviously from Quom as if Luke tried it it would be weird and surprisingly ineffective – and the pair easily dispatched them.

“I love being friends with a Jedi,” Quom grinned, wiping the blood from his mouth.

Luke grimaced as a Dead-Ender groaned at his feet. Truth be told, he was scared to have a Vrogem for a friend sometimes.

“Alright, you stay here,” Luke ordered. “I’m to go in alone. If I need you, I’ll yell for you, but I don’t want you close to the Darkness. I have no idea what’s in this cave and I don’t want to worry about controlling you.”

“You make me sound like an untamed animal.”

“You are an untamed animal.”

“Fair point.” Quom sighed, “I’m just worried. I don’t like you going in alone.”

“I don’t like it either, but I like it better than worrying about a possessed Vrogem,” Luke said. “I’ve been in these sorts of situations before. I need to go in alone… and I need to be weaponless.”

Quom’s eyes widened as Luke unclipped his lightsaber from his belt and presented it to him.


“Are you serious?” Quom asked.

“I trust you. Besides, kyber crystals regulate your energy. Maybe this will help. Please, take it.”

“What if you need it?”

“Then I’ll summon it.”

“Can you summon things that far?”

“To be honest, Quom, I could probably summon Teng to us here with the Force.”

Quom raised an eyebrow.
“We’re not using the Force to physically summon Rey to my hand,” Luke snapped.

“You have to admit, it is a good idea.”


Quom smiled and then placed a hand on Luke’s shoulder, “Hey, you be safe.”

“You too,” Luke smiled back and passed his saber into Quom’s furry paw. “And promise me one thing.”

“What’s that?”

“Don’t follow after me. Only come if I call.”

Quom took a deep breath and nodded, “Alright.”

“Also, don’t take apart my lightsaber.”

“Damn it!”

Luke chuckled, and then patted Quom on the shoulder, “Be safe, my friend.”

“You too.”

Luke turned to the cave, took a deep breath, righted his shoulders, and then entered.

Quom sighed, clutching Luke’s lightsaber tightly. He knew his friend would be okay, but he just wished he wasn’t such a bother to Luke. Quom wanted to protect his friend, and Luke was genuinely afraid that he could hurt him.

It was even more painful to know in his heart that he would hurt Luke.

Taking a deep breath, Quom walked back towards the speeder, getting the idea to call Teng and update him on the situation.

“Quom.”

The Vrogem froze. That voice. So familiar, so beloved, but it couldn’t possibly be.

Could it?

Slowly he turned back to the cave. Standing in the entrance was a creature like him, but smaller, leaner, with two tails, and reddish-brown fur. Most importantly, she had the same toothy and slightly frightening smile that he himself bore.

“Mom?” Quom frowned.

His mother smiled, and with one furry, clawed finger beckoned him forward. Quom’s promise to Luke was wiped blank from his mind, and indeed most else along with it. If you had asked him how Teng was doing, he would ask who that was.

With a mind as empty as a non-sentient creature, Quom followed his mother into the cave.
I told you how one of Fossil’s first lessons was the importance of flying in formation, so each bomber can rely on the ones around it. Well, the Resistance is like that. It’s made up of overlapping groups that support each other and depend on each other.

Something I’m still getting used to is that I don’t know very much about our overall capabilities – only our top leaders do. That’s for a good reason, too. We’d be in a lot of trouble if the First Order could discover everything about the Resistance’s capabilities by capturing one bomber crew.

- The Journal of Paige Tico

Diego Nalto rubbed the bridge of his nose, “Alright, let’s start this again from the beginning. Who are you?”

“Teng Malar,” the boy in the Holo answered nervously.

“Malar. Nubian, right?”

“Right, but I wasn’t born on Naboo. Just my parents. Ronhar and Saché Malar.”

“Saché?” Diego asked. “Any relation to Queen Amidala’s handmaiden?”

“No, Sir,” Teng answered. “Just a common name.”

“I see. So, where were you born?”

“Berryl.”

“But you live on Jakku?”

“Yeah, it’s uh… complicated. Long story short, parents got involved with a cult during the war, then afterwards they escaped, but got killed, I ended up with pirates, then they abandoned me on Jakku where I’ve been living for the last six years.”

Diego just blinked.

“Also, I’m sorted of legally owned by a Vrogem,” Teng added as if it would explain anything.

“I meet the oddest people,” Diego shook his head. He sighed, “Alright, Teng Malar from Berryl who is owned by a Vrogem, how exactly is it you know Doctor Aletha Kymeri?”

“She’s a friend.”

“A friend who wouldn’t bother to give you her personal line?”

“Uh… No, Sir. She decided no contact was the best way to keep us safe from her sister.”

“And yet, she has contact? A personal line between herself and this… Kira?” Diego was aware of Kira’s communications with Aletha, but he hadn’t known any specifics.

“Yes, Sir,” Teng said. “I’m surprised she didn’t tell you herself considering your… relationship.”

Diego raised an eyebrow. He looked very imposing seated at his desk, hands folded, and eyes narrowed at the small blue image of a scavenger on his desk.
“Who said she hasn’t?” Diego sighed, “I suppose your knowledge of my personal relationship with Doctor Kymeri is proof enough that you are acquainted and in contact with her. However, that is neither here nor there. If I deem there to be a violation, I shall recuse myself from this situation. I will call for her shortly, but before I do so, I would like to know why you have chosen to contact her?”

“My girlfriend, Kira has gone missing, and Aletha has an encrypted, two-way, single channel comm, the matching one being owned by Kira. I was hoping that Aletha could get a hold of Kira and see if she’s okay.”

“Wait,” Diego’s eyes widened slightly, “Aletha has an encrypted, two-way, single channel comm?”

Immediately Diego’s hand hit his security comm.

“I need a member of the High Council who is free to immediately come to my office. I must recuse myself, and as General Organa is away currently on Hosnian Prime with her husband, I need someone else to step in and mediate. We have a possible security violation among members of our staff. I also need an impartial representative from Communications – not Lieutenant Connix. On the security front, I require the following individuals to be picked up discreetly. If they ask why, tell them there’s a minor comm issue that needs to be sorted out. Please pick up Doctor Aletha Kymeri, Lieutenant Kaydel Ko Connix, Commander Poe Dameron, and the droid BB-8,” Diego recalled who had been in his office with Aletha. He looked to Teng, “Does anyone else know about this comm?”

Teng hesitated.

“Speak up, Son,” Diego ordered. “There’s going to be more trouble for them if you lie to me.”

“Three other girls. The Tico sisters, and a pilot called Jessika, whose last name I think starts with a Peth?”

“Jessika Pava?”

“That’s the one.”

Diego went back to his security comm, “Please also pick up Jessika Pava, Rose Tico, and Paige Tico.”

It took about twenty minutes for the very confused group to gather. Statura arrived to fill the role of Command, and the droid Peazy was the Communications representative. Diego refused to answer questions until everyone arrived, though he did pull Peazy and Statura aside to brief them while they waited.

Aletha had been finishing up with a patient, so she was the last one to arrive. She was still in scrubs with her hair tied back, a face mask hanging around her neck, and pulling off a pair of latex gloves. She was in the middle of an apology for tardiness when she stopped dead at the sight of Teng.

“Teng?” Aletha frowned. She looked around the room in fear and confusion. The group was too suspicious for it to be coincidence. Though she knew the answer, she still asked, “What’s going on?”

“I’m afraid we have a bit of a situation.” Diego gestured to the empty desk chair opposite his, “Please have a seat, Doctor Kymeri.”

Aletha said nothing, just bowed her head and quickly obeyed.

Statura moved to take his place in Diego’s chair, but Diego did not get up. He knew better than to
lead the meeting himself, but he was still Second-In-Command of the Resistance and he would use what power he could to help Aletha. He wouldn’t stop her from being punished for wrongdoings, but if she was going to go down, he was going to make sure it was for a good reason.

Statura looked down at Diego, and when the Commander just looked up at him, face unchanging and body unmoving, Statura elected not to press the issue.

“Alright,” Statura cleared his throat, “let’s just cut to the chase: Doctor Kymeri, do you possess an encrypted, two-way, single channel comm?”

Aletha felt the various fearful eyes press on her, “Yes. Yes, I do. My late husband and I had a set during the Rebellion, and I have kept them so I may communicate with my ex-boyfriend’s daughter. Kira has no other female figure in her life, and I’ve acted as a second mother to her. When I left Jakku, I thought it important to continue this relationship. I have since brought these young ladies into the fold to communicate with her as Kira does not have anyone female her age to talk to. We simply engage in girl talk. Fashion, makeup, romantic relationships, how to put a hyperdrive together. Girl talk.”

Diego lifted an eyebrow at the last entry.

“Frankly, I do not understand why Commander Dameron is here,” Aletha gestured to Poe. “True, he is aware of Kira and the comm, but he’s only exchanged two or three sentences with her. Frankly, his droid has had longer conversations with Kira.”

“Where is BB-8?” Statura asked.

“He’s in the middle of an oil change,” Poe explained. “My apologies. He’ll be along shortly, but is it really necessary? BB-8 has anti-espionage measures installed into him by C-3PO himself, and I have been purposely kept in the dark as to what they are or how to undo them in case I prove to be a spy. Which, for the record, I categorically deny being.”

“We might need him later,” Statura answered. “Depending on how this goes, we may need to order a memory wipe for him.”

“What?” Poe exclaimed. “No! You can’t!”

Kaydel grabbed his arm, “Calm down, Poe. It’ll be okay.”

“But Kaydel-”

“Relax.”

Poe sighed and conceded defeat. They hadn’t ordered anything yet, so Kaydel was right. No point in hostility right now, but he’d give them one hell of a fight if they tried to touch his little buddy.

“Commander Dameron is here because he was involved with a transmission you made to Jakku from this office a few months ago,” Diego explained.

Aletha frowned, “You gave me permission to use your office.”

“We’ll get to that in a moment,” Statura said. He pointed to the still waiting Holo of Teng on the desk, “I would like you to tell me who this young man is.”

Aletha’s eyes met Teng’s, and then she sighed. Even star systems away, her Jakku boys were still giving her problems.
“This is Teng Malar,” Aletha answered. “He’s a scavenger on Jakku and Kira’s boyfriend.”

Rose leaned in to Paige and whispered, “Hey, Kira was right. He is cute.”

Paige shrugged, “I guess if you like long hair and the sort of rugged look.”

“Dang,” Jessika muttered. “There goes my he’s only attractive to Kira because he’s the only one around theory.”

The Tico sisters stared at her.

Jessika rolled her eyes, “I’m gay. Not blind.”

Kaydel smirked and leaned in, “Cute or not, my boyfriend is still the hottest.”

“Thanks, Babe,” Poe grinned.

“I really disagree,” Paige added.

Rose sighed, “I need to find a boyfriend.”

“Your self-worth is not predicated on your relationship status, Rose,” Jessika reminded.

Diego and Statura exchanged a truly dumbfounded look.

“Excuse me!” Diego said loudly. “Do you lot not realize you are currently in the middle of an official proceeding to determine if you breeched security protocols and committed treason? This is an expulsion level offence!”

The group gave very muted responses with much muttering and the lowering of heads.

“Thank you,” Diego shook his head. “Doctor Kymeri you may continue.”

“Of course, Commander Nalto,” Aletha said, equally amazed by the young adults and yet not surprised. “As far as I know, Mister Malar is in the charge of my friend, Quom Tinadar. I helped Quom raise him – also with help from my ex-boyfriend – since Teng was something like thirteen when he came into Quom’s charge? I can’t remember the exact age at the moment. But Teng Malar is probably the second most good and non-troublemaking kid I’ve ever met.”

Diego arched an eyebrow, “Second? Who’s first?”

Aletha shrugged, “Rose.”

Rose sighed, “Thanks for that.”

Poe chuckled, “Oh, don’t be so down. I think it’s a fun label.”

“Poe?”

“Yeah?”

“Shower.”

“Shutting up,” Poe’s face reddened and everyone else looked confused.

Rose grinned. Oh, she was going to have fun with this.
“Alright, Teng Malar,” Statura pushed them back on topic. “And what security clearance does Mister Malar have?”

Aletha frowned, “None.”

“Then do you want to explain to me how he got this number? One of the highest priority and secured numbers in this organization?”

She looked at the Holo, “Frankly… I have no idea.”

“Really?” Statura looked around the room, “Anyone else want to wager a guess?”

Everyone was silent.

Then Kaydel slowly raised her hand.

“Yes, Connix?”

“Aleth- uh, Doctor Kymeri was given permission to use this line a few months ago to contact Jakku,” Kaydel explained. “But Poe-I mean, Commander Dameron and I were trying to stop her for personal reasons, and in her distraction, she didn’t encrypt the line properly. As a result, the comm station of Niima Outpost has a catalogued record of the line, enabling any scavenger to use it, as Mister Malar has.”

Stature looked impressed, “Wow. No wonder Nalto and Brance speak so highly of you. That was exactly right.”

“Connix is my best in the Department,” Diego smiled. He glanced at Peazy, “Uh… non-programmed operative. No offense, Peazy.”

“None taken, Commander Nalto,” the droid answered. “Droids are incapable of taking offense.”

“Someone tell that to Threepio,” Poe muttered.

“Admiral Stature, I am truly sorry,” Aletha bowed her head. “You are correct, I was negligent, and I will take my punishment for that. But I fail to see what this has to do with the young adults you’ve gathered here with me.”

“Which brings us back to your comm,” Statura said. “All of you present were aware of this comm?”

Various affirmations filled the room.

“Alright,” Statura sighed. “Doctor Kymeri are you aware that encrypted, two-way, single channel comms are forbidden in the Resistance?”

Aletha frowned, “I don’t recall it in the rules, and trust me, I looked.”


Diego brought the passage up on his work tablet and passed it to Aletha.

“Oh,” she said. “So it is.”

“Wait a second,” Poe interrupted. “No, they aren’t! My father and I have a set and we’re just fine.”

“They’re talking about unregistered ones,” Kaydel explained. “The ones you two own have had all
the proper paperwork filed."

“Well, can’t she just register it?” Paige asked.

“Of course she can,” Statura answered, “but the question is why hasn’t she already? We need to determine that answer and if it means we need to consider a major punishment.”

Jessika narrowed her eyes, “Why are you guys doing this?”

Diego sighed, “We need to make sure violations of the code of conduct are dealt with appropriately in respect to the magnitude of the offen-”

“No,” Jessika snapped, daring to raise her voice to members of the High Council. “Why are you guys doing this? You’ve dealt with contraband before; it’s not a big deal. A scolding, a slap on the wrist, maybe confiscation… Why are you making this into a big deal?”

And then it clicked for Kaydel.

“You’re doing this because of our family,” she said.

Diego and Statura shared an awkward look.

“You have to admit, there are concerns considering your family background,” Statura admitted.

“What, because they’re related to Phasma?” Poe exclaimed. “Trust me, these two have absolutely nothing to do with that monster.”

Diego held up his hand, “It’s not Phasma we’re concerned with.”

“Doctor Kymeri and Lieutenant Connix have well documented evidence of their violent estrangement to Captain Phasma,” Peazy informed. “Communications with her are unlikely and not of a concern. It is Timor Connix we inquire about.”

Poe frowned and looked at Kaydel, “Your father?”

Kaydel bit her lip, eyes darting away from Poe.

“Doctor Kymeri, when was the last time you were in touch with Timor Connix?” Statura asked.

“Timor?” Aletha blinked. “I haven’t seen or spoken to him since I was… nineteen. Kaydel’s forty-year-old brother could fit in my lap back then. Why?”

“Would you say you’re close with Timor?”

“Absolutely not.”

“What is your honest opinion of Timor Connix?”

Aletha sighed and glanced at Kaydel, “I’m sorry, Darling, but Timor Connix is an idiot and a freeloader. He ran Adrinna into the ground making her work three jobs while he tried to make his big break inventing useless junk. He’ll never amount to anything.”

“Actually, he’s amounted to being one of the richest men on Mallarex,” Kaydel said quietly.

All eyes fell on her, most in surprise, but none more so than Poe Dameron.
“I’m sorry, Babe, did you just say your dad is rich?” Poe chuckled nervously. “Like, you grew up rich? You’re a rich girl? And now you’re dating a farm boy?”

“Oh my god, can you two not do this classist am I – a poor farm boy – be good enough for the rich city girl crap right now?” Jessika exclaimed. “You’re not even a real farm boy!”

“Well, I wouldn’t have phrased it as such,” Diego said mildly, “but I agree. Could you two save that conversation for later?”

“Sure,” Poe grinned stiffly. “Guess I gotta get used to saving up things.”

“Please, Poe, stop it,” Kaydel groaned. “I’m not a trust fund girl any more than you actually are a farm boy. You’re a pilot and I’m a Communications officer. End of story. That’s what happens when you get disowned. Besides, you know my mother had no intention of spoiling me growing up. I wasn’t living the high life.”

“Lieutenant Connix,” Diego warned. “Enough. Save that for your personal time.”

“I’m sorry,” Aletha interrupted, “can someone explain to me how Timor Connix actually did something with his life?”

Kaydel sighed, “He invented something called a bartering ram cannon.”

“A what?” Poe asked.

She blinked, “What part of that phrase was confusing? It’s a cannon that knocks down doors. Using his connection to Aunt Alecta, he sold a bunch of them to the Empire and formed Connix Industries, one of the galaxy’s leading weapons manufacturers. They’ve since expanded into other weapons, and now they are the First Order’s top supplier of weapons… because my father is terrified of my aunt. And rightfully so. The reason I even met her was because one time he refused to sell a new shipment to the First Order after the whole Burning of Rornian fiasco. A few threats and reminders that we blame the Skywalker family for killing my Aunt Athena, and things were back on track.”

Paige just stared at Kaydel, “I can’t believe your dad is a weapons manufacturer.”

“Oh, it’s not just Dad,” Kaydel said, “it’s a family business. Mom runs the books, Katha’s head of research and marketing. Her kids are interns in various departments. Keth is a freelance safeties and compliance tester and regulator who sometimes picks up jobs to try out the new weapons. Heck, even Deek and Dacken have jobs waiting for them when they get out.”

“Get out?” Diego asked.

“Deek’s in prison. Dacken’s in rehab,” Kaydel shrugged. “Both got into spice hardcore a few years back. Mom was pissed.”

Everyone just stared at her.

“Your family scares me,” Rose said.

“Why do you think I got out?” Kaydel simply offered. “Aunt Ally was the smart one. I’d take decades on Jakku over the drama of the Anthea family any day.”

Poe noticed how she nervously stroked her hair.

He wondered how soon the monsters who set her hair on fire would get their freedom?
“Um…” Teng’s voice came from the Holo, reminding everyone he was still there. “Do I still need to be here? It’s costing me quite a bit to make the call.”

“You can hang up,” Diego said. “I’ll pass the message to Aletha.”

“Alright,” Teng looked over at Aletha. “Bye, Doctor Kymeri. It was nice seeing you again. I hope we talk soon.”

“Me too,” Aletha smiled. “Take care of the boys, and Kira will take care of you. Oh, and don’t forget to watch out for steelpeckers.”

“I will, I promise,” Teng laughed.

Then he flicked away.

“Alright,” Statura said, “if we can all remember where we were… Which I don’t think I do-”

“You were asking about Kaydel’s dad,” Rose supplied.

“Thank you. So, Doctor Kymeri, have you made any contact with the First Order or Connix Industries?”

“Absolutely not,” Aletha declared. “I didn’t even know about any of this before today.”

“So the reason you were keeping an unregistered and secret comm was not for any espionage reasons?” Statura asked.

“Absolutely not.”

“Is it technically a secret comm if,” Rose counted the people in the room not including Statura and Peazy, but added BB-8 for good measure, “at least eight people were aware of it?”

“That is logical,” Peazy said.

“The fact remains it is unregistered,” Statura pointed out.

“Doctor Kymeri, would you be willing to submit your comm for inspection so we may confirm that your calls have only been placed to Jakku?” Diego asked.

Something churned in Aletha’s stomach, “What would that entail?”

“Checking the call log and contacting Kira to verify she has no First Order connections,” Statura answered.

“Absolutely not.”

Diego blinked, “I’m sorry, what?”

“You are not calling Kira,” Aletha crossed her arms. “I won’t allow it.”

Statura and Diego exchanged a look.

“You… won’t allow it?” Diego repeated.

“Doctor Kymeri,” Statura said kindly, “you are aware that your refusal is highly suspicious, and could even be reason for us to believe that this Kira is indeed some sort of First Order operative?”
Might I also remind you that we are a government authority. Your refusal to cooperate in this investigation could result in an arrest for obstruction of justice.”

“Then arrest me.”

Diego genuinely couldn’t believe what he was hearing, “You are willing to be arrested, even imprisoned for this girl?”

“I will die for her,” Aletha said firmly. “I have raised this girl since she was a sad, sunburnt, little girl, mourning the death of her mother. My past relationship with her father aside, Kira is the closest thing I have to a daughter, and I will protect her as one.”

Statura looked at Diego, “Commander Nalto, a word?”

They went to the corner of the room as Peazy tried further attempts to convince Aletha to talk.

“I don’t want to arrest her,” Statura said. “The message that would send, that we turn on Rebel veterans, it’s horrible publicity. We can’t face any more of that, not after the past few years with Wedge Antilles’ death, your maiming, and the actions of General Organa’s son… I think we need to call in the General for this.”

“Please, give me a few minutes,” Diego begged. “I think I can work something out.”

“Nalto, you are dating this woman. You shouldn’t even be in the room anymore.”

“I know, but I’m not going to just stand aside and let her be arrested. Statura, please. Give me a few minutes, and if I can’t get her to talk I’ll leave the room… and we can pass this off to Amilyn.”

Statura’s eye widened, “Holdo over Leia?”

“Leia gets so little time with Han. Let’s let them be. She needs it.”

“Alright, but I’m only doing this because you’re willing to defer the issue to the High Council officer you hate the most, thus proving to me how serious you are about the issue.”

“That’s all I ask.” Diego clapped Statura on the shoulder and they rejoined the group. “Alright, let’s calm down, everyone. Shall we? Doctor Kymeri, we don’t need to arrest anyone. We just want a civil conversation.”

“You’re not having one with Kira,” Aletha refused.

“Then… we’ll speak with the rest of you gathered,” Diego looked around the room. “I want to know every single word Kira has ever spoken to you young ladies… and Commander Dameron. Perhaps we can determine things from there.”

Everyone exchanged a series of looks. Words of a promise to stick together and protect Kira buzzed in their minds.

“No,” Jessika said firmly.

“No?” Diego exclaimed. “Come on! Don’t make me arrest all of you! You know what happens if you don’t cooperate? You lose your ranks and go to jail.”

“If giving up our right to privacy is the cost of keeping my title of Commander and Head of Air Force,” Poe said slowly, “then by all means, take it from me.”
Diego groaned and rubbed the bridge of his nose, “Alright, how about this? You stop cooperating and I bring in Holdo.”

Poe grinned at Kaydel, “I think I’ll need to stretch first. Thighs have been cramping up this morning.”

“Oh for the love of…” Jessika shook her head.

“There has to be another compromise,” Paige said. “One that doesn’t put Kira at risk and makes those two do unspeakable acts on my bed even though Dameron has his own room.”

“What risk?” Statura asked, ignoring the last part.

“The reason we won’t talk to you,” Aletha answered. “Kira and her father are in hiding from the First Order itself. Her father does not want her in contact with the Resistance in an official capacity for fear of revealing themselves to the First Order, however accidentally.”

“Alright, since they are hiding from the First Order, I think we can use this to dismiss the whole issue.” Statura amended, “Though, not without appropriate punishments. I just need for the official record the reason why they are in hiding. Once we verify that, we’re all good. Okay?”

“Well…” Aletha nervously glanced at Kaydel.

Diego’s face darkened, “What?”

“We don’t know the reason they’re in hiding.”

Statura exclaimed, “Oh for the love of-”

Even Peazy started looking like she was annoyed.

“So let me get this straight,” Diego said, his voice increasing in volume with every word, “you’re all willing to go to prison to protect a girl you’ve never even met because you’re protecting her from the First Order and none of you even know why?”

“No,” said Aletha.

“Nope,” said Kaydel.

“Na uh,” said Jessika.

“Not a clue,” said Poe.

“Sorry,” said Paige.

Rose was oddly quiet.

Diego smiled, “Miss Rose Tico… care to add something?”

Rose’s eyes widened, “What?”

“You didn’t say no.”

“Oh, I uh… no. No clue whatsoever. I- I- I don’t know anything about why they are hiding or why the First Order would want to capture them. Not a single solitary clue.”
Diego looked at Paige, “Is she just awkward or truly that terrible at lying?”

Paige sighed, “Both.”

“Rose, you know why Kira’s on Jakku?” Poe asked.

“No!” Rose exclaimed. Buckling under the weight of the eyes on her, Rose sighed, “Alright… maybe a little. Kira might have mentioned a juicy not so little tidbit the other day.”

“Unbelievable,” Aletha shook her head. “They tell you, they tell Quom. But the woman who once shot someone in the knee to save her life? Nothing.”

“Sorry, it was a heat of the moment thing,” Rose said. “She buttered me all up. Said I was her best friend! I was so excited!”

“Wait, she calls you her best friend?” Kaydel sulked a little, “I thought I was.”

“What does it matter?” Paige pointed out, “It’s not like she’s your best friend. I am.”

Poe frowned, “I thought I was your best friend.”

“Once again,” Diego shouted, “treason investigation. Treat it as such. Now, Rose, you know why Kira is hiding from the First Order?”

“Uh huh.” Rose grinned, “It’s a really good reason.”

“Alright… what is it?”

“…I’m afraid I can’t tell you.”

Diego’s face dropped, “What? Why?”

“I promised I wouldn’t.”

He looked like he was ready to throw someone out of a window, “I promised- Rose, please I am trying to make things better all around. I need you to tell me why this Kira is so important.”

“I can’t. Her dad’s right, if this gets out, she’s in a lot of trouble. I won’t do it.”

Statura looked over at the quickly reddening face of Diego, “Should I call Holdo?”

“No!” Diego exclaimed. “One more idea, then we turn it over to her. Miss Rose Tico… are you willing to tell the reason if it was to one person and completely off the record, they then would vouch for the secret on your behalf and not tell anyone? Does that sound acceptable?”

Rose thought about it, “Yes.”

“Alright. Then let’s empty the room, and you can tell me-”

“Oh, I’m not telling you. Sorry, I can’t be confident you would keep this to yourself.”

Diego was definitely ready to throw someone out a window.

“What about another member of the High Council?” Statura asked. “All of them have been thoroughly vetted and we trust their word. If a member of the High Council vouches for you, we’ll settle the matter.”
“Okay, but who is on the High Council?”

“Here’s a list,” Diego’s hand was shaking so hard he dropped his datapad on the floor as he handed it to her.

Rose avoided his eye as she picked it up. She knew the shaking wasn’t just from his injury.

“Pick anyone off that list,” Statura said calmly. “Except for Dameron. He doesn’t count this time.”

Poe frowned, “Why not? Can’t I vouch for this not being a conspiracy?”

“Not when you’re under investigation for participating in said conspiracy.”

Rose scanned the list, weighing her options for a long time. Finally she settled on the one name she knew she could trust to keep the secret of a Jedi’s survival.

The Jedi Doctor herself.

“Doctor Kalonia,” Rose declared. “I want to talk to Doctor Kalonia.”

Diego and Statura exchanged a look. Really? Of all the military figures, Rose picked the Head of Medical?

“I’ll take her,” Statura said. “You look like you need a breather, Command Nalto.”

“Or maybe a good stiff drink,” Poe muttered.

“But Miss Tico, I need your word,” Statura said. “I need you to promise that you will tell Doctor Kalonia the reason this Kira is hiding from the First Order.”

“I promise,” Rey vowed.

“Then please,” Diego gestured to the door, “march!”

But I don’t think there was a base. Why would the Empire have thought twice about this place?

- Rey’s Survival Guide

The cave felt cold; cold just as the ones on Dagobah and Ahch-to had been. Luke’s senses were abuzz, but he was older and wiser. He knew to stay calm and alert, ready for any challenge the Force would throw at him, Light Side or Dark. He did not call out for Rey, sensing this was not a place for that sort of thing.

There was nothing for a very long time, just a corridor of sand and rock. Then the symbols appeared; strange carvings on the walls growing more numerous the deeper he went. Luke realized he had seen them before. One of the ancient Jedi texts on Ahch-to had been written in them. Felicity had picked up the book and immediately dropped it. When Luke scolded her for mishandling the artifact, she told him with wide unseeing eyes that that one was evil. She immediately exited the tree library and threw up. As one not strong with the Force, the Darkness of Ahch-to had been easily able to manipulate her. It was one of the reasons they had not stayed on Ahch-to longer than a day – the
other being that the Caretakers did not take too kindly to Luke and Felicity banging in the sacred village they were trying to upkeep.

That had been such an awkward wake up call.

Moving deeper into the cave, Luke fell something strong and Dark calling to him. It concerned him however, that he could not sense Rey.

And then he came upon it: a giant circular clearing. Symbols covered every inch of the cave walls and it sounded like the images were whispering words he didn’t understand.

Most concerning of all: there were no exits. Indeed, Luke looked back the way he came and found the corridor no longer existed.

“Well, no wonder Rey hasn’t gotten home yet,” Luke mused as he tried to spot a way out.

There were two things within the clearing: a giant circle carved into the rock floor with more symbols etched inside, and an enormous glowing Force Sensitive tree exactly like the ones he and Shara Bey had rescued from the Empire.

The tree had bright white, almost translucent leaves. Seeing nowhere else to go, Luke stepped forward the examine the tree. His foot landed right in the middle of the circle.

Something distant crashed like rock hitting rock. Suddenly, invisible yet distinctly present snaky arm reached out for him. Luke couldn’t fight it; it entered his body with an intake of breath. It filled his lungs, slinked through his body, and then bore into his brain.

Luke wanted to cry out, but he couldn’t. He felt it picking through his mind, sifting through his memories. Words of the past whispered in his ear and his mind’s eye flashed faces of those living and dead, but all loved by Luke Skywalker. The leaves of the tree began flashing different colours, cycling through until they each settled on the familiar but unique colour.

---

**Taupe**


---

**Onyx Black**

“I’m not going to give up on Ben,” came Lando Calrissian. It had been nearly a month since Alyla’s death, and Luke had opened his home to Lando for whenever he wanted to come see her grave. They were sitting in the living room, talking over a couple cups of hot chocolate. “If anyone can understand his situation, it’s me. He did something terrible, and what he needs most right now is a friend. And before you say anything, I’m not doing this because I think it’s what Alyla would have wanted. It is for sure, but I’m doing it because it’s what *I* want to do. I know that kid, I love him, and I want to help him. Everyone can change, Luke… it’s a lesson you’ve taught us all.”
Aletha Kymeri smiled up at Luke, “I thought if I found Antar, I could move on… but I realize that I don't need a sign. I don't need to bury his body… I just need you.”

Biggs Darklighter stood before him proudly in a Rebellion pilot jumpsuit, “It will be like old times, Luke. They’ll never stop us.”

“I’m proud of both of you,” Diego Nalto told Luke on his wedding day. “Fliss holds a special place in my heart, and I’m so incredibly happy she found someone has good for her as you. You are a man I am honored to call my Commander and my friend… Even if you nearly destroyed my X-Wing during the war.”

“I promise you that I will take care of her, Sir,” Teng Malar vowed to Luke privately not long after he had begun to date Rey. “She is literally the most important thing in my life, and the respect I have for you is unfathomable. You’re my idol, Mister Erso, and if I can love and take care of Rey the way you’ve loved and taken care of Rey, Quom, Aletha, and myself over these past several years, I know I’ll be good man.”

“I’m scared of him,” Ben Solo confessed one night shortly after moving to Rornian. Felicity was away for treatment and Rey was asleep. Luke had found Ben in a turmoil of nightmares and Snoke’s control, “I don’t know how to be strong like you… like grandfather. More than anything I want to be a Jedi like my grandfather before me… but I’m scared that I’m too weak and now with Rey around… I’m scared you’ll give up on me.”

“You came back,” Leia Organa hugged her brother tightly as the Ewoks and Rebels celebrated around them. “I knew you would come back… You always do.”
Anakin Skywalker’s face looked so pale and fragile as blasts sounded in the distance, “Luke. You were right. You were right about me. Tell your sister... you were right.”

Tyla Kinall stared into the fire with shining eyes, “Do you really think I could ever be more than what they made me? Do you think I could really be… good?”

“I understand the risks of this position, Master Skywalker,” Meredyth Kalonia smiled across the desk, “but I promise you that no matter what insanity the Force decides to throw at us, I’ll stand firm. You have my loyalty and my trust, Luke, and that’s a promise for life.”

“Don’t be afraid, Luke,” Obik Kenu said as he helped Luke load his X-Wing for that fateful month-long meeting on Hosnian Prime. “Reine and I will protect your Rey, even to our last breath.”

“It’s one thing to fight for the sake of our children and our families,” Kes Dameron told Luke once as they had discussed the reason Shara had given her life. “But that can’t be the only reason. If we fight simply for the selfish desire to protect our own, and not be willing to fight for the freedom and safety of even the people we despise, nothing will ever change. The only way we’ll ever win this fight is to do it to make the world a better place… not just our individual worlds.”

Beru Lars crouched down next to her nephew as he sat in the garage, despairing over yet another setback by his uncle from leaving Tatooine, “Your uncle means well, Luke… but he still has much to learn. I know who you are, and I know what you’re meant to truly be. You are not your uncle, or your father, or anyone they tell you to be. You are Luke Skywalker… and that’s all you ever need to be.”
“So, this is how it begins,” Reine Agim sighed as she and Luke sat in his office after the exodus of Cade Ren and his lackeys. “It’s no surprise, not with the in-fighting we’ve had for years… but I’m scared, Luke. If this is how it begins… how will it end?”

Deep Violet

“I love her,” Gavyn Kene said. “I know I should never have fallen for her, and for years I fought it. But Zena… Zena was my destiny and I’m not ashamed of it. So, don’t let anyone make you ashamed of loving Felicity. The First Order may hate it, Snoke may hate it, Cade Ren and his goons may hate it, but screw anyone who stands in your way. Trust me, there is evil in this world… and the love you two share is not a part of it.”

Lilac

Rey Rhiaon Skywalker smiled up at him a small spinebarrel flower growing out of the walker, "Whether big or small, life finds a way on Jakku, Daddy. We'll find a way. I promise."

Mulberry

“Obi-Wan?” Padmé Amidala whispered her dying breath. “There’s good in him. I know… I know there’s… still…”

Bright Orange

Poe Dameron laid mangled in a hospital bed surrounded by his father, Luke, Diego Nalto, Wedge Antilles, Leia Organa, and Felicity Rhiaon, “I only did it because I wanted to be a hero and make the world better… Like all of you… and like my mom.”

Pomegranate

“Any resistance will be met with proper force.”

The Holo image of Shara Bey stared up at Captain Phasma with nothing but strength in her eyes, “And any force will be met with proper resistance.”

Teal

“There is evil in this world,” Alyla Kene told Luke her eyes shining, “and the only way we can defeat it is with love and forgiveness. It’s how you saved Vader and it’s how we’ll save Ben.”


“Rowr roar grw rwl!” Chewbacca roared out such poignant words Luke could never forget.

Han Solo considered his next words as he hugged Luke tightly, "You might not have family anymore, Kid, but I promise… You got me. Promise."

“That place... is strong with the Dark Side of the Force,” Yoda explained the cave too much like the one Luke found himself in now. “A domain of evil it is. In you must go.”

Zena Halcorr told Luke, “I will not hide the sins of my past from my daughter. That is the true task of a parent, to use our mistakes to stop our children from repeating them… and then catching them as they fall when they do.”

“I’ve never had a home,” Quom Tinadar could barely look Luke in the eye. “Even when I was among my own people I was odd. My family was kind enough, but I never belonged. For years I had nothing in my life, just wasting my days away until my final sunset... And then you came along, and everything changed. You’re my best friend, Luke. You gave my life meaning. And I swear to
you, I will always stand by your side.”

Crimson

Felicity Rhiaon’s forehead was bowed against his own, “Because I will never believe in destiny… but I’ll always believe in you. I know that we love each other, and that what we have is special. So, no matter what comes our way, we’ll always be at each other’s side, keeping each other from harm.”


“Always,” Felicity whispered. “I will always believe in you.”

And then suddenly all light in the cave was snuffed out.

There was nothing but darkness.

For minutes – though it could have been years for all he knew – Luke stood in the pitch black and silence. He felt an odd sort of calm. The breath flowed in and out of his lungs, feeling like the center of his life, his soul, his entire world.

In and out.

Neither Darkness nor Light simmered in the Force. There was simply nothing.

Then a voice.

“Luke?”

It made his breath stop. That voice. That sweet, snarky voice he had missed so much. With slow movements he turned, afraid and excited that what he suspected was true. He came to a stop, and let out a shaky breath.

There she stood, eyes joyous but uncertain. Tears pricked his own; she looked every bit as he remembered her.


For a moment, time stood still.

And then she was in his arms. They held each other tightly, desperately like a sand about to slip through their fingers. Tears fell freely as Felicity buried her face in the crook of his neck. Luke didn’t kiss her, instead burying his own face in her long brown hair.

It felt like home, every bit of her so familiar. The smell of her hair, the warmth of her skin, how his arms rested perfectly around her waist, how her head fit so flawlessly in the crook of his neck, the sound of her sobs, and the rebellious little laugh that broke through all the tears. It was all so real.

Which was why he knew it wasn’t.

This was not Felicity Rhiaon in his arms, rather an idealized image he had of her. For one thing, she
looked way too young. This Felicity looked like the thirty-one-year-old he had first met, but if Felicity were alive, she would be fifty-two. Only two years older than his fifty years of age.

God they were old.

No, Luke had seen it in the cave on Dagobah and the cave on Ahch-to. This was some kind of test. The cave on Dagobah tested the burdens Luke carried within him, and Ahch-to tested the truth of the conflict within – Felicity experiencing the good and evil of her soul while Luke’s own vision had been one about his love for Anakin and Padmé vs Owen and Beru.

So he knew that the Felicity in his arms had to be some sort of test. But until he figured out what sort of test, he would have to play along. He couldn’t let this vision know he was on to it, so he would have to pretend like this was indeed his beloved wife come back to life.

Luke wasn’t certain if this was the easiest thing he would ever do or the hardest.


“I’ve missed you too.” Slowly he pulled back from her embrace but settled his hands on her hips. He would have to treat her like she was a slightly more intimate Sienna Ternan. Maybe like a clone? “I don’t understand. How are you here?”


“Yeah, I figured as much,” he laughed. “I meant more specifically.”

“There’s a power within this cave, Luke, to bring back the dead. Not… forever but we have time. I know it’s ridiculous, but I stopped questioning your weird religion years ago.”

“No, you didn’t.”

“Ok, I got less loud about it.”

“I’ll give you that,” Luke laughed. “And it’s truly you?”

“It truly is.”

Yeah, he knew it wasn’t.

False Felicity smiled at him and then clasped his hand.

“Come on,” she started pulling him forward. “We have to go.”

Luke frowned but let his feet follow, “Where?”

“To Rey. She’s lost here, Luke. She needs her parents to come save her.”

“Rey’s here?” Luke let out a breath of relief.

Part of him wondered if it was part of the trick, but he could feel the play of both Dark and Light in the cave. Not everything was a trick. His interaction in the cave on Ahch-to hadn’t been malevolent. What evidence was there that this one would be?

“But where are we going?” Luke asked as False Felicity led him forward. “There’s no way out.”

False Felicity smiled, “Take another look.”
Luke blinked, and there was an exit, another stony passage leading further into the cave.

“Come on,” False Felicity urged. “Let’s find our daughter.”

Luke glanced back at the tree, uncertain of the path ahead. There could be danger. It could be a trick. He was alone and weaponless. He knew he shouldn’t follow this false phantom deeper into the cave’s heart of Darkness, even if the cave did also contain some light.

But he had to find Rey.

So, with great hesitation, but a smile on his face, Luke followed after the False Felicity into the cave.

The clearing with the tree stood in perfect silence. Not even the drip of water on rock or shifting of sands echoed in the cave. For a long time, there was nothing but stillness. There was nothing, but nothing.

And then the leaves glittered again, and whispers filled the clearing.

You see, the False Felicity had not lied. The cave did have special properties. It did have the power to bring back the dead for even a moment. It was a defense mechanism used to fight off the false phantoms the tree would tear from a victim’s mind and give to the creatures of the cave to take that form.

That was why the Empire had held the cave in such high esteem. It could use the cave to produce figures from the past that the Empire could use against prisoners. Let an enemy loose in the cave for a few days and let them grow mad with the visions of reality and imagination lost in the maze of a cave with nothing but dead ends. Then the Dead-Enders – those trained to navigate those dead ends and manipulate the cave with the Force into letting a person return to the outside world – would retrieve their victim and interrogate them.

By that time, a person would tell them anything they wanted, and admit to anything that would get them away from that horrifying place. No prison was half as cruel as getting lost in a cave of what could have been.

And if the insanity or Dead-Enders didn’t get to the victim, the cave creatures would.

So, to combat the Dark Side that formed the false phantom of Felicity Rhiaon, the Light Side did what it would always: it tore a person from the world beyond this one, bringing them back to life for just enough time to save the poor soul lost in that dark cave.

As the False Felicity Rhiaon led Luke Skywalker ever deeper into the cave, she had no idea that there were now two Rhiaons in that cave.

And the new one was coming for her.

“So, what’s this all about?” Doctor Kalonia asked Rose in her office. Statura was waiting on the other side of the door. “Why are you driving the Admiral and from the sounds of it, Commander Nalto, up the wall?”

“It’s a big secret,” Rose pleaded, “I need you to promise not to tell anyone.”

“I swear it upon the same oath I swear never to reveal a patient’s medical information. Now please,
Rose. What’s the big secret?”

Rose took a deep breath and made sure she was relaxed and in control of herself to gently break the news.

“Kira’s name isn’t Kira, it’s really Rey, and she’s actually a Jedi in hiding, and so is her dad, and I’m the only who knows, and her mom was killed by the First Order because Rey’s a Jedi, and Teng and Quom know, and you probably know her dad which is why I’m trusting you with the secret, but her dad has a sister or something in the Resistance so that’s why I didn’t want to declare it on record, and Nalto is so close to the Skywalker family that I didn’t want to tell him because he would make it into a big deal, but if it becomes a big deal then the First Order and Snoke goes after her, and I really really really really don’t want that to happen.”

Kalonia blinked, “I’m sorry, what was that?”

“I stole ten credits off Paige’s dresser, but I’m going to pay it back, I promise,” Rose repeated.

“No, the first part. You and your sister can handle that bit by yourself. Just repeat your whole thing but a lot slower this time.”

“Kira’s name isn’t Kira, it’s really Rey, and she’s actually a Jedi in hiding, and so is her dad, and I’m the only who knows, and her mom was killed by the First Order because Rey’s a Jedi, and Teng and Quom know, and you probably know her dad which is why I’m trusting you with the secret, but her dad has a sister or something in the Resistance so that’s why I didn’t want to declare it on record, and Nalto is so close to the Skywalker family that I didn’t want to tell him because he would make it into a big deal, but if it becomes a big deal then the First Order and Snoke goes after her, and I really really really really don’t want that to happen.”

Kalonia blinked, “I’m sorry, what was that?”

Rose frowned, “You need me to say it again?”

“No, I got it.” Kalonia’s eyes were staring at Rose but seeing something else far away from there. “Kira… is not Kira. Kira is… Rey?”

“Uh huh.”

“Rey…” Kalonia’s voice shook. “Rey who has a father for a Jedi, whose sister is in the Resistance, and they live on Jakku?”

“Yes.”

Tears gathered in Kalonia’s eyes as she realized the weight of what Rose had just told her. It felt like she had lead in her stomach. She wanted to throw up, burst into tears, and scream it to the world.

“By the Force… Rey Rhiaon Skywalker is alive.”

Rose’s jaw dropped, “What?”

“Rey,” Kalonia shook her head. “Of course. Of course. It all makes sense. Of course, Luke would go there. And the name Kira? How didn’t I catch that before?”


“That’s exactly what I’m saying.” Kalonia sighed, “I don’t believe this. I thought Luke was on Ahch-to.”

“Poe knows Skywalker’s daughter, and we had them have a casual conversation?”

“But he couldn’t stand just leaving her there, so he went to Jakku.”
“We had the General sign an autograph to her own niece?”

“And he taught her to use a pseudonym that was the name they were originally going to give her.”

“This is so messed up.”

“Yeah, it is,” Kalonia laughed, shifting her attention back to Rose. “I don’t believe this.”

“Me neither.” Rose frowned, “My best friend, my Kira… she’s famous. When she finds out… she won’t want to be friends with someone like me anymore.”

Kalonia touched her shoulder, “I remember that little girl, Rose, and I can tell you that sure, I don’t know what she’s like now, but she had so much love and joy in her heart that of course she’ll want to still be friends with you.”

“But, this doesn’t make sense,” Rose said. “How can she be Rey Skywalker?”

“Rhiaon Skywalker,” Kalonia corrected. “We don’t want to call down the ghost of Felicity Rhiaon to haunt us for dropping the Rhiaon part.”

“Rey Rhiaon Skywalker… but no. It can’t be. No one survived the Burning of Rornian.”

“Her mother did. Felicity took Rey to Jakku where they hid for months. Then the First Order captured Felicity on Jakku, and she told them Rey was dead. I don’t know how she tricked them… but I believe Felicity Rhiaon found a way.” Kalonia’s smile fell as she remembered how broken Luke had looked the night he left, “Rose, we can’t tell anyone about this.”

“Yeah, that’s why we’re talking about it now instead of with Nalto and Statura.”

“I’m serious, Rose. No one can know. Not even Aletha, not even General Organa. If everyone thinks that Luke is on Ahch-to, having him really be on Jakku will keep them safer until they have the strength to return… I wonder if Luke can find the strength to train her?”

“Rey said he is already.”

“Good,” Kalonia felt a breath of relief. “The sooner they train, the sooner they return.”

“You think he’s going to come back?” Rose brightened.


“Doctor Kalonia has vouched for Rose Tico,” Statura spoke with Diego as the horde of young adults exited his office, no doubt to try to bug the answer out of Rose. “But I still don’t like this whole thing.”

“Neither do I, but we must respect their privacy.” Diego admitted. “You’ll determine their punishments and distribute them accordingly?”

“Top of my to-do list. I’d like to keep this under wraps though.”

“I agree.”

“Now, if you’ll excuse me, I’m going to nip into the cafeteria for some quick lunch. I have got
meetings all day.”

“I do not envy you,” Diego chuckled.

He watched the group disperse, no real hard feelings left behind as they exited the office.

Except apparently for the woman leaning against his desk with crossed arms and the look on her face like the time he refused to obey her orders on a battlefield and she drugged him as a response.

Note to self, accept no food, drinks, or shots from Aletha until she was significantly less pissed off.

“Are you staying behind because you would like to have lunch with me?” Diego asked hopefully.

“How dare you treat Rose like that,” Aletha got straight to her scolding. “She is a sixteen-year-old orphan with few friends, little social skills, no grace under pressure, a heart too big for her chest, and apparently has to hold some grand secret that I doubt she has the knowhow to keep.”

“So, that’s a no to lunch?”

“Diego!”

“I treated her exactly how one treats a suspect in a conspiracy case.”

“Yelling at her? Throwing things? Looking like you were going to commit violence against her? If that’s the way leadership behaves in the Resistance, I’m gone. I had to deal with that sort of thing with Alecta; I will not take it from the man I love.”

“Querida-”

“Don’t do that,” Aletha snapped. “Don’t you try to turn this on me.”

“So this is my fault?” Diego shot. “I’m not the one with contraband. You may not have known our opinions on it in the Resistance, but you know it was forbidden in the Rebellion. You knew you were doing wrong, and if I pull each of those girls into a room for interrogation, will I find evidence of conspiracy?”

Aletha narrowed her eyes, “I’m not answering that question without a lawyer.”

Diego winced. Had things gotten that serious?

“What happened to your promise?” Aletha demanded. “You told me If there’s anything you need to withhold from me for the sake of someone else, and it does not affect us, then by all means. As long as you promise honesty and full disclosure should a secret be forced to light.”

He blinked, “Did you remember the exact wording?”

“I have the ability to recall conversations exactly. It doesn’t come up a lot, but I can do it. Now, come on, Diego, what happened to that promise?”

“I’ve kept it. I swear it, Querida.”

Aletha sighed, “Whatever. I’m only here because you still need to tell me Teng’s message. Why did he call?”

“Oh, right. Kira’s gone missing for four days and he’s hoping you can get a hold of her via your comm.”
Her eyes shot wide, “Kira’s missing?”

“Yes.”

“How long? What happened? Why do they need my comm?”

“I don’t know. I didn’t ask. I was more focused on-”

“The investigation?” Aletha snapped. “You knew she was missing, could be injured or dead, and you wasted what money Teng had with bureaucratic nonsense instead of letting me find out more about the situation, so I could be relieved that the girl I view as my daughter wasn’t dead?”

Diego hesitated.

She slapped him.

“I don’t like the way you treated Rose,” Aletha said coldly. “And if you treat any of my girls like that again, we’re done. Now if you’ll excuse me, I need to go make sure that Kira isn’t dead in a ditch somewhere, and you better pray to God that if she is, it isn’t because you withheld Teng’s message from me.”

She turned on her heel and stormed off.

Diego sighed, rubbing his still stinging face.

“Right… that’s why I’m pushing sixty and have been never married.”

He had to fix this and fast.

“Tell me all about her,” False Felicity requested as she walked along with Luke. He was still dodging her kisses, but Luke had fallen victim to the need for touch. It just felt so real, her arms wrapped around his torso.

“Rey?” Luke smiled, happy to put on the act. What father that had a good relationship with his daughter didn’t wish to brag about her? “She’s amazing. She built her own speeder, she’s so strong with the Force, and she’s an amazing pilot.”

“Oh great, three things she definitely didn’t get from me,” False Felicity laughed. “And no, I didn’t actually mean Rey.”

“Who did you mean?”

“Tell me about Aletha.”

Luke froze. Was this the test?

“Why do you want me to talk about Aletha?” he asked stiffly.

“I want to know about the woman who could capture the heart of Luke Skywalker after the epic and tragic romance of Felicity Rhiaon, his one true love.”

Luke genuinely couldn’t figure out if the phantom was nailing the character of Felicity Rhiaon, or massively overdoing. But he suspected it was the former.

“Do you like her better than me?”

Oh yeah, definitely nailing the character. Only Felicity could enjoy tormenting him like this.

“No, of course not,” Luke lied. He absolutely liked Aletha better than some vision from the Dark Side pretending to be his wife. “But she was a wonderful woman there for me when I needed her. I’m happy for the time we had, but I’m not upset that it’s over.”

False Felicity pulled him to a stop, “And what about us? Are you happy for the time we had, but not upset that it’s over?”

Her words hit him hard. Luke swallowed thickly, trying to fight back his tears. True he had done the whole remember their life together and move on thing, but as he held a vision of what he could have had in his arms, it really reminded him of how much he missed Felicity.

“Not a day goes by that I don’t think of the woman I was lucky enough to call my wife,” Luke confessed. “If I could have her back for even a moment.”

“I’m here, Luke,” False Felicity whispered. She ran a hand through his hair and smiled as she caressed his beard, “You know, I thought I told you no facial hair. I’m not kissing you with it.”

Luke almost gave a sigh of relief.

“Oh, screw it,” False Felicity declared. “Eleven years is too long.”

She pressed her lips to his quickly before he could stop her. But he melted into the kiss; something warmer and more real than that kiss with Sienna Ternan.

And yet it felt even more hollow.

“Yes,” the False Felicity imitated the Real Felicity’s signature one corner smirk. Luke thought that she didn’t quite pull it off. “The beard was a mistake.”

“Figure out a way to come back to life permanently and I’ll shave it off.”

“You have a deal, Good Sir.”

He should have just killed this phantom, test be damned. It was far more painful to endure this thing that was so close to Felicity, yet he knew it could not be.

Of course, the real question was could he kill something that looked so much like the woman he loved?


False Felicity frowned, “I’m sorry?”

“I haven’t seen any food around here and Rey only carries so much. What has she been eating the past few days?”

“What she carries with her. I did teach her to ration during the desert trek.”

“How much did you give her for each meal during the trek?”
“Oh, details aren’t important.”

Luke smiled to himself. Funny how “Felicity” couldn’t answer a question he himself didn’t know the answer to, “What about water? How many bottles did you carry?”

False Felicity scowled, “Why are you asking me these questions?”

Luke opened his mouth.

“Dad?” a scared voice came.

Luke heart stopped.

“Rey?” he called back. He took off down further along the passage, leaving False Felicity behind.

The creature smiled after the Jedi. The cave knew when to intervene, and it took care of her well. Of course, the creature suspected the Jedi knew the truth of her, but why not play this out as long as possible?

Slowly, she followed after the father desperate to find his child.

He found Rey in another clearing; she was sitting on a lonely rock, a beam of light shining on her like a spotlight from a small hole in the cave roof. There were more symbols carved into the walls, but a lot less than the clearing with the tree.

“Rey!” he exclaimed.

“Daddy!” she ran into his arms. Rey was dirty and scared; she cried in his embrace, “Daddy is it really you?”

“It is, Sweetheart.” Luke held her head to his chest, his tears falling onto her dusty hair. “Daddy’s got you. You’re safe now.”

“I’ve been so terrified. I was called here by the Force and then I couldn’t get out.”

“It’s alright,” he assured her. “The Force likes to test us sometime, but I’m here and we’re safe now.”

“I want to go home.”

“Of course. Come on,” he grasped her hand and started leading her back the way he came.

“You can’t go that way,” a voice suddenly said.

They looked back, and False Felicity was casually sitting on the rock.

“The corridor closed when I stepped through,” False Felicity said. She pointed to a new passage that wasn’t there a moment before, “We have to go through that one.”

Rey released Luke’s hand, “Mom?”

False Felicity smiled, “Hello, Sweetheart. I told you I’d come back.”

Rey ran into Felicity’s arms and wept. She made exclamations of love, belief, and joy. It hurt Luke to watch the reunion knowing Rey didn’t understand what was happening.

“I never thought I’d see you again,” Rey wept. “I’ve missed you so much. I’m never leaving you
“Alright, Rey,” Luke came up and patted her on the back. “I know how much you’ve missed her, but we really need to get moving. Felicity, would you mind checking to make sure the passage goes somewhere?”

“Sure,” False Felicity pulled away from Rey. She touched Rey’s cheek, gave one last longing look, and then went into the passage.

“Rey,” Luke whispered, pulling her in close. “Listen to me, that’s not your mother.”

“What?” Rey frowned.

“This is a test from the Force. That is just a vision; some sort of phantom pretending to be your mother.”

“Well, what is it testing?”

“I don’t know, but until I figure it out, I need you to play along.”

“Then why tell me? Why not let me continue thinking it’s her?”

Luke lifted her chin, trying to fight back his tears, “I just didn’t want your heart to get broken. You were so happy to think she was here. I don’t want you to get hurt.”

Rey smiled and hugged him, “Thank you, Dad.”

“Anytime.”


“The passage looks good,” False Felicity smiled. “We should get going.”

“Alright, we’re coming.”

“You go on ahead, Dad,” Rey said. “I’ll follow you with Mom. We have a lot to talk about.”

Luke frowned, “Are you sure?”

“Of course,” Rey winked as she hooked an arm around False Felicity’s waist.

He nodded as False Felicity hooked her own arm around Rey’s waist. Of course Rey would spend a lot of time talking with Felicity if it were really her mom. He had such a smart daughter.

And so Luke led the way into the passage, ready to work with his Rey to fight against the phantom if needed.

“Does he have any idea?” False Felicity asked through overly smiling teeth.

“Not a clue,” Rey laughed.

But as we know, Rey wasn’t actually in the cave. She was in the ship she found after the X’us’R’ia. This was another phantom, but this time, Luke had no clue.

So the Force sent another ghost to join Rhiaon, who was following not too far behind. The Real
Rhiaon was overjoyed to see the new companion.

But the duo wasn’t the only one stalking the group.

The vicious growl of a Vrogem echoed off the walls behind Luke.

Rey had found seventeen quick-meal packs in the ship. The generous soul she inherited from Luke Skywalker, reinforced by his raising of her, made her know she needed to share them with her family. After all, she didn’t need to scarf down the food like it was the first food luxury she ever had in her life. They were still picking through leftovers of Aletha’s care shipment.

She didn’t need to help herself to any. Nope. Not a single one. She had self-restraint and could wait.

Okay, maybe just one.

It was on the fourth day that she gave into temptation, rationalizing that you can’t split seventeen four ways. She was doing her family a service by helping herself to one.

First thing in the morning, Rey broke the seal on one of the quick-meals and ate, what was to her, some of the finest food she’d ever enjoyed. She had no idea what it was, but there was actual meat product and a sauce that was sweet and tangy at the same time and something she thought might be nuts, which popped between her teeth with a satisfying snap. There was also a small disk, encased in some sort of batter, and when she bit into that it mixed with an almost spicy sugar that was so intense she nearly gagged on its sweetness.

Is this what her friends ate like every day? She couldn’t imagine handling such flavor at each meal every single day.

She was licking the last bits of deliciousness from the plastic container and vaguely wondering if she could reuse the dish somehow, when a faint beeping came from her satchel.

Rey frowned and set the dish aside. She dug through her bag and pulled out her Kira’s Council comm. It was odd. Aletha usually didn’t call at this time of day. It would be a little after one in the afternoon on D’Qar.

“Hello?” Rey answered.

“Rey?” Aletha exclaimed. “Oh, thank the Force! Are you alright?”

“Uh, yeah. Just scavenging.”

Rey swore she heard Aletha’s eyes narrow.

“Just scavenging? …For four days without going home?”

“How do you know about that?”

“Because Luke is freaking out.” Aletha had called the Jakku comm station from her personal comm to get more details from Teng. “You’ve been gone four days and your comm is dead. Teng called me to see if I could contact you for him.”

“Oh, I’m fine. Tell him not to worry.”
“You tell him yourself!”

“Ok, I will when I get back.”

“And you’re going right now!” Aletha demanded. “Stop whatever it is you’re doing and go home. The boys have been sick with worry about you.”

“Aletha, I can’t go.” Rey explained, “You’re not going to believe this, but I found an intact ship, and I think I can make it operational again!”

“Oh well, that entirely changes everything… Oh, no wait, no it doesn’t. You get your little butt home right now, Young Lady.”

“But Aletha, don’t you know how big a haul this will get me? I could get Plutt to pay… maybe five thousand portions. Or even credits!”

“I don’t care. My sympathy went out the window when you decided to put the boys through emotional turmoil! Now you go home to your loving father, weird but adoring Uncle Quom, and boyfriend who would go to the ends of the galaxy for you because even though you live an awful life on Jakku, AT LEAST YOU CAN SAY YOU HAVING A LOVING, ACCEPTING FAMILY AND A BOYFRIEND WHO APPRECIATES YOU AND SIDES WITH YOU UNCONDITIONALLY, AND I DON’T GIVE A DAMN WHAT HIS JOB IS, I’M STILL HIS FRICKING GIRLFRIEND AND WHO THE HELL IS HE TO TREAT A TEENAGER LIKE THAT?”

Rey blinked, “…Did you get in a fight with Diego?”

“Little bit,” Aletha answered quickly. “There was a thing involving my family, and Rose also got interrogated, and Diego was involved, and he didn’t handle things well.”

“Aletha, I love you, but are you sure he was the only one who overreacted?”

“Why am I taking advice from a sixteen-year-old who thought going off the grid for four days was no big deal?”

“Because I have just enough Luke Erso in me to prevent me from going off the edge of insanity?”

“That would do it.” Aletha sighed, “Look, I get it. That is an amazing find, and I hope you do make the ship functional… but you have to go home. Your father is devastated, and Teng’s been sitting up all night waiting for you. The boy has barely slept.”

Rey smiled, “Really?”

“Really really. Come on, Rey… you have to go home.”

“Alright, I’ll finish up the last of my work and head home tonight.”

“Rey-”

“I’m almost done.”

“Fine, but if you aren’t back in Niima by noon tomorrow, I’m coming down there to get you.”

“I believe it,” Rey laughed.

“Good luck with the ship, Rey,” Aletha said. “Keep me updated.”
“And you keep me updated on Diego. If you two aren’t back together by noon tomorrow, I’m coming down there to kick his ass.”

“Rey,” Aletha warned.

“Sorry,” Rey corrected, “I’m coming down there to kick his butt.”

“Better.”

“So, Teng, Quom, and Dad are in Niima waiting?”

“Well, Teng is. I’m not actually sure where Quom and your father are.”

“Will this cave ever end?” False Felicity groaned. “Honestly, Luke, this is worse than our vacation to Dagobah.”

“Aren’t you supposed to be guiding us?” Luke shot back. “Other than to the edge of insanity?”

“Excuse me, you married me knowing very well what I was like,” False Felicity said. “Admit it, you married me because deep down you really do like my snark and insanity.”

“Nah, it’s mostly because you’re really hot.”

“Ew, Dad,” False Rey pulled a face.


“This is worse than him telling me my conception story,” False Rey shuddered.


“Twice,” False Rey added.

Luke shook his head as they entered into yet another clearing. There were no symbols on the walls in this one… but there were bloodstains.

“Okay, we’ve found another one,” Luke cautiously turned back to the women. Once again the way they had come had disappeared. “Now what?”

“Don’t look at me,” False Rey said. “You’re the Jedi.”

Luke prompted, “Felicity?”

False Felicity was looking around, a smile playing on her face.

Then came a growl.


“It’s okay,” False Felicity said.

Then came another growl. And another. And another.

“Daddy?” False Rey whimpered.

Shuffling and snarling and pounding of rock against rock filled the air along with the whispers of words Luke didn’t understand but sensed the darkness of. He really started to regret giving Quom his lightsaber.

“Felicity!” Luke exclaimed as yellow eyes began appearing in the quickly darkening cave.

“It’s okay, Sweetheart,” False Felicity grinned. Something flicked in her eyes that drew his mind back to the cave of Dagobah. “Everything’s fine.”


“I don’t sense anything,” False Rey said.

“You don’t need to sense it; can’t you see what’s happening?” Luke exclaimed.

“Oh, Skywalker, you always did let your imagination get the best of you,” False Felicity laughed.

False Rey laughed too, “It’s given me such headaches over the years.”

Luke’s blood ran cold.

“What did you just call me?” he whispered, his grip on Rey’s arm going slack.

False Felicity frowned, “What?”

Slowly Luke’s head turned back to Rey. He studied her face carefully.

“What is it, Dad?” False Rey asked.

Oh, he prayed he wasn’t wrong about this.

In one swift motion, he twisted Rey’s wrist forcing her scream in pain. Then he slammed a knee into her torso, rammed an elbow into her neck, and threw Rey violently to the ground.

The False Rey let out a hiss too polytonal to be human.

“Thank the Force I was right,” Luke said quickly. “You’re not my daughter.”

The False Rey groaned and sat up.

“How did you know?” her voice was too casual for the situation.

“She called me Skywalker and you didn’t react,” Luke nodded back to the False Felicity, but didn’t look at her.

“So?”

“Rey doesn’t know that part yet.”

The False Rey frowned, and her eyes rolled up like she was going through her mental catalogue of memories to check his claim, “Damn it. And I was doing so good.”

“Oh, it’s okay, Sweetheart,” False Felicity cooed. “We all screw it up sometimes. You know I messed up things the last time. But why don’t we just cut to the good part now?”

“Agreed.”
They attacked at the same time. False Felicity locked an arm around his throat as False Rey hooked leg around his and yanked forward to send him crashing down into False Felicity’s full control.

Luke stumbled, but caught himself. Instantly he reached out and grasped False Felicity’s arm, holding her in place. It allowed him to keep her locked to him as he rammed backwards, slamming her against the rock cave wall with a sickening *thwack*.

False Felicity cried out in pain and clawed his eyes. Luke yelled, his eyes slamming shut instinctively to protect himself from the attack. Using the grip he had on her, he pried her arm from around his throat, and used the leverage of her weight to flip her over his body and slam her to ground.

False Rey went for his feet, but Luke kicked her in the face and held out his hand, summoning his lightsaber.

It arrived a lot quicker than he expected.

Almost robotically, Luke booted False Rey’s discarded staff to the side, ignited his saber, brought it up, and swung down with all of his might.

It stopped barely an inch from False Rey’s face.

Luke stood there, gripping his lightsaber, frozen in place. He couldn’t do it. He couldn’t bring his saber down on his daughter. True it was not his real daughter, but there was her face staring up at him in the same fear she had stared at Jarex Zolhar.

And Felicity. Felicity curled in pain at his feet, looking as powerless and beaten as the day Ben Solo shot her in the head.

Luke extinguished his saber and stared at the girls, False Rey taking refuge in False Felicity’s arms like Real Rey had done in Real Felicity’s arms so many times when she was young.

He couldn’t do it. He couldn’t kill them, even if they were false images.

What kind of person could attack someone they loved?

That was the moment Quom Tinadar sunk his fangs into Luke’s neck.

Luke screamed in pain louder than he had ever before, save for the time he learned Vader was his father. His vision was overwhelmed by the black unending nothingness of Quom’s eyes that had once been joyful grey irises who loved Luke so much.

“Quom,” Luke gasped as his friend bit down on his neck. “Quom, please.”

But this wasn’t Quom. His cloak and scarf had been shed, he stood on all fours, his eyes were black, his ears twitched, his tail flicked, and he growled and snarled as the Dark Side flowed freely through him.

“Please, Quom,” Luke gasped, struggling to reach out into the Force. He remembered it working before; maybe the Light Side could calm Quom again? “Look at me. You know me. I’m not going to hurt you.”

But Quom did not release him, indeed his grip got tighter. His fangs had pierced the skin of Luke’s neck, but thankfully they had not punctured through to his windpipe. He wasn’t completely screwed yet.
“Please Quom. It’s me. It’s Luke.”

Behind the Vrogem, Luke could see more figures gathering by the False Felicity and False Rey. There had to have been eleven of them including the False loved ones. They were long creatures with slits for yellow eyes, completely hairless, their pure white skin had the texture of a snake, and now that the cave was starting to get lighter, Luke noticed old shedding skins discarded on the floor. But the worst part were the two long and sharp top teeth which was covered in bloodstains that could never be cleaned away.

Well, this was new.


He tried to do as he did before and push happy memories into Quom’s mind, but the Vrogem was closed off. All Luke could turn to were final pleas, hoping there was some part of the true Quom that could reach him.

“Please, Quom,” Luke begged. “You know me.”

For just a second, Quom’s eyes flicked grey.

And then False Rey’s staff smashed Quom in the head, knocking him away from Luke.

It wasn’t wielded by False Rey.

Luke only had a split second to see that, but not much else besides. He couldn’t see who his hero was exactly; just enough to tell it wasn’t Rey’s silhouette. The cave creatures attacked the savior before Luke could see more, but for a split moment he thought he saw brown hair.

Then he gasped in pain as the reality of his injuries set in. Quom’s fangs were out of his neck, so his hand went to the wound to put pressure on the wound and stay the bleeding. But his hand was ripped away by False Felicity. She had False Rey’s gauze, which she whipped around Luke’s neck and pulled back hard, strangling him.

Luke fought and squirmed, but his face slowly turned blue as he struggled for breath. Going limp, Luke fell on his front and as his head was forced back by the force of the gauze, he stared up at the False Felicity.

It seemed the last thing he would ever see was the angry face of his wife strangling him to death.

“Hey!” a familiar voice shouted. “Doppelgänger!”

The False Felicity turned in surprise. Standing before her was a very familiar woman. She was pale-skinned, had brown hair pulled up into an elaborate bun, was short, but taller than Leia, and had a fearsome but joyful spark in her dark eyes.

Before the False Felicity could react, the woman punched her face, knocking her off Luke.

“Get away from my son,” Padmé Amidala warned her pretender daughter-in-law.

Luke frowned in confusion, gasping desperately her air, “Mother?”


She bent down to her knees, but Luke slid back from her.
“Don’t pretend to be her too,” Luke glowered at the woman. “Just face me as your true self. Enough of this charade.”

And then Padmé reached out and stroked Luke’s cheek with the back of her hand.

A flash of a memory that he shouldn’t have took over his brain.

---

_Darkness. All he knew was Darkness. Darkness and the other half of him that was always there._

_Then a woman cried out and the Darkness turned to light._

_Too bright. The light was too bright._

_Something held him – he was a him, a concept he never had until now. The deep voice that spoke to him sometimes in the Darkness was a him. The softer voice that had always been there was a her._

_He was passed to another. A man with ginger hair as a strange robotic voice uttered something._

_Where was his other half? Why was she gone?_

_“Luke,” whimpered the soft voice that had always been there. A woman laid on a table wearing a white gown._

_The ginger man held him out to the woman, and she touched his cheek over and over with the back of her hand._

_“Oh, Luke,” cooed the soft voice._

---

Luke pulled back from the memory in shock. The memory of the only time his mother had ever touched him.

Just as she touched him now.

Confused, Luke reached out into the Force to examine her presence. It was a strong mulberry shade, the exact shade his father had described to him so many times.

And that mulberry Signature thrummed with life.


“Yes,” Padmé softly smiled at her adult son. “But you won’t be for very long. Hold still. Let me deal with that.”

Padmé grabbed the gauze and gently rewrapped it around his neck to serve as a bandage. She secured it with a bobby pin from her up do. Then in the final act of motherhood, she licked the pad of her finger and wiped some dirt from his cheek.

“Sorry, that was bothering me,” Padmé explained clasping her hands tightly with her son.

He smiled. Luke could feel the Light Side filling her up, seeming to radiant out of that joyful, loving
smile he adored so much. She was a beautiful as Father had described.

The False Felicity suddenly sprang up to attack, but Padmé pulled a small blaster from her belt and without looking, shot in False Felicity in the leg. The False Felicity collapsed to the ground in pain, and Padmé put her blaster back on her belt.

“I’m busy talking to my son.”

As beautiful… and as fearless.

Luke laughed, “You know, the real Felicity is a big fan.”

“So I’ve heard,” Padmé glanced over at the figure fighting off the creatures.

“If you two are done with the mother-son bonding, I could use some help,” the figure called. A creature went flying backwards as False Rey’s staff struck them expertly.


Luke shook his head, “I’m fine, Mother. I just can’t believe it’s really you. Not a vision. You’re… alive. I’m very confused. Shouldn’t Father be with us right now having a party over this?”

“Oh, Ani can’t enter the cave,” Padmé explained. “Otherwise, without a doubt.”

“Guys!” the other figure called again.

“Coming, Rhiaon!” Padmé yelled.

Luke frowned, “Rhiaon? …Wait, is that-”

A few more creatures were batted aside, and Luke got a clear image of the other person the Force had sent to protect him.

The sight made his heart stop.

That soft brown hair. That athletic form. Those sharp angular lines of the face. That jaw cut the same way as Rey’s. Dinah Andromias’ naturally large lips. Alaric Rhiaon’s cheeks and chin. A mischievous sparkle in those gleaming eyes. And of course that one corner smirk Luke would never forget.

“What is going on?” Luke whispered. He couldn’t believe he was really seeing who was standing in front of him.

“Stay behind us,” the ghost of Rhiaon ordered, pulling him to his feet and shoving Luke back behind Padmé who had also stood up. “Padmé and I will take them. You focus on your Vrogem friend.”

“It’s okay, Luke,” Padmé gently smiled. “There will be a time for explanations. Right now, we need some aggressive negotiations.”


“Negotiations with a lightsaber.”

“Oh,” Luke nodded and focused his position back on Quom alone. Somehow, he would get his friend out of here. “I can do that.”
Padmé grinned, “That’s my boy.”

Luke beamed, happy to make his mother smile and proud.

The ghosts in front of him prepared themselves for battle, weapons ready and minds trying to focus on the enemy alone. Still, the ghost of Rhiaon couldn’t help but spare a glance backward.

“By the way,” the ghost said softly, “it’s good to see you, Luke.”

“It’s wonderful to see you too.” Luke shook his head, “I just never thought I’d get to meet you, Brendan.”

Love is admitting to the other person when you’re wrong. True love is accepting you both were.

- Yavinese Proverb

Aletha was sitting on her bed, reading over a new medical text when the hesitant knock came on her door. She waited a moment, making a note in the margin of a page, then set down her pen and sighed.

“Who is it?” she called, though she was fairly certain she knew the answer.

“It’s me,” Diego responded, confirming her suspicion. “Can we talk, Querida?”

She put her book on the bedside table and rubbed the bridge of her nose. She was very tempted to say no.

“You know the code,” Aletha conceded.

The door slid open and a very hesitant Diego Nalto entered the room.

“Hey,” he simply said.

“Hey,” she gave a small smile. She patted the mattress next to her.

“Thank you,” Diego crossed the room and sat next to her. He was careful not to push her boundaries with any sort of touching. “So…”

“So…” Aletha looked down, smoothing out her skirt.

Diego sighed, “Today did not go well for us.”

“Well, every couple fights. It was about time we had a big one.”

“You understand why I did what I did?”

“Diego, I’m a grown woman who has fought in two wars. Of course, I understand why you got concerned about security. And before you beat yourself up, yes, I know you don’t think I’m actually a traitor. What I don’t appreciate is you assuming that I have something to do with the family who has so cruelly set me aside.”
“I don’t think you do,” Diego whispered. “But Aletha… the question had to be asked. On the other hand, the way I treated Rose—”

“I know,” she placed her hand on his thigh. “We didn’t handle today well. I can’t get mad at you for doing your job—”

“And I can’t get mad at you for trying to protect a child so dear to you. I knew about Kira and still… What I should have done was excused myself from the room and allowed Statura to conduct the investigation. I just was afraid something was going to happen. I wanted to protect you.”

“I’m thankful for that, but as much as I hate to admit it, Holdo has a point about romance in the workplace. Things like this get complicated.”

“Well, we’ll do better next time something like this happens. Promise.” Diego grinned, “By the way, don’t tell Holdo we think she’s right.”

“Or Kaydel,” Aletha laughed. “I think she might punch a hole in the wall.”

“Don’t you mean Dameron?”

“I meant what I said. Don’t underestimate an Anthea woman.”

“Never,” Diego stroked Aletha’s cheek. “So, how is Kira? Did you get in touch?”

“Kira’s fine,” Aletha reported. “She’s just being a stupid teenager. I made it very clear to her that she needs to go home before I go down to Jakku and bring her back myself.”

“If you think I’m going to let you go back to Jakku and your ex-boyfriend without me, you’ve got another thing coming. I may not be very experienced in relationships, but I will fight for my woman.”

“Your woman? So now I’m your property?” Aletha teased.

“Absolutely,” he chuckled darkly, pulling her forward for a heady kiss. “These lips belong to me to do to which as I please.”

“And so do these belong to me,” Aletha ran a thumb over his bottom lip. “You know, since we both agree to be at fault for our fight, it seems that we both need to find a way to make it up to the other.”

“As it so happens, I know the perfect way to use our lips to do that very thing.”

Aletha laughed, “So, we’re all good then?”

“Of course we are, Querida. Nothing could change my mind about you. I love you.”

“I love you too, Darling.”

“Now,” Diego darkly chuckled again, gently pushing her down on the bed. “Let’s get to that atonement.”

“Diego… it’s two in the afternoon. I was thinking more like tonight.”

“Well, you have anything better to do right now?”

She shook her head.
Then do me.”

Aletha laughed joyously as she pulled his shirt over his head and threw it to the floor.

“Luke, on your right!”

“Nice one, Brendan!”

“Oh, you’ve gotta teach me that.”

“Mother, please stop calling me, Ani.”

“Sorry, you look so much like him.”

“Two on your left!”

“Let’s take these three together!”

“Yeah! That’s my mother!”

“What do they teach you in the Stormtrooper corps?”

“That looked like it hurt.”

“He got me in the arm!”

“That’s for looking like my sister!”

“I’m running out of blaster bolts!”

“You know your kid has a good idea with this whole staff fighting thing.”

“What you think you got it from your father?”

“Nice one, Luke!”

“I need to get myself a lightsaber.”

“Aren’t you dead yet?”

“Behind you, Luke!”

“To the left!”

“To the right!”

“Yeah, kick his ass! That’s my little bro-in-law!”

“Guys, Quom’s not dead, right?”

They were down to five creatures and one Quom. Padmé, Luke, and Brendan stood in a tight, defensive triangle, their backs literally touching each other’s. Brendan had the staff, Padmé a blaster, and Luke his lightsaber. The creatures were growling and pacing around the trio, regrouping after so many of their brethren lie slaughtered on the floor. Unfortunately, among those surviving five, the
False Felicity and False Rey were still standing.

“We need a better plan than just cutting these things down,” Padmé said.

“Agreed,” Luke said. “Cut one down, and three more appear. You know, I dealt with a creature like this once, but it involved heads rather than full creatures. Han is still making me buy him drinks for helping out with that one.”

“Han Solo is a smart man,” Brendan’s eyes didn’t move from the false image of his sister. “I’d love to give that ship of his a test run. May look like garbage but has it where it counts.”

“Well, that explains why Felicity feels such kinship to him,” Luke shrugged. He had always been suspicious of the similarities between Han and Brendan, but it was weird to see them laid out so bluntly. “So how are we going to fix this? Something tells me fire isn’t going to help me this time.”

Brendan and Padmé exchanged a look.

Luke narrowed his eyes, “You two know how to beat them.”

Padmé sighed, “You have to take out the leaders. Felicity and Rey. Without them to call for backup, we’ll steam the bleed of these creatures and then you can help your friend, who honestly, as your mother, I’m not sure if I like you spending time with him, Luke.”

“He’s not my first choice either, but he is my friend,” Luke grinned. “Alright. Brendan, you take care of Felicity, and Mother, do you think you can handle Rey? I’ll deal with Quom.”

“We can’t do that,” Brendan said.

“Why not?”

“You have to be the one who takes down Fliss and Rey.”

Luke swallowed, “I… I don’t know if I can.”

Padmé touched his arm, “I know it’s hard, but it’s the only way.”

“But I can’t do it,” Luke said. “False images or not, I can’t kill my wife and daughter any more than I could kill my father.”

Padmé said nothing but just gave him a gentle smile.

And then Luke understood.

“That’s the test,” he whispered. “The one I’ve always failed. Am I able to kill, or even just let go of someone I love, in exchange for the greater good?”

“Offering yourself up is something you’ve never faltered at,” Padmé said. “But sometimes giving up yourself isn’t an option. Sometimes you have to cut loose someone you love for the sake of something greater. I love your father, but after Mustafar, if I had survived there would have been no way I would have gone back to him. Not when I had to protect you and Leia.”

“And my father,” Brendan added, “after I found out about the Death Star, I knew I couldn’t continue on with that life. If I had lived and they asked me to do Operation Citadel, wouldn’t have even hesitated… like Fliss didn’t.”

“But she did hesitate,” Luke sighed. “She offered your father a chance of redemption and escape
with her… and many people died because of that. Alderaan died because of that.”

“It’s a heavy burden your wife carries,” Padmé said. “Much like the burden I carry of the deaths of the Clone Wars, the Naboo Occupation, and even the Galactic Civil War.”

“Those weren’t your fault.”

“But I played my part in them. I watched liberty die, and though I know Palpatine would have done it with or without me, I am responsible in a way. I’ve moved past it, Luke… now it’s time for you to move past all of this.”

“Besides,” Brendan grinned. “We all know Rey and Fliss would absolutely kick your ass if you laid a hand on them in real life.”

A smile twinged the corner of Luke’s mouth, “Yeah, they would.”

Luke took a deep breath and turned his gaze to the False Felicity. It wasn’t her. He couldn’t kill her because she was already dead. But that Vrogem stalking him in the corner? That was his friend. The one he could save.

He _would_ save Quom Tinadar.


And the False Felicity pounced.

Luke had to give the creature credit; she dodged, dueled, and attacked quite well for a being weaponless against a lightsaber.

“It’s not her, it’s not her,” Luke repeated under his breath as the False Felicity got his elbow to her face. “That’s not Felicity.”

“I might as well be,” False Felicity slammed a knee into his stomach. “I’ve seen all of your memories of her. I know everything. How you met at the ceremony. How you kissed on the roof. How your friends walked in on the two of you having sex the morning after your first anniversary. Remember the looks on their faces as they caught her riding you?”

Both Padmé and Brendan shuddered at the image.

“How you threw her into a bedside table the night your daughter was conceived,” False Felicity continued. “How you promised her in the woods to come back and never did? Oh and the incident you don’t speak of. I remember when R2-D2 commed you and told you there was an emergency back home? How he had stopped her from taking your precious three-month-old daughter and dr-”

He grasped False Felicity by the shoulders and slammed her literally headfirst into the rock of the cave. False Felicity cried out and slumped to the ground, her bloody forehead painting a trail down the cavern wall.

“Luke and Felicity’s Greatest Hits,” Luke said as the creature moaned at his feet. “That’s exactly what I needed to hear so I could remember that you absolutely are not her. So, thank you.”

False Felicity rolled over and glared up at him.

“You’re welcome,” she said bitterly.

Luke smiled, “No… you’re not her at all.”
He swung down his lightsaber, and False Felicity was no longer a problem.

Quom Tinadar however, was.

A growl filled the cave at the same time as False Rey’s scream. She was busy fighting Padmé, but Brendan was finishing off the last of the other creatures. There was no one to stop Quom from attacking Luke.


Like False Felicity, Quom slammed into the rock head first and slumped to the floor in a pathetic mess. But this time it was done with less force and more actual Force.

Quom was out in an instant. He didn’t move an inch.

Luke’s breath was heavy and even, “Is he dead?”

“Not yet,” a voice false but familiar added.

He turned and cried out as a set of nails too sharp to match the vision of the rough, worn scavenger hands of his daughter tore across his face. Luke pushed her away, perhaps too gently. Defeating the image of his known dead wife was one thing, but his living daughter he didn’t know if she was safe… it was hard. Especially knowing that she had been harmed so much as a child.

“I don’t want to fight you,” Luke said, holding out a hand between the two of them. He used a smidge of the Force to keep her away from him, but he wanted to let her make the decision to not attack. “Please, let us resolve this peacefully.”

“Peacefully?” False Rey snarled. “You killed my mother!”

Luke glanced at the dead False Felicity, “I’m sorry. I didn’t know she wasn’t just pretending to be your mother. But I was trying to protect myself.”

“And she was just protecting me! That’s what a mother does – what a parent does – protect their child.”

“I couldn’t agree more,” Padmé’s voice came seconds before she tackled the false image of her granddaughter to the ground.

Luke stared dumbly at the scene of his mother and daughter grappling on the cave floor.

“This is a really weird day,” he muttered.

And then False Rey tore her claws deep across the neck of Padmé Amidala.


Padmé gasped, clutching her throat, her hands staining with deep crimson blood. False Rey grinned, she was straddled across Padmé, watching down on the scene with glee.
“He gets to watch his mother die,” False Rey gloated. “Just like I had to.”

“No,” Padmé coughed, blood burbling in her throat. She convulsed, holding her throat tightly, then turned her head and threw up a mouthful of blood on the cold, stone floor.

Luke couldn’t watch.

False Rey laughed coldly, a type of laugh Luke knew his true daughter could never conjure, “That’s right. Now beg for your husband… Just like you did the last time you died.”

Padmé vomited more blood, coughing grotesquely.

“You see,” her voice was strained, “that’s the thing…”

She took a deep breath and cleared her throat. Padmé opened her mouth wide to take in as much air as possible. Her mouth was no longer filled with blood; the only drops left were the stains on her lips.

Padmé moved her hand from her throat and watched the False Rey’s dumbfounded expression as she shown her perfectly intact skin and perfectly clean hand that had been holding her bleeding throat.

“You can’t kill someone who’s already dead,” Padmé said.

She kicked False Rey right in the face, sending her flying back. Luke instantly rushed to his mother’s side.

“And for the record,” Padmé said as Luke helped her unsteadily get to her feet, “Palpatine killed me. Not some Force Choke, or ridiculous loss of will to live.”


“Luke, I had just given birth to two children, my husband who I still believed in had turned to the Dark Side, and there was a dictatorship to take down. I had plenty to live for.” She patted his hand in a gesture that could only be described as motherly, “We’ll talk about it later. Promise. Now finish her off.”

He stepped forward, his lightsaber at the ready. False Rey slowly got to her face; her face dark and challenging.

“You’re not going to kill me,” False Rey chuckled.

“Yes, I am,” Luke declared. “Maybe if you were my real daughter I wouldn’t-”

“If that’s what helps you sleep at night.”

Luke narrowed his eyes, “I would never lay a had on my daughter, and she would never lay a hand on me.”

False Rey outright laughed, “You both will.”

He frowned, “What are you talking about?”

With another dark laugh, False Rey reached out and grasped the side of his head. Something bore into his temple, and Luke groaned trying to resist.

“Don’t fight it,” she said coldly. “You can’t avoid this destiny.”
And then his mind filled with a vision of something awful. Something not of the past… but something yet to come.

They stood in the darkness of night on a planet of rock and rain. Rey was older, but not by much. Her clothing was different, and her hair no longer in its signature three buns. Though Luke had no context for the scene, the hatred and fear between father and daughter was clear.

“Answer me!” Rey screamed at him.

“No!” Luke turned his back to her. “How dare… I can’t even look at you right now!”

“Don’t you walk away from me!” she yelled as he stormed off.

“Leave me be!” Luke didn’t turn to look at her.

“No!” she grabbed at his arm, only for him to roughly throw her hand off.

“Rey, I need space before I do something I regret.”

But she couldn’t let go. She was so angry; so much had built up inside of her throughout the years, and despite all of her utterances of forgiveness, the resentment had swelled. Now the dam was about to burst.

“Stop!” she screamed. “STOP!”

And then the crack across his head that sent him to the ground. His own daughter had been filled with such Darkness that she committed an act of violence against him.

Pain riddled Luke’s body as he hit the drenched rocky terrain face fist. But as he rolled over to face the furious expression of his powerful and dangerous daughter, holding her staff up ready to fight, that pain wasn’t just physical.

“Is he right?” Rey demanded. “Is what he said true?”

“And what did he say?” Luke snapped.

A buzzing filled the air, the vision not allowing the present Luke to hear what Rey would say. Whatever it was, it infuriated future Luke. His face shook, and he shot to his feet in an instant.

Rey pulled back for a swing with her staff. Luke used the Force to rip a nearby lightning rod from its contraption and summon it to his hand. He brought it up to protect himself, locking with Rey’s staff at the last moment.

In the distance, he heard a baby’s cry.

Luke’s eyes met Rey’s, and for a moment they held there staring at each other. Darkness and hatred, there was no love between the father and daughter in that moment as the thunder rumbled and the lightning cracked.

She attacked first, swinging over and over again, Luke successfully dodging the blows. The force of one of the blows not meeting its target made her stumble forward slightly.

Then Luke did the thing he swore he’d never do.
He hit his own daughter.

It wasn’t hard, more a move of self-defence, and he didn’t press his attack, looking a little startled at it as he gripped his weapon with both hands... but he had hit his precious daughter. The one he swore to protect, the one he loved more dearly than any other before or after, and the one who he knew had been abused once as a child.

He hurt his child.

As the vision melt away, the present-day Luke looked up at the false image of his daughter in fear.

“It’s not a matter of if you’ll hurt your daughter,” False Rey grinned at his horrified expression. “It’s a matter of when.”

And then Brendan Rhiaon smashed his niece in the head with a staff.

“Clearly you’ve never hung out with this family,” Brendan leaned on the staff casually. “Sooner or later we all try to murder each other.”

The False Rey growled and sprung to her feet to attack Brendan. Luke’s lightsaber stopped that from ever happening.

“If that’s the future,” Luke whispered, “…then so be it. I will make the sacrifices needed to bring Light to the world.”

And he felt his mother’s comforting hand on his shoulder, “You did good, Luke. You made the right choice.”

For a long time, not a word was said. The only sound that filled the air was the slow drip of water droplets somewhere deep in the cave. No new creature appeared, and the trio stared down at the false image of Rey Rhiaon Skywalker cut into bloody pieces on the stone floor.

“Well, that’s going to give me nightmares,” Luke said dryly, unable to take his eyes away as he extinguished his saber and clipped it back on his belt.

“Just promise me you won’t kill any Sandpeople because of them,” Padmé added. “Or at least don’t go on and on about it to me.”

“Seriously, I have to ask, why was it you gave into Father’s advances?”

“It was more of situation where although your father was not skilled with flirting, I still genuinely had feelings for him, then thought we were going to die so I confessed them, and really couldn’t take them back when it became apparent we weren’t going to die.”


Brendan rolled his eyes and tossed the False Rey’s staff to the side, “Whatever.”

Luke frowned, “Ok… You know, it really is amazing to actually meet you. Felicity talks about you so much, I’ve always pictured us somehow getting together. I thought we would both be so happy to do so, and… here I am. Absolutely filled with joy at getting to meet the man that Felicity loved so dearly. I was right about this.”
“You were what?” Brendan snapped. “You think I’m happy to see you?”


“You’re a Rebel,” Brendan spat at Luke’s feet. “You slaughtered millions in a terrorist attack, brought about the murder of our beloved Emperor, and worst of all, killed my father. And you have the gall to expect me to be happy about the fact Felicity lowered herself to be your bedmate? You have disgraced her character and disgusted me with my own sister. I should do the world a favor and kill you right here, right now, with my own two hands.”


After all the stories Felicity had shared about Brendan, he had never expected this loyalist who burned with such utter hatred. If forced to it, Luke would fight Brendan, and judging by the action he had witnessed before, Luke knew it would be a tough fight.

And then Brendan burst out laughing.

“I’m just screwing with you,” Brendan smiled brightly, all contempt vanishing from his face in an instant. He clapped Luke jovially on the shoulder, “Don’t worry. I’m a Rebel, and I’m happy for what you did. Especially with Felicity; she became far more a handful than I ever expected. And really dedicated to that no flying thing. If I knew I was going to die, I definitely wouldn’t have made her make that promise… Also probably would have made plans to prevent said death, but that’s a whole other issue. I just couldn’t resist seeing the look on your face when you thought I was Pro-Imperial.”

“Typical Rhiaon,” Luke chuckled, shaking his head as he moved his hand away from his lightsaber. “So, you’re truly not an ally of the Empire?”

“Luke, they blew me up. Yeah, the Alliance isn’t the one I have problems with.”

Padmé shook her head, “Come on, you two. Let’s grab Quom and get out of here. We’ll talk on the way.”


“That way,” Padmé pointed behind her son.

Luke turned around and cave suddenly cracked open revealing the very same spot Luke had entered and they left the pile of Dead-Enders. Even though they were very deep in the cave, the exit was apparently now just right there.


“Come on,” Brendan walked over to the unconscious Quom. “We should move before the cave sends any more creatures.”


“Oh, Rey’s not in the cave.”

“Wh- She’s not?”

“Nope.”
Luke blinked, “So, this whole venture into a cave of the Dark Side, where Quom has bitten me in the neck.”

“Completely pointless,” Brendan nodded.

Luke raised an eyebrow, “I got to ask, the snark you do, is that homebrewed or did you and Felicity get it from your mother?”

“Actually, our father,” Brendan answered. “Never would do it to his superiors, but growing up with Uncle Garvan, Father learned the only true way to survive was to snark… Probably should have done that to my superiors. Getting exploded is surprisingly not fun.”


“Boys, stop comparing wounds,” Padmé shook her head, but he saw the smile on her face. It was the same he always saw on Leia’s face. “Besides I win automatically.”


“Blown up or electrocuted, sure they aren’t fun. But do not look me in the eye and tell me getting clawed in the back by a nexu doesn’t beat them both. Not only are you left alive, but you have to live with the continuing pain, not just the – pardon the pun – aftershock of electrocution.”

Luke chuckled and shook his head, “Tell me, Mother, are you always right?”

“Of course,” Padmé wrapped an arm around her son’s waist. “Where do you think your sister got it from?”

He laughed in a way he hadn’t for a very long time.

Kaydel was having a late lunch with Jessika and Tallie when Poe came up behind her.

“I thought we didn’t have secrets,” Poe said.

Jessika and Tallie traded a look.

“We’ll, uh… leave you two alone,” Jessika grabbed Tallie’s hand and quickly dragged her off, despite Tallie’s objections that she was still hungry and for them to at least grab their sandwiches from their lunch trays.

“Have you eaten?” Kaydel asked, picking at the lettuce poking out from beneath the bread of her shaak and swiss sandwich.

“Not hungry,” Poe took a seat on the bench next to her. Besides a couple stray techs and medical personnel who had just gotten off the morning shift, he and Kaydel were the only ones around.

“Eat,” she pushed over her meiloorun fruit.

“Kay-”

“Eat.”

Poe sighed and obeyed.
“Good,” Kaydel looked rather proud of herself.

Poe didn’t know it, but after the last time he had brought her home to Yavin IV for dinner with his father, she had promised Kes she would make sure Poe properly ate and sought medical assistance when needed. Poe was great at keeping his hygiene, but that rest of his health he liked to gamble on. Since Kaydel and Kes agreed they’d like him around for another good several decades, they had conspired to ensure it the best they could.

Plus, now that BB-8 was distracted with apparently pursuing one of the first cases of droid romance Kaydel had ever heard of, someone needed to keep Poe in line.

Kaydel chuckled quietly.

“What?” Poe asked as he worked on peeling his fruit. The spiky orange skin was edible, but too painful to be worth it.

“Just thinking about BB-8 and Ivee,” she answered. “Particularly about Rose’s reaction to the news. I believe her words were: Are you kidding? Even BB-8 has a girlfriend? Screw it, I’m building my own boyfriend. Jess then started to give her tips on how to build a droid.”

“Well, she would need to know how,” Poe laughed. “If Jess blows up another astromech, she’s not going to get anymore volunteers. She’ll have to build one of her own. BB-8 is so nervous about Ivee flying with her, even though he’s the one who came up with the idea for Ivee to be paired with Jess. You know, the droids call her The Great Destroyer?”

“Apparently Tallie started that one, and things got out of hand. It’s the one secret she’ll never tell Jess.”

The smile on Poe’s face fell, “So, you’re okay with secrets in a relationship, then?”

Kaydel narrowed her eyes, “I didn’t say that.”

“Come on, Babe,” Poe grabbed Kaydel’s knife and started to cut a section from his peeled fruit. “I’ve told you every single one of my secrets.”

“You know, I doubt that.”

“At least the ones that matter. Sure, maybe I didn’t tell you things like I once intentionally packed rotten fruit in a shipment to a vendor when I was six because I wanted to be done with my chores and just go play.”

“You did that?”

“Dad was pissed. Almost wrecked our farm’s reputation for the season, but Mom talked him down. I was only six after all.”

Kaydel watched him quickly pop the piece of meiloorun fruit so he didn’t have to keep talking about his mother, “Look, Poe, I didn’t withhold the thing about my father because I wanted to hurt you… It just hurts to talk about them.”

“That doesn’t mean we shouldn’t.”

“No… it doesn’t.” Kaydel sighed and wiped a little bit of the fruit’s juice that had dribbled down his chin. She lifted up slightly – it really sucked dating a guy seven inches taller – and kissed him. Kaydel grinned as she pulled away, “Your lips taste like meiloorun.”
“Oh really?” Poe kissed her again, “Well, now so do yours.”

Kaydel pulled his head down to share a few more sweet but sticky meiloorun kisses. Poe was eager to respond, but eventually he had to pull away.

“Don’t you distract me with your feminine wiles,” Poe teased. “We still have a conversation to have.”

She smiled and stroked his cheek, “Yeah, I suppose we do.”

So, they talked. And Kaydel found it was so much easier than she thought it would be. But of course it was, she realized. This was Poe Dameron, the man she loved. She could talk to him about anything. Even if it was about how she was thrown out of the house at seventeen because she refused to join the family business and sell weapons to the First Order. Because it didn’t matter if the Connix family were her flesh and blood, they weren’t her family.

Poe was.

Aletha was.

Paige was. Jessika was. Rose was. Kira was.

BB-8 was. Ivey was. Tallie was. Evan was. Peazy was. Diego was. Brance was. Leia was.

The Resistance was.

And she wouldn’t have picked anyone else.

…Though Obi-Wan Kenobi would have been a cool grandfather.

“So, to be clear,” Luke’s mind was buzzing as they exited the cave, struggling to carry Quom who was flopping every which way with the slightest jostle. Even unconscious, Quom Tinadar made everything far more difficult than needed to be, “The two of you are genuinely alive?”

“For a few hours more,” Brendan blinked at the sudden sunlight. “Where can we put your friend?”

“Back seat of my speeder,” Luke led them to do just that.

With a grunt, the trio gracelessly tossed Quom in the backseat.

“Damn it, Doc,” Quom groaned and rolled over, “five more minutes.”

“Well, he’s back to normal,” Luke exhaled in relief. “Or at least as normal as Quom Tinadar can manage. I swear, I love the guy, but I have never met someone so… who could just be so annoying and make things so much worse than they need to be, but somehow manage to make enough accidents to result in success and somehow be a little bit endearing.”

“Clearly, no one has introduced you to Jar Jar,” Padmé muttered.

Luke frowned, but Padmé waved him off.

“Sorry about this mess, Luke,” Brendan said. “I wish we could tell you where Rey actually is so you wouldn’t have had to bother with this whole mess.”
“In a weird way, it’s actually worth it,” Luke smiled. “I’ve wanted to meet both of you for so long. Sure, maybe the two of you aren’t exactly the top of my dead people I wish I could see list, but you certainly are in the top twenty.”

“Top twenty?” Padmé teased.

“Okay, you’re number four after Felicity, Aunt Beru, and Uncle Owen in that order, and Brendan’s number seventeen behind Biggs but before Ji-Dan Hayato,” Luke replied. “Sorry, Brendan, but I’ve got things to resolve with Wedge, I want so badly to see my Jedi students again particularly my closest friends, then there’s Nakari, and not to mention my grandparents—”

Brendan held up his hand, “I don’t need the whole list, Little Bro.”

The name made Luke smile.

“I’m just glad we did get to meet,” Luke clasped his mother’s hand. “Now, what’s this whole thing about your death?”

“It’s why I am so mad about this whole Alyla business!” exclaimed a very familiar voice.

Luke looked at Padmé, “Uh…”

“I told you he couldn’t be inside the cave,” Padmé smiled. “I never said anything about outside.”

Luke sighed as his father materialized before their eyes, and he instantly was trying to find a way to hold Padmé and kiss her.

“Padmé,” his voice was so reverent.

“Oh, Anakin,” Padmé, though wise, was as desperate to hold him as well and was going along in his attempts to embrace her.

Luke watched the scene with a smile but had to admit it wasn’t his first pick of sights to watch.

Brendan laughed and patted Luke’s shoulder, “Nothing quite like the awkwardness of watching your parents kiss.”

“I’m kind of grateful that Uncle Owen wasn’t an openly affectionate man,” Luke admitted.

“Hey, I’d take openly affectionate over my father any day. You know we had a rule in our house that Father was allowed to alter the outfits we were wearing however he wanted?”

“Learned that the hard way when I first asked Felicity to wear a different necklace to a business dinner.”

“Good,” Brendan smiled a little. “I always wanted her to stand up for herself like that… I’m just sad that I never got around to seeing the wonderful woman she became.”

Luke took a deep breath, “Felicity Rhiaon… is one of the greatest women I have ever had the pleasure of knowing. I am truly grateful that I was able to be her husband.”

“By the Gods,” Brendan called to Anakin and Padmé, “would you two quit it already? He is a ghost. Your reunion isn’t going to work. We’re burning daylight. Literally, once that sun has set, Padmé and I are gone.”

Padmé sighed and pulled back from Anakin, “He’s right, Ani. We don’t have a lot of time.”
“But Padmé-”

“Later. It’s not like we don’t see each other in the other world. Well, at least when I can get you to stop bothering our children.”

“Hey, I mostly do it when I’m avoiding Mace Windu.”

Luke frowned, “I have so many questions, and yet a sneaking suspicion none will be answered.”

“Yeah, you’re going to need to wait on that whole answers about the afterlife thing until you’re dead,” Brendan admitted. “So we doing this?”

“I think I’m ready,” Padmé nodded.


Anakin and Padmé traded a look.

“Well, Luke, you have to understand,” Padmé said, “I am so happy to be able to see you and speak with you. I left you far too soon, and we have so much time to make up for… But you aren’t the only one I left behind.”


“Little tricky, but I can manage to transport both of them away from here for a time,” Anakin answered.

“We figured we’d do a half and half thing,” Brendan explained. “You and I can spend some time together while Padmé goes with Anakin to see Leia—”

Luke opened his mouth, but Anakin was quicker.

“I’m not sticking around. I’ll let them have their time together unimpeded.”


“And then Anakin will bring me back and see you while Brendan goes off to visit,” Padmé ended.

Luke frowned, “You want to see Leia?”

Brendan shrugged, “It’d be nice, but I’m more into seeing a blood relative. A female brunette with hazel eyes you are well acquainted with.”

Anakin shot Brendan a look, “Remember the rules about living statuses.”

“Hey, I’m just happy someone managed to tell me Rey is alright,” Luke said.

Padmé and Anakin glared at Brendan, but he just shrugged.

“Alright, we should get going,” Padmé said.

“Wait,” Luke said, “what about the whole death thing you promised to explain?”

“When I return.” Padmé stroked her son’s cheek, “I will come back. I promise.”

Her words were comforting, but the fear in his heart couldn’t be quelled enough. Luke desperately pulled his mother into hug.
“Please come back,” he whispered.

“I will, I promise.”

Padmé held him so tightly, but soon enough she broke the hug. With a final touch of his cheek – the same way she had given his only touch in her life – Padmé stepped back, took Anakin’s hand, and was gone.

“She’ll be back,” Brendan promised. He nodded over to some low rocks outside the cave, the perfect seats, “Come on, let’s talk.”

Luke smiled and followed.

“Allright,” Brendan settled on a rock, completely ignoring the Dead-Enders at his feet. “What do you want to talk about?”


So Brendan explained the cave, how the tree scanned Luke’s memories to find a figure to test him with, how the creatures had been used against enemies of the Empire by the Dead-Enders, how the Force in an effort to even the odds would conjure an equal number of allies as there were opponents by actually drawing a figure from the netherworld of the Force, how the Force could not conjure someone the creatures had taken the form of.


Brendan shrugged, “Makes sense. Any more questions?”

“You know anything about my mother’s death?”

“Nope.”

“Ayila Kene?”

“Not going to lie; barely know who that is.”

“What my mother is doing with my sister?”

“Other than the fact she won’t reveal to Leia where you are, that’s between them,” Brendan answered. “Come on, you said it yourself, Luke, you’ve always wanted to meet me. Now that you’re talking to me… talk to me.”

“I just don’t know what to say. I have a million questions.”

“Well, we don’t have forever. Let’s stick to the biggest ones, Little Bro.”

“You going to keep calling me that?”

“In life I called my sister three things: Fliss, Shortstack, and Little Sis. You can pick between Lu, Shortstop, and Little Bro.”


“Good choice. So, what’s up?”
“Okay, um… What made you become a Rebel? The tipping point that is.”

Brendan sighed, “The last time I visited Felicity, I had already talked to Leia about joining the Rebellion. My senior officer found out, called me into his office, told me that he had received reports of possible rebellious actions on my part… four of the highest-ranking officers on the ship surrounded me, and beat the shit out of me. Afterwards they told me that if I made the wrong choice about all of this, the next time would be worse. I begged Bail Organa to let me join the Rebellion. I would have gotten away sooner, but my mental health issues…”

“Why did you never tell Felicity about your family’s mental health history? Your mother? Yourself? Why didn’t you warn her?”

“I tried to, but Father stopped every attempt I made… and perhaps… Perhaps I was too much of a coward to tell her. I wanted her to escape that mess so badly that I convinced myself she would. I’m sorry about her Postpartum Depression.”

Luke shook his head, “It’s in the past. What about Tyla? Do you blame her for what happened?”

“Yes,” Brendan answered honestly, “but I forgive her. I don’t absolve her, but I believe she made atonement, especially considering her actions during the Burning of Rornian.”


“You’ll find out someday. Come on, Luke, is this what you really want to ask me?”

“I guess my biggest question is,” Luke took a deep breath, “if you had lived, would you have approved of me being with Felicity?”

Brendan was silent for very long time.

“No,” he finally admitted.


“I don’t believe you would be good for Felicity… Not the one whose brother had lived.” Brendan explained, “My death changed my sister forever. It made her harder, stronger, bolder, less easy to manipulate – not that I’m implying you do that to her. But the reason you work so well with Fliss is that the two of you are equals in pain and experience. You challenge each other and understand her as well as you understand yourself. But a Fliss who hadn’t lost me? You two wouldn’t have lasted. She would have had her backbone surgically removed by our father. Felicity would have hated you for being a Rebel, and you would have only pitied her. You two would never have worked.”

Brendan then laughed and patted Luke’s shoulder.

“But hey,” Brendan grinned, “a Luke Skywalker who never met R2-D2 would have been a pretty good match. I would have been annoyed as hell by you, and tried to push you the way I pushed her, but that pairing would work.”

Luke smiled, “And what of a Brendan Rhiaon who was injured by Faclov but not killed?”

“He’d be too busy banking on his fame for destroying the Death Star, and not too concerned with the likes of Luke Whowalker. Hell, I may have even had Leia set the two of you up to get Fliss off my back for a while.”

“Oh, I’d still have taken that shot,” Luke laughed. “I don’t care how good a pilot you were, I’m still
better.”

Brendan’s smile stayed on his face but something sad flickered in his eyes.

Luke sighed, understanding, “Too bad we can never know for sure. There is one thing we can agree on, however.”

“What’s that?”

“No matter what path destiny may have played out… Felicity’s a terrible pilot in all universes.”

Brendan barked a laugh, “Yeah. I blame Andromias side. I still can’t believe she kept her promise to me so firmly. Like, I get it Fliss, you hold the moment so dear, but Good Gods, Woman, get a driver’s license. She really screwed herself over with that mess.”

“What can I say? Felicity Rhiaon’s a stubborn woman, and I love her for it.”


“What’s that?”

“Don’t beat yourself up over the whole Aletha thing. Fliss knows you love her above all else, and she will understand why you did what you did. She wants you to be happy. You and Rey are all that truly matters to her. Now, come on, Skywalker, let’s stop dancing around and just get to the thing we really need to talk about.”

Luke frowned, racking his brain for some other dire question he had miss, “I don’t understand. What else is there that is so pressing to speak about?”

“Only the most important information in all of the Galaxy for me to pass on to you,” Brendan gave a one corner smirk that Luke knew so well. “Embarrassing stories about my sister that she never wanted you to know.”

He laughed, “Oh, bring it on.”

---

Refnu reminded me and Rose of home, too, in a way. It was a cold and dark planet, and only warm enough for life because of its dense cloud cover. But Refnu had that same stark beauty I remembered from back home, and that was before we found out the Nefrians had imported snowgrape vines and selakale. For just a moment, holding a snowgrape’s sour fruit under my tongue, I could close my eyes and imagine everything that’s happened to us was a dream. I’d be at home in our sunroom, ready to get geared up and fly another hop for Central Ridge Mining. That wasn’t true of course.

But it was nice to imagine.

- The Journal of Paige Tico

“You know when Cat said the fruit would be a bittersweet thing, I thought he meant the flavor,” Evan watched in concern as his girlfriend had an unusually emotion reaction to eating a grape.

“Sorry,” Paige wiped away a tear, “just memories. I do appreciate the gift, Anh Yêu.”
“Good,” Evan grinned, “you have no idea the lengths I had to go through to get that for you. Savor it though. I don’t have any favors left to call in to get you more after this.”

“Do you mind if I share with Rose?”

“I’d be a fool to tell you no, Em Yêu,” Evan faltered a little bit over the name. It had been his idea to use terms of affection from Paige’s homeworld, but he struggled with the language.

Paige smiled as she folded up the little handkerchief of snowgrapes and tucked them away in a pocket, “Your pronunciation is getting better.”

“I’m glad to hear it,” Evan reached out with his left hand to grasp hers.

She was sitting with him as he had some down time to do paperwork. Unlike Poe and Kaydel, Paige and Evan had proven to their superiors not to be a nuisance when one was trying to work and had been granted the privilege of visiting each other during duty.

Poe on the other hand was currently working on a twelve-day ban from the Control Center – formerly the Communications Center until Diego took charge and decided to rename it for reasons no one had yet to figure out. Poe’s ban was a bit annoying as now Snap and Jessika had to alternate taking his place in the Center and acting as go-betweens when Poe needed to be involved in a meeting. Some asked why Kaydel wasn’t just scheduled to be off-duty during said meetings, but Diego insisted that Connix’s presence or absence wasn’t important. A ban was a ban, end of story.

“So I hear Rose got in a little trouble today,” Evan absentmindedly stroked Paige’s hand with a thumb as he looked over General Organa’s medical chart. She was scheduled for a check up on her bombing injuries from the First Order poison gas she had endured several years ago. “Anything to do with the security officers who picked up Grandma earlier?”

“Nalto found out about the comm and Kira’s Council,” Paige explained. “She got hauled in with Kaydel, Poe, myself, Rose, and Jessika over the matter. Everyone who knows about the Council is in hot water right now.”

“Do they know I know about it?”

“I thought no point in mentioning you as you haven’t actually spoken to her. I like to think of your involvement on the same level as General Organa’s. Knew enough to sign an autograph, but knows nothing beyond that. And definitely wasn’t the orchestrator of the toothbrushes and the Sabacc cards.”

“I knew I loved you for a reason,” Evan grinned. “And don’t knock the toothbrushes. Dental health is very important.”

“Yes, you already told me the story of how you seriously considered being a dentist, but chose nursing for the war, and plan on becoming a dentist after we win.” Paige pushed a lock of hair behind his ear, “Besides, you’re too cute to charge with treason.”

“I am that,” Evan chuckled.

“Alright, settle down, Hot Shot.”

“Only if I get a little something sweet from my Lucky Charm.”

He didn’t need to ask twice.
Brendan Rhiaon was everything Felicity had described. Luke had often wondered over the years if maybe his wife had idealized her brother. Though she may have exaggerated at points, Brendan was indeed as advertised.

If only they had been allowed some real time together. Luke knew Brendan would have fit right into the Skywalker family.

When Anakin and Padmé returned, the brothers shared a hug and a handshake.


Luke smiled, thinking of Rey, “I will.”

“It's time,” Anakin said quietly, standing behind Brendan. “She’s waiting.”

Brendan nodded, and then walked away.


“Yes?” he asked.

“Tell Leia I said hi,” Brendan winked.

And as Luke laughed, his brother-in-law was gone.

“He seems nice,” Padmé said.

“Yeah,” Luke smiled, “he was. Come.”

He led his mother to the rocks and took a seat.

“So,” Padmé started.

“Yeah,” Luke chuckled. “Did you have a nice conversation with Leia?”

“I did. She’s doing quite well. I think she’s with Han, he’s… terrifyingly like Anakin.”

“I know. I think it’s better for the Galaxy that they were enemies. Those two as friends… the thought is horrifying.”

“They certainly would have gotten along like a house on fire.”

“And set a few houses on fire in the process.”

“Oh, undoubtedly.”

Luke smiled, but sighed, “So, what did you talk about with her?”

Padmé took a deep breath, “That’s for her and I to know. If she wants to tell you, then so be it, but we discussed things I think she’d want to stay between us.”

“Ben and Father?”

“You did get my intuition.”
“Not enough to save me from the events of Hoth.”

“Let’s not talk about that,” Padmé shuddered. “You know, I never would have agreed to you two being separated, especially not where one got to be royalty and the other a farm boy. If I didn’t know it was because Bail Organa wanted a girl, I would wonder why it is my son was the one chosen to be trained over my daughter. I don’t care if you were technically born first, I will not stand for sexism. Even if this family does have the women be far more intelligent than the men.”

“In all fairness, despite that intelligence, the men do have a higher survival rate.”

“Your father was lit on fire, Han was in carbonite, you lost a hand and got electrocuted, and let’s not even start on what Ben Solo is doing with his life. The whole thing going on with Sasa is incredibly disturbing to me, and not just because she’s intentionally meant to remind him of me.”


“A nightmare for another day,” Padmé answered dryly. “Come, let this be about us.”

“Yes, let’s make it.”

Luke reached out to take her hand. He intentionally chose his left, and Padmé hesitated for a moment. Then she smiled and clasped the warm natural flesh of her son’s grip.

“Tell me about your death,” Luke asked quietly. “If you didn’t die from the Force Choke or the loss of will to live… how did you die? The droids couldn’t explain it.”

“They wouldn’t have been able to,” Padmé tried to not let her voice sound distant. “It was something beyond their logic filters, beyond the knowledge of the Jedi gathered, beyond anything Bail could have imagined… I died because Palpatine killed me.”


“You know why. He couldn’t have me running around, tempting Anakin back to the Light Side. I was good for the purpose I served him, but soon enough I proved a threat. So he ended my life. As for how, well… it turns out that the power he promised Anakin, the power to save one from death… was real.”

“But he didn’t save you.”

“No… he saved Anakin.”

Luke stared at her, “Father-”

“Died,” Padmé finished sharply. “Anakin died from his injuries on Mustafar, the same way that for a moment Rey died of heatstroke. Throughout my labour, Palpatine drained the life from me and transferred it into Anakin. Anakin Skywalker’s heart stopped the moment they first put on his helmet… and then Palpatine took the very last drop of my life force and gave it to Anakin. That is how I died. I, Padmé Amidala, who survived assassination attempts too numerous to count, fought in wars, dueled droids and humans and innumerable species… who kicked a nexu in the face, died because I was murdered by Palpatine. Not some loss of will to live.”

“That… certainly makes sense,” Luke squeezed her hand, the lump in his throat feeling especially thick. “But what does this have to do with Alyla?”

Something ice cold poured into Luke’s soul.

“…Alyla,” he whispered, “…was a failed attempt at that?”

Padmé squeezed her son’s hand.

Luke scrambled to work it all out, “But- But how? Who did it? How did they know how to do it? Why did they do it? Was she killed to save another? Or did someone try to save her?”

“I cannot tell you,” Padmé replied. “That is a story to be told at another time, but I promise that you will receive answers.”

“But I want to know now!”


He couldn’t help but laugh, “Alright, that may have been a little whiny.”

“You’re not nineteen asking for power convertors anymore.”

“Oh no. How do you know about that?”

“I’m your mother,” Padmé grinned. “And parents know everything.”

Luke laughed, “Now if only that were true.”

“You’re doing a fine job of raising Rey, Luke.”

“I know, but sometimes it’s just so difficult. I wish she had a better life than the one I’ve given her. Something worthy of a Skywalker woman.”

“Luke, considering the fact that at sixteen, Rey’s mother was full time Rebel, her aunt was a Senator, and her grandmother was the Queen of a planet for several years, I think Rey got off easy. Besides, she does get to train to be a Jedi now.”

“I suppose there is that.”

Though they didn’t have much time together, for a moment the pair just sat in silence and stared at each other.

“You know, you’re very handsome, Luke,” Padmé said after a while. “Definitely got your father’s features, though I do see a little of myself in you.”

Luke tried to smile a little, “Father said I got all the best parts of you. The temperament, the sense of style, the responsibility, the unwavering faith.”

“No, you got that from him. Even when he was a slave he was filled with such life… such hope. I’m proud of the man you’ve become.”

“You shouldn’t,” Luke turned his face away. “The choices I’ve made, how I’ve dealt with things… I’m hiding in a desert, away from the family who loves me, and am lying to my daughter on a daily basis.”

“I never said you were a perfect man… you wouldn’t be your father’s son if you were. And you certainly wouldn’t have been mine.”
“I know I’m not perfect. I can be… selfish.”

“Maybe once every ten years.”

“I’m serious. All that’s I’ve done in the past twenty years has been selfish, and people died because of that. Felicity died because of that.”

“Felicity made a choice,” Padmé said firmly. “What happened to her wasn’t because of the things you did. She could have escaped the fate she endured, but she chose not to because she had faith in her husband. The same way I had faith in mine.”

“And yet I couldn’t save her any less than he saved you,” Luke retorted.

“Felicity’s story is not mine. Let’s not waste time on quibbling who is and is not selfish.”

“But I’m selfish… I want you to stay with me. Make up for all of the time we lost.”

Padmé smiled, “And that is not selfish. So let’s start making up that time.”

“There’s just so much more I want to know, to say, to experience.” Luke sighed, unable to bear looking at the woman who was going to be so cruelly ripped away from him once more. “How much time do we have?”

Padmé turned his face back to hers and smiled, “Enough.”

And as the sun set in the distance, Luke enjoyed what time he did have to spend with his mother.

Sitting in corner where no one would bother him, R2-D2 sat in low power mode with a tarp thrown over him. The Command Center wasn’t busy in the evening, so no one gave much notice as Doctor Kalonia pulled off the tarp and bent down to Artoo’s level.

“Artoo?” she whispered, glancing around to make sure no one was paying attention. “Hey, Artoo, it’s Meredyth. I just wanted to let you know… Luke’s not on Ahch-to. He’s on Jakku, and he’s there because we were wrong. Felicity lied. Rey’s alive, and she’s with Luke. They’re training and they’re together.”

Despite the magnitude of the proclamation, R2-D2 didn’t so much as blink a light.

She sighed and patted his dome, “I just thought you would want to know.”

Kalonia rose back to her feet and headed to her room for some much-deserved sleep.

For an hour, nothing happened in the Command Center.

Then R2-D2 – whose conversation functions were still operational – finally finished processing the information Meredyth Kalonia had shared with him.

Though no one could hear it, R2-D2 let out a single triumphant…

**BEEP!**

His database reviewed an audio clip from Master Luke – though did not play it out loud.
“I can’t do it anymore, Artoo. I can’t stay here knowing what happened to my students... and my girls.”

Mistress Rey was alive.

Mistress Rey was alive and with Master Luke.

If one of Master Luke’s girls were alive, then that meant Master Luke was going to come home.

And R2-D2 would be right here, ready and waiting for Master Luke... to give him a piece of his mind.

God damn Skywalkers and their theatrics.

He wouldn’t have it any other way.

Proving she was in fact a god damn Skywalker, Rey found herself hit by another sandstorm right as she was about to set out. Sure, Aletha was going to be mad Rey didn’t uphold her promise to set out straight away to Niima Outpost, but what choice did Rey have but to spend another night?

She was tweaking a small part of the ship, taking a closer look at the minutiae that would needed to be tended to. When she fixed things, she let her mind wander, and lately that wandering had been focused on the mysteries of her past. Now that she had tangible facts and certain answers, a few of the mysteries were becoming clear.

For example, that funny feeling she got when hearing stories about Han Solo and Luke Skywalker? That feeling like she had heard them before somewhere? That was because she had... because if she lived in Temple Village, that meant she lived very close to Luke Skywalker and Rogue One.

Of course, it was a little closer than she would have guessed, but that’s neither here nor there. Rey was more focused on the idea that it meant she probably had met Han Solo and Chewbacca at some point.

But then came another revelation she neither expected nor wanted. The thought hit Rey so hard and so suddenly that it literally made her drop her wrench.

The revelation that the man she had seen in her vision – her cousin she knew by the colour of his Force Signature – was the same man that had been in the footage of her mother’s death.

She almost threw up. Her cousin had assisted in her mother’s murder? Why? Had he been the one to pull the trigger? Rey would have to see the footage again, as unbearable as that thought was. But she couldn’t remember what exactly her cousin had done in the footage.

Oh kriff, she was wrong. Rey did remember something the man who apparently was her cousin had done.

Her fucking cousin had kicked her mother’s dead body.

What the fuck was wrong with her family?

Rey couldn’t tame her rage; she knew it was of the Dark Side, but she couldn’t temper it. She wanted to rip him to shreds with her bare hands.
Look if he wanted to kill his own mother – even if it was her Aunt Alyla – that was one thing, but killing her mother? Oh, there was going to be hell to pay!

“Calm yourself, Rey,” a voice gently ordered.

Rey whipped around, hand reaching for her staff when she saw the man standing there. Outlined in blue, a man who looked much like her father smiled at her.

“Grandfather,” Rey recognized him from the past few nights ago.

“Hello, Rey,” Anakin smiled. “It’s good to finally speak to you.”

“Yeah, it is,” she gave a small grin. She felt a little of her anger dissipating, but not all of it. “Why have you not spoken to me before?”

“Uh… your father kind of forbid me,” Anakin awkwardly admitting. “Apparently, he doesn’t trust me to keep his secrets… Definitely got that from his mother, though that’s not saying she didn’t have good reasons for said distrust. I’m a bit of a troublemaker.”

“Must be genetic.”

“If it is, it’s definitely the first generation with me. My mother wasn’t anything of that sort. Actually, she’s why I decided to appear to you.”

“How so?”

“I know what you’re feeling, Rey,” Anakin said. “My mother was murdered, and I went down the same path you’re considering. I went waay down that path, and you can’t take back the things that happen down there. I did something very terrible to the people who took her from me, and it was a turning point in my life. One I don’t recommend you take… one I couldn’t stop your cousin from taking.”

“But he kicked her,” Rey fought back her tears. “He took her from me and then made a mockery of the act.”

“I know, Rey. I know far more than even you know, but revenge is not the way of the Jedi. It’s of the Sith, of the Dark Side, and of evil. There’s no good that will come from trying to take revenge whether it’s through words or actions.”

“Words?” Rey frowned, the gears turning in her head. “I’ve spoken to him. In real life?”

Anakin sighed, “Yes, you interacted with him that day.”

“Can I do it again? Can you connect us like Alyla did?”

“Rey, I shouldn’t-“

“Please! I want to talk to him.” Tears shined in her hazel eyes as she looked at her grandfather so helplessly. “Please, Grandfather… let me speak to him.”

Anakin thought about it, “Alright. But I wash my hands of this.”

It was like someone had hit the mute button on reality, all noise ceased as she was sucked into some
sort of vacuum. A small pocket of reality, set where she was sitting and yet that set her apart from everything.

There he sat, maybe on a bed though she couldn’t see what clothes he wore. Tall, pale, black hair she knew to be dyed, although that may have been because the brown roots of his father were showing. Clearly it was time for a touch up. His face was long and sullen, and there was something sad and empty in his brown eyes.

She knew those eyes from somewhere. Her heart whispered that it was those of her aunt, but those were not the eyes of Alyla Kene.

His body tensed, and his brow furrowed. Then suddenly, his head turned, and he was looking straight at her.

Their eyes met, Rhiaon hazel locking with Naberrie brown, and the sound of their synchronized breathing screeched in their ears like the screams of the wind in a hurricane.

Her cousin frowned, his face filled with disbelief, “Rey?”

“Ben,” Rey simply said, the name coming to her lips so naturally.

Then Rey grabbed the wrench sitting next to her and threw it at his head as hard as she could manage.

Ben jumped, lifting his arms to shield his face from the weapon.

It hit the ship wall opposite her and fell lamely to the ground.

Ben panted as he realized he had not been hurt. He looked up at her in shock, his body shaking a little as he struggled to process what had happened.

And then he shot to his feet and threw out his hand, trying to harness the Force to push the vision from his mind.

“Leave me be, Alyla,” Ben ordered.

But there Rey stayed, and there she did not move.

Ben frowned and lowered his hand. “She’s not doing this. Her Signature isn’t here, in fact, there’s another… Lilac. Yours. How is that possible? Are you a Force Ghost?”

Rey said nothing, her anger building as the bond between them grew stronger.

“No, you weren’t trained enough for that.” Ben turned to look behind himself, “Can you see my surroundings?”

“You’re gonna pay for what you did!” Rey spat at him.

“I can’t see yours,” he ignored her words as he turned back. Such sentiments of anger had been hurled at him in dreams and visions before, but there was something different about this one. Something he couldn’t put his finger on. “Just you. So, no. Not a Force Ghost. Not a dream. Not a vision. This is something else.”

Rey finally snapped.

“Did you hear a thing I said?” Rey screamed. “I’m going to make you pay!”
“For what exactly?” Ben asked, his voice disinterested. Apparently once you committed enough sins, you didn’t really care which one someone would swear vengeance for.

“For what you did to my mother!”

“Oh, that one.”

“You disgusting traitor! How dare you turn your back on us! How dare you turn against my mother!”

“Honestly, Rey, I didn’t turn on her,” Ben said simply. “You may have been too young to perceive it with much depth, but our mutual hatred was plain even to you.”

“You kicked her lifeless corpse!” Rey screeched. “She was no longer a threat and still what you chose to do to her body-”

“I simply thought it poetic justice.”

Rey scoffed, “Kicking her body was poetic justice?”

“No. When I took her body and-” Ben stopped. His eyes widened with realization, “…You don’t know what I did to her. How do you not know?”

“I know enough.”

“This doesn’t make sense,” Ben whispered, trying to work it out.

Rey’s voice shook as the tears filled her eyes, “I know that you beat her, tortured her, tied her up, and shot her in the head. You killed my mother!”

It was a blow to Ben’s gut. No, there was something really wrong. How did Rey not know the truth? How did Rey not know it was Phasma?

“Rey, please just let me explain,” Ben begged.

“No!” her eyes – Felicity Rhiaon’s eyes – burned into his fearful brown ones. Rey seethed, “Killer.”

“No,” he whispered.

“You killed my mother!” Rey screamed at him.

“Rey, listen to me-”

“You’re a monster!”

“No! I-”

“Kylo?” a woman asked.

Kylo Ren snapped out of the vision. He blinked as he looked up at the woman who had been lying in his arms a short while ago. She had been showering while he held his conversation with the ghost of his cousin, hence why she hadn’t heard it.
At least he hoped she hadn’t heard it.

“Are you alright?” she looked on him with concern as she dropped her towel and picked up her clothing from the floor. Her soft sighs and smiles had been a comfort as always, but always too brief, and never enough to quell the storm within.

He rubbed his face warily as she buttoned her pants. His own were lying somewhere in the room, he sitting on the bed in nothing but a pair of boxers.

“Just a vision,” he turned his face away from her, struggling for control. “It’s nothing, Tara.”

She narrowed her eyes. Of course, she gets the victory of getting Sasa out of his bed for once, and Kylo got hit with a vision, something she hated dealing with.

Tara bent down to pick up her bra at his feet, “Anything important? Or is it more of your angsty family crap? Because you take that shit to Sasa.”

Kylo smiled bitterly, “Wouldn’t want to waste your precious time. I’ll be sure to call for her in the morning.”

Tara stared at him for a silent moment, and then scratched him across the face.

“Ow! What the-”

Her tongue was in his mouth and her hands pulling his hair by the root. His hand went for her neck, squeezing ever so gently and listening carefully for their safe word – Hux. Kylo didn’t know if Tara’s preference for choking was a play on the Vader thing or her own fetish, but he knew it drove her wild. She pushed his tongue from her mouth with her own, then bore down on his lip hard. The tasted blood was on his tongue as she tore open the clot from the earlier assault during their coupling. There were long scratches down his back, and the next morning Hux would make fun of a hickey on Kylo’s neck.

He was breathless when Tara pulled away.

“Tell me,” Tara smirked, “does the redhead give and take pain too?”

“Not as much, as expertly, and as enthusiastically as you,” he answered.

“And don’t you forget it.” Tara stood up and resumed her dressing, “If you are so eager for the rebalancing crap, I could call Sasa for you right now.”

Kylo looked over at his crumpled sheets and discarded clothing on the ground. An odd feeling coursed through him. Was he feeling guilty?

“No,” Kylo said quickly. “Not tonight.”

“I thought not,” Tara smiled bitterly, but Kylo knew he couldn’t get away with biting her lip.

“I’ll be fine tonight,” Kylo tried to pretend he was in control. “Unless you wish to stay?”

Tara shot him a look, “The redhead cuddles. Not me. Good night, Kylo.”

“Good night, Tara.”

He winced when the door closed.
The room was perfectly silent.

Kylo glanced at the clock. 10:47, not that late yet. Maybe he could call Sasa-

No! Something deep inside of him screamed. Sasa may not be cunning, or even overly intelligent, but she would know what happened here. Even if he cleaned the room from top to bottom, she would know it. She would smell it in the air, or just see it on his guilty face.

Why did he feel guilty?

**Because Tara Ren is not your chosen bride.**

Kylo winced, “Supreme Leader, please. Not right now.”

Snoke’s voice was always so loud, so forceful in his mind. Kylo could never carry a straight thought while Snoke was in his mind. He couldn’t tune it out no matter how hard he tried.

Kylo had never stood a chance against Snoke’s control.

Plus, it was embarrassing to be reminded that the Supreme Leader was always watching him. Even during sex.

**My Apprentice, why do you continue to choose to couple with Tara so often?**

“Supreme Leader, you said it yourself, the more attempts I make with the most partners, the more likely I am to impregnate one of them.”

**Yet you fail to realize that I do not wish for you to impregnate just anyone. The Skywalker Legacy must continue, and it will only grow strong if you find an exceptional mother, unlike the misstep your uncle took.**

Kylo winced.

**My Apprentice, I seek to take care of you. To guide you on the right path. I have moulded the perfect bride for you, and yet you ignore her in favor of your deputy.**

“I couple with Sasa often,” Kylo objected.

**But not more than Tara. Things have started to become more even, but Sasa should be surpassing her.**

“With all due respect, Supreme Leader, if I were to couple with Sasa more than Tara, I’m fairly certain Tara would cut off my balls.”

To Kylo’s surprise, Snoke laughed.

**I suppose that would be counterproductive. Very well, I shall see to Tara and we will reconcile this matter. Continue with your efforts, My Apprentice, but keep in mind that there is more honour in mothering Sasa than Tara. Sasa Ren has been perfectly groomed to be your partner, but if she does not please you there are always others.**

Kylo frowned, “Others?”

**Sasa is only one of eight whom I have groomed for you. All hold different personalities and**
traits making you compatible with each pair in a unique way. The project of Nera Ren was an unfortunate failure, but Sasa can be replaced as easily as her.

He swallowed hard. Kylo remembered how well he had gotten along with Nera. If he had to pick one Knight of Ren he genuinely would have called his friend, Nera had been it. Unfortunately, they had not been sexually compatible, and it had cost Nera her life.

Kylo was stunned to hear that Nera had been groomed like Sasa. Nera had been against coupling with him from the get-go, but if that’s what she had been trained for-

Then he smiled. He knew the truth: Nera had been too much of a rebel for the First Order – another reason she had been knocked off – and rejecting Kylo would have been the perfect way to get back at Snoke for all those years of training she never wanted.

He missed Nera.

Rest, My Apprentice. Gather your strength and reflect on your bond in the morning. If Sasa does not please you, I will replace her.

His heart hammered in his chest, “What? No. You can’t!”

Oh? Has My Apprentice found favor with someone?

Kylo didn’t like how happy Snoke sounded, “I only find favor with her because you find such favor with her. Truly she must be the best of the best if of all the women you groomed for me, you chose her above all others.”

She was chosen for her control of emotions, plain and simple. You struggle most with such abilities, so I chose her because she was the only one able to regulate and cut off emotion, nothing more. I’m sorry if I misled you, My Apprentice, but Sasa Ren is not special.

And as Snoke disappeared from his mind, the Supreme Leader’s words left Kylo feeling numb.

He was puttering around the room, collecting his clothes when he saw it. There was a hair clip sitting on his desk: a bit of silver twisted into the royal crest of Alderaan.

Sasa often sported Alderiaan symbols, and even Kylo understood it was a mandate from Snoke to manipulate him. Actually, he didn’t mind it; Sasa was very interested in Alderiaan history, culture, and most of all, fashion. Kylo had been known to spend some of the nights they lie in bed together, sleep beyond their reach, teaching her the language of High Alderiaan – a practically dead language taught to him by Threepio and his mother as a child.

Kylo glanced back at his bed. His heart ached as he longed for her warm arms to be waiting there for him. But he couldn’t bear to see the look on her face when she realized Tara had ridden him on that very mattress only twenty minutes before.

He sighed as his hand closed upon the hair clip.

I’m sorry if I misled you, My Apprentice, but Sasa Ren is not special.

With a tear shining in his eye, Ben Solo whispered, “She is to me.”
In a world not of the living, Obi-Wan Kenobi found a rather nervous looking Anakin Skywalker by himself.

“Relax, My Friend,” Obi-Wan said. “Padmé will return to this world soon enough. Frankly, I thought you would be happy to hear that she gets to bond with your children in their world for a while.”

“That’s not why I’m nervous, Obi-Wan,” Anakin said.

“Then what is it?”

“I think… I think I may have just accidentally formed a permanent Force-bond between Rey and Ben. I only meant to do it briefly, but well… now their minds are connected… forever.”

Obi-Wan blinked at his former Padawan, the painful silence stretching on endlessly.

“That… is not good news,” Obi-Wan finally declared.

Anakin groaned and buried his face in his hands.

Only he could continue to directly screw up the Galaxy from beyond the grave.

Chapter End Notes

Coming Up Next Chapter…

To Be a Knight
When Sasa makes her monthly report to Snoke, FN-2187 is asked by Wiln Ren to come along and help him train The Chosen – the girls specially raised to be the consort of Kylo Ren. As FN-2187 gains insight into the life of a Knight of Ren, he fears he may not be right for the job. Meanwhile, Tara, Hux, and Cern plot to end Sasa and Kylo’s budding romance.

Yeah, so that’s my answer in this story for why Ben and Rey develop their Force-bond. It’s not because of Snoke, or destiny, or the nature of their family.

It’s because Anakin Skywalker can’t stop fucking up the Galaxy.

Someone needs to revoke his Force Ghost privileges.

To those excited at the idea of the cave being a thing to bring back dead people and maybe Luke using it to see Felicity again for real, and oh the possibilities, I can’t wait…

It’s not coming back.

Brendan and Padmé’s appearance was the result of me literally writing Luke into the corner and not knowing how to get him out alive and with Quom. I’ve always wanted to write a scene between him and dead big bro-in-law Brendan, and I’m a sucker for anything with Luke and Padmé interacting so I thought ghost cameo.
For those wondering, yes, I will show the scene of Leia and Padmé’s meeting, but I cut it out of this chapter because it was running too long. I’m going to put it in as a Leia flashback later, probably during TFA when Leia’s story needs a little padding. Likely right before the scene she tells Han to bring their son home.

In case anyone is confused because I told them something else, I decided at the last moment to switch the order of the next two chapters. So since Before the Awakening takes place over about eight months, it will come after the chapter To Be a Knight which occurs roughly the same time as this chapter. I thought it would be better to alternate the next few chapters between Jakku and the First Order rather than have a long time again where we don’t really see a lot of the people on Jakku. Some very important stuff is about to go down in the First Order, so I wanted to leave some breathing room. Plus people wanted to see some more Finn, so let’s check in on him.
To Be a Knight

Chapter Summary

FN-2187 learns what it means to be a Knight of Ren, Kylo comes up with a stupid solution to the Tara and Sasa feud, and Hux learns that no means no when dealing with a woman who uses Force Lightning.

Chapter Notes

So, I missed May the Fourth be with you, but it seems fitting that I post the First Order heavy chapter on Revenge of the Fifth… Get it?

I’ll shut up now (except not really because that would mean no chapter after this author’s note.)

Please note that huge chunks of the Finn portion of this chapter once again comes from Before the Awakening by Greg Rucka, whose writing I adore, but whose paragraphing is driving me insane. Particularly the very first section is almost entirely copy and pasted, but I have gone through, changed things, cut things, and added things. Just know that the bulk of it, is in fact not my work.

Trigger Warning: This chapter contains a scene near the end where Hux very clearly sexually harasses Sasa. The scene is uncomfortable, and intentionally written to be. Reader discretion is advised.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

The Long Way Home

Chapter Forty-Eight

To Be a Knight

There were four of them in the fire-team, and because shouting out things like, “FN-twenty-one eighty-seven, watch your back!” was a mouthful, especially when the blaster fire was searing the air around them, they’d defaulted to shorter versions. In front of the officers, in front of Captain Phasma especially, they always used their appropriate designations, of course. But in the barracks and in combat, they used the names they’d given one another or the names they’d given themselves.

FN-2199, he was Nines, because he liked the sound of it, simple as that. FN-2000 had told everyone to call him Zeroes, because he was proud of the fact that he’d landed such a straightforward number as his designation. He thought it made him special, and either nobody had ever told him that being a
“zero” wasn’t exactly something to be proud of or he didn’t care.

FN-2003 was the only one with an actual nickname. They called him Slip because of the incident that occurred on the day of their team selection. He always seemed just a little slower, a little clumsier than the rest of the fire-team. It wasn’t simply physical, either. Sometimes—in briefings, during training, during drills—you got the feeling that orders didn’t quite take with him, that he didn’t, or couldn’t, fully understand what it was he was supposed to be doing or how he was supposed to be doing it.

FN-2187 was simply Eight-Seven whenever one of the team wanted to shorten his designation. They didn’t do it very often. In whispers, Sasa Ren had been trying to come up with a name for him when Kylo wasn’t looking. They had tried FN, but it sounded too much like his general squad. Two-One didn’t roll off the tongue well and often became ‘Ton’ which FN-2187 wasn’t fond of. Eight-Seven reminded him of his isolation in the squad. Fyrn – his future Knight of Ren name – always made FN-2187 feel uncomfortable. Sasa had even tried Big Deal for a while in a secret reference to his still unknown to him connection to Felicity Rhiaon Skywalker, but that sounded ridiculous.

But FN-2187 was in fact a big deal in the First Order. Connection to Felicity Rhiaon aside, he was, as far as the training cadre and his peers were concerned, one of the best stormtroopers anyone had ever seen. He was everything their instructors wanted—loyal, dutiful, brave, smart, and strong. Whatever the test, whatever the evaluation, FN-2187 consistently scored in the top 1 percent. So he was FN-2187, well on his way to becoming the ideal First Order stormtrooper and some day an excellent Knight of Ren. That was what everyone thought, at least.

Except FN-2187 himself.


FN-2187, Zeroes, and Nines had taken cover behind what was left of an exterior perimeter wall, the section they were sheltering behind still mostly intact but cracked and scored with innumerable blaster hits. The wall marked the edge of the Republic compound, still heavily defended, and the suppressing fire being directed their way was withering. Bolts of bright blue sizzled overhead and smashed into the ground around them. They punched into the wall with enough force that the stormtroopers could feel the impact even through their armor.

“He did it again,” Zeroes said, elbowing FN-2187 and then pointing up-range, the direction from which they’d advanced.

FN-2187 crouched down and looked in the indicated direction. They were all virtually indistinguishable in their stormtrooper armor, but within his helmet, along with the near-constant stream of data projected across his lenses—telemetry, firing solutions, atmospheric conditions, everything up to and including the ammo count for his blaster rifle—individual ID tags would pop up whenever he looked directly at another trooper, his in-suit computer reading friendly identifications. According to that same stream of data, FN-2187 could see that Slip was exactly 29.3 meters back, crouched in cover behind the hulk of a blasted-out Republic speeder.

He could also see what Slip couldn’t—a squad of five Republic soldiers advancing on him unseen from the left flank. FN-2187 raised his rifle, sighting, but he knew before his helmet confirmed it that he was out of range. He could open fire, but there was no way he’d score a hit.

“He’s done,” Nines said. “We’ve got to advance.”

“He’s one of us,” FN-2187 said, lowering his rifle.
“We’ve got an objective,” Zeroes said. He jerked a thumb over his shoulder, toward the base. “It’s that way. We go back for him, we’ll be cut to shreds.”

Face hidden inside his helmet, FN-2187 frowned. Yes, they had an objective, and yes, there were enemies all around them, and yes, Zeroes was right. In the compound was their objective: an enemy position defended by a heavy repeating blaster. And whichever Republic soldiers were manning that thing, they knew their job. They’d seen two full squads cut down by it during their advance. The only reason FN-2187 could figure it hadn’t taken out Slip already was that whoever was on the trigger was waiting to see if one of them was going to do exactly what FN-2187 was thinking of doing – go back for him.

“We’re running out of time,” Zeroes said.

FN-2187 checked over his shoulder, back toward the compound. The terrain was uneven, and there was enough cover for a sustained fire-and-move advance. It would thin out the farther they advanced into the compound, approaching the heavy blaster emplacement, but it was doable if it was done smart.


“We’re gonna blow the mission,” Nines said. “On my order. Hold at the inner wall.”

“Hold at the inner wall,” FN-2187 said again. “Go!”

Neither Nines nor Zeroes liked it, FN-2187 could tell, but they were Stormtroopers, and that meant once orders were given they would follow them and follow them quickly. They moved at once, and FN-2187 waited a half-breath’s pause, letting each of them draw enemy fire, before launching forward. The terrain was just as bad in that direction, cruel, uneven, and strewn with broken rock and battle debris. Thick black clouds from engine fires clung to the ground, rolling across it like an uneven tide. He sprinted the first dozen meters, trying to keep low, zigzagging his way from points of cover and occasionally hurdling obstacles in his way.

He’d closed half the distance when one of the Republic soldiers saw him and gave a shout of alarm that carried across the battlefield. Just as the soldier opened fire, FN-2187 dove forward, tumbled into a freshly made crater, and lay flat for a second before popping up on his elbows. He fired twice before dropping down again, then rolled to his right and repeated, firing three times. He was pleased to see that he’d taken out two of the enemy.

But that left three more, and now he had their attention.

FN-2187 keyed his radio. “FN-2003, check right, check left!”

There was static, then Slip’s voice. “I don’t see them!”

“Your left!”

Another blast of static, loud enough that it made FN-2187 wince. He rolled back to his initial position and edged his way to the lip of the small crater just in time to see Slip opening fire on the remaining Republic soldiers closing in on his position. Now FN-2187 could take his time.

“Breathe. Just breathe,” Sasa Ren’s voice echoed in his mind. She had been teaching him control of emotion during battle in exchange for helping her improve her lightsaber skills, which FN-2187 again was at the top of the class for.

He sighted carefully, then stroked the trigger on his blaster rifle three times in succession. The last of
the enemy soldiers dropped.

“On me!” he shouted, but he needn’t have bothered, because Slip was already out of cover and running toward him. FN-2187 rolled onto his back, making room in the crater as Slip slid into place next to him and rapped him on the chest plate hard enough that it sounded like he was knocking on a door.

“Thanks, 2187,” Slip said. “Thank you, man. Thought you were gonna leave me behind.”

“You’re one of us,” FN-2187 said the words that were often spoken in the Expert Lightsaber Training Class. Slip was not part of that class – or any of the Lightsaber Classes – but Nines was and had recently advanced into the Advanced Class, along with his only other Stormtrooper friend than Slip, Marks. FN-2187 pointed back the direction he’d come. “Stay tight on me.”

“Right behind you,” Slip nodded.

FN-2187 took another moment to catch his breath. He let Sasa Ren’s soft and silky voice play in his mind.

“Breathe. Just breathe,” her words filled and calmed his soul. In fact, Sasa in general could just calm him in a moment. Her voice, her gentleness, and not to mention her radiant smile.

FN-2187 would be lying if he said he didn’t have a little bit of a crush on her. He knew it wasn’t mutual, but if given the shot, he wouldn’t hesitate to take it.

“Eight-Seven?” Slip asked.

“Let’s do this,” FN-2187 nodded.

He vaulted out of the crater, Slip clambering up behind him. The fire from the Republic Base seemed to have diminished, but FN-2187 knew that was an illusion, that it was just as intense as before, only less concentrated. That, of course, had been his plan: by splitting Zeroes and Nines, he’d forced the enemy to divide their attention, and that had given him the opening he needed to reach Slip. The downside was that Zeroes and Nines were now isolated, pinned down with no way to escape.

But there was a benefit to that, too, FN-2187 realized. With the enemy fire divided, it gave him a straight shot to the bunker, to the heavy repeater and their objective. All he had to do was be quick and not lose his nerve.

He began running faster. He heard Slip struggling to keep up behind him, but he could no longer worry about that, he realized. If he could do this, if he could do it fast enough, it wouldn’t matter if Slip stayed tight on his back or not. If he could do this, not only would he obtain their objective but he might do it without losing anyone on his fire-team.

Another cloud of smoke billowed across his vision, and cutting through it were the red and blue bolts of blaster fire—Zeroes’ and Nines’ and the enemy’s, too. He could hear his breathing, amplified within the helmet, feel his pulse in his temples.


He knew she wasn’t actually there, her words no more than a memory, but it comforted him all the same.

The bunker was ahead, the data across his lenses declaring the objective twenty meters away, then fifteen, then ten.
That was when they saw him, but it was already too late. He could see motion inside the bunker, see the Republic soldiers manning the gun react to the sight of him racing toward them and try to swing the barrel around in time. He could imagine himself as they saw him, the immaculate white armor, the symbol of unity and strength and power and skill that was a First Order stormtrooper.

If only they knew who he really was: not just a Stormtrooper, but a future Knight of Ren, handpicked and groomed by the Master of the Knights of Ren himself. If only he had a lightsaber, then the Republic would know true fear.

Just before they had their shot, FN-2187 dropped low, sliding feetfirst toward the edge of the bunker—one hand holding his rifle against his chest, the other going for one of the grenades on his belt. He rolled at the last moment, thumbing the activator hard as he collided sideways with the bunker wall and then, in one smooth motion, bringing his hand up and tossing the grenade through the opening into the bunker. Almost instantly there was the sound and the flash of the explosive detonating. He felt it echo, the vibration running through his armor.

For a moment there was silence, interrupted only by the sound of FN-2187 trying to catch his breath.

The world flickered, froze, and then winked out of existence. Where there had been an unnamed Republic outpost, where there had been dead Stormtroopers and Republic soldiers, there were only four walls and a perfectly flat metal floor. Where there had been a battlefield, there was only the simulation room, vast and empty and cold and sterile. High on one wall, the observation window became visible—heavily tinted, making it impossible to see who was inside.

Then Captain Phasma’s voice echoed over hidden speakers.


“Impressive,” Wiln Ren said, his arms folded as he watched the scene. Tara Ren glanced at Cern in the corner.

“If you say so,” she answered dryly.

Wiln frowned, “What are you talking about? He used solid teamwork to achieve success. That’s exactly what we look for in a Knight of Ren.”

“Yes, but sometimes not every team member is solid,” Cern lounged a little too casually in his chair. “Sometimes to make something stronger, you must prune the imperfections.”

“Imperfections or not, you can’t tell me this wasn’t a successful mission,” Wiln said.

“They completed the objective,” General Hux said. “There is that.”

“They completed the objective due to the skill of FN-2187’s leadership,” Captain Phasma said. “Wiln Ren is correct, that was a good demonstration of what a Knight of Ren should be.”

“Forgive me, Captain, but leave such declarations to us Force Sensitives,” Tara said in a light but snippy tone.

Phasma glared at Tara from behind her helmet. She basically hated every member of the First Order
in general, but Tara Ren could be a bigger pain in the ass than even Kylo and Hux put together.

While the Knights of Ren were seated in the rather comfortable chairs of the observation room, Hux and Phasma stood side by side at the two-way glass window. They all watched as the FN fire-team filed out of the simulation room below.

Three of the four Stormtroopers were clearly jubilant, clapping one another on the back and shoulders, pleased with their performance. But the fourth – FN-2187, Phasma could tell – was following behind them, not quite part of the group. She bit her lip, glad of the privacy of her helmet. She knew all too well what that felt like.

As they all watched, FN-2187 paused at the exit, looking back in their direction. Phasma wondered what he was thinking.

“He isolates himself,” Hux said, turning to look at her. “A good leader, part of his unit but standing apart.”

“If that’s why he’s doing it, General,” Phasma tried to keep her voice from being too quiet.

“You have concerns?” Hux raised an eyebrow. “Speak them.”

“These stormtroopers will be the finest the First Order has ever produced,” Phasma said. “I have overseen their training at every stage, from induction to deployment. This class is exemplary.”

“They’re also the only class that has three members in the saber classes,” Wiln added. “2187 excels in the Expert Class, 2199 is near the top of my Advanced Class, and Kylo reports that 2000 is doing well in the Beginner Class. Not exactly going to upgrade any time soon, but shows promise.”

“The FN Squad is my crowning jewel,” Phasma said proudly, though her mind focused on 2187, the only one that truly mattered to her. She would never say it out loud, but she was desperate to show everyone what she could make of the child Felicity Rhiaon had once tried to save from the First Order. It would be one of the best revenges… though nothing could compare to killing the idiot who had destroyed her family.

“Yet you have concerns, Captain,” Hux’s eyes narrowed. “I would hear them.”

“Not for this class,” Phasma snapped.

Hux sighed, at the edge of annoyance. Tara and Cern exchanged a grin.

“Let us not keep secrets, Captain Phasma,” Cern chortled. “If you make us to force it out of you, I fear that might open the door to exposing other secrets. And I think everyone here has a few they’d like to keep close to their chest.”

Phasma stiffened, Wiln went pale, and Hux traded a fearful look with Tara.

“It’s FN-2187,” Phasma finally admitted, the threat too great to ignore. Cern had managed to get into his position of power by not only having the ability to force his way into people’s minds like Kylo, but a far more quick draw tendency to do it. “He has the potential to be one of the finest stormtroopers I have ever seen.”

“From what I just observed, Captain, I agree,” Hux nodded.

“But his decision to split the fire-team and return for FN-2003 is problematic. It speaks to a potentially…dangerous level of empathy. You heard him.”
“You’re one of us?” Tara repeated.

Wiln shrugged, “It’s a mantra we use in the Expert Class. If he’s going to be a Knight of Ren, he must be one of us.”

“While I am entirely in support of unit cohesion, Master Ren, a stormtrooper’s loyalty must be higher. The Knights of Ren are a team, but a soldier must be a singular weapon. His loyalty must be to the First Order, not to one’s comrades.”

Hux glanced back at the window, surveying the empty simulation room.

“I trust you to remove any impurities from the group, Captain,” Hux said. “Wherever they may be found.”

He glanced at Tara.

“I can trust you to remove such impurities?” Hux asked.

Phasma gave a sly smile, “As much as Snoke can trust you to do so.”

Hux’s face fell.

“Now if you’ll excuse me, I have a squad to debrief,” Phasma bowed her head.

“I’ll come with you,” Wiln rose out of his chair. “I want to talk to you about tomorrow’s trip.”

Hux, Tara, and Cern did not a say word until the pair had left.

“Remind me again why we keep Wiln around?” Tara glared at the doorway.

“Because apparently I’m too violent and impatient to teach the Advanced Class,” Cern replied. “Besides, he’s well established with the Chosen.”

“Too established with some of them if I hear correctly,” Hux said.

“Wiln is too straight-laced to let that become a problem,” Tara replied. “Besides, I hear she’s an idiot anyway. Speaking of idiots and Chosen and things to be pruned, where is Sasa? Wasn’t she meant to join us today? Don’t tell me she’s off with Doxl and Berd on Onderon.”

“You think he’d send Solo’s whore on such an important mission?” Hux smirked. “No, she’s here with us on the Finalizer.”

“Then where is she?”

“Where do you think?” Cern grinned.

Tara rolled her eyes, “For fuck’s sake, it’s two in the afternoon.”

“Well, she does not have much purpose beyond being bred,” Hux pointed out. “Can we really blame a whore for doing her job?”

“I hope you do not refer to myself in such crude terms, General,” Tara said sharply.

“Of course not, you do so much more than spread your legs for Ren,” Hux chuckled. “Women who do such things as Sasa Ren are no more than the label I give them.”
Tara glared at him; there was something a little too gleeful in his grin.

“You’re right.” Tara bit, “By the way, how’s your mother?”

Cern didn’t care how openly he laughed. Hux’s face filled with red, and his hands shook at his side as he glared at Tara. It wasn’t exactly hidden knowledge that Armitage Hux had been the result of an affair the great Brendol Hux had with a kitchen woman.

“Doing quite well, actually,” Hux gritted his teeth. “My position allows me to keep her in comfort.”

“And mine allows the same for me,” Tara replied. “I’d like to keep it that way, and this little snit seems to be compromising that.”

“Yeah, but look on the bright side,” Cern grinned, “then you don’t have to raise the child of Ben Solo.”

Tara glanced over at Hux. He gave a small nod, and Tara used the Force to flip Cern’s chair over.

“I hate you two,” Cern groaned as he climbed back onto his chair.

“Good,” Tara replied, “if you liked me, I’d be doing something wrong.”

“I do have to agree with Tara,” Hux said. “Sasa is starting to get in the way. Even Ben Solo has some purpose in this Order, and I do need him to perform his duties without distraction.”

“Not to mention the embarrassment they’ve been raining upon us to the future Knights,” Cern sneered. “Late for class, blatant groping, and worst of all, the way she flirts with them to make him jealous. Sasa Ren is a problem I’d be glad to be rid of… right along with Wiln. He’s a little too goody goody for me.”

“Well, hypothetically,” Hux drew out his words, “it would be a challenge to get rid of such a problem. Both are in high favor with Solo and the Supreme Leader.”

“Snoke has half a dozen other girls trained to be exactly like her,” Tara shot. “Even he knows Sasa is not special. Wiln on the other hand, can be useful. He keeps his head down and does what he’s told but retains a personality. He’s still beneficial to us. Sasa on the other hand… I think it’s time to move on. The only question is how?”

“Can’t pull your usual tricks?” Hux smirked.

Tara shot him an innocent smile, “I have no idea what’s you’re talking about. The unfortunate string of deaths among the Knights of Ren is something I mourn greatly. Sasa is lucky; her favor with Kylo ensures it hard for her to befall such a tragic fate as the others… Not impossible, but difficult.”

“Well, I might have a better way to deal with the situation,” Cern offered.

“I’ll consult you when I hit rock bottom,” Tara rolled her eyes. “Until then, I just need to figure out a way to make her fall out of Kylo’s affections. Then the defences and protections will lower.”

Hux considered an idea, “What if you were to convince him those affections weren’t mutual? At least, not truly?”

Tara smiled, “Go on.”

“Sasa is not a soldier or a Knight or honestly even a person. She’s simply Snoke’s tool- No, not tool. A mere toy to distract Kylo and puppet around to the Supreme Leader’s desires. She’s vapid; nothing
inside of her but the urge to seduce.”

“What’s your point?” Cern asked.

“Make Kylo think he’s not the only one she’s seduced,” Hux suggested. “She flirts to make him jealous; it’s not unreasonable to make him think she does something more. Maybe plant the idea that she’s having an affair with that Stormtrooper she’s close with. 2187.”

“They are rather close,” Tara mulled over the idea. “But how do I convince Kylo of this?”

“Make him see her seducing another man.”
Tara shot him a look, “Let me guess, you’re going to be generous and volunteer?”

“She did insist on eating all of her meals with me for nearly a month,” Hux grinned smugly. “Let me eat right off her plate.”

“You do know it’s because she thought I was going to poison her?”

The put out look on Hux’s face suggested that he did not know that.

“I don’t know,” Cern frowned. “Do you really think you could convince Kylo that Sasa is sleeping with Hux? Would you really go after the woman you call Solo’s Whore?”

Tara chuckled, “The General here has always had a predilection for taking what belongs to Kylo.”

Hux exchanged a curious smile with her.

“That doesn’t comfort me,” Cern shook his head. “I think we should go with my idea.”

“How about this?” Hux suggested. “First we try it my way, then Tara’s, and if our ideas prove to be as foolish as you declare, then we’ll try yours. Agreed?”

Tara and Cern looked at each other and thought it over.

“Alright,” Tara finally said. “Let’s give it a try.”

There was no preamble. There never was. Captain Phasma faced them, surveyed them, and then said, “Adequate.”

FN-2187 glanced in the corner where Wiln was watching with folded arms. FN-2187 had learned that “adequate” was the closest Captain Phasma would ever get to saying “well done” or “good job.”

“FN-2000, you’re wasting ammunition,” Phasma continued. “Telemetry indicates you expended one hundred and twenty-seven shots, with a hit ratio of less than five to one. You are assigned to the range tomorrow during your second detail. I expect an immediate and marked improvement.”

Zeroes drew himself even higher, “Yes, Captain.”

The shiny helmet shifted almost imperceptibly to the left. It was another thing that FN-2187 had noticed about their captain; you never knew exactly who or what she was looking at. He thought it was Slip, but she spoke to Nines, instead.
“FN-2199, biosensors noted your heart rate eight percent above acceptable range, with an additional twenty-second delay in reverting from strong exertion to resting pulse. Your weight is up two percent, without corresponding gain in muscle mass. Your meals are being modified, and you will begin additional physical training tomorrow, second detail.”

“Yes, Captain,” Nines said.

Phasma didn’t move, not even the slightest shift in the angle of her helmet, yet FN-2187 was absolutely positive she was now looking at Slip. She didn’t speak. The silence stretched, and as it went on it changed, and FN-2187 could see Slip growing more and more nervous, fighting the urge to say something. Still the silence grew, and then 2187 could feel it, too, found himself silently urging Slip to stay silent, to wait it out, somehow knowing that if Slip should speak it would be a mistake and that another mistake was exactly what Captain Phasma wanted him to make.

At last she said, “FN-2187, your targeting was exemplary. According to the simulation, you fired your weapon only thirty-six times, scoring kills with thirty-five of those. You deployed one explosive, which resulted in the achieving of the objective and another six enemies killed.”

Now they could all see her head move as she looked them over in turn.

“All of you should take your example from FN-2187,” Captain Phasma said. “However you have proved yourself worthy enough to be assigned to a special mission. Master Ren?”

Wiln spoke, “I will be taking you and the MK squad with me tomorrow when Sasa and I visit the Supreme Leader aboard the Supremacy. The Chosen need some fresh meat to spar with, and since three of the four of you are in saber classes, I’ve decided to take you boys. FN-2003… good luck.”

Nines and Zeroes laughed.

“You are dismissed,” Captain Phasma announced. “Master Wiln will show you out. FN-2187, stay.”

The others collected their helmets and headed for the door. Slip shot him a last glance before it sealed shut again. FN-2187 remained standing. If FN-2187 had been using the Force, he would have sworn that Phasma hesitated for a moment before she spoke. He might have sensed her eyes flick to the door, the security cameras, consider something, and decide against it.

“Why did you go back for FN-2003?” Phasma asked.

“He’s one of us,” FN-2187 said. “I was taught in Tara Ren’s class to work as a team.”

“This is not the first time you’ve helped him. Your instructors have noted multiple occasions where you’ve been seen assisting him in various duties. Why are you doing this?”

“We’re only as strong as our weakest link, Captain.”

“I agree.”

“Thank you, Captain.”

“I want it to stop.”

He blinked, surprised. “Captain?”

This time, Phasma openly allowed herself to look at the cameras before she turned back to FN-2187.

“We are only as strong as our weakest link, FN-2187. While you believe you are attempting to
strengthen that weak link, I assure you that is not what you are actually doing. Rather than fixing the problem, you are allowing it to persist. As a result you are, in fact, weakening the whole. Further, you are weakening yourself.”

FN-2187 frowned, brow furrowing, “Captain Phasma, I don’t—”

“You have great potential, 2187. You are officer corps material. Your duty is to the First Order above everything. Nothing else comes before that. FN-2003 must stand or fall on his own. If he stands, the Order is strengthened. If he falls, the Order is spared his weakness. Am I understood?”

“Yes, Captain.”

“I sense hesitation.”

“No, Captain. None.”

“Then it will stop.”

He swallowed, then nodded, “Yes, Captain.”

Phasma took a step forward and placed a hand on his shoulder, “If you remember only one thing I ever tell you, FN-2187, let it be this. Never let them see behind your mask. I’m counting on you, FN-2187. Don’t let me don’t.”

“I won’t, Captain,” FN-2187 said. “I promise.”

“Then that is all. You are dismissed.”

When FN-2187 was gone, Phasma just stood there for a long time in perfect silence. Then she looked up directly at the nearest camera.

“I fucking hate all you people.”

“Isn’t the saying I have a bad feeling about this?” Sasa asked as she sat on the bed, waiting with her arms wrapped around the shirtless Kylo’s neck.

“There’s no law against switching it around. Besides,” Kylo smiled and snuck a kiss on her cheek, her soft breasts pressing against his back, “we’re not exactly law-abiding citizens in the first place.”

“No, we are not,” Sasa laughed, waving her hand through his freshly dyed black hair, pulling him in for a gentle kiss.

A thin blanket was tangled around the couple, shielding their bare legs twisted together, and privatizing the areas in between. Kylo bit his lip as he felt her sweet sex pressed against his thigh, already wet and wanting. His cock was a bar of steel and he wanted so badly to bury it inside of her as she thrashed and mewled beneath him.

“For the record,” Kylo said, “if anyone asks about the story of how we learned you were pregnant, we are absolutely not telling anyone that we decided to take a pregnancy test in the middle of sex.”

“Oh dear, now I have nothing to discuss with your mother when I finally meet her,” Sasa teased.

“Yeah, you are never meeting my mother. I don’t need her turning you against me.”
“Hey,” Sasa frowned.

His tone was joking, but she could hear the hint of fear in it. She stroked his cheek and eased it over to look him in the eyes. Sasa felt him relax immediately as his eyes stared into her forest green ones. She could sense him taking comfort in the familiarity of his own Force Signature as if there was some small part of his soul contained within her eyes.

“Kylo,” Sasa whispered. She hesitated and then added even quieter, “…Ben.”

She heard his sharp intake of breath, but he did not chastise her. Sasa sighed and then bowed her forehead against his.

“I will never turn against you,” Sasa vowed. “I swear it to you.”

She felt the tension dissipate from his Force Signature. He believed her. He trusted her.

Something about the look in his eyes – that confusing mix of adoration, faith, and desire – scared her. Even more frightening was her knowledge that she had the very same look in her eyes.

“Besides,” Sasa chuckled, running a thumb over his bottom lip, “I am so not looking your mother in the eye and discussing our sex life.”

“Good,” Kylo smiled, “then I really could never go home.”

“Really? Not after murdering Alyla?”

“In all fairness, I only like half killed her. Besides, they were more upset about Rhiaon’s death.”

“And you didn’t even kill her.”

Kylo raised an eyebrow.

“Hux gets surprisingly chatty around me,” Sasa shrugged. “And we had to talk about something during those lunches I had him be my taste tester.”

“That was the only reason I didn’t kill him for sharing private meals with you,” Kylo turned, forcing her arms off him so he could pull her into his lap. His now only semi-erect shaft inadvertently found purchase resting against her clit. A small roll of his hips made Sasa gasp. “The thought of him touching you, making you gasp, even making you give him a smile…something dark burns inside of me. I don’t want anyone else making you feel the way I get to. Not Hux. Not FN-2187. Not Wiln. Not Cern. Not even Snoke. You… are mine.”

Sasa shivered, “Then take what’s yours.”

Kylo crushed his lips to hers, taking them desperately like a drink of water in the desert. Helping Sasa adjust her hips, he positioned himself at the entrance of her beautiful cunt. Sasa cried out enthusiastically as he pulled her down onto his cock.

“Yes, please. Please take me,” Sasa moaned, wrapping her arms around his neck and losing herself into the kiss.

He grunted and panted as his gripped her hips tightly, guiding her up and down his shaft. He thrust into her desperately as her tongue caressed the roof of his mouth.

“I guess we’re just not going to discuss the pregnancy test sitting face down on my desk with the answer of whether or not you’re pregnant?” Kylo chuckled, his lips moving down to take her
“We don’t need a test,” Sasa panted, cradling his head to her breast as she had done almost every time they had sex. Kylo was very much a breast person, and he could never get enough of hers. Sasa was as desperate for his touch too. She wished he could take her even deeper, fill her entirely on the pleasure of his cock. “I can feel it in the Force. This time it’s real. This time I’m truly carrying your baby. A little Knight of Ren… Or would our baby have the last name Solo?”

“Over my dead body,” Kylo grunted. Oh, the pleasure was too much for him as she rocked up and down on his cock, “I don’t know how much longer I can-”

“It’s okay, Kylo,” Sasa clutched his neck as her anchor point as she lost all inhibition and just bounced frantically. “Cum when you’re ready. I don’t care if I finish; I just want to feel you fill me.”

Kylo gave a strangled cry at her words. Her skin was soft, sliding across his hard muscles with ease as the sweat on their bodies acted as some agent to ease the friction. A layer of lubricate almost, but nowhere near as wet and abundant as the slickness dripping between her legs that let him drive into her over and over. She whimpered as he stretched her walls sliding in and out with wild abandon. His nails almost pierced her skin as he desperately tried to keep a hold on her hips to slam their pelvises together.

“Oh God, Sasa,” Kylo moaned, his breath getting heavier as he buried his face into her copper curls. He never wanted the moment to end, but he was starting to feel the twinges in his legs that meant things were about to.

“It’s okay,” Sasa cooed. She was well aware of the signs of Kylo’s pleasure by that point, “It’s okay. Let yourself go. I want it. I want you. I want that strong Skywalker seed.”

“Fuck!” Kylo cried and shot off.

Sasa clung tightly to him as he emptied himself into her. They panted roughly as his body jerked against her a few times, and then he buried his face into her breasts as he tried to catch his breath.

“Okay,” Sasa laughed, placing a kiss on a scar across his shoulder, “you definitely have some sort of impregnation fetish.”

“If not naturally, then Snoke certainly had trained one into me,” he chuckled and kissed her lips softly. “You know… I’m lucky to have you. You’re the first person in a long time who’s really got me.”

She nuzzled him, still holding him close, “I don’t have many people I’m close with either. Just you and FN-2187. Oh, and Nova.”

“Nova?”

“She’s another one of the Chosen. My former roommate actually.”

“Is that the one Wiln-”

“Oh yeah.”

Kylo smiled and brushed back a lock of her hair, “You know, I thought the Chosen were held in enough esteem that you would have your own rooms.”

“Well, between you and me, Snoke’s ship is really poorly designed when it comes to having enough
quarters. He’ll swear against it to his grave, but the last time Hux went on board, he had to room with Tara.”

“How is he even still alive?” Kylo was genuinely surprised.

“I think Hux is smart enough not to make a move on Tara.”

“Or any girl who’s mine,” he pulled her closer.

Sasa’s smile fell.

“What is it?” Kylo asked.

“I’m sorry, it’s foolish,” Sasa shook her head. “Just hearing you say that Tara’s yours… I know we’re not exclusive, but I’d be lying if I said that sometimes I didn’t try to pretend.”

“Sasa,” Kylo murmured. “You know what this is between us-”

“I don’t think either of us know what this is.” Sasa looked down, “But… I know what I want it to be.”

Kylo looked away. He really didn’t want to be having this conversation now… or ever if he was being completely honest. He had spent almost twenty-eight years of his life avoiding his problems. Why start facing them head on now?

“It’s not going to be anything until there’s a child in the picture,” Kylo sighed as he glanced towards the pregnancy test face down on the desk.

“And what happens when there is?”

“Then I think we become something… more.”

“And if Tara is the mother of that child?”

“…I have no idea.” Gently he eased her off his lap, “Come on. We’ve delayed it enough.”

He went to stand, but a hand on his thigh stopped him, “Wait, Kylo.”

Kylo turned and looked at her.

Sasa bit her lip, “Can I ask you something? Something you’ll answer honestly?”

“Of course.”

“Do you actually want a child?”

The silence in the room was so heavy.

“I…” Ben finally said, “I don’t know.”

Sasa sighed.

He looked away from her, “I’ve just been told so many times that I had to have a child, I never stopped to think if I wanted one… To be honest, I don’t know.”

She didn’t say anything, sensing he needed to work it all out in his own head.
“But,” he said after a long while. He wouldn’t look her in the eye as he admitted the truth, “I know I am ready… to have a family again. I truly miss knowing there’s someone out there who cares about me, no strings attached. I can’t change who my family is… was but I do wish I didn’t… I don’t know. I wish I didn’t burn my bridges, but at the same time how can I act like I want the traitors who vilify the Supreme Leader and Vader?”

“I understand that longing,” Sasa said. “The First Order isn’t the easiest place to be. Everyone is about ten seconds away from literally stabbing you in the back. You wouldn’t believe how competitive things were in the Chosen. I only got along with Nera and Nova because they honestly weren’t that interested in being with you. I was honestly so surprised when Snoke chosen me for you. It was simply because of the emotional regulation. If you had your shit together, I wouldn’t be here right now.”

He knelt down back on the bed, pregnancy test unchecked in one hand, her legs between his spread thighs.

“Then maybe being an emotional wreck isn’t such a bad thing,” he cupped her cheek.

Sasa laughed, “Kiss me, you fool.”

Kylo was happy to oblige. No hands wandered, not lustful thoughts traded between their minds in the Force. All it was about was a soft, sweet, tender kiss. A pleading kiss, begging to fulfill that lonely, longing in their hearts. A prayer that someday this could be something morning.

They parted but did not draw back. His hand on her cheek, and hers securely on his neck. The bare skin of his overly broad chest burned with literal desire, his touch warm on her skin. Their eyes were locked together, gentle brown and reassuring forest green.

“Whose eyes will she have?” Sasa asked with a teasing grin.

Kylo chuckled, “He will have my brown eyes. Brown is a dominant gene, and it is tradition in my family.”

“So, she will be like the rest First Order you lot and have brown hair and brown eyes? Geeze, no wonder you’re attracted to me. Your family is in severe need of variety.”

“Well, maybe he will get the blue Skywalker eyes. Straight from the Force itself.”

“Have you considered the possibility that the Force isn’t your paternal grandfather? I doubt mean to doubt the word of your great-grandmother, but if she wasn’t lying, there are still ways that she simply just might not know-”

“Don’t even go there,” Kylo shuddered. “I get enough of those stories from Alyla.”

“I swear to Palpatine, if she appears right here and now and starts making comments about our sex life, I’m leaving you.”

“Don’t worry, I’m haunted by the ghost of Alyla Kene, not Felicity Rhiaon.”

“Not physically anyway,” Sasa teased.

Kylo laughed and shook his head. He held so light, so relaxed in that moment. He craved another kiss, but that wasn’t the foremost urge in his heart. There was something lingering in the air; three simple words that he yearned to vocalize… but knew he didn’t have the strength to do so.
Sasa sighed and touched his cheek. She opened her mouth to say something, but no words came. Whatever assurance she wished to utter died on her tongue.

Then her eyes flicked to the pregnancy test in his hand. Kylo made a small swallow and nodded. Without exchanging a word, they shifted themselves to sit side by side on the bed. Each took one end in their hand and held it up, the result screen facing down.

“Are you ready to confirm our daughter?” Sasa asked.

“I can’t wait to see the look on Hux’s face when we announce our son,” Kylo grinned.

“On three?”

“One.”

“Two.”

“Three,” they said together.

They flipped the test over.

Silence.

Long, long silence.

As Kylo let out a long exhale, Sasa shifted away from him and set the test.

“There’s always next month,” Kylo said.

“Isn’t there always?” Sasa shook her head.

“We just have to keep trying. There’s nothing wrong with us. The tests always come back very positive. We should easily be able to have a baby!”

“Then why do I have to face Snoke tomorrow and tell him once more there is none?”

Kylo didn’t have an answer for her, instead just pulled her back against him and pressed soft kisses against her bare shoulders.

“I don’t want you to go tomorrow,” Kylo murmured against her skin.

Sasa closed her eyes, relishing the feeling of his strong arms holding her close, “I don’t either, but orders are order. I have to do my tri-yearly check-in.”

“I hate every time you do those.”

“Kylo, this is the first time I’ve done one. I’ve only been a Knight of Ren for four months.”

“Seriously? I thought it was a lot longer than that.”

“It’s been two months since the weird Alyla ghost thing – which you still haven’t explained to me – and the first time we had sex was two months before that.”

“That’s what I get for losing track of time,” Kylo shook his head. “Do you really have to go?”

“I don’t have a choice,” Sasa sighed. She turned back and stole another one of his sweet kisses, “Gods, I love your mouth.”
Kylo winced, “Really? I’ve always hated my mouth. Thought my lips were too large.”

Sasa chuckled, “You say that like it’s a bad thing.”

He had never had much confidence in his looks, so to hear that about one of his most vulnerable features caused him to give a cheek splitting chin and grace her with another of the kisses she adored so much.

“Promise me your bed will be empty the night I return?” Sasa whispered.

“Three days? I promise.” He pressed his forehead to hers, “Just promise me you’ll be safe.”

She laughed, “I’ll be perfectly safe. Promise.”

Sasa’s scream echoed off the red walls as the lightning violently thrashed through her body.

“STOP! SUPREME LEADER! PLEASE STOP!”

She hit the floor with a heavy thud as the Force Lightning ceased. Sasa panted as she laid on the floor, curled in the fetal position. Tears pricked her ducts, but she wouldn’t let them fall.

Snoke settled back down in his throne and watched her, “Well, well. I am most impressed, Sasa.”

Sasa gave a ragged gasp as she tried to push herself up. She looked pathetic, like a rag doll thrown across the room by a child ungrateful of the present.

“Twenty-seven minutes,” Snoke declared. “A new record for you. None of the other Chosen have even come close. I look forward to the day you can stand it entirely without screaming.”

“As do I,” Sasa bowed her head.

So that I may stop this training method?

She winced as his words pounded in her mind.

Never forget that you cannot hide from me, Sasa. You are mine to do with as I please. Your mind belongs to me. You belong to me.

“Yes, Master,” Sasa blinked, eyes struggling to focus as she saw two Snokes before her.

“I suppose that was a long session,” Snoke nodded to the Praetorian guard who held the supplies to treat Sasa after her lightning sessions. Prolonged exposure to lightning could have dire side effects if untreated, including paralysis.

As the guard treated Sasa, she could feel the Supreme Leader picking through her mind, fishing in particular through the memories of Kylo.

“Good, good,” Snoke sounded pleased, a noise that churned Sasa’s stomach. “You have earned Kylo’s favor firmly and quickly. But what’s this? Jealousy? Do you doubt your destiny?”

“No, Supreme Leader.”

“And you should not. It is as I have foreseen. You will bear Kylo Ren a son, then a daughter, and
then a son. But only if you conceive it first. I am most disappointed that you come before me today without a child in your womb."

“I am trying, Supreme Leader.”

“Then try more.” Snoke paused and sent a knowing look to Sasa, “And no more of that business he did on your first night. If he wishes to manipulate you orally, it should be in preparation for you to receive his seed. Not after you already have.”

Sasa didn’t know she could blush that brightly.

He declared, “I want you to couple with him no less than five times per week, and that’s sessions. Not finishing. He should do so at least seven times.”

Oh, God, she couldn’t look him in the eye. Did he really have to do this in front of the Praetorian guards?

Yes, I do have to do this in front of them. Everyone knows what duty I have given you. Do not feel shame in performing it.

Well, you couldn’t say the First Order wasn’t at least a sex positive environment.

Am I understood, Sasa Ren?

“Yes, Supreme Leader,” Sasa bowed her head.

“Now,” Snoke said. He nodded to the guard treating Sasa to withdraw. “Shall we do another test? Perhaps you can bet twenty-seven minutes.”

“I suppose. Supreme Leader why again do we have to do this?”

“It’s a test of obedience, pain tolerance, and how well you can lower yourself into the power of the Force. Remember, empty yourself of everything and you won’t feel a thing. Are you ready?”

Sasa hesitated, “Considering you can read my mind, I’m going to say not really.”

Snoke laughed, “I appreciate the honesty. Now prepare yourself.”

She took a deep breath and stood firmly on her feet.

“And to think Kylo envies my one on one training with the Supreme Leader,” Sasa thought to herself.

I never said I picked him for his intelligence.

If there was one thing that was certain, it was that all of the Chosen were absolutely gorgeous. The collection of women Wiln Ren and the Stormtroopers found waiting for them in the training room took every Stormtrooper’s breath away. There were six of them in total, each of varying looks. Some pale skinned, some olive, and two with the same tone of FN-2187. Some were tall, but others rather short. None of them stood at average height. Some had ample chests, others were more blessed from behind. Long hair, short hair, blue eyes, green, brown, hazel, blonde hair, brunette, black, and the smallest girl of all seemed to have naturally blue hair.
“Gentlemen, these are the remaining Chosen.” Wiln gestured to each woman in turn, “Nova. Alix. Cleo. Echo. Iona. And Dido. Ladies, these are FN-2187, FN-2003, FN-2199, FN-2000, MK-6093, MK-6122, MK-6089, and MK-6191. They will be your sparring opponents today.”

“Fresh meat,” the one called Iona grinned.

“Who’s who?” Cleo asked.

“I’m Marks,” Marks answered. “My guys are Tone, Weevil, and Duck.”

“Duck?” Alix lifted an eyebrow.

“He’s not great at aiming with grenades,” Tone explained.

The women laughed.

“And you boys?” Nova – the blue haired one – smiled, Wiln coming to stand next to her.

Slip grinned and indicated himself, then the others. “FN Corps. Slip, Zeroes, Nines, and FN-2187.”

“Let me guess,” Dido said. “FN-2187 is in charge, right?”

“That’s right,” Slip nodded enthusiastically.

FN-2187 punched the snickering Marks in the arm.

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

“One of those what?” FN-2187 asked.

She laughed. Alix looked to be in her late twenties, perhaps, but there was something hard in her eyes, and the laugh wasn’t amused.

“An outsider, cadet,” Alix explained. “You’re on the outside, and you’ll always be looking in and wondering why you don’t belong.”

The rest of the stormtroopers laughed, Nines and Zeroes and even Slip along with them. FN-2187’s heart fell… but no more than when he saw the sympathetic but agreeing look in Marks’ eyes.

FN-2187 looked down at the number tattooed on his wrist. Phasma’s words echoed in his mind.

*Never let them see behind your mask.*

“Alright, Ladies and Gentlemen, let’s get to work,” Wiln used the Force to summon a rack of weapons from a closet.

Wiln explained that the Chosen would be fighting with lightsabers like the students of the Expert Class did, and the Stormtroopers would be using a variety of other weapons. In a truly impressive display – one that FN-2187 noticed brought a peculiar smile to Nova’s face – Wiln demonstrated the use of each weapon, the vibro-axes and shock staffs and force pikes and resonator maces, elaborating at length on the respective strengths and weaknesses of each and when and how to employ them to best effect.

He explained the composite alloys used to make the weapons, how all of the equipment was strong enough to block even a lightsaber. FN-2187 wondered about that—not whether it was true as they were fighting against lightsabers, but he couldn’t help but wonder if as a Knight of Ren he would
ever be expected to fight someone who used a lightsaber. Not just fight with a lightsaber. According to the First Order, the Jedi were extinct.

Right?

Soon enough, Wiln passed out the weapons. FN-2187 found himself with a mace and shield. Zeroes and Slip each ended up with force pikes. Nines used a one-handed vibro-axe and a shield. Marks was given a shock staff. They were told that all the powered weapons carried only a nominal charge, making them incapable of penetrating stormtrooper armor.

They began drills, basic moves—stance, attack, parry—and then repeated, over and over again, until FN-2187 could feel perspiration running down his back inside the bodysuit he wore beneath his armor. When they’d finished, his arms ached from the effort of maintaining the mace and shield, but there was a sense of pleasure, too, the delight of learning something new and learning it quickly and well.

Wiln then called for a meal break, and FN-2187 was thankful for it. Their food was brought to the training room, and they sat on the floor in groups. Many of the Stormtroopers took the opportunity to chat up the lovely young ladies, but Marks and FN-2187 had sensible heads on their shoulders and stayed far away.

FN-2187 was disappointed that Sasa didn’t join them, but that thought was soon banished when Marks pointed out Wiln and Nova huddled in the corner.

“They’re sitting rather close, aren’t they?” Marks said.

“Yeah,” FN-2187 frowned. “They are.”

Neither commented on how Nova kept touching Wiln’s arm, or that schoolboy grin on his face.

After lunch, they resumed the training where they’d left off but now with the introduction of sparring. Wiln would pick two of the trainees – sometimes Chosen vs Stormtrooper, sometimes two Chosen, or sometimes two Stormtroopers – to square off against each other. He’d give a go signal, and then it would be on, weapons swinging through the air while the white-armored figures collided, blocking and jabbing and parrying until one was knocked off their feet or Wiln announced a winner. The losing combatant would return to the others waiting their turns at the edges of the room, the winner would remain, and it would start again.

FN-2187 realized that, powered or not, armored or not, their weapons could cause real damage. Twice, trainees had to be helped off the floor, one with broken fingers from a particularly savage mace blow, the other stabbed by the tip of a force pike that had slipped off of an armor plate and punctured the membrane holding the plates together.

With a shudder, FN-2187 remembered that terrifying moment with Tara Ren and the lightsaber to his neck. He made a mental note not to let his guard down for even a moment with the girls. He knew the damage lightsabers could do, and he was not about to pull a Skywalker and lose a hand.

Slip was the first of the Stormtroopers to be called onto the floor, and for a moment while he watched his friend sparring, FN-2187 thought that might be the one thing at which Slip excelled. His footwork was consistent and good, and he kept his force pike in its proper grip. He didn’t make any of the obvious mistakes.

It didn’t last.

Slip’s opponent, Tone, was using a pike of his own. They were exchanging blows for the sixth time,
quick end to end as if fighting with staffs, when suddenly Tone stepped back, spinning his pike in both hands over his head, then bore down with a blow that cracked so loud on the top of Slip’s helmet it sounded like his helmet—and his head—had been split in two. Slip staggered, and his opponent flipped the staff and brought the opposite end up, just as hard, smashing it into Slip’s chin. Slip dropped like a stone, and when Wiln removed his helmet to survey the damage, FN-2187 could see blood coming from his mouth, his vision looking unfocused.

Slip got back in line.

The person who remained longest on the floor was Zeroes. He went four bouts without falling, sending Nova to the floor in a particularly nasty display.

Wiln rushed to her side faster than to any of the other women Zeroes had beaten. Zeroes turned to Nines to gloat about his success, and FN-2187 saw the way Wiln narrowed his eyes at Zeroes.

“FN-2187, you’re up next!” Wiln ordered.

Exactly as Wiln expected, FN-2187 easily ended Zeroes’ run.

“Win!” shouted Wiln Ren.

FN-2187 moved to help Zeroes back to his feet, dropping his mace and taking him by the elbow. Zeroes shrugged him off, his anger evident even behind his armor. FN-2187 figured that was because he’d broken Zeroes’ streak.

It was the start of FN-2187’s own streak, however. The next trainee to go at him was Duck, also armed with a mace and shield. The fight lasted three seconds. FN-2187 feinted an overhead blow with the mace, and when his opponent brought his shield up to parry it, he hit him instead with his own shield and knocked him flat. His next two opponents were Chosen, Iona and Cleo with a pair of lightsabers. The second of those took the longest, almost a full minute, but for FN-2187 it was a simple matter of waiting for an opening and striking at the right time.

Then it was Nines’ turn, with his vibro-axe and shield, and if FN-2187 had thought Zeroes was angry when he’d lost, Nines seemed to start out that way. Nines began with a swipe straight at FN-2187’s head, and the next thing 2187 knew Nines had rammed into him, body to body, their armor clattering as he was pushed back along the training floor. It took all his strength to keep his feet, to keep from giving Nines another opening with his axe, and finally FN-2187 dropped his shield altogether and used his free hand to take control of Nines’ wrist. They spun in place, and FN-2187 slammed his shoulder into Nines’ chest, sending him off balance long enough to create distance between them. Before he could recover his discarded shield, though, Nines was launching at him again, and FN-2187 was using his mace with both hands, knocking away Nines’s attacks as quickly as they came. He could feel his heart pounding inside the armor, the echo of his breathing as it grew labored. The thought occurred to him, unexpected and shocking, that Nines thought this was real, not an exercise, not training.

The vibro-axe fell again, slashing at his arm, and FN-2187 skipped back. The two of them began to circle. Nines feinted with the axe, then swung the shield and nearly caught him in the side, but FN-2187 managed to get the mace up to parry just in time. He saw the follow-up coming before Nines launched it, knew the axe was slashing in again, and that time, instead of stepping away from it, FN-2187 stepped forward and under Nines’ guard. The mace was in the wrong position, its heavy head toward the floor, so FN-2187 used its pommel instead, smashing it into Nines’ helmet. The other trooper went sailing onto his back. He laid still, dazed for a moment.

FN-2187 recovered his shield and reset it on his arm. He didn’t move to help Nines up.
That was four of them, which tied him with Zeroes’ streak.

Bout five was Slip, and right away FN-2187 could see something was wrong. Maybe it was the blow to the head, or something else, but he was moving slowly. His footwork, impeccable before, was sluggish and sloppy. His grip on his force pike kept slipping, not obviously but enough that the point was too low, so it would be easy for FN-2187 to knock it out of the way or even disarm him entirely. In his helmet, tasting his sweat, FN-2187 glanced over at Wiln observing them, looking for any sign that they were seeing what he was, that Slip wasn’t up to it, that it wasn’t going to be a fair fight at all. Wiln were impassive, standing in his uniform, hands behind their backs. Nothing in their expressions betrayed anything but vague interest. There was no sign of sympathy.

None except for whenever Nova came onto the floor. The girl was truly terrible – worse than FN-2187’s first day with a lightsaber – but still held a note a skill she almost seemed to fight against.

But Slip didn’t have a natural skill to fight against.

Slip lunged, and FN-2187 blocked him easily, sending the tip of the pike off his shield and to the left. Slip followed, unable to stop himself in time, almost at full reach and obviously off balance. FN-2187 stepped back, giving him room to recover. Again he glanced at Wiln. He was frowning... but at FN-2187.

FN-2187 swung his mace in an easy arc, putting no real power behind it, all but telegraphing the move. Slip barely got his parry in place in time and failed entirely to launch a riposte. They circled. Another glance at Wiln, and both he and Nova were frowning, Nova somehow having made her way to Wiln’s side. Slip tried to flip his grip on the pike and made a staff-end swing that FN-2187 ducked before he’d even thought about it. He had another opening and almost took it but for some reason found himself unable to.

It struck him, then, that if he were to lose, Slip would be left to face whoever went next. And based on the way Wiln kept glancing towards Alix – the Chosen that appeared to be the best with a lightsaber – FN-2187 suspected he knew who was next.

It struck him, too, that whoever Slip fought next wouldn’t care that he was already hurt, that another injury might be too much for him.

_You’re one of us_, FN-2187 thought.

He attacked with the mace, an upswing that Slip blocked but without any strength behind it. The parry blew through Slip’s guard and sent his hands and the pike high, almost over his head, leaving his middle exposed. FN-2187 stepped forward, leading with his shield, pressing rather than striking while at the same time bringing his left leg forward, behind Slip’s right. It took almost no discernible pressure; suddenly, Slip was on his back and FN-2187 was standing over him, and Wiln was shouting.

“Win!”

That was when FN-2187 sensed it, a small tug of cerise at the back of his mind. In the chrome reflection of his weapon he saw the miniature image of a woman standing in the doorway behind him. FN-2187 realized that Sasa Ren was watching them.

He stepped back, waiting as Slip pulled himself unsteadily to his feet. He turned to face Sasa, wanting to rush up to her, but Sasa shook her head. FN-2187 understood and nodded, ready to face his next opponent and try as hard as he could to impress Sasa.
FN-2187 so wanted to impress Sasa.

The next combatant was as he guessed, Alix, but FN-2187 didn’t really notice and didn’t much care. He knew Sasa was watching him, though it was impossible to be sure as she approached Wiln – with a slight stumble in her step – and the pair started to talk. Alix was using a pair of lightsabers, and she was wild with both.

By that point FN-2187’s mind was racing—thinking about Slip and Nines and Zeroes, and Sasa watching him—and it wasn’t really a surprise when the world burst into a flare of white, when the hilt of the sword connected with his jaw, when he could taste his own blood. One moment he was up, the next he was on his back, staring at the lights in the ceiling through the lenses of his helmet.

He got up and took his place in line.

“Here,” Sasa brought FN-2187 a cool cloth for his head when the group was taking a break. “That was a nasty blow to the head Alix gave you. Trust me, I know. Alix was my baptism by fire. Knocked me around quite a bit when I was one of them.”

“Thanks,” FN-2187 held the cloth to his forehead as she sat down next to him on the floor. “You’re an angel.”

“No, I’m not,” Sasa grinned, bumping playfully against him. “I wouldn’t be allowed to be a Knight of Ren if I was.”

FN-2187 laughed as Sasa shifted back upright. Suddenly she jolted, nearly losing her balance but FN-2187 caught her wrist.

“Are you alright?” he asked trying to steady her.

“Fine,” Sasa pinched the bridge of her nose and took deep breaths. “Just some of my training with the Supreme Leader has painful after effects. The… painkillers haven’t kicked in yet.”

Sasa wasn’t up to explaining to FN-2187 how Snoke would electrocute her and inject her with a treatment serum to deal with the medical after effects of Force Lightning.

“Well, I have something here for you,” Cleo sat down next to them and offered Sasa a steaming cup of tea. “Here, drink. You know it’ll help.”

“Thank you, Cleo,” Sasa smiled, sipping the usual after lightning tea the Chosen would partake in. “It was just a bad one today.”

“He’s gotten very over zealous lately,” Cleo chuckled. “So… Sasa… I’ve got to ask about Kylo. Is he any good?”

Sasa blushed, “Cleo!”

“Maybe I should leave,” FN-2187 started to get up.

“You stay!” Sasa pulled him back down. “I need someone to help me with this fiend. I’m not discussing it, Cleo.”

“Why not?”
“Because it’s between me and him... and FN-2187 that one time he walked in on us.”

“In my defense, you were in a supply closet,” FN-2187 shuddered at the image he wished he could be rid of. Kylo’s back had been to the door so he had seen very little of Sasa and far too much of Kylo than he ever wanted.

“Come on, Sasa” Cleo punched her shoulder, “I want to know what I’m going to deal with when I get my shot.”

The humor fell from her eyes, and her lips got very thin.

“When you... get your shot,” Sasa said slowly.

“Yeah,” Cleo said. “The Supreme Leader said the next slot that opens is going to another Chosen. I think I have a shot. I hope he’s as good as imagine.”

From her glare, FN-2187 seriously wondered if Sasa was trying to choke Cleo with her mind.

“Well, Cleo,” Sasa’s voice went very formal as she stiffly sat up straight and set aside her tea. “I’m afraid that you won’t have a chance.”

Cleo gasped, “Sasa, are you pregnant?”

“No,” Sasa admitted, “but any day now I should be.”

“Oh,” Cleo looked away, something uncomfortable setting upon the group. Cleo was happy to be friendly with Sasa, but at the end of the day their rivalry for Kylo would always get in the way.

FN-2187 certainly didn’t have anything to add to the conversation.

“Well,” Cleo finally said, “good luck on that. But I want you to promise me something.”

“What’s that?” Sasa asked.

Cleo grinned and grabbed FN-2187’s arm, “When you do get pregnant, I call dibs on this one.”

Sasa laughed and clutched his other arm, “No way, this one is definitely mine.”

Well, FN-2187 was not unhappy how this conversation turned out.

“FN-2187,” came a stern voice.

His heart fell as he looked up to see Wiln Ren staring down at him.

“Yes, Sir?” FN-2187 rose to his feet.

“Can I see you in the hallway... now?”

“What do you think you’re doing?” Wiln demanded when they were alone.

FN-2187 frowned, “What do you mean?”

“I mean I look over to see some Stormtrooper with two Chosen hanging off his arms. Would you please explain?”
“Well, Cleo was… I don’t know, flirting with me to tease Sasa, and Sasa’s my friend—”

“Based on what I’ve seen from you, I think you hope for a little more than friendship.”

“Master Ren—”

“Don’t lie to me, FN-2187,” Wiln cut off. “I’ve seen the way you look at Sasa. She’s Kylo’s. End of story.”

“Does it have to be?” FN-2187 boldly asked. “I mean, once Kylo gets someone pregnant there’s just these women left with nothing. If it so happens that Sasa is one of those women left behind—”

“Careful FN-2187,” Wiln warned, “that’s a dangerous train of thought.”

“It seems to be the same one as you the way you and Nova are all over each other—”

Wrong choice. FN-2187’s words died in his throat as Wiln violently slammed him against the wall and choked him. Not with the Force, but his bare hand squeezed around FN-2187’s throat, using that grip to pin FN-2187 to the wall.

“I didn’t just hear you say that,” Wiln seethed. “Right?”

FN-2187’s only reply was a desperate gasp.

“Let me explain to you why I didn’t hear that, the Chosen are chosen for Kylo Ren not anyone else. So, if Snoke even gets the whiff of an idea that anyone else has touched a Chosen, the punishment is death.”

FN-2187’s eyes widened.

“So,” Wiln eased the grip on FN-2187’s throat, but did not release him, “you are either going to nod your head or shake it right now. Did I hear you wrong? Was I mistaken when I heard you say that I was messing around with one of the Chosen?”

He nodded.

“Good man,” Wiln dropped FN-2187 to the floor. His face showed no sympathy as FN-2187 struggled to catch his breath. “On your feet, Soldier. We need to return.”

FN-2187 nodded and with a hand up by Wiln, re-entered the training room.

“Just remember,” Wiln looked over at Sasa and Cleo. There was no doubt in FN-2187’s mind that Wiln knew exactly how much he cared for Sasa. “It doesn’t matter how charming and beautiful and friendly they are. The Chosen are not for us. So, do not touch them ever.”

FN-2187 sighed and glanced at Sasa. It was true, maybe if fate had dealt him a better hand he would have gone after Sasa. But her eyes were not for him, and they had never been turned on him. Her heart was firmly in the palm of Kylo Ren.

He just wished there was someone who looked at him the way Sasa looked at Kylo.

FN-2187 refused to admit that he was lost. It was his first time spending the night on the Supremacy and he had gotten up to use the fresher. The fresher was strangely far from the crew quarters he and
the rest of the FN and MK squads were staying in. On his way back, the similar looking hallways had confused him, causing FN-2187 to take a wrong turn. But he wasn’t lost. No, sir; not one bit.

…Okay, maybe he was a little bit lost.

He turned down a hallway and was pleasantly surprised to recognize it as the one he had accompanied Sasa to her quarters in. The FN squad had acted as her bodyguards until Snoke’s Praetorian Guard took over those duties.

Thinking to ask Sasa for help, FN-2187 was trying to decipher which door was hers when he heard it. A strange sort of wet noise, some muttering, and a lot of panting. Frowning, FN-2187 followed the noise around another corner, down the hallway that he vaguely remembered to hold offices for visiting guests. They usually were empty at this time of night, but not right now. One of the doors had been left open and the sight he saw inside made FN-2187 stop dead.


Nova was lying on the desk, legs spread lewdly, top pulled down to expose her small and pert breasts, her skirt was hiked up her waist, and Wiln had his pants around his ankles as he thrust into her like no tomorrow. Moans, grunts, and whispered declarations of pleasure told FN-2187 just how much the pair was enjoying it, and the way they kissed, and touched, and just clung together…

FN-2187 lived in the military. He had heard about sex. He had seen sex. He knew sex.

This wasn’t sex. This was the thing they called making love. FN-2187 didn’t need the Force to feel the raw passion and deep adoration in that couple. But he did have the Force – whoever slightly – and he felt that love pulse through the air.

Wiln’s words from earlier echoed in his head, “It doesn’t matter how charming and beautiful and friendly they are. The Chosen are not for us. So, do not touch them ever.”

Nova let out a groan and arched her back, “Oh, Willarn. Please, don’t stop. Don’t ever stop.”

“I won’t,” Wiln grunted and buried his face in her neck. “I never will.”

She gently guided his head up and they stared down into each other’s eyes. Then she wove a hand into his hair and pulled him down into a passionate kiss.

When they pulled apart, he whispered, “I love you, Nova.”

“I love you too,” she pulled him in for another kiss.

So, this is what love was, FN-2187 realized. The willingness to risk absolutely everything, even your very life to be with the one you cared most for in the Galaxy.

And in that moment, FN-2187 realized and accepted one simple fact: he would never have that with Sasa.

Without a word, FN-2187 slipped away back down the hall. He glanced at the doors as he passed by, wondering which of them belonged to her. But he supposed it didn’t really matter. She absolutely was his friend, but he didn’t want to bother her. He needed some time alone to digest the new information.

Sasa Ren would never love him, and honestly, he never truly would love her.
But he hoped with all of his might that someday he would find a woman he could.

They returned a day early. Sasa was so giddy at the thought of surprising Kylo that she thought she’d make a whole deal out of it.

She slipped into her room, throwing her bag onto the bed, and quickly found one of Kylo’s favorite pieces of lingerie all black and red with lace cut outs and halter stockings. She threw on a beautiful grey silk robe over top, let down her hair and brushed it out. Sasa did her makeup, a simple natural look but was a gorgeous smoky eye and cerise lip – Kylo loved it when she wore her Force Signature colour. She dabbed on a bit of Kylo’s favorite perfume, checked over her appearance in the mirror, gave her breasts one last push up, and headed out the door.

Sasa received many odd looks as she made her way to Kylo’s room, but no one dared make a comment to her face. Wanting to surprise Kylo even more, Sasa focused on cutting herself off from the Force so neither she nor Kylo could sense each other.

She punched in the code to his bedroom and was pleased to hear the shower running in his fresher. Grinning like a minx, Sasa crawled onto the middle of his bed, untied the sahs of her robe and pushed off one shoulder. She assumed her most seductive pose and twisted her face into her best come hither, Master and take me look.

Kylo was going to lose his mind.

The shower shut off, and Sasa could barely sit still. Electricity buzzed in her veins as she heard the door slide open. The grin across her face was so wide that it was almost physically painful.

He stepped out of the fresher, water dripping down his completely nude body (what point was there in putting on a towel between the shower and the bed?) Kylo stopped dead at the sight of her.

“Sasa?” his eyes were wide as saucers.


“What are you doing here?” he demanded, not actually sounding too happy.

“Well, um, we came back a day early, so I thought I’d surprise you.” She took a deep breath, trying to gain a hold of the situation again. In an attempt to be seductive she turned over onto her stomach to entice him over, “I missed you, my-”

“Why can’t I sense you in the Force?”

Sasa blinked.

“I, uh… wanted to surprise you, so I cut myself off for a few minutes.” Sasa frowned, “Kylo, what’s going on?”

Kylo groaned, putting his face in his hands, “Sasa, now is really not the time-”

“Kylo?” a voice came form the fresher. “Is someone out there?”

Sasa’s heart froze. No, it couldn’t be.

Sure enough, a minute later, Tara Ren emerged from Kylo Ren’s fresher, freshly showered.
An equally nude Tara Ren.

“Sasa,” Tara flashed the girl a smile as fear filled Sasa’s eyes and she scrambled to tie closed her robe. Tara came behind Kylo and wrapped her arms around his shoulders, “We didn’t think you were coming back until tomorrow.”

“Kylo?” Sasa whispered looking so embarrassed and even a little ashamed.

“I’m sorry, Sasa,” Kylo summoned a pair of towels. He wrapped one around his waist and offered the other to Tara, but she took her time in covering up. “Like Tara said, I didn’t think… You weren’t supposed to be here tonight… especially in my room.”

Sasa looked down at the ground. Why did she want to cry? She knew he did this. She knew he slept with Tara Ren. His relationship with Tara wasn’t a mere fantasy.

But seeing it made it so much more real.

“Sorry, Kid,” Tara snickered, “but Kylo wanted a real woman’s touch tonight. Someone who actually knows how to take care of him.”

Sasa balls her fists in the sheets of his bed, “I… I don’t… I’m… I’m sorry. I just thought of the promise Kylo made that my turn would be when I got back.”

“Oh, Sasa,” Tara laughed. “Stop pretending like it’s a surprise you’re second string. That’s the way it’s always been.”

Sasa squeezed shut her eyes. Why wasn’t Kylo saying anything?

“Now run along, Little Girl,” Tara ordered. “And let a real woman handle this real man.”

Sasa opened her eyes to find remorseful brown ones staring back at her.

She tightened her fists on the bedsheets.

“No,” Sasa whispered, her eyes not moving from Kylo’s.

Tara frowned, “What?”

Sasa took a deep breath, “I said no.”

“No?” Tara repeated.

“Can she do that?” Kylo asked.

Tara punched him in the shoulder.

Gathering her courage, Sasa rose to her feet, “I am not a little girl. I am real woman who knows how to handle a man – this man. I’m Sasa Ren, Knight of Ren, Chosen of the Chosen, Heir to a Mighty Bloodline. I have every right and more than you to lay claim to Kylo’s bed. I will be the mother of his heir if it’s the last thing I do. So, no Tara. I’m not going anywhere.”

Tara took a step forward, “He wants me.”

“He wanted me,” Sasa snapped. She looked at Kylo, “Isn’t that right? Didn’t you promise that I would share your bed the night I returned?”
Kylo’s throat was very dry, “Uh… well-”

“He asked me to come to him tonight,” Tara snapped. “He pulled me into his shower and did things to me that are too vile for your delicate little ears to hear.”

“Oh trust me, we’ve done plenty of unspeakable things,” Sasa retorted.

“You know, maybe I’m focusing on that too much and that’s why I can’t have a kid,” Kylo mused.

“Shut up!” the girls said together.

Kylo held up his hands and took a step back.

Sasa sighed, “Kylo, tell her what you want. Tell her that you want me in your bed tonight.”

He looked to her, “Well, uh-”

“Kylo!” Tara snapped.

His head swung to her.

“Tell her to leave,” Tara demanded coldly. “Now!”

Kylo just stared at the two of them.

Oh God, they were both mad at him and half a second away from killing each other. How the hell was he going to save this situation?

And then it hit him.

“Well,” Kylo hesitated, looking over at Tara, “she doesn’t have to leave.”

Tara’s eyes flashed, “What?”

“And neither does Tara,” Kylo quickly added.

“Excuse me?” Sasa scowled.

Kylo swallowed, “Well… If you ladies are so insistent on wanting me tonight, I’m sure I could manage satisfying you both.”

There was a painfully long silence.

“Both of us,” Tara parroted back at him.

As Sasa stared at Kylo with a blank, white face, Tara honestly wanted to laugh.

“You’re suggesting we solve this rivalry,” Tara said slowly, “…with a threesome?”

“It’s not the first time we’ve invited another girl into bed with us,” Kylo shrugged. “In fact, as I recall, you quite enjoy it when we do.”

Tara shot a deathly glare at Sasa as the other girl failed to restrain a giggle.

“You both want me,” Kylo continued smugly, “I deeply desire both of you, and there’s plenty of me to go around. So what do you say, Ladies? Think the two of you could handle all of this?”
Sasa’s eyes met Tara. Silence stretched an eon. Then, with a raise brow from Tara and a nod from Sasa, they smiled and advanced toward Kylo, slowly and seductively.

Kylo chuckled to himself.

This had gone surprisingly well.

---

**Twenty Minutes Later…**

Phasma helped hold the bloody cloth to Kylo’s face, “So, how did you break your nose?”

Kylo shuddered, remembering the pain the girls had inflicted upon him before leaving his bed empty, “I don’t want to talk about it.”

---

It wasn’t the most nervous Ben Solo had ever been, but it certainly was up there. Somewhere between the moment Jaina commed his mother after the Burning of Rornian and the day he walked into a room to find Uncle Luke, Felicity, Reine Agim, Obik Kenu, his parents, and Darth Vader’s helmet.

He was embarrassed to enter the control room sans helmet, but his Medic-droid, Max had insisted on a sabbatical from the helmet for a few days to allow his nose to heal. Kylo caught many strange and confused looks from the soldiers and officers when he entered, but no one said a word. He doubted some of them even knew who the bare-faced man was.

Sasa was discussing a report with a high-ranking officer Kylo honestly couldn’t recall the name of. When said officer spotted Kylo, he was sure to excuse himself fast. Even if the general populace of the *Finalizer* didn’t know Sasa was personally responsible for Kylo’s nose – Tara had even complimented Sasa on her nose breaking work last night – Kylo and Sasa had developed enough of a reputation that everyone knew to just get the hell out of the way when they were in the same room together.

If Sasa was aware of his presence, she didn’t acknowledge it. Her head was down, and she focused on reading over the report again. Worried he might startle her if he just straight up approached her, Kylo cautiously reached out to touch her mind.

It was ice cold.

Kylo swallowed, a memory unwillingly surfacing. He didn’t like to think about his father at all, but a scene from the night of Uncle Luke’s bachelor party came to mind.

“Last fucking time I get into a drinking contest with Kes Dameron,” Han Solo groaned on the cool tile of the fresher floor. He looked absolutely trashed, and his eleven-year-old son was doing his best to take care of his father while not waking his mother. “I swear the man has a second stomach just for liquor.”

*Ben’s mind briefly went to Poe Dameron as Han pulled himself to his feet to stagger over to the sink,*
“Well, at least I’m not the only son dealing with their drunk father tonight.”

Han paused splashing water on his face, “Hey, Ben? I’m sorry about all this. You shouldn’t see me like this.”

“It’s okay. It’s not like you do this a lot.”

“I know, but still. I should be a good role model for you.”

“Dad, you’re a smuggler who once spent a year in carbonite because you owed a mob boss money. I don’t think there was even a point where you could have been a good role model to me.”

Han chuckled, “Fair enough. Hey, I ever tell you the story of the time I tried to beat Chewie at a drinking contest?”

“Yeah, you had to get your stomach pumped, and Uncle Luke had to mind trick a few nurses to stop them from calling the Imperials. Mom heard what happened, declared all three of you were idiots and refused to send other Rebels to help, but then Boba Fett showed up and you guys had to escape through the infectious diseases unit. The Alliance wouldn’t let you return to base and you were quarantined on the Falcon with a Medic droid for over a month until you were declared safe,” Ben laughed. “I love that story.”

“We sure have had some adventures,” Han grinned. “You still haven’t told your mom that I told her what happened with Lando, Chewie, and I on Mallarex?”

“Oh course not. I don’t want her to murder you.”

“Good boy,” Han patted his son’s head. He groaned again, “Alright, Chewie’s in Luke’s old room, so there’s a couch in the living room with my name on it.”

“Sorry, Uncle Luke and the woman are sleeping on it.”

“Stop calling Fliss the woman.”

“I’m not calling her Aunt Felicity.”

“I never said you had to,” Han replied. He rubbed his face, “Alright, what are the odds that you’ll let me share your bed?”

Ben raised an eyebrow, “Solo Family Motto.”

“Never tell me the odds,” Han rolled his eyes and muttered something about his son being too much like him. “Fine, I may be able to sneak into your mom and I’s room, but I’m worried I’ll wake your mother. She knows I was drinking heavily and want revenge on Luke, so, if I’m going to risk that yelling match, I want you to do me a favor.”

“…Ok.”

“Reach out with the Force and check the temperature of her Force Signature.”


“Because your Uncle always tells me that if a woman’s Force Signature is cold, you’re fucked. And not in the good way.”

“Ugh! Dad!”
“Ben, you were conceived in an Ewok village with C-3PO in sleep mode in the corner, and this is not new information for you. Let’s not act like we have pretences.”

“The Threepio information was new.”

“Could you just please check your mother?”

“What’s in it for me?” Ben asked.

Han narrowed his eyes, “Excuse me?”

Ben flashed his father a smile that was a mirror of Han’s, “You always told me not to do something risky for someone else unless there’s benefit to yourself.”

Han shook his head, “Note to self, teach next kid in the family selflessness over profit.”

“You have no one to blame but yourself.”

“So, what’s this going to cost me?”

“How about you start naming numbers and I’ll tell you when to stop?”

Han couldn’t help but smile, “That’s my boy.”

After a number had been agreed on – a number that had made Han Solo mutter something about forgoing protection on Endor had been a mistake – Ben had done what his father asked. Kylo would never forget how white Han’s face had gone when Ben declared his mother’s Signature was ice cold. He remembered thinking how hilarious the bind his father was in at dealing with a woman pissed enough to have an ice cold Signature.

But as he stared at Sasa Ren, her Signature probably even colder, Kylo Ren simply prayed for mercy.

…Or death. Death would be a lot easier.

Gathering his courage, Kylo took a deep breath and approached Sasa. When he was standing next to her, Sasa glanced up briefly, but did not acknowledge him as she focused on her work.

Ben Solo never wished harder than in that moment that he was a naturally charismatic person.

Kylo didn’t know how else to start the conversation, so he simply said, “Hey.”

Sasa barely looked up, “Good morning, Master Kylo.”

“I wanted to talk about last night.”

“What’s there to talk about? You were doing your duty and suggested a solution to do it more efficiently. I let my personal bias get in the way. I apologize.”

“Sasa, don’t do this,” he didn’t need to be a Solo to identify the sarcasm dripping from her voice.

“What?”

“This.”
“Sarcasm?” Sasa shot. “Sass? Doesn’t your family hold such virtues in high esteem?”

“No, I forgot,” she cut off. “You just want me to be quiet and submissive and do as you say until Tara comes calling.”

“It’s not like that.”

“Yes, it is.”

“Not anymore!” Kylo exclaimed.

A pair of techs looked up, and the Knights of Ren quickly turned their faces away.

“Look,” Kylo muttered when the officers went back to work, “that may have been how it started, but things have changed.”

Sasa looked away.

“No, they haven’t,” she whispered. “Nothing will ever change the fact that you picked her – you wanted her – but you didn’t choose me. The Supreme Leader did.”

“I’m not some nobody,” Sasa cut off firmly. “You’ve seen it. I was hand chosen by the Supreme Leader. I’m special. I come from high stock.”

“And what stock is that?”

Sasa blinked, “What do you mean?”

“What high stock do you come from?” Kylo repeated, his brow furrowed with a mystery that had been crossing his mind more as of late. “You say that you come from some great bloodline, but what bloodline is that? The old Jedi Order had rules against attachment, and the only children from the new Order were Rey Skywalker and Miri Halcorr-Kene. You can’t be Miri, because I personally killed her, and if you’re implying you’re Rey Skywalker, then you and I have a whole different set of issues to deal with.”

“I’m not Rey Skywalker,” Sasa snapped. She studied Kylo’s face for a long stretch, “Why are you asking such questions?”

“It’s just-”

“Do you doubt the Supreme Leader?”

There was no one in the room who was pretending they weren’t listening anymore.

Kylo glanced around, sternly but also nervously, “Of course I don’t. I just have… questions.”

For a very long time, Sasa said nothing. He could feel her cerise Signature gently probing at the borders of his mind. Kylo let her in, willing to show her the questions he dare not utter so publicly.

She drew back from his mind like it was a red-hot iron that scalded her skin.

“I am what he says I am,” Sasa whispered, a tear forming in the corner of her eye. Kylo so wanted to
wipe it away and quell her own fears with a kiss. “I believe what he claims. I know in my heart that I was made for something more, made from something more.”

Ben Solo closed his eyes. He may reject the more undesirable parts of his blood, but at least he could say the world knew his family’s names.

Sasa shook her head, “I am not a nobody, Kylo Ren… and I’ll prove it to you. Just you wait. I’ll show everyone.”

And without another word, Sasa strode out of the room.

Kylo could feel every eye in the room on him.

“What are you all looking at?” Kylo barked. “Get back to work!”

He didn’t need to ask twice.

Kylo sighed, rubbing his face. Then he caught sight of a somewhat familiar figure – the Stormtrooper called Marks. Marks was a promising future Knight of Ren according to Wiln, and was a friend of Sasa’s friend, FN-2187. Having no better option, Kylo went up to Marks.

“Tell me the truth, Soldier,” Kylo muttered his order, looking around nervously. “Did I just make things worse?”

Marks glanced towards the door Sasa had exited, “With all due respect, Sir… Hell yes.”

Kylo groaned.

It took a couple of days after his visit to the Supremacy — and the warning from Wiln Ren — for FN-2187 to realize that something had changed. Activity in the base, in their training, seemed on the uptick—a new, quiet urgency pervading everything they did, everything they were expected to do. Instruction seemed suddenly more intense. Their classwork and lectures, which until then had focused primarily on their duties as stormtroopers — on small-unit tactics, weapons maintenance, military structure and integration — gave way to more discussions on particular deployments, stormtrooper specializations, and localized scenarios using named, known locations. For the better part of a week, they studied and were repeatedly tested on different historical battles, many from the Clone Wars, some even earlier.

They were stormtroopers, but they weren’t quite, not yet. They were cadets, and as cadets they had additional duties aside from their training. Those duties covered everything from maintaining the armory to performing minor repairs on equipment to quite literally moving equipment from one location to another, often by hand but frequently with the assistance of the heavy-lifter droids, when whatever was to be moved was too big to be moved manually. They mopped the floors. They emptied the trash. They worked in the galley preparing meals.

That part of sanitation duty was fine for FN-2187, especially since Sasa tended to pull the right strings that FN-2187 would bring her her lunch. He would have to stay and supervise her meal, ensuring Tara hadn’t slipped in any poisons. And if they so happened to talk about things like training, schedules, and how pissed off Sasa was with Kylo like a pair of good friends, then so be it.

What FN-2187 didn’t enjoy was toilet scrubbing duty. And FN-2187 found he seemed to have his roster changed to toilet scrubbing duty whenever Kylo saw him exiting Sasa’s room in his daily plea
to get Sasa to speak to him again. Sasa was proud to tell FN-2187 that she had never actually let Kylo into her room so this was a special perk that even Kylo didn’t get.

Truth be told, FN-2187 was not keen on getting privileges from Sasa that Kylo didn’t get. There were enough rumours about FN-2187 and Sasa, and the angry glares he had been getting from Kylo lately made FN-2187 wonder if Kylo was starting to believe him.

FN-2187 still had a bruise on his back from the first time he ran into Kylo doing such plea. Kylo made it very clear what would happen to FN-2187 if he ever told anyone he saw Kylo bringing her flowers.

Even worse with this change of duty, free time in which to relax, simply to rest in the barracks or to read First Order–approved literature or watch First Order–approved vids, vanished.

Being a good friend, Sasa had been stealing FN-2187 away with made up excuses about duties for him to fulfil, but in reality she would sneak him back to her room for said downtime. They would play dejarik or watch some HoloVids that weren’t First Order approved. When Captain Phasma discovered what was going on, she put an instant stop to it.

Well, except for every Tuesday when she actually joined them to watch a hilarious melodrama based on the Skywalker family, *The Starkillers*. Both Sasa and FN-2187 were too afraid to ask why she was interested.

There was always something more to do, somewhere else to be, another session in the simulator or more dishes to wash. There was always someone watching their performance, no matter what it was, someone to tell them that they needed to work faster, work harder, that they had to be better.

It didn’t leave a lot of time to think, and FN-2187 began to wonder if that wasn’t the point.

As grueling as their schedule had become, it was Slip who took the worst of it. He had never been the best under pressure, and his mistakes became more common. Under scrutiny, each error was magnified. Minor infractions—a broken plate when they were doing the dishes, a battery pack left on the wrong shelf in the armory, things that could’ve happened to anyone—were dealt with punitively, and all of them were punished, not Slip alone.

Nines and Zeroes made no secret of their growing resentment. Even FN-2187 felt it. He could see Slip struggling, and he would think to help him, to try to ease his burden, even move to do so. Then he would remember Captain Phasma and would instead turn away.

FN-2187 hated the look on Sasa’s face whenever she saw him do that.

He didn’t like how that made him feel—almost like he was sick, like there was something sitting deep in his stomach that didn’t agree with him. It didn’t help that FN-2187 couldn’t see any indication from anyone else—not from Nines, not from Zeroes—that they felt the same way. He was sure he felt it alone.

He began to wonder if there was something wrong with him.

---

Sasa Ren wasn’t sure how she found herself alone in a hallway with General Hux, but she knew she should get out as quickly as possible.
“General,” she nodded as she passed.

Force Sensitive or not, she couldn’t help but give a small yelp when he hooked an arm around her hip and pulled her back to him.

“Don’t startle,” Hux held up his hands innocently. “I just wanted to talk.”

She glared at him, “You could have asked politely.”

“Sorry, I had a bit of a rough upbringing and I fear my interactions in treatment of women can be lacking.”

“You’re not actually justifying that kind of bullshit?”

Hux frowned, “Anyway… I wanted to speak to you about Kylo Ren. I hear that things are a little rocky with you two.”

“You must be delighted.”

“On the contrary, I hate seeing a beautiful woman upset.”

“Well, I’m not wilted flower, but I thank you for the concern,” Sasa said coldly. “Kylo and I are just going through a tiff.”

“I see, well,” Hux reached up and cupped her cheek, “if you need any help getting through such heartbreak, I am more than happy to offer my services. You are a very beautiful woman. What do you say? Would you like some comfort?”

Sasa answered sweetly, “Get your hand off my face, or I swear to the Force, I’ll bite your fingers off.”

Hux frowned, “Can you really do that?”

“Do you want to find out?”

He stepped back from her.

She flashed him a smile, “I thought not.”

As a member of the Expert Class, FN-2187 had the privilege of being allowed to access the lightsaber training room alone. It was a few days before he managed to get away to do so, thinking it would be a good way to clear his head of everything. Maybe he could finally settle this whole Slip/Sasa/Kylo/Phasma/Wiln mess in his head.

“Looking for a partner?” Wiln Ren asked.

FN-2187 sighed. Or not.

“Sure,” FN-2187 nodded. “You can only deflect remotes for so long.”

“And that’s the kind of thinking that let you skip the Advanced Class,” Wiln smiled. “You ready?”

“Your move, Sir,” FN-2187 raised his lightsaber.
They sparred and clashed for a good long while, Wiln critiquing him as they did so.

“You’re very good, 2187,” Wiln finally declared. “I’m really impressed. They told me you were born to be a soldier. Thought Sasa had made you too soft for that, but now I believe them.”

“Thank you,” FN-2187 blocked a blow. “Marks helps me practice when I need it.”

“Good. I’m almost ready to graduate him to the Expert Class. You both will make fine Knights of Ren.”

FN-2187 couldn’t manage a smile.

Gaining no reply, Wiln studied FN-2187 for a long time as they fought.

“You know,” Wiln said slyly, “there’s some offices near those rooms Sasa and I stayed in. No one uses them at night, so the doors are left open so that no one can sneak into them and hide behind a locked door.”

FN-2187 missed a block. Oh God, were they really going to talk about this? Couldn’t they just pretend it never happened?

“So whenever those doors are closed at night an alarm is sent to Security and they check the cameras,” Wiln continued. “So, if someone was doing something they shouldn’t in one of those offices, they wouldn’t close the door. But that’s nothing to worry about, because there would be nothing to see in said office. Do you follow me? Was there something to see?”

FN-2187 met Wiln’s eyes, “No, Sir. Nothing at all.”

He really didn't want to be choked again.

“Good,” Wiln nodded. “You know, the Chosen were originally selected from the Blessed.”

“Is that so?”

“I was one of the Blessed… and so was Nova. We became… close. We had plans. Goals. We knew what we wanted, but then Snoke chose her. I busted my ass to get into the position I am in today so that I could continue to see her, but there was no point. She had become off limits.”

“Yes, you made that point very clear.”

Blades locked, Wiln just stared at FN-2187, “Do you know what makes a good Knight of Ren?”

“No, Sir.”

“A good Knight of Ren knows how to play the game. They follow all the rules, obey all the orders, and do it without hesitation. I’ve seen many good Knights of Ren… but the Knights who are alive now… they’re not good Knights of Ren. Not the ones who have held their place for years. Who survive through it all. Those Knights – Tara, Cern, Kylo, myself – we’re great Knights of Ren.”

“What about Sasa?”

“She’s getting there, but she still hasn’t figured it out.”

"Figured out what?"

“Figured out how to be a great Knight of Ren. You know, Nova is not as dim as she presents
herself, and she’s a lot better at lightsaber than you’ve ever seen. But you’ll never see it.”

“Why?” FN-2187 asked.

“Because she does enough to keep herself from being punished, cast off, or even killed… but she’ll never present herself as good enough to ever truly fill a spot as a Knight of Ren. You see, the Chosen don’t have to sleep with Kylo, just the ones who become Knights of Ren. So, if she’s never a Knight of Ren, she doesn’t have to be with Kylo. And if she’s not forced to be with Kylo, well then…”

FN-2187 understood. If she wasn’t a Knight of Ren, then Nova could be with Wiln.

Wiln smiled, “That my friend, is how you be a great Knight of Ren. A good Knight of Ren follows the rules… but a great Knight of Ren knows how to rig the game. So the choice is yours FN-2187. Don’t make the wrong one.”

He frowned, “And which one is the wrong choice?”

“Now isn’t that the eternal question?”

After the second multiforce battle simulation, Captain Phasma singled out FN-2187 for praise in front of everyone who had participated. She had him stand and face the debriefing – and there were hundreds of them there that time, all the pilots and stormtroopers and instructors; it felt like everyone.

He especially didn’t like how Captain Electra’s droid, BB-9E looked at him. There was just something about BB Units that made FN-2187 uneasy.

She talked about his skill and his efficiency and his ruthlessness, how all the trainees could learn something from watching FN-2187. It made him feel awkward, even embarrassed, and he was thankful he had his helmet on so no one could see him.

“You know I can sense that blush on your face,” Sasa teased as everyone started to file out.

FN-2187 rolled his eyes, his blush not getting any better, “You sense everything.”

“True, but my point still stands.”

“Did you have a point?”

Sasa paused, “I suppose not.”

FN-2187 opened his mouth to speak but suddenly went very stiff.

“He’s watching us, isn’t he?” Sasa didn’t turn around.

FN-2187 nodded as Kylo’s eyes bore into him from across the room. He didn’t even look like he was paying attention to Captain Roan speaking to him.

Sasa glanced back and dramatically shook her head.

“Come on,” she boldly took his arm. “Let’s go have lunch.”

FN-2187 could feel Kylo’s eyes burning into him the whole way until Sasa dragged him out the
“They’re close,” Hux said, then though no one asked. “Almost too close one might say.”

“He’s a good soldier, he wouldn’t dare,” Kylo answered shortly.

“Oh, sure, he’s a good soldier, but that Sasa… How far would she go to prove her point? After all, isn’t toying with men and doing whatever it takes to get your attention exactly what she’s been trained for?”

“Hux?”

“Yes, Ren?”

“One more word against Sasa and I’ll throw you into the wall of this simulation room.”

Hux grinned, “That’s not a no.”

That was the last thing Hux said before Kylo used the Force to send him flying into the wall.

“Let it not be said I’m not a man of my word,” Kylo told the laughing Phasma.

FN-2187 couldn’t stop shaking. He had just had his very first real deployment. The deployment was to a mining colony established in an artificial asteroid field collectively known as Pressy’s Tumble.

The largest of the fragments was the base of the mining operation, a sprawling refinery complex that covered most of the surface and had been sunk deep into the rock itself. FN-2187 wasn’t exactly sure what was being mined; opinions varied. Some of the stormtroopers said it was fuel, vital to First Order fleet operations. Others said it was some kind of ore needed for starship shield generators. One stormtrooper claimed it was Tibanna gas, but he was clearly mistaken.

What FN-2187 did know was that they were there to “restore order,” according to the briefing given by Captain Phasma herself. Republic agents, she told them, had infiltrated the mining operations and were both sabotaging equipment and creating dissent among the miners. The First Order’s presence was required to put a stop to it, to get the miners back on schedule, and to prevent any further delays.

Theirs was the second squad to shuttle in, and it was different from their trip to the Star Destroyer. This time FN-2187, Slip, Zeroes, and Nines stood in deployment formation for the entire ride, along with another three fire-teams of stormtroopers, some cadets and some more seasoned veterans. All of them were locked and loaded, carrying live ammunition and grenades, and one of the fire-teams, FN-2187 saw, had shock staffs and neurocage nets—weapons designed for crowd control, meant to subdue rather than kill.

Or so he had thought.

What happened was now thing more than a blur, but a blur he couldn’t move from his mind. They had been called in the accompany Phasma to deal with the striking miners. It was supposed to be a simple mission. The miners had offer terms of agreement to the First Order. All Phasma had to do was accept them or negotiate until she accepted.

But instead… Instead she had ordered them to open fire on the unarmed civilians in the middle of a negotiation. FN-2187 didn’t need to be briefed on the Reasonable Wartime Measures Act to know
what had been done was a war crime.

A war crime he helped commit.

True, he never actually fired on them. Slip had. He had finally proved himself and opened fire. Zeroes and Nines followed suit. FN-2187 froze. By the time he had collected himself, they were all dead. Dead at the hands of his team.

Dead at the hands of Slip.

“Don’t make the wrong choice,” Wiln Ren’s words thundered in FN-2187’s mind as he made his way to Captain Phasma’s office. She hadn’t been very happy with his actions at Pressy’s Tumble.

When FN-2187 arrived at the office of Captain Phasma, he wasn’t quite sure what to do. Her door was open, but she wasn’t looking up at him from her desk. Instead she just sat there doing paperwork, forcing him to wait in silence.

The minutes stretched on endlessly as he just stood there waiting. His posture was ramrod and as perfect as one could imagine a soldier, but after a while of her letting him sweat, FN-2187 dared to let his eyes flick about.

He had been in a few offices before. Wiln Ren’s was filled with books, maps, artifacts, and Holos of information and pictures. Kylo being busy with his other duties, Wiln had taken the place of the First Order expert on the history and study of the Force, as well as the one in charge of advancing the potential Knights through the proper training. Meanwhile, Kylo was the top member of the High Council and was in charge of the military aspects of the Knights of Ren – especially relations with the Resistance. Cern was the intelligence and interrogation expert, while Tara made sure everything ran smoothly and kept everyone in line.

The other Knights of Ren didn’t seem to last long enough to have a permanent role. He’d be lying if he said that didn’t concern him about his future with the Knights of Ren… and Sasa’s.

If Tara or Cern had an office, FN-2187 hadn’t seen it. He had seen Kylo’s… and it was freakishly well-organized. He had a cross-reference catalogue system for all of his files that would make a droid salivate. Kylo had been proud to tell FN-2187 that he had programmed it from scratch all by himself. He was great with putting together mechanics and programming… which was good because every time Kylo got pissed off, whatever poor piece of machinery was nearest would become very well-acquainted with his lightsaber. The worst part was that then they would have to put up with a few days of Kylo’s complaining at his lack of equipment while they waited for the new parts to be shipped, until someone inevitably just gave up their own equipment to him to make the complaining to stop.

Three computer terminals and an interrogation room had taken the brunt of Kylo and Sasa’s feud. He remembered what Sasa had said upon him telling her the latest damage: Kylo Ren knows two ways to deal with his problems. He either fights them out or fucks them out. Since I’m not giving him one (Tara had conveniently left on a two week mission after the nose breaking incident) he’s gotta turn to the other. When we do make up, I’m probably not going to walk straight for a week.

FN-2187 really wished he didn’t remember that.

He had also seen General Hux’s office briefly, and he was surprised to see just how many framed awards, certificates, and various accolades the man could fit onto his walls.

But Phasma’s office was different; it was spartan and spotless with a few propaganda posters on the
wall. It was easy to tell she didn’t spend much time in the office, and honestly FN-2187 probably would have never guessed it was hers, lacking any personal touch whatsoever.

Except possibly the shelf that contained twelve small Holos each projecting the wanted poster of a different enemy of the First Order.

Everyone in the First Order knew the face of General Leia Organa. FN-2187 had seen that wanted poster so many times, it might as well have been tattooed onto the back of his eyelids.

FN-2187 was also a little bit familiar with the poster of Commander Diego Nalto, though honestly FN-2187 couldn’t recall the man’s position in the Resistance other than being Organa’s second-in-command.

He had no idea who the hell Commander Poe Dameron was. The man looked so smug in his file photo. Dameron was no doubt some pompous jerk like Hux or Kylo Ren. FN-2187 would probably hate him.

Three of the images were of droids: a blue astromech, a golden protocol droid, and an orange and white BB-8 unit. All had bold, capitalized letters under their pictures that read DISASSEMBLE UPON CAPTURE.

Next was some golden-brown furry creature FN-2187 had never heard of, but he had heard the name of Chewbacca. He had also heard of the next person: the infamous Rebellion General Han Solo.

Weirdly, the more FN-2187 stared at the picture of Solo, the more he started to think that the former General looked scarily like Kylo Ren. FN-2187 had been given the privilege of seeing Kylo sans mask, but he certainly was not in on the intel that Kylo was the son of Solo and Organa. Kylo liked to keep that under wraps as much as possible. Sure, FN-2187 knew Kylo was the grandson of Darth Vader via Vader’s daughter, but First Order Stormtroopers were not informed that Vader’s daughter was General Leia Organa.

Then was an image FN-2187 was certain he had seen before: a photo of Luke Skywalker ten years too old for FN-2187 to recognize him as now… Or when their paths did cross in about three years’ time. Luke’s photo also had bold, capital letters under it. TERMINATE IMMEDIATELY. CONTACT THE KNIGHTS OF REN FOR BACKUP. NO EXCEPTIONS.

The picture next to Luke Skywalker’s made FN-2187 do a double take.

Was that seriously a child on a wanted poster? Listed with a reward price twice the amount of General Leia Organa?

A sweet, smiling little girl stared out at FN-2187. He scowled at the image, something inside of him being pulled towards it. It gave him that funny stirring inside of him that Sasa always claimed was the Force when she tried to practice rebalancing with him. FN-2187 wasn’t very good at it, but there was something about that image that called him.

His eyes slipped down to the information section to figure out why such a young girl was considered one of the greatest enemies of the First Order, but what he saw in the text made his stomach drop.

MOST WANTED

NAME: Rey Rhiaon Skywalker
“Don’t make the wrong choice,” Wiln Ren’s words repeated.

FN-2187 gulped. Was this another thing he would have to do as a Knight of Ren?

He looked to the next Holo next to Rey’s. It was another one that listed the subject was terminated. Felicity Rhiaon Skywalker. Human. Female. Homeworld: Coruscant.

Why did something in the Force tug at him while he read that name?

The final one was a strangely unremarkable woman. She didn’t even have that high a bounty; just some old woman with the title of doctor before her name.

“Doctor Meredyth Kalonia,” Phasma suddenly said.

FN-2187 nearly jumped a foot. When had she started watching him.

“C- Captain?” FN-2187 stuttered.

Phasma just looked at him, “Kalonia. Doctor Kalonia. That’s the woman you were looking at.”

“Oh, uh, yes, Captain.”

“You’re wondering why I have her on my shelf?”

“Well, uh… yes, Captain.”

“That woman,” Phasma pointed to the Holo, “is the only one who was smart enough to get the hell off Rornian before the Knights of Ren burned it to the ground. That’s what Felicity Rhiaon should have done. Grabbed her daughter and gotten the hell out of there, Skywalkers be damned. What happened next to her daughter is her own damn fault.”

FN-2187 just stared at Phasma.

“Sit,” Phasma gestured to the empty chair across her desk.

He obeyed.

“You didn’t fire,” Phasma simply said.

FN-2187 hung his head, “No, Ma’am.”

“Why not?”

“I, uh… I don’t know. I just… couldn’t. They were unarmed.”
Phasma closed her eyes briefly, “Such attitudes won’t get you far in the First Order, FN-2187.”

“I know, Ma’am.”

“Do you not understand what’s going on here? We’re trying to groom you into a perfect soldier. You could be a General. You could be a Knight of Ren.”

“I know, I just… I can’t explain it. Perhaps I need a reconditioning session.”

Phasma raised an eyebrow. There was something really wrong when a soldier willingly requested a reconditioning session.

“I reviewed the footage of your session with the Chosen,” Phasma moved to the next point. “I saw your bout with FN-2003.”

FN-2187 winced.

“I have one question for you, FN-2187.”

“Yes, Captain.”

“Were you toying with FN-2003? Was that what I saw?”

FN-2187 hesitated, and just doing that, he knew, made Captain Phasma unhappy. If she was angry, he couldn’t tell. Through her helmet, her voice was always carefully modulated.

“FN-2003 had been injured in a previous bout,” he said. “I didn’t want to see him hurt any further.”

“I see.” Her helmet turned toward him, hidden eyes seeking his, and suddenly FN-2187 felt horribly exposed sitting across that desk, just the two of them. “You didn’t want him fighting someone else, someone who wasn’t…sympathetic to his situation.”

“No, Captain.”

“Your objective was simple, FN-2187.”

“I won the bout, Captain.”

“But you considered losing to him first, didn’t you?”

FN-2187 didn’t respond.

“A real stormtrooper has no room for sympathy,” Phasma told him. “A real stormtrooper is the extension of the First Order, of Supreme Leader Snoke’s will, nothing less. Do you think the Supreme Leader would have hesitated, FN-2187?”

“No, Captain.”

Phasma studied his face for a long time, “You must understand, FN-2187. What you’re doing now, what you’ve been doing these past few weeks is dangerous. If you don’t fit into the First Order… that’s not a good position to be in. I like you, FN-2187. I have high hopes for you, but I can’t protect you if you don’t play the game.”

There it was again, those words: play the game. What a horrible game it was.

“You need to make a choice, FN-2187,” Phasma said. “Do you have what it takes to be a Knight of
Ren? Or do you want something else entirely?"

FN-2187 was scared that he knew the answer.

Marks found him an hour later, curled up in his bunk having a full-on panic attack.

“It’s going to be okay,” Marks promised sitting on FN-2187’s bunk with him.

“No, it isn’t! You don’t understand!” FN-2187 admitted, “I don’t know if I want to be a Knight of Ren.”

Marks frowned and looked away, “You don’t get it.”

“Get what?”

“You and I… we’ve never had a choice. If they want us, they will make us a Knight of Ren. It was decided a long time ago, and they don’t care if we agree or not. You’re going to be a Knight of Ren. You better get used to the idea.”

FN-2187’s heart raced in his chest. Marks was right, for some reason Kylo Ren had decided his fate a long time ago. Someday FN-2187 would bear the name Fyrn Ren and do things as unspeakable as Phasma had done at Pressy’s Tumble.

“Don’t make the wrong choice,” Wiln Ren’s words had been nothing but the illusion of choice. He would be a Knight of Ren whether he liked it or not.

And FN-2187 didn’t like it.

“Wow, you really must have pissed her off,” Cern chuckled. “She won’t even look at you.”

“Shut up,” Kylo glared at him.

Cern just laughed.

It had been two weeks since his stupid threesome suggestion. Kylo and the rest of the Knights were scattered across the Command Bridge of the Finalizer. Sasa had placed herself on the absolute opposite end of the bridge from Kylo, electing to rather stand near Hux and Captain Electra than be anywhere near Kylo.

He knew he had fucked up when someone willingly chose Electra over him. Even Snoke kept his distance from her.

When Sasa looked up, Kylo tried to catch her eye – an admittedly difficult feat while wearing a mask – but he managed it. Unfortunately, the second he had, Sasa immediately looked towards Hux. She flashed the General a smile and touched a flirty hand to his arm.

Kylo smirked. Really? She was going to use Hux to make him jealous?

“You know, you look like an idiot wearing that fucking mask while the rest of us are barefaced,” a woman’s voice came from behind.
Oh good, because the day wasn’t unbearable enough already.

“Welcome back, Tara,” Kylo rolled his eyes. “Would it kill you not to disparage me in front of the officers?”

“It might,” Cern grinned.

Kylo and Tara exchanged a look. A nod from Kylo and Tara flipped Cern’s chair over.

“I gotta stop sitting next to you,” Cern grumbled, pulling himself back up.

Kylo shook his head, “How did the trip go?”

“Well, Tekka certainly knows something, but he’s on the run,” Tara reported. “I chased him across half the Galaxy before he gave me the slip on Scarif.”

“We’ll double our efforts to find him. Broken or not, I don’t like the idea of Luke Skywalker being out there somewhere.”

“Agreed.” Tara causally glanced towards Hux and Sasa, “My, my. Those two are getting rather touchy, aren’t they?”

Kylo scowled as he turned his attention to the two. Sasa was laughing and Hux standing behind her, hands caressing up and down her arms.

Those soft arms Kylo loved to feel wrapped around his body. A smile spread by lips he so craved the taste of. A sparkle in her spirit he had thought was only reserved for him.

He didn’t want to be jealous of Hux… but damn it, it was working.

Behind Kylo’s back, Tara shot Cern a smirk. Cern just rolled his eyes.

Kylo’s mind filled with dark images of choking out Hux, throwing him across the room, then dragging Sasa to his bedroom where he would tie her up, spank her, and punish her as he pleased. Unable to trust himself not to act on such thoughts, Kylo stormed over to observe a monitor that would force his back to the pair.

“Got him,” Sasa’s eyes twinkle mischievously. “Thank you for your help, General Hux.”

Hux chuckled, “Any venture that has the sole goal of angering Kylo Ren is one I’m happy to pursue. Especially when it concerns such a beautiful woman.”

Sasa smiled and moved to break away from Hux now that Kylo wasn’t watching. A hand suddenly caught her wrist and Sasa found herself pulled back towards Hux.

“Now, wait a moment,” Hux grinned. “We’re not done yet.”

“No, I think we are,” Sasa said kindly trying to shake his grip.

“But we’ve only just gotten started. Stay for a while. Let’s see what else will anger Ren.”

Kylo sensed the change in Sasa. Immediately his head snapped toward them. Hux had a firm gripping on Sasa’s wrist and she was trying to wrestle free. It looked innocent enough, maybe a playful act between lovers.

“I always did think Sasa’s eyes linger on Hux a little too long,” Tara murmured in Kylo’s ear. “So
shameful. I would barely give him the time of day, and yet there she’s throwing herself at him.”

Indeed, Kylo might have even believed it to be the act of a pair of lovers… if he couldn’t sense her discomfort in the Force.

“I’m serious, Hux,” Sasa kept her voice low not to make a scene. “Let go of me.”

“Just listen to what I have to say.”

“I will if you let me go. Come on, General, you’re hurting me.”

Someone cleared their throat, and Hux looked up to find the disapproving eyes of Wiln Ren.

“Is there a problem?” Wiln asked slowly.

Hux swallowed. The Supreme Leader hadn’t just made Wiln the instructor of the Chosen; it was also well-known that Wiln had been trained to be their protector. If you messed with one of Wiln’s girls… lets just say it never ended well.

Locking eyes with Wiln, Hux released Sasa and held up his hand innocently.

Wiln looked to Sasa, “Tell me if he’s giving you problems.”

Sasa nodded and Wiln departed. She turned her attention back to Hux, fixing him with a glare.

Hux tried to flash her a charming smile, “I’m sorry, Sasa, that was inappropriate of me, but a woman of your beauty just does things to a man.”

“Just look at them,” Tara took a step closer to Kylo so she was whispering in his ear. “So, blatant.”

“You are a very beautiful woman,” Hux twirled a lock of her hair. “Red is totally the loveliest hair colour. There aren’t nearly as many of us as there should be.”

“So intimate,” Tara hissed.

Sasa glared at Hux as he took a step closer to her and slid his hands up her arms, “General, please stop.”

“Why do you fight me?” Hux breathed. “Why do you fight this? He doesn’t respect you. You’re his second thought and will always be. He gives you no purpose but to spread your legs.”

“You’re wrong. I’m more than that.”

“But he doesn’t let you be. You need someone who will let you be more.”

“Someone like you?” Sasa shot, her body stiffening as his hands drifted down and settled on her hips.

“So much more than they pretend to be,” Tara smirked.

Kylo clenched his fist tightly.

“I could make everything change for you. Show you the world and give it to you. Together we would be unstoppable,” Hux ghosted his lips over hers. “You would be so much more than you are now. So much more than Solo’s Whore.”
“I’m sorry, Kylo,” Tara cooed, her hands running across his shoulders, “but it looks like it’s just a blatant betrayal of you.”

That was the moment a blast of blue lightning from Sasa’s fingertips shot Hux clean across the room, hitting the wall.

The room fell perfectly silent.

Kylo looked to Tara, “You were saying?”

“You’re right, General Hux,” Sasa said coldly but loudly. “I am far much more than just Solo’s Whore.”

Hux let out a pathetic groan against the wall.

With a smirk on her lips, Sasa’s head snapped to Kylo. He raised an eyebrow, a coy smile on his face, and Sasa crossed the room to him in less than four steps. With no preamble, she grasped those strong arms she had so missed, and looked up at him, forest green eyes burning with desire.

The same desire that inflamed his forest green soul.

“I forgive you,” Sasa declared before he could say a word. “Now take me to your room and fuck me until I’m raw.”

Kylo did not need to be asked twice; he simply gestured to the door and said, “Lead the way.”

Grasping his arm, Sasa led Kylo towards the exit when they were stopped by the call of Hux’s voice.

“You can’t leave!” Hux exclaimed, still crumpled in a heap against the wall. “We have important work to do, Sasa! Where do you thinking you’re going?”

Sasa just smirked, “To do what a whore does.”

And with that they were gone.

Slowly – and with much confusion – the officers got back to work, muttering among themselves about what had just occurred. No one dared to approach Hux as he sulked on the floor.

No one but Cern and Tara Ren.

“Would it be too much to ask for a hand up?” Hux inquired, looking quite pathetic.

Tara just crossed her arms, “We did it your way, General. Now it’s my turn.”

Sasa was already undressing Kylo before they had even stumbled kissing into his room.

“I’m so sorry,” Kylo managed through ragged breaths as Sasa fumbled for the door close button behind her. “I wanted you so much that night, I just didn’t want to let you go. But Tara would have literally tried to kill us if I sent her away, plus I don’t think you wanted to be with me after knowing I had been with her that night—”

“Kylo, shut up, you’re not making this better,” Sasa pulled his shirt over his head.
“Right,” Kylo turned her around and gently pushed her against the wall to unzip her dress. He kissed across her shoulder blades. “Basically what I’m saying is I was wrong and an idiot.”

“Oh God, can you repeat that into a tape recorder later?” Sasa teased as he pushed down her dress.

Kylo grinned, spun her back around, and carried her to the bed. She giggled as he threw her down and climbed atop her.

“I’m sorry,” Kylo her neck as her hands fumbled with his pants. “You were the only one I wanted in my bed that night. I just thought you weren’t coming back for another day and I needed your touch so bad. I thought Tara might be some sort of poor substitute.”

Sasa pulled back.

“What?” Kylo asked.

“Are you serious?” Sasa whispered. “I thought that when you wanted to be with her but couldn’t, you would call for me.”

Kylo shook his head, “At the start, but now… Oh God, and when I saw Hux trying to touch you and Tara pretending that you could ever be with him, I knew. I knew I didn’t want to let anyone else to have you.”

“And I don’t want anyone else to have you,” Sasa pushed him off. Before he could react, she pulled off his pants and shoved him down onto the bed. “I know you want Tara, but damn it, I want you Kylo. I want you to be mine. Only mine. I know you still want her, and I know that Tara wants the power of being the mother to your child. But I want to be the mother of your child to bond with you, and to have your child, no strings attached. I want you for no other reason than to be with you, whether it be Kylo Ren, Ben Solo, or whatever else you want to name yourself. But until there’s a baby in the picture, nothing can change. Tara and I can bicker all we wanted, but at the end of the day, it’s a race to the finish.”

Kylo looked up, rising from the mattress, “Sasa, listen-”

She put two fingers on his lips and smirked, “And if I know one thing…”

Kylo grunted in surprise when Sasa pushed him ungracefully back down on the bed.

“It’s that between now and tomorrow morning,” she straddled his lap and tossed her hair clip on the floor, “there’s plenty of chances to finish.”

He grinned and viciously flipped her over, throwing her down onto the bed. Kylo pinned her wrists above her head with one of his large hands. She mewedled as he caressed her sides, and Sasa writhed her body up against his. As he began to tear the rest of the clothes from her body, Kylo bent down and bit her lip until it drew blood.

“Yes, Master,” she moaned. “Take me.”

Kylo chuckled, “Am I forgiven?”

“I suppose you’ve suffered enough. But I swear to God if you ever suggest a threesome as a solution to this rivalry again-”

“Believe me, lesson learned.”
As he pulled her panties down to her ankles and forced her legs apart, Kylo couldn’t help but think how much hotter this seduction was over Tara’s.

He finished inside of her with a grunt, a moan, and a tender kiss, Ben panted and looked down at the woman beneath him. She was breathtaking, copper hair splayed on the bed, all pale skin and forest green eyes. Her mind freely reached for him and her Force Signature entwined with his own, forest green and cerise mixing into one. He could feel her body tremble beneath him, and the ferocity of her mind. He felt what she did, and the thought scared him.

“Don’t be afraid,” she whispered, though as a tear rolled down her cheek, Ben couldn’t tell if the words were to him or herself.

“I’m not afraid,” he bent down and kissed away the tear. But his breath was shaking and his eyes filled with alarm.

“I know you are,” she downcast her eyes and reached out to stroke his lips. She took a deep breath, “And I know you fear feeling the same way I do. You don’t want to hear these words.”

“Say them.”

“I love you,” Sasa whispered.

And Ben Solo – afraid of what it would mean if he felt that way too but also knowing that he very well might – replied with two words that were so much easier… and yet meant so much more.

“I know.”

That night General Hux was not surprised to find Captain Phasma when he entered the private medical office for the High Council. It was where they kept all of the personal medical supplies of the highest-ranking officers of the First Order.

“Mixing another batch of Ren’s sleeping cordial?” Hux asked as he casually searched through the cupboards.

“Kylo can’t sleep without it,” the Chrome Stormtrooper mixed the familiar set of ingredients spread out on the table. “What are you doing in here?”

“Trying to find something for the after effects of Force Lightning. My left arm has been numb for hours and my teeth keep… buzzing.”

Phasma chuckled.

Hux shook his head, “Do you know any remedies?”

“Why would I know any remedies?”

“Come now,” he shot her a look. “We both know why I would ask you that.”

She smirked behind her helmet, “I know, and I take great pleasure in also knowing you can never voice it. Tell me, how does it feel to be so certain of something, and yet still have enough of a seed of
doubt that you dare not confront it? Or is it not the doubt? Is it now that simply you’ve let it go on for so long you fear the repercussions if it were to be true?"

“I think we both would find ourselves in a difficult situation if the truth about Felicity Rhiaon were to come to light. I still can’t believe they honestly think Ben Solo killed her.”

“Imagine my feelings. It’s such a blow to my reputation.”

“And that brings us back to our earlier question.”

Phasma shook her head, “Try making some Flasse petals and Smie root into a tea. That should help a little.”

Hux hesitated to take the suggestion but nodded and opened the appropriate cupboard.

“Speaking of roots,” Phasma watched her liquid simmer over the burner. It was almost completed. “I’m almost out of Aabane root. I’m going to need it in no less than two weeks. I don’t trust the potency of this batch to ration it out any longer.”

“I’ll arrange the shipment from Valra first thing in the morning.” Hux watched her for a while as Phasma poured her concoction into a bottle for Kylo, “You know, I must ask. This cordial you make him, does it actually have any sedative properties in it?”

“Not a one. A mere placebo.”

“A placebo with a nasty side effect,” Hux smirked. “How does the root work?”

“It damages sperm production, makes them deformed. Oh sure, take a sample and they’ll test fine, but the second it crosses the cervix and is met with the hormone progesterone, the sperm loses its tail and can’t travel far enough to meet the egg. I mean, it’s possible to still impregnate a woman if she’s released an egg and it travels down far enough, but for the most part the man is rendered impotent.”

“Impotent enough that as hard as Tara or Sasa or any of them try, it’s almost impossible Kylo would ever get her pregnant,” Hux chuckled.

“Exactly,” Phasma capped the bottle. “And as long as he thinks I’m actually on his side, he’ll keep taking it.”

“And why are you pretending to be on his side?” Hux crossed his arms. “You hate him just as much me, maybe even more. Why pretend?”

“Because I have nothing left to fight for but my family, and if protecting them means manipulating Ben Solo into thinking I like him rather than my true feelings that I would be willing and eager to drop kick him into the lavas of Mustafar, then so be it.”

“And that’s why you prevent him from having any children.”

“No,” Phasma shook her head. “I do it because if I can’t have any children of my own, then I damn well am not going to let Ben Solo have one either.”

Chapter End Notes
Before the Awakening

After finding a nearly intact ship in the desert, Rey thinks she’s hit the jackpot. But when she is forced into a partnership with Devi and Strunk, she turns to her father to stop a betrayal. Back on D’Qar, Poe and Kaydel celebrate their first anniversary.

Not going to lie, I absolutely am starting to love Cern Ren. He’s kind of like the First Order Quom: can get away with whatever insane shit he wants, and still people keep him around.

So, I learned during this chapter that you can only highlight and copy paste a certain percentage of kindle books before they cut you off. I am not going to have fun with this, am I? I ended up finding a solution… I literally set up a new kindle account and bought another copy of the book.

I kid you not, I now own four copies of it. Two hardcovers (one for me to read and another filled with notes, highlights, and sticky notes) and two digital copies.

Someone please stop me.

Also, to all the people who were saying that Aletha and Diego need to make up and/or Poe and Kaydel need too, actually they were meant to have already. That’s what those two after argument chats were about. People were more angry towards Diego treating Rose the way he did, so if you want, I can add a small scene in the next chapter to address that issue. I’m sorry that things were unclear.
Before the Awakening

Chapter Summary

Rey repairs a ship, Kylo sees the inside of Sasa's room, and Malar's Men forms.

Chapter Notes

PLEASE NOTE, THIS CHAPTER CONTAINS A SINGLE SMALL REFERENCE TO A SCENE FROM SOLO. IF YOU DON’T WANT SPOILERS SKIP THE LINE THAT STARTS WITH “Rey was exactly right, the second bed of the Captain’s quarters” AS I CHOSE TO EXPLAIN WHY I SAID THE CAPTAIN’S QUARTERS OF THE Millennium Falcon HAD TWO BEDS IN IT, BUT THERE WAS CLEARLY NO ROOM SHOWN FOR A SECOND BED IN THE MOVIE SOLO.

Sorry about the long wait between updates. My computer broke, and literally the only ways to write this next chapter were pen and paper, and later I purchased a bluetooth keyboard to literally write this on my phone. Unfortunately, most of the things I needed were actually on my computer, and it turns out that my failsafe backup system wasn’t actually saving anything. I’ve basically had to take a sabbatical from writing, but honestly that’s a good thing because I was starting to feel burnout and this gave me a nice little break.

Warning: This chapter contains the storyline of a 17-year-old and 18-year-old having consensual sex. Both characters in story are considered to be of legal age on their planet, but this is not applicable to Earth. Age of consent laws vary in area. If you are uncomfortable by the depiction of a 17-year-old having sex, please skip those sections.

Once again, huge chunks of this chapter comes from Before the Awakening by Greg Rucka. Again, I have gone through, changed things, cut things, and added things but a lot of it, is in fact not my work.

Credit also goes to R2_D2106 who once more wrote a scene for this chapter – in particular the picnic scene.

Please note, this chapter starts the morning after chapter forty-seven (the cave chapter.) Chapter forty-eight ran about two weeks, but this one spans almost a year, so I decided we’re going to jump back in time slightly. The opening scene takes place on the same day the FN squad does their simulation, Tara plots with Hux and Cern against Sasa, and Kylo and Sasa take the pregnancy test.

Dirty version on AO3.

[Side note: I really recommend listening to Walking the Wire by Imagine Dragons during this chapter. I listened to it while writing, and it’s really a good theme for it.]

Enough housekeeping, on to the story.
“Drink,” Luke ordered, shoving a steaming mug in Quom’s face.

The Vrogem blinked blearily from his cot, barely awake, “What’s going on? What’s this?”

“That drink mix that Aletha sent for you. I told you I would need to use it on you at some point.”

“Why do you need to use it on me?”


Quom stared at Luke in confusion for a very long time. Then his eyes drifted to the swath of bandages wrapped around Luke’s neck, and everything clicked.

“Whoa,” Quom let out a low whistle. “That was… an adventure.”


“I think I saw my dead mother.”

“Hey, I saw my dead mother and you didn’t see me get possessed by the Dark Side.”

“Huh, so the woman really was your mom.”

“Yeah, it’s kind of complicated,” Luke said.

“When is it ever not with your family?” Quom grinned. “By the way, who’s the asshole who knocked me on my ass with Rey’s staff?”

“Brendan. My brother-in-law.”

“Huh. …He had good form.” Quom took another drink of his tea. He could feel it working its magic. “So, you found Rey in the cave?”

“No, apparently that venture was completely pointless,” Luke answered. “And I sense that Teng didn’t find her either.”

“How can you tell?”

That was the moment the noticeably alone Teng ducked into the tent.

“Stupid Jedi powers,” Quom grumbled.

“Good morning,” Teng had a small frown on his face, confused by Quom’s words but knowing not to push for an explanation. “I see you two made it back before the sandstorm yesterday.”
“I see you didn’t,” Quom shot back as he sipped at his tea. After the events of the cave, he was certain he’d be drinking it non-stop for weeks. “Where were you, Pup?”

“Oh, I stayed in the walker last night hoping Rey would show up. Unfortunately, she didn’t. She’s not here, is she?”

“No,” Luke sighed, fiddling with the bandage wrapped around his throat. He really hoped he wouldn’t end up with a permanent scar of Quom’s toothmarks on his throat. “Still no sign of Rey. I swear, guys, I’m starting to lose my mind.”

“Me too,” said Quom.

“Hey, you lost yours years ago,” Teng waved off.

Quom narrowed his eyes, and Teng took a nervous step back.

“Easy boy,” Teng held up his hands.


Teng frowned, “Wait, why is your neck bandaged?”

Luke and Quom traded a look.


“I’ve experienced so many weird things with you two over the years. I think I can handle it.”

They traded another look.

“Alright,” Luke said. “Quom got possessed by the Dark Side, and there were these two cave creatures who took the forms of Rey and Felicity to help him attack me, but it’s okay because my temporarily resurrected brother-in-law and mother saved me. Also I had a vision of the future and apparently Rey and I are going to get into a duel on a rocky plain in the middle of the rain, because it’s this family. Of course we’re going to have a dramatic duel in a lightning storm.”

Teng blinked, “…I regret asking.”


“Okay…” Teng said slowly, “so that doesn’t answer the neck bandage.”

“Oh, Quom bit me in the throat.”

Teng’s jaw dropped.

“What?” Quom scowled. “It wasn’t that hard.”

Teng lowered his head into his hands, “How did this end up being my life?”

“I think it has to do with you wanting to bang Luke’s daughter.”

“Alright, I’m going to go bury myself in the sand. It was nice knowing you.”

“Teng, come back,” Luke laughed as the boy ducked out of the tent. He and Quom followed
quickly, “Come on, we were just having a little fun with you.”

He came to an abrupt stop and turned to Luke in disbelief, “A little fun? How could you joke in a time like this?”

Luke sighed, lazily glancing at the people gathered at the town well in the distance behind himself. There was no true privacy on Jakku.

Teng took a deep breath, “I’m just… scared. It’s been five days since I saw Rey. I keep kicking myself for not going with her that day.”

“I know how you feel,” Luke said gently. “I’m the one who sent her off, and I’ve paid for that mistake dearly.”

“Luke… it’s not a mistake to give Rey a little independence.”

“No, it’s not,” Luke smiled, “and I’d be a fool to try to hold her back. But I know how you feel; I’m so scared right now. I lost her once and it destroyed me. I broke and walked away from everything I loved. She’s the most important thing in my universe… and to just have her go missing. I’m barely holding it together.”

“Come on, Guys,” Quom said. “It’s the Miracle Girl. Rey’s made of tough stuff. She’s just probably being the naïve, idealistic, fool she was genetically predisposed to be. She’ll be back.”

“I just wish I could think of a way to get a hold of her.”

Teng suddenly stiffened.

“At least we know she’s still on Jakku,” Quom said. “We probably would have heard about it if she wasn’t.”

“But what good does that do?” Luke shook his head. “She could be anywhere. Lost in the desert. Dead in a ditch-”

“Standing right next to the town well?” Teng pointed over Luke’s shoulder.

Luke frowned and turned. Sure enough, there was a familiar red speeder parked next to the well, and a perfectly intact Rey was splashing some water on the back of her neck.

“REY!” Luke and Quom shouted together.

She looked up at the noise, a mild expression on her face as the three most important men in her life came racing towards her. Luke reached her first, wrapping his arms around her and holding her tight.

“You’re safe,” Luke literally wept in relief. He buried his face in her greasy brown hair and let his eyes dampen the buns that had started to naturally come undone. “Thank the Force.”

“I’m fine, Dad,” Rey smiled at Teng over Luke’s shoulder. She moved to embrace her boyfriend, but Luke wouldn’t let her go. “Dad? Dad?”

Luke wouldn’t move.

Teng smiled and Rey sighed. She gave in to being caught in her father’s hug. Giving Teng a small smile, she managed to get a hand free and reached out for him. Teng clasped it, bringing up their interlocked fingers to kiss the back of her hand.
“I missed you,” Teng murmured.

“I missed you too,” Rey said. She nodded to Luke, “But I think he beats both of us.”

“Indeed,” Teng chuckled.

Her eyes turned to Quom, “Hey, Uncle Quom.”

“Hey, MG,” he smiled. “You okay?”

“Yeah, I’m fine. But I don’t think I’m ever escaping my father’s hug.”

“Damn right you’re not,” Luke mumbled into her shoulder, still squeezing as tight as he had the day he found her scared and alone all those years ago.

“Oh for goodness sake,” Quom rolled his eyes. “Luke, let her go. You’re going to suffocate the girl.”

Luke sighed and then complied. He shook his head as she immediately launched herself at Teng, and the pair of young adults locked in the kind of kiss that would make even Felicity Rhiaon blush.

“Young love,” Quom chuckled, slinging an arm over Luke’s shoulder.

Luke let the pair have a few minutes, even after they had disengaged from the kiss. He knew that desire to just hold each other for a few minutes after a long parting. It was the kind he wished he could share with Felicity or Aletha or any of the others in his life he had loved and lost.

Honestly, maybe it was time for him to start dating again. Sure, he knew he was never going to fall for someone like he had fallen for Felicity and Aletha, but a fling with a merchant might not be out of the question. He could have sworn Kelan Tolorna was checking him out last week.


“Oh, no, I was fine,” Rey waved off. “I just found a really good haul and decided it was better to stay with it than come home. Sorry, I would have told you, but my comm was dead. You didn’t go to any trouble, right?”

The men stared at her.

“Wait,” Rey frowned. “Why is your neck bandaged?”

Something furious flashed in Luke’s eyes.


“And Teng Malar Tinadar!” Quom turned on the boy.

Teng frowned, very confused, “Uh… My name isn’t Tinadar.”

“It is when I’m mad at you.” Quom looked at Luke, “…Why am I mad at him?”

Rey rolled her eyes, “Why do you do anything?”

Luke shook his head, “Quom, we’re not mad at Teng.”
“Oh. Sorry, Pup. Usually when we’re mad at Rey, you’ve tagged along and we’re mad at you too.”

“Eh,” Teng shrugged. “You’ve given me a lot worse.”

“Wait, why are you mad at me?” Rey asked.

“You’re not actually serious?” Luke said. “Rey, you disappeared for four days without a word simply because you wanted to and not that there was an emergency, and you don’t get why I’m mad?”

“Not really.”

“Rey Rhiaon Erso… you have exactly two minutes to completely explain everything to me or there will be Hell to pay.”

She did it in a minute forty-seven.

And yet, somehow it just made things worse.

“You thought you would… That it was no big deal… Burnt out comm… Four days… My dead mother… Quick meals!” Luke sputtered out some nonsense, looking like even he didn’t know what he was trying to say. Finally he just declared, “Rey Rhiaon Erso, you’re grounded!”

Rey blinked, “What?”

“Can he do that?” Quom whispered to Teng.

“I don’t know,” he answered.

A stern look set on Luke’s face as he crossed his arms and fixed her with a glare, “You are grounded. For an entire month.”

“Dad! No! I can’t!”

“You can and will.”

“But Dad, this ship is too good a haul.” Rey glanced around the market and lowered her voice, “Dad… I could make it functional.”

That made Luke think twice.

“Functional?” he repeated.

“Uh huh,” Rey nodded. “A working ship. Can you even imagine how many portions that would get us? I could do this, Dad.”

Luke looked over to Teng and Quom who looked enthralled by the idea of a working ship.

“That would bring in a huge haul,” Quom admitted.

Luke sighed, “Alright. Let’s go take a look at this… haul.”

I’ve never seen an Imperial command shuttle’s hyperdrive generator, but I know the manual for it by heart. Give me one and I could get the shuttle running in ten minutes – and I could fly it, too. I’ve
flown lots of ships, at least by simulator. And one real ship, for a little while – a Ghtroc 690 freighter. But I don’t want to talk about that.

- Rey’s Survival Guide

“So, what do you think?” Rey asked.

Luke and Quom traded a look. They had just completed a thorough inspection as Teng and Rey waited outside the ship and spent some alone time.

“It’ll be a lot of work, but it’s fixable,” Quom declared. “I know some great caches for supplies.”

“Good work, Rey,” Luke smiled. “This will be a wonderful project for us to all work on.”

Rey frowned, “Oh, uh, actually, I kind of wanted to do it by myself.”

“By yourself?” Quom questioned.

“Yeah, tackle a big project, get a sense of pride. I’ll ask for help when I need it but otherwise… can’t I do this alone? Please?”

Quom and Luke exchanged a look.


“It would be a good challenge. Then we can be sure that Rey is well-acquainted with all parts of ships.” Quom shrugged, “I don’t know. I don’t see any harm in letting her do it all by herself.”

“Alright, fine,” Luke smiled. “You can do this repair all by yourself on one condition.”

“What’s that?”

“Since you’ve been missed for four days and I got bitten in the neck because of it, we all work on it together today and make up with quality time.”

“Alright, but only if you explain to me how your neck got bitten in the first place.”

“Deal.”

“Well then,” Rey smiled at the boys. “Let’s get to work.”

There was a cheerful beat of silence as they looked at each other in excitement to get to work.

And then Luke narrowed his eyes and said, “Oh, and you’re still grounded for the next month.”

Rey frowned as Teng and Quom burst out laughing.

“Focus, focus, come on you can do this, Rey,” Luke guided.

Rey held out her hand trying with all her might to use the Force to summon the screwdriver across the walker into her hand.

Rey let out a yell and threw up her hands.

“I can’t do it!” Rey conceded defeat. “I give up. I can’t use the Force to summon objects. I’ll just be the one Jedi who can’t do it.”

“Rey, you and I are the only living Jedi. That doesn’t account for a lot.”

“Dad,” Rey rolled her eyes.

Luke sighed and motioned for her to sit next to him on the cot. With a heavy heart she slumped down next to him and laid her head on his chest. She listened to his soothing heartbeat as he stroked her hair.

“It’s okay if you can’t do it now,” Luke told her. “It took me a while too.”

“But it’s been months,” Rey moaned.

“And it took me almost a year. For me it took the support of someone I loved – my first girlfriend. Actually the first thing I ever moved with the Force was a noodle.”

“Really?”

“Yeah, she called me her *Noodle Scooter* as a result.”

“…I don’t know what to do with that information, Dad.”

Luke shrugged, “I just thought it would be a charming anecdote. Look, why don’t we just move on from the summoning lessons today and just relax. How’s the ship going?”

It had been five months since she started her project and Luke’s encounter in the cave. Unfortunately Quom’s bite mark had become a subtle scar on Luke’s throat. Not noticeable at first, but when people looked close they would get very confused why there were white toothmarks on his throat.

“Ship’s doing great,” Rey reported. “Teng and I finally got the fresher working.”

Luke raised an eyebrow.

“There’s no water.” Rey blushed, knowing her father’s thoughts. “…Teng and I haven’t showered together. I promise.”

“That’s okay, I trust you.” Luke hesitated, “Uh, Rey, have you and Teng-”

“Not yet,” she said quickly. “Still not ready.”

“Right. Well, if you ever wanted to talk about things-”

“Can we just go back to talking about the Force?”

“Alright. How has your meditation been going? Doing it before bed every night?”

“Yep,” Rey nodded.

She, Luke, Quom, and Teng had been taking turns sleeping on the ship each night to protect it. Or rather Luke, Quom, and Teng with Rey alternated. Teng and Rey liked the privacy, and Rey liked
having Teng there for other reasons too.

Rey shuddered as she remembered what she saw the night she slept alone on the ship.


“It was awful,” Rey clung tightly to her father.

“I’m sorry,” he kissed her forehead. “I wish you didn’t have to remember that. But I’m happy that you told me about it. I don’t want you keeping any visions from the Force a secret, okay?”

Rey heard a familiar muting sound and looked up. Staring back at her once more was her cousin.

They said nothing as Kylo and Rey stared at each other. These connections had been on and off for months, but the sound and image of them grew stronger with every connection.


She was pulled back to Jakku in an instant.

“Sorry,” Rey shook her head.

Luke frowned, “Are you okay?”

“Yeah, just spaced out for a second?”

“Thinking about the vision?”

“Something like that.”


“I will, Dad,” Rey smiled widely. “I promise I have and will tell you about every vision I get.”

But Luke knew from the look in her eye that she was lying.

Living on the Resistance Base, things could be quite hectic. Dates were missed, meetings canceled at the last minute, promised visits home often never happened, and honestly hardly anyone kept a calendar for purposes beyond scheduling missions.

So it wasn’t all that odd for Kaydel Ko Connix to wake up, roll over, and be startled by the date on the calendar.

“Woah!” she sat up suddenly, jarring the half-asleep Poe, whose bed she was in.

“What?” Poe groaned, rubbing his eyes as he tried to remember where he had put his pants. As he shifted around, the blankets fell down, exposing his bare, broad chest.

“Nothing,” Kaydel turned a little pink when she noticed a scratch born from her nails across his chest. “It’s just… I totally didn’t realize that today was Anex twelfth.”

He frowned, “Oh, uh, okay. Why? Is there something special about today?”
Kaydel raised an eyebrow.

“Oh shit,” he sat up straight. “It’s our anniversary.”

“Yeah,” she laughed a little. “We’ve been dating for one whole year.”

Poe and Kaydel stared at each other in silence for a moment… then plastered on identical grins.

“Nice!”

“We did it!”

They high fived.

Poe laughed as they settled back down, “Wow, an entire year.”

“It feels like that’s too long to be possible, and yet at the same time, not long enough.”

“Well, we’re in it for the long haul, Babe. One year down, eighty to go.”

“You plan to live to 108?”

“At the very least.”

Kaydel shook her head, “Oh Peacock, I love you so much.”

“Right back at you, Babe.” He glanced at the droid powered down in the corner of the room, “Hey, BB’s still in sleep mode. Want to get a quick one out before he wakes up?”

She laughed, “Dating a year and yet you still want to make love to me like we’ve been only dating for a month.”

“Let’s be real, Kay,” Poe positioned himself over her and started to kiss her neck, “I’m never going to get my fill of you.”

“No, I suppose not.” Kaydel had a twinkle in her eye that Poe knew meant no good. She whispered in his ear, “But I would like to be filled by you.”

Without another word, Poe pulled the covers over their bodies to hide themselves from BB-8 in case he woke up. He pushed up the hem of Kaydel’s nightgown to her waist and pulled off her panties. Poe lavished her with a passionate kiss as he undid his pants and shoved them down to his knees, leaving just enough room to kneel over her.

Knowing they wouldn’t have much time for preamble, Kaydel licked her palm and started to stroke his cock to get him fully erect. At the same time, he reached into his bedside drawer and found a bottle of lubricant. With a grunt, he guided Kaydel’s hand from his cock.

“That’s enough, or it’s going to be over before we start.”

He spread some of the lubrication over her pussy lips and clit, happy to feel a little bit of natural wetness seeping out of her entrance. Getting right to it, Poe fondled her clit for about a minute, making her even wetter. When she was ready, he slathered lube over his pointer and middle finger and slipped the middle one inside of her.

Not quite aroused enough yet, Kaydel gasped when as his invading digital forced its way inside of her. Kissing her lips tenderly and muttering adorations of love in Yavinese, Poe enthusiastically
fingered her passage, his thumb playing with her clit. When she was ready, he slid another lubricated finger into her and pumped faster.

When she was ready after that, he pulled his fingers out of her and slid them into her mouth. As Kaydel licked her own juices off his fingers, Poe reached down and positioned his cock. With a grunt and a few Yavinese swears, Poe pushed into her and quickly got to work.

The room was filled with impatient moans and the squeak of a bedframe as Poe thrust eagerly into that woman who so adore. He had meant what he said; he fully planned on spending the last eighty years of his life with this wonderful woman.

Especially if the sex was going to be this good.

They made love rather efficiently, Poe using his hand on her clit to bring her to a quick orgasm and then emptying inside of her almost immediately after.

“Yeah, I’m never giving you up, Babe,” Poe said as he helped her clean up after. “Who cares if we forgot our own anniversary and have no presents? At least we have great sex.”

“Well, actually,” Kaydel grinned, “I got you something.”

Poe gave her an amused smile as she reached across his body to rummage through one of the drawers of his bedside table. He kissed her shoulder as she located it and held it out to him. It was a small disc about the size of her palm.

“What is it?” he asked.

“Take a look,” she slipped it into his hand.

Poe smiled and flicked it on. The room was filled with the blue projection of a star map. There was no route marked, but there were three stars glowing bright red with large labels above them.

MALLAREX
YAVIN
D’QAR

“My home, your home, and the one we made together,” she explained. “That way we can always remember where we came from, how far we traveled, and all of the places we can go… together.”

“Forever,” Poe promised, unable to wipe the grin from his face. He sat up, the blanket falling down to expose his bare chest and he saw her eyes drift over his body with a smug smirk. She knew every inch of that skin belonged to her, just as the heart beating beneath those amazing pectorals belonged to her. “Kay, I don’t know what to say. This is so amazing. So thoughtful… Kinda making me look bad, Babe.”

“Didn’t mean to bruise your ego, My Peacock,” Kaydel chuckled, pushing herself up to kiss him. “But don’t you worry, I’m sure your gift will be just as wonderful as mine.”

Poe froze, “My gift?”

Kaydel scowled, “You were just joking about not getting me an anniversary gift, right? It’s our first anniversary, we’re going to remember this above any other anniversary. I mean, I’m not expecting an engagement ring or my own planet, but… you did get a gift, right?”
“Yeah, no, of course I did, Babe.”

She narrowed her eyes.

“I just can’t give it to you yet,” Poe chuckled, grinning far too widely to be truthful. “But I will give it to you. Promise. Tonight. We’ll do something tonight and I’ll give it to you then.”

From the way those brown eyes pierced him, it was clear Kaydel knew he was full of Bantha crap.

“Fine, tonight,” Kaydel conceded. “I don’t want to sound entitled or bitchy-”

“No offense, Babe, but I don’t think it’s physically possible for you to be a bitch.”

“You clearly haven’t met the women in my family,”

Poe shuddered as he recalled just how damn petty the one member of her family he had met could be. There was a reason Aletha had earned the nickname Doctor Chlor-meri-form. Poe himself had been tricked into sedation by Aletha no less than three times.

“I’ll have something for you, Babe,” Poe said. “I promise. I love you and I want to show you how much I do in the same way I see your love for me through this.”

“I know, but Poe-”

“Come on,” he lifted her chin, “you know you’re my girl. I put you in my tooth for goodness sake.”

Kaydel smiled, “Yeah, I guess you did do that. I just… sometimes I worry that I’m getting myself caught up in some whirlwind romance like Aletha did and that… I don’t know, this is just some fantasy that will fizzle out. I really do love you, Poe, and I worry-”

“Over nothing. Kaydel… I have a picture of you in my tooth. I’ve literally fought against a commanding officer to be with you. I’ve brought you home so many times, you have your own toothbrush there. I don’t mean my military base fresher, I mean the sink of my childhood home has a toothbrush specifically for you. I’m in it to win it, Kay. I promise.”

She sighed and rested her head against his chest, soothed by the beating of his heart, “I know. I’m sorry for being silly-”

“You’re not being silly,” he told her. “You have legitimate fears and I’m going to find a way to quell them. I promise.”

He held her in silence for a very long time. They revelled in the feel of skin against skin, so warm, so comfortable, so natural. It was as if the Force had planned from the very beginning that those two bodies lock together so perfectly.

Poe looked down at Kaydel and smiled. As he held his beloved in his arms, Poe felt pure joy. All was right in the world when Kaydel Ko Connix was in his arms.

And then the panic took over. What the hell was he going to get her for an anniversary gift? He had ten hours and a military base to work with. He was totally screwed.

Well… maybe he should ask General Organa for some ideas about a thoughtful last-minute gift he could pass off as having been purchased weeks ago. Because there’s no way in hell Poe Dameron believed Han Solo had never forgot his anniversary.
The task of repairing the ship was even harder and slower than Rey had imagined. Problems magnified and grew exponentially, and it wasn’t simply with the repairs to her ship. That would have been bad enough, just trying to get everything aboard working again. That would’ve been a full-time job in and of itself.

She still needed to eat. She still needed to survive. She still needed to work, and that meant she had to work twice as hard, because she was effectively trying to gather salvage for two jobs. Sure, she had Luke, Quom, and Teng to help, but she was precious with her project the same way she had been building her speeder. This was her project. Her baby. She was going to do this all by herself.

Well… mostly. Could you really blame the girl for unloading some of the heavy lifting? Sometimes quite literally?

Every piece of salvage she managed to collect was now subjected to critical evaluation: was it for the ship or for Unkar? The best pieces, of course, were worth the most to Unkar and could bring multiple portions. Invariably, those same pieces were the ones Rey needed to repair her ship. The harder it was to replace, the more it was worth; the harder it was to replace, the less likely that Rey would find another.

For that reason, the ship had to come first; it had to be the priority. If it wasn’t, then all that work was for nothing. Two months, then three, then five passed, and now she was up to seven. If it wasn’t for her father, she would almost always be hungry. Days spent crawling through the graveyard, desperately searching for bits and pieces, racking her brain trying to remember where she had seen an oscillation gyro that might still work, an intact plate of duralloy shielding that was big enough to help seal the gash in her freighter’s side, a coercive reciprocating pump for the oxygen scrubbers.

It was exhausting. It was unending. It took its toll, and Rey wasn’t as careful as she might have been.

“What’re you building?” someone asked her at the wash table one day.

Rey looked up from her scrubbing and resisted a groan, “I’m not building anything, Devi.”

Devi ignored her words, “Unkar’s not gonna pay for that. Porto’s crew brought in, like, maybe a hundred band limiters in the last week. You gotta know that.”

Rey shook the component dry and shoved it into her satchel, hoping the conversation was over.

“I have to get back to my Dad’s shop.”

It wasn’t.

Before Rey could get to her feet, Strunk slid onto the stool beside her. Devi took the one opposite. She was pinned… and a little pissed.

“My dad is waiting,” she said, gathering the pieces she’d set out to dry. Her staff was to her left, in easy reach, opposite where Strunk had taken a seat. Rey wondered if she would have to use it.

“You hold pieces back.” Devi said bluntly. “We’ve seen it. Like, you had the junction box for a power inverter on the YT series a couple days ago. That could’ve gotten you a lot. But you didn’t trade it.”

“Doing a lot with circuits and cabling, too,” Strunk said. “Like you’re wiring something up, you know?”
Rey stared at him, “Do you two actually think I’m going to tell you anything after the stunt you pulled with the Fighting Ring?”

Strunk shrugged and smiled apologetically.

“We don’t mean to pry, Rey,” Devi said.

“Then don’t!” Rey snapped. She could feel that simmering inside, the Darkness her father warned her about. She took a deep breath to control herself.

“We’re just curious, is all,” Devi continued. “You’ve not been around as much as you used to, and it’s just…you know, it’s just strange. Like, why would you not trade that stuff, you know?”

“I’m not that hungry,” Rey said. “I do have a rich father to take care of me after all.”

Devi looked surprised. Rey never played the money card, and often was embarrassed to bring it up to other scavengers. Somehow her father’s security of food made her a lesser scavenger in the eyes of the others.

Then Devi laughed, “Sure, okay. I get it. We all mind our own business. I get it.”

“Yes,” Rey said shortly. “That’s what we do.”

Strunk nodded.

Rey stuffed the remaining components into her satchel, grabbed her staff, and got to her feet. She spotted Teng walking across the market towards her and smiled.

“Nice talking to you,” Rey lied. “Now if you’ll excuse me, I have a man waiting.”

“Of course,” Devi nodded, but there was something in the corner of her eye that Rey didn’t like.

“Hey, Starshine,” Teng smiled as she came up to him. He nodded towards Devi and Strunk, “Everything okay?”

“Yeah, but can we get going?” she adjusted the staff slung across her shoulder. “I’m getting dangerously close to the Dark Side.”

“Let’s get you home and wrapped in something comfortable. Like me,” Teng grinned.

She swatted at his chest and he slung an arm around her waist. They had taken a few steps when they heard Devi call out.

“Hey, Rey!”

Rey turned back to see Devi had left the wash tables to follow her. There was that look in her eyes that Rey so hated.

“Thing is,” Devi said in a low voice, looking around, “we’ve noticed. So maybe somebody else has, like, noticed, too. Know what I mean?”

Devi tilted her head ever so slightly in the direction of Unkar’s window.

Rey couldn’t see him there, but that didn’t mean he wasn’t watching. She looked back at Devi.

“I’ll keep it in mind,” Rey said shortly.
Devi smiled, “We girls gotta look out for each other, right?”

Memories of the disaster that occurred the last time Devi said those words flitted through Rey’s mind.

“Right,” Rey narrowed her eyes.

Devi gave Teng a playful punch in the arm, “See you around, Malar.”

“See you,” he frowned as they watched Devi leave. “What was that all about?”

“I don’t know,” Rey said. “But I got a bad feeling about this.”

Poe Dameron was not nervous.

It had taken some planning (read: begging, pleading, and bargaining) but he had put together what he hoped would be a romantic date with Kaydel.

BB-8 was keeping an eye on his set up. Poe didn’t really know what sort of creatures were in the woods around the base, but he’d rather be safe than sorry, especially as he wanted to make it a surprise. He supposed he could have asked Paige and Evan about the dangers of the forest considering how often they would get lost in it, but Paige might tip off Kaydel, and he wasn’t very close with Evan.

Considering how close Paige and Kaydel were, it might be a good idea to remedy that.

Ivee had been given the responsibility of keeping Kaydel distracted until Poe was ready. Kaydel naturally wanted to spend as much time as possible with her boyfriend on their first anniversary, but Poe needed prep time and enlisted BB-8’s help, who had turned to his own girlfriend to do the job.

Poe still couldn’t believe his droid had a girlfriend. What did droids even do romantically? What programming sequence was the result of that? Was it an off-shoot of the programming that helped droids establish relationships and calculated actions and consequences to determine how to treat people. It was the same sort of program that made BB-8 like Poe and hate Ben Solo.

Admittedly BB-8 had a little bit of a better relationship with Ben. It was the result of a loyalty program the droid had to the people who would assemble him, and BB-8 had been assembled by Poe, Ben, and Rey… if sitting Rey in a corner, giving her screwdriver, and asking her to hand them things counted as her assembling BB-8. To be completely honest, it was very clear that Luke’s idea of setting the trio in the living room, wishing them luck, and going off to do chores with Felicity, was really just having Poe and Ben babysit Rey while they snuck upstairs for a quickie.

Poe shook his head at the memory of that summer. Felicity Rhiaon’s house design was truly beautiful… but the walls to her and Luke’s room were way too thin. Poe remembered the few weeks in Ben’s room, which was the one directly next to theirs. Poor Ben had no buffer for when Luke and Felicity got, uh, affectionate. No wonder he hated Felicity. Poe could have happily lived his life not knowing what Luke Skywalker sounded like when he had sex.

Maybe that’s why people always made fun of him and Kaydel. They were as bad as the Skywalkers.

It was nearly sunset when BB-8 sent Ivee the okay to disengage from Kaydel.

Alright, Poe thought to himself, taking a deep breath, here goes nothing.
“Hey,” he said, coming up behind Kaydel at her work station.

She knew something was up when Diego Nalto didn’t intercede.

“Hey,” she smiled, slipping off her headset. “How are you?”

“Good.” He wiped his palms on his pants. Come on, Dameron, where was that fearlessness when he needed it? He had dealt with higher stakes situations than this. Why did Kaydel Ko Connix always knock him right down? “Want to go for a walk?”

She narrowed her eyes, glancing towards Diego in the corner. He was talking to General Organa, both of them smiling and shooting glances towards Kaydel and Poe. Oh, yeah, there was something up.

“I just need to turn in this last report to Brance and I’ll be done,” she said, tapping away at her keyboard. She hit a final button and smiled, “Shall we?”

Poe offered his arm, “We shall.”

A few minutes later, the two of them were walking along a path in the woods surrounding the D’Qar base.

“Why a walk tonight?” Kaydel asked as they ambled along a river.

“You mean other than it being our anniversary? I just thought that since we both had the night free, we could, uh—” Poe stumbled over his words. “Well, we really haven’t been able to spend that much time together since the purple-haired bitch came back. Can Holdo just keep away from the base forever?”

“That would require the universe not hating us, Poe.”

“Well, at least I like you,” he bent down and gave her a quick kiss.

“I like you too, Peacock,” Kaydel chuckled. She sighed and leaned her head against his arm. “So, why are you so nervous?”

Kaydel was pretty sure that for all he was trying to play it casual, Poe had a fixed destination in mind.

“I thought some time away would give us time to…” he drifted off. “Y’know,”

“I’m not having sex in the woods.” Kaydel said flatly. “Not even if you do that thing I like.”


“Don’t you kink shame me.”

Poe smiled as he spotted BB-8. Yep, everything was set. He discretely tried to motion BB-8 away. In typical fashion, BB-8 treated this as irreverently as he did all of Poe’s romantic encounters: he blipped twice in recognition before speeding by, forcibly separating the pair who had been holding hands.

**Blip. Beep. Bwhop.**

“BB-8, shoo” Poe tried to get the droid to continue back to base. “Please.”
BB-8 flicked out his welding torch in a brief gesture that was decidedly ambiguous at the moment before wishing Friend-Poe the best of luck and speeding off. No doubt he was off to spend his own romantic evening with Ivey doing… whatever droids considered romantic.

“What was that about?” Kaydel asked looking back at the slowly disappearing droid in confusion.

“I set up a dinner for the two of us and BB was keeping watch.” Poe confessed. “I wanted it to be a surprise.”

“It is a very, very good surprise,” Kaydel looped her arms around his neck, drawing him into another kiss. He was only too happy to oblige.

She melted into the kiss, carding her fingers through his hair. After a moment they pulled apart, though they wished it could have gone on longer.

“We might want to eat before it gets cold,” Poe said, guiding her to where he had set up a picnic blanket for the two of them.

The view they had was of the stream that ran near the base. A pair of beavers were building a dam nearby and for a while, they ate in silence. “How long have you been planning this?” she asked as the sun started to set.

“Couple of weeks,” Poe lit the candles so they would still have some light. “Wasn’t until Jedek brought his last run in that I could actually pull it together.” He leaned back on his elbows. “I think it turned out well.”

“I think it did,” Kaydel set aside her plate and straddled him. Her lips found his with such ease one would think she had been born to kiss Poe Dameron’s lips.

The beavers paused in their dam building and exchanged glances before hurrying off. The two humans clearly wanted privacy even in the open.

When they came up for air, Poe found himself lying down fully.

“This is a dangerous position to put me in, Lieutenant Connix.”

“I’m well aware of what I’m doing, Commander Dameron. And after all, isn’t that why you brought me out here in the first place?”

“Actually, I wanted to ask you a question,” he nuzzled the hollow behind her ear with his nose.

“What?” Kaydel sighed in pleasure as his nose dragged along her skin. Poe loved the way her eyes drifted closed.

It took all of Poe’s willpower to focus with her breath hot on his ear. He knew exactly what he wanted, not just in the moment, but for the rest of his life.

Leia Organa’s words from earlier that day rang in his mind, “If you want to wake up every morning next to that girl… then do it.”

It was now or never.

He whispered into her ear, “Move in with me?”
Kaydel froze and Poe wondered if he’d pushed too far too soon. She sat back on her heels and Poe let out a groan.

“Are you serious?” she looked absolutely stunned.

Unable to speak, Poe nodded.

“You’re completely serious,” Kaydel said.

“I am,” Poe finally found his voice.

Kaydel hesitated and Poe felt his heart speed up. He’d pushed too far—oh Force, he’d mucked this—

“Of course, I’ll move in with you.”

He let out a breath as a wide smile tore across his face. Poe didn’t remember the last time he had such a huge smile.

“Really?” Poe laughed.

“Really really,” Kaydel joined him. “The peacock had successfully courted his chosen mate. The peahen submits eagerly.”

She brought her lips to his and they shared a long kiss.

“Good,” Poe reached for the pins keeping her hair in place. “That means I’ll get to see this every night.”

He rolled them over so he was on top. His legs pinned hers apart as she panted and gripped his shoulders, eagerness in her eyes. He was erect already, and ground the hard tent in his pants against her damping apex. Kaydel threw her head back and groaned. It would be a lie to say she didn’t want to feel him fill her with his hot cum after being denied that morning. Poe kissed his way down her neck to nibble at her collarbone.

His eyes sparked playfully, “Now, will the Peahen submit to the male for a breeding attempt?”

Kaydel slapped his chest playfully, “Shut up and kiss me, Peacock.”

And it turned out Kaydel Ko Connix would make love in the woods.

It was ten days before Devi and Strunk found her. Rey knew it was coming, but still her heart fell when she heard Devi calling out her name.

“Rey! Hey, Rey, you in there?”

Rey sighed and looked to her father who had been helping her wield a component.

“It’s okay,” Luke put a hand on her shoulder. “We’ll be fine. Come on, guys. Let’s deal with this.”

Teng nudged Quom with his foot. The Vrogem was knelt down fixing some wiring as Teng worked the control panel for tests of whether or not Quom had succeeded.

The group exited the ship via the newly repaired boarding ramp.
Devi and Strunk were both standing outside. Devi was grinning and Strunk’s mouth was open, as if he couldn’t believe what he was seeing.

“What?” Rey snapped, gripping her staff tightly. Behind her the boys all had crossed arms and intimidating looks. “What do you want, Devi?”

“This is amazing!” Strunk shouted, as if snapping out of a trance. He wasn’t at all perturbed by Rey’s wall of muscle. “R’iia’s shorts, Rey! This is amazing!”

Teng frowned and whispered to Quom, “R’iia’s shorts? Isn’t R’iia a female Teedo?”

“You stay in the sun too long, you come up with insane expressions,” Quom muttered back.

“It’s just a ship,” Rey said coolly.


Devi laughed. “Just a ship? You’re crazy! Look at this thing! How’d you find it?”

Rey held her staff in both hands, leaning on it, but it would be easy enough to move it into a swing if necessary. She could also see Teng, Quom, and Luke’s hands resting on their blasters, and Luke reaching back to the lightsaber clipped on his belt.

Deciding which of the two would be the better first mark, Rey looked first at Strunk, then at Devi.

“I figured it had to be something,” Devi said. “I knew you were working on something big, but, like, no way I ever imagined it was something like this. I thought maybe one of the ground vehicles or a repulsortank or something like that. Never imagined this! Rey, you’ve got a ship, girl! You’ve found yourself a ship!”

Devi. Devi would be the first one to get it if things turned sour.

“It needs a lot of work.” Rey said.

“Yeah, I’ll bet.” Devi stepped forward, craning her head back to look at the exposed underbelly. “Looks like one of the repulsors is totaled. And the landing gear.”

“There’s a Ghtroc 720,” Strunk said. He spoke slowly. “You know the one? Out by Feressee’s Point? The one that split when it came down? It’s all upside down and in pieces, but it’s still got its gear. This is a Ghtroc, right?”


“Two of us could move it,” Devi said, excited. “Be about a day’s work, maybe two, get it cut free and haul it back over here.”

They were both looking at her. And so were the men.

“It’s my ship,” Rey said after a long pause.

The men looked back to Devi and Strunk, Rey’s decision made for them.

“We can help you,” Devi said.

“She’s got lots of help already,” Quom snarked.
“C’mon. Strunk’s big and strong and stupid, so he’s fearless, like, and I’m small and smart and can get into the tiny crawl spaces,” Devi said.

“I’ve got Quom for strong, Dad for smart, Teng for fearless, and myself so small,” Rey shot back.

“And what about the days they need to go off and do their own work?” Devi asked. “I’ve seen it. They’re not helping you full time. We can help you fix this thing up full time, Rey.”


“You take us with you,” Devi said.

Rey blinked. The sentence didn’t make sense to her, not at all.

“Where?” she asked.

“Wherever it is you’re going.”

Rey looked to Luke, “I’m going to Niima. I’m going to sell it to Unkar.”

“No, serious,” Devi laughed. “Where are you guys going?”

Everyone was silent.

“We’re going to Niima,” Teng repeated. “We’re selling to Plank.”

Strunk opened his mouth to speak, but Devi moved her hand in a way that Rey understood was meant to shut him up. Strunk closed his mouth and shrugged.

She got that calculating look in her eye again; the same one she got after learning Rey would be trained for the Fighting Pit by Dirk.

“Unkar’ll pay a lot for it, especially if it’s spaceworthy.” Devi nodded, agreeing with herself. “Yeah, figure, what? Six, maybe seven thousand portions? He’d go higher if it’ll do hyperspace.”

“The converter chamber fractured,” Rey said. “If I can find a replacement and fit it, it can do hyperspace. It needs fuel.”

“Sure, yeah, perfect!” Devi was enthusiastic. “We help you fix it up, we do shares of the sale, split whatever Unkar’s willing to pay. That’s what I’m thinking. That’s fair, right? Each of us gets, like, a third?”

The men looked at Rey again.

“It’s my ship,” she repeated.

“Besides, there’s six of us,” Quom pointed out.

“Right, that’s fair, too, your ship, you found it, and there’s more of you. So you get two thirds, and Strunk and I split the rest. That’s gonna be five thousand shares for you, at least. Unkar’ll fall all over himself for this, you know he will.”

Rey didn’t say anything, thinking. The split didn’t seem fair to her somehow, but she wasn’t entirely certain what fair was considering her life.

Devi looked up at the hull again, as if admiring the ship, “In fact, he’d probably fall all over himself
Strunk had his hands in his pockets and was looking down, but he glanced at Devi for a moment before returning his eyes to his boots. Devi was turning slowly in place, still taking in the lines of the hull.

It wasn’t an overt threat, Rey knew. The way Devi had said it, maybe it hadn’t been meant as a threat at all but rather an observation, a statement of fact about Unkar’s greed and the worth of Rey’s little light freighter.

The problem was, of course, this was Devi.

Of course it was a threat.

Rey looked to her father for help, but he could only offer her a sad sigh. No way to be certain that they wouldn’t go to Unkar and tell him about the ship and claim the finder’s fee on it, if nothing else. The more Rey thought about that, the more she realized she couldn’t trust them not to do it. If she couldn’t trust them to keep it secret, how could she trust them to help her repair it?

But there didn’t seem any other option.

“What do you say?” Devi asked. She was looking at Rey again. “Partners?”

Rey looked at her hands, where they met on her staff. Her fingers were filthy, her nails cracked and grease stained. She needed to ask her dad for another manicure.

She felt his comforting hand on her shoulder and she considered her options. Rey didn’t like any of them.

Rey sighed and sadly admitted defeat, “Let me show you around.”

The sorrow in Rey’s eyes just broke Luke’s heart.

Our mother, Thanya, always told us that fears get smaller if you share them with people who care about you.

- The Journal of Paige Tico

“I can’t believe those two!” Paige exclaimed, slamming down onto the extra chair at Evan’s work station.

“I know!” Evan agreed, not looking up as he highlighted a passage on his datapad. “…Who are we mad at?”

“Poe and Kaydel. Kaydel especially.”

“Ok.”

Paige raised an eyebrow, “Aren’t you curious why we’re mad at them?”
“Mildly,” Evan shrugged. “But you’re my girlfriend so if you’re mad at someone, I’m mad at them too.”

She laughed and shook her head. Evan smiled; he so loved her laugh.

He reached out and clasped her hand, “So, why are we mad at them?”

“They’re moving in together!”

“Those dastardly fiends.”

Paige rolled her eyes but had a smile on her face, “Kay agreed to it without even talking to me.”

“So? They basically live together already.”

“I know, it’s just I’m her current roommate, so she didn’t even think about what this means for me. I’ll be given a new roommate. Who knows what strange person will end up in the bed next to mine? Not to mention our room is the one we use for our Kira’s Council.”

“I’m sure Jessika wouldn’t mind offering up her room.” Evan took down a note, “Hey, doesn’t Rose have an extra bed in her room?”

“No, she’s in a one bunk room right now. I think I’m going to ask General Organa if we could be reassigned together.”

“Or, you know, you could always move in with me,” he suggested casually.

Paige blinked.

Evan noticed the silence and looked up, “What?”

“Are you serious?”

“Bout what?”

“Moving in with you?”

“Sure,” Evan shrugged. “I get a nice room as med team anyway. Makes the late night visits easier. I don’t know if I can stand getting any more splinters from the sniping platforms when we get lost in the woods overnight.”

Paige smiled and squeezed his hand, “You really want to move in together?”

Evan set his datapad aside and took both of her hands in his, “Absolutely.”

Her heart fluttered. With Evan she felt a peace within her that only Rose had managed to bring ever since their parents had sent them away to give them a chance to live. He had brought her that peace ever since they met at the Battle of Valra when Evan had decided to stay at her side, watching over her for Aletha when Dr Kymeri had gotten too busy with dealing with Diego and the passing of Wedge Antilles. Those three weeks of recovery with gentle, kind, simple natured Evan as her nurse had sparked something that even Rose hadn’t been able to unearth. It was difficult to go through every day knowing her parents were dead, but also knowing she would never get official confirmation. Evan at her side made those days a little bit easier.

“Alright,” Paige felt her gold pendant sitting against her chest. She mentally thanked the medallion for her luck in finding Evan, “I’ll move in with you, Hotshot.”
“I can’t wait, Em Yêu.”

“Me neither.”

Evan scratched his neck, “No, seriously. I can’t wait. You wanna file the paperwork now?”

“Can we do that?”

“I can get the request forms on Grandma’s computer,” Evan pointed to Aletha’s desk. He grabbed
her hand and stood, “Don’t worry, I have user access on the terminal.”

Paige allowed him to lead her over to the computer. She watched him as he fired it up, navigated the
system, and found the right form.

“Give me a second,” Evan punched in a code that automatically input all of his required information
on file into the form. “Just need you to add your own information and we can send it right off.”

“Alright, I’ll do that right-’” Paige stopped typing. “Hey Ev? I think you hit the wrong code.”

“What?”

“The form has the wrong name filled in.”

Evan squinted at the screen to the top of the form.

‘Resistance Soldier Geno Namit, ID Number 53554, member of the Medical Department requests to
be his/her roommate, Paige Tico, ID Number 47640, member of the Bomber Command.’

“You must have punched in your code wrong,” Paige said. “Though that’s weird, I’ve never heard
you, Kalonia, or Aletha mention a Geno Namit before.”

Silence.

Paige narrowed her eyes, “Evan?”

“Oh, uh,” Evan pulled at his collar, “that’s not an error. I don’t think I’ve ever told you this, but uh,
Evan Tharel isn’t my real name. It’s Geno Namit. I just go by Evan.”

She stared at him, “I’m sorry, what?”

“My birth name is Geno Namit,” he repeated.

“Evan, we’ve been dating almost a year now and you’ve had a secret name this whole time?”

“It wasn’t a secret. It just never came up.”

“I feel like this is the kind of thing you don’t wait for a relevant conversation to mention,” Paige said.
“I’m sorry, but why do you have a secret name?”

Evan sighed, “It’s uh… because of med school.”
“Med school?”

“When I was studying to become a nurse, I was met with a lot of sexism and mockery from the males in the doctor program. Apparently droid midwives are okay, but male nurses are something to be mocked.”

“People are stupid.”

“Kind of how we ended up fighting in a Resistance, Em Yêu. Actually it was that type of mockery that made me think I had to prove myself as a manly Hotshot when I first joined up and led to my embarrassing sniper lesson display.”

“Hey, don’t knock that embarrassment,” Paige said. “I ended up getting a boyfriend out of it.”

Evan laughed.

“So how did this lead to a new name?” she asked.

“Well, I was met with the brunt of the mockery from a guy named Dalen, and the name Geno is actually a negative slang word for homosexual on his homeworld, so that didn’t help matters. Nor did Namit rhyming with Gambit. They ended up calling me the Gay Nurse Gambit... So I said, screw this, I’m changing my name. It’s not a legal name change, but I’ve gone by Evan Tharel ever since. General Organa is well aware of the situation. We’ve actually bonded over it a little as Evan and Tharel are Alderiaan names. Together they mean Gracious Bird.”

She stared at him.

“No, there’s no real reason I picked that name,” Evan admitted.

Laughing, Paige bent forward and pressed a kiss to his cheek, “Alright, Geno Namit. I’ll move in with you as long as you promise me two things.”

“What’s that?”

“No kicking Rose out of the room or restricting her access unless it’s for a good reason.”

“Is sex a good reason?”

“It’s a very good reason,” Paige winked, her smile joyous. “And the other thing: no more big secrets like names.”

“Alright, but in that case you need to know that my mom is alive, paralysed below the waist, and I’m terrified of introducing you two because she raised me to believe no sex before marriage, and I don’t know how long I can keep our sex life a secret from her. It’s not that she would disown me or anything; I just really don’t want to see that disappointed look on her face. She is aware of you though, and Aletha’s met her. Jokingly calls her Mom because of my Grandma nickname for her. Oh, and also I’ve been hiding a secret pet bird in my room for three months because General Organa refuses to approve pets on base, so I took matters into my own hands.”

Paige blinked.

“His name is George,” Evan added as if it would help anything.

“That was a lot of information in a very short time.”

“I know, but hey, other than that we’re secret free.”
“Well, that’s… good.”

“So,” Evan drew out the word. “We have a deal?”

She smiled, “Geno Namit, I’m moving in with you.”

“Glad to hear it,” Evan shook her hand, the two sealing their agreement in a very businesslike manner. “But please, call me Evan. I prefer it to Geno.”

“Alright.” Paige suddenly frowned, “Wait, isn’t Evan usually with two Aureks… and a woman’s name?”

“Yeah, I didn’t think that one through.”

Later that night at Kira’s Council, Paige’s news was met with a joyous reaction.

Except from Rose.

“Oh Gods,” she buried her face in a pillow. “I’m going to die alone.”

Aletha laughed and rubbed Rose’s shoulder. Out of the corner of her eye she watched Kaydel and Paige chat happily about their plans for domesticity with their boyfriends.

She couldn’t help but smile. Leia’s plan to suggest to Poe that Kaydel officially move in with him so that Paige would move in with Rose or Evan, thus freeing up an extra room for the next batch of incoming recruits had gone perfectly.

After all, sometimes you needed to be sneaky to get more resources.

They’re little, but don’t mess with them. Their spears are ionized and can knock you unconscious or even kill you. They’ll fight to defend their territory, or over something they think is theirs, or just for some strange Teedo reason.

Still, I’ve never had a serious problem with the Teedos.

- Rey’s Survival Guide

She couldn’t sleep.

Within the walls of the walker, Rey lay in her hammock and stared up at the ceiling, listening to the soft moan of the wind as it caught in the cracks of the hull. Her dad was away with Quom at one of the Sacred Villages overnight doing business. Rey was instructed to hold down the fort and protect the walker. Teng was sleeping on Luke’s cot as Rey refused to sleep alone after her horrifying vision of Obik Kenu’s death.

Plus it made illicit trysts a lot easier if he was only sleeping a few feet away. They had done some things on her father’s cot that night that Rey was certain Luke would absolutely not approve of.
The thought brought a classic Rhiaon smirk to her face.

She’d shut off her power for the night, and it was very dark. She was tired, but she couldn’t keep her mind from racing. Questions and thoughts, memories long buried and fresh. When she had first reached into the Force it felt like something new had come alive in her. It had been extraordinary.

…Except for the part where her mind started randomly connecting to her murderer cousin who seemed to be convinced she was a ghost haunting him. Well, if that’s what the mother murdering traitorous son of a bitch wanted to think, then a ghost she would be.

“Sorry for calling you a bitch, Alyla,” Rey whispered.

Teng was too soundly asleep to notice.

But it wasn’t her idiot, awful, life destroying cousin she worried about. No, it was the ship, and her whole forced partnership with Devi and Strunk. It wouldn’t take much more to finish the job, to return the Ghtroc to something of its former glory. She could see the end in sight.

_Maybe that’s the trouble, _she thought._ Maybe I know exactly what’s about to happen._

Rey rolled from side to side on her hammock, struggling to get comfortable, trying to push away thoughts that refused to leave. She didn’t trust Devi or Strunk, either of them alone and certainly not together. She hadn’t before the Fighting Ring, and she certainly didn’t after.

Yet each time she had that thought, she remembered everything they had done, all the times they’d kept their word. They had delivered on every promise. They had followed her instructions. They had, without question, helped bring the freighter back to life.

But then her mind would race back to the business with the Fighting Ring. She would remember Devi’s conniving when things hadn’t gone in her favor.

And selling the ship rather than using it to get off Jakku wasn’t in her favor.

Rey _should_ trust them. She _wanted_ to trust them.

But she couldn’t. They would betray her. Try to trick her. Try to steal the prize, cut her out of the sale. As much as she wanted to believe otherwise, she was certain that Devi and Strunk would turn on her, and soon.

The ship was alone, unprotected, out in the desert.

It was the dead of night and bitterly cold.

Oh, screw it.

“Teng, wake up!” Rey sat up and reached for her boots in the dark.

“What?” Teng blurrily awoke. He frowned as he watched Rey pull on her boots, then found her goggles and her staff. “What’s going on?”

“Get up,” she took one of the blankets and switched on a light long enough to find a knife. “We’re going to the ship.”

Teng cringed at the brightness, “Why?”

She cut a slit in the blanket’s center, then pulled it over her head, wearing it as a poncho, “Because I
“I’m not afraid of violence,” Rey said as she and Teng settled for sleep in the bunk of the Ghtroc. It was just big enough for both of them. “I don’t enjoy it, but I’m not afraid of it.”

“Of course you aren’t,” Teng undid her hair ties. He greatly disliked the way her buns dug into him when they laid together, so they had a rule that during cuddle time, Rey’s hair had to be down. “Violence is a necessary part of surviving on Jakku. You’ve kicked ass from Carbon Ridge to Kelvin Ravine.”

“I’ve been in more fights than I can remember.” Rey grinned smugly, “More wins than losses, thankfully.”

“That’s my girl,” Teng chuckled. “Good enough that the word has spread in Niima to stay clear of her and what she could do with her staff. Oh and the things you do with your staff, I must say they do things to me, Rey.”

“Trust me, I know,” Rey smiled. It didn’t linger for long, “But this is serious, Teng. I’ll fight the two of them if necessary.”

“The only question is which one is the bigger threat? Strunk is quite a wall of muscle.”

“Devi,” Rey decided. “She’s the dangerous one. Strunk is strong, but he’s slow and follows Devi’s lead. Devi’s quick – both physically and mentally.”

“And have you seen the vibro-knife she carries on her belt?”

“Not to mention she wears a cut-down shock stick strapped to her left leg, beneath her pants.”

“How do you know that?”

“Don’t ask.”

“No, seriously tell me,” Teng said. “My ideas are turning me on.”

She smacked his chest, “Good thing Jessika Pava isn’t here to hear that. Fetishizing lesbians. Really, Teng?”

“Look, I’m sorry if sometimes I say things like that or make jokes about Dirk’s mental state. I’m really trying to be better, but I grew up with pirates, a cult, and then was a slave. Political correctness was not the environment I grew up in.”

Rey just shook her head, “Look, if it comes to a fight, I’ll go for Devi first. Then we deal with Strunk together.”

“Alright, but I’m not looking forward to it.”

“Me neither.”

Rey tossed and turned roughly, trying to get comfortable.

“Hey, whoa, settle down,” Teng said. “Remember you’re lying on me. Elbows are sharp and should not be placed into several spots on my body.”
“I’m sorry, I just feel so foolish,” Rey said. “I was so certain that we would arrive here to find the ship already gone or, if we were lucky, Devi and Strunk in the process of trying to steal it.”

“How is that lucky? Plus, this ship can’t fly yet.”

“Teng please. I rode through the Graveyard and across the Crackle and risked gnaw-jaws and frostbite and crashing all because I can’t bring myself to trust them. What is wrong with me that damaged me so emotionally that I can’t trust them?”

“Well, I suspect it has to do with the cousin trying to murder you, the Jarex child abuse situation, and the fact that Devi has betrayed us before.”

Rey sighed, “I just wonder if the situation had been reversed, if Devi and Strunk had been the ones to discover the ship and I had stumbled on it later, would they have felt the same? Would I have done to them what I’m certain they plan to do to me?”

“Absolutely not,” Teng said.

“How can you be so sure?”

“Because I know you. You’re loving and caring and honest. You would never do something like that to them… besides, your dad would never let it happen.”

Rey chuckled, “I suppose not. I just don’t know why my mind is doing all of this.”

“You’re tired,” Teng kissed her forehead. “Lay back and get some sleep. Nothing’s going to happen. I promise.”

“How can you say that?” Rey tried to grin, but it turned into a yawn. “I thought I was the Jed… aye. Sorry didn’t mean to yawn. Jedi.”

Teng smiled, “I know because I will never let anything happen to you.”

“Promise?”

“Promise.”

Rey didn’t know when she fell asleep, but she knew she was safe in Teng Malar’s arms.

Rey started awake, one hand automatically reaching for her staff only to hit the sleeping Teng in the face.

“I’m up! I’m up!” he sat up.

“Sorry,” she whispered. “I didn’t mean-”

“It’s okay,” Teng yawned. “What’s going on?”

“I sensed something. Something nearby.”

“Oh goodie, and Luke is nowhere to be found. Good thing I have my blaster.” Teng’s eyes cast about the ship. “Well… good thing you have your staff because I forgot my blaster at home.”
“Really, Teng?”

“Hey, I thought you were the muscle in this relationship… Oh no, wait, I left my blaster in the cockpit. Sorry.”

Rey just shook her head. She wasn’t entirely certain she hadn’t been dreaming when she sensed it. She tumbled out of the bunk, grabbed her staff, and she and Teng crept to the cockpit.

“Get down,” Rey whispered, setting down her staff. She got on her hands and knees, using the flight console to conceal herself. “We’ll be safer this way.”

Teng frowned, but she summarily pulled him to the ground with a yelp.

“Alright, I get it,” Teng grumbled, “listen to your girlfriend Jedi.”

“Damn right,” Rey sounded exactly like her mother in that moment.

They peered up through the cockpit glass at the horizon. It had taken two months to secure the materials needed to repair the glass. Rey had to admit it was Devi and Strunk who ultimately turned that into a success.

Something moved in the corner of her eye.

“Did you see that?” Rey whispered.

“See what?” Teng asked.

The shadows moved again. Two figures were descending the dune toward the ship.

“Oh, I see them,” Teng said. “How many are there?”

“I can’t quite make them out,” Rey squinted through the glass. “Wait, look. Two more shapes cresting the dune, leading luggabeasts.”

Teng muttered a few Nubian swears and said, “It’s Teedos.”

Four Teedos coming toward them. As they drew closer, they could start to make out details. All the Teedos were armed, most of them with staves but one had a rifle. Rey couldn’t see their markings in the darkness, but she didn’t need to. They had come either to take the ship or to destroy it. It didn’t matter.

Either way, Rey and Teng wouldn’t let them. The Ghtroc was armed with a fore-mounted dual laser cannon, but the gun was nonoperative. Rey had restored the wiring and firing controls as best she could, but the Tibanna gas required to charge the weapons had long before leaked into the atmosphere and was impossible to replenish. Never mind that using the cannon was an absolute last resort solution, and willing though she was to defend her prize, Rey didn’t want to kill anyone if she could avoid it.

“Come on,” Rey nudged Teng. “We gotta get outside.”

“Give me a second,” Teng slowly rose to his feet to grab his blaster from the dash where he had left it earlier that day. He dropped back down to the floor and clumsily set it.

“Teng?”

“Yeah?”
“Have you ever killed anyone?”

“…Once. When I was with the pirates.”

“Is it…” Rey hesitated. “Is it hard?”

“To kill? Not really… It’s harder to live with, especially when you kill with a blaster. The simple pull of a trigger is all it takes to end someone’s entire life. It’s not an action to take lightly… but if it means the difference between your life ending and theirs, it’s an action you have to commit. Put the morals aside and just do whatever it takes to survive.”

Rey nodded and clasped his hand, “Thank you.”

“It’s nothing.”

But it wasn’t nothing, those words would carry with her for the rest of her life. And those words would be the thing that pushed her to fight three years later on Takodana when she took her first life.

They crawled quickly back to the cockpit hallway before getting to their feet. Stumbling through the darkness to the loading ramp, Rey hit the release, and followed it down as it descended. She and Teng jumped out before it had touched the ground, weapons at the ready. They ran to the front of the freighter. Rey had both hands on her staff and Teng’s blaster was ready to fire.

They skidded to a stop, facing the Teedos.

The Teedos paused their advance, the nearest of them—the one with the rifle—six, maybe seven meters away. For a long moment nobody moved and nobody spoke. One of the luggabeasts huffed, pawing at the sand, its gears grinding.

“This is mine,” Rey said. “It’s my ship, do you understand? You can’t have it.”

The Teedos didn’t respond.

“Did you hear her?” Teng yelled. “This is ours. Not yours.”

Rey couldn’t tell what kind of Teedos they were dealing with, scavengers or worse. Her stomach was tight, an ache in the pit of her gut, and she could feel her heart beating in her breast.

But then she sensed Teng’s fear in the Force and felt courage. She loved Teng and would do anything to protect him.

“Leave,” Rey said firmly to the Teedos. “Go away.”

The Teedo nearest her, rifle still lowered, turned his wrapped head to look back at the others. Their bodies were always hidden — everything, including their eyes — so even if the light had been better, Rey wouldn’t have been able to read anything in their expressions. The body language was clear enough, though.

The Teedo in the lead looked back at her. They had no intention of leaving.

“We don’t want to fight,” Teng told them,

Rey cut in, “We don’t want to fight, but we will. I will.”

Teng glanced at her nervously. He hoped she couldn’t see the way his hand holding the blaster was shaking. Just because he had taken a life before didn’t mean he wanted to.
The Teedo with the rifle brought the weapon up to his shoulder. It was pointing at Teng. Clearly the Teedos could see he was the weaker of the two – emotionally in the situation as well as physically.

Rey’s mind raced a mile a minute. She had to save Teng. How could she save Teng? Her own safety didn’t matter, but Teng… She wouldn’t let anything happen to him.

Ok, focus, think, calculate. How far was the Teedo from Teng?

Six meters.

Six meters was a close-range shot but too far for Rey to cover the distance before he could make it. She figured she had to try, anyway. Try for Teng. If she got lucky, if she led with her staff, maybe she would hit the end of the weapon before he fired, maybe she could knock it away, force him to miss. Rey doubted she would be so lucky, but she didn’t see any other choice.

She never got the chance to find out.

A blaster bolt zapped into the sand between Teng and the Teedo with the rifle. The shot was brilliant red in the darkness and made the sand spit and sizzle. A second shot followed the first, hitting closer to the Teedo. Both had come from Rey’s right, atop one of the dunes.

“You heard her!” Devi’s voice rang across the desert. “It’s her ship!”

Rey, Teng, and the Teedos turned to her in surprise. She was standing just over the rise, a small blaster held in both hands. Strunk was beside her, and as Devi spoke, he ran clumsily down the slope, splashing sand as he went. His hands were empty, but he seemed even bigger than before, twice the height of the tallest Teedo.

“I don’t have a lot of shots in this thing,” Devi said. “But I’ve got enough left. A couple of you are gonna get really hurt. Or maybe worse.”

Strunk had reached the bottom and jogged up alongside Rey. He touched her elbow as he passed but kept moving forward, striding toward the Teedo with the rifle. Teng could do nothing but blink and watch Strunk try to save his life.

He reached out and grabbed the weapon by its long barrel, then pulled it aside. The Teedo didn’t let go, but he couldn’t control where it was pointing. Strunk yanked, and the rifle came out of the Teedo’s three-fingered grip. Strunk turned the gun in his hands, found the charging clip, and tore it free. He flung the cartridge over the dunes, then handed the rifle back to the Teedo.

“What would it be inappropriate to clap?” Teng muttered to Rey.

“Teng!”

“Sorry.” Teng glanced around and very gently banged the tip of his fingers against the heel of his other hand making a very quiet clap Rey could neither see nor hear.

“It’s time for you to leave,” Devi told the Teedo.

The message clearly received, Teedos turned and went back the way they had come.

“Okay, can I faint now?” Teng asked.

Rey and Devi frowned at him.

“See,” Devi said, “this is why I don’t believe you when you say he belonged to pirates and a cult.”
Rey just sighed.

“You’re welcome,” Devi said, as she followed Rey and Teng up the ramp and back into the ship. Strunk’s footsteps were heavy on the metal behind them.

Rey spun on her heel, hands still gripping her staff.

“What were you doing out here?” Rey demanded as Strunk stumbled the last length off the ramp.

Teng let Rey take the lead on this one and holstered his blaster. He flicked on the lights in the main compartment and hit the switch to close the ramp once more.

Devi tucked her little blaster into one of her many pockets and ran her grimy fingers through her hair, looking up at Rey.

She seemed puzzled, “We were keeping watch.”

“Keeping watch?” Rey shot.

“Yeah, Strunk and I have been camping out here pretty much the last two weeks whenever you headed home,” Devi looked genuinely confused. “Someone had to stay on guard, right?”

“Two weeks?”

“About that, yeah. I’d have thought you’d be more grateful.”

Rey looked at her staff, then Teng. He placed a hand on her staff and forced her to lower it.

“We thank you, but it’s not necessary,” Teng said, giving Rey a look.

She sighed and set it against a bulkhead, “We already have guards for the ship. Either I, Teng, Quom, or Dad will sleep on it overnight.”

Rey didn’t mention that she never slept alone in the ship.

“Yeah, but we thought safety in numbers,” Devi said. “You know, in case something like this happened.”

Rey didn’t know how she should feel. They had been sleeping out in the cold for two weeks, risking the gnaw-jaws and everything else just to guard the ship.

But still… this was Devi she was dealing with.

“I didn’t know you were doing that,” Rey said.

“You guys keeping warm?” Teng asked.

“We’ve got one of those old emergency shelters we pulled from a wrecked X-wing a couple years ago. It’s pretty warm inside, though it gets kinda cozy,” Devi shot a grin at Strunk, who was standing mutely by, listening closely.

Teng and Rey traded a look, and Teng gave her a smirk.

“I'd ship it.”
“Shut up,” Rey snapped.

Devi smiled, but for once it looked like a real smile, “We normally wait until we see you guys arrive and then we head out on the salvage runs, get our portions, like that. Hadn’t you wondered why you were always here first?”

Honestly, Rey thought it was because of her super awesome Jedi powers.

“I just thought I was early,” Rey lied.

“Nah, Rey, we’ve been making sure everything stays safe.”

Rey considered and found that she was struggling with what she should say. It was nice but still… it was Devi.

“Thank you,” Rey forced herself to say. She nearly choked on the words.

Devi laughed. “See, that’s it! You’re welcome! It’s not a big thing, Rey. We’re just protecting our investment, right? That’s all it is. Nothing more to it.”

Rey narrowed her eyes, “Just like the Fighting Ring? Nothing more to that?”

Devi’s face fell, “Look, Rey, I’m sorry. That was a shitty move to pull. I shouldn’t have done it. It was just once I heard that Dirk was going to train you, I got scared. But I’m sorry. I shouldn’t have done that and I promise I won’t ever double cross you again.”

Rey nodded slowly. Her Force powers weren’t strong enough yet to sense Devi was lying.

Teng sighed and wrapped his arm around Rey’s waist, “We thank you for the apology, Devi. And Strunk, thank you for saving my life.”

“No problem,” Strunk shrugged.

“So, listen,” Devi said in that smooth as oil way she liked to peddle. “I was talking with Forna, when she, Oth, and Grand were in Niima the other day. They say that the X’us’R’iia all those months back uncovered an Uulshos XP, one of the yachts, you know? They said it’s entirely wrecked, they stripped it of everything, but they also said the main engine compartment came down intact. Neither me nor Strunk can ever remember Unkar selling a converter chamber, the thing’s just too hard to separate from the remix junction, right? But the one on this XP, it might still be intact. So we’re going to go out and take a look, what do you think?”

“I think it’s a good idea,” Rey said stiffly.

“Gonna be a real pain separating it out, though. Strunk’s strong enough to help lift it, but getting it disconnected without making it useless or cracking the diverter, that’s the part that’s worrying me.”

Rey and Teng traded a knowing look. Her big hazel eyes stared up at him begging please don’t make me do this. Teng nudged her, and Rey sighed.

“I can help,” Rey tried to sound enthusiastic about the offer.

Devi looked surprised, but not too surprised, “You sure? Isn’t your dad and Quom away on business? It’ll leave the ship alone.”

“No, I can help,” Rey said. “Strunk, Teng, and I can go. You stay with the ship.”
Devi stared at her, then looked away sharply. When she looked back, Rey thought her eyes had grown wet. The cynical Rhiaon half of her said they were fake, but the optimist Skywalker half hoped they were genuine.

“I won’t let anyone touch it,” Devi promised.

She almost sounded earnest.

*Almost.*

---

**AGE SEVENTEEN**

**The Year of the Tragedy**

Rey Erso knew exactly what she wanted for her seventeenth birthday. Sure, if Quom or her father asked, she would pretend she didn’t. But Rey knew what she wanted, and exactly who she wanted to give it to her.

“I want to have sex.”

Teng Malar – still eighteen for another month or so – blinked.

“I’m sorry, you want what?”

“I want to make love,” Rey said. “Tonight.”

“Tonight,” Teng repeated. He honestly didn’t remember how to return his eyes to a normal width. “Like… tonight tonight?”

“Look, if you don’t want to-”

“Oh, trust me, I want to, I just… wow. Wasn’t really expecting that.”

Rey frowned, “Really? Because we’ve been doing stuff for a year. We’ve seen each other fully naked. We’ve done stuff to each other naked.”

“Believe me, highlight of the year,” Teng said, “I just… it’s a lot to take in.”

Rey grinned, “Well, I’ve seen it, Teng. Not saying there’s nothing, but let’s not overestimate.”

“Yes, insult my body. This is a sure-fire way to get me to sleep with you.”

“Come on, Teng,” Rey laughed, setting down her scrub brush. They were the only ones at Unkar Plutt’s wash tables, the safest place to discuss such plans without risk of being overheard by Luke or Quom. “I’m ready. So if you want it…”

Under the table, Teng felt a hand slid up his thigh. Rey leaned forward so her breath was hot on his ear and breasts were pressing against his heaving chest.

“Then take it,” she whispered in his ear.
“Rey,” Teng choked out. “You can’t… You can’t just say things like that.”

“Why not?”

“Because now I’m not going to be able to stand up from this table for a while.”

And then Rey got a downright wicked look in her eye.

“Everyone’s out seeing what yesterday’s X’us’R’iia turned up. There’s no one at all watching,” Rey whispered, her hand drifting up his thigh.

“Rey,” Teng grunted as her fingers ran over his pant’s bulge.

“Just relax, Teng,” Rey grinned. “No one will see.”

“But Rey-”

“Are you not consenting to this?” Rey’s hand stopped.

Teng stared at her in a hot, heavy silence, the answer clear in his eyes.

“We have to be quick and quiet,” Teng panted, covertly unsnapping his fly under the table.

"Then we have a deal," Rey grinned. "I give you what you want… and tonight you give me what I want.”

Teng’s breath hitched as her hand slipped under his pants, “Agreed.”

“No,” Rose Tico’s voice came across the comm.

“Yes,” Rey grinned as she worked in Quom’s tent alone. Luke and Quom were out scavenging, and Teng was out trading, which was difficult as he couldn’t look anyone in the eye after their little stunt at the wash table.

“No,” Rose repeated.

“Yes!” Rey exclaimed.

“Holy fuck…” Jessika said.

Paige was speechless.

“I can’t believe you seriously gave Teng a handjob under the table at the wash tables… in public,” Kaydel said.

“Excuse me?” Rey frowned. “Is Miss I once broke into Holdo’s office, had sex on her desk, and broke her chair in the process really judging me?”

“She’s got a point,” said Jessika.

“Oh, be quiet,” Kaydel grumbled.
“I’m just happy Aletha isn’t here tonight,” Paige shook her head.

“Yeah, she might tell my dad about my plans with Teng,” Rey smirked.

“Are you sure you want to do this tonight?” Kaydel asked.

“Yeah,” Rey nodded. “I love Teng with all my heart and I’m ready to take our relationship to the next level. Besides, we’ve done pretty much everything you can do already.”

The older girls burst out laughing.

“Oh honey,” Jessika said, “you have no idea how much more there still is.”

“And we’re not even talking about thing I really like but Poe refuses to do level stuff,” Kaydel added.

“Ok, seriously, what is it you want him to do?” Rose asked. “Are we talking about non-sexual bodily fluids, extremely weird fetish, or bordering on the illegal?”

“Not illegal…just very unsanitary,” Kaydel answered. “Let’s just say that it involves a mouth in a very unhygienic place.”

Rey’s eyes went wide.

“Oh,” the girls said together.

“That’s it?” Jessika scoffed. “Gods be cursed, Kaydel, I thought we were talking something weird like a fire play fetish. Not something you can easily see in mainstream porn.”

“Hey, there’s nothing wrong with a little fire play,” Paige said.

The line went very silent.

“Wow,” Kaydel stretched out the word.

“Mark that down on the list of things I never wanted to know about my sister,” Rose grumbled.

“Fuck, Paige,” Jessika said, “I really underestimated Evan Tharel’s kinks.”

“Well, actually I was the one who convinced Ev-”

“So, Kira and Teng!” Rose hollered, so not wanting to hear anymore and silently praying for amnesia of the last two minutes. “You nervous, Kira?”

“A little,” Rey admitted. “But mostly excited.”

“Just remember,” Kaydel said kindly, “it’s perfectly natural for you not to get off on penetration alone. Don’t be afraid of additional stimulation.”

“And don’t freak if there’s a little blood,” Paige advised. “The whole hymen thing is a myth for the most part.”

“Oh, trust me, I had a bad fall years ago and broke that.”

“But there still might be blood,” Paige continued. “Just relax and make sure you’re good and ready before any penetration. There doesn’t have to be pain and blood, but there’s absolutely no shame if
you do experience that."

“And for the love of all the Gods,” Jessika said, “make sure he clips his fingernails.”

Rose spoke, “I don’t have any advice, but I will offer you a you go get some, girl if you wish.”

“Sure, Rose,” Rey smiled.

“You go get some, girl.”

Rey chuckled, “Thanks, girls. I’m so glad I have you all to talk to. It makes me less nervous knowing I can talk to people with experience and who can answer my questions. I think that’s why Teng is so nervous; the only person he can talk to about this is my dad, and that doesn’t sound like a good topic of conversation for them.”

“Yeah, if Evan asked my dad how to sexually please me, he and Rose would be burying a body,” said Paige.

“Why would I hide the body?” Rose asked.

“Daddy/daughter bonding?”

“Fair enough.”

Rey sighed, “I just wish there was someone for Teng to talk to. His own Kira’s Council. I don’t know… Malar’s Men.”

Something occurred to Kaydel, “Well, actually…”

The girls looked to her.

She grinned deviously, “Girls… I have an idea.”

“However much foreplay you think you’ll need, times that by three,” Poe instructed.

“And add another five minutes,” Evan nodded.

Tallie added, “And for the love of the Force, clip your nails.”

“Thanks, guys,” Teng chuckled. “I really appreciate this.”

“Eh, we really didn’t have much to do on base today anyways,” Poe shrugged. “So what exactly is it you want to talk about? You do know what sex is, right?”

“Of course I do!”

“Dameron, be nice,” Tallie warned. “Tell us, Honey. What do you want to know?”

“I’m just not quite sure, you know… what to do,” Teng admitted. “I mean, I know which part goes where and… you know, what motions to make with said parts, but… well, how do I start? What do I do?”

Poe Dameron and Evan Tharel traded a look, seated next to each other on the bed. Aletha Kymeri’s comm sat on the bedtable in Poe and Kaydel’s room – said room cleared of the comm’s usual council of girls – and the pair of men were joined by Tallissan Lintra seated at the desk.
“Look, sex is all about going with the flow,” Evan said. “Whatever feels right, just do that.”

“But keep open communication,” Tallie cut in. “You don’t need to ask her every two minutes if this is okay, but if you’re not going to outright ask her if she wants to proceed to something new, very slowly transition into and back off if she feels uncomfortable. Watch her body language.”

“That said,” Poe added, “asking a girl if they want you to do something to them… I swear nothing gets Kaydel hotter. Don’t be afraid of a little dirty talk, but don’t go all out at first, okay?”

“Oh, yeah no, good advice, but that’s not what I meant,” Teng started to sound frustrated. “What exactly do I do? How am I supposed to go with the flow if I don’t know what we’re flowing between.”

“Alright, fine,” Poe rolled his eyes, “you want specific instructions? Think of the five things you want to do most tonight. It can range anything from kissing to outright sex. Order them from 1-5 from most erotic to least. Got them?”

“I think so.”

“What you need to do is build up to number one. Linger between each number. Do something like 5 for ten minutes, then 4 for five minutes, then do 3 for two minutes, then go back to 4 for another five minutes. Mix and match as you will, jumping up and down in intensity and level. Maybe you go down from 2 to 5 for another two minutes just to make her go that wild. But whatever you do, do not do number 1. Tease her that you’re going to, tell her that’s what you’re going to do, but always pull back. Then, when you’ve literally got her begging for it, give her number 1.”

Tallie bit her lip and Evan cleared his throat.

“I uh…” Evan shifted awkwardly, “I think I need to find Paige after this.”

“Yeah, Jess is going to have some fun with me too,” Tallie said. “Damn, Dameron. No wonder Kaydel brags about you so much.”

Poe grinned, “I take my title of Sex God very seriously.”

“You think Kaydel calls you a sex god?” Evan raised an eyebrow.

“Maybe not to you guys.”

“Teng,” Tallie turned her attention back to the comm, “just relax. There’s no program to follow, just do whatever is comfortable to yourself and Kira.”

“I know,” Teng sighed. “I just want it to be perfect for her.”

The trio laughed.

“Oh Honey,” Tallie chuckled. “It’s not going to be perfect the first time. It’s always awkward the first time.”

“ Heck, it’s awkward the first time with a new partner,” Poe said. “The first time Kay and I had sex, I fell on her while trying to take off my boot, pinned her against my desk, and couldn’t figure out how to take off her bra.”

“First time Paige and I had sex, I couldn’t get her off,” Evan added.

“Jessika was my first, so you can imagine how well that went. Why don’t we each take a turn and
tell Teng something embarrassing from our very first times?” Tallie suggested. “The first time I had sex, I rolled right off the bed, slammed face first on the corner of the bedside table, and gave myself a black eye.”

The others laughed.

“Alright, I’ll go,” Evan volunteered. “The first time I had sex, I was so nervous, I couldn’t get hard for over an hour.”

“Ouch,” Poe chuckled, wincing a little. “That’s bad, but not quite as awful as what happened my first time.”

“Oh yeah? What happened?” Evan asked.

“My dad walked in.”

Tallie, Evan, and Teng winced.

“Oh, that’s awful,” Tallie laughed.

Poe groaned, “But it gets worse. When my dad walked in, he froze, turned bright red, and stuttered out an apology for interrupting. He started to back out the room when he paused, looked back, and I shit you not, then started to give me pointers on how to make things more enjoyable.”

The comm crackled with hysterical laughter from Teng. Evan just stared at Poe with his face perfectly white and jaw hanging open, and Tallie laughed so hard she literally fell out of her chair.

“How did you even respond to that?” Teng howled.

“I threw my pants at him and told him to get out,” Poe had gone a shade a red that had only been seen by Rose Tico after he walked in on her in the shower. “It completely killed the mood and scarred me for a very long time. It was a year before I had sex with a girl where I got to finish.”

“And somehow you are now an exhibitionist,” Evan said.

“Actually not really,” Poe corrected. “I get a thrill of the idea of possibly being caught, but actually getting walked in on is one of the worst things to endure. It’s why I hate Holdo so much... and why it took me two months to look General Organa in the eye again after the night of my promotion ceremony. So, yeah, there’s advice for you, Teng. Don’t let anyone walk in on you.”

“That’s hard to avoid,” Teng said. “I live with a Vrogem, and apparently not only can they smell sex on you, they can determine exactly what sex act you’ve performed.”

“Remind me never to hang around Vrogems,” Evan muttered.

Tallie raised an eyebrow, “Wouldn’t that involve you getting laid on a regular basis?”

Evan scowled, “You know I have a live-in girlfriend, right? Sure, I may not be Commander Sex God Dameron, but Paige and I have a very healthy and fulfilling sex life.”

“Healthy?” Poe shot. “Kay told me some of the shit you and Paige get up to. Tharel, that girl is weird.”

“Oh, she told them about the fire thing, did she?” Evan scratched his neck. “In my defense, it was only one time.”
Tallie raised an eyebrow.

“Okay, six times,” Evan admitted. “And don’t you give me that look. I know what you and Jessika get up to in unattended ships.”

“Uh, guys?” Teng cut in. “Aren’t we supposed to be talking about me?”

“Sorry, Kid,” Poe laughed. “This there anything else you want to talk about?”

“Yeah, how long is it supposed to last? Five minutes? Ten minutes? An hour?”

“Oh, God, don’t go for an hour, Teng,” Tallie shuddered. “You’ll chaff the girl.”

“And honestly, no one can last an hour,” Poe said.

“Didn’t you once last three?”

“I gave him a pill to do that.” Evan shook his head, “Don’t worry about lasting long, Teng. The first time you’re inside a woman, it’s going to be over quick. My first time, I lasted two minutes.”

“Really?”

“He’s right,” Poe agreed. “I’ll kill you guys if you tell anyone, but the first time I finished inside a girl, I lasted three pumps.”

“Anything else?” Evan asked. “You guys are using condoms, right? Because if not, I will tell Aletha, and she will come down there and castrate you.”

“We’re going to use a condom. But I did mean to ask about that,” Teng replied. “So, Kira and I have had absolutely no partners other than each other. We’re absolutely going to use a condom for the actual sex, but what about the rest of it? We don’t have to use one for foreplay, right?”

“Wrong,” Evan answered. “You can transmit some STIs through foreplay, and you can have an STI without knowing. You could be born with one, or maybe there’s some abuse that happened to you when you were really young that you don’t remember. Even if you both are virgins, until you both get tested, always use condoms. Heck, it’s a good idea to use them even when you are clean, monogamous, and on other birth control. Paige is on the pill, and we still use condoms every time, just in case.”

“Seriously?” Poe asked. “Kay’s got an IUD and the second we were both declared clean, we decided to get rid of them.”

“Dude, I’m a nurse. I don’t screw around with this sort of thing. The success rate of birth control may be in the high 90’s, but we’re not taking a chance. We’re not having a baby in the middle of a war.”

“So, is there anything else you wanted to discuss, Teng?” Tallie asked.

“No,” Teng laughed. “I think I’m ready.”

“Then Teng Malar,” Poe grinned, “go forth and get laid.”

That night Rey and Teng shared dinner with Devi and Strunk. Luke and Quom were back at the
shop, working on their own projects and having dinner. Rey and Teng didn’t dine with Devi and Strunk a lot, but as they worked together more and more, those dinners started to get more frequent.

They sat on the floor and had one portion apiece. Devi talked throughout the meal, the way she always seemed to be talking, but Rey found herself enjoying it more each time. Devi was no Kira’s Council, but it was nice to be face to face with a girl her age for once.

When they’d finished, Strunk got up to head for the ramp, Devi moving to follow him.

“See you in the morning, you guys,” Devi said and then, to Strunk, “I’ll take the first watch.”

Devi and Strunk had been camping out near the ship every night. Sometimes Rey got up the nerve to trust them alone with the ship, but never overnight. Instead she or Teng or sometimes even Luke or Quom would sleep on the ship, guarding it. In the middle of the night, there sometimes was an interruption from Devi and Strunk. Not every night, but often enough to make Rey wary.

She didn’t want any interruptions tonight.

“You guys can stay on the ship,” Rey said. “It’s warmer.”

They stopped. Teng even froze, giving her a funny look.

Surely she didn’t want an audience?

“That is true,” Devi glanced at Teng, looking a little confused but sly as she formulated a plan in her mind. “Also, it doesn’t smell so much like Strunk. Which, I hate to say it, that shelter totally does.”

“I do not smell.” Strunk sounded wounded.

“We all smell, Strunk.”

“Don’t you guys use the bathing hut?” Teng asked.

“Too expensive,” Devi replied. Her voice was a little bitter.

Teng winced. Sometimes he forgot that living with Luke meant he was living a life of privilege. Well… as privileged as you could get on Jakku.

Devi continued, “I can’t remember the last time I was in a refresher.”

Rey pointed to one of the small closed doors off the main compartment, “Fully functional.”

“You serious?”

“No water, but the sonics work.” Rey glanced at Teng. “I tested it this morning. Thought I’d be nice and fresh for… my birthday.”

Teng’s eyes went wide. Oh Gods, he was in trouble tonight.

Devi glanced between Rey and for a moment, opened her mouth, and then closed it.

“You can have that first watch, Strunk,” she disappeared into the refresher. Devi poked her head back out, “Oh, and Teng?”

Teng had been in the middle of grabbing Rey’s hand and leading her off the ship.
“Good luck,” she winked.

Rey couldn’t help laughing.

“Well, that was embarrassing.” Teng grumbled as they walked off the ship.

“Hey, I didn’t tell anyone,” Rey hung on to his arm.

He raised an eyebrow.

“Other than the Council,” she corrected.

Teng shook his head, “So, are you ready for tonight?”

“I think so. Are you?”

“I think so. You bring the condoms?”

“In my satchel,” she patted it.

“Good,” he took a deep breath.

“Hey,” Rey pulled him to a halt. “I’m happy we’re going to do this.”

“Yeah,” Teng smiled. “Me too.”

Rey took a breath, “I love you, Teng Malar.”

“I love you, Rey Erso,” he wrapped his arms around her. “Nothing will ever change that. I’ll love you to my dying breath.”

“And you to mine,” she rested her head against his chest. “I’m ready to do this.”

“Me too… So where exactly are we going to do this? I thought we were going to on the Ghroic, but that didn’t work out. And somehow I don’t think Quom and Luke would appreciate it if we did it in the walker or tent next to them while they try to sleep.”

Rey grinned, “Oh, I have the perfect idea.”

In the year since Kylo had met Sasa, he had never actually been in her room. Sure, he knew where it was located and he had seen outside of it, but he had never been inside.

He had seen Tara’s, and Nera’s when she was alive. He had been in Wihn’s several time when the two most trustworthy Knights – and that was saying something considering who they were – needed to speak alone. Cern’s room Kylo had no desire to see – there were probably deceased animals pinned to cards hung on the walls. And to be honest, he didn’t care at all about Doxl and Berd.

But Sasa’s room… well, at first it hadn’t been intentional that Kylo had never been in it. Then it became a bit of a game between the two. If Kylo showed up at her door and was able to correctly sense one object – non-living things were harder to sense in the Force – then he would be allowed in.
To be honest, it wasn’t that his Force Powers were too weak to sense things, but that Sasa had her ways to distract him during her tests.

The last time they thought she might be pregnant – due to the constant stress of trying to have a baby and avoiding Tara’s constant schemes to murder her, Sasa often missed her period – had been from one of those tests, resulting in Kylo having sex with her against her bedroom door.

But Kylo knew today wasn’t going to result in such a lighthearted flirting. Kylo stood before her bedroom door, uncertain what to do. She was in there, probably hiding from everyone again. If he waited long enough, he would likely find FN-2187 bringing her dinner shortly.

FN-2187 was in saber classes that moment, which was why Kylo chose to visit Sasa now. He liked FN-2187 well enough, but he didn’t feel comfortable speaking to Sasa in an intimate fashion in front of FN-2187. Heck, he barely could do it in front of Sasa.

In the almost year since her confession of love, Kylo couldn’t muster up a response beyond “I know.” Sure, as the son of Han Solo and Leia Organa that phrase meant so much more, but there was still a distance between himself and Sasa. A distance he was afraid to close.

Tara had been pissed off again when Sasa failed to show up to the Expert Saber Class. This snub was less egregious now that Sasa had been officially graduated from the class as a student. It hadn’t been Tara’s choice, rather a mandate from the Supreme Leader, championed by Kylo and Wiln. The Stormtrooper FN-2187 liked called Marks had taken her spot, and Sasa attended the class as a Knight of Ren helping, testing, and instructing like Doxl and Berd did.

Strictly speaking, a Knight of Ren didn’t have to attend, and it was no big deal if they missed one due to a mission – Cern had been away from three months tracking the missing Lor San Tekka – but if you were on Starkiller Base or the Finalizer with Tara, then you were expected to show up.

It had been three weeks since Sasa came to class.

Kylo could sense her inside; she was as somber as he had sensed her yesterday… and every day for weeks. She had been avoiding him, and he wanted to know why.

He took a deep breath and knocked on the door.

For a moment, she hesitated, but he heard the padding of footsteps. The door slid open only a little, and Sasa’s face peeked out.

“Hey,” Kylo said.

“Hey,” she gave a slight smile, but it didn’t reach her eyes.

She wasn’t her usual polished self, but Kylo could tell from years of living with Leia Organa that Sasa had done herself up a little. Ben Solo knew the difference between simple hair and makeup and the days he spent with his mother as she lounged around the house in baggy clothes, no makeup, and wild, frizzy hair tumbling down her shoulders, watching HoloNet together.

He wouldn’t admit he missed those days.

“Can I come in?” Kylo resisted the urge to stroke her cheek.

Sasa’s smile was real this time, “Can you earn your entry?”

Kylo shook his head, ready to make some witty retort when he paused, “Are you playing music?”
Sasa said nothing, but sure enough, faintly in the background some melody was playing. A melody he knew.

“Ubari Menvoln,” Kylo said. “Opening song of the second act of his opera, Imperio Tulada Mornay, aka The Empire’s Crushing Shadow. The song is called ‘Warra Aldeera,’ Cry for Alderaan.”

She lifted her eyebrows, “You know it?”

He frowned, “The song is about the destruction of Alderaan. Yeah, my mom may have played it a few million times growing up. I could sing it in my sleep.”

“Actually, now that I think about it, you may have literally done so.”

“Nice enough recording,” Kylo observed the music. “Truth be told, it’s most beautiful when played live. There’s layers to it you just can’t get in a recording.”

“I’d love to hear it played live.”

“Perhaps someday I’ll take you… You know, if I would immediately to arrested the second I stepped foot in the Coruscant Grand Opera Hall.”

Sasa smiled, “I’d like that… the outing and the part where no one arrests you.”

“So, did I pass the test?” Kylo asked.

“Alright, looks like you paid your toll. Come in.”

Kylo grinned and stepped past her when the door slid open.

Why was he not surprised her walls were pink?


“So, not like the rest of the rooms on this military ship?”

“Exactly.” Kylo chuckled, “Do I get the grand tour?”

“Well, there a door and a bed and a closet-”

“Come on,” he turned around and placed his hands on her hips. He grinned as he pulled her close, “I mean it.”

“I guess it is a nice room,” Sasa settled her hands on his broad arms.

“And big,” he frowned glancing around. “Is this bigger than my room?”

“Uh, kind of. Technically it’s three rooms. No, wait… four.”

Kylo blinked.

“The Supreme Leader really wants to make sure he’s getting a lot out of his investment,” Sasa gave an awkward shrug.

“I’d say,” Kylo kept surveying the room. “So… tell me about the room.”

It was bright and fresh unlike Kylo’s room with its dark grey walls and dank quality. But Sasa’s room had soft pink walls, a little extra oxygen pumped in, and smelled faintly of flowers. She had
about as much furniture as him, but the elegant wood fixtures were larger and had decorative
carvings. Her bed looked like it could sleep four comfortably, or maybe two adults and three kids
which was the number Snoke had always predicted Kylo having. A son, a daughter, and a son he
had foreseen.

She had deep purple silk bedsheets and pillowcases, and the mattress was so soft. Oh, he was so
nailing her in that bed. His bed was a joke compared to hers.

There was a desk and bookshelf in one corner, and a vanity set with a grand number of hair
products, skincare, and makeup so beautifully organized that Leia Organa would be proud to call
Sasa her daughter-in-law.

Wait… Where the hell did that thought come from?

Her fresher – the second room of her quarters – was identical to his own, except she had a bathtub to
go with her shower.

But it was something in the main room that surprised Kylo the most.

“Is this a… dejarik table?” he ran a hand over the rim, his mouth hanging open.

“Yep,” she smiled. “I love playing. Nova and I had a travel set we played all the time. When I was
chosen, the Supreme Leader let me choose three personal enjoyments for my room. Dejarik was one
of them, and the speaker system was another. It’s wired throughout all parts of my quarters; even the
fresher for some ambiance during a bubble bath.”

Oh sweet Force, he so wanted to see her in a bubble bath… maybe join her too.

Sasa continued, “I have a program of over two thousand opera songs, symphonies, and other
instrumental music. Do you like dejarik or opera?”

He just stared at her, “Is this a trick?”

“Excuse me?”

“Come on, you have to know. Don’t pretend you have interest in things you don’t.”

“I’m not,” Sasa frowned. “I like these things, Kylo. If you don’t, there’s no need to disparage-”

“You really like them.” He blinked at her, “You’re serious?”

She crossed her arms, “Yes.”

There was a very long silence.

Then Kylo laughed.

“Well,” he grinned. “I’m starting to see more and more why the Supreme Leader picked you for me.
My mother took me to the opera all the time when I was young. As for dejark, I, uh… I played it all
the time with my father on his ship. I love the game. I’m great at it. I can even beat Chewie – er,
Chewbacca – and he won’t tear my arms off… Although I have the feeling he wouldn’t hesitate to
do so now. Even if dejark wasn’t involved.”

“Well, I won’t let him,” Sasa grinned. “I like these arms.”

“You’ll take on a Wookiee?”
“For you? I’d take on anything.”

Kylo smiled, and gently stroked her cheek.

“Anyway, if you’re really so great at dejarik, I’d love to play you,” Sasa said. “Of course, you couldn’t beat me—”

“Oh, I’d be careful,” he tilted her chin. “Don’t say something you know not to be true.”

“Challenge accepted, Master Ren.”

Kylo bent his head down to touch his forehead to hers, and then reluctantly let her go, “So, what was the third thing?”

“Sorry?”

“The other personal item you chose?”

Sasa grinned and grabbed his hand, “Follow me.”

Her room had three doors in it; two to the right – one of which lead to the fresher – and one to the left. She led him through the door to the left.

At first glance, Kylo thought it was a walk-in closet. There were outfits – particularly dresses – hanging from almost all of the walls. Probably somewhere near a thousand different garments. They were arranged by colour from lightest to darkest, and all had id cards listing extensive information like date made, materials, and suggested complementary pieces.

Two thirds of the outfits were black, grey, or dark brown, the colours the Knights of Ren were allowed to wear. But the colourful ones – all the reds, greens, purples, and every colour in the rainbow – were more lavish. It was easy to tell more effort and care went into them. Where a black dress might have a simple, practical design, a glittery gold dress might have three layers of skirt, intricate embroidery, and an elegant, perfectly cut back that showcased bare skin in a wavy hem until it reached her hips.

But it wasn’t a closet; it was a workroom. Hanging from the ceiling were computer screens that played a montage of fashion designs. One of the monitors showed a home screen with folders labeled “Sewing Patterns” “Alderiaan Fashion History” “Amidala Outfits” “Inventory Spreadsheets” “Sewing Techniques” “Past Designs” “Current Projects” “Unfinished Ideas” and so forth.

In the middle of the room was a large desk with a digital screen running some sort of design program. The incomplete sewing pattern of a long sleeved black tunic, skirt, and legging combo sat open in the program, titled “Battle Outfit – Version 7.”

Along the walls, stored under the racks of clothing were drawers filled with thread, buttons, zippers, various sewing notions and tools, and hundreds of bolts of fabric. And in one of the corners was a table, rather comfy looking chair, and sewing machine that looked more complicated than the hyperdrive of the Millennium Falcon.

“What,” Kylo looked around in amazement, “is all this?”

“Oh, I like to sew,” Sasa answered simply.

He just laughed, “Really? I couldn’t tell. Seriously, what is all this?”
“My wardrobe. I love making outfits… even if I can’t wear them,” she sent a longing look to the colourful garments to her left. She glanced down at her gainsboro grey dress. A light blueish grey was as colourful a Knight of Ren could get, and it would be a lie to say Kylo hadn’t noticed her discontentment at that before. “Still, I love designing and creating beautiful clothes. I especially love studying the fashion of Alderaan and Naboo. The Supreme Leader gave me a book of the fashion of Padmé Amidala when I was young, and I became obsessed. That woman knew how to put together an outfit.”

Kylo tried to keep the smile on his face. He wanted to ask her exactly why Snoke gave her a book of his grandmother’s fashion specifically. He was not yet aware that Sasa had been groomed to remind him of his grandmother, but every now and then he would get a weird feeling about Sasa.

But he wouldn’t ask her, not now when she was all smiling and bright eyed for the first time in weeks.

Then something flashed in those bright eyes, and she bit her lip.

“Do you… like them?” she asked.

Kylo was taken aback by the question, “What? Yes, of course. They’re gorgeous.”

She blushed, “Thank you.”

“How long have you been doing this? All of it. The opera, the sewing, the dejarik.”

“Well, let me think… I started seriously sewing at twelve, the opera came when I was fourteen, and I’ve been playing dejarik since I was eight. What about you?”

“My mother started taking me to the opera at eight, the sewing is a moot point as I can’t even sew a button-”

“Oh, I am so changing that.”

Kylo chuckled at her seriousness, “And the dejarik… I think I’ve literally been playing since the day of my birth. I have memories of sitting on my father’s lap on the Falcon, as we played against Uncle Chewie.”

Sasa smiled kindly.

“Happy memories?” she carefully asked.

His throat felt dry.

“Yeah,” he admitted with a nod. “Very happy. It’s been a very long time since I’ve had a game of it. I used to play with Wiln sometimes but the dejarik table… kind of was ruined.”

She stared at him.

“You had a temper tantrum and destroyed it with your lightsaber?”

“Little bit.”

Sasa laughed and hooked her arm around his, “Come on, let’s go play a game.”

“Are you sure?” Kylo grinned. “I’m really good at it.”
“Just as long as you promise not to destroy my table when I totally kick your ass.”

“Milady,” he kissed her hand. “…game on.”

To find the most valuable equipment, you need to know ship schematics backward and forward – that will keep you from spending hours poking around blindly and getting hurt.

- Rey’s Survival Guide

“Your uncle’s freighter?” Teng looked around the Millennium Falcon in surprise. “Rey Erso, you are a devious one.”

“I thought it fitting,” Rey smiled. She wrapped her arms around his neck. “Besides, we haven’t spent nearly enough time inspecting the captain’s quarters.”

“Mmm, which one are the captain’s quarters?” Teng wrapped his arms around her waist.

“The weird room that looks like normal quarters but has that small room that looks like a closet but for some reason has another bed shoved into it.”

Rey was exactly right; the second bed of the Captain’s quarters had originally been a closet. More specifically the cape closet of Lando Calrissian. But after Qi’ra’s betrayal, all Han could think of when he saw that closet was the stolen moment they shared in it. So, Han had a bed installed in it and turned the space into another bedroom. After all, Lando Calrissian had had a big ass closet.

He let Lando keep his capes, though.

“Well, then,” Teng said, “why don’t we go… explore that room?”

“Yeah,” Rey smiled. “Let’s do it.”

“My monnok just took your Ng’ok. You still want to pretend you’re good at this game?”

“I’m just a little rusty,” Kylo scowled, staring at the board to rethink his strategy. “It’s been a while since I’ve had a good opponent.”

“If that’s what you want to believe,” Sasa grinned as she punched in another move that made things dangerous for Kylo. “And to think, Tara doesn’t believe I can be calculating.”

“No, she just thinks you’re a pain in the ass,” he chuckled, punching in a move that impressed Sasa with how easily it relieved him of danger. “Speaking of, Tara is not happy you’ve been avoiding saber class. Did something happen with the two of you?”

“Not with us.”

Kylo scowled, “So… something’s happened.”
She looked up at him. Sasa was silent for a long time, unable to find words. Then she sighed, glanced down, and punched in another move.

“It’s nothing, really,” she said.

“You’ve been avoiding people for weeks, hiding in your room. You won’t even come share by bed, sexually and non-sexually. You’re hiding something,” he typed in his move. “Tell me.”

Sasa hesitated, “I… I had a chemical miscarriage.”

Kylo felt like he had been punched in the chest.

“You… I… what?” he exclaimed. “You had a miscarriage? You were pregnant?”

She held up a hand to calm him, “Not technically. A chemical miscarriage is when a sperm fertilizes an egg, but the cells never start dividing. We had the right ingredients, we just… never started cooking.”

Still, Kylo could barely handle the news. He just couldn’t believe it. He had actually gotten Sasa pregnant.

And later when he told Phasma, she wouldn’t believe it either. FN-2187 on patrol duty that night would walk by her office and overhear Phasma yelling to Hux about the one time she was away on a mission and Ren ran out of sleeping cordial of course the horny little bastard would bang the redhead.

FN-2187 knew not to pry.

“I just… I don’t believe it,” Kylo shook his head. “You know what this means?”

“It means that we can conceive a child,” Sasa said. “You and I have compatible reproductive cycles.”

“You know, all these years I thought that there might be something… wrong with me.”

“What makes you say that?”

“I’m twenty-seven. I’ve been trying to have a kid for years, and nothing. None of the women I’ve slept with could ever get pregnant. It had to have been me. But now—”

“Now the pressure’s on.” Sasa’s eyes flicked towards the one door she had yet to open to Kylo. “When the Supreme Leader finds out about this…”

“Gods,” Kylo groaned, punching in his move. “If he tells me to start putting in even more effort in conceiving a child, I think he’s going to bleed me dry.”

Sasa smirked, “Actually, I think that’s my job.”

Kylo grinned, “Then why don’t we take this over to the bed?”

She punched in a move and simply said, “Nope.”

“Why not?” he scowled as he lost his Ghhhk to her Houjix.

“My bed,” she paused to consider her pieces, “is a place of tranquility and relaxation. It’s to be filled with happy memories, not ones of getting shagged by a man who turned around and left me when
Tara – a woman actively trying to kill me – got pregnant.”

“You think I would leave you for Tara?”

“Well, what would happen if someone else did get pregnant?”

Kylo sighed, “I don’t know.”

They sat in silence as he played another move.

“Well…” Sasa spoke, “until the day comes that you decide you want me and only me, you’re not touching me in that bed.”

A thought crossed his mind and he grinned, “And what about the rest of the room? Say the bathtub or your desk… or maybe this very dejarik table?”

“Oh, those are possibilities. But you have to beat me at dejarik before you’re allowed to have me on the table.”

“I really need to brush up on my technique. I’m definitely going to lose this game, and that is absolutely embarrassing. I’m starting to think my father and uncles went easy on me.”

“I believe it,” Sasa chuckled. “You play a lot with them?”

“Mostly my dad, but Uncle Chewie and Uncle Lando liked to play me. Uncle Luke sometimes played with me – a lot when I was younger – but after Rhiaon came into the picture, most of his spare time was redirected from me to her. Then when Rey was born… I was lucky if I could get fifteen minutes alone with him. Honestly as much as we hated each other, at least I could say I did get a lot of quality time with Rhiaon. Even if we were just scheming different ways to push each other down the laundry chute and convince Uncle Luke we were innocent.”

“Was your Skywalker your hero growing up?”

“He was my mentor, but if I had to be honest… my dad was my hero.”

“Really?” Sasa asked.

“Well, when I was really little,” Kylo sighed. “He taught me to fly, to shoot, told me the wildest stories. Some of my favorite memories are being with him on the Millennium Falcon fixing things, playing dejarik, or just sitting in the co-pilot chair and fiddling with his precious gold dice.”

“It sounds lovely. I would love to have such memories of my parents.”

“Yeah, but it’s a shame to have those memories tainted when they ended up so misguided in the end. We had good times, but it was never easy to be a family. I was completely unplanned, and I know to a degree I wasn’t… wanted.”

“I’m sure that’s not true.”

“But it is,” Kylo punched in another move. “They never would have picked to have me if given the choice. I was just in their way. Mom was always off with her politics, and Dad… he just wanted to be free. Able to run off and explore the galaxy the way he did before. Instead he was stuck on planet with me. He never even knew how to be a father. I heard him talking to Mom one time how it felt like everything he did was wrong. But still… I admit he tried. He was really protective of me when I was young. There was an incident one time at a podracing track when I got really upset. We were in
the washroom and I was trying to calm my emotions, but I lost control with the Dark Side and broke a mirror. The management was angry and tried to kick me out. Dad was right there at my defense. And when one of the guys ended up making a comment under his breath that Dad needed to control his kid when it was a freak like that one… oh, he lost it. Mom was the only reason he didn’t punch out the guy or worse.”

“He sounds like a hell of a father,” Sasa chuckled. “When did you two grow apart?”

“My mom got pregnant with a boy they were going to call Jacen. We were all so excited and everything was going fine… Then Mom got attacked, and she miscarried my brother. Dad pulled away from me, too ashamed at the thought of giving one son attention but not the other. Mom buried herself in politics. Chewie was on Kashyyyk with his family in those days. Uncle Luke was busy with Rhiaon. And Lando and Alyla were all tangled up with each other. That’s when the Supreme Leader really reached out for me. He had been speaking to me before, but that’s when things got more intense. He supported me and comforted me and taught me when no one else would. As I followed the teachings of the Supreme Leader, I started to turn to my Grandfather as my idol of what I wanted to be, and less so that Non-Force Sensitive. Dad saw that I was pulling away from him, but he did nothing to stop it.”

Sasa glanced again at that fourth door, and then reached out and clasped Kylo’s hand.

“I remember the day I packed to leave for Rornian,” Kylo tried to fend off the sorrow in his voice. “I remember Dad leading me into my room with a bag and telling me to pack. I asked him how long I was going, and he told me Take everything that’s important to you. That place… Luke’s house… It’s your home now. You’re not coming back here. Not for a while. Not to stay. I was devastated and tried to object but he just shook his head, wouldn’t look me in the eye, and said It’s better this way, Ben. What can I do for someone like you?”

“And what did you want him to do?”

“I… I wanted him to fight for me. I wanted him to let me be home with him and Mom. Instead I got stuck as a live-in-babysitter to Rhiaon’s spawn, and eventually was forced to play nice with that pain in the ass, Poe Dameron for an entire summer.”

“Poe Dameron?” Sasa punched in another move. “Is that the handsome one from the reward posters?”

Kylo narrowed his eyes.

“Sorry,” she grinned. “So, do you know exactly when came the moment you started hating your father?”

“That’s the problem,” Kylo punched in a move. “I don’t hate him.”

Sasa didn’t know what to say. Thankfully she was saved by the sound system which had been playing quietly in the background. It changed to a song from an opera Kylo knew well.

“Oh man, I must have seen this opera a hundred times,” he chuckled. “Mom would make Dad and I go with her to the Coruscant Grand Opera House all the time. Apparently it was to make us more cultured, but the Opera House is where all politics are truly done on Coruscant – the planet my mom was Senator of. As long as we didn’t get in her way or embarrass her, she didn’t care what we did. But Dad… Dad hated it so much, and so did I. We would constantly scheme on how to get out of it. I remember one time we faked food poisoning and I even went so far to force myself to throw up. Dad said I didn’t have to go that far, but admitted he was kind of impressed at my commitment.”
“Well, it would be quite unlike you to half ass a dramatic overreaction.”

“Hey!”

Sasa laughed, but her eyes drifted to the unopened door again.

“What’s in there?” Kylo asked.

“Huh?”

“The room. You keep looking at it.”

“Oh, it’s nothing.”

“It’s not nothing if you keep looking at it.”

Sasa looked away, “Trust me, Kylo, you don’t want to know.”

“Yes, I do,” Kylo insisted. “Sasa, I care about you so much. I don’t care what secrets you may have. What sins you may have committed. None could be greater than my own.”

“I’m not hiding a secret. I’m just… scared of what your reaction to the room will be. What you’ll think when you see what’s inside.”

“She’s, please… what’s in the fourth room?”

She looked up at him, and there was something just awful in her eyes.

“You really want to know?”

“Viola,” she turned on the light, the pair of them standing in the doorway. “The adjacent room to mine. Always there to remind me.”

Kylo Ren didn’t know what to say.

The adjoining room… was a fully stocked nursery.

A crib with a mobile of different models of ships. Pale green wallpaper with white silhouettes of kiros birds. A rocking chair in one corner, a changing table with enough supplies they could change a baby that very minute and still be good for three months. A dresser Kylo was certain he could pull open the drawers and find filled with enough boy and girls outfits to last a dozen babies. A shelving unit with a couple varieties of toys and books.

And creepiest of all, what Kylo swore was – if not a perfect replicate, then legitimately – the exact same nightlight that had been in Rey Skywalker’s room.

He hoped to God that it was just a replica.

“This…” Kylo looked around the room in utter shock, taking a few steps in for a closer look, “is… so uncomfortable.”

"Oh, it gets worse," Sasa leaned against the doorframe with folded arms, "the Supreme Leader himself designed the room. Our Master is a man to be feared and respected… but I will be first to
admit that the image of Snoke putting a stuffed Acklay on our baby’s toy shelf downright scares the shit out of me.”

“I’m not going to argue that point. I just... I don’t understand. Why is this here?”

“It’s like I said, it’s his reminder to me. Sure, there’s the practical side of this being the place we’ll keep our baby when she’s born, but still... he put it in so that I will always have a reminder of what my purpose is in the Order. I’m ordered to spend at least half an hour in here everyday and just reflect on that purpose. What my goal is. What my value is.”

Kylo frowned, “Sasa... you have value beyond just giving birth.”

“Not to the Supreme Leader.”

He sighed; he couldn’t refute that.

“What did you mean this is where we’ll put our baby?” Kylo asked. “Wouldn’t that be inconvenient?”

Sasa frowned, “What do you mean? I’ll be right next door.”

He blinked, “You will?”

“Yeah. Where else would I be?”

“Well, I thought...”

Sasa startled a bit, “You thought I would be in your room?”

“Yeah, well, I guess I assumed that if you got pregnant with our child that our situation... I don’t know. It would change.”

“To what?”

He said nothing.

“Kylo,” she sighed, walking up to him. Sasa uncrossed her arms and wrapped them around his neck. She bowed her head against his chest, and his arms wrapped around her waist, pulling her in close, “I understand. This is all very complicated... but I know my feelings for you. When I tell you that I love you... I do mean it. I want to be with you, have a family with you. Not because I was trained to, but because I choose you. We are meant to be together; I can feel it in the Force. We will join together someday and bring life to the world.”

“And what if we can’t?” Kylo’s throat felt thick. “What if this is my punishment? That because I have caused so much death, I can’t create life? What if this is my punishment for what I did to Alyla?”

“My Love,” she stroked a thumb across his lip, “don’t beat yourself up. There’s no reason to believe you are incapable of siring an heir.”

“But there is! Sasa, I can’t get a woman pregnant! I’ve been trying for years, and nothing! Even with this chemical miscarriage you can see that there’s something defective about me that just can’t successfully create a child. Something’s wrong, but I don’t know what. It has to be the Force.”

Sasa sighed, “Then maybe it is.”
“It… what?”

“Maybe the Force is punishing you. Not for what you think, but something else.”

“What else could it be?”

“Maybe the turmoil is too much. Maybe the Force won’t let it happen until you’ve admitted the truth.”

“What truth is that?” Kylo asked.

Sasa took a deep breath, “Of what you want… Who you want.”

Kylo looked away.

“You’re going to have to make a choice, Kylo,” Sasa said. “It’s not just a matter of toying with the hearts of two women – assuming Tara even has a heart. It’s not just a matter of waiting until someone gets pregnant. Maybe the Force won’t let that happen until you decide. Because the truth is, Kylo… you have to make a choice. Not just which woman you want, but what future you want.”

“Sasa, I—”

“I would wait a thousand years for you, Kylo. I’ve made my decision; I know what I want. I’m ride or die, plain and simple. I want you by my side, our child in my arms, and FN-2187 covering my back.”

“You really have bonded with him, haven’t you?”

“He’s my only real friend.”

“You know he’s in love with you?”

“How could he not be?” Sasa grinned.

Kylo couldn’t help but smile.

Sasa – still grinning – sighed in contentment, “I’ll wait for you, Kylo. It doesn’t matter how long it takes, I’ll wait. I know we’re meant to be… but you have to make a choice. And you’ll have to make it soon.”

Her words took hold of him, Kylo exhaled deeply and pulled her into a hug. He held her in silence, burying his face into her copper hair, the background noise of space, opera, and mechanics filling the air.

He battled and lost to a shaky breath.

“Kylo?” Sasa looked up. She frowned at the tears in his eyes and touched his cheek, “Are you alright?”

He struggled to swallow.

“I’m fine,” he lied. “You’re just… you’re right. I need to make a choice.”

But as Sasa looked up at him with the tender smile on her face and love in her eyes… he knew he
“Are you sure you want to do this?” Teng whispered.

They were lying on the bed together, naked under a sheet. The pair had performed foreplay many times before, so they were well acquainted with each other’s bodies. Still, it was really cold in the desert, and the sheet was for warmth.

“Yeah, I’m sure,” Rey couldn’t stop trembling. “I love you.”

“I love you too.”

Rey smirked at him, “Then why don’t you show me?”

Teng grinned, knowing exactly what she wanted. He kissed her, savoring the taste of her lips. She moaned, threading her fingers through his long black hair.

She chuckled as he kissed along her jaw, “You need a haircut.”

His lips were on her neck, “You know I like it long. And you like it too.”

“It’s not your worst feature,” she sighed as he kissed along her collarbone. “Oh Teng. Lower please.”

He shifted his head down to her breasts, already slightly damp from lots of attention paid to by his lips as he had slid his fingers in and out of her between her legs. Teng took a tender nipple into his mouth, and Rey shuddered. He hand stroked her silky thigh, the scent of her desire on the air.

Teng himself was hard and wanting. Rey had wanted to be adventurous before they moved to the captain’s bed. In the adjacent room she had stripped him down, knelt before him and sucked his cock almost to completion.

“That feels so good,” Rey moaned lifting her chest higher to his mouth. “But that’s not where I want your lips… that’s not where I want your tongue.”

He looked up at her and grinned. Teng kissed her lips and with a wicked grin, ducked his head below the blankets.

Rey squealed as his tongue found her clit.

“Oh, fuck, don’t stop!”

Teng had no intention to do so.

Rey laid boneless on the bed as he feasted on her. It was a thrilling eroticism, not seeing what he was doing, just feeling his tongue lapping at her. A mysterious force giving her pleasure as she lay on the bed, eyes squeezed shut and moaning. She gripped at the sheets tightly and rolled her pelvis up at him.

Oh fuck, it felt so good. His tongue flicking at her clit and then circling her opening. Her oh so wet and wanting opening. But right when she thought he was going to submit to her pleasure he would drag his tongue back up to her clit and give her a different type of pleasure.
Rey wanted to cum so badly.

“Please Teng,” she moaned wildly. “I need you inside of me. Please, Teng. Please!”

She screamed when his tongue fulfilled that need.

“FUCK!”

A few minutes later, his hand joined his tongue, and thumb dipped down to collect the wetness seeping out between her legs. He ran his wet thumb across her lower lips, while Rey bit down harder on her bottom mouth lip. Teng swirled that thumb around her clit as his tongue slid in and out of her, curling up and giving her pleasure she had never known.

It didn’t take long. Her hips shot off the bed, her thighs clamped around his head, and she screamed his name as she came.

He backed off after the last of her aftershocks and rested his head against her thigh. Every now and then he would place a gentle kiss to said thigh, but otherwise he just let her rest.

“That,” Rey panted. “That was wonderful.”

Teng took that as his signal to come join her back above the covers.

“Thank you so much for that,” Rey grinned as they cuddled.

“Anytime you want,” Teng grinned.

Rey blushed as she saw the dampness on his lips, “Teng, I’m… I’m on your lips.”

“I know. There’s few things better tasting in this universe than that sweet nectar between your legs.”

“Sweet nectar?”

“Don’t ruin the moment.”

Rey laughed, “Alright then, what is better tasting than the nectar between my thighs as you call it?”

“Only one thing,” he ghosted his lips over hers. “The taste of you on your own lips.”

And he bent down and kissed her.

They stayed like that for a while, kissing and cuddling, savoring the intimate moment. Then Rey looked into his eyes and said three simple words.

“I’m ready, Teng.”

He swallowed hard and nodded.

They were both trembling as they shifted their limbs so Teng was knelt over her. The blanket was pulled protectively over their bodies, both a little awkward about the situation and wary of the possibility of someone interrupting them.

“Ok, hold on,” Rey scowled and fumbled around a bit, “where do I… does my legs go over yours or beside or-”

“Here, hold on,” he grasped her failing leg, “I’ll just shift it-”
“Ow! Teng it doesn’t bend that way!”

“Sorry, hold on, let me just hook it over like this.”

“It’s just to cramp if I keep it there.”

“Alright where do you suggest?”

“Look. Just shift your hips like… No not that way! Oh fuck!” Rey shuddered as his cockhead stroked across her clit.

“Sorry, I didn’t mean-”

“Oh, I’m not complaining about that,” Rey laughed. “That felt good.”

“Yeah, too good,” Teng frowned. “I forgot we don’t have a condom on yet. Move your leg so I can reach your bag on the floor.”

“No, wait, let me see if I can do this.” Rey reached out her hand to her bag and concentrated, “Come on… come on.”

“Rey, that’s what I’m going to do if we don’t get this started quickly.”

“Knock it off,” she bumped her shoulder against him as she held out her hand towards the bag. “Come on… Come on… Damn it! I don’t think I can do it.”

“That’s alright. You really want to tell your dad that the first time you used the Force to grab something, it was a condom?”

“Fair point. Alright, I’ll let you go.”

Teng stumbled off the bed and rummaged through the bag. He quickly found the condoms and then held up the small bottle of lube.

“Poe and Evan said to use a lot of this the first time,” Teng sat on the bed and unwrapped the condom. “Apparently even if I have you nice and ready, it’s still a good idea.”

“Yeah, that’s what Kaydel said. The more lube the better. What are you doing?”

Teng jerked himself slowly, “I want to make sure I’m hard enough, otherwise the condom can fall off.”

“Here,” Rey gently wrapped her hand around his shaft. “Let me.”

He moaned as she pumped him, absolutely ensuring he was nice and hard. Teng loved the feeling of her body pressed against his. He bent down and sucked at her nipple as her hand slid up and down his silky shaft.

“Hard enough?” Rey whispered.

“Any harder and I’m going to explode,” he groaned.

“Good. That’s the plan.”

He chuckled as Rey took the condom and rolled it down his shaft. He was twitching at her touch. Rey then uncapped the bottle of lube and squirted some in her hand, then set it on the ground. Teng
dug his nails into his palms as she watched her spread it around her palm and then wrap her hand around his shaft.

“The condom needs to be lubricated too,” Rey whispered.

They locked lips as Rey resumed her stroking and Teng grunted, trying to restrain himself.

“Rey, please, I can’t…”

Mercifully she removed her hand and laid back on the bed. She reached down and slipped her lube covered fingers inside her pussy.

“Have to make sure I’m ready too,” she panted as she pleasured herself.

He watched Rey enjoy herself for a few minutes, and then moved her hand away.

“Are you ready?” he asked.

“Yes,” her voice was barely more than a whisper.

They shifted back into their previous position, but this time found a comfortable enough position for all of their limbs. They stayed in position, just staring at each other and reflecting on the magnitude of what was about to happen.

“Are you sure you want to do this?” Teng asked once more.

“Yes,” she gripped his shoulders. “Are you sure?”

“I’ve never been more sure of anything in my life. I love you, Rey Erso.”

“I love you, Teng Malar.”

Teng bent down to give her a passionate kiss, and then… then he pushed into her.

Or at least he tried. Instead his cock just bumped against her awkwardly, finding no entrance.

Rey couldn’t stop her giggle.

“Sorry,” Teng blushed a little. He readjusted his hips, “Let me just move and little bit… there. That should do it.”

He pushed forward again.

And found nothing.

“Damn it!”

“Teng do you want me to-”

“No, I got this.” Teng grunted as he pushed forward again but slid uselessly against her body.

“Damn it!”

“Teng-”

“For the love of…” He let out a frustrated breath and yanked up the sheet to duck down his head, “Where are you?”
Teng fumbled around a bit, and then he felt Rey’s hand wrap around him and point his cock to her entrance.

“Oh, there we go,” Teng said, his head returning above the blanket. “Thanks.”

“No problem,” Rey smiled.

“You know that’s a lot further down than I expected. Are you sure it’s not… you know, that far down?”

“Teng, if it was that far down I would definitely be saying something.”

“Oh, so it’s… off the table?”

“For tonight at least. Let’s master the art of putting that where it’s supposed to go before we explore other avenues.”

“Right,” Teng laughed. He took another deep breath, “Alright, take two. Here we go. Ready?”

“Uh huh,” she nodded, gripping his shoulders tight.

“Ok… here I go.”

“Not too fast.”

“Right… right. Okay… Deep breath… here we go.”

Rey gasped as he pushed into her. Her nails dug into his skin and she let out a shocked whimper.

Teng immediately stopped, “Are you okay? Did I hurt you?”

“No! Well, I mean yes, but, no, it’s okay,” Rey grunted as she tried to adjust to the feeling of him inside of her. “I just need a moment.”

“Right,” Teng nodded. She couldn’t see the way he clenched his teeth behind his lips. He needed to show restrain. “How, uh… how does it feel?”

“Honestly? At the moment, I don’t see what the big fuss over sex is.”

“No, I mean specifically, how does it feel? What does it feel like?”

“Uh, kind of like a… a hot pressure, stretching me out. But not necessarily in a bad way, it just feels… different.”

“Good different?”

“Getting better. I think I’m ready for you to move again. But slowly, just a little.”

“Right.” Teng forced himself to control his breathing as he slowly pushed a little more inside of her. He stopped when she gave another uncomfortable grunt. “You okay?”

“Yeah, I’m fine, please, keep going.” Rey panted. That pressure was increased, but something nice was simmering under the surface. “How much further until you’re all the way in?”

“Just a little more… there,” he stopped when he was fully inside of her. “How’s- How’s that?”

“It’s, uh… it’s good.”
“Getting better?”

“Yeah. Uh, try pulling out and pushing back in. One slow thrust.”

Carefully and slowly, he did as requested. Oh Gods, he understood what Poe and Evan told him about not lasting long. Teng already wanted to cum.

“Was that okay?” Teng asked.

“Yeah,” Rey swallowed. “Try- Try another.”

And he did, this time getting a groan from Rey with a hint of pleasure.

Teng grinned, “Getting better.”

“Oh, it’s starting to feel good.” She gasped as he gave her a faster thrust, “A lot better. OH go faster. Not too fast, but… oh, I want more.”

Teng bent down and kissed her as he started into a slow but steady pace of thrusting.

Rey moaned, closing her eyes as her head lulled back onto the pillow, “Oh, god, it… it feels good. Really good. I don’t get it. How do Jessika and Tallie not want this?”

“Well there are certain toys they can use to replicate it.”

“Toys?” Rey asked in confusion.

“Huh, I guess sex toys weren’t part of Aletha’s sex ed talks. Ask the girls about them sometime.”

“I will.” She sighed in contentment, experimenting in lifting her hips up to meet his thrust, “I really like this. Like, a lot. How does it feel for you?”

“Oh, I… Uh,” Teng cleared his throat, “It’s good.”

“Teng,” she warned. “Tell me the truth.”

“The truth? Well, uh, the truth… The truth is that… This is the best thing I have ever felt in my life. Gods, you’re so tight and wet… I just want to slam into you so hard and fast.”

Rey moaned, “That sounds so hot.”

“Yeah, but that wouldn’t be very good for you. Not yet anyways. But still… oh, I can barely hold back.”

“Then let’s switch.”

“What?”

“Let’s move so I’m on top and can control the speed and depth. Does that sound good for you?”

The image of Rey slamming up and down his cock, breasts bouncing in his face filled Teng’s mind, “Yeah, I think I can agree to that.”

Rey moaned as he continued to thrust into her, “Oh, but that would involve you pulling out of me, and I don’t want that. I want you inside of me.”

Reluctantly, Teng stopped thrusting.
“Actually, I think I can manage that.” He hooked an arm around her waist, “If I just roll you like this-”

Teng quite gracefully threw Rey right off the bed.

“Ohops,” he stared at her lying naked and dazed on the floor. “My bad.”

Rey just laughed, “That’s alright. Accidents happen.”

“Speaking of,” Teng frowned at a spot of blood on the mattress. “Are you okay? There’s blood here.”

“Oh, Jessika said that was normal,” Rey waved off, climbing back onto the bed.

“Are you sure?”

“Positive,” Rey nodded. “My only worry is that it’s going to leave a stain.”

It would, and two years later Rey would have to very awkwardly explain to her uncle the origin of it... right in front of Luke, Finn, Chewbacca, and BB-8.

But we’re getting ahead of things.

They repositioned themselves, Rey mounting Teng with an intense moan of pleasure. The air was filled with moans, grunts, and squeaking of furniture as Rey lay across Teng, rolling her hips to move up and down his cock with increasing enthusiasm.

So much enthusiasm that Rey jerked upright, throwing her head back in pleasure, and smacking it right against the top of the bunk.

“Damn it,” Rey rubbed her head as Teng laughed beneath her. “Who designed this room?”

“Rey, this ship is a piece of garbage, what do you expect?”

“Next time we use the other bedroom.”

“There’s going to be a next time?”

“Fuck yes, there’s going to be another time,” Rey got back to work bobbing up and down his cock. “In fact, I don’t think I want to do anything else for now on but feel your cock drive in and out of me.”

“Oh fuck!” Teng cried. Rey wasn’t a saint, but he wouldn’t say she swore like a sailor. So to hear those words come out of her mouth just pushed him straight to the brink. “Fuck, Rey! I’m sorry, I... I’m think I’m about to- I can’t- I’m gonna- FUCK!”

Teng jerked up, head slamming into her shoulder as he climaxed.

“Fuck,” Teng panted as they lay together in bed. “I’m sorry that I-”

“It’s okay,” Rey placed a finger on his lips, dismounting him and moving to remove his condom. She tied it up and set it down on the floor to dispose of later. “The girls warned me that you might not last too long.”

“Did... did you want me to finish you off?” Teng shrugged to catch his breath.
“That’s alright. You got me once already,” Rey curled up at his side, pulling the blanket over them. “I just want to cuddle.”

“I can do that,” he wrapped his arms around her and held her tight.

And so they stayed that way for a long time, holding each other, whispering and laughing, just revelling in the feeling of skin against skin and hearts that beat as one.

“Oh, Starlight?” Teng whispered.

“Yes, Moonshine?”

“Happy birthday.”

And Rey smiled.

This moment on the Millennium Falcon where she and Teng just held each other, basking in the afterglow of the first time they made love… It was a moment she would carry with her to her dying days.

The benefits of working with Devi and Strunk were immediate, much to Rey’s initial annoyance. She was so used to being alone – ok, maybe she also had help sometimes from Luke, Quom, and Teng – having them around the ship – her ship – set her teeth on edge.

And Devi talked all the time, which made it worse.

“I thought you liked your girl talk,” Teng said when she complained about it one day.

“Not girl talk with Devi,” Rey replied.

But they were good salvagers, and there was no denying that fact. They knew the graveyard as well as Rey did, but like everyone working in the deserts of Jakku, they had discovered their own prime spots, their own special finds that they’d kept hidden from everyone else.

Many of the parts that Rey had begun to despair of ever repairing, let alone replacing, Devi and Strunk were able to produce in a matter of days.

They brought in the promised landing strut within the first twenty-four hours; three days later, they showed up in the afternoon dragging an entire repulsorlift complex that they’d pulled, whole, from a crashed Lambda-class shuttle. It was an Imperial design, never intended to incorporate with the Ghtroc’s systems, but it took Rey and Luke only another day and a half to fashion an interface converter.

But there were some things they couldn’t speed up the process on, and one of those things was the flight system. Rey needed to bring in Luke to help her with it, and they elected to fix it last. For one reason was that it was so complicated and would take a long time, but another reason was that Devi and Strunk couldn’t steal a ship that couldn’t fly.

Nearly a year after Rey had started work on her project, they’d replaced the missing port-side generator.

Rey and Luke went up to the cockpit to check that the systems had interfaced properly. She’d replaced the batteries for the main flight system months earlier, and the ship rested in a low-power...
standby mode.

Devi and Strunk followed them, eager and excited, watching closely as Luke went quickly through the power-up sequence, then initiated the repulsorlift engines. Each of the three emitters had its own gauge, blue vertical bars that measured lift power in percentages, and the fore and starboard ones responded immediately, indicating that they were fully operational.

“Did it work?” Devi asked. “Is it working?”

Luke fiddled with the port-side controller, trying to get the jury-rigged engine in synch with the other two. Its power bar remained stubbornly empty and then, all at once, jumped to full. All of them felt the ship tremble beneath them, vibrating slightly. Grains of sand bounced off the repaired canopy of the cockpit and slid down the window.

Strunk whooped, cheering inarticulately, and Devi was laughing. Devi slapped Rey on the shoulder, which annoyed Rey, but she found herself smiling anyway. Luke chuckled and pulled in Rey for a hug.

“You are amazing, Mister Erso!” Devi said.

“Oh don’t look at me,” Luke said. “It was mostly Rey.”

“You are unbelievable, Rey!” Devi turned to her.

Rey squirmed awkwardly, “You guys helped.”

“Sure, if you call dragging chunks of starships across the desert helping!”

“Hey, it’s how I’ve made my living for twelve years,” Luke grinned.

“Come on, Rey!” Devi exclaimed. “You’re the one who put it all together. You’re the one who’s making this thing work!”

Rey blushed and caught her father’s eye. That smile of pride on his face just filled her heart.

“Alright, I guess I can take most of the credit,” Rey admitted, “But I didn’t do it alone.”

“Oh thank the Force,” Luke sighed. “You got my humility and not the Rhiaon arrogance.”

“Is the Rhiaon arrogance really that bad?”

“Remind me to talk you about my father-in-law sometime.”

“What are we waiting for, you guys?” Devi swung herself into the co-pilot’s chair and spun it around on its post. The chair creaked as it turned. “Let’s take her up!”

“Wait, what?” Rey blinked.

“What, now?” Strunk seemed to share Rey’s confusion. “Dev?”

“Sure, now,” Devi said. She swept one hand toward the view out the canopy. “Sun’s low enough. We stay level nobody’ll see us, right? They’ll be looking at the sun. Let’s do it! I want to see if it’ll really fly!”

Rey looked at the indicators on the console, the power levels, the temperature and pressure and flux gauges. The repulsors were idling, fully powered. The freighter was alive, trembling almost
imperceptibly around them.

“I don’t know… Dad?”

Luke grinned, a thought occurring to him, “Well, I think it’s a good idea, but if we fly… you’re going to be the one to fly it.”

Rey blinked, “What? Are you serious?”

“Absolutely.” He gestured to the pilot’s seat, “Go on. Take the controls. You’ve got this.”

“You know you want to,” Devi said. “You totally know you want to, Rey.”

Rey put her hands on the yoke and licked her bottom lip. Her very blood was calling out to her to join the ranks of her father, grandfather, and uncles. She was born to be a pilot, and now it was time to fulfill that destiny.

“Just to make sure everything’s hooked up properly,” Rey said.


He secretly prayed that Rey didn’t end up taking after her mother and crash the ship, killing them all.

Rey settled her feet on the control pedals and reached with her right to disengage the static locks. A warning light came on to tell her that the ship wasn’t properly pressurized, and she switched it off, then reconfigured the controls for atmospheric flight.

Devi was watching her, grinning the same as ever. Strunk had moved to stand behind Devi’s seat and was holding on to the back of it so tightly Rey saw the color had gone out of his knuckles.

“First flight?” she asked him.

He nodded.

“Mine, too,” Rey said.


She looked up at him and smiled. He nodded down at her and reached her for in the Force.

“You can do this,” he whispered in her mind. “Breathe. Just breathe.”

Rey took a deep breath.

And then she cut the brakes.

She brought up the power on the repulsors, the way she had thousands of times before in simulations. The ship moved, rising in an almost perfectly straight line. Luke heard her gasp, but she had a goofy grin on her face that he recognized all too well.

Rey felt Jakku trying to pull her back down, her, Dad, Devi, and Strunk and the ship, too, as if afraid to let them go. She felt the ship wobble slightly as she held the yoke, felt the nose dip as she came off the pedals and directed the repulsor field to propel them forward. The little freighter hesitated, as if uncertain of its relationship with gravity.

Rey’s stomach dropped, and Strunk made a noise that sounded like a whimper and a moan
“Breathe. Just breathe,” Luke’s voice rang in her mind. Rey teased the power and fed more to the repulsors, and all at once they were sliding forward into the late afternoon sky. They were flying.

“I’m so proud of you,” her father’s words sung in her head. Rey didn’t know how many times he actually said it, but they rang in her head over and over like a song of love and pride.

She was really flying a ship.

“So amazing,” Devi whispered. Rey had to agree but couldn’t find the words.

According to the instruments, they were only fifty meters up and coasting at a sedate one-tenth acceleration, but the ship was alive in her hands and the world outside was changed because of it. The graveyard, the Crackle, the Spike, everything was recognizable yet entirely different seen from that new position. She could make out Niima on the horizon, the tiny specks of its huts and few buildings. She could see a lone Teedo and luggabeast traversing the desert away from the setting sun. She could see the sky changing colors, growing richer and deeper than it had ever looked from the ground.

“It works,” Devi said. “It scorchin’ well works, Rey!”

“It works,” Rey said softly.

All the repairs seemed to be holding. A few warning lights were flashing, but they were all nonessential systems they would never have the means on Jakku to fix. The engines were still in synch and at full power.

Luke bent down and actually whispered in her ear this time, “You did it Sweetheart… Now wait until you see how hyperspace feels.”

“Someday,” Rey smiled. “Someday.”

“I’m glad it works,” Strunk said. “Can we land again, please?”


Devi turned in her chair to look at him, “You big baby.”

“No, he’s right,” Rey said. “We don’t want to be seen, not yet.”

“Right, yeah.”

Luke frowned at the tone of Devi’s voice. There was something longing and regretful in it.

Rey banked the ship, the maneuver graceful and effortless, and circled back to where they’d lifted off. The sense of movement, the response of the freighter to her commands, had her smiling again. Her flight sim, for all its wonder and entertainment, had never captured that, and how could it? How could it have ever synthesized the reality of that freedom and power?
She set down the ship as gently as it had lifted off, powered down the engines in sequence, then put the main batteries back into standby mode. The sky had turned to dusk.

Devi got out of the co-pilot’s seat and clapped Rey on the shoulder again, “Mechanic and pilot, you do it all! C’mon, Strunk, let’s go home.”

“Yes, rest up you two,” Luke said. “With this fixed I think we’re finally all done.”

Rey’s eyes lit up and she shot out of her seat, “Are you serious?”

“Yes, Sweetheart,” Luke smiled. “You did it. You fixed this ship all up. I am so proud of you.”

Rey didn’t think she could stop smiling.

“But I’m still pissed about that disappearance stunt.”

Oh look, she could stop smiling.

“So, what do we do now?” Devi glanced at Strunk.

Luke didn’t like that glance.

Neither did Rey.

“Well, I think we should go and sell the ship to Unkar Plutt,” Rey said. “Oh, can you even imagine how many portions we’re going to get?”

“It’s going to be a lot.” Devi hesitated, “But… Are we sure we want to sell.”

Rey crossed her arms, “That was the deal. We can break it now and you get nothing, or you can follow it and get your portions.”

“The choice is yours,” Luke crossed his arms as well. They stared down at Devi in perfect genetic match.

Devi thought about it for a while and then smiled, “Of course we’ll continue our deal. I just wanted to make sure you weren’t regretting anything.”

Luke and Rey exchanged an identical unimpressed look.

“We should get going,” Devi grabbed Strunk’s arm. “See you tomorrow, Rey. It’s going to be so much fun!”

Without a word, Rey and Luke watched them disembark down the boarding ramp.

“Dad?” Rey said. “I have a bad feeling about this.”

Luke sighed, “Yeah… me too.”

Devi and Strunk once told me they were crossing the Sinking Fields at night and saw a nightwatcher that could have swallowed Niima. But I don’t believe that. Because those two swindlers have told me a lot of things.

- Rey’s Survival Guide
Unkar was waiting outside as she pulled up in her speeder. The ship was perfect and sitting behind her. She was so proud, especially when she saw the dumbstruck look on Plutt’s face. He blinked at her slowly, waiting until she'd shut off the speeder and hopped down. There would be no bending over for more portions this time.

“It’s a Ghtroc 690,” Rey said proudly. “Fully restored, working hyperdrive, everything but the laser cannon and the water tanks. Everything else fully operational, Unkar.”

He blinked at her again, then turned his heavy head to the side, looking toward the airfield.

That was when the sound of the engine reached her, and Rey turned to look, as well, just in time to see the Ghtroc rising into the air.

It ascended quickly, almost too fast. It banked hard, its nose jerking up. The main engines ignited, and a blue flare of ionized gases jetted from the aft end.

Then the Ghtroc was a dot in the blue sky.

Then it was gone.

Unkar grunted and headed back inside. Rey heard the outpost coming to life again around her, the voices of scavengers and vendors, Niima returning to normal.

Rey stood there a long time. When she finally moved it was to mount her speeder and drive home, back to the walker. She knew she should be angry, but she wasn’t.

She had been expecting it all along.

“NO!” Rey gasped as she shot up in bed.

Luke startled awake, half from the shout, and half some sensing her distress in the Force, “What? What is it?”

Rey panted hard, gripping her blankets, “Dad… I think I just had a vision.”

“Alright, is everyone ready?” Luke looked around the cockpit suspiciously. Devi, Strunk, and Teng were crammed all over behind Rey in the pilot’s seat.

“Ready,” Rey gave the thumb’s up.

“Then let’s go sell a ship,” Devi grinned.

So, Rey flew the Ghtroc 690 light freighter she had found, the spaceship she had spent the better part of a year reassembling, into Niima with Devi sitting in the co-pilot’s seat beside her, Teng and Strunk hovering behind them, and her father’s hands resting on her shoulders.

“I’m so proud of you, Sweetheart,” he whispered in her ear.
The hyperdrive was functional and communicating cheerfully with the navicomputer. The repulsor engines were humming along at optimal efficiency. The pressure seals on all the external access ways were tight, and the atmosphere was stable, steady, and comfortable. There were only two warning lights flashing on the console, and each was nonessential; one told Rey that the water tanks were empty.

“What does that one mean?” Teng pointed to the other light.

Luke grinned, “Just that the Ghtroc is overdue for its scheduled twenty thousand light-year maintenance.”

Devi and Teng burst out laughing.

They flew in from the south, Rey slowing so everyone in Niima could get a good look at the ship as it came in over the airfield. Almost every approach was from the east, and Rey knew that sharp-eyed observers would know the difference, would be wondering who they were and where they had come from.

She banked in a lazy loop around the little town, looking through the canopy at the activity below. Devi leaned forward, doing the same. They could see the small figures of scavengers and vendors emerging from their shelters and from beneath awnings, raising hands to shield their eyes from the glare of the sun.

“Think they’ve seen enough?” Rey asked.

“I think they’ve never seen anything like this,” Devi said.

“Oh, yeah haven’t even begun to see what this family is capable of with ships,” Luke chuckled.

Rey rolled the ship out of its turn and then, on a whim, gave the engines a sudden nudge. The freighter shot forward, the horizon vanishing from view as she brought the nose up. She turned the ship in a half loop, then rolled out of it and doubled back.

Devi whooped.


Teng clapped.

Strunk’s grip on the seats tightened.

Rey slowed once more as they reacquired the airfield and put the freighter into a hover, letting it turn in place. There was space between the Millennium Falcon and one of the newer, cleaner ships that Unkar had acquired.

With perfect precision Rey set it down so gently the landing gear didn’t make a sound as Jakku once more took the Ghtroc’s weight.

She worked the console quickly, excited, putting the ship into standby. Unkar would want to know it worked, that everything worked, and when Rey brought him aboard she wanted to be able to show off her work without delay.

Rey released the yoke and got to her feet, “Everyone ready?”

Teng, Devi, and Strunk replied affirmatively. None noticed the secret look exchanged between Luke
“Then let’s go,” Rey grinned.

Devi and Strunk moved after her, and Luke and Teng headed towards the landing ramp. They would go out first, Luke leading an air of credence to the transaction, and Teng to extol her virtues to Plutt – which was something Teng excelled in.

But Rey… oh Rey had plans for a dramatic entrance worthy of the Skywalker she was.

They’d loaded her speeder into the main compartment. Rey mounted it and gave a thumb’s up. Strunk nodded and hit the release for the ramp.

As it lowered, Rey could see people gathered at the edge of the airfield, trying to get a look at the newcomers.

“Don’t let anyone else aboard,” Rey told Devi.

“Only me and Unkar, nobody else, no matter how much they promise, no matter how hard they beg,” Devi nodded.

Rey hesitated, “Devi? Strunk? …Thanks for all the help. I thought I couldn’t trust you, but you proved me wrong. I forgive you for the Fighting Ring incident.”

Devi’s smile fell, and with it, so did Rey’s heart.

She couldn’t believe that her suspicions were true.

“I’ll be right back,” Rey said.


“For all of us,” Rey nodded.

Then she gunned the speeder forward, down the ramp and out of the airfield, turning hard and fast toward Unkar’s place. Someone shouted as she passed, and a couple of the scavengers at the washing station burst into cheers when they saw her, understanding at once just how immense Rey’s accomplishment was.

She was smiling again, her cheeks aching, but that time she didn’t mind so much. Unkar was waiting with her father and Teng outside as she pulled up.

He blinked at her slowly, waiting until she’d shut off the speeder and hopped down.

“It’s a Ghtroc 690,” Rey said. “Fully restored, working hyperdrive, everything but the laser cannon and the water tanks. Everything else fully operational, Unkar.”

He blinked at her again, then turned his heavy head to the side, looking toward the airfield.

That was when the sound of the engine reached her, and Rey turned to look, as well.

“Oh no,” she whispered as her vision started to come true.

“It’s alright,” Luke put his hand on her shoulder. “We got it covered.”
“Come on, hurry, Strunk,” Devi said from the pilot’s chair as they madly flipped switches and pressed buttons. “We gotta get this ship off the ground.”

“Ahem!” a deep voice cleared their throat.

The two scavengers’ eyes went wide, and in unison they turned around. Standing at the entrance of the cockpit was Quom Tinadar.

“Going somewhere?” Quom asked, flashing his teeth.

“Uh…” Strunk stared at him in fear.

Devi just looked confused, “Where did you come from?”

“You really should double check your bunk room before you take off. I was quite enjoying my nap.”

“You were… having a nap?” Devi repeated nervously.

“Well, kind of. Mostly keeping guard because Rey, Luke, Teng, and I aren’t stupid enough to actually trust you alone with a functional ship. Now,” he took a step forward and the pair winced. “What are we going to do with the two of you backstabbers?”

What happened next wasn’t pretty, but Devi and Strunk learned that you didn’t ever want to cross a girl who called a Vrogem Uncle.

“That bitch!”

“Jessika, language!” Aletha scolded her.

“Oh, I am not apologizing for calling her a bitch.”

“I just don’t believe it,” Kaydel said. “They really were going to steal the ship?”

“If it wasn’t for Dad I would be standing here empty handed right now,” Rey said. “Well, and Quom. The mess he left of those two was not pretty. Dad’s only instructions were don’t kill them and Quom took that literally. I’m not surprised they betrayed me, though. I knew Devi was devious and she wanted the ship.”

“Still, what a bitch,” Paige said.

“Okay, I will cut this transmission if you ladies don’t clean up your language,” Aletha warned.

“Aunt Ally,” Kaydel said kindly, “Paige and I just had a twenty-minute conversation about whose boyfriend was better at going down on them. I don’t think a few bitches is going to ruin our innocence.”

There was a long pause like Aletha was considering something.

“…Who won?” Aletha meekly asked.

“Tallie,” Jessika sounded too proud.
Rey just laughed.

“Anyway, Kira, tell us what happened next,” Rose urged.

“Ok, so Plutt tried to make me an offer, but Dad interrupted and said-”

“Sweetheart, did you want me to fill up your speeder?” Luke suddenly entered the walker. “I’ve got some leftover gas from mine and-”

He stopped in his tracks when he saw Rey frozen in shock on her hammock holding a comm.


“Uh, no, nothing at all,” Rey lied.

“Sunshine, what’s going on?” Aletha asked, her voice ringing out in the walker painfully for Rey.

Luke raised an eyebrow.

“That’s a recording I made of Aletha, Dad,” Rey grinned.

“With what?”

“Uh… Quom helped me?”

Luke crossed his arms, “Sweetheart, stop that wide, false grin. I don’t appreciate you literally lying through your teeth. Now you’re going to look me in the eye and tell me that you’re holding Antar Kymeri’s personal comm and communicating to Aletha.”

“How do you know that?” Rey asked.

“Because I walked in on you talking to her over a year ago, Kira. In fact, I’ve walked in many times and you’ve never noticed. I leave it alone because I know they call you Kira, so clearly you’re protecting your identity, and hey, I figure you could use the female influence on your life. But I don’t like you lying to me. I’m going to let this go, but I know that you are talking to Aletha. In fact, I know you’re talking to more than Aletha.”

“More?”

“Yeah, you’re talking to Aletha, someone named Rose, Aletha’s niece, Kaydel… and two other girls whose names escape me at the moment.”

“Whoa,” Rose sounded starstruck. “He knows my name.”

“Rose, shut up!” Jessika scolded.

Aletha’s voice chuckled over the comm, “Well, I guess the cat’s out of the bag. It’s good to hear your voice again, Erso.”

Luke smiled, knowing she didn’t use his first name as a safety measure, “It’s wonderful to hear yours too, Aletha. You keeping out of trouble?”

“Not in the slightest.”

“Good,” he grinned. “You ladies having fun with your chat?”
“As always,” Kaydel laughed. “It’s nice to finally put a voice to all the stories I’ve heard from Kira and Aunt Ally?”

“Oh?” Luke lifted an eyebrow at the blushing Rey. “And what stories have you been telling?”

“I think my favorite is when you beat the shit out of the Jarex guy,” Jessika said. “When you cut in speaking Huttese, oh, it’s so beautiful. I wish I had seen it.”

“It was a bit of an adventure,” Luke said. “Alright, well, I don’t mean to cut in on girl time. Kira, you want me to fill up your speeder?”

“Sure,” Rey answered. “Thanks, Dad.”

“No problem,” he bent down and kissed her forehead. “Now if only we can figure out what to do with your new ship. I don’t think we’ll get our money’s worth from Plutt. If only we knew someone else who wanted to buy a ship.”

“Actually,” Aletha cut in, “I have a suggestion.”

Luke paid a merchant an exorbitant amount to take Devi and Strunk with him the next morning. They didn’t know where they were headed, but they also didn’t particularly care. Anywhere was better than Jakku.

Rey saw them off, glaring at them the whole time as Teng stood patiently by her side.

“I’m glad to be rid of them,” Teng confessed as the merchant’s ship became an increasingly smaller dot in the sky. “I don’t think I could have survived another one of her tricks.”

“It’s a shame really,” Rey sighed, resting her head on his shoulder. “It would be nice to have a girl friend that isn’t just a voice on a comm, a weird ghost thing that appears randomly, or a pseudo mom figure who dates my dad. If I didn’t have you guys around, this whole situation might have embittered me towards friendship.”

“Nah, made you more guarded, but not embittered you. You’re too full of hope to let that happen. It’s one of the reasons I love you.”

“And it’s one of the reasons I love you,” Rey pressed a kiss to his lips.

Teng chuckled when they reluctantly broke apart, “My optimism, really? Well, that solves the mystery of why you like me. I was starting to think your friend Jessika’s theory of you liking me simply because I was the only guy around your age was true.”

“Nah, it’s your optimism, your generousness, and your ability to hand me the exact right tool from the toolbox on the first try.”

“I do excel at that.” Teng looked down at Rey as she gave a loud exhale. The ship was completely gone, “Better?”

“Much,” Rey nodded. “Now, come on, I’m running late for the ship’s price negotiation.”

He frowned, “Didn’t you decide against selling to the Blobfish yesterday?”

“Oh, I’m not selling to the Blobfish.”

“What? Who are you selling to?”
“I’m happy you decided to contact us, Miss Kira,” Diego Nalto sat straight and stiff at his desk. Even though he was just speaking to a voice on a comm – Kira had refused to switch to visual for some reason – he still looked as professional as ever.

“Actually it was Aletha’s idea,” Rey’s voice replied.

Diego nodded to his girlfriend seated across the desk from him. “Thank you, My Querida. The Resistance is always on the lookout for additional resources.”

“Just as long as one of those resources isn’t Kira herself,” Aletha gave him a playful smile.

“Oh, trust me, I learned my lesson during the treason interrogation. I was apologizing to you and Rose for months.”

“Isn’t that how Rose ended up getting her own private room?” Rey asked.

Aletha nodded, “Diego pulled some strings to get Rose an upgrade to a nice one bed unit with private fresher. Nowhere near as fancy as myself or Poe’s rooms. More on the level of Hot Shot’s room before Paige moved in with him.”

“Rose and I called things even after that,” Diego concluded, a small scowl on his face. “That was not fun to justify to Leia and Holdo.”

“Holdo? …Oh, is that the one whose office Poe and Kaydel broke into and they wrecked her chair?”

“Dameron was responsible for that?” Diego exclaimed.

Aletha rolled her eyes, “Oh, don’t act like you didn’t already suspect it. The only person who hasn’t figured it out was Amilyn herself.”

Diego opened his mouth, paused to think, and then closed it.

“Fair point,” he conceded. “So, Kira, what kind of ship are you offering up?”

“It’s a Ghtroc Industries 690 freighter. An older model but runs so beautifully.”

“I’m proud of you, Re- Kira,” Aletha caught herself. She was used to censoring Rey’s name in the company of the girls, but not so much Diego.

“A 690?” Diego thought about it. “A freighter, right? Made for a crew of one, carrying a maximum of three passengers. Cargo capacity, what… 50 metric tons?”

“60,” Rey corrected.

Diego glanced at Aletha, “It’s not quite what we’re looking for. If it were larger or a fighter then
we’d be in business. But a 690, I’m going to be honest, it’s barely worth the effort it would take to collect it, maintain it, and fuel it. I’m not saying never but at the moment it’s not something the budget would allow for.”

Aletha’s eyes slipped shut as she imagined the heartbreak Rey was suffering at the news.

“But it’s operational,” Rey sounded lost. “Flies and everything. Couldn’t you use it for small missions and undercover service?”

“The undercover outfits we are running at the moment are more involving high-class businesses and sniffing out the affiliations of the elite. No millionaire is going to be flying a 690 on a regular basis. Maybe a collector would have one in storage, but not in action. As for small missions, we’re not running a lot of those at the moment. Mostly straight up battles and attacks. We might be seeing different sorts of missions if the Senate would finally pull their heads out of their.”

“Diego,” Aletha warned.

“But they haven’t,” Diego finished. “I’m sorry, Miss Kira, but I can’t offer to purchase your ship at this moment. Now, if you were to join the Resistance and fly it here—”

“Diego,” Aletha snapped.

“Then we could take it into our inventory,” Diego continued. “However, I know that you are not interested in joining us at this time.”

There was a long pause from the comm.

“What about when I am ready?” Rey asked.

Diego blinked, “You wish to join the Resistance?”

“Not right now, but maybe someday in the future.”

Aletha looked between Diego and her comm, “How about this? Kira, you keep the ship for now, that way if you and the boys ever need to make a quick getaway, you have something. When you decide to join the Resistance, then fly it here and donate the ship. I bet we could give you a little bit extra for the donation. Maybe a nicer room, better initial rank, privilege to recused from certain chores?”

“I could swing that,” Diego nodded. “What do you think Miss Kira?”

There was a long pause.

“Aletha?” Rey replied. “I think we have a deal.”

“Great, then let’s start the paperwork.” Diego turned to his computer and pulled up the form, “Now, I’m going to have to ask you a couple questions. Let me know all that you can answer. Since the transaction will not be completed just yet, I can hold off on some information. Understand?”

“Yes, sir,” Rey answered.

“Alright, first thing is a first and last name,” Diego tapped at his keyboard. “Now, I can put Kira in as a placeholder for the first name, but I will need an accurate surname.”

“Oh, I don’t actually know my real surname.”
“Whatever you go by right now should be fine.”

“I don’t know. …Aletha?”

“It’s alright, Sunshine,” Aletha smiled. “It’s just Diego and I right now. We’ll keep you safe. Just tell him the surname you and your dad go by.”

Rey sighed, “Alright. It’s Erso. Esk, Resh, Senth, Osk.”

“Alright, Ers-” Diego paused his typing. “…huh.”

“What is it?” Aletha frowned.

Diego had a very puzzled expression on his face, “Nothing, it’s just… I knew someone who sometimes called themselves Erso.”

A very long silence ensued as Aletha watched Diego ponder the thought. Something pulled at her mind as her stomach felt unsettled.

Then Diego finally spoke.

“Eh,” he shrugged. “It’s probably nothing.”

He continued on with his conversation with Rey, but Aletha could barely pay attention. All she could think about was that maybe, just maybe… there was something there she was missing.

But she couldn’t figure out what.

Chapter End Notes

Coming Up Next Chapter…

A Momentary Truce
Undercover at a conference, things get complicated for Poe and Kaydel when Kylo and Sasa Ren arrive. But when Imperial Loyalists attack to take down both Resistance and First Order in one swift move, Poe, Kaydel, Kylo, and Sasa find they must set their issues aside and team up in order to save their lives… If only Poe could stop punching Ben.

(I fully expect that chapter to clock in somewhere between 30-40k just with all that happens. If you can find it on youtube, play the song “It’s About to Get Crazy” by Oh the Larceny right now.)

So, the good thing about my computer breaking is that this all gave me a chance to sit down and outline the last section of this story before we finally get into TFA. I know I keep saying it’s close, but we’re in the homestretch guys. I did have to add an additional few chapters just due to length of some story lines. However, one of those chapters is actually moving up a chapter that was originally going to take place in TFA. I’ve decided to move up a plot twist to being revealed before TFA.
And believe me, you’ll know exactly what I’m talking about when it happens.

I will give you a heads up that this final section will mostly concern the First Order. We will check in on Jakku and the Resistance, but for the most part, we will be setting up the position the First Order is in at the start of TFA. It does make sense though, the first chunk of chapters in the fourteen years segment were about Jakku, then we’ve had about ten chapters of Resistance, and now we’re moving in to the First Order.

In this chapter, Evan reveals that his real name is Geno Namit. I would like to clarify that, yes, that is the male character who follows Holdo around, played by Hugh Skinner. When I created Evan, I didn’t have a full picture of him, and then started playing around with the idea of making him Geno. I hesitated as I had already given Evan a name and Geno is a supporter of Holdo, but then I really latched on to the idea of Evan turning into a supporter of Holdo, and turning against some of his friends, Poe in particular after the death of Paige.

So, in case anyone was confused, yes, Evan Tharel is going to be the tall, skinny, brunette guy that follows Holdo around.

Final note, I saw Solo, and I freaking love it. Love it so much, I’ve seen it twice and fully intend on seeing it more times in theatre. I actually think it’s in my top five Star Wars movies (ROTJ, ESB, ANH, TFA, Solo, ROTS, AOTC, TPM, TLJ, and then Rogue One if you’re curious.) As such, I have decided to take that movie 100% into the canon of my story. This is going to be particularly evident in the next chapter, so I will give a heads up to anyone who hasn’t seen the movie yet. Do not read chapter fifty until you have seen the movie if you don’t want spoilers, because not only will I have references to the film… I’m bringing in a surviving character that’s going to make this story so much more fun.

Oh yeah, I’m bringing back exactly who you’re thinking of.
Messes in Mess Hall

Chapter Summary

Paige meets Evan’s mother, Kaydel argues about baby names, and Poe might have a new brother.

Chapter Notes

Alright, I decided to cut this chapter into four, so not all of the awesome stuff I wanted to happen, happens in this chapter. But there’s a lot of fun about to happen in the next few chapters, and I wanted to try doing a smaller chapter to see if I show switch back to a smaller length.

Enjoy the – not supersized but I’ve literally work over 30 hours on these next few chapters – fiftieth chapter. If you haven’t reviewed already, I’d love to hear how you’ve been enjoying the last fifty chapters and what you look forward to the next fifty.

Because this story’s going to end up clocking in at 200 chapters. Mark my words.

The Long Way Home

Chapter Fifty

Messes in Mess Hall

You could usually tell when Poe Dameron was about to go on an undercover mission because his appearance would turn into what Jessika Pava liked to call Scruff Mode Activated.

“I always forget that you have your mother’s curly hair,” Leia said as she and Poe walked towards the mess hall. “Doesn’t really look it all that much until it gets long.”

“Well, that’s mostly because I use about ten thousand products to smooth it down,” Poe replied. His black hair had been grown out at least a good four inches, and he had a thick, rather untamed beard. He looked the opposite of his usual peacock nature. “Dad always tries to get me to keep the natural curl, always going on about how I should be proud of my heritage, but honestly, it’s just easier to control smoothed down.”

“If that’s what you want to tell yourself,” Leia chuckled. “How’s Kaydel?”

“Quite excited that we get to do an undercover mission with me. I’m surprised the Council agreed to let the two of us go on one together.”
“Well, when the personas of charismatic but overly affectionate married couple was pitched, we knew exactly where to look.”

Poe shook his head, “I’m surprised Vice Admiral Holdo didn’t object.”

“Object? Poe… she was the one who suggested you two,” Leia grinned. “Said something along the lines of if they’re going to be constantly making out on the job, might as well put it to good use.”

Poe gave a hearty laugh as they entered the mess hall.

He immediately spotted Jessika Pava waving him over to the table where Tallie, Paige, and Rose were sitting. Poe glanced at Leia and saw her eyes searching for a friendly enough face. It seemed that no other heads of department were at lunch. Made sense, what with Nils Arlos busy with Poe’s upcoming mission, Diego Nalto stressing over event planning, and the rest dealing with the commotion going on at the landing platform.

“Hey, do you know if my Dad come in yet?” Poe asked Leia.

“No, he’s not supposed to land for another hour,” she answered. “Remind me to thank him for helping out with this relocation.”

“Of course.”

The Resistance was busy that day helping move about a thousand refugees off Preon IX – yet another system that had been ravaged by the First Order. Kes had volunteered to help out with administering aid and supplies. Holdo was overseeing the exodus, claiming Leia could use a break. Usually Diego was the one to step in when Leia needed a break, but she and Holdo were fairly certain that if Diego had one more responsibility to oversee, the Commander might just literally explode.

An event planner, Diego Nalto was not born to be.

“Looking for anyone in particular today?” Poe teased as he saw Leia searching the faces in the mess hall.

She grinned at him. “I might have a surprise or two today.”

“Poe!” Jessika finally called out.

“I’m coming,” he yelled back. Poe looked to Leia, “Well, until you get your surprise, would you like to join us? Or are we whippersnappers a might too young for you?”


“Oh, don’t remind me. So, you in?”

“I suppose one lunch wouldn’t hurt. I’ll get our food and you get our seats. Just make sure we keep a few seats open for later.”

“Holdo can’t sit with us.”

“Noted, Poe,” she patted him on the shoulder and joined the food line.

“Uh… are you not eating today?” Paige frowned as Poe took his seat at the table. “Because Evan’s joining us in about fifteen minutes after shift and I’m not up for another why you shouldn’t skip meals lecture.”
“Oh, the General’s getting it for me,” Poe nodded towards Leia who was arguing with the people in line that no, she didn’t want them to let her cut to the front of the line, they don’t need to give her special treatment.

“The General?” Jessika exchanged a look with Tallie. “Great. Here, I thought lunch was going to be relaxing.”

“Knock it off,” Poe shook his head. “You know the General isn’t like that.”

“Where’s Kaydel?” Tallie asked. “Thought she was coming with you.”

“She had to finish some prep for the mission.”

“When are you guys setting out?”

“Day after tomorrow,” Paige answered. “This is so exciting, I’ve never been on an undercover mission.”

“How did Paige get assigned to this mission?” Rose frowned, trying to pretend she wasn’t insanely jealous and feeling a little left out.

“We thought it might be a good idea to bring Evan just in case something went south and we need a medic,” Poe explained. “Since it’s good to have a second seat of eyes, we thought having Evan be off as a second ‘unaffiliated’ team would be good. He pitched Paige and the Council figured that they work well together.”

“I just don’t see why I couldn’t go too,” Rose crossed her arms.

“Hey, you want to sleep in a hotel room with your sister and her boyfriend, that’s your prerogative,” Jessika held up her hands.

“Jess,” Paige scolded. “Evan and I are going to be on a mission. We’re not going to be doing that.”

“Why not?” Poe shrugged. “Kay and I will.”

“Oh please,” Jessika rolled her eyes, “you two will do it anywhere.”

Poe opened his mouth and then paused. He considered her words, closed his mouth, and shrugged.

“Just my luck,” a voice said behind Poe. “I approach the table to once again find Poe Dameron discussing his sex life. Scoot over, Dameron.”

Most heads turned to the newcomer: a petite brunette with an amused but pretending to be annoyed grin.

“Oh, sorry,” Tallie spoke up to the brunette as she set her lunch tray down on the table, “you can’t sit here. We’re waiting on some others and all ful…”

Tallie stopped.

“Kaydel?” her jaw dropped.

The brunette – indeed one Kaydel Ko Connix – smiled and placed her hands on Poe’s shoulders. Poe chuckled as the others stared at Kaydel in shock. She bent down, and he turned his head to give her a kiss and a hello. He couldn’t stop smiling as everyone watched in shock as a not only brunette Kaydel Ko Connix sat down next to Poe, but a blue-eyed, brunette Kaydel Ko Connix with her hair
down.

Silence clung to the table for a long minute as everyone just stared at her.

Kaydel looked around the table and frowned, “What?”

“What is going on with your hair?” Jessika said bluntly.

“And eyes?” Tallie added.

“Contacts,” Poe explained the latter. “I’m going to wear green contacts on the mission. But yeah, can you believe this hair?”

“Oh,” Kaydel grimaced a little as she pushed the brunette locks off her shoulder, “it’s for the mission. They wanted me to change my appearance a little bit and figured the best way was dying my hair… the whole having my hair down thing is not my idea, but Colonel Arlos insisted I get rid of the… how did he put it?”

“Yavin era Leia buns I believe he called them,” Leia cut in setting down two trays on the table and taking the other seat next to Poe. “Apparently the style is too recognizable. As if I’m the only woman in the world to ever wear two hair buns. Our styles aren’t even the same ones. And all of you, stop.”

Everyone paused, all but Poe having been moving to stand and salute the General.

“There’s no need for ceremony,” she motioned for them to sit down.

They awkwardly obeyed.

Paige smiled at Kaydel, “Well, I for one like your hair down. You should wear it like that more often.”

Poe watched as Kaydel struggled to return the smile. He was fairly certain he was the only one on base – maybe with the exception of Aletha – who knew the story of why Kaydel’s hair was always up.

“I’m sure she’s got her reasons,” Poe slung an arm around her shoulder. “Up, down, long, short, bald. Who cares? She’s beautiful inside and out no matter how she wears her hair.”

“So, to be clear,” Jessika said dryly, “this constant praise of Kaydel’s feature is something we’re going to have to put up with from you for the rest of our lives? It’s not just a… first year thing?”

“Try to get used to it,” Poe nodded. “There’s nothing wrong with a little public display of affection.”

Jessika shook her head as Paige asked General Organa a question. She didn’t pay attention to where the conversation went, instead turning her head towards Tallie. Jessika hesitated and then reached for Tallie’s hand resting on the table.

Tallie slipped her hand from Jessika’s grasp.

Scowling, Jessika caught Tallie’s eyes. Tallie gave her girlfriend an apologetic smile and then jerked her head towards Leia.


Jessika sighed and tried to force a smile to her face. In the nearly two years since they started dating – it was about five months from Rey’s eighteenth birthday – not once had Tallie allowed a public
display of affection in front of a Council member. Jessika just let it slide, mostly because she didn’t want to get into a big, emotional fight… but she was starting to reach her limit.

Why did it seem that Tallie didn’t want any Council member but Poe to know she was dating Jessika? Jessika even wondered if Diego knew they were an item.

“Well, look who’s back!” Poe’s joyous exclamation caught Jessika’s attention.

Catching sight of the couple who had just entered the mess hall, Jessika’s face split into a grin and she shot to her feet.

“All right!” Jessika cried as Snap Wexley and Karé Kun approached the table. “Black Squadron back together.”

“It’s good to be back,” Karé laughed. “Mind if we join you?”

“All right,” Paige glanced around. “But I’m starting to think we’re going to need a bigger table.”

“Oh, definitely,” Leia nodded. “Someone want to help me push that table together with this one?”

Snap frowned, “General, are you sure that-”

“Anyone who implies I’m too frail to push a table will get latrine duty for three months,” Leia cut off. She narrowed in on Snap, “Newlywed or not.”

He chuckled and held up his hands.

“Here, I’ll help,” Kaydel got up.

Tables could fit about four on each bench – which each table had two of – so when the tables were pushed there was a bit of shuffling, which looked odd until later when their other visitors had filled the rest of the seats.

The first table had Leia seated alone on one side of the bench facing Karé, Snap, Jessika, and Tallie on the other bench. The next table had Paige and Rose sitting on the end of the bench parallel to Leia. Poe and Kaydel sat in the middle of the bench opposite them.

“Okay, we better get more people sitting with us soon,” Poe said, looking around. “This just looks weird.”

“Evan should be finishing up soon,” Paige replied. “Poor thing got pulled for the morning shift at last minute.”

“Well, we had no choice,” Leia said. “We need all hands on deck with the refugees coming in, especially in the medical department. Since Doctor Kymeri is off on Hosnian Prime sorting out vendors for the upcoming ceremony, we had to pull Evan.”

“Oh, you’ll hear no complaints from me,” Paige laughed. “He was just a ball of nerves, excitement, and stress this morning. I thought he was going to bounce off the walls.”

“Doctor Kymeri’s sorting out vendors?” Snap blinked. “I thought Nalto was the one sorting this whole thing out.”

Kaydel grinned, “Well, she figured she’d help give him a hand. Besides, she was going to Hosnian Prime for a supply run anyway.”
“How is the Commander coping?” Karé asked.

“He yelled at Threepio for an hour about trying to arrange the seating chart for him,” Leia chuckled. “Apparently figuring out which military officers should share a table and which ones should absolutely not is serious business.”

“Oh, you have no idea,” Poe shook his head, his voice sounding like he was experiencing a battlefield flashback. “So, how was the honeymoon?”

“Wonderful,” Karé grinned, looping her arm with Snap’s. “But strangely it’s nice to be back here. Thank you again, General Organa for officiating the ceremony.”

“It was my pleasure,” Leia smiled warmly. “In time of war, love is a precious resource. That’s why I’m not upset with any of the relationships at this table… as long as none of them give me any issues.”

All eyes turned to Poe.

“Ok, that’s not fair,” he objected.

“Don’t worry, General,” Rose gave a nervous smile. She still had trouble talking to Leia sometimes… especially after discovering she totally knew the General’s beloved late niece was really alive. Rose had the tendency to just run out of the room when she saw Leia, too afraid that she would blurt out the truth. “You don’t have to fear my relationships giving you trouble. I’m fairly certain I’m going to die alone.”

“Oh for the love of!” Paige slammed her head against the table. “Enough, Rose! You are seventeen! You have plenty of time to find a boyfriend!”

“Or girlfriend,” Jessika added.

“But, be careful, Rose,” Kaydel grinned. “You might end up settling like your sister.”

Paige narrowed her eyes at Kaydel, “Yeah, because everyone wants a Poe Dameron. Good lord, even thinking about being with someone like him gives me a headache. Evan is sweet, caring, nurturing, and very uncomplicated. Who gives a damn is he’s not a muscular flyboy? At least I can always say Evan has composure and dignity.”

That was when the very desperate and unkempt Evan Tharel raced into the mess hall and made a beeline for Paige.

“Is she here yet?” Evan skidded to a halt, his eyes holding a not unlike crazed look.

Poe snorted.

Paige turned in her seat and took Evan’s hands, “She’s not here yet. Anh Yêu. Take a deep breath. Relax. Sit and have something to eat.”

“Oh, I can’t eat,” Evan climbed onto the bench next to Paige. He shot a glance to the empty spot left on the bench, “I’m too nervous.”

Paige shook her head, “Oh, no, you don’t. You don’t get to give lectures on skipping meals, and then skip one yourself, Hot Shot. Eat.”

She pushed her lunch try in front of him.
He gave her a nervous smile, grabbed a fork, and started picking at the pasta.

Kaydel frowned, “You’re not worried about germs from sharing?”

Evan raised an eyebrow, “I put my mouth against hers on a regular basis. If I was going to catch something, I would have a long time ago.”

“That is the most clinical description of a kiss I have ever heard,” Jessika said.

“I’m still a little grossed out,” Rose shuddered.

Evan grinned and reached over to ruffle her hair. Rose batted his hands away but smiled the whole time. Ever since Evan had moved in with Paige, he had made it his mission to be as big brotherly to Rose as possible as recompense for stealing away her sister. He wanted it to be clear to Rose that he wasn’t trying to break their family apart, but rather wanted to become part of it. Not just a partner for Paige, but he would care for and protect Rose as Paige did for her and he did for Paige.

“I AM NOT FILLING IT OUT, AND THAT’S FINAL!” a shout rang out through the mess hall.

All heads turned to the door to identify the owner of the man’s voice carrying from the hall.

All heads but Poe Dameron’s. Instead Poe grinned and turned to look at the wincing Leia Organa.

“I’m assuming that’s your surprise?” he chuckled.

“Don’t smile yet,” Leia said. “I don’t think you’ll like part two.”

The grin fell right off Poe’s face when he saw the woman who walked in with the shouting man.

“Would you lower your voice?” Holdo chided. “I’m standing right here.”

The man rolled his eyes, “I know, but apparently, you’re not getting what I’m saying, so maybe a higher volume will get it through the hair dye. I am not filling out your useless, arbitrary paperwork to file a… what? A record of my ship landing on the base? I’m dropping off a few refugees, not signing up for battle.”

“Don’t make me laugh,” Holdo huffed. “You signing up for battle? That would involve you caring about this war again. But no, you would rather just go mess around in the Galaxy, not getting involved because you don’t care.”

“I don’t care?” the man exclaimed. He laughed dangerously, “Oh, say that again, Sister. I dare you.”

Rose leaned over to Paige, “Who is that?”

“I don’t know.” Paige looked to Kaydel, “Do you know?”

Kaydel shrugged, “No. Poe?”

Poe just smirked.

Jessika blinked, “Wait a minute… Is that-”

“Oh yeah,” Poe laughed. “It is.”

“Wait for it,” Poe said.

“You want to look me in the eye, Holdo, and tell me that I don’t care?” the man challenged. “That this war means nothing to me? That I’ve lost nothing in it?”

Holdo just looked disgusted at him, “You don’t fight, you don’t go on missions, you won’t even fill out paperwork.”

“Fine! You want paperwork? Alright, here’s my ID Number 10002. Got that? 2! Because I was the second person to answer the call and join this damn Resistance. So you can take your paperwork and shove it right up your—”

General Leia Organa’s voice loudly cut in, “Do you always have to make a scene?”

Holdo and the man stopped and turned to look at Leia. She was sitting with crossed arms and a stern look but still a smile on her face.

“Hey, she started it,” the man pointed to Holdo.

A loud growl filled the room, and a Wookiee lumbered into the mess hall, chiding the man at Holdo’s side. Leia moved from the table to greet the Wookiee and embrace the man.

“Oh my god,” Rose’s eyes were as wide as saucers.

“Is that…” Paige couldn’t finish her sentence.

“I think it is,” Kaydel’s jaw was hanging open.

“Ladies and gentlemen,” Poe gestured to the man now hugging Leia, “I give you, Han Solo.”

“No way,” Rose whispered.

“Are you sure?” Jessika asked.

Han bent his head down and kissed Leia.

“Well, if not, then someone should probably give him a call about that,” Poe smirked.

“Oh my god,” Rose gasped. “Oh my god. Oh my god. Oh my god!”

“Oh, breathe,” Evan leaned forward. “You’re starting to sound like you’re hyperventilating.”

“Oh my god!” Rose exclaimed. “That’s Han Solo! The Han Solo!”

Karé frowned, “Yeah, we get it. Poe just said that.”

“No, you don’t get it!” Rose cried. “We’re finally in the same room as Han Solo!”

Everyone stared at her.

“We can get her autograph for Kira!”

Silence.

Then Poe burst out laughing.

“Oh, please do!” Poe was turning red from laughing so hard. “I need to see his reaction.”
Kaydel glared at him, “You mean better than the one you’re having at Rose’s expense right now?”

Her glare shut him right up.

“Babe,” Snap leaned over to his wife. “Who’s Kira?”

“I have no idea,” Karé replied looking equally lost.

We don’t have enough capital ships or troops to oppose the First Order everywhere, but we can look for ways to make a difference – contributing medicine or blasters, or bringing rebels to Resistance headquarters for a week of commando training.

- The Journal of Paige Tico

“So, how’s the refugee intake going, Amilyn?” Leia asked as she led Holdo, Han, and Chewbacca back to the table. They all settled on Leia’s formerly lone bench.

“Good,” Holdo nodded. “Almost all the transports have arrived. We’re still waiting on Seneca with Phoenix Rising, but otherwise everyone’s accounted for. The humanitarian tents are set up in the sniping field. The New Republic should have relocation homes ready in a week or two. Technically we’re still waiting for the freighter Eravana to arrive because I haven’t gotten the paperwork-”

“I will leave right now if you don’t drop this,” Han warned.

Holdo shrugged, “You say that like it’s a bad thing.”

Leia narrowed her eyes. Han was another person who had permanently blacklisted Holdo from his affections after her business with Felicity. It didn’t help that upon Holdo’s first meeting with Han she had told Leia – admittedly not to Han’s face – that Leia could do better.

Of course, they were already married with a baby on the way by then.

“Excuse me, Vice Admiral?” Evan cut in. “Sorry for bothering you, but I was wondering about a certain passenger.”

Leia held up her hand, “It’s alright. She’s on Phoenix Rising with Senesca and Dameron.”

“Dameron?” Han perked up. “Huh, thought you would have Poe on base in case of attack.”

“Uh, Captain Solo?” Poe held up his hand. “I’m right here. She means my dad.”


Rose bit her lip very hard to stop herself from making a comment about how put together Luke Skywalker could be living in an AT-AT in the desert of Jakku.

“I’ve got an espionage mission in a few days,” Poe said. “Trust me, no one’s looking forward to me shaving this beard more than myself.”
“I think my thighs would disagree,” Kaydel muttered.

Han blinked at her, “Uh… Leia? Do we have a kid I don’t know about?”


“Well, this girl looks a lot like you,” Han nodded to Kaydel. “Like… a creepy amount. Like absolutely could be your daughter.”

Everyone looked between Leia and Kaydel.

“No.”

“Not really.”

“What are you talking about?”

“I don’t think so.”

“Maybe if you squint.”

“I don’t see it.”

“He doesn’t mean Kaydel, right?”

Han scowled at the group, “You all must be joking. Seriously?”

Poe shook his head, “I don’t think they look anything alike.”

“Oh, what do you know?” Han waved off. “You probably don’t spend a lot of the time with the girl.”

“Sorry,” Leia cut in, “I forgot to introduce you. Han this is Connix… the girl I told you about.”

Han scowled, “No, I don’t remember anyone called Connix.”

Chewie growled something to Han. Poe didn’t know many words in Shyriiwook… but he did recognize the word *desk*.

Crap.

Han grinned, “Oh, right. *That* Connix.”

As Kaydel looked at him in confusion, Poe made a mental note not to ever tell her what he translated.

“Speaking of the mission,” Holdo said, “is everyone ready for it?”

Paige, Evan, Poe, Kaydel, Karé, and Snap replied affirmatively.

“Good,” Leia said, “Jaina will be here tomorrow.”

“Jaina Fel?” Han asked.

“She’s pretending to be my personal assistant,” Poe explained. “General, are we sure it’s a good idea to send her? She’s got that scar on her arm from Kylo Ren pushing her onto the broken glass. It might tip someone off.”
“Jaina will wear long sleeves and gloves,” Leia replied. “Besides, she’s the only person available who knows what a personal aide should act like.”


“I need her on Hosnian Prime making my case to the Senate,” Leia answered. “We can’t back down on making them understand the danger of the First Order.”

“Well, if the death of Luke Skywalker’s daughter wasn’t enough to get them to do anything, somehow I don’t think anything is going to make them act,” Han said bitterly. “Hey, maybe you can show the footage from Fliss’ torture or Shara’s murder. Those we really effective.”

A very awkward silence clung to the table.

“Alright, then,” Poe cleared his throat. Kaydel’s hand was gripping his in comfort, “Hey, Snap, have the rings finished being polished?”

“Oh, yeah, here,” Snap produced a pair of weddings bands and simple, but visibly expensive engagement ring from his pocket. As he handed them over to Poe and Kaydel, he glanced at his and Karé’s bare fingers. “I hate that Karé and I can’t also act married.”

“You’re supposed to be our bodyguards,” Poe retorted. “Why would I hire a married couple to be our bodyguards?”

“Still,” Snap shrugged, “it’s just weird that the married couple has to pretend to be single and the single couple is acting married.”

“Now be careful with those rings,” Holdo warned Poe and Kaydel as they slipped the rings on. They had already measured a while back to make sure they would fit the pair. “Those rings actually belong to a couple in the Resistance. I expect them to be returned to their owners in perfect condition or you will be replacing them. Understood?”

“Yes, Ma’am,” Poe gave a salute with his left hand, a glint of gold catching the light.

Evan shot to his feet, “Mom!”

Many people at the table laughed as Evan sprang to his feet at the sight of a brunette woman and made a run for her. She was – as they were soon to find out – the exact same age as Leia, she had her son’s brown hair and green eyes, and she was bound at a wheelchair.

As Evan raced forward, Paige nervously got to her feet, brushing off and straightening her clothing. It was time for the dreaded meet the parents moment she knew Evan luckily and unluckily wouldn’t have to endure in return.

Or so she thought.

There were other smiles at the table with the arrival, Holdo following after Evan in a leisurely pace to complete business. That was because Shayna Namit wasn’t entering alone. Strolling in behind her was Kes Dameron and Zev Senesca, the latter making a quick exit to finish other tasks after he reported in to Holdo.

“Hey,” Rose nudged her sister as they watched Evan drop to his knees and hug his mother tightly, the two immediately breaking into conversations of how the other had been. “You should go to them.”
“Oh no, I couldn’t,” Paige fiddled anxiously with her crescent moon pendant, trying to suck as much luck out of it as possible.

“Yes, you can! She’s going to love you!”

“Paige,” Kaydel reached across the table, “you’ll be fine. If she’s anything like Evan, she’s going to adore you.”

“I’ve just never done something like this. Met a boyfriend’s parent.”

“You know, Kay said the exact same thing to me before meeting my dad,” Poe cut in. “When I told Dad that, he told me to tell her that the parents want to like their kid’s significant other. Parents want above all else their child’s happiness, and the significant other makes them happy, so you’ve already got an edge.”

Kaydel clasped his hand, “Poe’s right, in my experience the boyfriend’s parents don’t try to kill you… Just your parents.”

“You clearly have never met my father-in-law,” Han mumbled stealing a fried nuna strip from Leia’s plate.

“Look, Paige,” Kaydel said, “if Evan’s mom is even half like Kes Dameron, you’ll be fine.”

“Aw, how sweet. Thank you, Dear,” Kes laughed. No one had noticed when he had reached the table with a couple of bags he set on the ground.

“Dad!” Poe leapt to his feet to grab his father into a hug. “It’s so good to see you!”

“Good to see you too.” Kes pulled back and gave his son a good look up and down, “Or so I thought I would see you. What happened to you? The voice is right, but where’s my son behind all this scruff?”

“Just a mission,” Poe swatted away Kes’ hand as he ruffled Poe’s unruly hair. “I’ll be back to normal soon enough.”

“You better. Just when I finally give up on the you should have Yavinese hair argument you let it grow out? I don’t think so,” Kes patted Poe shoulder, chuckling. He turned his attention to Kaydel, “And don’t tell me you traded in that sweet Connix girl for some brunette. I mean this one gives me very nice compliments, but I’m rooting for Kaydel.”

“Very funny, Kes,” Kaydel laughed, getting to her feet to hug him. “Again, it’s just for a mission. I’ll be back to blonde in no time.”

“You might want to do it before the mission,” Kes scowled. “You know, you look a lot like Leia.”

“Thank you!” Han exclaimed. “Finally someone else sees it!”

“I don’t know how you can’t,” Kes slid onto the end of the bench next to Poe. “Good to see you, Solo.”

“Kes,” Han nodded. “Been a while. What are you up to these days? Still doing the farming thing?”

“It’s a nice, quiet life. You doing much of the same? And by same, I mean the same life you always have which is the absolute opposite of my life?”

“The quiet life is a boring one. Nothing like a good heist to get the heart pumping.”
“That reminds me,” Leia said, “I’ve got to pull something in a few months here and I want to get your opinion on my plan.”

“Sure. What’s up?”

“I’ll explain it later when we’re alone but let’s just say Lor San Tekka has… run into a little trouble lately.”

“Yeah, he hasn’t been around much,” Kes frowned. “What happened to him? I know he travels, but he likes to visit the old Force Sensitive tree Shara and I planted. Hasn’t been around Yavin IV in almost a year.”

Leia shifted uncomfortably. She did not like answering this question in front of so many people.

“Um…” Leia cleared her throat, “there was an image of Lor San obtained by the First Order in which he may or may not be wearing a neck pouch not unlike the one used in Operation Citadel.”

Han lifted an eyebrow, “So, you’ve found-”

“The key to Ahch-to,” Kes finished.

“Rrer gre row ree?” Chewie added.

“It’s not confirmed,” Leia insisted. “Besides, we’re not even 100% sure that Luke ever made it to Ahch-to. A few years ago there was some suspicious activity involving certain assets of his that were confirm to be done by him personally. Luke may be at the first Jedi Temple, or he might have changed his mind. For all we know we went to Jakku to find Rey.”

Rose loudly coughed as she choked on her drink.

Every eye turned on her.

“Just, uh…” Rose cleared her throat, “went down the wrong way.”

Jessika frowned.

“So Lor San is off finding Luke?” Kes returned to them to the previous conversation.

“I think that was his plan,” Leia replied, “but then Tara Ren turned up on his doorstep and he’s been fleeing from the First Order ever since. We’ve completely dropped out of contact. I have no idea what he’s doing.”

“I’m sure he’ll show up sooner or later,” Holdo said.

“He better,” Han cut in. “It’s far past the time that Luke should have come home. I get needed some time alone after what happened, but it’s been twelve god damn years. I don’t care with we have to drag him back literally kicking and screaming; Luke is coming home.”

He crossed his arms and slumped back in his chair.

“I’m bringing someone home,” Han muttered so only Chewie and Leia could hear him. “I failed with Qi’ra, Rey, Felicity, and Ben. I’m bringing Luke home.”

Chewie gave a soft growl and Leia placed her hand over Han’s.

“Well, I’d be more than happy to help you fetch him,” Kes offered. “This all reminds me of the
Rebellion pre-Battle of Yavin. A cold war is worse than an active one.”

Holdo gave a sympathetic smile, “It’s true, especially with this refugee situation. Forcing mining towns under their thumb and putting those who rebel in prison camps. If we hadn’t gotten to the Preon system first, this might have ended up like what they did to Otomok.”

Rose winced. She felt Paige grasp her hand under the table, but when she looked at her sister, Paige had a pained, longing look over to Evan who was still off talking to his mother.

“Anyone left there these days?” Snap asked, unaware of the Ticos’ association with the system.

“No,” Karé shook her head sadly. “It’s barren. Everyone’s either dead or in prison camps.”

Rose struggled not to think of her parents. She wanted nothing more than to go into the First Order with blasters blazing to find that list of Otomok prisoners in the camps. Maybe looking through that list for the names Thanya and Vien Tico would finally quell the ache in her heart. At least then she could come up with a plan for rescue.

Or finally get closure on their deaths.

“It’s okay,” Paige whispered in her ear. “We still have each other. I won’t leave you. I promise.”

That was a promise she couldn’t keep.

Holdo said, “The sad thing is this cold war won’t heat up until either Luke Skywalker returns and brings hope back to the galaxy… or they blow up another planet and we get united by a lust for revenge.”

“If they build another Death Star, I call blowing that one up,” Poe yelled dibs.

He sunk back in his seat when he saw Leia’s deathly glare.

“Not to diminish the loss of Alderaan or sacrifices made in the Battles of Yavin and Endor. Right, Dad?”

“I’m not backing you up in this one, Poe. Your mother and I both fought in Endor. You want to mock it, you’re on your own.”

“You do have to admit,” Kaydel tried to backup his boyfriend a bit, “if there is anything that’s a magnet for drawing out Luke Skywalker, it would be a Death Star.”

“Well, if there is another Death Star, I’m not telling Nalto,” Nils Arlos cut in as he approached the tables. “I had to tell him and Felicity about Death Star Two, and I’m not dealing with him putting another chair through the window.”

“How about we just take him to a field, put him at the opposite end, yell it to him through a megaphone, and then run like hell?” Poe suggested.

“Sounds good to me,” Nils shrugged. “I’ve got your ID chips ready.”

Nils set a handful of identification chips on the table and took the free seat next to Kaydel. It put him right between Kaydel and Poe and at the next table, Karé and Snap, giving them the best access to the chips.

“Nice,” Poe snatched up his while Kaydel slid Paige’s and Evan’s across the table. “And Vice Admiral Holdo, I respectfully disagree with your assessment.”
“Whoa,” Holdo blinked, “is that the first time you’ve used the word respect in relation to me without a negative connotation?”

“Don’t get used to it,” he flashed her a smile. “Besides, I *am* disagreeing with you. This isn’t a cold war anymore. Things are definitely heating up with the air force.”

“Not by much.”

“I think BB-8 would refute that.”

Kes frowned, “Now that you mention it, where is the little ball?”

Most of the eyes at the table turned on Poe as he gave his father a sheepish smile.

“Well, uh, he, sort of,” Poe rubbed the back of his neck, “he kind of… blew up… a little.”

Kes blinked, “I’m sorry, what?”

“BB-8 blew up,” Jessika repeated.

“Wow, tough luck, Kid,” Han said.

“Oh, no, he’s fine,” Poe assured. “He just got hit by a blaster bolt and went flying in a few different directions. We’ve got all the pieces but a lot of him is scorched and melded together so BB needs a very thorough repair job that’s going to take about a month. Memory core’s intact, so he’ll be the same BB-8 we all know and love, but he needs some intense work.”

“Honestly Poe,” Jessika teased, “you need to treat your droids with more respect.”

“Whatever you say, *Great Destroyer.*”

Tallie gave a nervous chuckle. Jessika still hadn’t figured out Tallie was the mastermind behind the nickname, and Tallie very much wanted to keep that a secret.

“If we could redirect our attention,” Nils said a little louder than necessary, “I’d like to go over the mission a little.”

Rose hesitated, “Do we… Do the rest of us have to leave?”

“No, Dear,” Holdo gave her a sickly smile not intending for it to be condescending. “It’s not *that* classified.”

“Hey, Hot Shot!” Poe turned and yelled to Evan. “Get over here! We’re briefing.”

Evan nodded, and he approached the table with his mother. Paige shot to her feet in an instant. As she waited for them, she kept adjusting her stance, shifting her weight and swaying in jerky movements, appearing to have forgotten entirely how standing normally was supposed to look.

“Everyone, this is my mother, Shayna,” Evan announced when they reached the table. “Mother, these are my friends, commanding officers, and… and I’m not sure who the fuzzy one is.”

Chewbacca growled a greeting.

“Sorry, we’re last minutes additions as always,” Han said. “I’m Han Solo and that’s Chewbacca.”

“It’s a pleasu-” Shayna stopped and blinked, “Wait… the Han Solo? Like *Kessel Run* Han Solo?”
The one who did the Kessel in twelve parsecs?

Han too blinked, then broke into an enormous grin, “Lady, I think I like you.”

“I don’t believe it,” Shayna sounded as excited as Rey when she spoke of Han Solo. “This is amazing. I’ve always wanted to meet you and shake your hand.”

“Well, I don’t want to be rude,” Han got to his feet and did just that. “It’s always nice to meet someone who focuses on my best accomplishment.”

Leia raised an eyebrow, “Didn’t you used to say our son was your best accomplishment?”

“In all fairness, General,” Poe grinned, “I feel history will disagree.”

“Poe,” Kes warned.

“Captain Solo, tell me,” Shayna leaned in conspiratorially. “Did you really do the Kessel Run in only twelve parsecs?”

Han grinned, “Absolutely.”

_Roar rah ro grr!

He glared at Chewie, “You’re not supposed to tell them we round down!”_

_Rah grr gre raw roh greh!

“Oh, whatever!” Han stomped back to his seat. “It’s still less than thirteen, so it counts as twelve!”_

_Grr grah roh gree!

“No, we are not doing this again, Chewie! Now drop it!”_

Chewie huffed and crossed his arms but did as he was told.

Holdo just stared at the two, “…Alright then.”

Rose suddenly pushed Paige forward. She went stumbling almost falling right onto Shayna, but Evan caught her in time.

Paige caught her bearings and scowled at her sister, “Rose!”

“What?” Rose held up her hands in surrender. “She seems nice and you looked like you needed a push.”

“Rose!” Paige blushed.

Evan just looked like he wanted to laugh but knew at least one person in the company would slap him for doing so… Most likely Jessika.

“Oh, come on,” Rose exclaimed, “she’s a Han Solo fan. She’s good in my book.”

“For the love of,” Paige groaned.

Leia leaned over to Han, “Rose there is a big fan of yours as well.”

“Oh really?” Han looked so smug.
“Yep, and she’s got a little friend here that absolutely adores you. Like I mean Felicity didn’t idolize Brendan as strongly as her friend idolizes you.”

“Sweetheart, I have no interest in being a hundred feet near someone who idolizes me more than Fliss idolized Brendan. That’s just a terrifying image.”

“You’re in luck. The girl isn’t actually on base.”

“Good. Won’t want to have the girl hear her idol doesn’t want to meet her.”

“It would be devastating, but I would never focus you into that situation. I am however making you sign an autograph to her.”

“I don’t do autographs,” Han said instantly.

“No, but you’ll do this one,” Leia answered as a matter of fact. “You’re going to grin and bear it, take a picture of yourself, and sign it To Kira, Never Tell Me the Odds, Love Han Solo, Captain of the Millennium Falcon.”

“Qi’ra?” Han frowned.

“Not your Qi’ra. Kira like how Luke and Felicity were going to spell it.”

“Good, that would just be awkward if it was my Qi’ra.”

“Especially since we’re taking and sending a picture of the two of us as well.”

“The two of us?”

“A picture and autograph from Chewie as well. This girl has grown up in an environment like Tatooine mixed with Corellia. The least was can do for her is send a couple of pictures.”

“Leia,” Han groaned. He hated it when she played the Corellia card.

“Don’t even start,” Leia count off. “You know you’re not going to win this argument.”

Han huffed but conceded defeat.

While that was happening, Paige was trying to find a way to actually open her mouth and speak to Evan’s mother. She didn’t even need to introduce herself, she just needed to find a way to regain the ability to speak. Even the word hi seemed out of her grasp. Hell, she’d be happy to just blurt out I slept with your son last night to calm his nerves over your arrival today.

Okay, maybe not exactly that.

Shayna watched as the girl struggled to speak. She glanced at her son and found Geno was being of no help.

She sighed; fine, if she had to do it herself, she would.

“Hello, Dear,” Shayna offered her hand to shake. “It’s a pleasure to meet you.”

“The pleasure’s all mine,” Paige shook. When they let go, she started to crouch down, but stopped herself. She started to go back up but again hesitated and started to crouch until she stopped again. “I, um… I’m sorry, I haven’t met someone in a wheelchair before. Should I be standing, or is it more offensive not to look at you at eye level?”
“Standing is preferred,” Shayna said politely. “It’s actually considered to be condescending to crouch unless asked.”

Horror filled Paige’s face, “Oh my God, I am so sorry! I didn’t mean-”

“Oh, I didn’t think we were trying to be.”

“I know!” Paige said getting increasingly hysterical, “I just- I thought- I don’t- I- Evan- I mean, Geno… Uh, you see-”

Shayna held up a hand, and Paige fell silent.

“Relax,” Shayna said gently. “Why don’t we start this over?”

Paige nodded, “Ok.”

“Take a deep breath… and you start.”

She gathered herself and then smiled, “Hello, my name is Paige Tico, and your son, Geno is the best thing to ever happen to me.”

Rose loudly cleared her throat.

“After my sister, Rose,” Paige amended.

Shayna chuckled, “Hello, Paige. I’m Shayna Namit. Genie’s told me a lot of good things about you.”

“That’s good, and again, it’s a pleasure to meet you, Mrs. Namit.”

“Oh, Dear, call me Shayna.”

“Alright,” Paige smiled finding herself relaxing. “Shayna’s a pretty name. My mother had one similar, Thanya.”

“Has Genie had the pleasure of being introduced yet? Or is the tardiness in introductions mutual?”

“Mother,” Evan groaned.

“Don’t you mother me,” Shayna countered. “I know you live with the girl.”

“Hey, we just sleep in the same bed. We haven’t done anything else!”

Jessika leaned over to Tallie, “Yeah, just like we only sleep together.”

“Jess!” Tallie hissed, eyeing Holdo.

“Uh, no,” Paige answered the query, “Evan- Er, Geno hasn’t met my parents. They’re, um… We’re from Hays Minor and…”

Shayna smiled, “I understand. It’s a horrible thing the First Order has done to the Otomok system and now the Preon moons.”

“Why were you living on Preon IX? I thought you guys were from,” Paige paused. “Actually I can’t remember where you guys are from. Evan only mentioned it once, but I know it wasn’t Preon IX.”

“Oh, I work for a mining organization as a coordinating director,” Shayna explained. “I decide which employees to send to which sites. Actually that’s how I met Geno’s father. He was a safety
inspector for the mining industry. He was checking out one of my sites, then started to check out me, and I checked out him, and well… Things went from there. It was strange, not meanly man take a second look at a girl in a wheelchair.”

“I’m sorry about your husband. Evan said he died in a work accident?”

“We was inspecting a mountain operation’s safety measures and there was an avalanche and… let’s just say the operation wasn’t up to code.”

“I’m sorry.”

“It was years ago,” Shayna waved off. “I think I did a good job with Genie afterwards.”

“I agree,” Paige grinned at Evan. “I think you did a very good job.”

Evan reddened slightly.

“Sorry to cut in,” Jessika said, “but you’re one of the refugees?”

“I haven’t had a stable home since Geno joined the Resistance,” Shayna explained. “I sold our house so that Geno could afford to do so. That’s the problem with these volunteer organizations, they don’t come with a salary.”

“Believe me,” Leia interjected, “if I could get actual funding from the New Republic, anyone would be able to join. Not just the well-off and the homeless.”

A series of looks were exchanged across the tables. Far too many of the people seated there were technically homeless. The mere beds, food, and refreshers just barely allowed those who didn’t have money to survive, and those who did often felt pressured to foot the bill.

And those revenue streams were starting to dry up.

“So, where were you living if you didn’t have the house anymore?” Holdo asked.

“Thankfully my company would pay for places to stay while I was out traveling,” Shayna answered. “Otherwise I’ve been doing a mix of motels and the generosity of friends. I was living on Preon IX for a few months when my company got into this mess with the First Order. We’re currently pretty broke and have to shut down until things get better. I was in the middle of trying to find somewhere to go when the New republic finally woke up and ordered the evacuation. I’ve been promised a place to live from the government and a meager pension, but it’s going to be a little longer to find a placement for me, what with the whole wheelchair situation.”

“Which brings me to my point,” Jessika said. She turned to Holdo and Leia, “You’re not seriously going to make her sleep in the sniper field in a tent? General Organa, I know that forest. I know its trials. Even BB-8 gets knocked over on those paths.”

Leia said, “It’s alright, Miss Pava. Due to her disability, Mrs. Namit has been allotted a room for better accessibility.”

“Speaking of,” Holdo stood, “I was about to go check on how things are going with the camp. Would you like me to run your bags to your room, Mrs. Namit?”

“That would be wonderful.” Shayna looked to Kes, “Is this the one you said your son complains about a lot?”
Poe glared at Kes.

He shrugged, “What? It was a long flight. Having sons was a mutual topic for conversation.”

Holdo went to the end of the table where Kes had dropped Shayna’s bags.

“Genie, help her out,” Shayna said as Holdo struggled to find a bag way too hold all three bags. Amilyn Holdo was definitely not a stand in for a pack mule like Kes Dameron.

Evan frowned as he helped Holdo, “Is this all you have?”

“It’s all we were allowed,” Shayna replied. “They told us we could only bring three bags. You know, it’s not easy to put a lifetime into a bag. Not that I really had much after selling the house.”

“I know how you feel,” Kes said. “I remember during the Rebellion you were allowed to pack a single bag. Lead to some weird items showing up on base. Didn’t Fliss steal her brother’s urn from her father?”

“Carried that thing everywhere,” Leia shook her head. “Although, admittedly it was the size of a travel shampoo bottle. There wasn’t a lot of Brendan’s body to cremate. But hey, at least she got a bag. There were people like Diego, Luke, and I whose homes and families were destroyed and you literally only had the clothes on your back.”

“Sweetheart,” Han said, “you absolutely had more than one outfit.”

“Well, in my case I already had a bag packed at the base,” Leia reddened slightly. “It still counts!”

Holdo had managed to get the bags all sorted out. She said her goodbyes and then she was gone.

“Hey, Mom, I’m going to go grab you some lunch,” Evan put a hand on her shoulder. “You want to stay here with Paige?”

“Of course,” Shayna wheeled to the end of the bench where an empty spot was left for her and Evan. “She’s a lovely girl. Why don’t you, I, and her have dinner tonight. Privately?”

“Right. Privately,” Evan reddened as he caught her meaning. He probably shouldn’t have made Paige have an audience for meeting his mother. Oh well, he didn’t exactly have a reputation around base for thinking things through. He wasn’t called Hot Shot for nothing.

As Evan left to get his mother some lunch and Shayna settled at the end of the table, only then did Paige realize that Shayna wouldn’t be able to sit on spot on the bench they had left for her.

Oops.

When Nils announced in annoyance that he couldn’t proceed with the briefing until Evan got back, the table broke off into several side conversations. Kes, Kaydel, and Poe fell into their natural rhythm – Kes adoring Kaydel so much that Poe suspected Kes liked her better than Poe. Han, Leia, and Chewie broke into Skywalker family banter. Karé, Snap, Jessika, and Tallie went into the topic of piloting. And surprisingly, Rose and Nils – seated across from each other – fell into a conversation about tricking computer systems while undercover.

That left Paige and Shayna alone.

“So,” Paige shifted in her seat, “did you and Evan have a nice conversation earlier?”

“A wonderful one,” she smiled. “Geno is truly my pride and joy. He’s a little eccentric and
hotheaded sometimes. I think I might have been a little too by the book when raising him and he wants a life that isn’t too cliché. A little cliché, sure, but not his whole life.”

“Yeah, he told me that you were very conservative.”

“Oh, Honey, if you think I’m conservative, you should have met my parents. They wouldn’t let me do anything after I ended up in this thing.”

Paige hesitated, “If you don’t mind me asking… Evan doesn’t- Won’t tell me-”

“How I ended up in the chair?”

She nodded.

Shayna said, “Have you ever heard of the Bombing of Faclov? That’s how.”

“The Bombing of Faclov?” Paige blinked.

“Yes. I grew up in Faclov City. Raised Geno right on the intersection of Rhiaon Boulevard and Memorial Street.”

“Wow, I didn’t even know people survived the bombing.”

“Oh, 2000 may have died but there were over 5000 injured. I was near a lamppost when the bombs went off. Said lamppost exploded and I got fragments shot into my spine, paralyzing me from the waist down. People don’t like to talk about the survivors of Faclov, just the martyrs like Brendan Rhiaon. But thousands of us survived, and we were pissed. I wanted to join the Rebellion in revenge, but I was only fourteen and my parents became super protective of me.”

“I’m so sorry,” Paige said.

“It’s okay. I’ve lived a good life,” Shayna said. “You know, Genie tells me you’re a bomber.”

“I, um… I don’t believe violence should ever be used, especially when there are bystanders involved, but I believe the use of bombs in space battles are an important tool. No, we’re not always going to hit the right people, but I think it’s a good way to accomplish a lot using only a little.”

Shayna patted Paige’s hand, “I’m not going to debate the ethics of bombs with you. You live a different life than I do, and with that comes… different beliefs.”

Paige frowned, why was there that odd tone in Shayna’s vo-

Oh.

“Oh.

“You, uh… you know about Evan and I…” Paige couldn’t even bring herself to say it.

“Darling, you share a bed,” Shayna said simply. “I’m not an idiot.”

“Right,” Paige chuckled nervously. “Look, I don’t want you to think that I devalue the uh, act of lovemaking. I just, um, I don’t think you have to be married. I think it’s up to each person to make that decision for themselves.”

“I agree. I think that’s a choice for each individual to make. Personally, I think it should be reserved for your spouse alone, but I’m not going to impose my will on others.”
Paige frowned, “I thought Evan said you’d kill him if he had sex before marriage.”

“I may have told him such things,” Shayna smiled slyly. “But that’s only because I wanted Geno to treat the thing very seriously. His nickname around here of Hot Head is appropriate. If I told Genie that I didn’t care who he slept with and when, I know he would have rushed into something he regretted. He holds me in high regard… maybe too high. I knew he wouldn’t want to hurt me. If he had come talked to me about why he wanted to have sex before marriage, I knew he would be taking the issue seriously. I knew that if he wanted to tell me – or as it turned out not tell me but do it anyways – that he wanted to be with a woman intimately, that meant this girl was something very special to him. If he wanted to also just go out and sleep with every woman on this base, that would have been okay. I simply gave him my opinion and enough passion behind it to treat the issue seriously. Did I over step? Perhaps, but ultimately Geno… Evan is an adult free to make his own choices. So, if he wants to be Evan Tharel, war nurse, and having sex before marriage, then that’s the man he chooses to be, and I respect it.”

“For what it’s worth,” Paige said, “personally, I think you should only do it with someone you love.”

“And do you love my son?”

She smiled, “Absolutely. Meeting him was one of the greatest things to happen to me. I’m so happy that Aletha was too busy to treat me after the Battle of Valra.”

“That’s wonderful,” Shayna reached out and squeezed Paige’s hand. “Now that that’s out of the way, I’ve been meaning to ask. Where is Aletha?”

Evan returned at that moment with a lunch tray.

“Grandma’s on Hosnian Prime helping secure vendors,” he set down the try in front of her and took his seat next to Paige. He wrapped his arm around Paige. “She’ll be back in a few days. This ceremony is stressing out half the Resistance.”

“Oh right, the big ceremony.” Shayna teased, “Do I get an invitation? After all, Aletha apparently is my mother.”

“I know you’re joking about getting invited,” Leia interjected, “but I don’t suggest you make such comments to Diego. He’s so obsessed with putting this all together that a joke like that might break him.”

“Nalto’s planning this?” Han had given up the pretense that he hadn’t just stolen Leia’s lunch tray. “I’m surprised. Based on history, I would have thought you’d be all over that, Sweetheart.”

“I have far too much to deal with to be concerned with event planning. Diego was actually really excited to do it himself at first. Aletha’s been lending a hand, but this will ultimately be his vision. Which reminds me, Diego wanted me to tell the lot of you that he does need an official RSVP. Even if you’re involved with the ceremony. So far, he’s only received Holdo’s.”

Poe leaned over to Kaydel, “Remind me again why it would have been rude not to invite her?”

“She’s the third-in-command of the Resistance.”

“What’s your point?”

“Well, I’d reply if I were invited,” Han said, “but Chewie and I only heard about all of this this morning. Guess we weren’t included.”
“Yes, you both were,” Leia responded, “Diego was just smart enough to send the invitations to Malla and I. You’re both going.”

“Oh, I am, am I?” Han countered.

“Yes, and you’re going to remember how Diego spent hours collecting the bodies of the Jedi while you punched and tree and threw up. So put on a suit, take a shower, comb your hair, smile, and deal with it.”

An indignant look flooded Han’s face and he opened his mouth to argue, finger pointing right in Leia’s face. Nothing came from his throat but a small, strangled noise as he realized he had no retort.

So he grunted, crossed his arms, and mumbled, “Fine.”

“And that,” Kes leaned over to Poe, “is how he ended up married to her.”

Poe chuckled.

“Chewie,” Leia turned her attention to the Wookiee. “I’ll need you to get a hold of Waroo. He’s invited, but Malla said he wasn’t home when I commed her. I need to know if he’s coming.”

Rowr roo ree wah.

“No, Chewie, I can’t. I don’t know where he is.”

Grr rowr gree raa.

“What? D’Qar here?”

Roar.

Leia just stared at Chewie. Then, slowly, she turned to face the cringing Han.

“Why is Waroo on your ship?” Leia demanded.

Han shrugged, “Chewie wanted to spend more time with his son, so I suggested he come spend a few months doing business with us.”

“Illegal business?”

“We may bend the rules from time to time.”

“Han,” Leia chided.

“Oh, don’t start, Leia,” Han was in no mood for this argument. “Waroo is an adult. He can make choices like this. Frankly it’s a better choice than our own son is making ever since he decided to take roleplaying as Darth Vader Junior far too seriously!”

“Do you have to make a joke about everything?”

“It’s the only way I know how to cope with pain.”

The table fell silent.

A very, very long silence.

“…So, anyway,” Kes cleared his throat. “Shayna, if you actually wanted to come to Nalto’s thing,
I’ve got a free plus one. You could come as my date.”

“What?” Poe blinked.

“Really?” Shayna asked.

“Yeah, in fact, I’ve got a spare room at my place if you wanted somewhere to stay that’s better than what the New Republic would give you.”


“That would be wonderful!” Shayna grinned, excited at the thought. “You know the entire time you were talking about your farm, I was thinking how much I’d love to see a place like that. Are you sure I wouldn’t be a bother?”

“Oh, not at all. Frankly, I’ve been quite lonely these past few months.”

“Dad,” Poe said nervously.

“You have no idea what these would mean to me,” Shayna continued. “You know, I’m a certified accountant. I could run the books for you as thank you.”

“Mom,” Evan groaned looking as frightened.

“That would be amazing. I’m terrible at math.”

“Math is one of my favorite things.”

“Hey, I’m going to go grab a sandwich,” Kes stood up. “We can talk details when I get back.”

“Why don’t I come with you?” Shayna suggested.

“Let’s do it!”

The table was silent again as Shayna and Kes went off talking excitedly.

“What just happened?” Evan stared blankly after his mother.

“I think my dad is going on a date with your mom,” Poe looked pale.

Evan turned to Poe and blinked, “…I’m not calling you brother.”

“Don’t worry, Boys,” Han chuckled, “Chewie and I are meeting a contact on Yavin IV in few weeks, so we offered to give Kes – and now, Shayna, I guess – a flight home. We’ll keep an eye on that. For what it’s worth, I don’t think they mean a date date.”

Poe scowled at Evan, “I still don’t like this. My dad is meant for my mom. End of story.”

“Don’t worry,” he sighed, “my mom is ridiculously straight-laced. If he’s anything like you, he won’t have any fun with her at all.”

“Well, if we’re done chatting,” Nils Arlos cut in impatiently, “can we please get to the briefing?”

“Right.”

The soon to be spies scrambled for the ID chips they had forgotten about.
“Okay, let’s go over the mission,” Nils began. “You lot will be going to the planet of Nixrye in a few days. You’ll be staying at a hotel that’s holding a business and pleasure conference as they call it, for Kation Defense Holdings. This is a new company offering defense weapons and systems and we want to check them out, as well as who they’re doing business with, before the Resistance approaches them for a partnership. Now, you are allowed to partake in the hotel’s amenities, but try to keep the costs as reasonable as possible. You will be required to list everything in your reports later and anything deemed too extravagant you will be asked to reimburse the Resistance for. Got it?”

“No facials with 14 karat gold, got it,” Poe nodded.

“You lot will be going as two separate groups. Tharel and Tico, who are you going as?” Nils quizzed.

“Doctor Zeth Bahol, veterinarian,” Evan answered as he studied his fake ID chip. “Paige is going to be Doctor Liin Mallix, my coworker who may or may not be having an affair with me even though that’s against workplace rules.”

“Good, make a story,” Nils nodded. “So, why are you two attended a weapons conference?”

“We work on an endangered animal reservation and are looking for new anti-poaching measures.”

“Good.” Nils turned to the others, “Now the rest of you, as well as Miss Fel, who has already been briefed, will be going as another group. Poe, you’re Kane Nilar, millionaire real estate mogul with other side projects of a questionable nature. You may or may not be involved in the spice trade.”

“I refuse to confirm or deny,” Poe smirked.

“Now, Miss Connix, you are playing Dania Nilar, his, uh… how to put this nicely? Trophy wife.”

“Got it,” Kaydel nodded. “He’s ten years older than me and we got married when I was eighteen after only knowing each other for three months, but I was conveniently impregnated by him – we’ve had blood tests to prove it – so it’s what you do. You get married.”

“How’d you two meet?” Nils tested.

“Well, Dania here,” Poe wrapped his arm around her, “we were at the same gala together. She came in on the arm of a business associate of mine, and she left the museum night on my arm.”

“In all fairness, he ended up being an absolute creep,” Kaydel said. “Kane saved me from him, and I thought it polite to reward him.”

“We went straight to my luxury penthouse apartment, and I, uh, made her breakfast for the next three days. One of my favorite memories,” Poe nuzzled her neck.

Kaydel paused him away, smiling, “Come on, not in polite company, Dear.”

“Since when have I been polite?”

He was suddenly literally pulled off Kaydel by the returning Kes Dameron.

“Since I taught you to be so,” Kes set Poe back in his seat. “Now sit up and stop mauling your girlfriend. It’s rude.”

“Can you please stay here forever?” Jessika begged.
Leia shook her head, “I think you two are going to have fun with this cover story. Just make sure you stay consistent.”

“We will,” Poe nodded.

“Oh, really?” Han smirked. “Why don’t we test that theory?”

“Go ahead,” Kaydel welcomed. “We can answer anything and do it consistently.”

“Alright,” Jessika said, “how many kids you have?”

“Three,” Poe answered.

“Names?” Tallie asked.

“Abril, Persephone, and Mateo,” he shot back like he had picked them out years ago. “Two Yavinese names like me, and one Mallarex for Kaydel.”

“How old are they?” Rose challenged.

“Eight, seven, and Mateo’s about to turn five,” Kaydel shot back.

“How old were you when you had them?” Leia asked.

Kaydel paused to calculate.

“And you just blew your cover,” Leia said. “A mother knows the age she had a child. Make sure you know that by heart. So, I’ll ask again. How old were you when you had your kids?”

“Nineteen, twenty, and twenty-two.”

“Good girl,” Nils smiled. “General Organa’s right, you all need to study and practice your stories a lot. The tiniest slip of the tongue could blow the entire mission. Know your story and go along with what the others come up with.”

“Speaking of,” Kaydel turned to Poe, “really with those names?”

“What?” he frowned. “They’re nice. I like them.”

“Well, I don’t.”

“What’s wrong with them?” he challenged.

Kaydel raised an eyebrow, “I hate the name Abril – it sounds like we misspelled the name April and just went with it.”

“Abril is the Yavinese word for April.”

“I don’t care. Then there’s Persephone, the kind of name a trust fund baby would have.”

“Which is why, it’s perfect.”

“Poe, can you ever spell Persephone? Then there’s Mateo-”

“What’s wrong with Mateo?” Poe snapped.

“Poe… it’s Diego’s father’s name. Tell me that isn’t a little weird to use.”
He considered it, “Alright, I’ll give you that one. We can change the names if you want.”

“I’m sorry but I’m going to have to veto that,” Nils said. “We now all know the names, so it’s safer to just have those names in your heads than them and another set. Abril, Persephone, and Mateo it is.”

Poe shrunk back from Kaydel’s glare.

“Now, this is a good angle to have,” Nils said, “two girls and a boy. It’s exactly what my wife and I had, and Sabrina is from Yavin III. Our younger selves kind of look like you two, so our kids might pass as yours. I’ll get a picture of them from the right age that you can use in case anyone asks to see them.”

“Thank you,” Kaydel smiled, “that sounds wonderful.”

No one at the table considered the fact that Kaydel was now sporting brown hair instead of the blonde of Nils’ youth. So no one thought to stop Nils from giving black-haired Poe and brunette Kaydel a picture of two black-haired children and a blonde.

On and on the preparations went. Snap would be Thon Sho, Poe’s personal bodyguard, and Karé would be Vella Takan, Kaydel’s bodyguard. Jaina Fel would pretended to be a personal assistant named Artora Dimodan. The job of Poe’s team was to get as close to the employees of Kation Defense Holdings and their clients while Evan and Paige would monitor what happened behind the scenes.

The group had been talking about the mission on Nixrye for about half an hour when something hard and metallic tapped Leia’s shoulder.

“Excuse me, General Organa?”

Leia looked up in surprise to see Threepio standing between herself and Han.

“What is it, Threepio?” Leia asked.

“Pardon me for the interruption – it is a pleasure to see you again, Captain Solo – but I’m afraid it’s Commander Nalto.”

“Can’t get the centerpieces just right?” Poe asked dryly.

Kaydel swatted his arm.

“What happened, Threepio?” Leia asked.

“Well, this is rather embarrassing, but it appears that Doctor Kalonia has discovered she’s allergic to a certain root vegetable on the menu she committed to, so she told him she had to switch her catering choice from nuna to fish, and uh… Commander Nalto has locked himself in his office crying and cussing… Mostly cussing… And throwing his possessions.”

Kes shook his head, “That’s it, I’m putting Diego in anger management courses.”

“Maybe wait until after the ceremony,” Poe suggested. “He might actually try to kill you if anyone pisses him off in the next two months.

Leia sighed, “I’m coming.”

“I’ll get Aletha on the comm,” Kaydel too rose.
One by one everyone took this as the signal the meal was over and each gave farewells and muttered plans for where they were going next. Han had just risen from the bench himself when someone tugged his arm.

“Uh, Captain Solo?” Rose asked nervously.

“What is it?” Han tried to be polite but he wasn’t sure why he was talking to this girl who was roughly the height of Felicity, he noted sadly. Maybe that was why he gave her his attention, for that speck of resemblance she held to his best female friend that he missed so much.

Rose bit her lip, nervously fiddling with what appeared to be a comm on her belt, “I know it’s out of the blue, but I was wondering if you might do me a favor?”

Han sighed as he caught an encouraging look from Chewie out of the corner of his eye, “Depends on the favor.”

“Rose, you are the best person in the universe!” Rey squealed into the comm as she sat alone in the walker. “You got Han Solo to come talk to me?”

“Well, I thought since it was just going to be just the two of us tonight we might do something self indulgent.” Rose was indeed alone that night, Kaydel and Paige off having dinners with their boyfriends’ parents, Aletha on Hosnian Prime – these days she tended to leave Rey’s comm with the girls when she went away – and Jessika decided to have some alone time with Tallie that night.

“Is he going to be there soon?”

“Any moment. Are you alone? Your dad would be so upset if he discovered this.”

“I don’t think he would.”

“Trust me, he would.”

Before Rey could argue, she heard the compression of a door.

“Captain Solo!” Rose greeted. “Thank you so much for doing this!”

“Alright, alright, settle down,” a gruff voice made Rey’s heart stop. Holy shit, that was Han Freaking Solo. “I’m only doing this because it’s always good when a mechanic owes you a favor. Now, where’s your friend?”

“She’s off-planet, but we’re communicating over the comm. Say hello.”

It took a second before Rey realized Rose had said that to her, “Oh, right, hello, Captain Solo. It’s truly the greatest honor to speak to you.”

“Yeah, well, nice to speak to you too, I guess. I’ll be honest the only reason I’m doing this is that Leia says you grew up on a place a lot like Corellia and Tatooine, and I have a weakness for kids I find in the desert. So, what’s your name?”

Rey wanted to scream her real name at the top of her lungs, but held back. Considering her connection to the Jedi, it wasn’t safe.

“Kira,” she answered.
“Oh, right, Leia mentioned that. Okay, I know this whole thing means a lot to you, but not to be crude, I do have a Princess waiting for me back in her room. So let’s try to make this quick. You get one story. Which do you want to hear?”

“Tell me about the Kessel Run!”

Han chuckled, “A good choice. Alright, settle in, it’s a long one. Now, picture this: It is a lawless time. Crime Syndicates compete for resources - food, medicine, and hyperfuel. On the shipbuilding planet of Corellia, the foul Lady Proxima forces runaways into a life of crime in exchange for shelter and protection. On these mean streets, a young man fights for survival, but yearns to fly among the stars...”

Rey listened in her hammock, clutching her pilot and Felicity dolls, Dosmit Raeh’s helmet on her head, and a smile plastered on her face. She could barely believe what was happening. Han Solo was actually telling her the story of the Kessel Run. She could barely focus on breathing, let alone anything else.

Which was why she didn’t notice Luke watching in the corner.

His arms were folded, a smile identical to hers was on his face, and he made no movement whatsoever to put a stop to it.

It was simply wonderful to hear Han’s voice again.

Chapter End Notes

Coming Up Next Chapter…

Sins of a Family
The mission on Nixrye doesn’t go as smoothly as the Resistance hoped when Kylo Ren and entourage show up. But Kaydel struggles to help Poe through his feelings of anger and betrayal when faces from her own past also arrive.
If anyone is interested in what I meant by Poe’s Scruff Mode Activated I pretty much meant, Poe in this chapter looks like Oscar Isaac did in The Nativity Story.

I want to clarify one note about the timeline of this story. In the last chapter I mentioned that Snap and Karé had recently gotten married. This event occurs in the Poe Dameron comic, issue 25. However, Leia mentioned a heist, which refers to a story arc from the comic taking place from issues 20-25. I want to state for the record that the events of issues 20-25 have not taken place yet, but Snap and Karé got married already. I have a moment planned for later to explain why the divergence happens.

So to be clear, Snap and Karé are married, but Leia’s heist has yet to take place. It will happen (off-screen probably) but it hasn’t happened yet.

…And the reason that is is because something’s going to happen that saves Padmé Amidala’s dresses. Yes, I changed the relationship of two characters simply so I can
have a way to save Padmé’s outfits.

Also, don’t ask me where the events of issues 1-19 take place. I actually just started reading the comic at issue 20, so I don’t have the proper knowledge yet to give you an answer.
Sins of a Family

Chapter Summary

Poe discusses his feelings about Ben Solo, Jaina is woefully under-prepared for the amorousness of Poe and Kaydel, and Kes Dameron just wants to feed all the parentless children.

Chapter Notes

So, I don’t know if it was the time of day I posted or because I dropped back down to the 10k range, but last chapter was a great success. Therefore, I am testing out going back to the 10k range for word count.

…Which means, there’s going to be about twenty more chapters added before TFA. But hey, I can pump out 10k chapters a lot quicker so there should be more frequent updates.

I promise we’ll get to TFA someday guys. I’m aiming for November, but I’m going to stop making promises. Trust me there’s a bunch of things that are about to happen that will make it very very clear why it’s taking so long to get to TFA. There’s going to be some major character and plot changes to TFA.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The Long Way Home

Chapter Fifty-One

Sins of a Family

It was the fanciest place Poe had ever seen. Twenty-seven levels of ever increasing luxury hotel rooms. A private beach of white, highly-groomed sand leading into a picture-perfect piece of ocean where the aiwha liked to play. Seventeen full service restaurants with chefs paid a yearly salary higher than the cost of the Rebellion’s war. Eight additional pools with exotic landscaping of the best flora from across the Galaxy. A five-star spa that was larger than the Resistance base on D’Qar. Three business centers, an excursion booking desk whose lowest package started at half a million credits, nine gardens to stroll in including an honest to god hedge labyrinth, a massive library, a full service shipyard with onsite mechanic, three golf courses, an entire floor dedicated to gambling in which Evan would later swear he saw Lando Calrissian playing a hand of Sabacc, two dance clubs, one place with 24/7 ballroom dancing, a stunt flying school, a shooting range, a personal sommelier for each room, a tea sommelier available upon request, and a fathier riding school that Paige was
trying to find a justification to attend.

Poe was overwhelmed. Sure, in his thirty years of life, he hadn’t been to a lot of fancy places, but this was the stuff of Senators and Royalty.

How was he ever going to pretend he belonged?

“Relax,” Kaydel said as Poe tugged at the collar of a suit that cost more money than he had ever made in his life. She was seated at a vanity, putting on a pair of earrings embedded with a recording device. “You’ll do fine.”

“What if I don’t, Kay?” Poe plunked down on the bed. “I don’t fit in with these people.”

“Neither do I, but good thing for you, I know what they’re like.”

“Really?”

“Yeah, these people are exactly like my family,” Kaydel smiled and moved from the chair to kneel in his lap, “Just pretend you think you’re better than everyone else. Make them think you have twice as much money as them, five times as much excitement, and ten times as much family drama.”

Poe laughed and ran his hands across her sides, “Well, I think I might have to borrow a little of your true backstory to inspire that last part. Aside from the First Order killing my mother, my family is pretty drama-free.”

“Lucky,” she bowed her forehead against his. “Just remember, I’m going to be right there with you. I believe in you, Poe, so if you need to draw on me to get confidence and inspiration… then draw way.”

He chuckled and pressed his lips to hers for a gentle but wanting kiss. Kaydel gave into it, moaning as his mouth took charge. She only pushed him away when his hands went for her dress zipper.

“Nuh uh,” Kaydel pulled back. “It just spent an hour putting my appearance together so I look the perfect part of trophy wife. I am not having you muss up my outfit because you have needs.”

Poe smirked, “But didn’t you just say to draw on you?”

“Poe,” she warned, standing up.

“Stop, Kay, I’m sorry,” he grabbed her hand and pulled her back to sit on the bed. He kissed her hand, “I’m sorry. You’re right. We shouldn’t.”

“That’s right we shouldn’t.”

They were silent for a moment.

“That is, unless…” Kaydel said slyly, “there was some you wanted to do that wouldn’t harm my appearance.”

He had her on her back with his head between her legs in an instant.

“There you guys are,” Snap fiddled with his cufflinks as Poe and Kaydel exited the bedroom twenty minutes later. “Finally!”
Jaina had her dark hair pinned up and she was in a simple, conservative charcoal dress, “We’re going to be late. What took you two so long?”

Poe and Kaydel exchanged a sheepish long.

“Well, you see…” Poe scratched the back of his neck.

Karé narrowed her eyes, “You two had sex, didn’t you?”

“Depends on your definition,” he conceded.

As Snap laughed, Kaydel couldn’t manage to look anyone in the eye.

“What?” Jaina scowled. “Why would you two do that right before we’re supposed to commence our mission?”

Poe lifted an eyebrow and smirked, “You and I haven’t hung out a lot, have we?”

She frowned and shook her head looking a little lost.

Snap slung an arm over her shoulder, “Jaina Fel… welcome to Poe Dameron and Kaydel Ko Connix. They go at it worse than nerfs in the springtime.”

“Come on,” Jaina pushed off his arm, “they can’t be bed.”

“You clearly haven’t heard about the desk incident,” Kaydel bit her lip looking both red from embarrassment and a little mischievous.

“Desk incident?” Jaina repeated slowly. She looked to Karé, “Do I want to-”

“Absolutely not,” Karé cut off. “This is the pair that when I told them that I cut off things with Snap because I didn’t want things to get intense during the war and we should just be like Jedi and not get attached… Oh what was the lovely response I got from you, Kaydel?”

Kaydel sighed, “I believe my exact words were… that is the stupidest thing I’ve ever heard. And then Poe preceded to rant about the summer he spent on Rornian and how much sex the New Jedi Order members appeared to be having.”

“Celibacy and non-attachment were certainly not tenants of those people,” Poe shook his head.

Jaina just stared at the group, “And Senate Organa asks me why I don’t like hanging out with the Resistance a lot.”

“Don’t worry,” Snap smiled, “it’s just Poe and Kaydel that are the notorious animals. Karé and I are very professional on missions, and barely anyone who doesn’t know them personally can tell that Tharel and Tico are dating. I promise, two out of three couples on this mission are very professional.”

“That reminds me,” Karé said, “Hon, can you check in on Paige and Evan and ask them if they’re ready to go?”

“Sure.” Snap retrieved a comm and earpiece from the coffee table, “Bey Five and Bey Six, come in. Do you read?”

The response was confined to Snap’s earpiece, so the others had to wait as Snap listened to the response.
“Perfect,” Snap smiled. “Are you guys ready to go?”

A few seconds later, the smile fell from his face.

“Oh… Okay. Uh, sure. We’ll see you then. Okay. Bey Three out.”

Snap said nothing as he slowly and awkwardly set the comm back on the coffee table, very aware of the eyes on him.

“So?” Karé urged.

Snap cleared his throat, “Uh, Evan says that they’re going to need another ten minutes… They were kind of in the middle of… something.”

Silence filled the room.

He gave a weak smile to Jaina, “How does one professional couple out of three sound?”

“Okay, Rose,” Kes said, “you can put it down wherever.”

Rose grunted as she dropped the box of BB-8 parts on the dining table. She had been invited to join the party heading to Yavin IV and work on repairing BB-8 so she didn’t hang around the D’Qar base moping that she couldn’t go on the mission with Paige. It was perfect for Rose who not only got to hang out with Han Solo and Chewbacca but Kes had offered to take her on a tour of the old Yavin IV Rebel Base – now the Museum of Rebellion History – which was hosting a revival of one of its most popular exhibits, the exhibit on the Death Star, a mix of the story of Operation Citadel and the story of Luke Skywalker’s side of the story.

She wanted to take a lot of pictures to send to Rey but decided against it as she was fairly certain they would end up getting intercepted by Luke first.

It would be so weird to see Rey’s parents in the exhibit.

But she did plan on making fun of the Diego parts to Aletha later.

“So…” Rose looked around the Dameron kitchen, “this is the house where Poe grew up.”

“Yep,” Kes smiled as he watched Rose observe the house in wonderment. “I can give you the grand tour when I’m a little less jetlagged.”

Rose walked around the kitchen, admiring the Holos hung on the walls. Kes had seen her briefly glancing at the others as they entered the house, but now she had the chance to truly examine them. He enjoyed seeing the slightly confused expression on her face when she saw that a few of the Holos had Kaydel in them.

“Girl’s one of the family to me,” Kes said. “I know it’s kind of quick, but Poe loves her so much and that poor girl is so lonely and screwed up from her own family that how could I not just instantly want to take her in? Sure, she’s got Aletha and that serves her need of love from female figures, but you can see how much she craves paternal love too. From what I’ve gathered the men in her family are spineless and distant. So to meet a loveable protective father figure… well, I’m happy to play my part.”

“You don’t think it’s little weird considering she’s your son’s girlfriend?” Rose asked.
“Well, yeah, it’s the girl who my son is doing unspeakable things to, but on the other hand, I just… I don’t know. There’s a part of me that just wants to wrap the girl up in the blanket and feed her pupusas. Oh, God, I’ve turned into my mother.”

Rose gave a small laugh as her eyes turned to another picture, “Is this Shara?”

“Yeah,” Kes leaned against the stove. “Most wonderful woman I’ve ever had the pleasure of meeting.”

“You really loved her, didn’t you?”

“Shara Bey stole my heart and took it with her to the next world. I’ll get them both back in the next life, but for this one, she ruined me completely for anyone else.”

Rose hesitated, “Including Shayna?”

Kes laughed, “Is that the deal you and Poe made? You come here and fix his droid as a cover for watching what happens between me and Evan Tharel’s mother?”

“Actually, it was Evan’s idea,” Rose admitted. “You weren’t really thinking about-”

“Shayna seems like a nice woman, but I’m not looking for anything more than a friend. I enjoy my spot in the lonely hearts club.”

“Well, I don’t,” Rose grumbled. “I’m sick of everyone having someone and me being alone.”

“Don’t you fret, Pobrecita,” Kes laughed. “Your time will come. I know it’s hard for you, but let your sister enjoy her boyfriend. He seems to make her very happy.”

“I know he does, but it’s just that we’re not supposed to be apart. We promised we wouldn’t, not after…”

Kes frowned as she trailed off.

Rose sighed, “Our parents sent us to the Resistance. Our planet had been ravaged and attacked by the First Order, so they put us on a supply ship to Botajef. I asked if they were coming too… They said they had to stay and fight. We told Mama we wanted to fight, and she said we would, but not there. Papa promised we’d see each other again and then gave us his parents matching medallions.”

Rose pulled the crescent from underneath her clothing. Tears shone in her eyes as she held it up to Kes.

“Papa said that us having the medallions meant that Otomok would always be with us – the precious minerals at its heart would sit next to ours.”

Kes watched as she struggled to choke back a sob. Slowly, his crossed the kitchen and placed a hand on her shoulder.

“Hey,” he whispered, “it’s alright.”

Rose sniffed, still fighting back her tears, “I keep insisting to Paige that Mama and Papa survived and one day we’ll be together again back home… but I know she doesn’t believe it. And to be honest… I don’t either. But the more I say it, the longer I can go before finally admitting defeat. Admitting that my parents are-”

“Shh, it’s okay,” he pulled her in for a hug. Kes Dameron held this strange little girl as she cried,
“It’s alright, Rose.”

“I’m sorry,” she sniffed, getting herself back under control. “I’m sorry, you must think me a mess.”

“No,” Kes laughed, “all I’m thinking right now is if I should ask if you want a blanket and a pupusa.”

Rose paused, “…Can I?”

“Let me show you how to make tortillas.”

“Hey, Kes,” Han Solo entered the kitchen oblivious to the emotional scene, “we got all of Shayna’s things in but are you aware all of your bedrooms are at the top of a staircase? How is she supposed to get up and down?”

“I was thinking that she could take the office down here. Do you think you and the Wookiees could bring down the bed into the office and the desk set up into the spare bedroom?”

Han crossed his arms, “Excuse me, I am not your moving service. Just because I have two Wookiees doesn’t mean we have to do your heavy lifting.”

“I just thought you would want to do it.”

“And why would I want to do it?”

“Because if you don’t,” Kes opened the fridge to gather ingredients for Rose’s pupusas, “then you don’t get to have dinner with us.”

Han rolled his eyes, “You really think dinner is going to entice-”

“I’m making hilachas.”

Han fell silent.

“And rellenitos for dessert,” Kes added.

“CHEWIE!” Han yelled. “GET WAROO! WE’RE MOVING FURNITURE!”

Rose giggled as Han Solo left the kitchen.

Kes grinned at her, “Food is not the way to a man’s heart, My Dear… but it is the way to many favors.”

Poe Dameron must have been a politician in another life. Not a particularly intelligent one that focused on economical platforms and infrastructure maintenance budgets, but one who flashed his pretty smile to the camera and made empty promises of new jobs and lower taxes without the knowhow to put them into action.

Twenty minutes into the opening night reception, he had a small crowd of people around him. Millionaires, governments, even some people Kaydel was certain belonged to crime syndicates, all fell to the charms of Kane Nilar and his wife, Dania.

Kaydel clung onto his arm, smiling and adding in small details to his anecdotes, acting the perfect
part of trophy wife. But as Poe melted into the role of roguish former playboy millionaire, Kaydel felt uneasy. Her eyes flicked around the room as she remembered being dragged to parties like this in her childhood. Any moment, she was certain someone was going to get a flicker of recognition in their eyes and exclaim *Kaydel Ko Connix, is that you?*

It was ridiculous; the Resistance had done their checks. If the name Connix had shown up on even a list of friends of friends of friends of an attendant, they would have pulled Kaydel from the mission in an instant.

Besides, who even noticed the youngest Connix girl?

Still, Kaydel’s eyes flicked through the room. There was a bad feeling that she just couldn’t shake.

No one else seemed disturbed or anxious. Jaina or “Artora Dimidan” was perfectly in her element, filling in Poe and Kaydel with names, relevant backstories, and bullshit statistics about the Nilar Company in an instant. Karé or “Vella Takan” did seem uneasy, constantly looking around the room, but that was just her role of bodyguard. Snap or “Thon Sho” seemed much more interested in the delicious offerings at the buffet in the corner. A roast quail had caught his eyes more time than his wife.

“And that was the last time we ever let the children cook,” Poe finished an anecdote. He was using a somewhat thick Yavin II accent that didn’t sound unlike Diego Nalto.

The ruckus laughter of the crowd drew Kaydel back to the people before her.

“Oh, you laugh now, but at the time I was horrified,” Kaydel hoped her words were vague enough to cover the fact she wasn’t paying attention.

“Hey, Abril’s eyebrows grew back just fine… eventually,” Poe gave her a thin smile, reading her uneasiness as if she had screamed out to the entire room.

Kaydel shifted her weight, “I told you from the start, we should just hire people to do all the cooking and cleaning for us.”

“You’ve been saying that since our second date.” Poe grinned at an Ithorian, “You know, some people say that she’s just after my money. To them, I say… who cares? I’m trading her in for a young model in fifteen years anyway.”

The Ithorian laughed as Kaydel smacked his arm.

“Alright, Mr. Nilar,” Jaina stepped in, “why don’t we let Mrs. Nilar cool off a bit before she kills you? We still haven’t introduced ourselves to the host yet.”

“Oh yes, business calls.” Poe looked around the group, “Pardon us, Ladies and Gentlemen. I need to get a few drinks in my wife before I’m sleeping on the couch tonight.”

The group give a mixture of laughter and disappointment as Poe led his team away.

“Hey,” he said in a low voice to Kaydel, daring to drop into his normal accent. He stood close to her at the edge of the room. Everyone around them was too wrapped up in their own conversations to notice. “Are you alright?”

“Yeah,” Kaydel nodded, trying to manage a smile. “Just… it brings back a lot of memories.”

Poe sighed and pulled her in closer. He kissed her forehead and gave her a tender smile.
“I love you,” he murmured.

“I love you too,” Kaydel leaned in to kiss him.

“Guys?” Karé interrupted. “We are standing right here.”

“Sorry,” Poe took a step back.

Snap just grinned at him, “Don’t worry. You’ve done worse to me.”

“Sorry about your bed.”

He frowned, “What about my bed?”

Poe’s eyes widened as he realized he had never told Snap the locale of his and Kaydel’s first lovemaking session.

“Nothing!” Kaydel replied quickly. But her blush couldn’t hide her guilt.

“Anyway,” Jaina said after a pause, “I was serious about introducing you to the host. They’re footing most of the bill. We need to go talk to her.”

“We need to also work the room,” Poe looked around the room. “The… vets aren’t here.”

“Well, it’s a good thing our ship has such a good valet,” Karé replied. Evan and Paige had gone to the hotel resort’s private shipyard to check out who else was visiting the hotel. “You never know who might show up at these events. I would like to know that very much.”

“How about we split up?” Kaydel offered. “Artora, take Kane and Thon to meet our host, and while you do that, Vella and I will take a look around the reception. You know, check out who and what is here.”

Snap narrowed his eyes, “You’re going to hit the buffet, aren’t you?”

“I’m hungry, damn it!” Kaydel exclaimed.

Karé sighed at Snap, “I’ll bring you a plate.”

He lit up at that.

“Mr. Nilar,” Jaina nudged Poe, pointing at someone over Kaydel’s shoulder, “I’ve spotted our host.”

“Then let’s go turn on the charm,” he gave Kaydel a quick kiss and departed.

“Alright,” Karé said. “Where’s that buffet?”

Kaydel grinned, but before she could speak, someone barreled right into her.

“Oh my gosh!” a man exclaimed as Kaydel fell to the ground. “I am so sorry! Are you okay?”

Karé instantly stepped between them, “Back it up, Buddy.”

“I’m so sorry, I didn’t mean to,” he had brown skin, black eyes, and was wearing a charcoal grey uniform.

The other man with him grabbed him by the arm and pulled him back, “Easy now. Let the girl breathe.”
“I’m sorry,” the first man told Karé as she helped Kaydel off the ground.

“So you’ve said,” Karé narrowed her eyes.

“It’s alright, Vella,” Kaydel brushed off her dress. “I’m not hurt. It was just an accident.”

“Are you sure, you’re okay?” the man asked.

His friend laughed, “The girl’s not made of porcelain. She’ll be fine.”

Kaydel still smiled at the man, “I’ll be okay. Now if you’ll excuse us, I have a buffet calling.”

The man’s friend continued to laugh as he stared helplessly after Kaydel and Karé as they departed.

“Whoa, I can’t believe it,” the friend shook his head. “Usually you only get this awkward around Sasa, Eight-Seven.”

FN-2187 rolled his eyes, “Come on, Marks. They’re going to be waiting.”

Jaina led Poe and Snap to a woman who looked even more groomed than Poe on a good day. Perfect manicure, professionally blonde hair dyed to mask her burgeoning greys that was tied up into a fancy updo without a strand out of place, skincare and makeup obsessively done to make her look ten years younger making her look weirdly like an older version of Kaydel, and her conservative lavender dress was pressed hard so that a wrinkle wouldn’t dare grace the fabric.

“Mr. Nilar,” Jaina introduced, “this is Mrs. Sindal, CEO of Kation Defense Holdings. Mrs. Sindal, I spoke to you earlier? This is my boss, Kane Nilar?”

“Oh yes, the owner of Nilar Company,” Mrs. Sindal grinned, offering her hand in an awkward motion that confused Poe as to whether she wanted him to kiss it or shake it. “An inventive name, Mr. Nilar.”

“Please, Mrs. Sindal,” Poe decided to just go for the hand kiss. “You flatter me.”

“You seem to be the flatterer,” Mrs. Sindal laughed. “And please, call me Kat.”

“Only if you call me Kane.”

“It’s a deal. My, my, you seem to be just as handsome and charming as your assistant advertised. She was desperate to get your company on my guest list.”

“Artora insists that you have a high reputation.”

“Admittedly, we are a subsidiary, but the prestige and history of our parent company brings a certain legitimacy to the table,” Kat waved down a waiter and she helped herself to two glasses of champagne. She offered one to Poe, “Have you dealt with our parent company before?”

“No,” Poe grinned as he accepted it. His eyes drifted up and down her form, only being able to pretend he enjoyed it as much as he put on due to the fact that there really was something about her that reminded him of Kaydel. “But I’m very much regretting that decision right now. Are you from Mallarex by any chance?”

“Born and raised. What about you? Where are you from?”
“Can’t you guess?”

“Well, I’m fairly certain that you’re from a Yavinese moon… but which one? Thirteen? Eight? Twenty-Six?”

“Two.”

“Dang. So close,” Kat laughed. “How could you tell I’m from Mallarex?”

“You have features like my wife. Thought I’d take a shot in the dark,” Poe shrugged.

“I do have traditionally Mallarexian features.”

“You should see my kids.”

“Are you joking?” Kat asked. “Because I do love a Holo of a cute kid.”

“Oh, then you have to see mine,” Poe patted at his pockets trying to find the Holo of Nils Arlos’ children.

And as Kat cooed over the picture of his supposed children, Poe couldn’t help but think that things were going very well.

“This is humiliating,” Zeroes muttered. “Our first deployment is not a battlefield. No, we pull bodyguard duty for the most redundant set of people in the First Order. Why do the Knights of Ren even need bodyguards?”

“Just shut up and help me carry the champagne,” Nines rolled his eyes as they carried a pair of trays back to the group.

The MK squad – Marks, Duck, Tone, and Weevil – were standing behind Berd and Doxl Ren, taking their role of guard very seriously as they surveyed the room. Slip and FN-2187 were granted a higher amount of freedom as they openly conversed with Sasa Ren, Slip looking a little lovesick as he did so. Poor Nines and Zeroes somehow managed to pull the waiter cards as they had been sent off by Sasa – who was acting like such a belle of the ball one might think she was hosting the reception – to get the group some refreshments.

Apparently the miserable Kylo Ren had made a break for it in the time since they left.

“Thank you, Boys,” Sasa flashed them a smile, though the pair could barely manage one in return. At least she let them have a drink, something Captain Phasma would never allow them to do on duty. “I must say, this is such a wonderful party. Good food, good music, great drinks.”

Marks frowned, “Perhaps this should be your last, Master Sasa?”

She grinned, “It’s only my third.”

“Yes,” FN-2187 bowed his head, “but Master Kylo-”

“Can come stop me himself if he finds it to be a problem. If he wants to go off and slink in the shadows, he must face the consequences.”

“Like me getting a chance to dance with you?” Berd raised a coy eyebrow.
Sasa chuckled nursing the rim of her champagne, “I’m going to need a lot more of these before that happens. Now… Zeroes and Nines, did you see anyone?”

“No, Master Ren,” Nine bowed his head. “No one appeared to be suspicious or an enemy of the First Order.”

“Master Ren,” Duck said kindly, “are you certain there’s a reason to be alarmed?”

“Master Kylo said he sensed something. Someone familiar and dangerous, he just couldn’t quite place who it was.”

“We’ll keep looking, Master Sasa,” Tone promised.

“You better,” Doxl warned. “We have many enemies and the Force can only work so far. I don’t want anyone getting the jump on us.”

“Who’s going to get the jump on us?” Berd shot. “No one knew we were coming, and Master Kylo was added at the very last second when he decided he couldn’t trust us alone with his lover. For goodness sake, we’re not Wiln!”

FN-2187 traded a look with Sasa. That had been the entire reason the FN and MK squads had been ordered to act as bodyguards. It wasn’t that Kylo didn’t trust Berd and Doxl not to sleep with Sasa—it’s that he didn’t trust them not to use the opportunity to work with Tara to kill Sasa.

But FN-2187 wasn’t going to let that happen.

“You know, it doesn’t matter if you are Wiln,” Sasa decided to act coy. FN-2187 could see the calculation behind her eyes, “You gentlemen – all of you – can look as much as you want. Only Master Kylo may touch me.”

In that moment, all eight Stormtroopers felt more than welcome to enjoy the instruction to look at Sasa as much as they wanted.

Sasa took another drink of her champagne and sighed, “Oh for goodness sake, he forced his way onto the mission and now he’s sulking on the balcony. Marks, go find Master Kylo and bring him back.”

Marks frowned, “But Master Sasa, I don’t think he-”

“If he gives you any problems, just tell him that if wants to hide in the shadows while I have to deal with all these boring business people alone, I’ll put him through a hell worse than his threesome suggestion.”

No less than two minutes after Marks found Kylo were they both at Sasa’s side.

“I didn’t want to see what worse was,” Kylo admitted.

“Good,” she lifted on her toes and kissed him. “Now, I’ve been working this party for over an hour. I want a break, maybe let loose on the dance floor a little.”

Kylo sighed, “Alright, I suppose I can-”


Everyone turned to look at him.
He gulped, “I’m going to be dead within twenty-four hours, aren’t I?”

“Probably,” Kylo answered honestly.

“Oh, stop it,” Sasa swatted his arm. “This is the consequence to your sulking. You didn’t want to join me doing the boring stuff, you don’t get to join me during the fun stuff.”

“Sasa…” he eyed the others watching the scene in amusement.

“And if you don’t get yourself in order, there’s going to be no fun stuff this entire trip,” Sasa warned. “You forced your way onto this mission, Kylo. Hell, not even Tara knows you’re here with us.”

“Only way I was able to go on a week-long getaway with you.”

Kylo knew what he should be doing; he should firmly re-establish his superiority to the group of Stormtroopers and Knights as not to compromise his position… But on the other hand, there was no way in hell he was spending a week in a fabulous hotel with Sasa and not trying his absolute hardest to knock her up.

And if he kept this up, he was probably going to end up bunking with the MK squad tonight.

“Alright,” he conceded. “How can I win my way back into your graces?”

Sasa smirked, “You need to make us three new business contacts.”

His face fell, “Three?”

“No need for firm contracts, but feel the room out. Find a few new allies for the First Order. The Supreme Leader will be very proud if you do. So go, let me dance with FN-2187 for a while, then come take his place when you’ve made three contacts.”

Kylo huffed, “Fine. But FN-2187, if your hands touch any place on her that is not her waist or shoulder I will remove said hands. Understood?”

“Perfectly,” FN-2187 stiffly nodded.

“Enjoy yourself!” Sasa called after Kylo as he stormed off to find some poor, unprepared potential business contact. She looked at FN-2187, “You ready?”

“You know I don’t know how to dance?” FN-2187 asked.

“Then I’ll teach you,” she grinned and led him to the dance floor.

Nines and Zeroes frowned at the disappearing pair.

“So…” Nines asked, “are they sleeping together?”

Zeroes shrugged, “I have no idea.”

Kylo found a brunette alone by the buffet table. There was a dark-skinned woman with her, but by her posture and the way her eyes constantly darted about, Kylo could tell she was a bodyguard.

He took a deep breath. Show time.
“You might want to skip that one,” Kylo advised as the small brunette reached for the plate of deep-fried gorg. “Only trust gorg from Tatooine. Every other planet ruins it.”

When the woman looked up at him, he was surprised. She did not look unlike his mother.

“Oh,” she blinked. “Thank you.”

“No problem,” Kylo had to stop himself from using the Force to summon a plate, instead picking it up like the worthless Non-Sensitives he was constantly surrounded by. He started piling miniature koyo melons on his plate and noticed the small heap on the woman’s plate, “Fan of koyo melons?”

“My husband got me addicted to them,” she blushed a little.

“Yeah, someone hooked me on them years ago too,” Kylo tried to push Poe Dameron from his mind. “I swear, they’re never better than right as soon as you pick them.”

“Tell me about it. My husband loves taking me to the orchard during harvest.”

The bodyguard nudged her.

“We own many orchards,” the woman randomly added, sounding a little frantic. “Part of our investments.”

“Oh? What kind of investments do you make?”

“Mostly realty but have… other avenues of a less clean hands nature if you catch my drift,” the woman said.

Kylo smirked, “You don’t meet many people who openly admit to such things.”

“I like knowing who I’m dealing with,” the woman shot. “So I wonder, who am I dealing with?”

He considered it, and then extended his hand, “Someone with very dirty hands.”

“Then forgive me for not shaking it.”

Kylo couldn’t stop a laugh.

“Fair enough,” Kylo pulled back his hand. “Have you dealt with Kation before?”

“No. Have you?”

“Done a lot of business with their parent company.”

“I’ve heard good things about it.”

“Oh, you should see some of the things they can cook up. Our enemies don’t stand a chance.”

The woman looked at him suspiciously, “And who are your enemies?”

“I don’t know,” Kylo smiled. “But I do like to know the names of my friends.”

Considering his words, the woman looked to her bodyguard. The taller woman gave a small nod.

“I’m Dania Nilar,” the woman said. “My husband, Kane, owns Nilar Company. And you are?”

Kylo knew it was dangerous to give his real name without an extensive background check, “How
about you call me… Oh, let’s see… How about… Tobias Beckett?”

“Wasn’t that the mercenary who killed Aurra Sing?”

“I heard that she fell,” Kylo smirked.

The woman returned it, “I’ll keep my eye out around you.”

“Oh good… I found a smart one.”

“Em Yêu, hurry up, we’re already late!”

“A few more minutes and I’ll be done. I promise.”

Paige Tico looked kind of ridiculous, arms crossed, wearing a pair of heels and a floor length gown that once belonged to Leia Organa, tapping her foot impatiently as a handsomely suited Evan Tharel crouched in the shadows of the dirty cover ship yard.

“Someone’s going to see us,” Paige worried.

“Just hold on,” Evan held up a tablet to capture on image of the ship in front of them, which would cross match it to the Resistance database of enemy craft. “This is the last ship.”

“I’m just so nervous,” Paige’s hand went to fiddle with her pendant but found nothing but the flesh of her neck. The pendant was too recognizable for Paige to bring, so she had left it with Jessika to bring her friend luck. “This is my first undercover mission. I don’t want to blow it.”

“Same here,” Evan said, “but I think we’re going to do just that if we keep talking about it. How about this? When we get back to the room tonight, as my way of saying sorry for dragging you into this garage while the others get to dance and drink, I’ll give you that pressure point focused, stress relieving massage you love so much?”

“I think you need to drag me into dirty garages more.”

“I can arrange that.”

Evan’s device beeped.

“There,” he declared, “the ship’s all around through, now we can leave because the result is-”

He stopped.

Paige frowned seeing something change in his eyes, “What?”

“You might want to see this,” he said.

She walked over to him and took his tablet. Her heart fell when she saw the result.

FIRST ORDER VESSEL: PRIVATE SHUTTLE OF KNIGHTS OF REN

PRIMARY OPERATOR: SOLO, BEN aka “KYLO REN”

Paige looked at Evan in horror and said, “Fuck.”
“Yeah,” he nodded. “We gotta get out of here before it’s too late.”

Just then an instruction from Poe buzzed over their hidden ear pieces, “Bey Four! Move Bey Two right now! Get him the hell away from her!”

Paige swallowed, “I think we’re too late.”

---

Two Minutes Earlier…

Poe and Kat were laughing hysterically at the story of one of Poe’s pretend children. Little Mateo truly was a precocious one.

“I honestly don’t know how I’m going to survive these children,” Poe chortled.

“Oh, it’s hard but you’ll get through it,” Kat playfully touched his arm. Poe found she was a very touchy-feely person, especially when doling out compliments. “I got through it with my three with very minimal cuts and bruises.”

“You have children?”

“Two girls and a boy just like you. Sage, Serena, and Sinon.”

Poe frowned, “Do all Mallarexians like to do the alliteration thing?”

“No. Why?”

“Nothing,” Poe shook off. It was probably just a coincidence. “So, who’s the lucky father?”

“That would be the charming man talking to my father and our eldest daughter, Sage, over there who has been shooting you dirty looks throughout our conversation,” Kat pointed to a blonde, blue-eyed man talking to a slightly older blonde, blue-eyed man and young blonde, blue-eyed woman. “He’s a very steady man but can get jealous considering how flirtatious I can get during business. Never would be unfaithful to him, but it does ruffle his feathers a little.”

“Oh, I know what you mean. It’s the same with my wife and I. I should introduce you to Dania.”

Poe turned towards the buffet table, “She’s just right over-”

Poe stopped dead.

Kaydel was talking to a tall, pale man clad in all black. His dark eyes had something haunted and piercing in them, and his hand rested on a hilt clipped to his belt.

Kaydel was talking to Kylo Ren.

Poe couldn’t believe his eyes, and in fact wouldn’t believe until he heard a squeak from Jaina by his side, confirming the man was really there.

Immediately Poe sprung into action. He barely managed a goodbye and excuse to Kat as he raced forward. He heard Snap trying to call from him, but thankfully it seemed Jaina was willing to explain things.

All Poe could think about was saving Kaydel.
Not caring that people could see him, Poe frantically went for his hidden comm, “Bey Four! Move Bey Two **right now**! Get him the hell away from her!”

Karé and Kaydel looked confused but made some sort of excuse and got away from Kylo Ren. Kylo went off – where Poe didn’t know, nor cared, all he wanted was Kaydel in his arms – and Kaydel led Karé to a secluded corner where there was a convenient potted plant to hide behind.

Poe literally skidded to a stop and had his arms around Kaydel in a second, “Are you okay? What did he do?”

“What’s going on?” Kaydel tried to push him off her to get some answers.

“You need to tell me everything he said and did. Why were you talking to him?”

“Babe?” Karé looked to Snap, “why is he losing his mind?”

Snap shrugged, “I have no idea.”

“Dameron,” Jaina lowered her voice, “what is he doing here?”

Poe turned on her, “I could ask you the same question. Weren’t there supposed to have been checks done?”

“You think if I even got a whiff that he would be here that I would have let this happen? We need to get the hell out of here.”

“Agreed.” He turned back to Kaydel. Poe looked helpless and increasingly angry as he ran his hands over her face and shoulders, checking for harm, “Are you okay? Did he hurt you? Did he touch you? I swear to God if he even laid a hand on you, I’ll-”

“Stop it!” Kaydel snapped she pushed him away.

The group started in a stunned silence. Even Kaydel looked shocked at her dramatic rejection of Poe’s affection.

“Look,” she took a deep breath to collect herself. Kaydel touched his arm, “Poe… what’s going on?”

He sighed, “Alright… That man?”

Poe pointed to who Kaydel had been talking to. The man had cut in to a couple dancing and said a few words to a dark-skinned man in a First Order uniform. The man held out an arm for a copper-haired beauty in a sleek glittery silver dress. It hugged her body in all the right ways, fitting her like a glove, but her skirt had a little swish to it.

The trio crossed to a wall where seven other men in First Order officer uniforms were gathered. All but the black man and a copper-skinned man – who took a moment to slap the black man on the butt – looked uncomfortable in the uniforms. The black and copper-skinned men looked like they had been born to wear the uniforms.

There were two men in the ground, but their outfits looked similar to, albeit a little less grand, than the man Kaydel had spoken to.

The man hooked an arm around the copper-haired beauty’s waist and her delighted laugh carried across the room. They had been approached by the very woman Poe had been talking to and the conversation appeared to be a little too comfortable.
“That’s Ben Solo,” Poe whispered.

Kaydel went perfectly stiff.

“Kylo Ren?” Snap’s jaw hung open. “Are you kidding?”

“We need to pull out right now,” Poe said, “before it gets worse.”

“Uh, Darling?” Kaydel whispered. “…It’s worse.”

Karé frowned, “How could it be worse?”

“It’s worse because that means that the First Order is already working with this company,” Jaina said. “I know business deals and politics. That body language they have – formal but comfortable – is clearly the type you display to someone you’ve done a deal with before. Oh, we have to get out of here before Ben recognizes Dameron or I.”

“Jaina,” Kaydel grabbed her arm as she tried to move for the door. “That’s not what I meant.”

“What? What do you…” Poe frowned, “Babe, what’s going on?”

She pointed to Kat, “That woman-”

“The head of the conference? Kat Sinon?”

“Uh huh,” Kaydel’s throat was dry. “…That’s my sister, Katha.”

The group stared at Kaydel in horror.

“I’m not joking,” she said quickly.

Poe sighed, “Fuck.”

“Are you positive?” Leia Organa’s voice came over the comm.

“I saw him with my own eyes,” Poe answered, pacing behind the couch of his and Kaydel’s hotel suite. “It’s Kylo Ren.”

As part of the guise, one of the most expensive suites had been rented for them, with Snap, Karé, and Jaina in a smaller adjoining room. Paige and Evan were two floors down in a standard. They weren’t allowed to come up to Poe and Kaydel’s room for fear of their connection being discovered.

“And the presenters of the seminar?” Diego asked.

“Absolutely tied to Connix Industries,” Kaydel said, watching Poe pace as she was seated on the couch next to Jaina. “I saw multiple members of my family. My sister, Katha, her husband, Telon, her daughter, Sage, my father, Timor, and my nephew, Dacken.”

“This is a problem,” Holdo sighed. “We did all of our checks properly?”

“There was absolutely nothing to suggest the First Order or Connix family would be involved,” Jaina frowned at the scar on her arm. The one she never allowed to be healed, her self decided punishment for her roles in the deaths of Felicity and Rey Rhiaon Skywalker. “I would never have come on the
mission if I’d known that bastard, Ben would be here. My apologies, General Organa.”

“Well, he was conceived out of wedlock, so not exactly an incorrect term,” Leia’s voice still didn’t sound pleased.

“Should we pull out?” Snap asked.

“No, it would be too suspicious now,” Leia replied. “And if the First Order is interested in these weapons, then I am too. We’re just going to have to be extra careful to keep Kaydel from her family and Poe and Jaina from Ben. We don’t want them recognized.”

“Plus I feel like there would be a lot of paperwork after I murdered Kylo Ren,” Poe said.

Absolute silence filled the room. Jokes about murdering members of the High Council of the First Order were the norm in the Resistance… but you didn’t joke about killing Ben Solo in front of Leia Organa. And even worse, it was clear that Poe was making no joke.

“Commander Dameron,” Leia never used his formal title unless he was in serious trouble, “suspicious or not, if you do not follow directives, I will pull you off this mission so fast your head will spin. You absolutely do not have permission to kill a Knight of Ren unless in appropriate, battle, self defense circumstances. Am I understood?”

All eyes turned to Poe.

“Understood,” he hung his head.

And yet the look on his face only made Kaydel worry.

Honestly, the only time I want to discuss Kylo Ren again is when he’s rotting in a prison cell.

- Poe Dameron’s Flight Log

“Want some company?” Kaydel asked an hour later as she tip toed onto the balcony.

Poe sighed. He had been out there for twenty minutes already, making a swift exit from the room the second the transmission to base had ended. The room felt so hot and suffocating. At least out there in the cool night air he could breathe.

“I’m alright, Kay,” Poe leaned against the balcony railing. He was met with a glorious view of the moon and stars over the vast ocean, a deep midnight blue reflecting down with twinkling pinpricks of stars far away. It was hard to tell where water met the sky.

“No, you’re not,” she joined him at the railing. Kaydel glanced to the side wall of the balcony separating their suite from the suite next door. White crosshatched wood made the wall and a voluminous plant of small pink flowers and hanging ivy provided the neighboring tenants their privacy. She sighed and gently grabbed his right bicep, “You’re no more alright than I am. I’m so freaked out right now, Poe. I don’t need you to be tough. I need you to be honest.”

“Honestly, I’m fine, Kaydel, really,” Poe shook her off. He paused, then turned his head to look at her. He winced as he saw her bowed head and dejected expression. Taking a deep breath, Poe
wrapped his arm around her waist and pulled her close, “It’s just… hard. It’s the first time I’ve really seen him since Rey died. You don’t understand what that little girl meant to me. To us.”

“Then make me understand,” she rested her head on his chest.

Poe sighed, “Rey was… I don’t know. In some ways I felt like she was my responsibility. Ben too. After my mom died, Luke, Leia, and Felicity all made sure to take care of me, so when I was old enough, I chose to thank them by caring for their own children. That summer I spent with the Skywalkers was one of the happiest times of my life. Far and away, one of my all-time favorite memories is Rey, Ben, and I assembling BB-8. Sure, Ben may have been an annoying pain in the ass, but he was in the way your little brother would be. We never said it out loud, but Ben and I were friends. And Rey…”

He struggled to find the words.

“She really was a ray of light. Sure, she had temper tantrums and whatnot, but I’ve never met someone who was such a stranger to hatred. She saw the best in people and did whatever it took to take care of people. Even when it was beyond her capabilities, she still tried to help. And Ben absolutely adored her. Called her Nightlight. He was there to hold her when she cried, lift her when she fell, and chase away the monsters who wanted to scare her… And then…”

Kaydel pressed her face closer against his chest, resting her cheek to his heart as Poe choked back a sob.

“And then he became the monster,” Poe couldn’t fight the tears anymore. Twelve years he had tried to bottle it up, but now the dam exploded. He had to voice the feelings he truly felt about Ben’s betrayal. “She was… She was dragged from her bed, Kay. In the middle of the night, a five-year-old was torn from the safety of her own bed and had men in masks try to cut her into pieces. That home we made so many memories in was burned to the ground. People who loved us, who protected us, who didn’t do anything wrong were slaughtered… And Ben made it all possible. He led them into Temple Village, he gave them the codes to the Skywalker house. Luke told us the passwords to lockdown the house and to reset the codes. Ben used the reset to trap Felicity and her daughter in the place that was supposed to be their sanctuary.”

There was nothing Kaydel could find to say to bring Poe comfort.

“I never hated Ben Solo,” Poe said slowly. “Not even was he was being an annoying prick. Not even when he cussed out Felicity in front of her own daughter. Not even when he killed Alyla Kene… but then he chased Rey into the woods and tried to murder her using a saber powered by a crystal he stole from her. He tried to murder her in cold blood. His five-year-old cousin who thought of him as her hero.”

Kaydel’s throat went dry and she too fought tears. She knew vaguely the story of Rey’s death, but now hearing the details and hearing them from a man who had loved that little girl, it was an unbearable tale.

“And then there’s what he did to Felicity,” Poe’s voice grew stronger, his fists tightening on the balcony rail. “He didn’t just shoot her in the head, Kay. He tortured her. Not metaphorically or hyperbolically. He legitimately tortured her. He hunted her down like a dog and tortured her for the whereabouts of her daughter. A daughter who died a horrific death in the wastes of Jakku, whose body will never be recovered… and I think I’m the reason why.”

“What?” Kaydel found her voice. “What are you talking about?”
“Digging a hole. I taught Rey that when she was in a situation she couldn’t change but was frustrated that she should dig a hole and scream in it. What if… what if she told Felicity? What if the reason Felicity thought to bury Rey was that she had dug that hole to scream? I’m the reason Rey’s body was lost!”

“No! No, you are not!” Kaydel firmly pulled him into her arms. “Don’t you dare think like that!”

“But I do all the time. I think about the things I could have done. Should have done. I think about how I should have cut out the Academy early to join the hunt for Rey and Felicity. What if I had shown up, and they had an extra person, so they decided to send me to check Jakku? What if I had found them? Saved them? What if I had done SOMETHING?”

“Stop it,” the tears were flowing from Kaydel’s eyes now.

“But I think about it all the time. I think about Felicity’s death. I wonder what Ben Solo could have done that was so cruel that it broke Luke Skywalker. I think about that last conversation with Luke. I know Kalonia spoke with him, but let’s be real, I was the last person to interact with Luke before he decided to just up and leave everything. What if I said something? What if I did something? What if it’s my fault?”

Kaydel grabbed the sides of his face and pulled his head down, “Look at me, Poe. None of it is your fault. Do you hear me? Do you understand? It wasn’t your fault.”

Poe closed his eyes and took a deep and shaky breath. He let the feeling of oxygen flowing in and out of his lungs as a way to cleanse his soul. He took another breath, then gently removed Kaydel’s hands from his face, and bowed his forehead against hers.

“I know,” his voice was calmer, stronger, but still held a slight tremor, “but still I have to live everyday with the thought that somehow I could have changed everything… I loved Ben, Kaydel. He was like my annoying little brother. And that’s why I hate him now, because he destroyed the people who loved him… all for a vanity project. I want to kill him, Kaydel.”

“Don’t exaggerate.”

“I’m not. I want to kill him. My blood boils at the thought that he is somewhere in this building. I want to hunt him down the way he hunted down Felicity and put a blast through his temple as easily as he did through hers.”

“Poe.”

“I won’t do it, though,” he said. “I know that. I know I’m a better man than that, but I want it. The same way I want to break Captain Phasma’s neck for murdering my mother. I won’t kill him, Kay, but Ben Solo is dead to me. No, Ben may not have cut Rey Rhiaon Skywalker down with his lightsaber, but as far as I’m concerned, he murdered that little girl in cold blood. And I will never forgive him for that.”

Kaydel took a deep breath and closed her eyes, processing all that Poe had said.

He looked down at her and his face fell. His darkest thoughts had been laid bare at her feet. Could she love a man whose heart held such darkness?

“Kaydel,” he whispered, “I’m sorry if-”

“Don’t,” she put a finger to his lips. “I understand. It’s alright, just promise me that you’ll never act on these feelings. It’s one thing to think them, but another to act on them.”
A smile quirked his lips, “Are you saying I don’t have your permission to murder Kylo Ren?”

“That’s exactly what I’m saying,” Kaydel smiled.

He stroked her cheek and felt the last of his tears drying, “Then I promise you, until the day I am granted your permission to do so, I will not murder Kylo Ren… but I do request permission to punch him in the face a lot if given the chance.”

“By all means.”

“Then we have a deal,” he pulled her in for a kiss.

Two years later when Kaydel Ko Connix held a beaten, bloodied, and broken Poe Dameron in her arms, his wounds a consequence of being the victim of Kylo Ren’s torture… she would grant Poe her permission to kill Ben Solo.

They stayed outside for another hour just talking, trying to collect themselves to face the others again. Some of their discussion was as heavy as Poe’s confession, but for the most part they kept things lighthearted.

It was just as Kaydel had convinced Poe he was calm enough to go back inside the suite when they heard a voice from the next balcony over.

“I just can’t believe the Supreme Leader put me on such a humiliating mission!” Kylo Ren exclaimed.

“You need to calm down,” Sasa Ren urged. “It’s not that humiliating. In fact, I think this will be a lot of fun.”

“Fun, Sasa? This isn’t fun! Let Hux wine and dine the elite. Or send Captain Anthea! It is her family after all.”

“Excuse me, I am not telling Alecta Anthea to do this mission. That woman scares me more than Tara.”

Kaydel’s jaw dropped, “Is that—”

“Oh, shit!” Poe mumbled. Very slowly and strategically he tiptoed over to the crosshatched wood partition and peered through the flora. A few seconds later he hissed a series of very vulgar Yavinese swears.

“Poe,” Kaydel chided, her voice a whisper. “Keep it down!”

“I don’t believe this,” Poe groaned. “It’s Ben Solo and the redhead woman. Of all the suites they could be staying in. Kay, I don’t know if I can restrain myself if we’re next door.”

“You have to. I’m not letting you go to jail for murder because of rooming arrangements.” Kaydel took a deep breath, “Besides, think of the opportunity. We’re right next door to them. This will make spying so much easier.”

“Spying? Kay, we’re not spying on them. We’re going to get back inside and switch rooms as quickly as possible. It’s too dangerous for Jaina and I to be so close to Ben Solo. We can’t draw attention.”
“And switching rooms in the middle of the night would draw massive attention. Poe, please.”

He conceded, “Fine, but no spying tonight unless he get a reason. I just want to get you inside away from him. Please, Kay.”


“Deal.”

They were about to pull open the balcony door when one sentence stopped them in their tracks.

“I just wish I could be supervising the building of the new base,” Kylo said.

Kaydel winced and Poe looked like he wanted to punch something. For safety measures, the Resistance was not required to stay near First Order personnel during spy missions if it wasn’t part of the directive, except for in the cases of the three B’s. Bombing, battles, and bases. Due to the importance of those three items, if First Order personnel mentioned any of those topics, the Resistance fighters were required to stay and listen to the rest of the conversation in an attempt to gather as much information as possible.

With a sigh, Poe nodded to Kaydel. She took off her earring, activated the recording device, and planted it into the balcony partition for the closest reach to record the conversation.

As she planted the device, she peered through the ivy to get a look at the scene next door. Sure enough, there was General Leia Organa’s son taking to the redhead called Sasa. But it was a little more than talking; it appeared they were in some sort of embrace.

“Hey,” Kaydel whispered, “what information do we have on the redhead woman?”

Poe shrugged, “I don’t think we have any. I don’t have any off hand other than he hung off Kylo’s arm at the reception, and a black Stormtrooper was always one step behind her. Why?”

“They’re in an embrace, I think they might be lovers or something.”

“Lovers?” Poe let out a laugh that was bit too loud. “Ben Solo has a lover. Sure, yeah. I believe it. Wonder how much he’s paying her.”

“Poe!” Kaydel scolded.

“Oh, come on, he’s a murderer,” Poe rolled his eyes. “Anyway, do we even have to listen to this? They mentioned a new base once.”

Kaydel narrowed her eyes, “Do not let your feud affect your work, Poe. I don’t care what’s between you and Solo. What’s between us and Holdo is more pertinent to me, and I don’t need her to get anymore ammo. We’re recording this conversation.”

Poe and Kaydel were in a little bit of luck. Earlier that day, Poe, Snap, and Karé had played a few rounds of Sabacc on the balcony, so there was a deck of cards and a pair of dice on the table. They settled in the deck chairs and played a few rounds, vaguely listening to Kylo and Sasa periodically mentioning some new base, but mostly Kylo bitching about having to be on this mission while Hux was back on said new base doing his work for Kylo.

After about half an hour, Poe had managed to talk Kaydel into turning it into a round of strip Sabacc. He was running out of money for Kaydel to win from him, so he figured he might as well give her a
show if she was going to beat him every right. Poe was in the middle of taking off his shirt to the 
enthusiasm of Kaydel when the conversation from next door took a turn he didn’t like.

“Look, Master Kylo,” they couldn’t see Sasa’s hand running suggestively over Kylo Ren’s chest, 
“you need to relax. Sure, you don’t want to be here, but at least you’re here with me. No pressures to 
interrupt us. No Tara trying to murder me again.”

“That is a plus. She’s getting more desperate to get rid of you. I’m surprised she hasn’t taken out a 
mob hit yet.”

“Give it time. Now, come on. Relax. Let’s have some fun while we’re here. Nice dinners, some 
dancing, maybe a few spa trips.”

“I heard there’s a theatre in this resort,” Kylo said. “Maybe I can get them to perform you some of 
that opera you love.”

“You are the sweetest man alive,” Sasa cooed.

Poe rolled his eyes, “I highly disagree.”

“Shh,” Kaydel hushed.

“Take a nice little break from all the pressures and the politics,” Sasa continued.

“Well, not exactly,” Kylo said. “Hux wants me to do up a report of all the things we still need to get 
for the new base. From personnel to materials. Ugh, it’s going to be a nightmare, and you just know 
I’ll forget to list something that Hux will throw in my face.”

Poe and Kaydel’s eyes brightened.

“Personnel and materials?” she mouthed.

“Jackpot!” he lipped back as they high fived.

“Well, how about this?” Sasa offered, “You tell me the list now and I can see what you’re 
forgetting.”

“You’re going to stand there and listen to a boring list I have to make?” Kylo said.

“Of course not. I was thinking of… kneeling.”

“Kneeling?” Kylo repeated.

Poe’s eyes widened, “Kneeling?”

Sasa gave a mischievous chuckle, “How about while you list all your items, I do something to relax you? That way it’s truly a vacation? What do you say?”

“What do I say?” Kylo grinned darkly and pushed her down, “I say get kneeling.”

She smirked up at him, “And I say get listing.”

So they did… much to the absolute horror of Poe Dameron.

“I am not hearing this,” Poe tried covering his ears, looking as pale as the snow on Hoth. "I am not listening to Kylo Ren getting a blowjob and telling his probably paid lover that he's going to bend
her over the railing and take her, Berd and Doxl be damned. This is not happening!"

“Poe,” Kaydel grabbed his hand. She looked him in the eyes, “Go.”

“What?”

“Get out of here,” she urged. “Someone has to stay with the recording device to ensure the machine is working. Its placement isn’t discovered or compromised, and to remove it when needed. But only one person needs to do that. I can do that for you, Poe. I’ll stay and… and listen. You go.”

“No, Kay,” Poe said. “I couldn’t ask that of you.”

“It’s okay. I want to do this for you.”

“Why?”

“Because I love you too much to make you listen. Now, go.”

Poe nodded and got to his feet. He scurried to the balcony door, but stopped when he reached it. He looked back at Kaydel and sighed.

“What are you doing?” Kaydel frowned as Poe returned to his seat at the table, the moans from next door getting louder.

“I’m staying,” Poe plunked down in his chair. He pulled on his discarded shirt and picked up his Sabacc cards.

Kaydel blinked, “But Poe, you hate Kylo Ren. This is a nightmare for you. How could you sit here and listen to this?”

“Oh, Kylo!” Sasa’s voice rang out.

Poe shuddered as Kylo gave a drawn-out moan, “Because… I love you too much to make you sit through this alone.”

Kaydel smiled and reached for his hand, “Oh, Poe. You are the sweetest.”

“Don’t touch me.”

“Sorry.”

“Just,” Poe took a deep breath and winced as another of Ben Solo’s moans carried to him, “deal me a new hand of cards.”

Forty-five minutes later, Poe Dameron slammed closed the door of the balcony behind himself and Kaydel.

“You guys were out there a while,” Snap said. “Jaina went to bed.”

“Great,” Poe replied through tightly gritted teeth.

Karé looked up from her HoloNovel and noticed how awkward and flushed the pair was, “Did you two have sex on the balcony?”
Kaydel stifled a giggle.

Poe just looked pissed, “I never have and never will have sex on a balcony for the rest of my life.”

Karé looked at Snap in confusion, “What’s going on?”

“Kylo Ren is in the room next to us,” Kaydel explained. “We overheard him and that girl – Sasa, he called her – talking about some military information, so I used my earring to collect a recording. The problem is that Poe and I had to stay out there the entire conversation to make sure everything went okay.”

Snap frowned, “Alright…”

“They were having the conversation during sex.”

Karé and Snap winced.

“So, send this off to Tharel and Tico to process, because I am never listening to Ben Solo have sex again,” Poe threw the earring on the coffee table. “Now if anyone needs me, I need to take ten thousand scalding showers.”

The others just laughed as Poe stalked off into the fresher.

“I guess we’ll need to find a way into the room next do and rig it for audio,” Karé said. “I’ll talk to Tharel and Tico, and we’ll see what we can do.”

“I can’t believe it,” Snap shook his head. “Not only do we run into the General’s son at the conference, but we rent the room next to his… and have to listen to him have sex.”

“Yeah,” Kaydel nervously scratched her neck. “And you know what the worst part is?”

“What?” Karé asked.

“I’m actually kind of turned on.” Kaydel glanced towards the fresher, “I’m going to go see if Poe wants some company in the shower.”

Snap and Karé laughed as Kaydel scampered off to the fresher, a red tinge to her cheeks.

“So,” Snap slung an arm around his wife, “how bad do you think that’s going to end?”

“I’m going to say pretty bad,” Karé grinned.

As if on cue, Poe Dameron’s voice rang through the suite, “FOR THE LOVE OF GOD, KAYDEL, OUT!”

And Snap and Karé laughed as the very embarrassed Kaydel shot out the fresher not two seconds later.

“IT just received word from Nixrye,” Tara announced to the two men gathered secretly in her office. “Everything’s set. By this time next week, Sasa Ren will no longer be a problem.”

“Good,” Hux crossed his arms, “this girl was never going to make it in a political climate such as the one we have in the First Order.”
“You’re just saying that because she won’t sleep with you,” Cern smirked.

“You're sleeping your way to the top is a time-honoured woman’s tradition of getting power.” Hus glanced at Tara, “You won’t quarrel over that?”

“Why would I? It’s true,” she said. “However, Sasa is already sleeping her way to stay on top. Your plan was never going to work, Armitage. We need to reduce her level, not raise her up higher.”

“Which is exactly why I think we should be going with my plan,” Cern snapped. “With one move, I can take down Sasa, Kylo, Wiln, and one more person.”

Tara narrowed her eyes, “Betray me, and I cut your throat, Cern. I even know which knife to use.”

“I believe it,” Hux muttered. “Honestly, Tara, do you truly think we can trust… this person? We’re talking about criminals.”

Tara just smiled, “Yes, Hux, I do believe I can trust her. In fact, I’m the only person in the galaxy who can trust her.”

Hux raised an eyebrow, “Not her husband?”

“Oh, he’s the last person who can.” Tara looked between the two of them, “So, Gentlemen, do we have an agreement?”

Cern and Hux traded a look. Cern sighed and nodded. Hux flicked on the holo projector.

“Have you finished discussing?” an older, but highly groomed woman sat on a luxurious couch in the office of her private yacht. A signet ring hung proudly on her finger, and no matter what outfit she wore, she never hid the brand on her wrist declaring her affiliation with one of the most dangerous organizations in the galaxy… one she had claimed for herself exactly forty years ago.

“We’ll take the offer, Lady Qi’ra,” Hux announced.

“Good,” Qi’ra said. “I knew Tara would bring you around. She’s my…”

“Top Lieutenant?” Tara finished.

Qi’ra grinned, “Just promise you won’t do what Dryden Vos’ top lieutenant did to him.”

“Don’t ask me to make a promise I can’t keep.”

“Good girl.” Qi’ra turned her gaze back to Hux, “Do you have any concerns, General?”

“How do I know I can trust you?”

“You can’t. The sooner you learn that, the easier our dealings will be.”

“With all due respect, Lady Qi’ra, I’ve had bad dealings with your husband in the past. If Ores is in anyway involved-”

“Laertes doesn’t even have a whiff of this,” Qi’ra assured him. “He’s away dealing with the Guavian Death Gang if you must know.”

“Attempting another acquisition?” Tara asked.

In Qi’ra’s reign over Crimson Dawn, she had absorbed seven various notable syndicates and gangs
into the fold of Crimson Dawn. It had been no less than marriage to Syndicate Leader, Laertes Ores that had sealed the deal between Crimson Dawn and Black Sun.

Surprisingly, the marriage was a happy one… well, as happy as a pair of backstabbing crime bosses who were always one miscalculated move away from murdering their spouse could be together.

Still, the man knew how to make her laugh.

“A very promising one,” Qi’ra replied. “So, are we agreed?”

“On one condition,” Hux said. “If things go south, the Supreme Leader must not find out that we were the ones to hire you.”

“Crimson Dawn won’t so much as mention your name during the operation,” Qi’ra said. “You have my word. Trust me.”

“I thought I was not to trust you?” Hux countered.

“Oh, good,” Qi’ra smiled at Tara, “he does learn.”

“Slowly, but perhaps has more merit than we give him,” Tara shrugged. “So, you’ll deal with the redhead?”

“Don’t spare another thought for her, My Dear,” Something softened in Qi’ra’s eyes, “You know, you simply must come visit me soon, Tara. It’s been far too long. Laertes and I have so missed you.”

Tara gave a small, genuine laugh, “I’ll see what I can swing, Mother.”

Chapter End Notes

Coming Up Next Chapter…

Bad Feelings About This
In the looming shadow of Crimson Dawn’s plan, Poe and Kaydel try to avoid the faces from their pasts. But the inevitable collision will change everything when Kylo decides to taunt Poe by finally revealing what happened to Felicity Rhiaon’s body. Meanwhile, Evan unknowingly sends a certain recording to Leia without properly screening it.

Yes, I know Tara had the whole line of my backstory doesn’t matter, but when I watched Solo I got major Sasa and Tara vibes from Qi’ra’s relationship with Vos, and I thought that Han would be having basically war flashbacks to Qi’ra and Vos when he saw Ben with the girls. Then I offhandedly joked to a friend about what if Tara was Qi’ra’s daughter, started thinking about it, pitched it to a few friends, received great feedback on the idea, and went screw it. Ben Solo lost his virginity to the daughter of the woman Han lost his virginity to.

And yes, both Han and Ben will eventually discover this fact… it will be glorious.
Also, no, Han is not Tara’s father. Laertes is. I know there’s a lot of jokes about brothers and sisters making out, but we’re not going all Game of Thrones up here with Kylo/Tara stuff.

Final note, as I was writing this chapter in which Poe pretends to be a guy named Kane, I learned that Oscar Isaac has also played a character named Kane in the movie Annihilation. …In which his wife is played by Natalie Portman. So there’s apparently a movie that was shot at the exact same time as TLJ (Oscar would literally film one movie, have lunch, then go film the other which was in the same studio) in which Poe Dameron and Padmé Amidala bang.

…That’s an image I won’t get rid of anytime soon.
**Bad Feelings About This**

Chapter Summary

Evan sends Leia a message he shouldn't, Finn gets a couple's massage with Kylo Ren, and Timor Connix tries to get Poe to dump Kaydel for his daughter, Kaydel.

Chapter Notes

Reminder that in this story the timeline is a little bit fluid putting scenes in order that fits best thematically and not necessarily in the order they happened. The Yavin IV scene takes place about a day before the scenes occurring directly before and after it.

Since people seemed to like the Oscar Isaac fact in the last chapter, I’m going to tell you another one. I’m working on a Robin Hood series that I plan to actually publish on Amazon (let me know if you are interested in hearing more about it) so I’ve been watching different Robin Hood movies. I knew that Oscar Isaac was in the Russell Crowe version, but what I didn’t know was that his first scene involves him in bed having a fun time with a girl who does not look unlike Kaydel. It gave me all the Poydel hilarity.

Oh, and Max von Sydow aka Lor San Tekka is in it too and might have scenes with Oscar… I got too distracted by naked Oscar Isaac to pay attention to anything else. The boy is as cut as I describe Poe to be.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

---

**The Long Way Home**

Chapter Fifty-Two

Bad Feelings About This

The morning after the balcony incident, Sasa had seen Kaydel exiting the neighboring hotel suite the same time Sasa was departing hers with Kylo. Kaydel very quickly shoved Poe – who had been following her out – back into the room and locked the door, pretending like it was nothing at all.

Sasa recognized her as the girl Kylo had spoken to the previous night and was quick to strike up a conversation as she hung off the not even pretending to be bored Kylo’s arm. Apparently Kylo had taken a liking to Kaydel and thought she could be a potential contact – read, could help bankroll the First Order – and encouraged Sasa to spend time with Kaydel. This resulted in an invitation for Kaydel and Karé – a bodyguard for protection wasn’t an unreasonable request when alone with the
First Order – to join the Knights of Ren for breakfast.

And for the life of her, Kaydel could not think of one excuse to turn it down.

In fact, poor Kaydel found herself practically attached to Sasa’s hip all that week. She had been forced to do everything from having multiple lunches with Sasa – and sometimes Kylo and the other Knights of Ren – to taking sightseeing tours with Sasa, to even having a girls’ day at the hotel spa. Thankfully the First Order was paying for everything, and as awkward as it was to be invited to a dual couple’s massage with Kylo and Sasa, it was a hell of a spa. Her manicure left her nails looking so fabulous that Karé insisted on getting one while watching Kaydel and Sasa at the spa the next day.

Poe had avoided the hallway when Kaydel ran in to Sasa, and he managed to avoid Sasa and Kylo through a number of increasingly unconvincing excuses. The worst moment had been when Kaydel showed up for the dual couple’s massage sans Poe – Karé basically sewn to her side as firmly as Kaydel was to Sasa’s. After “Kane’s abandonment” at the massage, Kaydel was fairly certain Sasa thought her “husband” was having an affair with his assistant, who Kaydel liked to talk about, but again neither she nor Kylo had yet to see.

Like Jaina Fel was going to willingly come within a mile of Ben Solo or his arm candy of the week.

Then to make things worse, at the dual couple’s massage, Karé couldn’t take the extra spot of massage for fear of not being able to adequately protect Kaydel. Sure, she was tempted, but Diego Nalto and Aletha Kymeri would string her up by the ankles upon return to Dqar for pulling that.

So Sasa decided to not let the extra spot go to waste, and offered it to her favorite bodyguard, some soldier named FN-2187.

Two years later, Poe Dameron, Rose Tico, and Rey Rhiaon Skywalker would laugh at the story about that time Kaydel inadvertently got a couple’s massage with Finn.

While Kaydel spied on the First Order, Poe was working the Connix family for information with Jaina and Snap. He was as charming as ever, creeping right into the hearts of Katha and particularly Timor. He wouldn’t admit it out loud but there was a small part of him pleased that Kaydel’s father had taken such a liking to him. Timor was requesting him by name for as many meals as Sasa did Kaydel. Poe’s favorite moment had to be the day he and Timor went golfing and Timor told him that if Poe wasn’t already married, he’d offer him a daughter.

Kaydel had a good laugh that night in bed, nestled in Poe’s arms, waiting to recount her awkward massage to him.

Poe was strangely interested in if Ben Solo was good looking shirtless.

“He’s surprisingly well cut,” Kaydel admitted, “but the man is freakishly broad. The other guy though… you probably should watch your behaviour. I might be interested.”

Poe did not like that answer.

Finn didn’t either two years later.

---

FATHIER: If you told me I could only see one creature in the galaxy, it would be a fathier. Someday I want to see a fathier race! I wouldn’t even bet – I’d just watch!
Evan and Paige would survey the goings on in the hotel, particularly Berd and Doxl Ren, or just show up wherever Poe or Kaydel’s groups needed extra backup.

As much as Evan preferred joining Poe’s team, he was starting to admit he liked trips to the spa.

But the best thing in Paige’s opinion was the day she found that someone in the Resistance had anonymously paid for Paige to attend a day session at the fathier stable learning to ride and care for the creatures. It was handwaved away with some excuse that Berd Ren was dragging FN-2187 – Sasa was otherwise occupied that day by a certain Ben Solo – and the soldier called Marks to the stables to check out the creatures as potential resources for the First Order. Surely Evan and Paige just had to go keep an eye on them.

Paige thought that FN-2187 was one hell of a fathier rider, and she was so thankful that someone had made one of her childhood dreams come true.

Two months later, Leia would ask about it while going over Holdo’s financial contributions to the Resistance. Holdo would simply answer that she had heard the Tico sisters go on about it so much that she just had to. She then swore Leia to secrecy. After all, she had a reputation to maintain. She couldn’t let Poe Dameron and Kaydel Ko Connix think she actually was a little charmed by them and their friends.

_A little._

But it wasn’t all fun and luxury, each group had their fair share of difficulties whether it was Paige and Evan being locked out of most of operation due to their “lesser wealth status” or the way Kaydel’s conscious wrestled with wining and dining the First Order.

For Poe, the hardest part of his mission were all the times he had to deal with Dacken Tokani, Kaydel’s nephew. The first Kaydel Connix’s husband was named Rogen Tokani and apparently was running the finance department of Kation Defense Holdings, and Kation turned out to be an anagram of Kaydel I’s married surname. Dacken had an internship as a way to get clean after his addiction to spice, granting the young man a second chance at life.

He also just so happened to be one of the nephews who once upon a time _set Kaydel’s hair on fire._

Poe had playact, laughing and smiling along with the Connix family. He could only do it by pretending they weren’t horrible monsters to Kaydel and Poe was seriously trying to win them over as Kaydel’s boyfriend. But with Dacken, it was different. He had to struggle to pretend every moment that he didn’t want to just throw him headfirst through a plate glass window.

Admittedly, while golfing he had managed to “_accidentally_” knock Dacken into a pond. Kaydel was surprisingly unhappy about that.

To be fair, Poe could see Dacken was trying to be a good guy. A recovering spice addict, he was using the family business to get clean and back on his feet. Timor told “Kane Nilar” in a whisper that Dacken was in intense tri-weekly therapy sessions.

But Poe could never forget how scared Kaydel was of letting her hair down. He couldn’t stop thinking about it. How was Dacken involved in the incident? Was it his idea? Was it the brainchild
of his brother? Did he make sure she was sound asleep? Did he light the match? Did he put the flame to Kaydel’s beautiful golden hair?

Kaydel had talked about the incident one time, and that was it. She wouldn’t give Poe any further answers. He had no idea how Dacken had reacted to what he had done. Poe didn’t know if Dacken ever apologized or expressed remorse. He didn’t know who had called for help or how long Kaydel’s hair had been on fire.

What he did know was how it felt to have your hair on fire. He could remember vividly that accident that almost took his life, that had turned his face to meat, that had singed every hair from his head.

And he could never forgive someone for doing that to Kaydel.

That was why he and Kaydel seemed to have the same conversation every night.

“I’m going to punch him.”

“No, Poe, don’t.”

“Fine, you want to punch him?”

“No, I’m not going to punch him!”

“Then, I’m going to punch him.”

“Poe, I said no.”

“Kay, one of us is going to punch him. So if it’s not you, then I’m going to punch him.”

“Poe,” she sighed, “please… you don’t need to do this.”

He blinked, “Kay… he set your hair on fire.”

Somehow that was never a good enough argument for Kaydel… but Poe knew why. He knew that punching Dacken would cause a big enough scene to inevitably reveal Kaydel to her family. And that was her biggest fear on this mission. Not of being discovered, not of Kylo and Poe coming face to face, not of being captured, tortured, or killed.

Kaydel was terrified of facing her family.

One week into their trip, Evan Tharel was in the middle of processing the recorded audio they had gotten from Kylo and Sasa’s balcony. Apparently, Kylo was worried his room was bugged – which it was not as they had yet to find a way into the room undetected – so whenever he needed to speak of something confidential he went to a place that wasn’t bugged, the balcony – which they had been able to bug.

Evan was busy going through the files to double check audio quality while Paige was off taking a
shower. He was watching the door as he listened to the audio, vaguely wondering if he should go offer Paige company in her shower when he noticed his comm flashing.

“Bey Five,” Evan answered.

Bey – after Shara Bey – was the Resistance’s standard undercover code name. Before the mission, Poe had gotten into a very heated argument with Diego Nalto that he should be called Bey Three instead of Bey One as he was the third member of Shara’s family. Diego’s hands full with preparations for the big upcoming event and trying to figure out how many people could fit in the mess hall of D’Qar’s base, Diego had snapped and told Poe to shut up before he got uninvited from the event, which would massively piss Kaydel off.

“How are things going, Bey Five?” Leia Organa asked from the comm.

“Pretty good. Bey Two managed to be invited to lunch by Sasa Ren again.”

“Good, I like that she’s made a contact and connection with Sasa. Have you been able to build a profile on her yet? I want an accurate record of all Knights of Ren.”

Evan’s lips quirked; more accurately General Organa wanted to know everything about the girl who according to the team’s reports was so very clearly sleeping with Leia’s son.

“We’ll send it along tonight,” Evan chuckled lightly. “I must say, it’s been all so nerve-racking for Bey Two. Did we tell you she had a couple’s massage with Kylo Ren?”

“No, but I greatly look forward to that report.”

“It will be in tonight’s information batch.”

“Good,” Leia said. “What about the audio files?”

“Just double checking the quality as we speak.”

“Oh, don’t worry about the quality, just send it forward to me now.”

Evan blinked, “Are you sure, General?”

He was actually unaware of the content of the very first recording, instead Snap had just given him a weird look, a chuckle, and warned him to listen to it last.

“I’m positive,” Leia replied. “Besides, my workload’s a little light today. It will give me something to do.”

Alright then,” Evan worked at his computer. “Sending them now.”

A minute or so passed.

“Received them,” Leia declared. “Thank you, Bey Five.”

“You are very welcome.”

He had no idea what he had just sent her.
C-3PO was busy with a report from one of his spy network droids when he processed something in the utmost corner of his visual matrix. Princess Leia had a listening device on, and the longer she listened to her present audio, the more intensely did his photo receptors register the emotion of utmost horror on her face.

Suddenly in a very uncharacteristic display, she tore the listening device from her head and literally threw them down on the workstation.

“Amilyn!” she called out desperately, causing a few people to look up in worry.

Amilyn Holdo made quick work of getting to Princess Leia’s side, “What is it, General?”

Princess Leia sounded very shaken, “Amilyn, I need you to finish this audio report for me. I can’t… I can’t listen to it personally.”

Vice Admiral Holdo frowned, “Why is that, General?”

“It’s an audio recording of Kylo Ren.”

Sympathy on the face of Vice Admiral Holdo registered in Threepio’s databanks.

“Leia, I understand,” Vice Admiral Holdo said kindly, “and I know that it is a conflict of interest with you. But I’ve been briefed on the magnitude of this information. It’s important that you as Head of the Resistance be the one to listen to it.”

“Amilyn, I don’t think you understand-”

“A new base, Leia. We can get a jump on them before they even know. What could be so wrong about you listening to your son divulge that information?”

“Because he divulges that information in the middle of having sex with some woman called Sasa Ren,” Princess Leia said bluntly.

The entire Command Center fell silent.

Vice Admiral Holdo blinked at Princess Leia, and then quickly picked up the listening device.

“I’ll finish that for you, Leia.”

“Thank you, Amilyn.”

Princess Leia immediately exited the room, and very slowly the Command Center resumed normal activities.

Most peculiar, Threepio decided. He had heard the sounds of sexual intercourse many times in his programming history. From Captain Solo and Princess Leia, to Master Luke and Miss Rhiaon, and even Master Ani and Mistress Padmé as Master Luke had managed to restore Threepio’s wiped memories about a year before his disappearance.

Threepio just couldn’t understand why Princess Leia thought the sounds of her son having sexual intercourse were so sickening.

Humans were quite odd creatures.
Why the hell would you send that to Leia?” Poe Dameron exclaimed as they entered the ballroom. It was finally the day of Katha’s big presentation.

“I didn’t know you had that kind of recording!” Evan shot back. “Why didn’t you tell me?”

“I told Thon to tell you.” Poe eyed Snap, “Thon did tell you, right?”

Snap chuckled nervously, “I may have only hinted at it.”

The group groaned and Karé smacked her husband upside the head.

Kathy was hanging on Poe’s arm, talking with Paige. She and Evan were able to walk in with the others because there were so many people entering the ballroom at once that they blended in. Jaina excused herself to go get the information packages that Dacken and Sage – Katha’s daughter – were handing out.

Suddenly, Paige’s eyes widened, “First Order.”

Everyone’s heads snapped in the direction Paige was watching. Sure enough, Kylo, Berd, Doxl, and Sasa were heading straight towards them with their eight Stormtroopers following behind.

Kylo was in a smart looking charcoal grey business casual jacket and crisp black shirt, pants, and boots. His lightsaber hung from a belt very clearly as a warning to everyone. Berd and Doxl in their regular black Knight of Ren outfits – admittedly not as dramatic as Kylo’s – looked quite out of place next to him and Sasa.

Sasa was in a rather stunning seafoam green dress, the fabric of her sweetheart neckline crisscrossing in a complicated sewing feat that had taken her three days to get just right. Snoke had allowed her to wear colours other than black, grey, and brown for this mission and she was damn well going to take advantage of it.

“I think his girlfriend dressed him,” Kaydel muttered.

“Fuck, he’s heading right towards us,” Poe whispered in a panic.

“What do we do?” Evan asked.

Without a word of warning, Poe grabbed Evan and Paige, yanked them slightly away from the group, then spun Evan around, pinned him against the wall so Poe’s back was facing the group, and started talking to Evan and Paige about opening a zoo.

“And I will need good veterinarians like you two to take care of my animals,” Poe spoke in such a thick, deep Yavin II accent that Diego Nalto would slap him if he heard it. “Just think of all the children who would come and see.”

“Forgive me, Mister Nilar,” Evan did his best to inflect a prim and proper Coruscanti accent. He sounded more Bail Organa than Grand Moff Tarkin. “But Liin and I did not study for years to work in a zoo.”

“Dania!” Sasa greeted with a happy call and a sudden hug.

“Oh, hello, Sasa,” Kaydel sputtered as she reluctantly returned the hug. She nodded to Ben when Sasa broke the hug, “Master Kylo.”
“Mrs. Nilar,” Kylo nodded. He glanced at Poe, his face not so much twitching at his uncharacteristic long black locks, “So this must be the husband we’ve heard so much about. Hello, I’m Ky-”

“Not now! I’m busy!” Poe held out a hand to shush him, not turning his head in the slightest. He laid on the accent even thicker… if that was possible, “Now, tell me, what is so horrible about zoos?”

“Well, have you heard about the way they treat Fathiers?” Paige countered.

“Yes, but that is a racing track. It would be a very humane operation this zoo.”

Kylo stared at Poe, his mouth still opened to form the word he had been cut off at. He looked like he wasn’t quite sure what had just happened. It had been a while since someone waved him off so easily.

“Sorry,” Kaydel gave a sheepish smile. “You know how they can get with business deals. Kane’s wanted to open a zoo ever since he was a young man and now with the kids he’s become obsessed. It’ll be Mateo’s fifth birthday present if Kane has his way.”

“An admirable goal,” Sasa cuddled up on Kylo’s arm.

Kylo closed his mouth but still looked stunned.

“Do you have any children together?” Poe grinned but still didn’t turn.

Oh, he loved that awkward silence he caused.

“Um, well, no,” Sasa cleared her throat, looking suddenly like she wanted to be anywhere but there. “But maybe someday… someday soon.”

“Hopefully,” Kylo nodded.

Kaydel raised an eyebrow. Now there was something to put in the report.

For a minute there was silence and Poe could feel Kylo’s eyes on the back of his head. Sure, Poe had green contacts and a beard, but he still didn’t trust Ben Solo not to recognize him.

Then he realized what the silence was for… Ben was searching in the Force for Poe’s Force Signature. And there was nothing Poe could do to stop him.

Kylo focused on the myriad of colours. The vets had some sort of pink and red colours, he didn’t pause long enough at the bodyguards to specify their colours, and Dania had a soft orange… that of an orange blossom.

And her husband had an orange too. A strong, bright orange, almost like the colour of…

A cerise Signature slammed into his.

“Sasa,” Kylo hissed. “What are you doing?”

“It’s rude to pick through the colours and minds of our new friends,” Sasa chastised softly while giving the others an everything is okay smile. “That’s not the way you make business partners.”

Kylo opened his mouth to argue, but then considered it, “Huh, I guess you’re right. My apologies.”

“No problem,” Kaydel said quickly.
“Think nothing of it,” Poe still wouldn’t turn around.

“You know,” Kylo leaned in to Sasa, “in all her years as my right hand, Tara’s never stopped me from doing that before.”

“Is that so?” Sasa’s voice was very measured.

“Yeah.” He moved so close his breath was hot on her ear, “I guess that makes you better at this than her.”

Sasa couldn’t wipe the grin off her face, “Oh, you are so being rewarded for that tonight.”

As the pair laughed, Paige noticed that the black bodyguard nearest Sasa quickly lowered his head.

“Sorry about us,” Sasa grinned at the group. “He’s terrible and a work in progress for me.”

“Trust me,” Kaydel smiled, “mine puts me through the ringer on a daily basis.”

“Why do you still keep him around?” Sasa teased.

“Well, the kids would ask questions if I didn’t, plus he looks really good with his shirt off.”

“Thank you, Darling,” Poe said dryly.

“Anytime,” Kaydel replied.

Kylo frowned at the choice of words.

Sasa looked to Kylo and bumped him with her hip, “Well, we were wondering if you lot wanted to sit with us during the presentation? We’ve done many transactions with Connix Industries. We could give you some insight.”

Kaydel bit her lip and glanced at Poe.

“Thank you,” Poe said stiffly, “but we’ll draw our own conclusion.”

“Oh, but I must insist,” Sasa pushed. “They are truly a wonderful company, plus I don’t want to get stuck next to the Prince of Averna again. He always stares down my top.”

Kylo scowled, “Sasa, always tell me if he does. I warned him last time I’d break his wrist if he ever did it again.”

The Resistance group had nothing to say to that.

“Well, if you’ll excuse me,” Evan cleared his throat, “but my associate and I must be going.”

“Lucky bastards,” Snap muttered as Evan and Paige made their escape.

Poe dared to turn his head for two seconds to kiss Kaydel on the cheek, and then put his back to Kylo again to speak to Karé.

“I’m going to go see what’s taking Artora so long with that information packet,” Poe said. “Keep Dania safe, and get us a good seat.”

Kaydel glared at Poe’s back as he left with Snap. She knew it was best for Poe to get away from Ben Solo as quickly as possible…but she was still going to get Jessika to kick his ass for leaving her
alone with the Knights of Ren with only Karé for backup.

Admittedly, Karé was excellent back up, but it was the principle of the thing.

“Now,” Sasa turned her attention back to Kaydel, “please, come sit with us.”

Kaydel gave what could only be classified as a whimper.

Then came something that was both amazing and horrifying.

The good news was that someone decided to interrupt their conversation.

The bad news was that someone was her father.

“Masters Ren,” Timor Connix greeted, his son-in-law, Telon Sindal – Katha’s husband – following. “It’s so good to see you all again.”

As he shook hands with Kylo, Sasa, Berd, and Doxl, Kaydel seriously considered using the distraction to make a run for it. But she eyed the eight Stormtroopers – at least four of them still had eyes on her – and decided against it. Instead she pulled the brown hair in front of her face and kept her head down.

She also made sure to flick on the recording device in her earring.

“How goes things in the First Order?” Timor asked Kylo.

“Same as always,” Kylo replied. “Bringing peace and order. I presume Connix Industries is still selling to the right people?”

Telon smiled at him, “I assure you, Master Ren, no matter what you hear today, Connix Industries never has and never will sell weapons to the New Republic or the Resistance.”

“Good,” Kylo said shortly. “You know what Captain Anthea would do to you if you did.”

“That’s why we cut the fat from the family as one would say,” Timor grinned.

Karé took a protective step forward, but Kaydel held her back. Suddenly Kaydel was glad Poe wasn’t present. A comment like that in front of Poe would have ended with her father’s teeth on the floor.

“How is Alecta doing?” Timor asked, completely ignoring the two women right in front of him.

“Scaring the crap out of the cadets,” Berd cut in.

“Good,” Timor laughed. “The more time she spends scaring the crap out of them, the less she spends scaring the crap out of me. You know my wife’s sister decided she’d rather live in a desert than deal with Alecta?”

“I didn’t know that was an option,” Doxl grinned.

Kaydel’s fist tightened. Aunt Ally had endured that horrid desert just so she wouldn’t be brutally murdered by one sister in revenge for another… but sure, make jokes about it.

“May Telon show you to your seats?” Timor asked. “He needs an excuse to escape Katha for a while.”
“Not that I don’t love my wife,” Telon said quickly. “I just don’t dare interrupt her prepping for a business presentation.”

“Well, we were wondering if we could sit with some new friends of ours?” Sasa smiled at Kaydel. “I’ve become very well acquainted with Dania Nilar here.”

“Oh, this is Mrs. Nilar. I’ve been spending a lot of time with that charming husband of yours.” Timor held out his hand, “It’s nice to meet you, My Dear.”

Kaydel took a deep breath and looked up.

It was the same man she knew. That pale skin had more wrinkles, the blonde hair was almost completely grey, but those brown eyes – the only break from Anthea family tradition – her own eyes were the ones she was staring straight into.

…and he didn’t even so much as blink at her.

“It’s nice to meet you, Mister Connix,” her voice was soft and subdued as she shook the hand of her own father and he didn’t recognize her. Either her contouring skills were a true gift from the Goddesses… or Timor was as absent a father as she always suspected.

Kaydel so wished she could say it was the former.

“Kane has told me so much about you,” Timor grinned. He took a good look up and down, “Just as pretty as he claimed. I guess that’s why he doesn’t want one of my daughters.”

*Oh, trust me, Dad, he does,* Kaydel thought. *Up to four times a day.*

Karé took a menacing step forward and stared down Timor.

“Well, as pretty as Mrs. Nilar is, unfortunately we’ve already got some special chairs set up for you.” Timor leaned in and whispered, “Not these piece of crap hotel ballroom chairs.”

Sasa laughed, “How considerate.”

“Oh, don’t thank me, Love,” Timor grinned wide enough that Kylo’s arm tightened around Sasa’s a bit more. “It’s strict orders from Alecta, and I don’t want to get on her bad side. Telon, will you show the First Order to their seats?”

Telon nodded and didn’t even glance at his sister-in-law. Instead he just led the First Order to a reserved section near the front of the stage.

That left Kaydel alone with her father.

“So,” Kaydel looked to the floor, taking a step back towards Karé’s protective stance. “What made you decide to go into defensive weapons and systems?”

“Oh, well, I’ll tell you the full story during the presentation, but my eldest daughter, Kaydel was killed by a speeder bomb,” Timor answered. “Some Imperial Loyalist extremists. After that I decided to focus on defensive measures instead of just wrecking the world.”

Funny, in her twenty-three years of life, not once had Kaydel heard him mention defensive measures.

“I’m sorry about your daughter,” Kaydel said.

“Yes, poor thing. Left behind two sons. One of them’s here with us today.”
Timor waved at Dacken across the room. He started to wave back… then his eyes fell on Kaydel and he frowned.

“There you are,” Poe Dameron suddenly stepped in front, blocking her from Dacken’s line of sight. “I was looking all over for you, Querida.”

*Querida*? Kaydel blinked. Okay, seriously, was Poe just doing a caricature of Diego Nalto now?

This was because of the *Bey Three* thing, wasn’t it?

Poe locked his arm around Kaydel’s waist and pulled her in close. Snap and Jaina were behind him, both on guard to make a run for it if things went south.

“Shall we go get our seats, Darling?” Poe asked, wanting to get Kaydel away from Timor as quick as possible. He didn’t know if Timor Connix was dangerous, but Alecta Anthea was and that was a risk he wasn’t willing to take.

“I was just going to offer to escort her to some,” Timor said.

“We can find them ourselves,” Jaina smiled politely at him. “Really Mister Connix, you must be very busy. Go get everything in order.”

“Oh, no, I don’t dare get in Katha’s way,” Timor chuckled. “I must admit, Nilar, you did pick a pretty one. Though, if – the Goddesses Forbid – anything happens that puts you in the market for a new someone special, I’ve got a few daughters left to test your palate.”

Kaydel scowled. She didn’t know what was more disturbing, that her father was hinting that her “husband” leave her for herself, or…

No, wait… That was it. That was the disturbing thing. Her father was trying to tell her husband to leave Kaydel for Kaydel.

Why was her family so weird?

“Well, if they’re all as pretty as Katha over there,” Poe nodded to the blonde wearing a headset coordinating everything, her daughter, Sage looking a perfect mirror at her side, “then I might take you up on that.”

Kaydel made no secret of stomping on Poe’s foot.

“Ow! Babe, I was kidding!”

Timor laughed, “She’s a feisty one, isn’t she?”

“You should see her aunt,” Poe gritted his teeth trying to soothe his foot by rubbing it on the back of the opposite leg. “Best part, the kids got it too. Little monsters.”

“Kane,” Kaydel warned.

“What? They are,” Poe objected. “Abril’s new attitude I do not like at all.”

“Oh kids,” Timor said. “They are a handful. You got any pictures?”

“She only lets me carry one,” Poe pulled out Nils Arlos’ Holo. “Afraid they’ll get kidnapped or something.”
“Kane, we’re worth a lot of money,” Kaydel chided. “I don’t want another hostage situation like what happened with Jewel.”

“Who honestly ransoms a tooka?”

“I think the worst part is how much you paid to get her back.”

“Hey! Jewel is one of the family! It was worth every credit!”

Snap and Karé exchanged a look. Poe and Kaydel were a little too good at this.

“That’s a sweet family,” Timor smiled at the Holo. “I’m assuming the boy is Mateo, but which is Abril and which is Penelope?”

“Persephone,” Kaydel corrected. “And she’s the one who looks like her father. The blonde is Abril.”

Timor frowned, “Huh, where does she get the blonde hair?”

Kaydel blinked.

Fuck.

“Oh, it’s my natural colour,” Kaydel mumbled. “But I like being a brunette, so I dye it.”

“Honestly, she dyes it so much I forgot she was naturally blonde before Abril was born,” Poe quickly lied.

Timor just frowned.

Oh, Poe didn’t like the way Timor was staring at Kaydel.

“You know…” Timor said slowly, “Persephone is a Mallarexian name.”

“Is it?” Kaydel feigned surprise. “I read it in a book and liked it. I was so high on labour drugs when she was born that I was just out of it when I named her. Honestly, if it wasn’t for Vella here-”

Kaydel pointed to Karé.

“I probably would have broken Persephone in those first few days,” Kaydel gave a false chuckle. “Mister Honey, it’s just a quick business trip, I’ll back before you know it, and of course the baby won’t decide to come a month early didn’t show up until five days later and by then the name was finalized and he couldn’t stop me.”

“Good God,” Poe rolled his eyes, “miss one kid’s birth out of three and suddenly I’m an awful father.”

“I never said that.”

“No, but you’re going to hold it over my head for the rest of my life.”

“You missed the birth of our child!”

“I made it the other two times!”

An awkward silence clung to the air.

“I, um,” Timor cleared his throat, “I think I’m going to go check on Katha.”
“Good luck with the presentation!” Jaina called after him.

When he was gone, they all let out a breath of relief.

“Huh,” Karé said, “Maybe you guys being too good at this isn’t such a terrible thing.”

Jaina sighed, “Let’s just get to our seats before we run into another face from the past.”

“Alright, but if Luke Skywalker shows up, I am dropping everything to drag him back to base,” said Poe.

“Deal,” they all agreed.

Evan and Paige were minding their own business, settled in a pair of hotel ballroom chairs – not necessarily uncomfortable, but there’s a reason people got up and danced at wedding. Admittedly it was a nice ballroom. It even had old fashioned lanterns with real flames for lights on the wall. Paige looked around to see where Poe, Kaydel, and their lot settled while Evan flipped through the information package.

“Zeth?” she frowned, “do you feel bad about… leaving our colleagues behind at work?”

“Not really,” Evan understood what she was getting at. “You know this line of defensive weapons are actually really interesting. Just no one show Grandma the tranq gun. A rifle and a sedative are two things put together she would so abuse.”

Paige laughed.

“Oh, hey, did you ever hear if your mom arrived safely…” Paige looked around, “with the guys and you know who?”

“Yeah, I got word. They’re all fine. The Sex God’s father has promised to show my mom some fun, but clarified it’s not a date date. I think the two of them are just lonely and looking for a friend. I think the… couriers were going to stick around too. Our little bloom will be happy about it.”

“That sounds like she’ll have so much fun,” Paige smiled. Hanging out with Kes Dameron, Han Solo, and Chewbacca the Wookiee would be an amazing night, one Rose would lose her mind over.

“Honestly, I feel bad for them trying to entertain my mother,” said Evan. “She is ridiculously straight-laced. I don’t think she even knows how to have fun.”

“Drink, you Rebel bastards! The next round’s on me!” Shayna cried.

Kes, Han, and Chewie all cheered as the bartender filled another row of shot glasses in front of them. Waroo was up in the atmosphere on the freighter (it was too large to land so Han had a smaller shuttle to the surface and kept the Eravana in orbit) tinkering and Rose was back at the house working on BB-8 while the group had a no sons around night.

Of course, for Han, every night was a “no sons around” night… which was probably why he was drinking in the first place.
Following Han yelling some old Corellia drinking phrase, in perfect unison Han, Kes, Chewie, and Shayna downed their shots in one go, slammed them on the bar, and signaled to the bartender to pour another round.

“And here I thought you wouldn’t drink,” Kes laughed as Shayna knocked back another shot.

“Boys, I took half a lamppost through the back when I was fourteen,” Shayna slammed down the glass. “I deserve as many drinks as I want for the rest of my life.”

“Okay, I gotta ask,” Han said. “Your kid… is he adopted? Cause I can’t figure out the whole paralyzed labour thing.”

“Two words: caesarian section.”

“You know, you’re lucky you got to be there,” Kes was too drunk to think about that statement too hard. “I missed Poe’s birth and it’s one of the biggest regrets of my life. I didn’t get to even meet him until he was three days old.”

“You’re welcome for that, by the way,” Han said.

Shayna frowned, “Wait, what?

“Han brought me to see Poe after he was born,” Kes answered. “Let’s just say that it wasn’t exactly a Council approved excursion.”

She blinked, “Okay, I think I need to hear this story.”

Kes shook his head but conceded, “About two years after the Battle of Yavin, Poe was born. Shara had returned here to Yavin IV several months earlier, and it had been three since I last saw her. She commed me about an hour after giving birth and told me the news. Would have done it sooner, but she insisted on being the one to tell me and Shara was so exhausted from the childbirth. I was of course, over the moon about it, and immediately I was trying to find a way to get leave and go meet my son.”

“But the bastards on the High Council denied him,” Han cut in.

Roar raw row roo!

“You said it Chewie,” Han signalled the bartender to refill his whisky glass.

“So, I tried pulling every favor I had to get approval,” Kes continued, “but nothing could move them. I was down to one last person: Princess Leia. Thought that with my connections to Felicity and Diego that I might have a chance. Leia was on the *Millennium Falcon*, arguing with Solo here over something I honestly can’t remember.”

“Probably that she wouldn’t admit her feelings for me.” Han chuckled as he sipped his topped-up whiskey, “I got her in the end.”

“Anyway, I beg Leia to let me go, and she’s sympathetic but ultimately tells me there’s nothing she can do and goes off to talk to Chewie in another part of the ship.”

Chewie tried to interject and pick up the story from there, but it soon became clear Shayna didn’t understand a word he said, so he just enjoyed another drink.

“What he was saying,” Han said, “was that I saw Kes and Leia talking and after Leia left him
looking disappointed, I asked what was going on. Kes explained and I felt bad about it all – I’ve always had a bit of a soft spot for dads who overtly love and protect their kids, maybe I should have done a bit more of that with my own – and I told Kes to strap in. We’re heading to Yavin IV.”

“I remember telling him that we didn’t have leave, and Han just grins at me and says *that’s why they call it AWOL.*”

“So we go into the cockpit and we take off.”

Kes chuckled nervously, “And twenty minutes later we realized Leia is still on the ship and we’ve just kidnapped the Princess of Alderaan.”

“She yelled at me for three hours straight,” Han shuddered. “I think I went deaf in one ear. But you know what? It was worth it in the end.”

“Yeah,” Kes smiled warmly. “Getting to hold Poe when he was only a few days old, knowing this was what I was fighting for, a future where he could grow up in peace, choose to pursue any career he wanted, never go hungry or sick, never be afraid of speaking his mind or standing up for what he believes in… and screw his girlfriend on the desk of his superior officer.”

“I still can’t believe he did that,” Han shook his head. “I never did hear whose desk it was. Was it Nalto’s? Or was it Leia’s, because if so, been there, done that many times… in fact did that the morning before we left D’Qar.”

“I didn’t need to hear that. And it was Holdo’s desk.”

“I knew I liked your kid for a reason, but, uh… that’s not why the AWOL kidnapping was worth it to me.”

“Oh?” Shayna asked, “Then why was it?”

Han gave a small grin, not the haughty smirk of condescension he displayed so often, but rather the genuine one he reserved for Leia, Ben, Leia, and those of similar rank to him.

“Leia told me years later that seeing me do that for you Kes,” Han said, “…was when she finally let herself accept the fact she was in love with me. Sure, fought against those feelings for another year, but she finally admitted it. Actually, when we were discussing whether or not to actually have our kid, Leia brought up the memory. Said that was the thing that made her believe that I could be a good father to her kid. If I was able to go that far for someone else’s kid, imagine what I would do for ours…”

The group was silent as Han took another drink of his whiskey. No one spoke for fear of breaking the spell that allowed for Han Solo to bare his shoulders so honestly. Han never talked about his family so candidly unless he was with people he really trusted… or was really drunk.

Han sighed, “Lot of good I ended up being for our kid. I don’t know, sometimes I think maybe we…”

He couldn’t even finish the thought.

Chewie put a paw on Han’s shoulder and growled something soft and personal to him. Kes and Shayna couldn’t understand, but they knew it was something not for their ears.

“It was a hard decision,” Kes said. “Having a kid in general… especially in a war. It’s always a gamble.”
“Here I thought I was a good gambler,” Han bitterly smiled. “Turns out I was only lucky once…and that was winning the Falcon.”

Chewie batted him upside the head and started roaring out something about Leia and Luke and their family and how Han wasn’t being fair with that statement.

“Alright, alright, calm down,” Han tried to shush him. “We don’t want to get kicked out until our contact gets here. I get it, Fuzzball. You’re right, I made a few good gambles in my life. Best one was probably vocalizing Shyriiwook to a Wookiee trying to eat me. If you hadn’t been around, Buddy, I would have been killed long before ever meeting Ben Kenobi.”

Chewbacca gave an arrogant growl that Kes was fairly certain translated to something like And don’t you forget it.

“Kids really are a gamble,” Shayna said. “And they never come when you want them to.”

“I’m honestly surprised there aren’t a dozen MisCalcs running around D’Qar right now,” Kes agreed.

Han smirked, “And I’m honestly surprised your kid doesn’t have a dozen MisCalcs running around right now.”

“You and me both. With how much he and Kaydel get at it, I should be a grandfather seven times over.”

“See, another point in waiting until you’re married to have sex,” Shayna said.

“Hey, Shara and I were married, and Poe was still a MisCalc,” Kes pointed out.

“Well, it’s a good thing Poe doesn’t have a kid,” Han said. “What would he even do with a kid?”

“Oh, we’ve got a deal in case he gets someone pregnant,” Kes replied. “If he has a MisCalc, I’ll do for him what my father-in-law did for Shara and I. I’ll raise the kid until the war is over.”

“Are you sure?” Shayna asked. “That’s a lot of responsibility.”

“I wasn’t there for the first two years of my son’s life. I want to be there for my grandkids.”

“Meanwhile I’m scared shitless that someday I’m going to overhear in a bar that I have a grandkid,” Han shook his head. “I kid you not, the current rumour is that my son has some sort of breeding harem?”

Kes, Chewbacca, and Shayna stared at him.

“What does that even mean?” Shayna whispered.

“I’m too afraid to find out,” Han admitted.

Shayna shook her head, “Look at us, sitting around a bar getting drunk over our idiot sons.”

Grr roar gar gree.

“You can’t possibly be happy that your son has joined the family business of black market smuggling or whatever you guys do,” Shayna said. She knew a little Shyriiwook from dealing with some Wookiee miners a decade ago.
Chewbacca shrugged.

*Rawr.*

Shayna smiled and shook her head, “I swear, sons are the reason their parent go grey.”

“You should have seen my hair,” Kes sighed. “It was better than Poe’s.”

Han frowned, “You had it shaved what, an inch to your skull?”

“I looked good!”

“No wonder your son’s a fricken peacock,” Han rolled his eyes.

“Look at us,” Shayna sometimes tended to repeat herself when drunk. “Complaining about our sons.”

“Our sons are worth complaining about,” Kes said.

Han shook his head, “A wannabe Sith Lord who shot my sister-in-law in the head.”

“An immature flyboy who can’t keep it in his pants even during business meetings,” Kes knocked back his drink.

*Gar roar grr ree.*

“And pretender virgin who keeps a secret pet bird in his room and walks around with a Alderiaan women’s name,” Shayna swirled her glass. “You know, I don’t mind him having a new name. He wants me to call him Évan, I’ll do it, but he’ll always be my *Genie.*”

“He’ll always be my *Cielito,*” Kes said.

“He’ll always be my *Ben, stop using the Force for that,*” Han said.

*Roar rah grah gree.*

“Yeah, Pal,” Han chuckled, “is he your little fuzzball… Though I think he’s finally taller than you.”

Chewbacca gave a very sharp growl.

“They’re idiots,” Kes laughed. “And we wouldn’t want them any other way.”

“Oh, I could tweak my kid a little,” Han said. “Make him a little less stabby… Maybe also get rid of the hair dye. Though he does look kind of good with the black hair.”

“Gentlemen,” Shayna raised her glass, “shall we toast to the insanity that is our offspring?”

“Just think, at one point or another we were as stupid as them all,” Kes laughed.

“Wait, her kid has a medical license,” Han said, “I don’t think I’ve ever been that smart.”

*Ree raw gro raw.*

“We toast,” Shayna moved as if she meant to stand up only to realize at the last second she hadn’t been able to walk in thirty-six years. Maybe this should be the last round.

The men lifted their glass.
“To sons,” Shayna said.

“Idiot sons,” Han amended.

“Who think they know everything,” Kes added.

Grah ree roar raw gree groh!

Shayna smiled and combined it all, “To idiot sons who think they know everything but don’t have the first freaking clue.”

“To idiot sons who think they know everything but don’t have the first freaking clue!” the men chorused.

They clinked glasses and drank.

“Well, it seems like I arrived at the perfect time,” a voice made Han look up.

He grinned at the woman standing before him. Her curly, red hair had long ago turned grey, but her freckles were as bright and numerous as ever.

“Hey, Nest,” Han greeted. “Guys, this is Enfys Nest, the contact who decided she was so busy that we could only meet up on Yavin IV for some inexplicable reason.”

“The Civil war may have been won, but my war is as tumultuous as ever,” Enfys shook her head and plopped down on the bar stool next to Han. “Buy me a drink?”

“Hey now, didn’t I give you several million credits worth of coaxium?”

“Yeah, forty years ago. Now, buy me a drink or I get lost.”

“I think you underestimate my powers of persuasion.”

“Oh, is this the part where you lie and tell me you have thirty hired guns on a freighter waiting to ambush me when you give the signal, and at that exact moment the freighter takes off without you?”

Shayna snorted into her drink.

“True story,” Enfys told Kes.

“I believe it,” he said.

“Alright, I’ll get you a drink,” Han conceded.

He signalled to the bartender and placed an order for her usual, a double of Savareen brandy. Not cheap either. She gulped it down like she was drinking water on Tatooine.

“Alright, what’s the news?” Han asked. “And I’m not getting you another drink unless you’ve got something good.”

As a thank you for his contribution to her gang on Savareen, Enfys met up with Han once a year to fill him in on all the details of the criminal underworld. So Enfys launched into a long spiel about the ongoings in the black market and the wars between the Crime Syndicates that Nest and her gang protected the little people from. Kes wasn’t particularly interested, and Shayna appeared to fall asleep on the bar counter.
It was the last piece of news that caught their attention.

“Laertes Ores has officially strong-armed the Guavian Death Gang into the fold of Crimson Dawn,” Enfys said.

“Oh good,” Han groaned, “three things I really God damn hate teaming up together… Is… Is Qi’ra involved?”

Kes perked up.

Chewie growled that it was a different Qi’ra than Kira.

“Nah, according to my sources Lady Qi’ra,” Enfys rolled her eyes at the title, “is off pulling her own thing on Nixrye that Ores doesn’t know about. Bombing some weapons conference.”

Kes dropped his glass.

“What?” he exclaimed as it shattered in the floor and a disgruntled mouse cleaning droid whizzed under his feet mumbling words in binary that were definitely not in the default list.

“What?” Enfys frowned.

“Bombing a weapons conference… on Nixrye?” Kes’ heart hammered in his chest. “When?”

“Kes, what’s going on?” Shayna asked.

“When?” he demanded.

“Tomorrow afternoon,” Enfys answered. “What’s it to you?”

Kes caught Shayna’s eye, and she understood.


“Yeah,” Enfys frowned. “You know about it?”

“I’m calling Geno,” Shayna set to it quickly.

“Kes, what’s going on?” Han asked.

“That’s the conference Poe is at,” Kes said. “Please, Ms. Nest, tell me everything. What’s going to happen at the conference?”

Enfys gave Han an uncertain look, but he nodded.

“They’re going to bomb the resort during the business presentation,” Enfys said. “They’ve also sent people in dressed up and acting like Imperial Loyalists because there’s going to be First Order presence there.”

“First Order presence?” Han repeated.

“Four Knights of Ren and a handful of Stormtroopers, but no, I don’t know names,” Enfys caught Han’s look. “So, yeah, your kid could be one of them.”

“Han,” Kes said in a low voice, “Jessika commed Rose last night. Apparently Ben is at that conference.”
“Kriffing hell,” Han muttered. “So that’s it? They’re just going to blow it up and blame it on Imperials for no reason?”

“Oh no, that’s just the cover story,” Enfys said. “They’re pretending to be there to steal the weapons on display, but according to my mole in Crimson Dawn, really it’s an elaborate plan to kill one of the Knights of Ren. Again. Don’t know who.”

Han felt a knot in his stomach.

“Is there any way to stop it?” Han asked.

“I don’t think so. Look, Solo, I’m sorry to leave after throwing that on you but I’ve got a transport waiting. You got what you wanted. I got what I wanted,” she held up her fourth glass of Savareen whiskey, which Han did not remember agreeing to buy. “See you next year?”

“Yeah,” Han stiffly nodded, his mind set only on the danger his son was in. “See you next year.”

Enfys finished her drink and walked out the door.

“Ben,” Han whispered.

“Now there’s no need to panic,” Kes said, his voice a pitch higher than normal, “we don’t know for sure that this information is correct.”

“Guys,” Shayna frowned; she had been busy fiddling with her comm, “I can’t get a hold of Geno.”

Kes and Han looked at each other.

“Okay, now we can panic,” Kes approved.

“What are we going to do?” Han sighed.

Shayna frowned, “What are we going to do? Are you serious? You’re Han Solo. Those are our sons out there. If they’re in danger, what do we do? We go all Mama and Papa Bears on their asses and save our boys!”

Kes raised an eyebrow, “You are not at all what Evan described you as.”

“Genie likes to put me on a pedestal. Now let’s go and kick some ass!” Shayna slapped her hand on the bar, “Hey, barkeep! One more shot for courage!”

“So, are we doing this, Solo?” Kes asked as the bartender poured another round. “It’s your ship.”

And it was his son in danger.

Han sighed and grabbed a shot, “Let’s go get our boys.”

They were all a bit too drunk to think “Hey, maybe we should call the Resistance and give Poe and his team a head’s up, and get Leia to send back up.”

All they could think about was the grand adventure they were about to have saving their sons from Crimson Dawn.

“To idiot sons who think they know everything but don’t have the first freaking clue!” Han, Kes, Shayna, and Chewie cheered – Chewie cheering in Shyriwook.
So, they all took one last shot, paid the tab, and headed back to the shuttle.

“Hey, is anyone sober enough to pilot?” Han asked.

Silence.

“I think we better call Rose,” Kes said.

Chewie agreed.

“That’s weird,” Kaydel frowned fiddling with her concealed comm as they waited for the presentation to start. “My comm won’t work.”

“Sometimes places like this will use a signal blocker to prevent interruptions in the presentation,” Jaina informed.

“That doesn’t sound safe,” Poe said, lazily flipping through the information packet.

“Neither is interrupting eccentric, short-tempered millionaires.” Jaina glanced nervously towards where the First Order was seated, “Are you sure they don’t know it’s us?”

“Not positive but sure enough not to take action at the moment.” Poe sighed, “Look, we’ve got Thon sitting on the end. He’s big and bulky and will block us. No offense, Thon.”

“None taken.” Snap winked at Karé sitting on the opposite end of the group next to Jaina, “Just more of me to love.”

Karé smiled.

“But if things do go south we’re going to do it like this,” Poe said. He gestured to Jaina, “If Artora or myself get recognized, she, I, and Vella will sneak away and leave you two behind.”

“And if Dania gets recognized?” Snap asked.

“I want you to take her and go. Our,” Poe glanced across the seated crowd towards Evan and Paige, “other friends have their instructions when and where to leave. Try to leave through the back exit, understood?”

“Yes, Sir,” everyone nodded.

“Is everything alright, Kylo?” Sasa asked when his head once again turned towards the Nilar group. “You keep looking at them.”

“I don’t know,” Kylo squinted at Kane Nilar. There was something about him. “I just feel something’s off.”

Berd and Doxl exchanged a look.

“Do you want us to go pull them, Sir?” Marks asked.
“No, we’ll wait and see what happens,” Kylo said. “But if any of them move to leave during the presentation, Sasa, I want you to take Berd and Doxl and go after them.”

“Just the three of us?” Berd inquired.

FN-2187 narrowed his eyes, “Sir… perhaps you should send more soldiers to accompany Master Sasa?”

Kylo caught his meaning, “Good thought, FN-2187. Marks, I want you to take your squad with the Knights. FN-2187, I want you and your squad with me. If they split up when they leave, split into two groups.”

FN-2187 leaned over to Marks, “Don’t leave Sasa alone with any Knight of Ren who isn’t Wiln or Kylo.”

“Oh you?” Marks teased.

“Don’t even joke about that,” FN-2187 shuddered. “I’m not ready to be a Knight.”

“Well, physically you are, but mentally…”

Marks let the thought hang as the lights went down and Katha Sindal née Connix mounted the stage. She wore a headset and black, athletic-looking pantsuit, perfectly dyed blonde hair falling down pin straight on her shoulders, and she had a plastic looking smile on her face.

Poe leaned over to Kaydel, “She looks like she’s about to give a seminar on how to achieve your dreams with nothing but the power of believing in yourself.”

“Give her ten years,” she grinned as Poe slung his arm around her shoulders.

“Ladies and Gentlemen,” Katha’s voice was blasted through the room with more stereos than the mid-sized ballroom needed. A giant screen projected the logo of Kation Defense Holdings behind her. “Welcome to the first showcase of Kation Defense Holdings, the soon to be number one selling and top trusted name in defense systems and weaponry. In our first year alone of business we have already won twenty-seven safety standards and consumer satisfaction awards, and made net sales of over five million credits.”

The room clapped.

“Of course, at our prices that might not be saying much, but who can put a price tag on safety? But I still think those prices are going to make you smile.”

A door slammed shut and Paige instinctually turned to look. Two people in dark clothing had entered the room. They waved off Dacken’s attempt to give them an information packet and Sage’s offer to help them to a seat. Instead they chose to lean against the back wall.

Odd.

“We are the very first Connix family run subsidiary of Connix Industries, one of the top names in weapons manufacturing for thirty-eight years. For decades the name Connix is one people know to trust when they need a good blaster at their side. But unfortunately, until now we have not been thinking enough of the other side of the equation. A good blaster is a wonderful way to make an advance… but what about the times you don’t seek violence at all? What about when you want to stop the threat before it even starts?”
Paige nudged Evan and pointed at the two men at the back of the room.

“ Weird, right?” Paige asked.

“Yeah,” Evan frowned, subconsciously shifting his back forward to be in between Paige’s back and the men.

“Twenty-three years ago, my older sister, Kaydel Tokani née Connix lost her life to a terrorist attack.”

An image of the first Kaydel Connix flicked on screen.

“Thought she’d look more like you,” Poe whispered.

Kaydel shot him a shut up right now look.

“She left behind two sons, a devastated husband, a broken family-”

Kaydel snorted. The Anthea family was broken long before Kaydel I ever died.

“And a sister with a resolve to make something like that never happen again,” Katha had tears in her eyes. “What happened to my older sister was inexcusable.”

“But throwing your younger one out like garbage, totally on the up and up,” Karé muttered.

“Don’t forget the aunt,” Jaina added.

“So the day we buried Kaydel, I went to my father and told him that I was going to make something of my sister’s legacy.”

“So did my parents,” Kaydel joked to Snap. “They had me.”

On and on Katha went with her speech giving the expected presentation. She told all about the company’s history, the offerings, the prices, the safety tests, the awards, the sales…

It was a miracle half the Resistance group didn’t fall asleep.

FN-2187 had to kick Slip when he did.

After about forty-five minutes, Katha turned the stage over to her father, and Timor Connix greeted the crowd with a smile.

“Do we secure the doors now?” Sasa heard the whisper.

“Shut up!” someone hissed back.

She turned around to see the same men as Paige had spotted… and one had just smacked the other.

“We are a proud, loyal, transparent company,” Timor was droning on into a microphone. “I am so proud of my daughter, Katha for seeing this through to the end.”

“Kylo,” Sasa nudged him. She pointed to the men at the door, “Do you sense something… off about them?”

He frowned when he noticed a blaster hanging from the belt of one of the men, and the other… what was that round thing on his belt?
“And I guarantee every piece you receive from Kation Defense Holdings will be of equal or greater quality than that of Connix Industries products, or your money back.”

Snap too frowned when he saw the gun on the man’s hip. With the exception of the First Order, everyone had been patted down before they entered the ballroom. Sure, the Resistance group had their ways to hide weapons on their persons, and Jaina had snuck in and stashed some blasters under a few floor tiles last night… but people weren’t supposed to have weapons in the room.

“Now, I know what some of you are thinking, that’s great and all, but is it worth the risk of doing business with you? In this mess of Republics, Empires, Resistances, Rebellions, and First Orders, where do you stand?”

Kaydel frowned. What was her father getting at?

“And I can assure you that we are a truly neutral company. We don’t step out of the conflicts the galaxy faces, we’re right on the front line with every side.”

Paige clenched her fists as she thought of what had been done Hays Minor by the First Order. How could someone be proud to stand with them?

Evan grabbed her hand and squeezed tight.

“My wife,” Timor smiled as an image of Adrinna Connix née Anthea was projected on the screen, “a lovely thing, isn’t she? Couldn’t come with us this week, too busy running Head Office of Connix Industries. Without her I would be nowhere.”

“So that’s your mom?” Poe lifted an eyebrow. “If that’s what I’m looking at with you in forty years, Babe, then I’m in for a treat. I mean, I knew Aletha was hot, but- Ow!”

“I’m not even going to tell you two to shut up,” Karé smirked.

“Now, for those of you who don’t know, my wife and I come from the planet of Mallarex. And on Mallarex we believe in the Five Sister Goddesses who bring luck and fortune to the world. It is considered a blessing to have five girls in our culture, and my wife is the eldest of five sisters. A true Goddess each one of them.”

Everyone heard Kylo and Poe snort in unison at the thought of Captain Alecta Anthea being dubbed a Goddess.

“Now, I didn’t have five girls, but I got close. One son to throw things off, but I’m not unhappy with my boy, Keth. Kindest soul you’ll ever meet.”

FN-2187 noticed the man seated behind him fidgeting with a bag at his feet.

He was also wearing an Imperial pin on his lapel.

And a brand on his forearm.

“But I had four girls, and between my wife’s sisters and my daughters, we have covered every possible spectrum of these conflicts the galaxy has and does face. We are neutral because our girls are everywhere.”

“Wait, what?” Poe blurted out.

Kaydel frowned, “What’s going on?”
The screen flicked to a picture of a woman who looked not unlike Kaydel and was wearing a New Republic Defense Fleet pilot formal uniform. Poe noticed that her rank patches and medals were really impressive. This girl was going to be a General one day. Not might be. Would be.

“My second youngest, Kyra Connix flies in the New Republic Defense Fleet as a Lieutenant General, and has nowhere to go but up. With her we prove our loyalty to the New Republic.”

“What is he doing?” Kaydel whispered in horror.

The photo changed to one that looked like a mix of Aletha and the flatter features of Adrinna. This woman was wearing an Imperial uniform and was posed in what Poe could have sworn was a hallway of the Death Star.

“Athena Anthea. The middle child of the five sisters, my beloved wife’s younger sister who died on the Death Star. But don’t worry, we don’t blame Luke Skywalker or Felicity Rhiaon for it. Athena is the testament of our loyalty to the Empire.”

“Bull fucking shit!” Poe exclaimed… or rather half exclaimed because after the first syllable Jaina clapped her hand over his mouth.

Next was a picture of Alecta Anthea, first in her Imperial gear, and then unhelmeted in Stormtrooper armor.

“Wait,” Evan frowned. “Is that picture right?”

Paige shrugged. She was too focused on the men at the door. Even more so now that two men had gathered near the emergency exit.

Evan held up his conference lanyard – which Paige had planted a camera in – and took a picture of the image of the armored Alecta Anthea.

“Alecta Anthea, a terrifying woman, my wife’s sister, born only a year after her. Alecta is a committed soldier in the First Order, and our proof of partnership to them… But we were not all Imperials and First Order lovers. No, some of us were Rebels.”

The Resistance group’s jaws dropped as the next picture flicked on screen.

“Is that Aletha?” Kaydel stared in utter disbelief.

“Oh my God,” Poe lifted his watch which could also secretly snap and store a small number of pictures. “Nalto’s so going to want to see this. What is she, seventeen?”

“Why is she talking about Aletha?” Snap asked.

“Aletha Anthea,” Timor said, “my youngest sister-in-law, joined with the Rebels at nineteen and spent her life as a doctor helping the misfortunate. We love her, are proud of her, and stand by her no matter what.”

“Well, the first sentence was right,” Poe conceded as Timor explained Aletha was their connection to the Rebellion.

“Oh God,” Kaydel whispered.

“I know, it’s a horrible thing to claim they love and stand by Doctor Kymeri,” Snap said.

“No, you don’t understand.” Kaydel shot them all scathing looks, “They said they had connections
to *everyone.* Including the Resistance.”

“So?” Jaina asked.

Kaydel cocked her head and said pointedly, “Who do we know that’s in the Resistance that’s connected to them?”

A horrified silence fell over the group.

“Babe,” Poe whispered. “*Run!*

Kaydel and Snap shot out of their seats the second her image flicked on screen.

“*Kaydel Ko Connix, my youngest girl, named for her older sister who died before they could meet, and a proud member of the Resistance.*”

“Fuck!” Kaydel winced.

“Go,” Snap pushed her forward. “Go. Move!”

“Out the back way,” Poe ordered as Snap and Kaydel scrambled forward, tripping over very confused people. It was only Jaina’s hand on his shoulder that was stopping him from racing off with Kaydel.

Sasa, who had been finding the presentation frightfully boring, sat up straight at Kaydel Ko Connix’s picture.

“Is that Dania?” she exclaimed.

Kylo blinked, “Yeah, I think…I think it is.”

In perfect unison, their heads snapped over to the Nilar group. Dania and her bodyguard, Thon were making a very suspicious and quick exit. Dania’s husband seemed to be urging them to move fast.

And then Kane Nilar’s head turned just a little too far.

Even across a ballroom, extra hairy, and bearded, Ben Solo knew the face of Poe Dameron.

…Okay, the Force helped a little.

“Dameron,” Kylo growled. He turned to the others, “Everyone move! We have Resistance members present. You know your positions.”

“Oh, fuck!” Poe exclaimed as the First Order started to move. “We’ve been compromised. Everybody move!”

Figuring there was no point to secrecy now, Jaina turned and yelled to the crowd, “EVAN! PAIGE! *RUN!*”

They sprang to their feet immediately and booked it towards the main exit.

“Wait, not that one,” Paige pulled Evan’s arm to guide them away from the main exit. “I don’t trust those men.”
Evan wordlessly pivoted towards the emergency exit.

“And that’s why you should trust us…” Timor looked around in confusion at the suddenly shouting and movement. “We’re truly neutral because it’s bad enough to have one woman mad at me, so if we side with one party above the other, then I’ll have five. And five women mad at you is a… nightmare.”

He glanced down at Katha.

She looked as lost as her father.

“Ladies and Gentlemen,” Katha scaled the stage, “the presentation isn’t over. We were just about to demonstrate our technologies.”

She gestured to the tables in front of the tables laden with weapons both of the Kation Defense Holdings and Connix Industries variety.

But no one was listening to her.

“Groups, split up!” Kylo ordered. “Knights of Ren and MK squads go after the girl. FN squad with me.”

He locked eyes with Poe.

“Dameron’s mine.”

“Oh shit,” Poe muttered.

He just sprung to his feet and having no other real option, picked up his chair and just chucked it at the First Order.

Poe wasn’t anywhere near close enough to hit them, but it did cause a bit of a commotion that gave Karé and him time to pull out their concealed blasters and for Jaina to spring for the hidden cache.

Paige and Evan slid the last few feet across the ballroom tile only to find those two other men blocking the emergency exit.

“You gotta move!” Evan exclaimed.

“I’m not going nowhere,” one of the men shook his head. “Now get back in your seat.”

Evan’s eyes narrowed, “I will move you if I have to.”

The men laughed and pushed Evan, “You’re not going to move me.”

“You’re right,” Paige cut in. “I am.”

He turned just in time for Paige to clock him across face, knocking him to the ground. She immediately pivoted and kicked the other in the face, forcing him to fall back.

They hit the ground with a thud and a groan.

Evan blinked, “That… That was really hot.”
“Really?” Paige smiled, taking a step closer to him.

“Yeah,” he grinned, wrapping his arms around her waist, “it makes me really—”

One of the men suddenly grabbed at Evan’s ankles. In unison he and Paige kicked them in the face.

“Later?” Paige asked.

“Later,” he nodded.

Together they kicked the men again, lunged down, took their blasters, and pointed them at the men.

“Not another move,” Paige warned as the men realized they had been bested.

The men held up their hands, but the sound of blasters cocking reached their ears. Paige and Evan looked up to see that Marks had broken off from Sasa’s group, leading Duck and Tone with him. Weevil was off tailing Sasa, Berd, and Doxl.

“Come on, let’s go!” Evan grabbed her hand and they crossed through the door.

The fire alarm went off the second they opened it. People leapt to their feet and the scene inside the ballroom was absolute madness.

Marks shouted to his men over the alarm, “Come on! After them!”

The Stormtroopers barrelled forward certain that things couldn’t get worse.

Marks came to a stop so fast both Tone and Duck slammed into him. It didn’t take long for them to figure out why. Standing before them were the pair of Resistance soldiers frozen in shock, blasters lax at their sides.

Because the pathway between the ballroom emergency exit and the garden… was completely riddled with explosives.

Snap and Kaydel had nearly made it to the back exit when someone grabbed her arm and pulled her.

“Aunt Kayko!”

She suddenly found herself face to face with her nephew, Dacken.

Kaydel blinked.

Then Kaydel swung her fist.

She landed him flat on his ass.

“Nice to see you too, Aunt Kayko,” Dacken groaned, holding his face.

Snap had to hold her back from jumping on him, “Oh no, you don’t. Let’s get out of here!”

“No, wait!” Dacken cried, scrambling to his feet. “Kayko, look I’m sorry for being a dick when we were kids, but—”

“Dacken!” she rounded on her heel, “now is really not the time! So, can you pencil me in to come
kick your ass later?”

He quirked a smile, “Hey, you got badass.”

Kaydel lunged forward but another arm grabbed her.

“Ko?” Timor Connix pulled her back. He looked stunned as she tried to squirm out of his grip, “Oh, Sweetie, I thought it might be you, but I didn’t think it was possible.”

“Let me go!” Kaydel threw him off.

Timor moved to grab her arm, but Snap stepped between them and shoved Timor back. Snap had managed to draw his concealed blaster and was pointing it at Timor.

“Touch her again and I fire,” he warned.

Kaydel took the time to pull her own blaster from her boot and point it at Dacken.

“I hate you, Dacken,” she growled. “You messed me up and got away with it.”

“I know,” he hung his head, “I’m sorry.”

She took a deep breath, “I don’t forgive you. Now we’re going to go, and you people won’t follow.”

“Ko,” Timor started.

“Shut it!” Snap cocked his blaster.

“We’re going,” Kaydel repeated.

“But you can’t!” Dacken objected.

Kaydel grinned, “Watch me.”

With a haughty smirk she glanced over to the back-exit door and pulled on the handle.

It didn’t open.

Dacken sighed and put his hands up in surrender, “I mean it has a lock code. That’s what I’ve been trying to give you.”

Snap pointed his blaster at Dacken, “Then unlock the door.”

Free hands still held up when applicable, Dacken revealed a hidden panel on the wall and started typing a code.

“Ko?” another voice called.

“Oh for the love of…” Kaydel rolled her eyes and turned her blaster on the very confused looking Katha, followed by Telon and Sage. “I’m kind of busy right now, Kat.”

“What’s going on?” Katha exclaimed.

“Undercover Resistance mission to check out your company, but no one knew it was affiliated with Connix Industries. Your little slideshow blew my cover.”

“Told you not to do the picture thing,” Telon told his father-in-law.
Timor shrugged.

“Ko…” Katha looked lost.

“No,” Kaydel held up her blaster, “don’t call me that. Don’t call me Ko, don’t call me Kayko, don’t call me Kaydel Ko. My name is Kaydel… and you people have wrecked everything for me once more.”

Timor blinked, “Ko-”

He caught her look.

“Kaydel,” he corrected, “I can’t believe this. You’re really here. I’ve missed-”

“No, you haven’t,” Kaydel spat. Why wasn’t Poe or Paige or Aletha at her side right now to give her the strength she sorely needed? “You went up there and lied saying you love me and miss me and are proud of me… But if that were true, you never would have abandoned me.”

“Kaydel, your mother-”

“Don’t blame her, because you still went along with it,” Kaydel shook her head. “But doesn’t matter anymore because I have a new family now. One that includes Aunt Aletha.”

Timor blinked, “You’ve seen Aletha?”

“Yeah… and in two years she’s been more of a mother to me than you were a father in seventeen. But maybe it’s true, maybe you do love and miss me and are proud of me. And if that’s true, then you’ll let Snap and I walk through that door and not tell the First Order.”

The Connix family exchanged a series of looks.

“Okay,” Timor agreed. “We’ll let you go.”

Kaydel froze, “What?”

“You can leave,” Timor repeated. “Go, while you have the chance. We’ll cover you however we can.”

She wanted to smile but was too afraid to do so.

“I don’t believe it,” she whispered.

“Believe it, Little Sister,” Katha took a step forward. “I’m sorry about everything that’s happened, Kaydel. I thought by telling you about Aunt Aletha I could have spared you her fate… but that wasn’t meant to be. You need to go be the rebel you were born to be. But… before you go, can I have a hug?”

Kaydel hesitated, but with a nod from Snap, she accepted the offer.

The hug was so warm and cozy.

“I’m sorry, Kaydel,” Katha whispered.

“It’s okay,” she squeezed her sister. “I know what Mom’s like.”

“I’m not apologizing for Mom kicking you out.”
“Then what are you apologizing for?”

Katha suddenly twisted Kaydel’s wrist, forcing her to drop her blaster. As she screamed in pain, Katha slammed a knee into her stomach, grabbed her blaster, and looped a weird thin piece of chain around her wrist.

When Kaydel’s brain finished registering the attack she understood what had happened.

Katha had handcuffed her.

“Sorry, Ko,” Katha said, “but Aunt Alecta would have killed my kids if she knew I helped you escape.”

“Oh, well, that makes it okay then,” Snap pointed his blaster at her.

He heard the cock of a blaster and found Telon holding one to his head.

“We have a family business of weapons manufacturing,” Telon grinned as Katha also pointed Kaydel’s blaster at Snap. “Of course, we’re always armed.”

“What the hell is even this stupid chain?” Kaydel squirmed, trying to prevent Katha from closing it properly.

“New Kation technology,” Katha smirked as she secured the chain closed. She held Kaydel’s blaster confidently at Snap, “A chain strip that has an end that hooks onto various parts of the strap for a portable, less obvious pair of handcuffs. $32.95 a pair if the Resistance is interested.”

She yanked on Kaydel’s arm, forcing a cry from her sister. Katha dragged her to the wall and chained the other end to one of the open flame lanterns.

“You’re a bitch,” Kaydel glowered at Katha.

“No, Kyra’s the bitch of our generation,” she slung an arm around her daughter’s shoulder and guided Sage to the exit. “I just know what’s important to me. HEY! FIRST ORDER! KNIGHTS OF REN!”

She gave a loud whistle and waved at Sasa, Berd, Doxl, and Weevil.

Katha looked back at her glowering sister, “Good luck, Sis… You’re going to need it.”

And with that, Katha, Sage, and Telon disappeared through the back exit.

Timor and Dacken were left looking very confused.

“Yeah, no, Aunt Kyra just lost the title of Bitch Aunt,” Dacken agreed with Kaydel.

“Dacken, language!” Timor scolded.

He raised a brow, “I’m a recovering drug addict and you’re scolding me for my language?”

“Kid, you set my hair on fire as a child and he didn’t raise his voice,” Kaydel tugged on her handcuff. “My sister just chained me to the wall and left me to be tortured and die, and he said nothing. This man does not have the proper priorities. Now can somebody get me out of these handcuffs?”

Timor and Dacken exchanged a look.
“She had the only key, didn’t she?” Snap asked.

“Yeah,” Dacken nodded.

Kaydel rolled her eyes, “Fuck.”

By that time, most people had cleared the hall. The mystery men at the doors had disappeared into the crowd, most leaving by either the emergency exit or the main exit.

But Poe Dameron wasn’t leaving, not until Kaydel Ko Connix was out safe.

And currently she appeared to have been handcuffed to the wall… so that might be a while yet.

“How the hell did that happen?” Karé rubbed her eyes, trying to figure out if she really was seeing Kaydel handcuffed to a lantern.

“At this point I don’t ask,” Poe shrugged.

They had their blasters ready, but there were still quite a few bystanders in the room, so they wouldn’t open fire yet.

“Where are Jaina with those weapons?” Poe asked.

A chair whipped across the room and slammed straight into Poe’s knees.

He groaned as he laid face first on the ground, “Alright… now we get to it.”

Poe didn’t need to hear Kylo’s saber to ignite to know he was there. He just rolled and kicked Ben Solo right in the face.

Kylo stumbled back, a little taken by surprise, but right back to business as quickly as possible. He swung his saber down at Poe, but Poe dodged and rolled right under the rows of chairs.

“I am so thankful now that Luke taught me to fight someone using a lightsaber,” Poe declared from under the chairs.

Kylo used the Force to sweep the first row of chairs aside. Poe was just laying underneath with hands pillowing his head.

“Hey, Ben,” Poe grinned. “Long time, no see.”

The lightsaber swung down at him, but Poe rolled again to dodge.

Poe spared a glance to the side to see Karé taking on three Stormtroopers by herself. Jaina literally slid up next to Karé armed with the new weapons and joined Karé in her melee.

Damn, they were good.

He narrowly missed the saber at his head.

“Oh, come on,” Poe laughed as Kylo ripped away the next row of chairs. Poe was already five rows in. Literally crawling away from a Knight of Ren wasn’t his finest hour, but hey, whatever kept him alive. “After all these years, you’re not even going to greet me? We haven’t seen each other since we
were kids.”

“We saw each other a few years ago, Dameron.”

“Oh right, when you gassed your own mother.”

Kylo swung his saber down and cleaved a chair in half. He left a disappointing burnt hole in the floor. What he thought had been Poe’s feet was simply an abandoned bag.

“Come on, Solo,” Poe laughed daring to pop his head up to taunt Kylo with his true location. “Not even one passing comment of how I’ve faired over the years?”

“Poe Dameron,” Kylo took in his long hair and unkempt beard, “you look terrible.”

He grinned, “And you look like your father.”

Kylo’s saber caught Poe’s throat a little that time. Not enough to do damage but enough to make his throat sting like hell.

“Fuck! That was a good one,” Poe cried.

Kylo grinned, “Thanks.”

He threw the chair aside with the Force, but Poe had bet on that. He planted his elbow on the ground and leveraged his weight to give a powerful kick upwards. It sent Kylo tumbling back over two chairs.

And it made him drop his lightsaber.

Poe sprung for it. When Kylo pushed himself off the floor, he was pinned to it by the red crackle of his own blade.

“You stole this from Rey Rhiaon Skywalker,” Poe pointed the lightsaber at Ben’s throat.

Kylo laughed, “Put it down, Dameron, it’s not a toy.”


“You have no idea what you’re doing with that weapon.”

“No… but I bet I’m going to have a lot of fun.”

Kylo turned and shouted, “SASA!”

A saber flew across the room into Kylo’s outstretched hand. He ignited it just in time to block Poe’s shot.

“Oh yeah, Solo,” Poe grinned. “Let’s do this.”

A pair of men ran along the shadows of the hotel. The area was chaos as people were trying to figure what was going on. The fire alarm still blared loudly, and the local authorities were discussing
whether or not to intervene. Technically in the broadest sense of the term, the Resistance was a governmental authority and the First Order did not have jurisdiction over Nixrye.

But both parties were causing one hell of a confusing mess.

And that worked in the favor of the two men who slunk in the shadows wearing old Imperial uniforms but had Crimson Dawn brands on their wrists.

The men came to a stop and one pulled out a comm.

“Lady Qi’ra, come in?”

“Yes, Revenor?”

“Everything’s in place. We’re ready to fire.”

“Hmm… wait until the top of the hour.”

“But Lady Qi’ra-”

“Make it more memorable to sell the lie.”

The man bowed his head, “Yes, Lady.”

“And at the top of the hour?” the other man asked.

Qi’ra smiled on her end, “Blow them all to hell.”

Poe was pretty impressive for never having really wielded a lightsaber in his life. Sure, Luke and Reine showed him how to spar, but not with a real, you could cut your hand off lightsaber. He tried to remember everything Luke had taught him as he clashed and slashed with Kylo.

But he was doing good. Really good.

Or was Ben just terrible?

“I can’t believe you’re still doing the fucking spinning thing,” Poe laughed as the blades locked. “You know you’re going to lose a hand like that?”

Perhaps Poe had a little too much fun. He jumped up on the back of a chair, only for it to immediately topple over, sending him sprawling to the ground. But Poe Dameron was quick, he slashed Kylo’s borrowed blade from his rightful blade, and Poe was back on his feet.

They circled each other like feral dogs, blades extended and sizzling.

“You know this is a lot fun,” Poe said.

“Yeah,” Kylo grinned, “but you know what? I think I’ve had enough fun with you.”

He looked towards the back exit, Poe frowning, eyes following to Berd and Doxl with Snap, Timor, and Dacken on their knees and lightsabers pointed at them. Karé and Jaina were still scrapping against the four Stormtroopers.

“Wouldn’t you agree, Sasa?” Kylo added loudly.
Then came an agonizing scream. A bloodcurdling scream. A scream that dropped Poe’s heart to his stomach.

Kaydel’s scream.

The scream she gave as she hung from the lamp fixture, writhing in pain under Sasa’s Force Lightning.

“You bitch!” Poe roared trying to race towards her.

He was jerked to a stop by Kylo using the Force.

“You love her,” Kylo chuckled. “I can sense it. It’s not just a role you’re playing of pretend husband and wife. You love this girl.”

Kaydel screamed again as another bolt hit her body.


Kylo smirked, “What will you do if I comply?”

Poe’s eyes flicked around the room. To Snap. To Kaydel. To Karé. To Jaina. But he knew it didn’t matter what they thought… he knew what he was going to do.

“If I surrender,” Poe began, “will you let her go?”

Kylo extinguished his lightsaber and folded his arms, “You’ll come with me? No fight?”

“As long as you play fair, yes. I will put down my weapon and come with you.”

“No! Poe, don’t!” Kaydel yelled.

“It’s okay,” he promised her. “I’ll be okay.”

“No, you won’t. Don’t do this!”

Poe turned back to Kylo, “You let her go, and you let my friends go—”

“I’ll let the Connix ones go and the male who was with your girl.” Kylo looked back at Karé and Jaina, “But the other girls stay. You wanted to split up into teams? Then we fight that way. Agreed?”

Poe turned off Kylo’s lightsaber and set it on a chair.

“Agreed.”

Kylo extinguished Sasa’s lightsaber and threw it across the room. It flew into her hand and she ignited the crimson blade, making a clean slash through the handcuff.

Kaydel hit the ground hit. She didn’t linger on the pain, instead her eyes automatically going up to meet Poe’s gaze across the room.

“You have two minutes,” Kylo declared.

“Poe,” Kaydel whispered.

“Kay, Baby, go,” Poe ordered.
“No,” she refused.

“Babe, go.”

“A minute fifty,” Kylo said.

“Kaydel, go!” Poe demanded.

“No!” she refused. “I’m not going without you!”

“I’ll be fine. I promise.”

“You can’t promise that,” her eyes filled with tears.


Kaydel smiled and nodded, “108.”

“I’ll be fine. Now please… go.”

Silence clung to the room as Kaydel struggled to her feet. Dacken reached for her to check if she was alright, but Kaydel pushed him away. Timor did allow Snap to help him to his feet though.

“Wait,” Timor looked between Poe and Kaydel in confusion, “are those two actually a couple?”

“Honestly, they might even be engaged at this point,” Snap shrugged. “Don’t remember, but yeah, they’re a rather infamous couple in the Resistance.”

“Don’t you mean famous?”

“No, infamous. If you heard some of the stuff they got up to, it would turn your hair white.”

“A minute thirty!” Kylo declared. “You’re wasting time.”

“Right,” Snap nodded. He looked over longingly at his wife, “Karé-”

“I’ll be fine,” Karé said. “Poe’s got my back.”

“Promise?” Snap fixed him with a look.

“You cover my girl, I cover yours.” Poe caught Karé’s look, “And vice versa. Karé will watch Kay’s man, and Kay will watch hers.”

“Damn straight,” Karé grinned.

He turned his eyes back to Kaydel, “Be safe, Mi Amor.”

“I love you, Poe Dameron.”

“I love you too, Kaydel Ko Connix… Stupid name and all.”

Timor frowned, “I don’t think it’s stupid.”

Kaydel rolled her eyes and grabbed his wrist, “Come on.”

Snap, Kaydel, Timor, and Dacken raced through the exit. It was a dark hall that led them far from the ballroom. They skidded to a stop when the hallway suddenly split into two. Unfortunately, there was
no signage to direct them and they couldn’t find a sign of Katha and her family.

“Well?” Kaydel asked Dacken and Timor. “Which way?”

“I think they said in the event of an emergency to go to the right,” Dacken said.

They raced forward to the right.

But they should have gone left.

“Sasa?” Kylo looked to her a minute later. “Take Berd, Doxl, and Weevil. Bring me back their heads.”

Something tackled Kylo to the ground.

“Surprise,” Jaina Fel said to him the same way he had the day he scarred her arm. Then she pulled out a vibro blade and stabbed him in the leg.

He cried out, but his scream was drowned out by hers when Sasa threw her highest voltage of lightning at Jaina. She flopped to the ground helplessly, and Kylo used the Force to slam her into the chairs like a bowling ball at pins.

“Go!” Kylo ordered Sasa. “Get them! Kill the other three, but bring me Dameron’s girl alive.”

Sasa nodded eagerly and departed with the others.

“You hear that, Dameron?” Kylo looked around the room for Poe. “We’ll make your girl suffer. Maybe give her to her aunt and finish off with a Rhiaon special.”

A powerful blaster bolt hit him, knocking him off his feet, hitting the ground hard. Kylo groaned and pushed himself up to see Poe Dameron standing at the table of Connix weapons holding one of the new blasters.

Poe frowned at the weapon, “Damn it! Lowest stun setting! I wanted kill. Who built this display?”

He yelped when Kylo used the Force to grab Poe by the ankle and drag him across the room to Kylo. When he reached Kylo – who was still flat on his back, fighting the twinges of a stun blast – Poe slammed his elbow into Kylo’s face and threw himself on top of him.

The boys started scrapping like a much deadlier version of the roughhousing they used to do as kids.

Jaina groaned as she laid on the groan, sizzling and sore. Her head flopped helplessly to her side as she wished her revenge plan had gone a little smoother. She didn’t have the energy to move.

All she did was just stare at the abandoned bag on the floor next to her head.

Kylo had Poe pinned to the ground, choking him with his bare hands. Poe fought against his grip but
Kylo was using the Force to his advantage. Kylo wasn’t squeezing hard enough to outright kill him, but definitely enough to make him suffer.

“And to think,” Kylo smirked, “you once thought we could be friends.”

Defiant to the last, Poe gasped out, “Why would I ever be friends with a monster like you?”

“Oh, you don’t even know why I’m a monster,” Kylo growled. He released Poe’s throat slightly, and bent in uncomfortably close to Poe, “How about this? How about I tell you a secret? A very, very dark secret. How about I tell you exactly what made Luke Skywalker break and walk away from everything he loves?”

Poe grunted, trying to shake Kylo off of him.

“How about I tell you…” Kylo whispered, “what I did to Felicity Rhiaon’s body?”

Poe stopped moving.

“What… What hap- You’re going to tell me what happened to her body?”

“Oh yes, Poe, after all you and I are such good friends,” he squeezed Poe throat. “Do you want to know the truth? Do you want to know what happened to her?”

Poe grunted, “Yes.”

“Say it.”

“Yes!”

“Tell me you want to know what happened,” Kylo demanded.

“I want to know what happened to Felicity Rhiaon’s body!” Poe exclaimed.

Kylo chuckled and eased up on his grip, just slightly but he was still choking Poe.

“Alright, Dameron, I tell you,” Kylo Ren smirked. “You see when we tied her up, beat her, made her paralyzed, tortured her, gagged her, made her beg for her life, and shoot her in the head… well, it wasn’t enough.”

“I can imagine, Poe said dully.

Kylo just shook his head, “So, I thought to myself, how can I do more? How can I give one final humiliation to this horrible woman, give her what she truly deserves, and end it all on a satisfying note? And then it hit me. Felicity Rhiaon wanted to be remembered for her participation in the Death Star, so I thought… why not give her her own Death Star adventure? …Except this time there was no C-3PO or R2-D2 to save her.”

Poe’s eyes widened.

Wait… did that mean…

“That’s right Poe Dameron, I threw Felicity Rhiaon in the trash compactor.”

Poe blinked.

Silence.
So still and solid a silence that not even the wind dared to blow.

“You…” Poe whispered, “you what?”

“I threw her in the trash compactor… and hit compact.”

He tried to stop it, but at those words, Poe threw up a little in his mouth. Kylo turned out to be gracious enough not to want him to die from choking on vomit, so he rolled Poe’s body on his side and released his throat. At first Kylo thought Poe might attack, but instead Poe gagged, cried, and panted as he processed the horrifying demise of one of his closest family friends.

And Kylo wanted to make sure he knew truly how horrifying it was.

“Imagine it,” Kylo whispered, “her body falling all that way down and down into murky cold water, darkness, jagged metal. Then the walls, that tremor and slow creak to her doom. No turning back, no changing what had been done. And then, walls reach her and start to press.”

Poe slammed his eyes shut trying to fight back the image.

“Imagine it, what happens when those walls crush her. Bones snapping, organs rupturing, insides becoming outsides as the walls mash her up until she’s nothing but bloody… soggy… pulp.”

A fleck of spit hit Poe in the face.

“And then I spaced her,” Kylo laughed. “I spaced the bitch so that Uncle Luke still couldn’t even have that much. Oh, and you know what happens to things that go into space.”

Poe’s fist tightened so hard he was shaking.

“I put Felicity Rhiaon right where she belonged. Where she’s always belonged. In the trash… right where Uncle Luke found her.”

Images of Felicity Rhiaon’s loving and kindness flashed through Poe’s mind. Images of Felicity holding her little Rey. Images of those simple kisses Luke liked to sneak from her. Images of that one corner upturned smirk that Poe would never see again.

Images of the woman who had been there after his own mother had been taken.

“We treated her exactly as she deserved,” Kylo continued to taunt. “He beat up that trash, forced her to her knees, and shot her in the head. Just like she deserved. Just like trash deserved.”

Kylo paused.

“…Just like your mother deserved.”

Poe slammed Kylo on the ground with the agility of a tiger and began punching him in the face as hard and as many times as physically possible. Kylo’s blood stained his fist, but Poe didn’t care about his promise to Kaydel.

Poe Dameron was ready to kill Kylo Ren.

If the Connix group plus Snap had gone down the left hallway, it would have led them to the gardens that held a camouflaged saferoom. That was where Katha, Telon, and Sage were hiding
until things died down.

The right hallway led them straight into the chaotic hotel lobby.

“Come on,” Kaydel lead them to hide behind a pillar that supported a grand staircase. The group panted as they tried to stay out of sight, “Okay… we need to make a plan.”

Before they could even get their bearings, a woman asked, “Would you like a suggestion, Dania?”

They heard the cock of a blaster and the snap hiss of three lightsabers.

Slowly, the group turned and saw Weevil with a blaster pointed at them, standing next to Sasa, Berd, and Doxl Ren, all ready to kill.

“I suggest you just surrender,” Sasa gave a sickly sweet smile.

“Come on, Sasa,” Kaydel faked a smiled. “I thought we were friends.”

“So did I, but it seems that-”

Sasa stopped, her eyes widened at something over Kaydel’s shoulder. Carefully, Kaydel turned around and she too stood in wide-eyed frozen shock.

There was a bomb planted on the pillar, only inches from Kaydel’s head.

“Get down!” Sasa and Kaydel shouted together.

But it was too late.

FN-2187 was very impressed the way Karé Kun was able to down hand-to-hand combat with his team. She was so impressive that no one really noticed when she backed him into the chair and he tripped.

He groaned. The damn man’s bag behind him had been left on the floor. His training kicked in, and in order to avoid being trampled by Karé and the others, FN-2187 crawled underneath the chairs and stayed still.

Then his eye caught sight of another bag. It was about ten chairs away but a completely identical bag.

Then he saw another, two rows back. And another three rows up and six to the left. And another. And another. And another.

His heart pounding, FN-2187 tore open the bag and confirmed his fear.

It was a remote activated explosive.

The place was rigged to blow.

FN-2187 scrambled as fast as he could from the chairs and tackled the first person he saw, ironically helping Kylo Ren as request by unintentionally knocking Poe Dameron to the floor.

Kylo leapt to his feet, “Two-One, where have you-”
And then he sensed it.

FN-2187 and Kylo Ren locked eyes, and they screamed in unison:

“EVERYBODY DOWN!”

Then in moment the survivors would claim to have passed in slow motion, the ballroom, hotel lobby, and garden pathway blew up.

Chapter End Notes

Coming Up Next Chapter…

A Momentary Truce
Crimson Dawn’s attack has left our heroes dead, damaged, and divided. As they struggle to find a way back to each other and off the planet, First Order and Resistance are forced to work as teams. But how long can patience last when Poe learns the identity of Sasa’s favorite bodyguard? How long can prejudice last when Kaydel notices something wrong with Sasa? And how long can Kes Dameron last before breaking into laughter when Han runs into his ex-girlfriend?

So, yeah, that’s what happened to Felicity. Ben Solo threw her in the trash compactor.

Doesn’t that make Han’s line later about throwing Phasma into the trash compactor so much more fun?
A Momentary Truce

Chapter Summary

Han Solo runs into his ex-girlfriend, Evan Tharel yells at a lot of people, and someone loses a leg, leading to a questionable battlefield medical decision.

Chapter Notes

Due to popular request, the summary of this story has been changed to reflect the fact that TFA doesn't come into the story into much, much later than originally advertised. I'm sorry, when I originally wrote the summary, I genuinely thought it wouldn't take so long.

Sorry for stalling between updates. There was about thirty-three characters moving between about ten locations and certain characters couldn't meet, and so and so died and character X had this injury, and there's this problem to solve, and this room is located next to this room.

I had to write out about six different versions of just plotting where everyone was and where they were going. I kid you not, I drew a map and used Lego to figure this out.

Oh God, I saw Mamma Mia: Here We Go Again and the whole time I watched Hugh Skinner as young Harry, all I could think is "that is Evan. What is Evan doing?" So if I randomly make Evan Tharel sing Waterloo, just ignore me. Also, I am officially addicted to the show he stars in, The Windsors. If you haven't seen it, go do that right now.

Not going to lie, this opening scene is one of my most favorite things I have ever written.

Trigger Warning for descriptions of gore in this chapter as people are being vividly described as killed via blowing up. There are also particularly brutal depictions of questionable battlefield first aid. Also, there is some brief discussion of drug use and a character having track marks. Finally there are some hints in a Force vision about Sasa suffering child abuse. I will warn you that that is an endgame piece of her background: she was physically abused as child at an age even younger than Rey was. Please let me know if this is triggering for you, and I can work out a way to accommodate you (such as giving you skip markers or even rewriting portions of chapters. Whatever you need.)

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

The Long Way Home

Chapter Fifty-Three

A Momentary Truce
Poe Dameron was dead.

He was lying on the floor of the ballroom dead.

He had to be dead. He couldn't be in so much pain and not be dead.

Well… actually he had been in this much pain before and survived. When he crashed his ship back when he was seventeen.

Of course, back then he had been on fire.

Was he on fire now?

…Maybe.

He couldn't tell.

His leg did tingle.

Poe Dameron was dead.

He had been killed by a bomb during an undercover mission gone wrong.

He had been fighting Kylo Ren when the blast knocked him to the ground.

A blast that yelled "get down."

…Wait. Blasts couldn't yell.

No, wait, that was right. He had been knocked down by a person. A black Stormtrooper had yelled for him to get down and pushed him out of the way.

That was a nice gesture.

It was probably only because Poe had been fighting Kylo Ren.

Kylo Ren. The murderer. The monster.

Ben Solo. His once upon a time long gone friend.

Kylo Solo.

Ben Ren.

Kylo Ben.

Ren Solo.

The monster who had thrown Felicity Rhiaon down a trash compactor.

Leia would be devastated.

She would also be devastated that Poe Dameron had died.

Poe Dameron was dead.
He screwed up this mission with his hatred for Ben Solo.
At least he took Kylo Ren with him.
Except he could hear Kylo breathing raggedly next to him.
Wait, how could he hear Kylo breathing?
Unless Kylo wasn't dead.
But how could a dead tell man tell if Kylo was breathing?
Unless…

Poe Dameron wasn't dead.
But he was about to be.
He could hear the crackle of fire and the cries of agony.
He could smell the burning of flesh and the air of smoke.
He could taste the flecks of ash and drip of blood.
He could feel the coldness of tile and the shards of shrapnel.
He could see nothing.

Poe Dameron wasn't dead.
But he was about to be.
So close. So close to the end.
So close to seeing his mother again.
He hoped she was proud.
Dad would be devastated, but he would be with them someday.
Poe just hoped his father would watch over Kaydel for him.

Kaydel.

Kaydel Ko Connix.
The woman he loved.
The woman pretending to be his wife.
The woman he wanted to be his wife.
Where was Kaydel?
Kaydel was gone.

Was she okay? Had she been hit by the bombs?
How far did the bombs hit? How far had they been rigged?

He had others with him.


They could be hurt.

They could be dead.

None were his concern.

Not in that moment.

**Only Kaydel.**

Where was Kaydel?

Was she hurt?

Was she worse?

Poe Dameron wasn't dead.

Kaydel Ko Connix *might* be.

His heart cried out at the thought.

His body made no move to prevent the grief.

Poe Dameron wasn't dead.

But he was close.

So close. Too close.

All he had to do was give in.

Give in to death and see his mother again.

Give in to death and see Kaydel again.

Unless she wasn't dead.

Poe Dameron wasn't dead.

Kaydel Ko Connix might not be either.

But Poe Dameron was almost dead.

It would be so easy to die.

Too easy.

It was living that was the struggle.

It was too hard to fight death.
Poe Dameron wasn't dead.
But he was about to be.
Poe Dameron wasn't dead.
He was going to be.
He had no choice.
…No.
Kaydel.
No, he wouldn't die.
He had to find Kaydel.
He had to get up.
Poe Dameron wasn't dead.
Kaydel Ko Connix might not be either.
He had to get up.
Get up.
Get up, Poe.
You have to get up.
Wake up, Poe.
You have to wake up.
Poe, wake up.
Come on, Poe.
Poe, wake up.
Wake up, Poe.
Wake up!

"Wake up!"
Poe jolted awake.
"Wake up, Poe! Wake up!" Karé was screaming in his face as she shook him hard.
"I'm up," Poe groaned, pushing her away from him. "I'm okay."
"Oh, thank God," Karé exhaled deeply, shifting back on her knees. "You're okay. Your cheek is sliced open and you're bleeding heavy from the arms, and your face is… you're going to be very
upset when you look in the mirror, but the Stormtrooper who knocked you down protected you mostly from the from the blast. I couldn't find any shrapnel on you-

"Yeah, I'm fine, Karé," Poe took a series of deep breaths but coughed as smoke filled his lungs. "Though my legs really hurt. You have any idea why?"

Karé couldn't find the words, instead her eyes drifted down his charred pant leg and Poe discovered the truth.

"Was I on fire?" Poe exclaimed.

"Little bit," Karé nodded. She grimaced as she moved her arm which was torn up and bloody. "But I put you out. Mostly your clothing burned but your legs may have first degree burns. Other than that, you seem to be fine."

Poe just sighed and shook his head, "What about you?"

"Pretty good, except for the arm, and well…"

Karé pulled a face and looked down. Poe's eyes followed hers. Embedded in her leg was a nasty piece of metal.

"I can still move," Karé's face was covered in ash and blood, chunks of her hair burnt off too. "But it's painful."

"Don't take it out until we can get Evan to help you," Poe advised. He started to sit up as he struggled to clear the smoke from his lungs. "It may hurt, but it's going to be a bigger problem if you pull it out."

Karé cringed as she shifted her leg, "Now here's hoping Evan is alright."

Poe's stomach dropped as he thought about Evan and Paige. He couldn't muse that long as he suddenly started coughing so hard his face started to turn red.

"Keep low," a man's voice ordered. "There's a lot of smoke."

Poe looked over to see the black Stormtrooper who had knocked him down. The man was crouched over the body of Kylo Ren trying to rouse him.

The Stormtrooper was as shredded and bloody as them, but Kylo looked pretty untouched. He must of used the Force to protect himself. The only mark on him was a very large and bloody spot on his forehead where it looked like something had slammed into his head, knocking him out.

"Master Kylo," the man urged as he shook Kylo. "Come on, wake up. Wake up for me. Wake up for Sasa."

Kylo was breathing… but he wasn't waking.

"What?" Poe blinked as he pulled up his shirt to cover his mouth as a pseudo-filter for the smoke. He need to collect his bearings, "What happened?"

"Bombing," the black Stormtrooper said. "This place was rigged. Explosives placed under the chairs. There were some guys in here trying to trap us all. They're all dead now."

"What about the other people in the room?" Poe asked. "Your soldiers and our… Karé, where's Jaina?"
The Stormtrooper and Karé exchanged a look.

"Well…" Karé struggled to start, "um, Jaina was right next to one of the bombs and I… uh… well, I found her over there."

Karé gestured towards the shattered pile of ballroom chairs that was ablaze. Poe's stomach shifted when he realized that wasn't the end of Karé's answer. Taking a deep breath, Karé turned and pointed to a different spot across the room.

"And I found the rest of her over there," Karé said quickly. She bowed her head, "I'm sorry, Poe. Jaina Fel has been killed in action."

Clenching his fist, Poe slammed his eyes shut but forced back a sob.

"She… She died honorably," Poe struggled to say. He didn't know her well, but he never took losing someone on a mission well. He looked to the Stormtrooper, "What about your men?"

The Stormtrooper's face fell

"Well… two of mine survived," he indicated to two men huddled together bloody, broken but still alive. Then he pointed to a body lying on the floor, "I… uh…"

The Stormtrooper cleared his throat, trying to fight back tears.

Poe put his hand on the Stormtrooper's shoulder, "It's okay."

"I lost one," he choked out. The Stormtrooper hung his head, "He- He's gone."

"Your friend?" Poe rubbed the man's shoulder slightly to try and comfort him.

"Yeah," the Stormtrooper nodded. "Uh… Slip. He was never really the top of the class, but he was my teammate."

"I'm sorry for your loss."

Karé touched the Stormtrooper's other arm, "I am too. It's okay. You don't need to playact in front of us. Kylo doesn't need to know."

"What the hell are you two doing?"

Poe and Karé's heads snapped over to see Kylo Ren sitting up and looking very confused.

"Oh good, you're up," Poe said sarcastically.

Kylo narrowed his eyes at Poe.

"Two-One!" Kylo snapped and pointed to his side. "Here! Now!"

Quickly and quietly, FN-2187 obeyed.

"Report," Kylo ordered.

"FN-2199 and FN-2000 survived the bombing. All three of us have minimal injuries… FN-2003 was killed in action."

If Kylo noticed the sadness in FN-2187's voice, he didn't comment, "And the Resistance group?"
"Those two lived," FN-2187 pointed to Poe and Karé. "The other girl was killed."

"The oth-" Kylo frozen. For a moment, something very sad and contemplative passed over Ben Solo's face. "Jaina Fel… is dead?"

Poe nodded.

Whatever it was that Ben Solo felt, he fought very hard not to let Poe and the others see it. Maybe not full remorse, but there was something about Jaina dying that hurt Ben.

And then just as quickly as the moment came did Kylo Ren push it away.


Poe raised an eyebrow at the desperate way he asked the last name.

"I… um…" FN-2187 looked sad and frightened, "I can't get a hold of her. All comms are being blocked, and I'm not… strong enough to sense her."

Poe expected there to be a reprimand or an explosion of anger. Instead he was surprised by Kylo turning his attention instantly to reaching out into the Force. The whisper of Sasa slid from his lips as Ben Solo's eyelids blocked him from distraction and he focused his all of his energy into searching for that copper-haired beauty.

A smile quirked Poe's lips. Interesting… Sasa Ren was Kylo's first priority. Poe didn't know what to do with this information, but he was sure the Resistance could find a way.

"What do you see?" FN-2187 asked.

Kylo waited a second, and as the vision came to him, he whispered the name, "Sasa."

---

She was facedown on the ground, chunks of a staircase pinning her to the marble floor of what used to be a grand lobby. A blonde girl – Dameron's – was next to her and not moving.

Sasa was alive, but her breathing was ragged. Kylo could feel the pain coursing through her body; that numbness, the throbbing, the slight burning in her leg and collarbone.

"Sasa," he whispered her name.

It seemed enough to rouse her.

"Kylo," she moaned, her eyes fluttering open far too slowly.

Then came a cry of pain as she tried to move. He felt her weakly reaching for him in the Force and he held on to her presence as tightly as possible.

Kylo wished he could send Alyla to Sasa for comfort and help – the other Knights of Ren knew of his ghost but were wise enough not to ask questions. However, in order to get some peace during the trip he had allowed her to go visit the boy she called "her child" and thus was out of his reach at the moment.

Feeling secure enough that Sasa was at the very least alive, Kylo reached out to see who was around her that could help. He couldn't put names to most colours. Orange blossom was unconscious. Fallow was just barely stirring. Persimmon was having a panic attack. Smoke was in immense pain. Salmon and Oxblood were nowhere to be found.
He narrowed in on Russet.

"Berd," Kylo reached to the russet Signature. "Berd, do you hear me?"

The russet Signature pressed back against the Forest Green in acknowledgement.

"Help Sasa," Kylo ordered.

Then he saw Berd obeying.

"It's okay," he whispered as he helped prop Sasa up.

She was crying in pain as Berd observed the safest way to rescue her. It was one thing to have something fall on you, but a crash injury... sometimes removing the obstacle would lead to immediate death.

"Well?" Kylo demanded. "How is she?"

"...I think I can help her," Berd said. His hand stroked his shoulder and the other cupped her neck. "All I need to do is-"

The vision cut out.

Kylo couldn't sense Sasa or Berd anymore.

"Well?" the female Resistance soldier pushed.

He shot her a derisive look, "What are my visions to you?"

"Are you kidding me?" she shot back.

"God, Solo," Poe looked absolutely shocked at Ben's callousness. "We just want to know about our people. Are they safe? Are they alive?"

"What are their Force Signature colours?"

Poe frowned at him, "I'm not sure."

"Then how am I supposed to help you?" Kylo shot.

Poe opened his mouth to argue but stopped. Ben did have a point.

"Can you at least tell us if these explosions were confined solely to the ballroom?" Karé asked.

"Of course," Kylo said.

There was a pause as Poe and Karé waited for him to elaborate further. Kylo just smirked as they realized he wouldn't.

"You're a dick," Karé glowered.

FN-2187 looked between Kylo and the Resistance soldiers awkwardly.

"Master Ren?" he dared to ask. "What of our people?"

Kylo glanced at FN-2187, "Weevil's dead. I can't sense the other Knights of Ren, but I'm not certain
if they've been killed. I was able to touch Sasa and Berd, but... something cut us off. We need to connect to their comms."

"I've tried," FN-2187 said, "like I said, something's jamming the signal."

"All comm signals," Karé added. "We can't contact our people either, which is a pity considering we brought a medical officer with us... and then sent him away from the fighting. Why did we think that was a good idea?"

"We didn't exactly expect the ballroom to blow up. Jaina said that Kation was using a blocker." Poe looked at the debris of what used to be the ballroom, "It'll be hell to find it among the rubble."

Kylo frowned, "That's odd... the Connix family don't typically use blockers. Captain Anthea wants us to able to contact her the second they break our deals."

"Looks like they wanted to break it in a major way this time."

"Excuse me?" Kylo glared at Poe. "You're seriously pinning this on me?"

"Nobody knew we were here," Poe shot back. "This has to be your doing."

"The First Order is well aware of threats like this and deal with them before they come to head. We were not the targets of this attack."

"Oh, I don't think you were the targets. I think you were the one targeting. Bombing a weapons conference seems right up the First Order's ally."

Kylo scoffed, "You would think I would do something as awful as this?"

There was a dark look that fell on Poe's face that Kylo Ren did not like one bit.

"Do I think you would do something as awful as this?" Poe repeated slowly. "Do I think you would do something as awful as this? You son of a bitch! You burned down Rornian, you slaughtered the Jedi, you hunted down Rey and Felicity like dogs, you shot Felicity in the head and threw her in the trash compactor, you mangled Diego Nalto because he called out your granddaddy issues, you tortured my girlfriend in front of me to get me to surrender, you gassed your own mother, you disfigured Reine Agim's face, murdered in cold blood the one woman who never gave up on you, and tried to murder your five-year-old cousin! Do I think you would do something as awful as this? What the FUCK do you think my answer is going to be?"

"Oh don't you dare stand there and try to act like the good guy. It's all my fault, isn't it? No one else is to blame about everything that has happened, isn't that right?" Kylo scoffed, "You just can't admit the truth: that if Rhiaon had just stayed on Rornian with Skywalker, their daughter might still be alive. That if all your friends weren't just sitting on their asses during the search, maybe one of them might have actually followed the Jakku lead and find them in time. Hey, maybe if you had thought it a cause worth joining you might have been able to find them instead of lollygagging in the day Skywalker learned his daughter died. Go ahead, stand there and blame me all you want... but let's not forget that you were the one who last spoke to Skywalker before he left. What exactly was it that you said to him that made him leave."

"Don't pin that on me. You killed his kid and wife, and threw Felicity's body in the trash compactor. You destroyed everything he cared about!"

"And yet... he didn't leave until he talked to you. So tell me, Dameron... what do you say?"
The memory was forced to the forefront of his mind. Poe couldn't stop himself to agonizing over the scene that had haunted him for years. What was the sentence that triggered Luke?

"Is it true what they're saying about Felicity? She's gone too?"

Luke nodded as he lowered his head, trying not to let Poe see his tears. BB-8 watching from the corner made a sad noise.

Poe sighed and dropped his own head, "I'm sorry. She was a good friend to me and my family. If you need anything at all."

"I know," Luke gave Poe a smile, but Poe could see the pain and falseness behind it. "Thank you."

He wanted so much to find a way to help Luke.


"Wait, can you give this to Leia?" Luke handed Poe the data chip with the Temple blueprints.

"Of course. Take care of yourself, Luke."


**Take care of yourself, Luke.**

Poe had told Luke to take care of himself, and that's exactly what he did. He thought only of himself and left everyone else to struggle to cope. Because of Poe, Luke Skywalker had decided to only take care of himself.

It was all his fault.

"Take care of yourself, Luke," Kylo chuckled. "Well, he certainly has done that, hasn't he?"

Poe's eyes widened as she realized why the memory had surfaced. Kylo Ren was picking through his mind.

"You know, I should thank you, Poe," Kylo continued to laugh. "Because of you and you alone, Luke Skywalker is not an issue anymore. He's broken. Beaten. He's never coming back."

Poe punched Kylo as hard as physically possible.

Kylo landed on the floor. He let out a growl and grabbed his lightsaber. Poe advanced forward as Kylo leapt to his feet, thumb over his ignition button.

"ENOUGH!" Karé screamed.

Suddenly the men were yanked away from each other, FN-2187 pulling Kylo and Karé dragging Poe.

"Enough!" she repeated. "Enough with this fighting!"

"Let me go," Kylo ordered FN-2187.
"Don't you dare!" Karé snapped. She gave Poe a rough jerk back as he fought against her, "And that's enough from you too."

"Let me at him," Poe growled.

"No! Listen to me! I get it, you two have a history and guilt and has done some pretty terrible things. I get it. But this is a waste of time. Out there right now are the people we love, and we don't know if they're even alive. This isn't our doing. This wasn't the Resistance and this wasn't the First Order. Someone is targeting either one or both of us. We're all injured. My leg is killing me, maybe even literally. But we have no communications, no medical help, no idea what's going on… what we do have is each other. I don't care who killed who or what eighteen-year-old Poe Dameron said to a grieving man. What matters right now is surviving this, and the only way we can go so is by working together. So please… for the sake of my husband, for the sake of Kaydel, for the sake of that girl both of you guys are so clearly infatuated with-

Kylo and FN-2187 exchanged an awkward look.

"For the sake of the ones who just died," Karé looked over to where the bodies of Jaina Fel and Slip lay, "…can we put this all aside for one day and just figure out a way to get out of here?"

Poe and Kylo had relaxed in the arms of their captors, but neither looked thrilled at the idea of a truce.

"And what happens afterwards?" Poe asked. "If we agree to help them, what happens when the threat is dealt with?"

"I'm not saying we have to end the war," Karé answered, "far from it… but can't we just a timeout?"

Poe sighed and looked over at Kylo, "I'm willing to make the call if it means saving my people. What about you? Or is this just some new Faclov gambit?"

Kylo's mouth was a thin line, "We are not the Empire."

"That's exactly right!" a voice shouted across the room.

All heads whipped towards the main entrance where about twenty soldiers were flooding into the room. The emergency exit leading into the gardens was nothing more than a pile of rubble and completely blocked off. Poe turned to the back exit where Kaydel and co had disappeared down. Even more soldiers – about ten – were blocking that exit.

The soldiers were pretty non-descript, a motley of brown, black, and grey pieces from a hundred different outfits cobbled together in similar enough looking outfits. Some looked a little less military than the rest, their weapons and gear too complicated and customized to be a uniform.

"Bounty hunters?" Poe whispered.

"Bounty hunters, mercenaries, workers of various crime syndicates," Kylo Ren had seen enough shady criminals thanks to his father to know the difference.

They were surrounded by the soldiers, all of them wearing the Imperial symbol somewhere on their bodies – necklaces, shirts, hats, tattoos, arm bands, or wherever else they could find a spot. Weapons were raised to Kylo, Poe, Karé, FN-2187, Nines, and Zeroes, but none of them moved to surrender.

"Look what we have here," the Leader – aka the one who had shouted across the room – grinned at Poe. "This one is that Resistance pilot, isn't he? The one with Rebel parents."

The Leader spat in his face.

Poe barely flinched, "That wasn't very nice."

"Who are you people?" Kylo demanded, his hand resting on his lightsaber but not yet moving to use it.

His other hand slipped to the other hip and Poe was surprised to see that Kylo was also carrying a blaster. Poe grinned a little. Apparently being the son of Han Solo wasn't something you could shake off entirely. Considering how well Han Solo and Kes Dameron had worked together in the war, maybe a truce between their sons wasn't the worst idea.

"We are the true believers," the Leader gave Kylo a haughty look. "We are the Emperor's men. We fight to restore the galaxy back to its glory and take it from the hands of the usurpers who killed our beloved monarch."

"So, Imperial Loyalists," Kylo said simply.

The Leader frowned a little at that, "We seek to return to the ways of the old. The galaxy was united under the Imperial, under Emperor Palpatine. Not this pretender, Snoke."

"Palpatine was short-sighted. The Supreme Leader knows how to rule with both love and fear. The First Order does not crush the galaxy like Darth Sidious did. He only chooses the best to be at his side, not like Sidious who used apprentices who fit a single need. The Knights of Ren are capable in every aspect and obey his every order."

"Obeying orders?" the Leader scoffed. "That's rich coming from the grandson of a murderer. Ben Solo, as the grandson of the traitor Darth Vader, he who plunged a lightsaber through the back of our glorious and merciful leading, I bestow his crimes onto you as his heir and sentence you to die for them."

"Oh, look at that, they're making you the heir of Darth Vader," Poe teased, "just what you've always wanted."

"And you," the Leader turned to Poe, "son of Shara Bey and Kes Dameron--"

"Call me Poe."

"I bestow the crimes of your parents upon you and sentence you to die for them. You and all of your companions."

"Is that so?" Poe smirked. He looked to Ben, "Well, it seems we've in a bit of a pickle."

"Indeed," Kylo's eyes flicked about the room. Then he met eyes with FN-2187 and nodded.

FN-2187 nodded back.

Kylo shifted his weight, still not moving for his weapon as many blasters were turned on him. Poe caught Karé's eye, but he too did nothing as a pair of men grabbed him the same time another pair grabbed Kylo.

"Ben Solo and Poe Dameron, you will be executed immediately in the name of the Magnificent
Emperor Palpatine," the Leader said. "If you wish to go to the next world with a clean conscience, you may now confess your family's crimes."

Kylo just smiled, "Hey, Dameron?"

"Yes, Solo?" Poe replied casually as his arms were forced behind his back.

"Remember that move Skywalker and Rhiaon liked to do?"

"One, Two, Flip?"

"Yep."

"I remember."

"Good."

"Ben Solo and Poe Dameron," the Leader said, "may the Force have mercy on your souls."

He lifted his blaster.

Kylo ripped his hand from his captor's grip and used the Force to whip the blaster from the Leader and fling it to Karé.

"Now, Dameron!" Kylo yelled as Karé, FN-2187, Nines, and Zeroes opened fire on the Loyalists.

Poe and Kylo moved in perfect harmony. They bashed their elbows into their captors' solar plexuses. Both captors groaned and lurched forward only to have their heads slammed down to the floor. Then Kylo turned to face Poe, who put one hand on top the other and crouched down. Without a thought, Kylo stepped onto his hands and Poe thrust him up into a high leap. Kylo's foot smashed into the Leader's face and knocked him to the ground. The Leader groaned and started to sit up, but Poe shot him dead.

"Nice kick," Poe complimented as he shot down another soldier.

"Nice shot," Kylo lit his lightsaber and blocked a dozen blaster bolts aiming for his head.

His eyes widened fractionally, and suddenly he stabbed at Poe. Poe flinched but realized a second later that Kylo had actually aimed over his shoulder. The blade wasn't skewering Poe but rather a man who had been sneaking up behind Poe.

"Thanks," Poe said.

"Don't mention it," Kylo said.

"Of course not," Poe chuckled.

Kylo grabbed his shoulder, "No seriously, don't mention it. I have a reputation to maintain."

"Whatever you say compactor boy," Poe just shook his head. "Just know I will be informing your mother how into recycling you proved to be. Tell me, do corpses of your aunt-in-law go in the blue bin or green bin?"

Kylo shuddered at the thought of his mother finding out what he had done to Felicity.

It took about ten minutes, but soon enough the floor was littered with the bodies of all the Imperial
Loyalists. Poe, Karé, Kylo, FN-2187, Nines, and Zeroes barely had a scratch more than their initial explosion injuries, though Zeroes was getting quite dizzy from his head wound.

"Well, that was fun," Karé said, panting a little as she double checked that everyone was indeed dead.

"Don't start the celebration," Kylo replied, "I sense more coming."

"Sir?" Nines shot Zeroes a confused glance, "what about the Resistance soldiers? Are we taking them into custody?"

Kylo sighed and looked at Poe, "I think working together is what's best for the moment. The higher our numbers, the safer we are."

"So what exactly are you saying?" Poe asked.

"I'm willing to offer a truce. A momentary truce. Once we have our people all accounted for, then things are back to normal. I can take you into custody and you can try to take us prisoner."

"I cannot wait to drag your ass back to your mother and see what she does to you," Poe smirked. "But you're right, a momentary truce is what's best."

Poe holstered his blaster and offered Kylo his hand to shake.

"Ben Solo, do we have a truce?"

Kylo grabbed it, "Deal."

They shook on it.

"Okay," Poe instantly dropped his hand. He wanted to touch this monster as little as possible. "Let's get to work. Do you know which way the others are going to come from, Solo?"

"I sense people from both the main entrance and the back exit. The side emergency exit is too blocked off to pursue our other people."

"Can't you do that with the Force?"

"I'd rather save my energy for fighting the inevitable fight than lifting rocks."

"Alright, I'll give you that."

"So, can we just make a break for it out the main doors?" Karé asked.

"Not quite," Kylo shook his head. "We're going to just trap ourselves if we go the long way around, but the back exit has a shortcut to the lobby which is where I saw Sasa at the very least, so that will be our best bet. But first what we need to do is find the comm blocker in this room and disable it."

"If it's even in the room," Poe pointed out.

"In case there's something wrong with the machine, who is the most tech savvy here?" FN-2187 asked.

"I've got a pretty good handle on machines," Karé raised her hand. "Sure, I'm no Jessika, but gotta work with what we have."
Everyone has to be able to do with the least one other job, in case someone gets hurt or killed during a mission.

- The Journal of Paige Tico

"You should team up with Ren," Poe nodded to Kylo. "He's got the Skywalker touch with mechanics. I can lead the defense."

"Sounds good to me," Kylo nodded. He looked to Karé, "What's your name?"

"Karé," she replied.

"How bad are your injuries?"

"Pretty banged up and got some shrapnel in the leg, but I can still fight for a while before passing out. Besides, I'm not fainting until I know the one I love is okay."

Kylo thought of Sasa, "Yeah... I get that."

Poe scowled and glanced at the black Stormtrooper. He just made a dramatic shaking head motion clearly signalling Poe not to ask questions.

"Okay..." Poe looked a little uncomfortable. "Ren, the main entrance will have more people coming through it?"

"Yes. Nines and Zeros, you should cover the back." Kylo nodded to FN-2187, "You're my best man, so you help Dameron with the front."

"Yes, Sir," FN-2187 saluted.

"Alright," Kylo went into battle mode. "There's a group heading our way at this moment. Karé and I will look for the machine and shut it down. When I gave the all clear signal we go out the back exit and make our way to the lobby. That's where I sense most of the others."

"Their Signatures are back?" FN-2187 asked. "Are they reaching out to you?"

Their eyes met and Kylo understood that FN-2187 was truly asking about Sasa.

"No," Kylo's voice was quiet. "I can't sense them at all."

Thinking of Kaydel, Poe's tongue touched the tooth with the Holo projector of her image.

He could do nothing but simply hope she wasn't dead.

Kaydel Ko Connix should be dead.

Instead she woke gasping, bleeding, and confused under the rubble of what used to be a grand staircase.

She should be dead. She was standing right next to a bomb that went off. By all accounts she would be dead.

Why wasn't she dead?
Kaydel panted as she surveyed the scene of devastation surrounding her. She had been standing right next to the bomb. How had she survived?

And then she remembered. Not only was she standing next to the bomb… she was also standing next to three Force Sensitives standing next to a bomb about to explode.

It had happened so fast; the blink of an eye, just a flash of white light. Three Force Sensitives had used their abilities to chuck that bomb – and any others within reach – away from them. Kaydel – standing next to them – just so happened to benefit from the situation.

Of course, whipping the bombs away didn't completely solve the problem. In fact, it seemed to make things a little worse personally for the group. The explosion's location had been the perfect spot to bring down the staircase. It had been a chunk of stone that hit Kaydel in the head and knocked her out.

Kaydel groaned as she struggled to stay sitting up. A wave of nausea and dizziness swarmed her, and she instinctively laid back down. Her hand went to her forehead and her fingers felt the sticky drip of blood. She had no mirror but the pain that pulsed through her body told her that her visage was a mess.

She wanted to just close her eyes and go to sleep.

No! Kaydel refused the thought, forcing her eyes to stay open. She had to get back to Aletha. To Paige.

To Poe.

Oh God, Poe. What if he was dead?

"I'll be fine. I promise."

"You can't promise that."

"Yes, I can. Remember. 108."

Kaydel took a deep breath and remembered. 108. If there was a man who would fight, charm, and trick his way to 108-years-old, it was Poe Dameron.

And Kaydel Ko Connix was determined to make it as far to that with him as possible.

Poe Dameron was alive.

So, she gathered her strength and forced herself to sit back up.

Kaydel couldn't hear anything beyond the ringing of her ears, her hearing deafened temporarily by the explosion. But her sight was as perfect as ever, and everywhere she looked, she saw total devastation. The people who had crowded the lobby were in shambles. Bloody, broken, even dead. It was a scene straight from a horror movie.

As a member of the Communications team, Kaydel didn't see much action on the battlefield or the grizzly injuries wheeled into the Medical Center. She could barely handle watching the destruction before her. Kaydel didn't know if it was from her head injury or the awfulness before her, but when she saw a mother holding a young boy – no more than seven years old – who was now missing a
leg... she promptly lurched forward and threw up the contents of her stomach.

Then her ears crackled and the screams that filled her senses would haunt her to the rest of her days.

She wished she hadn't woken up.

"Help! Someone help!"

Kaydel's head slowly turned to the side. She was shocked to see that redhead Knight of Ren not far from her. She was pinned under some pieces of the staircase. Her body was twisted like she had moved to shield it. Her leg and collarbone were the victims, and the woman was crying in pain.

It was strange to see a monster of the First Order shedding tears.

One of the Knights of Ren – Berd if she recalled correctly – was trying to pry the rubble off her. He couldn't lift it and he was the one crying for help.

It would be easy to just leave them there, let nature take care of the problem and live in a world where there was one less Dark Side user. Yet there Kaydel Ko Connix was, pushing herself to her feet and stumbling forward to help.

"What happened?" Kaydel felt so woozy as she collapsed to her knees next to Sasa and Berd.

Berd looked surprised at her arrival, "She got hit but I think the Force protected her enough that it's still safe to free her."

"Any doctors around?"

"If there are they're busy with other people," Berd gestured to the scene of chaos. He was right, there were some people giving what medical assistance they could, but the screaming children of the lobby were their foremost attention, as they should be.

"So we need to lift this?" Kaydel positioned herself at the pinning rubble. She scanned Sasa for further injuries, trying to conjure up all the medical advice Aletha had ever imparted on her. "Why don't you use the Force?"

"We've tried," Sasa moaned, "but something's blocking us and we don't have the strength to do it."

"What about the other Knight? Can he help?"

Sasa and Berd exchanged a look. Together they pointed towards a man on the ground not far from them. It was Doxl Ren... bloody and unmoving.

"We lost him," Sasa said quietly.

Kaydel squeezed her eyes shut, struggling so hard against her feelings of sympathy. It wasn't wrong to be empathetic, but if anyone deserved a fate like this... No. No one deserved this.

"I'm sorry," Kaydel said quietly. She took a deep breath, "Okay, I'm going to help you. You grip that end and I'll grab this one. Okay... on the count of three. One... Two... Three... Lift!"

Berd and Kaydel groaned and used all their strength, but they didn't have enough to make it budge.

"We're almost there," Kaydel's voice strained, "we just need a little more-"

Her eyes fell on a man buried in the rubble.
"Snap!"

His head shot up. He smiled when he saw her, but his face was contorted in pain.

"Kaydel!" he exclaimed. "You're okay! Poe's not going to kill me!"

"No, he isn't. And Karé wont kill me!" Kaydel smiled in relief. "Come over here and help us!"

"Kaydel, I can't."

"No, it's okay."

"No, really, Kaydel, I can't."

"Just crawl over!"

"Kaydel, my leg is-"

"I got it," suddenly Dacken was crouched next to her, helping lift. He was bloody, his clothing scorched, had bad burns on his arms, and half the blonde hair on his scalp had been singed off.

"What- What happened to you?" Kaydel stared at him in shock.

"I caught on fire," Dacken gripped the rubble. "We even now?"

Kaydel rolled her eyes, then they fell on a series of large, red, puncture scars on his arm, "What about that?"

"Oh don't worry, just track marks."

She stared at him.

"Aunt Kayko, I'm a drug addict. Yeah, I got track marks. Can we discuss this later?"

"Right," Kaydel shook her head. "Come on, let's lift."

The three of them groaned as they raised the rubble off Sasa and set it aside. They made quick work of the second piece. Sasa was free, but she was sobbing in pain.

"It's okay," Berd crouched next to her. He stroked the back of her neck, "Let me take a look."

"No. It hurts," Sasa cried as he gently pushed on her collarbone and leg.

"I can imagine. I think they're broken. You just stay put. We don't want it to get worse."

"You're being kind," Kaydel said.

"If anything happens to her, Kylo Ren will behead me," Berd replied bluntly. "I very much enjoy having my head on my shoulders."

Kaydel blinked, "Fair enough."

"Aunt Kayko," Dacken touched her arm. "Look I know you don't like us, but I need your help. It's Grandpa Timor."

"I don't want anything to do with him," she said instantly.
"Kayko, he is missing half his face. Personal feelings aside, Grandma Adrinna will murder both of us if we don't help."

She sighed and glanced about the room, "Okay, but I'm going to need your shirt."

"Half of it's burnt off anyway," Dacken shrugged and pulled it over his head. His body was charred and thin. There were more track marks scarring him and on his back it looked like he had whip scars.

"What happened to you?" Kaydel whispered.

"Some bad stuff," he tossed her his shirt. "Now what do we do?"

Kaydel said nothing but started to pull up her shirt.

"No! No! Stop!" Dacken covered his eyes. "Our family's screwed up, but we're not moving into incest."

"I'm not doing that!" She smacked his arm but flinched when it hit one of his burns and he howled in pain, "Sorry."

"It's okay," he whimpered holding his arm. "We gotta be even by now though."

"Let's talk about it later. Now, go to that couch," she pointed to a pile of splinter, fabric, and stuffing that used to be a beautiful couch, "and get me some stuffing."

He ran off to do so.

"Kaydel!" Snap called for her. "My leg."

"In a minute!" she yelled.

Kaydel ignored whatever Snap called next; he was far away enough to be tuned out. She lifted her shirt and revealed that wound and tied around her torso were a few yards of bandages and a small white pouch clipped around her waist.

"What's that?" Dacken asked as he returned with an armful of stuffing.

"Aunt Ally insists I always carry bandages and some medicine with me on missions," Kaydel started rolling the bandages off her. With her other hand, she fumbled in the little pouch and pulled out a few sachets of aloe vera, "Here. Put these on your burns. It'll help… I think. I don't know. Aunt Ally's the doctor, not me. I think I should call her."

Dacken shook his head, "The comms are all being blocked. No one can call for help. No one can even tell the New Republic."

"This wasn't an accident. There's something more going on here."

"There's been some claims about Imperial Loyalists. Makes sense, Ben Solo is here to make an example-"

"No," Kaydel cut off. "Something else is happening. Earlier this week Sasa told me that Kylo Ren wasn't supposed to be here, and nobody knew about the Resistance being here either. It's a front, but I don't understand what for."

She glanced over at Berd who was tending to the dead body of the Stormtrooper, Weevil.
Berd was oddly uninjured.

"Come on," Kaydel slowly got to her feet, eyes not moving from Berd, "let's go save my father."

They took off across the lobby, not hearing Snap's yells after them.

Kaydel would come to regret not paying attention.

"I cannot believe you people!" Rose exclaimed, the idolization of her war heroes slipping. "Four grown adults, and not one of you thinks to call the Resistance for back up?"

"Rah ro gree rwah!" Waroo added, shooting his father a look. He looked very much like his father but had his mother's snout, streaks of black fur, and was a little taller than his father – not that anyone ever dared tell that to Chewbacca's face.

Chewie tried to explain, "Roo gra roar-"

Waroo cut him off, "Arr ragh rawr rah groo graw!"

Chewbacca had no retort.

Kes and Shayna just exchanged a pained look.

"All this growling is terrible for my hangover," Kes moaned.

"Agreed," Shayna nodded.

"I get it, Daisy or whatever your name is, we screwed up," Han rubbed his temples wishing this little girl would stop yelling at him. He already had a Princess to do that. "But why didn't you call them either?"

"I thought you guys had already done so!" Rose exclaimed.

"In all fairness, Rose, we were drunk," Kes pointed out. "This one is a little bit on you. We were obviously too inebriated call for help."

Rose and Waroo traded a truly amazed look.

"But not too inebriated to stock up on weapons and medical supplies?" Rose shot.

"I can't be responsible for what Drunk Han Solo does," Han said. "Drunk Han Solo once made me wake up in a dumpster on Mandalore, handcuffed to a shoeless Felicity, and the proud new owner of a shaak farm."

Everyone stared at Han.

"We don't have time for that story," Han waved off.

"Look, the fact is that the signal is now being blocked," Kes said. "We can't call the Resistance so the best we can do is go in there and help our kids/siblings/friends."

"Starting descent," Han announced as he flipped a few controls on the cockpit of the transport.

"Why don't we just backtrack far enough to send a signal and then return to the planet to help them?" Rose asked.
"Because knowing our sons, Kes' son either has mine in a headlock or mine is Force Choking his."

"I still don't understand why-"

Waroo put a hand on her shoulder and growled something.

"Fine," she conceded. "But for the record, I still think we should take the hour it takes to backtrack, send a message, and return."

"You know, maybe Rose is right," Shayna said. "Maybe we've taken this out of proportion. For all we know it was just a little bomb or not even attempted yet. Maybe things aren't as bad as-"

Her words died on her tongue as the resort came into view and all they could see was black smoke and utter devastation.

"Hold still," Kaydel instructed as she and Dacken tried to help her father. They had wrapped the couch stuffing in Dacken's shirt as a way to soak up the blood and wrapped the bandage around his face to hold it in place. "There. That should do it until we can get you better help."

"Thank you, Ko," Timor said. Unluckily his mouth wasn't covered. "I don't know where you learned that-"

"I learned it from Aunt Aletha," Kaydel cut off. "You know, you really have some nerve-"

"Excuse me?" a woman interrupted.

"Yes?" Kaydel felt like she knew her for some reason but couldn't pinpoint where.

The woman's eyes were red and puffy, "Please… I heard that you had some painkillers and medical stuff. My son is very hurt. I don't know how to help him, but we've bound his wound in a shirt."

"I'm sorry but I just used the last of my bandages on my father."

"Of course… but maybe. Do you a painkiller to spare? Please he's so young and in such pain."

Kaydel's face softened, "Of course."

"Bless you, Young Lady," the woman smiled as Kaydel dug in her pouch. "The people around here aren't very generous. They think because they have wealth that makes them better than my family."

"Father!" Kaydel hissed.

"No, it's okay," the woman sniffed. "I, uh, won a HoloNet contest. All expenses paid. I just los my husband and money has been tight. This vacation was a blessing, but now… I don't know how I'm going to pay the medical bills."

The woman broke down crying and Kaydel pulled her into a hug. She felt her father's eyes on her and looked up to meet them.

There was something in them that she hadn't seen in a very long time.

Timor placed his hand on the woman's shoulder, "Don't you worry about a thing. I'll give you my contact information and take care of everything."
"Of course," Timor nodded. "I lost my eldest daughter many years ago. I know the pain of your child suffering."

The woman looked beyond words, "Thank you. Thank you, so much."

"Wow, Dad, that's very generous," Kaydel said softly. She didn't know quite what to feel.

"I know I can be a hard man," he said.

Kaydel raised an eyebrow.

"I know how hard your mother can be," Timor corrected, "but I'm not a monster. Go on, go take care of your friend and I'll help this woman. I'm Timor Connix, and this is my daughter, Kaydel Ko, and my grandson, Dacken Tokani."

"Hena Narden," the woman smiled gently as Kaydel handed her the painkiller. "Thank you so much, Mr. Connix."

"Think nothing of it," he clasped her hand.

Kaydel smiled as she watched her father. For a moment, she hesitated, craving to hug her father.

"You know, Ko," Timor said as Dacken spoke with Hena to collect her details, "it's nice to see you actually doing something useful for once. Fighting for the right cause and not making scenes about how evil we apparently are. Maybe you'll see the light and be able to rejoin the family. But you're definitely going to have to break up with that Yavinese boy and cut ties with Aletha."

Well, the hug feeling passed quite quickly.

"Just when I thought you might have a soul," Kaydel glared at him. "Come on, Dacken."

Dacken blinked in surprise that she was being nice to him but shrugged and followed after her.

"Snap!" Kaydel cried out as she raced back across the room. "Snap, where are you?"

She knew she was getting close when she saw Berd and Sasa. Doxl and Weevil had been placed next to the still reclining Sasa as Berd was trying to find a way to make his comm work again.

"Snap!" Kaydel continued to call. She locked eyes with Sasa, "Hey, do you guys know where-"

"I'm over here, Kaydel!" Snap called. "Please, help! Quickly!"

"I'm coming," she raced towards the rubble with Dacken trailing her. "Don't worry, I'm going to-"

Kaydel stopped dead. She could see Snap buried in the rubble, trying to crawl his way out. But his injuries were making that escape from the rubble very difficult.

Because everything below Snap's left knee had been blown clean off.

Kaydel didn't have the stomach of doctor. She promptly dropped to the ground and threw up.

"Oh Goddesses! Snap!" she screamed racing towards him. She fell to her knees before him, "Snap! I don't- I can't- Oh my God, what do I do? What do I do?"
Her hands were shaking and her mind was a mess. She shouldn't have ignored him. Why had she ignored him? Oh god, what was she supposed to do when a guy on her mission lost a leg?

Karé was going to actually murder her.

"What do I do? What do I do?" Kaydel repeated it over and over in a panic. "What do I do?"

Dacken took charge.

"First we're going to get him out of the rubble," he said with a clear head. Dacken hooked his arms under Snap's armpits, "Come on, Kayko. You gotta help me."

Kaydel nodded and did so.

"Let's pull him to a clear space," Dacken ordered. "Back by the couch."

"Couch, got it," Kaydel tried not to watch the smear of blood his mangled knee drew across the floor.

They settled close to the Knights of Ren who watched the scene in interest, though they didn't have much of a clue what to do either. None of them had medical training or an instruction book or anyway to search for the correct way to handle the loss of a limb. They just had to sort of wing it and hope for the best.

"Water!" Dacken ordered Berd and Sasa. "Throw me a water flask!"

Berd pulled the one off Weevil's belt and tossed it to Dacken. Using the water and what scrap they had left of his shirt, Dacken did his best to clean Snap's leg.

Snap screamed the entire time.

"We need something to bind the leg, I think," Dacken said. "Does anyone have a shirt we can use?"

Kaydel, Sasa, and Berd looked at each other. Berd's had been used to fashion Sasa a splint to prevent her from further injuring her collarbone which had broken on the left side, so any movement of her left arm further damaged it. Sasa's outfit wasn't an option either, her fancy dress too tight-fitting and made of poor bandage fabric. That left only one option.

"Oh screw it," Kaydel pulled hers over her head.

Both Dacken and Snap looked away as Kaydel was left in just her bra. Berd looked a little too hard at her, and Sasa swatted him for it.

"Yeah," Snap groaned as Kaydel tied her shirt around his bleeding leg. "Poe is actually going to kill me."

"Snap, you are missing a leg," she said. "Me shirtless is nothing compared to your injury."

She knotted the end with maybe too tight a tug.

"Sorry," she frowned as he winced. "At least you'll have good pressure."

"Until I bleed to death," Snap groaned. His eyes flicked to the pouch still buckled around her torso, "What's that?"

Kaydel gasped. In her panic, she had forgotten about it.
"Yes!" she cried out joyfully. "I can help you! I can save you!"

"How?" Snap frowned as she zipped open her belt and began digging through it. "Is that a money belt?"

"A medication belt," Kaydel corrected. "Basically Aunt Aletha stocked a money belt with emergency medical supplies. Not much, but there's a few things to help us. Including this."

Kaydel held up a tiny green pill.

"What's that?" Snap asked.

"For sudden loss of limbs," Kaydel grinned. "She makes Poe and Diego carry them too. Almost like she wants someone to lose a limb."

"Glad I could please her," Snap groaned. "Oh God, what is Kare going to think?"

"She's going to be happy you're alive." Kaydel thrust the pill at him, "Now take it. It'll clot the blood, relieve the pain, and start a course of medicine to treat your... stump until you can get help. Take it, Snap. Please."

He reached for it but did not clasp the pill. His eyes flicked over and his smile fell. Kaydel's eyes followed Snap's and her heart sunk. Snap was staring at her father and Hena. The reason that Hena had looked familiar was that she was the crying mother holding her legless child. The boy was getting paler by the second.

"Oh no," Dacken whispered.

Snap sighed and dropped both his hand and his head, "We have to do it, don't we?"

Kaydel bit her lip and nodded, "Yeah, we do. Snap, I."

"Don't worry about me," he said. "I'm old. The kid's young. We have to give him a chance."

"You're a good man, Temmin Wexley."

Kaydel bent forward and kissed his cheek. Dacken offered her the First Order water flask and she smiled as she took it. Firmly gripping the pill, she got to her feet and approached the mother.

Hena pulled her son a little closer when Kaydel knelt down in front of her. Timor looked confused but let his daughter talk.

Dacken patted Snap's shoulder, "I'm going to go see if I can find something else to help you."

Snap nodded as Dacken walked away, and then he turned his attention back to Kaydel and the mother. He watched the moment bittersweetly as Kaydel explained. Suddenly Hena cried out and grabbed Kaydel in a hug, almost dropping her son in the process. She wept into Kaydel's shoulder repeating the words "thank you" a thousand times.

Kaydel stroked the boy's hair as she urged him to drink from the First Order canteen and ensured the boy swallowed the pill. Snap smiled as he made the right choice.

"That was very kind," Sasa Ren surprised him. She was suddenly lying down next to him. Her injuries didn't stop her from moving, but there was enough pain for her not to want to do very often.

Berd was nowhere to be seen.
"Oh, uh, yeah," Snap blinked. "But he's a kid, so what else could I do?"

"But your leg-"

"I've had worse."

"...Really?"

"No," Snap conceded, "but I'll live. Provided I find a way to stop the bleeding."

Sasa got a strange look on her face.

"What?" he asked.

"I think I have an idea, but it's not a pleasant one."

"What is it?"

"Well, there is one tool I have that's known for cauterizing wounds."

"Really?" he perked up.

It took a moment for Snap to get it but when he did, his jaw dropped.

"Your lightsaber?" he exclaimed. "Are you crazy?"

"It was just a suggestion," Sasa defended.

"I'm not going to let you torture me!"

"What's going on here?" Kaydel asked as she returned to Snap. Her eyes hardened at Sasa, "Is she giving you a problem?"

"I was just suggesting a way to help him," Sasa said.

"She wants to use her lightsaber on my leg."

"WHAT?"

"To stop the bleeding!" Sasa groaned at herself, "Look, it was just a suggestion."

"Yeah, what a great suggestion," Snap scoffed. "Hey, you lost your leg. How about I torture you?"

"It's not torture!" Sasa paused. "Well, not intentionally. Look, there's a very good chance you're about to bleed to death, and your medical officer isn't anywhere to be found."

"Isn't cauterizing wounds generally considered to be a terrible way of stemming bleeding?" Snap shot.

"Do you have any other option?" Sasa countered. "Listen to me, if you want to get back to your wife – the dark-skinned woman is your wife, right? – the bleeding needs to stop. It doesn't matter to me if you live or die, but this will make you live... Don't you think you owe your wife that?"

For a very long time, Snap was silent as he considered her words. Even Kaydel had to admit she saw the logic in the argument. What else did they have that could stop the bleeding? How else could they save Snap?
Snap took a deep breath and looked to Kaydel, "What do you think?"

Kaydel didn't answer right away. She wondered what she would do if it were her and Poe in Snap and Karé's place, "It… it's not my choice to make."

"I know," Snap looked down. "But if it were you?"

"I'd do whatever it took to get back to Poe," she admitted. "…We have to do it, don't we?"

He allowed a small smile, "Yeah, we do. Kaydel, I-"

"It's okay," Kaydel took his hand. "I'll stay right by your side."

"Have you made your decision?" Sasa asked.

"Yeah," Snap squeezed Kaydel's hand. "I'll do it."

Sasa smiled and then called out for Berd. Snap looked very uncomfortable as Sasa explained the situation to Berd and asked him to hold down Snap. Dacken had gone off to check on Hena and her son. The two of them looked too relaxed for Kaydel to call Dacken away. That poor mother deserved a little relief.

Kaydel looked down at Snap, and her heart sunk as she knew Snap would have none of that any time soon.

"You okay?" Kaydel asked as Berd gave him some water.

"No." Snap swallowed a painkiller from Kaydel's medicine belt. The most powerful pill in her stash was still not going to be anywhere enough to ease the agony he was about to endure. "I know I have to do it… but I have a really bad feeling about this."

"I'm not going anywhere," Kaydel settled Snap to lie in her lap – Berd holding down his torso – as she hugged him tightly. "I promise."

"Are you ready?" Sasa ignited her lightsaber. She was kneeling by what remained of his leg, strong enough to perform the act but wouldn't be able to prolong the experience.

Snap took a deep breath, "Okay… do it."

And Kaydel Ko Connix would never forget the sound of Snap's screams as the lightsaber bit into his mangled flesh.

---

Evan Tharel wasn't dead.

It took him about three minutes to register that fact as he lay on his back in the garden staring up at the smoke-filled sky.

He wasn't dead. Evan, Paige, and the First Order soldiers had forgotten their hostilities and just made a run for it. The door of the emergency exit had locked behind them, so they had no choice but to run further and further down the garden path.

More bombs littered the path and doors were secured a little too strong to be the work of normal hotel staff. They were nearly at the resort's famous hedge maze when the explosion sent the five of them flying.
The last thing Evan remembered was Paige's hand reaching for him and her small fingers slipping through his.

It took Evan Tharel three minutes to realize he wasn't dead. Three minutes for him to realize there was a hope of seeing his mother again. Three minutes to realize there was a chance to hold Paige Tico in his arms once more. Three minutes to realize that he could provide the others with what they needed most at the moment: medical attention.

At three minutes and four seconds, Evan Tharel took a deep breath. And at three minutes and twelve seconds, he grabbed his medic bag he always carried on his shoulder – thankfully it had stayed there – shot to his feet, and got to work.

The closest person to him was the soldier called Marks, and he was writhing and groaning on the ground as his left arm bled profusely. In a moment, Evan was on his knees next to Marks helping fix him up. There was no thought of First Order vs Resistance in his mind. Marks was a patient and Evan a medical officer. Loyalty didn't matter. His mind wasn't even on Paige; just his patient.

"It's alright, I've got you," Evan assured Marks as his pulled the proper tools from his bag. "Just relax."

Groaning, Marks let Evan see the extent of his injuries. His ankle hurt, and a quick feel made Evan suspect at least a fracture, but Marks would be able to limp enough until the shot of a vaccine from Ryloth that helped treat bone injuries in emergency situations kicked in.

The worst part of Marks' injuries was his left arm; a good chunk of it was missing. Evan slathered it in more bacta than he wanted to ration out for one person, and then cut off the sleeve of his formal jacket to make a secure band to hold still the bandages he wrapped around the wound. Another chunk was missing from Marks' cheek, but he stopped Evan from using any more bacta on him.

"But it'll scar if I don't," Evan said.

"That's alright," Marks grimaced as he forced himself to his feet. "Save it for someone else. Besides, scars are considered a good thing to have in the First Order."

Evan hated that he laughed at that.

"Thanks for helping me," Marks said as Evan's eyes scanned the garden for another wounded person.

"I'm a medical officer for a reason," Evan wasn't even looking at Marks as he searched frantically for someone else to have survived. His heart turned cold as he realized he couldn't see Paige anywhere. He had heard enough stories of the Bombing of Faclov from his mother to have been scared shitless of explosions. "I don't care who you fight for. If someone's injured, I fix them. Especially when it comes to bombs."

"Still," Marks said, "I appreciate it."

Evan smiled a little.

"What about you?" Marks asked. "Are you hurt?"

"Had the wind knocked out of me, got thrown into a hedge and landed on the grass. Other than that… actually I don't think I have any injuries. I guess the Force decided to not break the one medic around."
"Thank goodness for that." His eyes suddenly went wide, "Tone!"

Marks raced limping over to a man before Evan could stop him. Tone was wheezing and lying on his front. When Marks flipped Tone onto his back, he gasped. A piece of metal was lodged in his throat.

"Doctor!" Marks called to Evan as Tone flailed in panic. "Please help him!"

"Alright," Evan dropped to his knees and nudged Marks back away from Tone. "By the way, just call me, Evan, I'm not a doctor. But I am going to help him… His name's Tone?"

"Yeah," Marks nodded, nervously watching his squadmate gasping.

Tone kept reaching for the metal in his throat, instinct telling him to remove the danger, but Evan kept yanking his hands away.

"Stop!" Evan ordered sternly. "I'm going to help you, but whatever you do, you must not pull-"

Instinct won over reason. Tone yanked the metal from his throat. Evan's eyes slammed shut as Tone's blood spurted onto his face. There was nothing more he could do in the last three seconds of Tone's life. Tone sputtered, gurgled on blood, and died.

Evan sighed and wiped the blood from his face onto his sleeve, "Alright… Now I have to get tested for blood transmitted diseases. That's tedious."

He glanced up at Marks and shifted away slightly when it looked like Marks was about to hit him.

"My condolences for your friend," Evan got to his feet and backed away.

"Thanks," Marks sighed as he stared down at Tone's body sadly. "I just don't get why he pulled it out."

"People aren't in their right minds with they have metal lodged in their throat," Evan walked along the garden path scanning the bushes. He stopped when he saw a hand sticking out from a hedge. Evan knelt down and pushed back the foliage to investigate, "To be honest there wasn't much I could do to save him. Not with the equipment I have here. I think I found your other friend… or what's left of him."

Something in Marks' eyes fell, "…Left of him?"

Evan held the bush back for Marks to see. There was an arm attached to a torso… and nothing more. They would find his head a few minutes later smashed again the wall.

Marks choked back a gag, "Yeah, that's him."

"I'm sorry, Man."

"Nah," Marks shook his head, but his eyes were sad. "Life of a soldier."

"Life of a Stormtrooper," Evan corrected. "We're not like that in the Resistance."

Marks laughed bitterly, "Please don't act like I have a choice in who I get to fight for."

Evan frowned at his words but didn't pry.

"Come on," Marks said. "Let's find your girl… She is yours, right?"
"Yes," Evan said a little too loudly.
Marks laughed at his defensiveness. "Sorry, just didn't expect a girl like that to be with a guy like-"
"Like what?"
"Nothing."
"No, you were going to say something. Say it."
Marks shook his head, "All I was going to say was does she have a sister?"
"Yes, but I'll punch you if you do anything to her."
Marks quirked a smile, "Can you throw a good punch?"
"It's more of the principle of the thing," Evan admitted.
"Well, if we have time, maybe I can show you how to punch better. Now what's your girl's name?"
"Paige."
"Then let's look for Paige."
"Right, Paige!" Evan yelled running off to the left. "Em Yêu!"
"Paige!" Marks hollered to the right.
They must have called her name for a good five minutes before Evan heard a weak call of:
"Evan?"
His eyes widened and shot off after the sound of her voice.
"Paige! Em Yêu! Paige, where are you?"
He found her on the ground bleeding from the leg and a small piece of shrapnel was embedded in her forehead.
"Hey, hey," he dropped to his knees. "Hey, I got you."
"Evan?" she moaned. Her head flopped to the side and her eyes fought to close, "Evan, I'm so tir-"
"No, no, no!" he shook her. "Don't go to sleep. Don't you dare go to sleep!"
"My head-"
"You'll be fine, I promise. You just gotta stay awake, Baby. Please stay awake. For me."
Paige gave a pained smiled as she laid in Evan's arms. She lifted a shaky hand and stroked his cheek.
"You're not hurt," she struggled to speak.
"Of course not," Evan smiled. "I've got my lucky charm."
"It's a good thing too," Marks crouched down next to them. "He's been doing a great job as a medic."
"Really?" she smiled.

"I've been totally awesome," Evan smirked.

She rolled her eyes, "Settle down, Hot Shot."

"Only if you promise not to go to sleep," Evan replied.

"But it's hard," she moaned. "I'm in pain and so tired."

She started to reach for the shrapnel in her head but Marks grabbed her hand and stopped her.

"Don't you go doing that," Marks firmly put her hand back down.

"It's too dangerous to pull it out," Evan agreed. "But it's just a little bit and not too deep. You should be fine, but we'll keep it in until I can get you to a place with proper medical equipment. Okay? But in order to do that, I need you to stay awake, get up, and move. We can't stay here."

"He's right," Marks agreed.

"I don't know if I can," Paige winced. "My leg-"

"We'll help you," Marks promised. "Both of us. I think if we go in the maze, it'll bring us to the front of the hotel. Evan and I will help you. You just gotta stay awake."

"But-"

"Do it for Evan. For the Resistance. For your friends-"

Evan cut in, "Do it for your sister."

There is one part of my life you absolutely need to understand: nothing is more important to me and then my LITTLE SISTER ROSE.

- The Journal of Paige Tico

Paige smiled, "My sister?"

"She's only got you left," Evan said. "You gotta fight for her."

"I've gotta fight for her," Paige whispered.

"Then fight," Marks urged. "Fight for your sister. Fight for… What's her name?"

"Rose," Paige answered.

"Rose, huh?" a thought occurred to him. "I've got an idea."

Not far from them was a rose bush. They were only tiny little red things and Marks liberated one. He secured it in his breast pocket and returned to the pair.

"Listen to me, Paige," Marks said, "anytime you think of going to sleep, you look at my pocket, and you remember Rose."

"I'll remember Rose," Paige nodded.
Marks frowned a little and leaned over to Evan, "Does she always repeat things in such a simplistic fashion?"

"It's the head injury."

"Fair enough. Come on. Let's get going."

Together they helped Paige to her feet. There was no discussion of swearing a truce. They were going to trust each other to get through this, no negotiation required. And stationed on either side of the girl, struggling to hold her up and shaking her when she started to drift, Evan Tharel, Paige Tico, and MK-6093 hobbled into the hedge maze to find safety.

"Whoa! These guys really know how to move!" Poe exclaimed as he and the Stormtrooper fired blasts at the two dozen or so Imperialists that were trying to get into the main entrance of the ballroom.

Swarm after swarm of soldiers had come at them, but Poe, FN-2187, Zeroes, and Nines had held them back pretty well. It helped that they could restock on weapons and ammo from the dead bodies and the Kation Defense Holdings weapons left behind. Unfortunately, Karé and Kylo had yet to find the machine blocking comm signals.

"Good thing we can move faster," FN-2187 let off a rapid succession of blasts as they hid behind a crumbled pillar.

Poe was absolutely amazed to see every single one of the Stormtrooper's shots hit their mark.

"Nice shooting, Rex," Poe grinned as he reloaded his weapon with a new gas cartridge hidden beneath his clothes. "Now, we gotta take out as many of these guys we can or we're not gonna get very far."

"All right," FN-2187 nodded.

"We're in a good position. Just stay sharp. Got it?"

"Got it," FN-2187 answered. "Since Master Ren is busy and we have that truce going, are you going to be the Commander in charge?"

"What?" Poe blinked. "No, we're working as a team. You got my back, I got yours. Partners, okay Buddy?"

Buddy. FN-2187 liked being called Buddy. Marks did it sometimes, though he was never one for nicknames. Sasa had tried a two-week stint, but the name fell flat. Nines liked to mockingly call him that. And Kylo had once call him that, only for it to be so painfully awkward they agreed never to speak of it again.

But this time, the name Buddy coming from this man… Maybe there was something just so naturally charming with that man, but FN-2187 liked hearing that voice call him Buddy. He wanted to be this man's buddy. Even if it was just pretend for a little while.

"Okay… Buddy," FN-2187 replied with an awkward eagerness.

Poe grinned. He kind of liked this guy.

The Imperialists – or what was left of them – had made it into the ballroom, taking refuge behind
blown bits of junk like Poe and FN-2187. They were nowhere near Kylo and Karé, or Zeroes and Nines who were fending off more not so Imperialist looking thugs at the other entrance. If Poe and FN-2187 had anything to say about it, the thugs would stay far away from them.

"Up ahead! Up ahead!" Poe called, pointing to a lopsided piece of stage that had been blown clear off the floor and thrown across the room. "You see it?"

FN-2187 squinted. There were about three Imperialists trying to crouch behind it, waiting until they were inconspicuous enough to take the shot. There were far too many of them trying to hide than the trash could provide cover for.

"I see them," FN-2187 acknowledged.

"It's too far for me, but you can get them dead center," Poe said, firing off a few blasts at another pair of Imperialists. "It's a clean shot."

"Okay, got it."

FN-2187 flipped the settings of his blasters to a higher impact level and aimed quickly, fluidly, and accurately. The Imperialists wore masks over their faces, so to FN-2187 they were no different than the holograms in the Sim Room. He hit the first thug in the chest, the second in the head, the third in the neck, and then blew up the stage debris causing it to explode and rain shrapnel in different directions.

Poe and FN-2187 pressed themselves backwards behind the pillar, shielding their faces as the shrapnel shot towards them. Their backs hit each other, but they did not recoil, instead settling into a safety of their "Buddy" quite literally having their back.

When the dust settled – the blasts stopping for a moment on their end of the ballroom as everyone ducked for cover – Poe saw that not only had the Stormtrooper shot down the three Imperialists, but four more had been killed by the explosion.

"Yeah!" FN-2187 screamed.

"Yes!" Poe exclaimed.

The two men whooped and cheered in triumph as they surveyed the damage. Poe was damn impressed by the soldier's abilities. No wonder the First Order had been giving the Resistance such a run for their money. Their soldiers were good.

Or at least this one damn well was.

"Did you see that?" FN-2187 yelled. "Did you see that?"

"I saw it," Poe was proud of his friend. Huh… he thought of the Stormtrooper as his friend.

Weird.

"That was amazing!" Poe called as he and the Stormtrooper opened fire again. "Who taught you to shoot like that?"

"I'm the top in Captain Phasma's class," FN-2187 admitted.

"Phasma?" Poe paused for a moment. Could he really want to be friends with a Phasma lackey? No, wait, he wouldn't judge the Stormtrooper. The boy had been forced into this life as an infant. It
wasn't his fault, "Hey, tell me something I've been arguing with some guys back on base about. Is Phasma the biggest bitch in the First Order?"

"Honestly, I'd say the fifth biggest bitch," FN-2187 laughed. He felt a freedom in his life he had never felt before. Back on base he could never call a commanding officer a bitch, and yet here he was discussing rankings.

"Fifth, huh?" Poe nailed another soldier in the knee – or what Kaydel liked to call the Aletha Specialty. "Who are the top five biggest bitches in the First Order?"

"Number five: Phasma. Number four: Hux. Number three: Kylo."

Poe snorted. Oh he was so telling people back at the Resistance that Kylo Ren and Armitage Hux were officially the some of the biggest bitches in the First Order, and he was fairly certain the Stormtrooper didn't mean in the badass way… Though from a glance back at Kylo with Karé and the way Kylo was just taking down man after man, Poe could admit a little that Kylo was a bit of a badass with the Force.

"Number two: Tara," FN-2187 continued. "And number one: Captain Electra."

"Captain Electra? Really?" Poe asked. "Never even heard of her."

"Be glad you haven't," FN-2187 shuddered. "Though she did torture your guys' second-in-command before Kylo Ren screwed up his arm."

"Ah. The Captain who owns BB-8's evil twin."

"BB… Who?"

"Just my droid," Poe waved off. "He's not here because he was blown up on a different mission. He'll be okay, though."

"Oh," FN-2187 said.

"Hey, what's your name?" Poe asked, it finally occurring to him that maybe it was polite to know his new friend's name.

He expected his Stormtrooper friend to have a name like Captain Phasma, considering that his Stormtrooper friend had been apparently Kylo Ren's lover's personal bodyguard or something. At least highly trusted by Kylo Ren in some capacity, and certainly had the skills to be a commanding officer.

Poe fully expected his friend to declare his name was something like Lieutenant Sabre, or Sergeant Macro. And even if his Stormtrooper friend had not yet climbed the ranks, Poe was planning on hearing some inconsequential serial number like THX-1183, NH-1977, or RJ-1983.

What Poe wasn't expecting was to hear a very familiar string of letters and numbers.

"FN-2187!" the Stormtrooper shouted.

"F," Poe started to repeat, his brain not yet making the connection.

And then he stopped firing.

"What?" Poe exclaimed.
Did his Stormtrooper friend just say FN-2187?

"That's the only name they ever gave me," FN-2187 explained, clearly thinking that the issue was Poe was shocked by the concept of Stormtroopers only having serial numbers.

But that wasn't what had thrown Poe. Oh, he was perfectly aware that First Order Stormtroopers only had serial numbers. He had fought in the Resistance far too long not to be aware of it.

It was the number FN-2187 that gave him pause. A significant number in his family's circle of friends. A number that had been defiantly displayed by a founding member of the Resistance. A number that had been very famously tattooed onto the wrist of a close family friend. A number that had been repeated over and over throughout the years as a reminder of one woman's failure and determination. A number that was at the very center of one of the Resistance's biggest fiascos.

Poe Dameron could not believe what he was hearing; FN-2187. He was crouching right next to the very child that had been ripped out of Felicity Rhiaon's arms, twenty-one years ago.

Holy hell… Poe had to save him.

As FN-2187 focused on shooting a group of Imperialists trying to sneak up on them from the right, Poe let his mind go to the memories of Felicity Rhiaon, his dear family friend who suffered a horrifying death at the hands of the man who was standing only feet away from him. Poe remembered Felicity's determination to someday once again find FN-2187 and free him. He remembered how Felicity had always said she could never be content until the day FN-2187 was free, had his own name, and knew that there was at least one person in the world who cared about him.

Poe had always been disturbed by the thought that Felicity Rhiaon's soul could never find peace. He wondered if she was restless in the afterlife, helpless to complete her one last piece of business.

Well, Poe was more than happy to complete that business. He was determined to ensure that FN-2187 was freed – though he wasn't sure yet how to do that – and knew someone cared about him – he had seen the way FN-2187's eyes lit up at the term Buddy – and there was something Poe could do here and now to fulfill that other part.

He could give him a name.

"Well, I ain't using it!" Poe stubbornly declared. "F-N, huh?"

Poe thought quickly. After all these years, FN-2187 would be granted his very own name and become his very own person. The only question was what to call him? It had to be something epic and brilliant and significant and unforgettable. Something like…

"Finn," Poe decreed. "I'm gonna call you Finn!"

…Okay, maybe Poe wasn't the greatest at naming things.

Kaydel was so going to make fun of him for this.

Oh, God Kaydel. He had been trying so hard not to think of her because it would only send him into a panic. Poe hoped with every fibre of his being that Kaydel was alright.

No, he had to focus. He would use Finn to focus.

"Is that all right?" Poe turned to look back at his friend.
"Finn," FN-2187 tried out the name. "Yeah, Finn, I like that! I like that!"

Poe turned back and had to suppress a chuckle. Good, the kid had as bad taste in names as Poe did. He was certain that Commander Nalto would tease him endlessly when he brought Finn back to the Resistance with him, but at least Finn liked his name.

"I'm Poe," Poe introduced himself. "Poe Dameron."

"Good to meet you, Poe!" Finn said enthusiastically.

"Good to meet you too, Finn!" Poe shot back.

And Finn had no idea truly how good it felt for Poe to finally meet Finn.

"On your right!" Karé shouted.

Kylo Ren swiftly blocked five blaster bolts aimed at their heads.

"Thanks," he said as the bolts bounced off his saber and hit a few of the soldiers. "Now where is this blocker? I can't find it anywhere."

"Maybe it's not in the room," Karé suggested. "Maybe this is a bigger conspiracy."

A man rushed at Kylo and he easily cut him down, but when the man hit the ground, Kylo saw something that made him pause.

"I think you're right," Kylo bent down and grabbed the man's arm. He pushed down a wristband and found a very familiar mark underneath, "Look at this."

"What is it?" Karé frowned.

"It's a brand," Kylo explained. "That's the mark of Crimson Dawn."

"Crimson Dawn?"

Kylo chuckled, "These aren't loyalists. They're part of a crime syndicate. I guess it's a good thing I tagged along to this trip, because now they're a crime syndicate who just made a very big mistake."

"What mistake?" Karé asked.

He just grinned at her.

With one final shot, Poe downed the last Imperialist and the ballroom went silent.

"We all clear?" Kylo shouted down to them.

The others raced across the ballroom to join Kylo and the still confused Karé.

"Yeah, we're good," Poe panted a little. A battlefield sure knew how to get the heart pumping, "We're out of guys on our end."

"Same here." Kylo looked to Finn who had been speaking with Nines, "Nice shot with that blast at the stage."

"Thank you, Sir," Finn bowed his head.
Poe clenched his fist, wanting so hard to drive it across Kylo's face. Of fucking course. How could he not guess it? Ben Solo had intentionally picked and trained and turned into his lackey the child Felicity Rhiaon Skywalker so badly had wanted to save.

Oh, Leia was going to be pissed when he told her.

"We should get a move on, then," Kylo said, bracing himself against the wall with one hand. Even Knights of Ren could be felled by exhaustion. "We'll take the back exit as there's less of a chance to meet other soldier and it has a shortcut to the hotel lobby. I think that's where I saw the others were. Karé, Nines, Zeroes, and Two-One, I want you to check the coast and clear the way. Dameron and I will follow when we've given the main entrance a final check."

"Yes, Sir," Zeroes, Nines, and Finn saluted.

Karé frowned, glanced at Poe, and then gave a reluctant, small salute.

"You heard him." Poe clapped his hands, "Everyone get moving."

"Yes, Sir," Karé nodded.

The second they were alone at the main entrance, Poe immediately slammed Kylo's head into the wall.

"Ow! Dameron!"

"You son of a bitch," Poe growled.

Kylo glowered at him, rubbing his head, "Does your commanding officer know you call her a bitch?"

"She knows I want to stab you a lot."

"Then I guess I'm lucky you don't have a knife."

"You are a sick bastard," Poe said. He pointed to Finn, "That is FN-2187. Are you serious?"

Kylo smirked, "He turned out to be one hell of a soldier. It's a good thing Rhiaon failed to steal him."

Poe slammed Ben's head into the wall again.

"Stop it!" Kylo snapped. "I've got a reputation to maintain, Dameron!"

"You didn't seriously just say that, right?" Poe stared at him.

Kylo let out an exasperated huff of air, "Look, I know we don't get along, but we agreed to a momentary truce."

"I said I wouldn't kill you. Not that I wouldn't hurt you."

"Oh, come on, Dameron. What do you want from me?"

"I want my mother, Fliss, and Rey back."

Kylo froze.

"But I know you can't achieve that," Poe sneered. "No matter how powerful you are."
"Poe…" Kylo said quietly, "I had nothing to do with your mother-"

"Don't you even start, not after taunting me over her death. And you can't say the same thing about the other two. You shot Felicity in the head and threw her into the trash compactor! You murdered Rey!"

"I didn't kill her," Kylo shot a nervous look towards his Stormtroopers.

There was nothing but ice behind Poe's eyes, "No… you just tried, and led her into circumstances that caused an even more painful death than a lightsaber. You made her die of thirst, hunger, and exhaustion in the desert. You know, I bet she cried herself to sleep the night she died."

Poe could have sworn there were tears in Kylo's eyes.

"Dameron…" Kylo whispered. "Not a day passes that I don't think of how Rey died."

Poe's eyes darkened, "And nothing can ever be said or done to or by you that will ever make up for what happened to Rey Rhiaon Skywalker."

Kylo opened his mouth… and then froze in a way Poe still vaguely recognized.

"Did you just sense someone?" Poe asked.

He nodded, "Yes… a ship just landed near the hotel. I don't recognize the ship… but I know the people."

Poe cocked his head.

Fear filled Kylo's face as the blood drained from it, "Poe… my dad is here."

He blinked, "…Okay, that does make up things a little."

---

"No, I don't have a landing permit. I'm trying to reach my son." Han scowled and leaned over to Chewbacca, "Why am I having flashbacks to Cloud City?"

Chewie roared something a shrugged.

"Sir, for the last time, you are going to have to remove your ship from the yard and vacate the property," a man in a New Republic uniform crossed his arms. A barricade had been set up at the entrance of the hotel as hundreds of people attempted to get inside the hotel to find loved ones and see what was going on. "You do not have the resort's permission to be here."

"Yeah, but the resort may have just gotten my kid blown up, so I would call it even."

"Please, Sir," Shayna rolled to the front of the group, "there's a crime syndicate framing Imperial Loyalists so they can kill a Knight of Ren. We need to get in there to save our Resistance soldier children."

Everyone stared at her.

"Ma'am, that is the most insane story I have ever heard," the man said. "Now get back to your ship and vacate the property."

The group decided to fall back to think of a new plan of action. They lingered several yards away from the barricade, still in sight of it, but hanging out by the opening of the resort's famous hedge
"Okay, Lando's been here a few times before," Han said into the huddle. Why they were in a huddle was beyond him. "He's told me about a few shortcuts, and I'll admit that I don't remember any of them but this, if you go through the hedge maze, you'll end up in the gardens and there's an emergency exit that leads into the ballroom. If there was a conference being held, that's where the presentation would have been."

"So let me get this straight," Kes said, "your plan to save our kids is to solve a hedge maze?"

Han rolled his eyes, "Well, I mean we could use Shayna's kid as an excuse to get in due to the fact he's a medical officer, but there's the slight problem of him not being here, unless you think he's about to stumble out of this maze."

That was the moment Evan, Paige, and Marks stumbled out of the maze.

"Paige!" Rose yelled, racing forward.

"Genie!" Shayna wheeled after her.

Han Solo blinked as he and Kes stared at the group in shock.

"Damn, I'm good," Han mumbled.

"Yeah," Kes nodded. "Didn't see that coming."

"Hey, I wonder..." Han turned something over in his mind. He suddenly – quite loudly – declared, "And it's not like Luke Skywalker is just going to randomly show up behind me!"

Han and Kes turned around in unison, honestly expecting to find a Jedi Knight standing behind them.

They were disappointed.

"Well," Kes patted Han on the shoulder, "can't fault you for trying."

"Mark my words, I am going to randomly stumble upon him one day."

Two years later in the cockpit of the *Millennium Falcon* to be exact, but we're getting ahead of ourselves.

Evan and Paige looked very confused at the sight of the group but allowed for hugs anyway.

"Mom?"

"Rose?" Paige stumbled into her sister's arms as Evan bent down to hug his mother.

"Easy," Marks said, helping right the girls.

"Thanks," Rose smiled at him. "Uh... who are you?"

"Oh that's Marks," Evan said, frowning as he took in the sight of everyone else. "He's a First Order soldier."

"But our friend," Paige interjected. She shot him an awkward look, "At least... at the moment."
"Friend?" Rose looked at Marks warily.

"We've sort of made a temporary truce," Evan explained. "It's a long story. But he's been keep Paige awake for me, and since she probably has a concussion, that makes him a good guy in my book."

"You've been keeping her awake?" Rose regarded him suspiciously.

"Well, technically you have," Marks corrected. He pulled the little rose from his pocket, "I've been having her look at this and think of you anytime she started to drift off. Here. Take it."

"Thanks." Not knowing what to do with it, Rose slipped it in her pocket. She tried to keep a scowl on her face, but his smile was a little disarming.

Marks was tall, very muscular, copper skinned, had longer black hair than most men kept theirs (though nowhere near what Rey had claimed Teng's hair to be.) He had a no-nonsense attitude etched onto his facial features – especially on those really cute cheekbones – but there was kindness too, and there was more going on behind his grey eyes than first glance suggested.

But the man was also wearing a First Order uniform, so it didn't matter how cute those cheekbones were, this man was the enemy. No sir, didn't matter at all how cute his cheekbones were, or strong his calves, or tight his butt, or the fact he could probably bench-press her and not break too much into a sweat.

…Why was she blushing?

"Okay then," Han said loudly, "if we're all done our flirting…"

Rose refused to acknowledge her face was as red as the rose in her pocket.

"Where's everyone else?" Kes asked for Han. "Poe? Kaydel? The rest of you guys?"

"We don't know," Evan watched Paige as she struggled to stay upright only with the help of Rose and Marks. "We got separated. Comms are all being blocked. What are you guys doing here?"

"We got some information that there was going to be an attack and rushed to your rescue." Shayna frowned at Paige, "Oh, Honey, come on, let's get you in the ship."

"Waroo, help them," Han ordered as Marks and Rose started guiding Paige towards the transport. He growled and obeyed.

Evan gave a sigh of relief as Paige and her helpers started to move off, "This is wonderful. I can't believe you guys are here. Who gave you the information?"

Han briefly explained the meeting with Enfys Nest – leaving out most of the drinking – and by the time he was done, Rose, Marks, and Waroo were racing back to the group.

"Evan!" Rose exclaimed. "We got Paige down on the bunk but she went to sleep!"

"Rose-" he said calmly.

"I'm so sorry!" tears were coming from her eyes. "What do I do? How bad is it?"

"Rose-"

"I didn't mean to-"
"Rose!" Evan snapped. "It's okay. She'll be fine."

She frowned, "But you can't sleep after a head injury."

"Oh no, that's a myth. In fact, head injuries need sleep to properly heal."

Marks scowled, "But… you wouldn't let her go to sleep."

"Not while we were in danger," Evan replied. "I can't carry her. I don't have arms like yours."

Rose did admit that Marks had very strong arms.

"I figured it was best we keep her awake and moving on her own until I could get her somewhere safe rather than each of us carry one end of her and leaving us vulnerable to attack."

Marks blinked, "Dude… I could have carried her."

Evan paused to think about that, "Huh, guess you could have… Eh, I know for next time."

"You plan on consorting with the First Order a lot?" Han shot.

"Oh, don't even," Evan cut off. "You sired the second-in-command of the First Order."

"Well, aren't you a little Hot Shot?" Han glared at Evan.

"How do you think Nalto came up with the nickname?" Kes stated.

"Speaking of," Evan said, "how long did Nalto say it would take for the troops to get here?"

Han, Kes, and Chewie exchanged a look. Shayna decided it was best to let everyone keep ignoring her.

"Excuse me?" there was a nervous strain to Kes' voice.

"Oh, sorry, did you talk to General Organa, or maybe Vice Admiral Holdo? Doesn't matter, how long till they get here?"

Rose and Waroo crossed their arms and looked at the trio.

"Go on," Rose urged dangerously, "tell them."

Han sighed. How did he always find a sassy midget woman to piss off?

Kes bit the bullet and confessed, "We… kind of forgot to comm the Resistance and by the time we remembered, our communications were being blocked."

Evan's jaw literally dropped, "You didn't call the Resistance?"

"It was a mistake and we apologize," Kes said. "We just heard our sons were in danger and acted on instinct."

"But, but why? Why didn't you think to call-" Evan stopped when his brain made it click. They had been in a bar when they heard the news. "Were you guys drunk?"

Han, Kes, and Chewie exchanged a look.

"Maybe a little," Kes admitted.
"But," Evan sputtered, "my mom-"

"Was knocking them back harder than Chewie," Shayna said, quietly watching the scene from the side.

Evan looked like he had gone catatonic.

Marks too was just staring at them, "How did you people win a Rebellion?"

"Actually the three of us just blew up shit on Endor and… let teddy bears do most of the work," Han replied. "And none of us fought in the Battle of Jakku, so technically we didn't win the Rebellion personally. just… helped?"

"I did throw you the last charge when we were rigging the control bunker," Kes offered.

For the first time in his life, MK-6093 thought maybe he was fighting on the right side.

"I can't believe this," Evan whispered. His eyes flashed at the trio of grown ass men, old enough to be grandfathers who apparently were just as stupid as they alleged their sons to be in a toast the previous day. "You didn't call the Resistance because you were drunk? How long ago did you find out?"

Han was almost afraid to admit it, "A day ago."

"A day a- You've know for an entire day that we were going to be blown up, and you didn't tell us?" Evan screamed at them. He was beyond any semblance of respect for these 'war heroes' as memories of the horrors he had seen inflicted upon five people alone rung through his mind. "You are kidding me! Are you actually fucking kidding me?"

"Watch it, Kid," Han warned. "Technically all three of us are a higher rank in the Resistance than-"

"No!" Don't you dare!" Evan roared. "This is the absolute most idiotic and selfish thing I have ever seen! And I watched Commander Nalto get Wedge Antilles killed! Hell, I pulled Wedge Antilles' body from the wreckage!"

Kes winced as he remembered Wedge's funeral. Han and Chewie unfortunately didn't hear of Wedge's death until four months after his death, not that they were particularly close.

But Evan… Evan was shaking.

"People just died! No, not died! People just exploded! You see this blood?" he pointed to his crimson soaked clothing. "This is the blood of a man who pulled shrapnel out of his throat and bled to death on me! And you're telling me that not one of you could pick up a damn comm!"

Absolute silence fell on the group as they just stared at the blood on Evan in horror.

Then he said fifteen words that chilled Han Solo to the core.

"Fuck this. I am telling General Organa what you did. Good luck with that, Solo."

Han shuddered. Maybe the Force would be merciful, and Ben would murder him before Leia could. Either way, he was sure he was going to die at the hands of a Skywalker some day.

Then Shayna, who had been patiently observing the scene from the side, wheeled over to her son.

"Geno," Shayna's voice was calm as she took Evan's hands in her own. "Enough. We are sorry, we
made a mistake. We just heard that our children were in danger, and we didn't think. We were wrong and I'm sorry for that. But we need to move on with this situation. You're right, people are dying, and we need to find the rest of our people. Can we put a pin in this, and you do what you do best? Go help people? We did bring medical supplies."

Evan took a deep breath and let his anger dissipate, "Okay, fine. There are people who need our help and we're going to help them."

"That's my boy," she smiled. "Now, what's the plan?"

Everyone looked at each other, waiting for someone to take charge.

"Alright then," Shayna sighed, "who has the highest rank?"

"Not me," Rose was quick to answer. "I don't even know if I have an official rank. I was literally just carted off to the Resistance by my parents. I know Evan's higher than me."

"I'm First Order," Marks said.

Waroo roared that he wasn't a member of the Resistance.

"Kes Dameron outranks me slightly," Evan said.

"Han was my commanding officer at Endor," Kes countered. "So, I guess that makes him in charge now… Because his plans are always so… Don't make me end that sentence."

"Alright," Han sighed, reluctantly taking charge, though honestly he'd always rather give orders than take them. "What do we need to do?"

"Find our people," Marks answered.

"And how do we do that?"

"We need to get in the building," Kes replied.

"It would be easiest to find them if the comms were working," Rose pointed out. "Then we could also get help from the New Republic for the planet. We need to find the communications control center because the blocking is too powerful to be an independent machine. This is being straight up wired from the main center."

"I know where that is," Marks said. "It's on the other corner of the hedge maze, not too far from here. We don't have to enter the maze at all, just hug the side. I could get there and provide protection, but I'm useless at machines."

"Do we have someone here who isn't?" Han asked.

---

Rose can't fly the way I can, which has always driven her crazy, but she's a genius with machines. Give her a few minutes to poke around inside something broken, and she'll figure out why it isn't working and how to fix it.

- The Journal of Paige Tico

"Rose," Evan suggested. "Rose can do it."
"What?" her eyes widened. "Oh no. No, I couldn't."

"You can, and you will," Evan countered. "Don't forget, everyone here outranks you. If we say you have to do it, you have to do it."

She fixed him with a look that her sister was known to give him, and that never meant any good when she did.

"Fine," Rose huffed, crossing her arms. She eyes Marks, nervous about the thought of being alone with him… though she couldn't put her finger on exactly why. "Are you really going to leave me alone with a First Order Stormtrooper?"

"Good point," Han said. "Waroo, go with them."

Roar.

"You guys have enough ammo?" Kes asked.

"I picked up some extra from my killed squadmates," Marks answered a little stiffly.

"Waroo's got extra if you need it." Han leaned over to Waroo and gave a few very crude and short growls in Shyriiwook that translated to, "If he tries anything, shoot him."

Waroo nodded.

"Alright," Han said, "you three, move it. Comm us when you've fixed things and we'll figure out what to do from there."

"Wait," Rose didn't move when Waroo and Marks started to, "what about Paige? Who's going to be with her? Evan."

"I'm going into the hotel," Evan shook his head. "It's my duty as a New Republic medical officer to go assist the injured."

"I'll stay," Shayna offered.

"Are you sure?" Evan asked.

She patted his arm, "I don't need to see another bombing. Faclov was more than enough for a lifetime. Go on. I'll watch over Paige."

"Thank you so much," he bent down and hugged her.

"Alright," Han looked around. "The next step is the remaining four of us find a way through the barricade. Hopefully now that we have a medic with us, we can get through."

Han was wrong.

After the different groups went on their ways and they had a chance to grab that extra medical supplies from the ship, Han, Kes, Evan, and Chewbacca strolled right back up to that barricade and demanded they get in because they had a medical officer with them.

The man at the barricade's response to Han?

"Sir, am I going to have to call the police?"
That resulted in Evan having a full on yelling match with the man for ten minutes about denying a New Republic medical officer into a disaster site to administer aid.

"Look," Evan dug his official medical officer ID lanyard out of his bag and hung it on his neck. Even in undercover missions he had to carry it just in case, but they kept it concealed in a secret pocket of the bag, "Right there: Geno Namit. Certified Nurse. A list of all my credentials. Are you seriously telling me that you are refusing to let a certified medical officer into a disaster zone to administer aid?"

"Sir, I'm going to have to ask you to lower your voice," the man said. He looked very smug on the other side of that simple wooden barricade, little more than a glorified construction work ahead sign. "You're causing a scene."

"Yeah, that's the point!" Evan's voice rose even higher. "I want to make sure that everyone here knows that you are Refusing To Admit A Certified Medical Officer Into A Disaster Zone To Administer Aid! Or Do I Need To Go Even Louder?"

The angry mutterings of the crowd started to unnerve the man.

"Sir, I understand what you are saying," the man tried to calm the situation, "but I can't let anyone in without the New Republic officially declaring it an emergency situation."

"They can't declare it an emergency situation because they don't know about it, you idiot," Kes growled. "Now you are going to let us in right now or I swear to God, if you stop me from seeing if my son is okay-"

"Kes, stop," Han held up a hand. "I got this. We just got to stay calm."

He raised an eyebrow, "Stay calm? …Who are you and what have you done to Han Solo?"

"Now, now, boys," Han swaggered casually up to the wooden barricade, "I think we can handle this like mature, responsible adults."

"Thank you, Sir," the man brightened.

"Now, if you don't mind," Han gave a friendly pat on the man's arm, one he might give Luke or Lando, "can I just offer a little bit of a… different perspective? A new, calm, level-headed argument?"

"Well… I suppose." The man leaned in close to Han, careful that the crowd couldn't hear and start using this new argument against him if it worked for this group, "What is your argument?"

Han punched him to the face.

"Chewie!" Han yelled as the man hit the ground and a few other officers started to rush towards him.

Chewbacca picked up two and smashed them together before dropping the men to ground. A female officer reached for her blaster, but Kes hit her first with a stun blast as Han took out two more with his own blaster – hopefully also on stun. Evan slammed over the wooden barricade and made a run for it. The men were quick to follow.

"Alright," Evan said as they raced into the hotel through the spa entrance but continued into the hallway instead of booking themselves in for some battlefield manicures. "At the end of this hallway there's a stairwell and set of elevators. The next floor down is the main level – this part of the resort is
on a hill which is why we entered on floor two – and that leads to a restaurant. We take a left there and we'll be able to dart into the next building where the ballroom is."

"Sounds easy enough to me," Kes nodded.

That was when they started to get shot at.

"You just had to say it, didn't you?" Han yelled as they returned the fire.

"Head for the stairwell!" Kes ordered. "We can take up a defensive position there."

They hunkered down and for long past half an hour they were stuck in a back and forth of blaster fire as neither the Resistance men or the "Imperial Loyalists" – or rather Crimson Dawn members they explained to Evan – could gain an advantage against the other.

"Why do I always try to save people?" Han muttered as he swapped in a new round of ammo as Kes and Chewie covered him. Evan had gone a little higher to take up a sniping position, and he wasn't bad at it.

"You're more kind-hearted than you want to admit," Kes answered. "I don't blame you though. You're kid's here. I'm going to do anything in my power to save Poe. I know you'll do the same for Ben."

"Oh yes, saving Ben is such a delight. Here I am risking my life for my son who helped murder his five-year-old cousin, actually murdered the love of my brother-in-law's life, manipulated those around him to find that pair to do so to them, killed multiple friends and mentors, probably will at same point attempt to kill me, and will absolutely hate that I'm here. Oh, and we're being shot at by Crimson Dawn pretending to be Imperial Loyalists." Han groaned, "Could this get any worse?"

"Hold your fire!" a female voice made Han freeze up.

The firestorm stopped, and after a minute or so of inactivity, the Resistance men dared to peek their heads out to see what was going on.

They saw a woman approaching the group, the "Imperial Loyalists" parting automatically and some even bowing their heads. Elegantly dressed in a perfectly pressed blackish brown jumpsuit and a black cape with hood covering her face, a low-slung weapons belt properly stocked with blaster and extra ammunition, a half-bib logo hung from her neck, and a gold signet ring sat proudly on her finger.

"Stand down, men," the woman ordered. "They're not who we're after."

"Oh?" Kes challenged as the Resistance men slowly descended the stairwell. "And who are you after?"

The woman chuckled, her head was turned to Han and never moved away, "I always find you with the fieriest people, don't I?"

Han said nothing, but Chewie was giving a low growl.

Evan frowned at the scene, refusing to holster his sniping rifle, "Uh… Captain Solo, do you know her?"

Han still didn't reply. He just clenched his jaw as tightly as his fist.
Slowly, the woman pulled down her hood. A mess of brown and grey hair spilled onto her shoulders, and though there were new wrinkles upon it, her face was one that Han knew well.

"Hello, Han," Qi'ra smiled. "It's been a while."

Finally, he spoke.

"Oh look. Things got worse."

"Resistance come in," Kaydel tried her comm yet again. "Resistance, this is Lieutenant Connix, please come in, we have a Mayday. Please respond!"

"Still nothing, Sweetie?" Timor asked.

"No," Kaydel rolled her eyes. Dacken had abandoned her to once more check on Hena and her son. "And don't call me Sweetie."

"Why not?" Timor chuckled. "I'm your father. I'm allowed to call you whatever I want."

He tried to sling an arm over her shoulders. They were sitting on the floor together as Kaydel fiddled with her comm to see if there was something she could do.

"Get off!" she pushed his arm off her. "You lost that right when you let Mom throw me out of the house. You turned your back on me, and now you want to pretend that nothing's happened? No, that's not how this is going to work. I don't care if you offered to pay Hena's medical bills, you're despicable."

"Ko..." Timor took a deep breath, "your mother is a very difficult woman-"

"And you're a spineless snob," Kaydel spat.

Dacken laughed, returning to the pair, "Look, I came back in time for our family's favorite tradition: yelling at each other."

"Shut up!" she snapped at him. "You're just a cruel, sadistic, bastard. At least he can say his cruelty is from a lack of agency."

Dacken sighed, "Am I not allowed to apologize?"

"Apologize all you want. You set my fire on fire you sick fuck!" Kaydel was too stressed and had too many years of anger built up in her to consider his recent kind actions.

"You do remember that I was recently set on fire?" Dacken asked dryly.

"Fuck off!"

"Kaydel Ko Connix! Watch your language!" Timor scolded. "And for the love of the Goddesses, would you put on a shirt?"

"Oh, don't even!" Kaydel spun on her heel. She didn't care that she had been waltzing around for more than an hour in her bra. A very alluring and lacy black and magenta piece that had clearly been meant for Poe to have fun with her later. Timor had offered his own shirt, but Kaydel refused to accept anything from him. "Aunt Ally can scold me for my language, not you! And I am more than happy to waltz around in a bra if it means my friend won't bleed to death."
Snap groaned where he was lying not too far from them, horror in his eyes knowing he could never unlive a lightsaber cauterizing his no longer bleeding leg.

"I support this topless decision," Berd, who hadn't moved from near the group, called out.

Sasa promptly shocked him with a little Force Lightning.

"Bitch," he muttered, rubbing his leg.

Sasa and Kaydel shared a small smile.

"Aunt Ally?" Timor scowled.

"That's what you're focusing on?" Kaydel rolled her eyes as Dacken decided he had enough of being insulted and walked back to Hena and her son. "Yeah, I found Aunt Aletha. She's been ten times the parent to me in two years than you and Mom were in seventeen."

"You threw your daughter out at seventeen?" Sasa groaned, cradling her arm but too afraid to move her leg. There was no doubt that Sasa's leg had been thoroughly screwed up but the pillar collapsing on her. Her collarbone was barely in better shape and she refused to take any of Kaydel's painkillers, convincing Kaydel to hand them out to the injured children in the hotel lobby.

"And speaking of Aunt Ally," Kaydel continued, "how dare you use us in your presentation? You don't support the Resistance or the Rebellion!"

Timo sighed, "Ko, you have to understand, your Aunt Alecta-"

"I don't care!" Kaydel snapped. "I know she's a threat, so I decided to stand and fight, not cower behind Mom and excuses like you do. Timor Connix, you're just a pathetic fucking coward and worst Goddesses-damned father in the galaxy."

"Oh, am I?" he glowered at her. Timor may be the submissive one in his marriage, but he wasn't completely spineless. "And that boy you've been cavorting with... bet he's just a gift from the Goddesses."

"After the life you put me through, yes, Poe, Aunt Ally, General Organa, and my friends are truly a gift from the Goddesses."

"Unbelievable. What happened to you, Ko? You were such a nice girl. A sweet girl. And now you're a foul-mouthed, violent, turncoat who gave her innocence to some Yavinese pilot."

"Oh no, I gave my innocence to a Nubian waiter on Coruscant six months after you threw me out, but trust me, Poe's been vigorously and eagerly meeting those needs for almost two years now. And trust me, Father, he's really good at screwing me."

Timo could barely hold back a shudder, "Did he teach you your uncouth vocabulary?"

"No, that's credit to Jessika fucking Pava."

Somewhere in the Galaxy, Jessika fucking Pava smiled.

Timo shook his head, "I just don't understand, what changed you?"

"What changed me?" Kaydel's eyes flashed. Rage exploding, she pointed to Dacken, "What changed me was that you let him and his psychopath brother set my hair on fire and get away with
"it! ...You never even apologized for it."

A silence clung to the air like everyone was waiting for Timor to apologize now.

Timor said nothing.

Kaydel fought her tears, "I'm going to go try to contact the others again."

No one followed after her as she cried... but Dacken considered it.

Sasa sighed and looked away from the speechless Timor Connix. Something pulled at her mind, a voice she wanted to forget.

"Get that thing to stop crying, or I'll do it myself!"

No, Sasa pushed the voice away. Timor wasn't like the voice. Timor was hands off and neglectful.

That voice was anything but.

"Well, that was eventful," Berd knelt down next to Sasa. Noticing her pained movements, he offered her his water flask, "Here, drink. Kylo will have me strung up if I don't take care of you."

"Thank you," Sasa's hands shook as she took it from him.

His eyes were on her carefully as she brought it up to her lips, but her eyes were not on him. Instead, Sasa watched Kaydel off in the corner trying to contact the Resistance. Feeling someone staring at her, Kaydel looked up, and for a minute their eyes met. A strange sort of understanding passed between them... one they couldn't explain.

And then the voice spoke again.

"Come on, it's a good deal. The right thing to do. Then she won't be our problem anymore."

The water met her lips and Sasa winced. Her connections with both Kaydel and the voice was severed as an acidic bitterness hit her tongue.

Sasa coughed, her body instinctually rejecting the water.

"Are you okay?" Berd rubbed her back.

She struggled to keep a grip on his flask, "Yeah. Fine, just the water's a little off."

Berd chuckled, "Budget cuts are a bitch."

Sasa laughed, "Don't I know it."

"Here," he guided her hands to lift the flask once more. "Drink deep so you're in good shape for Kylo."

He watched her very closely as she swallowed a mouthful of the bitter water.

"Good," Berd patted her shoulder. "Keep drinking. I'm going to see if I can make contact with the First Order. Keep an eye on Doxl."

"Will do," Sasa smiled and eyed the unmoving form next to her.

She checked his pulse and held her hand above his mouth. No pulse. No breath. Doxl was one with
Sasa's stomach dropped as she wondered who would take his place among the Knights of Ren... and who would take hers if she let the pain she was in win.

She was so tired.

"Hey, are you okay?"

Sasa looked up to see a very concerned Kaydel standing in front of her.

"Yeah, fine." She made a cheers motion with the flask, "The water will make me right."

Kaydel frowned, "Is something wrong with it? I saw you pull a face."

"Oh, no," Sasa chuckled, "our budget got cut last year, so the First Order bought all these really cheap water flasks. After a few months, they start getting this bitter taste because of something in the plastic. It's fine. Just wasn't expecting the water to taste sour."

"Are you... Are you sure?"

"Positive. What else could it be?"

Kaydel wasn't certain... but she had an idea. An idea she didn't like one bit.

And in that moment, Dacken could have sworn he saw Doxl twitch.

---

We tried, but then the First Order started testing weapons on our planet, and invited arms dealers from all over the galaxy to watch. You'd see them in the spaceports and supply depots, wearing shimmering fabrics and lush furs that made us feel ashamed of our stained jumpsuits and patched cloaks.

- Rose Tico: Resistance Fighter

A very long silence hung in the air as the men stared at Qi'ra. She looked absolutely stunning in the scene of death and destruction. The hood of her cape was trimmed with fur that had been stained with blood. Hung from her belt were the pair of custom bronzium Kyuzo petars Dryden Vos once tried to slit her throat with.

Elegant and deadly. Headgirl Scrumrat Qi'ra had grown into the position of Crime Syndicate Mob Boss well.

Qi'ra smiled, brushing a bit of dusk off her fur as she waited for the men to respond. Kes and Evan exchanged a confused glance, lost by the situation, while Chewie gave her a low but vicious growl and Han was just glaring at her.

"What?" Qi'ra smiled at Han. "Not even a hello?"

"Why are you messing with the First Order, Qi'ra?" Han asked. His weapons was still raised, "Don't you have better things to do?"

"Laertes is off with an expansion possibility and I had to amuse myself somehow," her voice was light speaking as if they were still friends or even lovers. "Besides, I owe someone a favor."
"Bombing a conference, stealing some weapons, and assassinating a Knight of Ren?" Han saw her startle at the last one. "You must owe a really big favor."

"I don't know what you mean," Qi'ra's voice was smooth.

"Oh, don't do that. I know why you're here."

"I doubt that."

"Yeah?" Han challenged. "It's Crimson Dawn pretending they're stealing weapons by pretending to be Imperial Loyalists, but really you're here to kill a Knight of Ren. Just admit it."

Qi'ra sighed, "Alright, fine. I don't know where you got your information, but yes, that's why we're here. But I'm not pretending about stealing weapons. We are doing that too."

"Have you actually lost your mind?"

"Oh, I could counter with so many stories about your insanity, I don't even know where to start."

Kes and Evan just stared at each other.

"What is going on here?" Evan asked.

"I have no idea," Kes replied.

"Well, aren't we being rude?" Qi'ra laughed. "We haven't done proper greetings, Han. Aren't you going to introduce me to your friends?"

"Oh, no you don't," Han knew better. "Last time I introduced you to one of my friends, you ended up stabbing her in the leg."

"Hey! Your sister-in-law started it!"

"It's Felicity Rhiaon. She always starts it."

"Yeah, I heard what the First Order did to her. Tough break." Qi'ra's childhood on Corellia had hardened her at a very young age to the idea of death.

Kes blinked, "Guys… can we focus on why we're here?"

"This is why we're here," Han snapped. His eyes flashed as they narrowed in on Qi'ra, "What do you think you're doing going after the Knights of Ren? I thought we had an agreement."

"An agreement I'm not breeching," Qi'ra countered instantly.

"What agreement?" Evan asked.

Han sighed, "We… kind of have a pact about our kids. I've never met hers and she's never met mine, but Qi'ra and I agreed that Ben and… I honestly don't even know if her kid is a boy or girl, much less what it's named."

"I think Laertes would kill both of us if I told you. He's very protective of our child."

"Your husband is an ass, and you should have dumped him years ago."

"Well, I'm sorry that we can't all marry royalty," Qi'ra spat. Her voice was rank with bitterness, "Do
you honestly know how insulting it is for your first boyfriend – and probably only man who
genuinely ever cared about you – to turn around and marry an honest to the Gods Princess?"

"Hey, you had your shoot with me! You were the one who threw it away!"

"Wait, wait, wait," Kes interjected. He looked like he was holding back a laugh, "Your ex-
girlfriend… is the leader of Crimson Dawn?"

"Not just ex-girlfriend," Qi'ra chuckled as she turned to Kes, standing next to Han. Both of them
facing towards Kes, Qi'ra placed a hand on Han's shoulder in an overly familiar gesture,
"First girlfriend. I made him a man."

"Oh, I am so telling Poe to use that against you," Kes grinned.

"Huh," Evan mused, "that's where Poe gets it from."
Looking rather annoyed, Han physically lifted Qi'ra's hand off his shoulder and dropped it to her
side.

"This isn't a joke, Qi'ra," he said coldly. "What do you think you're doing? Why are you going after
my son?"

"I'm not going after your son," she replied. "Our deal is unbreeched, Han. My target isn't Kylo, just
some a Knight of Ren. A girl who needs to be knocked out of power because she's gained the wrong
person's affections."

"So your men are instructed not to hurt my son as collateral damage?"

"If that's why you came out here, I'm sorry to say but it was all in vain. Kylo isn't here. I made sure
of that before I took the job."

"Kylo Ren is here," Evan spoke up. "He joined the mission at the last minute."
Qi'ra's face faded a few shades lighter, "He- He's here?"

"Yep," Evan held up his recorder watch and after a little fiddling display a small holo of Kylo in the
ballroom.

"No…” she looked lost. Panic filled her eyes, "No, I specifically asked if Kylo was going to be here.
I was assured he would not be."

"Looks like your informant had it wrong," Han said bitterly.
Qi'ra sighed, closing her eyes as she considered the situation. She didn't know if Tara had made a
mistake or genuinely withheld information from her. Either way, they were have a serious talk later.

"This is... a big problem," Qi'ra admitted.

"I don't think so," Han shot. "Call your men and tell them not to shoot my son. Theirs too if you feel
like it."

"You don't understand," Qi'ra said, "I can't call them off. The comms are being blocked."

"Wait," Evan cut in, "you blocked off your own comms?"

"Why?" Kes asked in amazement.
"It was an all or nothing situation," Qi'ra explained. "Besides, I didn't expect I needed to communicate with them once the plan was in action. Crimson Dawn runs like a well-oiled machine. I expect the best."

"Well, I'm glad that your team building exercises and training Holos have been such a hit," Han rolled his eyes. "But what are we going to do."

"They're only going to stand down if the order comes directly from me." Qi'ra thought about it, "Maybe we can come to an arrangement."

Chewie and Han exchanged a look. The Wookiee rolled his eyes and said they probably shouldn't take it.

"I don't know if we have a choice, Pal," Han sighed. He still didn't move to holster his blaster, "Alright, Qi'ra, what's this grand idea? I swear if it results you helping Luke's ex-girlfriend taking out a hit on my wife again-"

"For the last time, Han, that was Laertes. Not me."

"Laertes?" Kes questioned.

"Her husband," Han explained. "He's never liked me hanging around and constantly schemes ways to get rid of me. I think my favorite time was the one where he didn't like that once upon a time, I slept with his wife, so he decided it would only be fair to sleep with mine."

Kes raised an eyebrow.

"It didn't end well for him," Han grinned. "Leia put in the hospital for six months."

"Again, I was not involved with that at all," Qi'ra said. "In fact, that was when I took a year and a half off from Crimson Dawn to spend time with our child."

"Speaking of kids," Han prompted.

"Alright," Qi'ra sighed, "I can tell my men to stand down, but only personally. If anyone hurts Kylo before I can find them, I refuse to accept responsibility. I specifically looked in to whether or not he was going to be here and the answer was no."

"Okay," Han nodded. "So what's the catch?"

She smiled, "However… if you want protection for the rest of your people, I'm not willing to give a bunch of names and descriptions. It's too confusing beyond just one person and my men might forget and your people will get hurt anyway."

"So?" he pushed.

"You want protection for everyone else, you have to stick with me. All of you. The deal is you stay with us as we go into the ballroom – where your son should be – as we go collect the Kation Defense Holdings and Connix Industries weaponry – whatever remains of it – and we'll help you and your people escape unharmed."

"Are you crazy?" Evan exclaimed. "We help you with a heist and you'll try to not get us shot?"

Kes placed a hand on Evan's arm and shook his head. The message was clear: stand down.

"Fine, but… Solo," he said, "how can we trust her?"
"Kid's got a point," Han's eyes didn't move from Qi'ra. "Why should I do this deal?"

"Because it's the only way you'll safely see your son."

The answer clung to the air as her words sat on them like a heavy fog.

Qi'ra watched as Han debated the deal, sure his son may have been a monster in the mask these days, but she knew Han Solo. She knew his heart; she knew he would do anything for his son the way he once would have done anything for her. The thought Han still always made her smile.

And smiled she did as he slowly lowered his weapon. Qi'ra moved her hand forward to offer a handshake but stopped when he suddenly reached into his pocket.

Han Solo held up a pair of golden dice on a chain.

Qi'ra gave a small laugh, "I thought you kept those on your ship."

"Only when I'm flying it, otherwise I like to keep them on my person," he replied stiffly. "A nice little reminder that no matter how much I love something or someone, I can still end up losing them."

Han could have sworn he saw Qi'ra flinch.

Kes and Evan just traded a look.

"I am so confused right now," Evan declared.

"Yeah, is she helping us or not, Solo?" Kes asked.

Han put the dice back in his pocket, but made no move to shake her hand, nor to extend his weapon.

"I don't trust you," he said. "I haven't been able to trust you in forty years. You've betrayed me not once, not twice, but every time we've crossed paths since Corellia. But this is not about you and me anymore. It's about my kid. It's about his kid."

Han nodded to Kes.

"About every kid who is now fighting a war we should have ended a long time ago. And because of that, and only because of that, I will agree to the terms and make this deal with you… even though I know you're going to stab me in the back once more."

Qi'ra was hesitant when Han offered his hand but conceded to shake it.

"Alright," he quickly dropped her hand and took two steps away. "Let's get in there and find our kids."

Kes Dameron and Chewbacca had his back immediately, the trio heading for the door. Evan looked between Qi'ra and the men a few times, still greatly confused, but then scampered after them.

"You're wrong about one thing, Han," Qi'ra called.

Han stopped and turned look at her, "Oh yeah?"

"I've never stabbed you in the back." That vulnerable part of Qi'ra he once knew and loved on the filthy streets of Corellia emerged. "I've never been able to betray you to your face."

"Yeah," he said softly. "And it just makes things all that much worse. Come on, we've got a deal to
"Alright," Qi'ra grinned, "just promise me you're not going to pretend another rock is a thermal detonator."

Han clicked his tongue and winked, "Got us off Corellia, didn't it?"

Qi'ra just laughed.

Kaydel was sitting with knees tucked into her chest, staring in dismay at Snap when she heard a voice.

"Is this seat taken?"

She looked up and just nodded at Dacken. He gave a half-hearted smile and settled next to her.

For a long time they sat in silence.

"It was Deek's idea."

Kaydel frowned and turned her head, "What?"

"Deek was the one who thought to set your hair on fire," Dacken said. "Deek was the one who found the matches. Deek was the one to make sure that Grandma was asleep… I was the one who lit your hair on fire."

Kaydel winced.

"I am truly sorry about that Kayko," he said softly. "I try to justify it by telling myself that I was the one who brought the water to put you out, that you didn't really get hurt, that it wasn't my idea, but… but you're right. I'm a sick fuck. I need help, Kayko. And I don't know what to do with my life. I don't fit in with this family. I don't have the heart or stomach to do the awful things they do."

She said nothing; just let him talk.

"Part of my internship is filing the customer complaints… there are so many people getting hurt. So many lives being lost that shouldn't. So many people who don't get to grow up with a mother because of weapons we make."

Kaydel sighed, "I guess I've never really stopped to think how this all feels for you. You had a mom that cared about you and she got taken away. I'm an insult to your memory of her."

"Doesn't mean you deserved what happened."

"No, it doesn't."

Dacken took a deep breath, "Kaydel."

She sucked in her air; she knew the struggle it would be for him to call her his mother's name.

"I am truly and deeply sorry for what I did," there were tears in his eyes. "There is no excuse for what I did. It was wrong and if I could take it back, I would. Is there any way you could ever come to forgive me? Maybe not today, maybe not tomorrow, but… someday?"

It took her a long time to answer.
"Yes."

Dacken gave a disbelieving smile.

Kaydel reached out her hand and clasped his, "Maybe not today, maybe not tomorrow, but someday."

"I want to be a better man Aunt Kayko."

"Then be one. Join the Resistance."

"Really?"

"Aunt Ally took me in, and now I'll take you." Kaydel grinned and quoted her aunt, "I'll take any part of you you're offering, My Darling."

"Ugh," Dacken shuddered, "don't call me Darling."

Kaydel laughed and pulled in her nephew = her four years older than her nephew – in for a hug. Her family was hard, but maybe, just maybe, some of them deserved a second chance.

Suddenly she pulled back, "But if you screw this up, I'm setting you on fire."

"Deal," he laughed.

Kaydel returned his laughter, smiling wider than she had in a long time. She opened her mouth to respond with some witty retort when she saw something that made her blood run cold.

Moaning in pain, Sasa Ren was rolling on the ground convulsing and throwing up uncontrollably.

"Sasa!" Kaydel leapt to her feet, Dacken on his a moment after.

Loath she was to admit it, Kaydel had developed a bit of an affection for Sasa over the past week. Their ideologies might be different, but there was something genuinely sweet and honest about that Knight of Ren. So Kaydel was determined to do whatever she could in her power to help Sasa in her condition.

But Kaydel didn't reach her in time because when Kaydel was only a couple of metres away from Sasa, someone got to her first. The so-called dead body of Doxl Ren suddenly rolled over and pulled a vibroblade from his belt.

Dacken and Kaydel could do nothing but watch in horror as he plunged it down into Sasa's abdomen.

Her scream was another noise that Kaydel Ko Connix would never forget.

Author's Note (too big to put in normal spot)

For those of you who don't know, I'm not just forgetting about TFA and now TLJ. I actually have some days I sit down and write bits of those future chapters. In fact, the first chapter of TFA where Poe goes to Jakku has been fully written for about a year and a half now. I've been changing and adding new things as new material is released and new stories arise. For example, I have recently had to go in and add in parts that include Poe's relationship with Kaydel, Kylo's relationship with Sasa,
and address the fact that Rey knows who BB-8 is.

That was not a fun edit to work all of that in.

The problem with this is that sometimes choices I make have ended up contradicting the material I have already written, forcing me to change parts and delete others.

Why do I mention this?

Because I have already fully written the scene of Poe naming Finn in its original spot in TFA. I now have to fully cut the scene and replace the dialogue with something else now. As I do enjoy the original scene, I will present it to you here now as a deleted/alternate scene.

Enjoy.

"Hey, what's your name?" Poe asked, it finally occurring to him that maybe it was polite to know the name of the guy who had rescued him and helped him steal a ship to epically made an escape (or were at least attempting an epic escape) from the First Order.

He expected his Stormtrooper friend to have a name like Captain Phasma, considering that his Stormtrooper friend had been unquestioned when he claimed Poe was needed by Kylo Ben (Poe made a mental note to always call Ben Solo that from now. It really had pissed him off, and Poe wasn't about to give any shred of kindness to a man who facilitated the death of a five-year-old, especially when said five-year-old was the cousin of said Wannabe Sith Lord.)

Poe fully expected his friend to declare his name was something like Lieutenant Sabre, or Sergeant Macro. And even if his Stormtrooper friend had not yet climbed the ranks, Poe was fully expecting to hear some inconsequential serial number like THX-1183, NH-1977, or RJ-1983.

What Poe wasn't expecting was to hear a very familiar string of letters and numbers.

"FN-2187!" The Stormtrooper shouted.

"F," Poe started to repeat, his brain not yet making the connection.

And then he stopped.

"What?" Poe exclaimed.

Did his Stormtrooper friend just say FN-2187?

"That's the only name they ever gave me," FN-2187 explained, clearly thinking that the issue was Poe was shocked by the concept of Stormtroopers only having serial numbers.

But that wasn't what had thrown Poe. Oh, he was perfectly aware that First Order Stormtroopers only had serial numbers. He had fought in the Resistance far too long not to be aware of it.

It was the number FN-2187 that gave him pause. A significant number in his family's circle of friends. A number that had been defiantly displayed by a founding member of the Resistance. A number that had been very famously tattooed onto the wrist of a close family friend. A number that had been repeated over and over throughout the years as a reminder of one woman's failure and determination. A number that was at the very center of one of the Resistance's biggest fiascos.

Poe Dameron could not believe what he was hearing; FN-2187. He was sitting right next to the very child that had been ripped out of Felicity Rhiaon's arms, twenty-three years ago.
And Poe had saved him.

… Okay, FN-2187 had actually saved himself, but Poe definitely helped.

In the brief few seconds granted to Poe by FN-2187's explanation, he let his mind go to the memories of Felicity Rhiaon, his dear family friend who suffered a horrifying death at the hands of the man who had captured and tortured Poe. Poe remembered Felicity's determination to someday once again find FN-2187 and free him. He remembered how Felicity had always said she could never be content until the day FN-2187 was free, had his own name, and knew that there was at least one person in the world who cared about him.

Poe had always been disturbed by the thought that Felicity Rhiaon's soul could never find peace. He wondered if she was restless in the afterlife, helpless to complete her one last piece of business.

Well, Poe was more than happy to complete that business. FN-2187 was free and knew someone cared about him (his new friend, Poe) but he still needed one more thing.

A name.

"Well, I ain't using it!" Poe stubbornly declared. "F-N, huh?"

Poe thought quickly. After all these years, FN-2187 would be granted his very own name and become his very own person. The only question was what to call him? It had to be something epic and brilliant and significant and unforgettable. Something like…

"Finn," Poe decreed. "I'm gonna call you Finn!"

…Okay, maybe Poe wasn't the greatest at naming things.

Kaydel was so going to make fun of him for this.

"Is that all right?" Poe turned to look back at his friend.

"Finn," FN-2187 tried out the name. "Yeah, Finn, I like that! I like that!"

Poe turned back and had to suppress a chuckle. Good, the kid had as bad taste in names as Poe did. He was certain that Commander Nalto would tease him endlessly when he brought Finn back to the Resistance with him, but at least Finn liked his name.

"I'm Poe," Poe introduced himself. "Poe Dameron."

"Good to meet you, Poe!" Finn said enthusiastically.

"Good to meet you too, Finn!" Poe shot back.

And Finn had no idea truly how good it felt for Poe to finally meet Finn.

Chapter End Notes

Coming Up Next Chapter…
Kaydel's Decision
The groups converge in an epic battle to escape the resort, but when the other Knights of Ren arrive, Kylo forces Kaydel to make a decision between Poe's freedom and her own.

I absolutely love that in the reviews for last chapter everyone thought it was going to be Kaydel who died. Come on, guys. I literally said a chapter ago that Kaydel will tell Poe in a couple years to kill Kylo Ren. Plus I brought back Jaina for what honestly looked like no reason whatsoever. You really think I would be that cruel?

...She says in a chapter where a guy's leg was blown off and they used a lightsaber to cauterize the wound.

So, I was informed there is another book in the series of Rey's Survival Guide, Poe Dameron: Flight Log, and The Journal of Paige Tico called Rose Tico: Resistance Fighter. I got it and love it (there is a god damn hilarious quote about Poe hating Holdo that I need to use so badly) and I will be pulling quotes from there too as you have seen.

There is just one tiny problem from the book, in it, Rose confirms her parents are named Thanya and Hue. In my story you'll have noticed that I named Rose and Paige's father, Vien. Frankly, I like the name Vien better than Hue and there is something later in this story involving the name of the Tico father. So, I've decided to disregard the canon name Hue and just go with Vien.

So, for those who are asking, I've got good news and bad news for the question of when will we reach TFA. The good news is I sat down and pounded out a scene by scene, beat by beat, joke by joke, 100% inclusive exact plan and outline of what happens between now and the start of TFA.

This includes sorting out all the characters from Luke, Quom, and Rey on Jakku, Kira's Council and the Resistance on D'Qar, Kes and Shayna on Yavin IV, Han, Chewie, and Waroo, what Lando is up to, what happens in the Tara/Kylo/Sasa love triangle, what the Knights of Ren do, what happens with the other First Order officers, what happens with Black Squadron, what happens with Holdo, what happens with the Resistance medical teams, what happens with Teng, what happens with Lor San Tekka, the story of Rey using Luke's lightsaber for the first time, the story of how Aletha learns the truth about Luke, a flashback sequence explaining and revisiting important moments of the story to see a certain character's point of view and explain their motivations, what happens with Finn and the FN squad.

I know everything. The outline is 74 pages long and tells me exactly what chapter will be the first one of TFA... give or take a few if certain chapters get too long but I kept a two-page rule for each chapter.

And that's the bad news. You want the honest truth? TFA starts at chapter 90.

Yes, I tried to cut that down but in order for every character to properly be in the spot I need them to be for TFA, we've got a lot of chapters to go. I'm hoping to hit TFA sometime next year, but let's be honest, it's probably going to be around the release of Episode 9.

I thank you all for your patience and understanding. As I said before I changed the story summary to reflect the fact we won't hit TFA until chapter 90. However, please keep in mind, as evidenced by this chapter where Finn and Poe meet and Poe names Finn, there
will be parts of TFA that happen before technically the Force Awakens.

That said, I can't explicitly say why it's going to take so long to get to TFA, but you will see why. There's about four or five major stories that occur that significantly change the characters and stakes of TFA. Let me just put it this way (skip if you don't want spoilers) Finn and Rey might not actually be meeting for the first time during TFA, and the whole idea of Rey coming in and being the Skywalker Heir is a much larger threat to Kylo.

Once more, I thank you for your patience and I hope you enjoy the story for what it is rather than what ultimately is one of many story arcs in this tale. Remember, this is the story of Luke and Rey being in each other's lives; TFA is just one part of a much bigger story.
Chapter Summary

Sasa Ren's dress is a secret masterpiece, Snap makes a badass shot, and Roses hates Stromtroopers, yet can't stop thinking about Marks' butt.

Chapter Notes

Fuck it, I’m cutting the chapter in half because you guys need an explanation.

Hey guys, sorry about the long wait between updates. I’ve been really busy over the past few months because – great news – I got a new job.

Also I get ridiculously addicted to Mamma Mia, so don’t be surprised if you see a Mamma Mia fic pop up under my penname.

Anyway, the new job now has me working normal hours, will allow me most of the weekend off (Sundays for certain and getting home at 4:00 at the latest on Saturdays.) Plus, I’m no longer mentally and physically exhausted after work and spending my days off just resting as I’m too tired even to write. It also unloads a bunch of other stresses and offers other benefits to me that are tangential to writing, but a little too personal to get into here.

So, sorry about the wait, but hopefully with this new job I can get into a better posting rhythm. However, I would like to remind all of you that I never promise a consistent day to update. With my personal life, mental health disorder, and general writing style (I literally cannot force myself to do creative writing as my brain and muse just shut everything down in retaliation) I can’t keep to hard deadlines with creative writing.

I also want to thank everyone who gave me encouragement in the last chapter over the fact it’s still a long way away until TFA. As one reviewer said The title said all. Isn’t it, the Long Way Home after all. Indeed it is, and the title of this fic became ironically meta, but trust me, I guarantee that in the next chapter you will see one of the many reasons why it's taking so long

Finally, I’m going to be breaking my self-imposed rule of don’t directly translate what Wookiees or droids are saying. I’ve always believed it to be part of the magic of Star Wars, and I don’t translate. However, Waroo’s dialogue is going to be important not in this chapter, but a little while from now. So I’m introducing a Waroo exclusive thing. Anytime I want to translate what Waroo is saying, the dialogue will be framed [Like this. Waroo will be the only Wookiee or droid I do this for, so don’t get used to it.] Got it? Good.

Anyway, yay me! Enjoy the chapter.
The vibroblade had been in Sasa’s abdomen for less than a minute before she shot Doxl off her. The surge of blue lightning coming from her fingertips was more intense than the shocks Luke Skywalker endured on the second Death Star. Still, the blade was painful, so her scream rang off what remained of the walls.

Immediately the nausea returned and Sasa rolled onto her front and resumed her vomiting. Her convulsions began to ebb, but she still twinged and shook beyond her control.

And then the boot came down on the back of her neck.

If there was something Sasa Ren was proud about, it was her knowledge of fashion and her ability to remember what people were wearing. Even pinned to the ground, she could tell whose boot was on her neck.

Rubber sole, grip slightly worn down. The tread had a stylistic star pattern – the signature of a Corellian designer she personally liked to shop from. The man – indicated by the masculine grunt he made – shifted his weight forward to intensify the pressure. He moved a little too far and the toe of his boot brushed her neck. It was happabore leather, she knew the texture in an instant, and she only knew one person who wore rubber soled, happabore leather boots made by her favorite Corellian designer.

“Berd,” Sasa squeaked. “Stop… Please.”

She tried with all her might not to throw up again. Berd Ren was strangling her in a very odd way, face down, forcing her head to bend painfully as the front of her neck was pinned to the floor. If she threw up in this position, she was done: she would choke, and she would die.

“Sorry, Sasa,” Berd pressed down hard. “But you knew this was coming.”

Her throat burned with the stomach acid left behind from her convulsions of vomit. She shook, making the strangulation more painfully. Her Cerise Signature thrashed about as well, desperately, pathetically searching to find Kylo, to find FN-2187, to find Nova or Wiln or even Marks.

But the Force was out of her reach.

“Please, Berd… Please… It hurts.”

“If I could switch it to a Force Choke, I would. It would be quicker and cleaner, but that’s the problem: it’s too clean. Kylo would know it was me in an instant. He has to think it was Doxl, and with both of you dead there will be no one to correct him.”

“But Doxl isn’t-”

“I’ll take care of that soon enough.”

Sasa just sobbed. Where was Kylo? Where was FN-2187? She wanted them. Someone by her side who cared about her. Sasa didn’t even need rescue, her death at Tara’s hands seemed a given. All
she wanted was at least someone who cared about her by her side to give her one last comfort. But she was alone… and she was going to die alone.

And then Kaydel Ko Connix smashed Berd across the head with what pieces remained of a side table from one of the cozy lounge areas of the lobby.

Having watched HoloNet all her life, Kaydel expected such an act to knock Berd out.

It did not.

But it did make him fall forward, giving Kaydel time to flip over Sasa… but it also made Berd furious.

“You bitch!” he roared as Kaydel turned Sasa’s head to let her throw up. Berd lunged for Kaydel but was knocked to the ground by Dacken.

“Go, Kayko!” Dacken yelled.

“Come on,” Kaydel urged the Knight of Ren.

Sasa was unable to get to her feet, her body still going haywire, so Kaydel went with Plan B. Kaydel struggled to pick up Sasa off the ground. She wasn’t strong enough to carry Sasa, at least not very far. Fumbling, Kaydel ungracefully dropped Sasa to the ground.

“Sorry!” Kaydel winced.

As Kaydel and Sasa figured out the best way to get Sasa away was Kaydel dragging her by the arms across the ballroom – not a fun thing for Sasa with her broken collarbone – Dacken tried his best to hold off Berd with his fists.

The girls had just reached Snap when Kaydel was grabbed by the hair and torn away from Sasa. Kaydel shrieked in pain, but tackled Doxl, who had finally gathered himself from his electrocution. Doxl tried to throw her off him but Sasa scratched him across the face and grabbed his lightsaber.

She chucked it to Snap, who caught it with one hand.

Sasa went to do the same with the vibroblade but he grabbed her wrist and twisted. Sasa dropped the knife but Kaydel’s fingers instantly replaced hers, and now she was the one grappling with Doxl. Kaydel locked her free arm around his neck and tried to strangle him as best she could.

Kaydel was very thankful for all those fisticuffs training General Organa insisted all Resistance soldiers have (sometimes even being the one who sparred with the students.) Actually, it was being assigned partners in that class that Paige and Kaydel met, and Jessika Pava had beaten up Kira’s Council many times as so called training sessions. Though sometimes Kaydel wondered if Jessika’s matches with all the members of Kira’s Council (minus Kira) was just showing off to Tallie.

And yes, by all members of Kira’s Council that included the occasional session with Aletha.

But thank the Goddesses for Jessika’s need to show off, Kaydel thought in that moment as one arm strangled Doxl while the other hand fought against his to grip the vibroblade.

Then Doxl decided to slam backwards to smash Kaydel to the ground.

Kaydel had the wind knocked out of her, but it was the moment she got the upper hand. Doxl was distracted by performing the move, and Kaydel took her chance. She tore the vibroblade from his grasp and when he pinned her to the ground, Kaydel released her choking arm.
Without a second thought, Kaydel slit the blade across his neck.

His eyes bugged, and Doxl gave a raspy choke. Then he went limp in her arms.

It jolted through her. Shocked at her two second decision, Kaydel dropped the blade. She touched his neck and felt his clotting blood. Her fingers trailed across the line left behind by his own blade, not stomaching the action of looking at her handiwork.

He was dead. Kaydel Ko Connix had held a man in her arms and slit his throat. Bile rushed up into her mouth, but she forced it back down. Kaydel dropped Doxl and hit the ground face first with a sickening thwack!

She stared at his unmoving body, shaken by her actions. Her fingers frantically twiddled, pushing the blood around like she was trying not to let herself forget this hot, sticky red mess she brought forward.

Kaydel had killed in battle before… but this was the first time she had murdered someone.

And her hand was wet with his blood.

Across the room, Berd and Dacken were still going fist to fist. Dacken’s moves were so quick and unexpected that Berd hadn’t gotten the chance to even reach his lightsaber, let alone use it.

“Get out of my way,” Berd swung at Dacken with his fist, but he dodged and hit Berd square in the face.

“What? And miss all the fun?” Dacken drove an elbow into Berd’s stomach.

“Oh, you want fun?”

Berd kicked high, his boot smashing into Dacken’s face and sending him to the ground. The Knight automatically reached for his lightsaber, but Dacken grabbed a shard of twisted metal and barrelled into his legs. Berd buckled and hit the ground knees first.

Using the opportunity, Dacken slashed Berd’s belt, slicing it in two. The lightsaber hit the ground with a thud. Berd may have the Force, but he was cut off from it and Dacken was quicker. A split second before Berd could grab it, Dacken’s hand enclosed over the hilt and snatched it away.

“Granddad! Catch!” Dacken chucked it at Timor without another word of warning.

But as Kaydel had learned long ago, Timor Connix did not value family over his own neck. Timor didn’t even watch to see where the lightsaber landed – heck, the lightsaber might not have even hit the ground – before he started into the excuses.

“Oh no, Dacken, we can’t. If Alecta found out I had helped-”

And so forth the usual nonsense he had used to justify disowning his daughter. He just rambled on, sitting next to Hena, the mother of the legless child.

“Throw it back!” Berd roared at Timor.

“Granddad, no!” Dacken pleaded.

But that meant nothing to Timor, “Of course, Master Ren. I’ll just-”

Timor froze.
“Throw it!” Berd was losing his patience. “Do not make me come over there!”

“The lightsaber!” Timor cried. “It’s gone! I can’t find it!”

“What?”

“I don’t understand,” Timor looked around the area frantically. There was no sign of that silver hilt. “It has to be here! It landed over here. Oh, where is it?”

Hena kept her head low, trying not to draw the attention. She held her son tightly against her, counting the seconds until this would all be over.

No one noticed the lightsaber she kept hidden under her torn, bloody skirt.

“You little-” Berd grabbed Dacken by the throat. “I swear to the Supreme Leader, I’ll make you-”

A blaster bolt hit Berd square in the temple. He dropped to the ground, making Dacken stumble down with him in the process.

Dacken scowled, “What the?”

Snap Wexley slowly lowered his blaster, “Did everyone see that? Because that was awesome, and we’re telling everyone when we get back to D’Qar.”

“Uh… Buddy?” Dacken realized he didn’t actually remember what Snap’s name was. Dacken had chosen to check out the unmoving Berd to ensure they were safe, “You didn’t kill him.”

“I know,” Snap said. “Shot him with the highest stun setting.”

“Why?” Kaydel asked. She hid her bloody hand behind her back. No one could see it. She wouldn’t let them.

“Come on, Kay,” Snap lifted an eyebrow, “this is a set up against the First Order.”

“The First Order?” Sasa questioned. Her vomiting was starting to quell and her convulsions lessened. Sasa muttered what Kaydel could have sworn was to her own dress, “Come on, kick in faster.”

“Oh, yeah,” Dacken said. “Didn’t you have the same thought, Kayko?”

“What’s going on?” Sasa frowned.

“Never mind,” Kaydel knelt down next to Sasa. “I’ll explain later. How are you doing?”

“I’m doing better. I don’t think-” Sasa stopped to gag but nothing came up. “Sorry. I think the vomiting is subsiding. The twitching is stopping too. It’s finally starting to kick in.”

Snap and Kaydel exchanged a confused look.

“Uh… what’s kicking in?” Snap asked.

Sasa grunted as she shifted to show them where she had been stabbed. The handsewn, intricately designed seafoam green dress that Sasa had bragged to Kaydel about over breakfast that morning had barely been punctured. In the tiny area that had, a blue familiar ooze was seeping into the fabric and Sasa’s minor injury.

Kaydel stared at it in shock, “Is that… bacta?”
“What the actual hell?” Snap whispered.

Sasa grinned as she shifted herself again, this time into a more comfortable position, “Why do you think I was so proud of this dress? When I said that it had a complicated sewing feat that took me three days to get right, I didn’t mean the neckline. It was the under netting that was difficult.”

“Under… netting?” Kaydel repeated slowly. Sure, she didn’t know much about fashion, but she was a lot more lost than she knew she should be.

“The fabric is special,” Sasa explained. “I made it myself. Technically it’s four layers of fabric. The top is the seafoam gossamer, then underneath are two layers of a certain Mandalorian fabric. It’s woven into a protective material almost as impenetrable as plate armor, but surprisingly light weight. Was a bitch to dye green. You should have seen my hands. I made the mistake of… having an encounter with Kylo and he went into a meeting with the Supreme Leader not realizing he had green hand marks on his neck. Hux wouldn’t let him live it down. Underneath that is a material – very expensive, way too high a cost to mass produce – I designed of netting with pockets of bacta. If the other material got pierced, then the bacta would be punctured and I could immediately start getting medical treatment. Not only is it healing my stab and bombing wounds but whatever I’ve been drugged with is getting its ass kicked in my biological system right now. All in all, this dress is stronger and more beneficial protection than most suits of armor… and damn it, if I don’t look drop dead gorgeous in it.”

Kaydel, Snap, and Dacken all just stared at her.

“What…” Snap’s mouth was hanging open slightly.

“You’re hardcore,” Dacken nodded.

“I definitely underestimated your cunning,” Kaydel admitted.

“Come on, Kaydel,” Sasa smiled playfully, “Tara Ren has been trying to kill me for over a year. You don’t actually think I’d walk around defenseless?”

“Damn, Sasa,” Snap shook his head, “if I wasn’t happily married, I think I’d be falling in love.”

“Well, just remember, I did sear your leg with a lightsaber.”

“Feelings gone.”

“Good. You wouldn’t want to face Kylo.”

“And you wouldn’t want to face Karé.”

“Yes, forget Tara Ren,” Kaydel agreed, “Karé Kun can be a scary woman. So… Are you all healed now or something? I mean you were poisoned.”

“The bacta will do what it can, but I’ll need further medical intervention.” Sasa glanced to Snap, “Your friend too. But with me the best thing for healing will be to figure out how I got poisoned and stop it at the source.”

Kaydel blinked, “Are you serious?”

“What?”

“You can’t figure out how you were poisoned? Come on, it’s the simplest thing in the book! You
drank from Berd’s water flask! It tasted sour! He poisoned you with his water!”

“Uh… Kay?” Snap interrupted. “It wasn’t poisoned.”

“What?” she scowled. “How do you know?”

“Because I drank from it too.”

It confused her for a minute and Kaydel remembered.

"You okay?" Kaydel asked as Berd gave him some water.

"No." Snap swallowed a painkiller from Kaydel's medicine belt. The most powerful pill in her stash was still not going to be anywhere enough to ease the agony he was about to endure. "I know I have to do it… but I have a really bad feeling about this."

“I drank before she did,” Snap pointed out. “If it had been poisoned, I would have gotten the symptoms too.”

Kaydel blinked, “…Oh.”

Sasa lifted an eyebrow, “You really think I would drink something untested? I saw your friend didn’t have a reaction, so I knew it was safe.”

“But… it was sour.”

“Because the idiotic department who bought them didn’t make sure they were BPA free. Plastic and chemicals have been leeching into the water making it sour. A replacement shipment is on the way to the First Order with better water bottles and canteens, but the new bottles got packed by our mission prep squad. Kylo was mad when he opened our bags and saw, but we were stuck with them. Repurchasing equipment we already had is something the expenses department would have our asses over. The Supreme Leader gives them a surprising amount of power.”

“So…” Kaydel tried to puzzle it out, “you were poisoned another way?”

“I suspect it happened when Berd dug me out of the rubble. That’s when I lost connection with the Force and Kylo. Now, let’s try to find Berd’s lightsaber and a way to contact our people so we can see if that medic of yours is still alive and can help me figure out the source of the poisoning. Someone go over to the check-in desk computer and see if you can find a layout of the grounds. We need to find the communications control center because the blocking is too powerful to be an independent machine. This is being straight up wired from the main center.”

Kaydel just stared at Sasa, “I’m starting to see why Kylo Ren is in love with you. You are so much more than dresses and flirting.”

“Come on. You don’t think the Supreme Leader keeps me around because I look pretty?”

“Not anymore.”

“There is a brain behind this beautiful face. I have a much grander purpose than to screw Kylo.”
Sasa paused. “So… put in a good word about me to his mother, okay?”

“Sure…” Kaydel sighed. “That’ll be a fun conversation.”

It wasn’t.

“So,” Marks stared up at the catwalk inside the communication control center. He and Waroo had been doing whatever Rose demanded of them, the group reprogramming, rebooting, and rewiring various control systems for a good half an hour. “The last thing that needs to be dealt with is up on that catwalk.”

“Correct,” Rose stood between him and Waroo looking extra short between the figures who were both abnormally tall for their species.

“And we need a ladder to get up there?”

“Correct.”

“But Waroo broke the ladder in half when he used it to hit those five Crimson Dawn lackeys guarding this place when we first got in here.”

[Correct] Waroo said.

“So we have dead guards… but no way to get up there,” Marks said.

“Well…” Rose turned her head to both sides to look up at each of them, “there is one way. But I don’t think you’re going to like it.”

“Waroo, please stop shifting!”

[Your heels are digging into my back, Human!]

Rose had crossed arms and a smirk as she watched Marks standing on Waroo’s back, the Wookiee down on all fours.

“I really should have brought a recording device with me,” Rose smirked.

“Would you just climb up us already?” Marks rolled his eyes.

Rose thought nothing of it as she climbed on the back of Waroo, trying to finding her footing so Marks wouldn’t knock her off. But it wasn’t until she tried to climb on Marks’ back and he nearly fell off, taking her down with him.

“I think we’re going to have to rethink this,” Marks said as he and Rose climbed off Waroo.

“Waroo, you relax for a moment while we figure this out.” Rose turned to face Marks, “So, how we gonna do this? I can’t climb you while on another living thing.”

“I don’t know,” his brows knit together, his grey eyes getting all serious in a way that made Rose want to bite her lip.

And maybe a few places on him. Oh God, she really had to stop thinking about his cheekbones, and butt, and how much he could bench-press.
Wait a minute.

“How much can you bench-press?” Rose asked.

He raised an eyebrow but answered, “Bout 120.”

Rose frowned, “What about 130?”

Marks understood, “I could lift you.”

“Alright, Waroo,” Rose turned back to the Wookiee. “Get ready. We’re going again.”

Waroo grunted and repositioned himself. Marks crouched down, and though she was a little awkward at it, Rose climbed onto his back and locked her arms around his neck.

“Are you sure you got me?” Rose nervously asked as Marks grabbed one of the steel support beams that connected the catwalk to the ground.

“Don’t worry,” he reached up and gripped her arm, his hand firm on her yet still gentle. “I promise I won’t let you fall.”

God damn, she thought she was more independent. Why did that make her swoon a little? This was what she got for being so desperate for a boyfriend. When the Force finally gave her a potential love interest, it had to be a god damn Stormtrooper.

Eh. Could be worse. She could have ended up with Evan Tharel.

Seriously? What did Paige see in Evan?

“AH!” Kes collapsed when a blast hit him in the arm.

“Tharel!” Han yelled as he, Chewie, and Qi’ra fired at the Imperial Loyalists across the hallway. Turned out that those who genuinely believed in the cause weren’t so happy about the pretenders from Crimson Dawn and had turned against Qi’ra and her people.

“On it,” Evan pulled Kes against a closed door, a small potted plant giving the tiniest bit of coverage. Not even pulling off his medical satchel, Evan dug out the bandaging supplies with one arm, the other still firing off shots with his blaster. “Hold still, Lieutenant Dameron. It won’t take long.”

As Evan bandaged him, Kes was forced to face the hallway down which they had just come. It was clear behind the group… until Kes spotted five armed men appear over Evan’s shoulder.

“Tharel! Watch out for-”

Without even looking back, Evan turned his weapon behind him and fired five perfect shots. They all hit the men square in the chest, each falling down dead.

Evan then returned to Kes’ injuries without even a blink.

“You know, it’s a good thing Paige was there with Evan during the bombing,” Rose said as Marks
climbed up on Waroo’s back. “He needed someone with actual brawn to watch his back.

“Actually,” Marks said as Rose climbed on top his shoulders. He reached up to put a hand on her back to support her. “Considering his actions after we woke up, I think your friend Evan might secretly be a badass.”

Rose snorted as she pulled herself up onto the catwalk, “I’ll believe it when I see it.”

“You up safe?” Marks asked.

“Yeah.” Rose turned to the machines and cracked her knuckles, “Let’s see how Crimson Dawn hurt you guys.”

It took about ten minutes. Marks got off Waroo, and the Wookiee went over to monitor the ground level computers to see Rose’s progress. Marks just stood below, watching Rose dutifully with concern. He had the posture and expression of a guard dog, ready any moment to spring into action.

“Alright, and…” Rose flipped a switch.

Light and sounds filled the room as the dormant machines flickered on and buzzed into order.

“Got it!” Rose exclaimed.

A little too caught up in her victory, she jumped a little in the air. When she came back down, her foot caught a cable and she stumbled back. As it so happened she was perfectly aligned to the part of the catwalk that didn’t have a railing, and she screamed as she found herself falling backward toward the ground and a broken neck.

…Only to land in Marks’ quick arms and slam him into the ground.

When the two broke from their daze, Rose was startled to realize that she was lying atop Marks… and she had no motivation to move away from being so close and feeling every inch of his body.

After a moment, Marks smiled up at her, “I told you I wouldn’t let you fall.”

In a split second she had a vision of pressing her lips to his. Rose yelped and pushed off Marks before she surrendered to making it reality.

“Thanks!” she yelped. Seeing his amused expression, Rose cleared her throat and repeated, “Thanks. Thanks.”

Somehow she couldn’t find a normal tone of voice.

“No problem,” Marks smiled.

Oh God, she wanted to smack that stupid handsome smile off his face. He was the enemy; what was she doing?

“So,” Marks scratched his neck, finally catching on to her awkwardness, “are the comms working now?”

“I think so,” Rose looked down and saw hers was working. “I’m not sure if the line will hold though. We need to test it.”

“Here,” Marks pulled out his comm, “I’ll call Captain Phasma for a distress call. That way if the line, breaks, diverts, or is compromised we’re not risking something important.”
Rose couldn’t argue with that, but when Marks successfully called Phasma and she heard the stupid Stormtrooper Captain voice, she wanted to tear the comm from his hand and scream until her face was purple. That arrogant, mechanical voice was the voice of the woman who helped torture and murder the mother of Rose’s best friend. She wanted to do a great many things to Captain Phasma, and while yelling at her was low on the list, it was on the list.

Rose did take twisted, smug pleasure in hearing Phasma’s reaction to the news of who had accompanied Rose to Nixrye when Marks explained the situation.

“So, just so that I’m clear,” there was an odd tone to Phasma’s voice, “Han Solo, Chewbacca the Wookiee, Chewbacca’s son, and both the Dameron men are there on planet with you?”

“Yes, Ma’am,” Marks reported.

“…huh.”

Marks frowned and shot an awkward look to Rose. The girl merely offered him a shrug but not withhold her smirk.

“Uh, alright then,” Phasma cleared her throat. “I’ll send reinforcements immediately. And Marks?”

“Yes, Captain?”

“If you manage to get one of those males alone… Do not let them escape your custody.”

The smirk fell off Rose’s face in an instant.

Phasma continued, “I want them face to face with me or I swear to the Gods, I will break your wrist. Am I clear?”

“I understand completely, Ma’am.”

“Communication over.”

And the line went dead.

Star systems away, the woman who called herself Captain Phasma stood in her quarters, staring at her communication device in shock.

“Han Solo… Chewbacca… Waroo… Kes… and Poe Dameron… are on Nixrye… And I stayed back on the Star Destroyer.”

Phasma blinked.

“SON OF A BITCH!”

Behind her, her visitor chuckled, “Well… I told you to go with Ben.”

And even though she knew she wouldn’t hit him, Phasma threw the closest heavy object at his head.
But I won’t let myself hate everyone in the First Order. For all I know the Stormtroopers, pilots, and technicians are just like me and Rose – they found themselves stuck in a situation they never chose. Maybe some of them are looking for a way out of that trap.

- The Journal of Paige Tico

“So…” Rose began as she exchanged a look with Waroo. “Phasma wants you to hold onto Solo, Chewbacca, Waroo, or the Damerons if you get one alone.”

“That is correct,” Marks replied simply.

Rose and Waroo looked at each other again.

“And… you’re alone with Waroo,” Rose continued.

“Well, not exactly,” Marks countered. “You are present, but I suppose that this would fit the parameters.”

Waroo shifted his blaster rifle. He didn’t carry a bowcaster like his father, but the rifle he carried was so large and powerful that Rose suspected if Aletha ever saw it, she would come up with some elaborate plot to claim it as her own.

Note to self: don’t let Aletha give Waroo any “vaccines”.

Marks looked between Rose, the Wookiee, and the rifle.

Then he began to laugh.

“I’m sorry, you don’t actually think I’m stupid enough to grapple with a Wookiee?”

Waroo growled something to Rose that she was fairly certain meant, [He’s got a point.]

Rose was not willing to concede the point, “But Phasma ordered you to hold him.”

“So what?”

She blinked, “…Excuse me?”

“So what?” he repeated. “So what if she told me to capture him? I’m not a droid to program. I’m a human being who can think and decide for myself. And I’ve decided to institute a policy of not fucking with Wookiees.”

“But… But you’re a Stormtrooper!”

“And there’s a face behind that mask.”

Rose shifted on the balls of her feet. She refused to acknowledge just how handsome the face behind the mask was. No Sir, not handsome at all. The blast wounds made him ugly, not rugged and mysterious. Those eyes were cutting and cold, not clear pools of grey that could see into her very soul. And those cheekbones…

Oh God damn it, she knew those cheekbones would be her downfall.
“Whatever,” Rose’s voice was louder than she intended. They needed to get back on track and not quibbling over individuality among the First Order and Marks’ stupid handsome face. “You had your turn to talk to your people, and now it’s mine.”

She pushed him – lightly – to the side and made herself at home with the communicator. Marks just smiled and watched her as Rose hailed the Ninka and explained to Vice Admiral Holdo’s crew about the situation.

He had never quite met anyone like Rose Tico before. The girl was tiny, but with her feisty spirit and confidence the way she carried herself made her loom over the Wookiee in the room. Marks stood almost head to head with Kylo and Phasma, but when he talked to Rose he felt like he was looking her right in the eye… Probably because she lifted on her toes when yelling at him that way she could indeed look him in the eye as she scolded him. He didn’t mind; she did have pretty eyes.

In no way was Rose a super model, and she wouldn’t be found among the Chosen with Sasa and Nova and the like, but she was more than simply the word cute in his eyes. Not to mention the girl didn’t mind getting her hands literally dirty, Marks had noticed. Her hands were rough and scratched and grease stained. There was a smudge of oil on the side of her nose that Marks fought desperately against the urge to wipe it away. She’d probably tear his arm off if he touched her.

But still… he did yearn.

There was one fact about her no one could deny, Marks decided. Her lips were the dictionary definition of perfection… and something warm and liquid danced in his stomach whenever she bit that perfect bottom lip.

Oh, this was not going to end well for him.

“There!” Rose turned off her comm with a flourish. “The Resistance is on its way to rescue us.”

Both she and Marks desperately fought to hide their overt attraction for each other… even if it was so plain to Waroo he would approach Reine Agim for a betting pool if the Jedi was still alive.

“And the First Order is on its way to save us,” Marks pointed out.

“Yes? Well, the Resistance will get here first,” Rose shot, lifting onto her toes.

“No, it isn’t. Phasma said that there was already someone halfway here.”

Rose dropped to the flats of her feet.

“What?” Marks asked.

“I thought the First Order wasn’t involved in this bombing.”

“It isn’t.”

“Then why is there already someone on their way?”

He frowned, not realizing the point until Rose pointed it out. But it didn’t take long for him to put it together, and he let out a huff of air when he did.

“What a bitch,” Marks shook his head.

“Excuse me?” Rose’s voice was an octave higher than normal.
“Sorry, not you,” Marks realized how that must have come across. “Look, just because it wasn’t set up by the First Order doesn’t mean it wasn’t set up by someone in the First Order. Five credits says it’s Tara Ren on her way. That woman is getting so damn creative in her murder attempts. This is a lot cleverer than that whole poisoned hair comb idea.”

Rose and Waroo exchanged a look that reminded Marks they had no idea what the hell was going on.

“It is far too long a story to explain.” Marks summed it up with, “Basically, Kylo Ren has some crazy ass girlfriends.”

Rose didn’t even want to understand more.

Thankfully they were cut off by the beeping of Rose’s comm.

“Tico,” she answered.

“Rose?” Han Solo’s voice came. “You still alive?”

“I’m fine.” She eyed Marks, “The Stormtrooper didn’t try anything… yet.”

He lifted an eyebrow, “Is that an invitation?”

She should slap that smirk off his stupid, handsome face.

“Hey, Tharel, you can relax!” Han’s voice was faint in the comm. “Your girl’s sister is safe.”

“Then get off the comm and we can check on the others,” Evan’s voice just barely was audible.

“Kid’s got a point,” Han conceded. “We should try to reach Dameron and his lot. Are guys still armed?”

“Yes, Sir,” Rose answered.

“Good. Come meet us in the ballroom and we’ll find the others together. Understood?”

“Perfectly. We’ll see you soon.” With that she turned off the comm. She pointed towards the door and ordered Marks, “You go first. We’ll need a meat shield if we run into any trouble.”

Marks smirked, “Explains why you’ve been staring at me like I’m a piece of meat.”

Rose turned as bright as her namesake and jabbed a finger at the door, “March! Now!”

Marks teasingly saluted and obeyed. Meanwhile Rose grumbled and glowered with crossed arms, hung up on his accusation. She hadn’t been staring at him and didn’t even remotely want to do so.

Still, as he marched away… Rose had to admit his butt did look pretty cute.

They were still bickering. It had been ages since they left the ballroom… and Poe and Kylo were still god damn bickering.

If it wasn’t about the bombing it was about Skywalkers, if it wasn’t Skywalkers it was about General Organa, if it wasn’t General Organa then it was about Han Solo or Felicity Rhiaon or the murder of
Poe’s mother or a pissing contest over who was more worried about their girlfriend or which of them was a better shot or who was responsible for the death of Jaina Fel.

Karé Kun was fairly certain that if she asked the First Order Stormtroopers to help her smother them both, the Stormtroopers would do it.

“Okay, if you two would shut up,” Karé exclaimed. She did not have time for this childhood rivalry bullshit. Her husband might be dead; Karé Kun did not give one single damn over whether or not Kylo Ren should have been forced to sleep on a pullout couch and Poe Dameron in his room when he had a broken leg at age fourteen. “We clearly took a wrong turn somewhere. We have been walking for too long in this direction not to hit the lobby.”

“Karé, there was only one turn,” Poe remembered the right or left fork not far from the ballroom’s back door. He eyed Kylo, “We were supposed to go left, correct?”

“That’s where you’re supposed to go in an emergency,” Kylo replied. “Come on, my… Sasa is in danger too. You think I would delay going to her just to screw with you?”

“I genuinely consider it a possibility.”

“Uh, Master Ren?” FN-2187 nervously piped out. “Didn’t you see Master Sasa in the lobby?”

“Yes,” Kylo turned on FN-2187. Why was he undermining Kylo in front of Dameron. Ugh, that was the last thing Kylo needed: FN-2187 and Poe to be friends.

“Well, uh,” FN-2187 shifted nervously, “isn’t the lobby east? Meaning we should have gone to the right? I mean, the Resistance group might have taken the wrong turn and Master Sasa sensed it, following them to the right.”

Kylo blinked.

“Damn it.”

“Oh, for the love of,” Poe rolled his eyes when he heard Kylo admit the mistake. “How long have we been walking down this hall?”

“Forty-five minutes of you two idiots bickering over nothing,” Karé seethed. “Great now we’ve got to turn around and… Poe, what’s flashing on your belt?”

Poe looked down, “Oh my god… that’s my comm. It has a signal!”

Kylo scowled, “But who fixed-”

“Who the hell cares?” Poe ripped his comm from his belt. Since he was posing as a business man, his image allowed for him to openly carry his comm rather than have it concealed and disguised like Evan and Kaydel’s. He flicked it on without a second thought and desperately called into it, “Kaydel? Babe? Kay, can you hear me? Are you okay? Are you hurt? Please pick up!”

“Uh, Dameron?” Kylo interrupted. He was pulling out his own comm to call Sasa. “You gotta cut your own transmission to let her respond.”

“Oh… right.” He cleared his throat and lifted off his thumb.

A voice answered… but it was not the one he expected.

“Dacken? What the hell are you doing answering Kaydel’s comm?”
“It’s uh… long story.”

“Ok, just hold still,” Kaydel ordered as Sasa cried out, her body jerking when needle pierced skin. The women had decided that it would be best to aid Sasa’s healing process by stitching up her wounds. Bacta could fix things, but stitches would make the healing faster. “I can’t do this if you keep jerking around. I know it hurts, but I’m trying to help.”

“I know, it just hurts.” Sasa glanced down at her wound, “Hey, don’t take this the wrong way, but could you try to make your stitches a little more uniform. They’re a little crisscrossed and of varying lengths.”

Kaydel scowled, “Oh, is this not going to hold right?”

“No, it will, it’s just… I like to sew a lot and if I have to stare at bad hand stitching for a couple weeks, I’m going to go insane.”

Kaydel just stared at her.

“Sorry,” Sasa gave a meek smile. “You know how people can get about hobbies.”

“Yeah, this right here is the reason I never pilot things when Poe’s a passenger. He is the worst backseat driver. I can barely manage to land a ship, and here he yells for me to do evasive maneuvers of loops and spins.”

“Sounds as bad as Kylo.”

“I can imagine. A Skywalker and a Solo mashed into one? Flyboy should be his legal surname.”

“So… you’re not mad at me?” Sasa asked carefully.

“Sasa… you electrocuted me with the Force over an hour ago. If I’m complaining about you, it’s not going to be about sewing constructive criticism.”

“Oh, right, I did do that, didn’t I? Uh… sorry, heat of the moment. Orders are orders. Insert awkward excuse here.”

“Well, my sister handcuffed me to a wall right before that and I’ve had to worked out my relationship problems with the nephew who set my hair on fire, in between questionable battlefield medical decisions. Also someone tried to blow me up. I’m not having a very good day so far.”

“You and me both,” Sasa chuckled. “You have to admit, at least breakfast was good.”

“Oh, those deviled pelikki eggs were to die for,” Kaydel said. “And that tea, I wish I had asked about the brand.”

“I would offer to get it for you, but I have a feeling after today we won’t have many opportunities to socialize.”

“We’ll always have that time we cauterized a man with a lightsaber on Nixrye.”

“You know, speaking of tea,” Sasa said, “you’ll need to treat the after effects of that Force Lightning. A tea of Flasse petals and Smie root usually do the trick.”
“Thanks. I was starting to wonder if my teeth were supposed to periodically buzz.”

“That should wear off in a couple hours.”

Sasa suddenly hissed, her body jerking forward.

“Whoa, careful,” Kaydel guided Sasa back down. “Don’t want me to stab you in the wrong place.”

“Sorry, I’ve just been getting a lot of cramping in the pelvic area.”

“Stomach?”

“More uterine area. What is this stupid poison and how do I get it to stop?”

Suddenly, something caught Kaydel’s eye.

“Sasa, is your leg hurt?” she scowled.

Sasa frowned and looked down. Kaydel had been forced to pull up her dress and cut parts of her skirt to stitch the stab wound. It was their best at giving Sasa some modesty – they also had nestled themselves in a vacant corner – without full on pulling off Sasa’s clothing and forcing Kaydel to deal with her in nothing but her underwear. She could offer Sasa some level of dignity in the mess.

On the exposed skin of her leg, Sasa could see dark red blood staining her thigh. She pressed her legs together – painful considering one was broken – and felt that the blood was coming somewhere a little north of her thigh. So overwhelmed by the pain and injuries of battle and bombing, Sasa hadn’t even noticed the tell tale signs of womanhood.

“Oh, damn it.” Sasa glanced around, and secure in her knowledge that only Kaydel was watching, she shifted her body away and discretely reached down between her legs. When she brought her hand up, bright red blood stained her fingers. “Are you kidding me? After two weeks of being late, now is when I get my period?”

Kaydel raised an eyebrow, “You were two weeks late and openly drinking?”

“What do you mean?”

“Weren’t you worried you might be pregnant?”

“Oh, I wish. The stresses of being in the First Order and Tara constantly trying to kill me means I’m almost always late. Besides I get monthly pregnancy tests and I had one a week ago, which was negative. And here I thought the cramping I was getting was from the poisoning.”

Something still unsettled Kaydel.

But before they could debate it further, Kaydel’s comm started to beep.

The women stared at each other in shock.

“Do you-”

“I hear it. Is it-”

“It’s working!”

“Oh my god, it’s working!”
Kaydel scrambled over to the pile of clothing and supplies they had shoved a little bit away from them. Kaydel’s comm had been planted in a bracelet, and Kaydel had taken off the bracelet when she started to stitch up Sasa, wondered the blood would ruin it.

As Kaydel reached for the bracelet, she paused. Kaydel had been wearing latex gloves while stitching Sasa – thank you, Aunt Aletha and your medical pouch – to protect herself, but underneath her hands were still stained with blood.

Suddenly Kaydel was fighting Doxl Ren again. He was trying to hurt her. Kill her.

She slit his throat without a second thought. His eyes bulged, his blood stained her hands. He burbled, choking on his blood as Kaydel held him in her arms. She held him there, didn’t move to help Doxl as he drowned in his own blood.

Then she dropped his body to the ground with a sickening thwack.

“Kaydel?”

A hand was on her shoulder. She was in the present, and Dacken was looking down at her. Her eyes were wide and her throat dry.

“I heard beeping,” Dacken explained. “I thought your comm might… Are you okay?”

Her hands shook as she looked down at them.

They were still stained with the blood of the man she had murdered.

“Aunt Kayko?”

Her head whipped up. No, she couldn’t do this. She couldn’t tell him the thoughts running through her mind.

“Did…” Dacken glanced towards the comm, “did you want to answer it?”

Kaydel stared at it. No, she knew. She couldn’t touch it, stain it… infect it.

“Here,” Dacken picked up the bracelet. “I’ll play the transmission.”

He flicked it on and Kaydel’s heart swelled in joy as she heard a familiar voice fill the room.

“Kaydel? Babe? Kay, can you hear me? Are you okay? Are you hurt? Please pick up!”

She wanted to burst into tears. Poe was alive. He was safe. His voice filled her with heart with joy. And then it flooded her with despair.

The transmission repeated itself.

“Kaydel? Babe? Kay, can you hear me? Are you okay? Are you hurt? Please pick up!”

She couldn’t answer it. How could she possibly speak to Poe? If she spoke, he would know. He
“Could you answer that? Kaydel can’t touch it right now; she can’t risk cross-contamination and she’s not done stitching me up. Kaydel, would you mind?”

“Right.”

“Go on, Dacken,” Sasa smiled pleasantly, “you take it over to Snap. He’ll need to talk with his people. Kaydel will be there shortly.”

Dacken stared at the pair for a minute, “…Ok then.”

He nodded, grabbed the comm, and left to find Snap.

Kaydel let out a breath of relief.

“Are you alright?” Sasa asked.

“I’m fine,” Kaydel tried to push away her thoughts. Taking deep breaths, she lied, “I’m fine.”

“No, you’re not.”

Kaydel’s mind immediately went on the defense, “What, you think because you have the Force you can tell people what they do and do not feel?”

“No… I can tell you’re not fine because you’re shaking and pale. Was Doxl the first time you killed someone?”

“No!”

“Was it the first time you killed someone one to one?”

Kaydel was silent.

“I see,” Sasa said. She reached out her hand, “Come here. Let me help.”

But Kaydel couldn’t touch her, not with the blood of Doxl Ren on her hands.

“Here. Come on, Kaydel. I won’t touch your hand. I promise.”

Slowly, Kaydel came forward and allowed Sasa to take her by the wrist. She guided Kaydel to kneel next to her and gently stroked Kaydel’s arm.

“You know, the reason I am a good partner for Kylo Ren is that I’m good at handling people who struggle with emotion. If I had my access to the Force, I would try something with you called rebalancing. It helps regulate emotions using the Force.”

“But I don’t have the Force.”

“Everyone has the Force, no matter how remote.” Sasa reached up to casually scratch her neck. “I think I would be able to help you if I wasn’t being bloc-”

She froze.

“What- What the hell is that?”

Kaydel frowned, “What?”
“Is there something on my neck?” Sasa bent her head forward.

Kaydel leaned forward and examined, “Can you push your hair aside?”

As she did so, Sasa muttered to herself, “How did something get on my-”

And then she remembered:

“I think I can help her,” Berd said. His hand stroked her shoulder and the other cupped her neck. “All I need to do is-“

And so also remembered:

“It's okay,” Berd crouched next to her. He stroked the back of her neck, ”Let me take a look.”

“That bastard!” Sasa cried out.

“Yep,” Kaydel reached into her medical pouch and pulled out a pair of tweezers. She pulled off a clear adhesive patch stuck to the back of Sasa’s neck. “He stuck you with something. Does it look familiar?”

It took a second, but then Sasa saw it. When the patch was tilted one way, it took on a slight red tinge, if it tilted the opposite way it got a sickly bright mustard tinge.

“That son of a bitch!” Sasa exclaimed. “This is a ysalamir patch! We use these on Force Sensitives to cut them off from the Force! He put it on me so that Kylo couldn’t sense what was happening to me! I can’t believe he used one on me!”

Kaydel frowned slightly, “Well, he was trying to kill you. Cutting you off seemed like the next logical move to get away with it.”

“No, you don’t understand. I came up with these patches. We used to inject people with a serum, and then I suggested we develop a patch as it would be easier to apply and have less risk of injury to the person applying it when the one drugged fought them. Plus the patches also have a poison in them, where the injection version didn’t.”

“Oh yeah, that two part ysalamir blood injection they gave Felicity Rhiaon,” Kaydel recalled the story.

“What? Two parts?” Sasa scowled. “Yeah, they used it on Rhiaon, but just has one part. Only the patch has poison.”

“Huh. Must have remembered that wrong. So does that mean you can connect to the Force now?”
“I think I’ll need a minute but-” Sasa yelped and grabbed her head, “Yes. Yes. Kylo, I’m alive. Could you just… No, I understand, but… Kylo… Kylo… Kylo…”

Kaydel stifled a laugh.

Sasa sighed and started speaking to the air again, “Look, I’m not happy I had to use that name either, but you were the only one who heard it… Well, you and Kaydel. Huh? …Yeah, Dameron’s girl is fine… No, you absolutely will not do that. …Kylo! …You will tell him this minute that Kaydel is- I don’t care how entertaining you find Dameron arguing with Dacken is! You tell him that Kaydel is alright, right now! …Oh, I have my ways and you know. I swear to the Supreme Leader, if you think the threesome story was bad, you haven’t even seen me pissed. …Look, I have got one hell of a headache right now. I am bleeding and broken and stabbed-”

Sasa paused.

“Yes, stabbed. Big shocker, this was another ploy for Tara to murder me. …Huh? …Berd and Doxl. Doxl’s dead now… No, Kaydel actually. …No, I didn’t force her to. See this is what happens when you try to be mildly sociable and charming, people stop other people from killing you, not attempt to themselves. …Kylo, you have had six people try to kill you in the past week alone, and I’m not even counting the events of today… Look, like I tried to say, I have a headache, so can you stop pushing into my Force Signature so hard? …Thank you.”

There was a moment of silent, and a grin crept across her face.

“I’m relieved that you aren’t either. …Yeah, I’m a little hurt. …Ok, more than a little hurt, but hey I’m alive. Are you on your way to me? …A patch, in fact, my freaking patches. …Yeah, I don’t think either of us can be too proud that we didn’t figure it out sooner. Kylo, it cut off when he touched my neck, we should have put two and two together. …Yeah, the netting worked.”

Sasa blushed a little as he soothed her with the declaration of how proud of her he was.

“Um, Kylo, there’s something I need to tell you. You know how Max said that even though we got a positive it was possible I could be… you know? I, um… just got my period, so it’s a no again this time around. …Hey, we’ll just keep trying. …I know but… it’s going to work someday. You know it will… Because I believe it will.”

Why did Kaydel feel sad at the fact Sasa wasn’t pregnant with Ben Solo’s baby? Note to self never tell Poe.

“Look, how about Kaydel and I get on her comm and coordinate the meetup with you guys?”

“Hey,” Kaydel whispered to Sasa. “Can you ask how Poe is taking talking to Dacken?”

“Kylo?” Sasa asked. “How is the conversation going between Dameron and Dacken Tokani?”

Sasa paused.

“Ok, thanks.” Sasa looked to Kaydel, “Dameron is swearing at Tokani in every language he knows.”

Kaydel sighed, “Well, you can’t say Poe is uncultured in the array of languages he knows.”

The whole time Sasa had spoken to Kylo, Kaydel had worked on finishing Sasa’s stitches. She ended them and took off her latex gloves.
Her heart sunk as she saw the bloodstains on her fingers.

Sasa sighed, “Kylo? We’ll just be a moment. I’m, um… it’s kind of hard for me to move right now… No, having Wexley walk the comm back over to us is not an option right now. Is his wife happy he’s alive… That’s good for the wife… Oh no, he has adequate reason to be vague… Yeah, don’t worry, won’t take long… I promise. …Hey, I’ll be safe. Connix has my back… No, not Timor Connix, I too want to strangle him with the Force right now. …Oh shit, no you can’t, that’s too cruel. …Oh, we should do it!”

“How do you?” Kaydel asked.

“Leave him to Alecta Athena.”

Kaydel shuddered and thought about. Aunt Alecta was too terrifying to throw her father to that wolf… but she wouldn’t stop someone else from doing so.

“Alright, we’ll see each other soon,” Sasa told Kylo. “You promise me you’ll be safe. …A truce with Dameron? You must be loving that. …Yes, I’m teasing you. Alright, I- Huh? …No, we didn’t fix it. …I don’t know. Maybe the resort staff. …Look we can talk about things later? I think Kaydel and I better start trying to get to the comm before Dameron figures out how to strangle Dacken through it. …Alright. …Soon, I promise. …I can’t wait to be in them. Be careful.”

And then Sasa was silent.

“Are you, uh,” Kaydel scratched her neck, “you guys done?”

“Yeah,” Sasa smiled. “Uh, arms. That’s what I was saying I wanted to be in.”

“I got it,” Kaydel didn’t want details on Ben Solo’s love life. The balcony had given her enough details for a lifetime. “But, can I ask you something?”

“Sure.”

“What was that threesome thing?”

“Oh God, that story. Look I’ll tell you it, but only if you promise not to tell anyone else.”

“I promise.”

Within a week, everyone on D’Qar knew the story of the time Kylo Ren suggested a threesome. And Leia Organa was frankly getting sick of how much she had to hear about her son’s sex life.

“So, we should probably go get that comm,” Kaydel started to stand.

Sasa pulled her back down, “I have the Force again. Let’s deal with your problem.”

“But Kylo and Poe.”

“That slow movement thing was to buy us some time. Come on, you need a good rebalancing.”
Kaydel took a deep breath and then reached forward.

Sasa’s eyes shot wide, “Oh crap!”

“What?” Kaydel dropped her hand. “Did I-”

“Not you,” Sasa groaned. “Sorry, I can sense people with the Force and I just sensed that…”

“…That?”

Sasa sighed, “She’s here.”

It was over half an hour before the officers at the entrance of the hotel had re-erected the barricade and gotten the crowd back under control. Far too many people had slipped into the hotel during the chaos, but things were back in order and would stay that way.

And then he was approached by a black-haired woman and two men clad in black attire, all of whom carried a strange silver cylinder on their belts.

“Halt,” the man who had been punched by Han Solo commanded. To his surprise the trio obeyed, stopping right on the other side of the wooden barricade. “Please take several steps back. We’re trying to contain the situation.”

“Oh, but we’ve come here to help,” the woman said. “Aren’t we, Wiln? Cern?”


“Definitely,” Cern agreed.

“Ma’am,” the officer said. “Listen to me-”

“Call me Tara,” the woman smiled at him.

“Tara,” he corrected. “I’m afraid I can’t let civilians-”

“Oh, but I’m not a civilian.”

He blinked, “You’re… You’re not?”

“Forgive us. We haven’t introduced ourselves.” Tara offered her hand to him, “We are the Knights of Ren. Tara Ren. Cern Ren. And Wiln Ren.”

The officer whispered, “Knights of…”

He couldn’t force out the words, his horror too great at the assembly before him.

Wiln saw the error, “We’re not the ones who burned down Rornian. They’re all dead, and we’ve vowed not to make that mistake again.”

“We’ve seen the error of our ways,” Cern’s voice made the officer believe the opposite.

“And that’s why we’re here,” Tara gave a pleasant smile. God, she hated this innocent, little, kind, simpleton act. Her mother may have been able to smooth people, but Tara felt like God damn Sasa. Should she giggle and twirl her hair too? “As a Knight of Ren, I am strong with the Force. I had a
vision of this awful scene, and immediately the First Order rushed to put together an aid mission. We have eight ships on their way right now with doctors, medical supplies, and relief workers. I assume that the New Republic wouldn’t mind the additional help?”

The officer sighed, “Tara… We thank you for your offer, but it’s unnecessary. The New Republic—”

“Whoa? Tell me, Sir, what orders have the New Republic given you? Are you allowing doctors in?”

“Well… no.”

“Are you allowing aid in?” Wiln asked.

“…No.”

“Are you in any way helping the people inside?” even Cern was pretending to be nice. It made him want to set his tongue on fire.

“No. Our orders are to contain the scene until we get further instructions,” the officer admitted.

“And is the New Republic on their way with aid?” Tara inquired.

“Well… As- As far as I know… they’re not.”

The crowds of people began to buzz with mutterings of anger. Even the other soldiers were starting to look annoyed.

“Please,” Tara said, “let us pass. Let the First Order demonstrate we are here to help the Galaxy. Support it… Take care of the people the way the New Republic has refused to do so. Let us provide these victims with the care they require.”

Her voice increased with every word, not the way the male nurse had yelled at him, but more that Tara Ren was turning her attention from him to address the crowd. All eyes were on him.

Which was why he couldn’t defy orders. If it was public record that he disobeyed instructions, his commanding officer would punish him in an equally public fashion.

“Ma’am, I am afraid that I cannot let you pass,” the officer firmly announced. “This planet is New Republic jurisdiction, and I must follow my orders. I’m sorry.”

Tara sighed, “Yes, I’m sorry too. But the people in there must be saved, so I’m afraid I have no choice.”

The last thing he saw was a blur of red from the cylinder on her belt. Then his head was off his shoulders, and he knew no more.

There was a rumble from the crowd and the other New Republic soldiers, but none seemed unhappy with the turn of events.

“Ladies and Gentlemen!” Tara announced to the crowd. “This man was an infection that is taking root in the New Republic. A remnant of the days of the Empire where you blindly followed orders without thought. The First Order is not like that and will protect you from it, just like we will protect the people inside of this building. So… officers of the New Republic.”

Tara turned to face the soldiers, every single eye following her.
She gave them as pleasant a smile she could muster without looking fake, “Will you allow us in?”

Instantly the soldiers saluted and took a step backwards to clear the way. Two men picked up the barricade and gestured their hands to the cleared pathway.

“Thank you,” Tara smiled again. Good she hated being cheerful. At least she got to kill someone this time. “You are all fine examples of a military who cares.”

She stepped over the body of her victim – one of the soldiers taking her hand to assist her like it was a puddle and she in a fine dress. Wiln was quick to follow, courteously stepping around the body.

But Cern actually climbed atop the body and announced, “And if anyone is interested in joining our cause, please come talk to me.”

He was instantly mobbed by an easily manipulated horde.

“Come on, Wiln,” Tara said as they left behind Cern. “We have to go see how many Knights of Ren have survived this unfortunate bombing. If we’re lucky, it’ll only be one.”

“You mean if you’re lucky, it will be none.”

“Willarn Gresley, I have no interest in being first in command. And you speak of this incident as if I actually had something to do with it.”

Wiln laughed, “Don’t think for a second that I buy your little I had a vision of it story. I know you set this up, probably to kill Sasa.”

“What a horrible thing to say.”

“Don’t sound so flattered. Why do you think I keep Nova away from you?”

“Nova is of no concern to me. She keeps out of the way. Actually, if you ask me, I think she’s kind of pathetic.”

“I didn’t ask.”

Tara laughed.

“You know…” Wiln glanced back at Cern, who appeared to start getting annoyed with the crowd. A few bodies would probably be hitting the ground soon when Cern lost his temper. “I will give you this. It may be a horrible scene of tragedy and needless waste of life for the First Order to come to the rescue of a bombing… but damn if it isn’t good propaganda.”

“Oh, look, I don’t speak Yavinese, but even I know you’re just swearing at me in it,” Dacken said into the comm. “What happened with Kaydel and I is frankly none of your business, so we’ll handle it ourselves, alright?”

Wrong move. Poe started screaming so loud into the comm that not only would everyone in the building know their location, but Kylo was pretty sure his mother on D’Qar could hear it too.

Or his father somewhere in this very resort.

Oh, Han Solo better not run into Sasa at any point. Kylo was so not explaining that relationship to
his father. He knew how hard Han Solo would judge him. He was staunchly anti-polygamy to the point that Leia couldn’t invite certain political guests for dinner.

Han would at the very least smack his son upside the head… and that wasn’t even factoring into all the stuff Kylo had pulled back in 20 ABY. Between Alyla, the Burning of Rornian, Rey, Felicity, and Luke, he wouldn’t be surprised if his father genuinely tried to kill him.

His only saving grace was the knowledge of how much it would piss off his mother, and that that ire might be enough to prevent filicide.

This family really was playing an elaborate game of attempted familicide bingo.

“*Oh, give me that!*” a voice snapped over the comm.

Dameron perked right up, “Kay? Babe?”

“You can settle down, Peacock. I’m here now.”

Kylo snorted, “Peacock?”

“Excuse me, you walk around bearing a name that was a sarcastic comment made by your aunt who you hated,” Poe pointed out.

“She was not my aunt!”

“Then what the hell was that ceremony my father and I attended? Or that dedication ceremony the day after involving the Force Sensitive tree on our family farm?”

Kylo groaned as he remembered that little ceremony on the Dameron ranch his mother had dragged him to. Rhiaon and Luke resting their hands on the tree and vowing their love. It was sickening.

…Why was he now picturing doing the same thing with Sasa?

FN-2187 just frowned at the pair and leaned over to Karé, “Hey… would you mind drawing me a quick family tree? I’m kinda lost with all this.”

“I’ll let you know when I figure it out myself,” Karé replied. “But word of warning, don’t go down the rabbit hole of the Anthea family. I can’t even figure out how many members there are, alive or dead.”

Thirty-eight at that moment for the record, but it would take the collective knowledge of Aletha and Kaydel to figure out everyone, and even then, they would probably miss someone.

And in a year’s time it would be forty-one.

“*Guys?*” Kaydel cut in. “*Can we focus?*”

“Right,” Poe said. “How are you? Are you okay?”

“I’m… I’m okay. A little bloodied and bruised but mostly fine. I was standing next to the Knights of Ren when the bombs went off. When they used the Force to protect themselves, I was close enough to benefit and be shielded by the Force.”

“Thank the Force.”

“I think you mean thank the Knights of Ren,” Kylo smirked.
“Those words will never leave my lips,” Poe vowed.

“So, how are you?” Kaydel asked. “Are you okay?”

“He’s fine,” Karé leaned forward to answer. “I kept up our bargain and watched out for your man.”

Poe glowered, “May I remind you I’m your commanding officer?”

“Oh, don’t even make me bring up Holdo’s desk and the level of regard you hold for Commanders.”

“I’ll be quiet.”

“So, Kaydel,” Karé continued, “how about you? Snap won’t tell me. Am I going to be getting my husband back 100%?”

There was a very long silence.

“Kaydel?” Karé repeated nervously.

“Well, um… would returning 85% of your husband still be acceptable?”

Karé and Poe stared at the comm.

“Babe…” Poe asked slowly, “what are you talking about?”

“Kaydel, maybe you should just give me the comm,” Snap’s voice was barely heard in the background.

“Temmin?” Karé’s body language shifted slightly. She panicked a little more upon hearing his voice. She had been glad to hear it earlier, knowing it meant he was alive, but after how evasive he had been and Kaydel’s words, her heart was filled with fear, “Honey, what’s going on?”

There was a shuffling and a bit of crackling over the comm as Kaydel passed it to Snap. Since hers was in a bracelet so it was a little more difficult than passing a small openly showing communicator.

“Karé?” Snap asked once he had taken it over.

“I’m here,” she said. “What’s going on?”

“Okay.” He took a deep breath, “Are you sitting down?”

She almost rolled her eyes, “Babe, we’re currently running away from Crimson Dawn. Sitting down is not an option.”

“Crimson- Never mind. Right. Okay. Babe, this is going to be hard to hear, but I need you to be strong.”

Karé braced herself.

“Babe… Karé,” his voice struggled. “I… I’ve lost my left leg.”

In a word, her whole world turned upside down.

“You- You what?” she exclaimed.

It sent the others reeling.
“No, Snap you… you can’t,” Poe stiffened. “Come on, Man, you’re just pulling my leg, right?”

Even Finn stared at him like he was an idiot.

“Did you just seriously use that idiom, Dameron?” Kylo balked.

“And instantly regretting it,” Poe admitted. “You’re never going to let me live that down, are you?”

“Absolutely not.”

“At least we’re on the same page.”

“You lost your leg!” Karé exclaimed. “Oh my God, Snap-”

“That nickname is a little too ironic now,” he said. “Look, it’ll be okay. It’s more like half a leg. Just the stuff below the knee, and it’s all bandaged up. Not even bleeding anymore. Once we get back to the doctors on D’Qar I’ll be fine.”

“How did you get the bleeding to stop?”

There was another very long pause.

“Um… Let’s say we got very creative, and I’ll fill you in on the details later.”

“And I refuse to take responsibility for what happened,” Kaydel cut in.

Karé sighed, “I’m not going to like this, am I?”

“If it makes you feel better, I’ve already been severely punished for allowing it,” Snap replied.

She wanted to ask more questions… but she was too afraid of the answer. When they asked her and Snap to take a mission directly after their honeymoon, they should have said no.

“If you all are done with that, can I talk to Kylo?” Sasa’s voice buzzed on the comm.

“Sasa?” FN-2187 perked up.

A cold look from Kylo made him slump back down.

“You, uh… must be happy to hear her, Sir.”

“Indeed.” Kylo held out his hand for the comm, and Karé reluctantly gave it to him. “Sasa? Is that you?”

“I told you I’d be fine,” her voice was gentle, joyous, but pained. “Kylo, we have to get out of here.”

“It’s okay, no one else will touch you or I.”

“I’m going to have to disagree.”

“Doxl is dead and I’m assuming Berd has been dealt with?”

“Out cold, but not dead. We’ll be able to deliver punishment.”

“Good,” Kylo said coldly. “I’ll make sure he gets quite the public execution.”
“Oh, that’s… sweet,” Poe sighed. “Would you publicly execute someone for me, Babe?”

He had no idea that behind Kaydel’s silence her body had gone stiff as a board, her face white and wide, and her eyes down to her still bloodstained hands.

“Alright, stupid question,” Poe admitted, not understanding exactly how stupid.

Sasa sighed on the comm, “Kylo, Berd and Doxl aren’t a problem; there’s something larger going on here.”

“It’s Crimson Dawn, but that’s okay,” Kylo said. “There’s actually an agreement in place that… protects me from them.”

Everyone stared at him.

“I’m not getting into it right now,” Kylo refused.

“Basically they can’t touch him because his father once dated their leader,” Poe remembered Felicity telling him about the deal during his summer with the Skywalkers as Qi’ra had decided to visit Rornian and cause a little trouble.

“Kylo,” Sasa said, “I’m not talking about Crimson Dawn.”

He frowned, “Who are you talking about?”

“Come on. Can’t you sense them?”

When he reached out into the Force he found the answer almost immediately.

“Tara,” he growled.

“And Wiln. And Cern,” Sasa pointed out. “Looks like we’re playing with a full deck of Knights.”

“Wow,” Poe said, “I didn’t think you guys all actually went to places together. You do so many things alone Solo, I wondered if the Knights of Ren thing was just a myth.”

“Can it, Dameron. You have no idea what we’re dealing with having all of us here. Things aren’t so harmonious when we get together.”

“You see, a good Commander builds a team of people who respect them. Right, Karé?”

“Screw you, Poe. You asked my legless husband if he was pulling your leg.”

“Alright, maybe Black Squadron isn’t on its A Game right now.”

Kylo shook his head, “I still can’t believe they made you Head of the Air Force.”

“Only because you tortured Diego Nalto.”

“You’re welcome for the promotion.”

“That’s it!”

Poe lunged forward to smash Kylo’s head against the wall again, but Finn caught him and held him back.

“Easy,” Finn ordered.
“Fine,” Poe sighed and stepped back. “But only because you asked.”

Kylo glared at Poe. Great, his suspicions were correct. Oh, Kylo wasn’t keen on Poe becoming friends with FN-2187.

He also wasn’t keen on the word keen because it just made him think of Alyla Kene and that whole mess. Seriously, why did he let her leave him for this trip?

Something pricked at his brain.

“Dameron,” he said seriously, “someone’s coming.”

“Uh, hold that thought, Guys,” Poe switched off the comm.

Instantly the group fell into formation, readying themselves with blasters and lightsaber alike.

“Who’s coming?” Poe asked, taking position next to Kylo. Nines and Zeroes were crouched on the ground at the front, Karé and Finn behind them, and Poe and Kylo standing at the back.

“I don’t know,” Kylo answered. “I’m not familiar with the signatures. Mahogany, some sort of red, and a bronze… why do I feel like I should know bronze?”

Poe shrugged. He could hear the footsteps now, running – racing – towards them. Heavy boots and blasters in holsters banging against their hips with the bounce of every step. Something growled in the darkness stretching before them. It was the way they were headed, and Poe for once was thankful Ben Solo was there to sense something for him. What would have happened if they ran into the trio without any warning?

“Here they come,” Karé whispered as three looming shadows stretched along the wall.

In perfect unison, six blasters – even Kylo wielded one – set and cocked. Fingers hovered over the triggers and slowly Poe lifted his hand to give the signal.

“Wait for it… Wait for it…” Poe’s voice was low and tense as his eyes followed the shadows. One was short, the other abnormally tall, and one… one was a ferocious creature. Then they stepped into range, “NOW!”

Rose Tico, Waroo, and Marks ran into view.

“STOP!” Kylo and Poe roared.

Six bolts jerked off course in an instant, firing into various spots on the wall.

Rose, Waroo, and Marks just stared at the group in shock.

“Marks?” Finn frowned, getting to his feet.

“Hey Buddy,” Marks panted, still recovering from almost getting shot. “Nice shooting.”

“Nice dodging,” Finn holstered his blaster.

“Rose?” Poe scowled, looking utterly confused. “What are- How did- Aren’t you on Yavin IV right now?”

“Uh, no, I’m here,” Rose answered nervous. “…Surprise.”
“It’s okay, Solo, the girl’s with us… How, I don’t know, but she’s under my protection. I’m assuming the man’s yours?” Poe looked to Kylo and stopped.

Kylo was staring at the Wookiee in only what could only be called dumbfounded fear.

“Wa… Waroo?”

Poe blinked. He knew the name Waroo, so it utterly confused Poe as to why Kylo was so afraid of Waroo. After all, it was only Chewbacca’s son.

…And then Poe understood. Waroo was Chewbacca’s son. Kylo was Han Solo and Leia Organa’s. Throw in Rey Rhiaon Skywalker and you had Millennium Falcon: The Next Generation.

Of course, two of those elements were gone forever.

But Kylo… Oh, Kylo was in trouble. Han Solo and Chewbacca were the dictionary definition of “best friends” and Kylo had to stare down his counter component after destroying everything their families had worked so hard to build. Poe knew that Wookiees could tear a man’s limbs from his body, and there was a damn good chance he was about to see it in action.

Waroo made a curious noise at seeing Ben – his Bond-Brother – for the first time in years. Kylo’s throat was dry and wordless. Indeed, they had been Bond-Brothers, sons of fathers who shared a life debt. Waroo was as much bonded to Ben as Chewbacca was to Han. And when they were younger, Ben and Waroo had lived the title.

Though Waroo was 53-years-old – even older than Ben’s mother – in human terms he and Ben were roughly the same age. They had played together as children, gotten into trouble as teenagers, and planned to have adventures like their fathers as adults.

And then Ben Solo became Kylo Ren and destroyed both their families in the process.

Poe Dameron knew that there was genuinely the risk that Waroo was about to murder Ben Solo.

Then Waroo let out a ferocious roar and grabbed Ben Solo off the ground with both his massive, furry arms.

“No!” Poe yelled. He couldn’t let Ben be killed, not after the truce deal, and definitely not after General Organa made it clear Poe was not to kill Ben himself.

Poe rushed forward to help pry Kylo away from Waroo. The Wookiee was holding Kylo to his chest, crushing him with his arms as Kylo squirmed to escape. Poe had to explain their deal, stop this from happening.

But he suddenly came up short.

Poe’s jaw hung open as he realized that Waroo wasn’t attacking Kylo… he was hugging him.

“Yes, yes,” Kylo awkwardly squirmed in the Wookiee’s embrace, shooting furtive looks back at his First Order soldiers. “Yeah, I know, Waroo… Yes… Yes… Yeah, I get it but… Waroo you have to put me down… No, Waroo… Waroo, listen… Look, I…”

But Waroo’s moans and cries were too insistent.

Kylo gave up and sighed, hanging his head as he admitted with a mutter, “Yeah, I’ve missed you too.”
Waroo gave a satisfied moan.

“Now would you put me down, you overgrown fuzzball?”

Kylo instantly found himself dropped to the ground.

He glared up at Waroo and rubbed his aching backside, “That’s not what I meant.”

[I know] Waroo said smugly.

Kylo gave a low growl of a Shyriiwook word that used to get him in a lot of trouble with his father.

“Okay,” Karé looked around at the scene. “What is going on? Who are these people?”

“This is Waroo,” Poe pointed to him. “He’s the son of Chewbacca. A friendly to us, and if not, he’s knows I’ll tell his father.”

Waroo gave a sharp growl.

Kylo chuckled.

“And you?” Karé stared down Marks.

“MK-6093, but you can call me, Marks,” he strolled over to Finn. “You okay, Eight-Seventy?”

“I’m fine, Marks,” Finn grinned. “I’m glad you didn’t get blown up.”

“Hey, we Batch Eights are made of stronger stuff. Batch-eight, heigh-ho!”

Finn turned bright red when Marks suddenly slapped his butt. Poe had to stifle a chuckle, and Kylo Ren rolled his eyes.

“Right,” Finn cleared his throat. “Batch eight… heigh-ho.”

He gave a very muted butt slap back.

Rose bit her lip hard. Oh, how she wished to be that hand. She would slap it as enthusiastically as Marks had delivered his. God, would he do that to her too?

…Okay, what was wrong with her? This man was working with the people who murdered her parents, and all she could think about was touching his butt.

That tight, perfect butt.

Rose didn’t see Poe’s eyes on her.

“Uh… Rose?” he asked. “Something you want to share with the class?”

She startled, “What? Share with- No, there’s nothing to share! Nothing at all!”

Poe arched one perfect eyebrow on his equally stupid handsome face. It was sight that would have brought Kaydel Ko Connix to her knees – to Poe’s enthusiasm – and Rose cursed herself once more. She finally finds herself a man who makes her as weak in the knees as Poe did Kaydel (and half the population of the Resistance), as Teng did Rey, as Evan did Paige, as Tallie did Jessika, as Diego did Aletha… and hers had to be a god damn Stormtrooper with cheekbones that could grate cheese.

If she were alone, she would have slammed her head against the wall.

“No, I don’t!” she snapped. God, why did Poe Dameron have to clue in to this?

“Yes, you do,” he insisted. “Rose, no offense…but what the hell are you doing here?”

Oh right.

That.

“Uh…” Rose exchanged a look with Waroo. “It’s a long story.”

“Are you the people who fixed the communications?” Kylo asked.

“This girl is amazing,” Marks nodded to Rose.

Ok, she had to focus on something else before she literally swooned. How about the Stormtrooper that Marks was friendly with? He could distract her.

“What happened to your team? Unfortunately, we got the report Weevil was KIA.” FN-2187 added quietly, “Slip was also KIA.”

God damn it, this one was hot too.

“Tone and Duck were KIA,” Marks reported. “The Resistance people, Evan and Paige are fine. Paige has shrapnel in the head and is resting on their ship, but the medic has entered the building to help people… I think. We had to split up, so I can’t vouch for how far they got.”

“They?” Kylo questioned. “Who are they?”

Rose’s head snapped to the side. Suddenly it clicked.

This was Kylo Ren. This was the bastard who had tortured and murdered her best friend’s mother and tried to kill Rey as a five-year-old.

She wanted nothing more than to launch herself at him and tear his throat out.

Rose even moved for a second to do so, but the thought of Rey held her back. If she attacked Kylo – no matter how egregious his sins against Rey, the best friend Rose hadn’t even met yet, were – there was only one conclusion to that scene. Doing so could only end with Kylo learning why Rose attacked him… and that meant revealing to him Rey was alive.

She couldn’t let that happen.

So Rose had to grit her teeth and just bear it… even if the only way she could manage was by picturing punching his stupid face over and over again.

But that didn’t mean she couldn’t hurt him.

“Your Dad is here,” Rose declared. “…And he’s here to rescue you.”

Damn, she loved the look on his stupid face.

As they raced into the ballroom, the first words on the men’s lips – save for Evan – were the names
“Poe! Poe! Cielito! Poe!”

“BEN! BEN! DAMN IT, I WILL CALL YOU KYLO IF THAT’S WHAT IT TAKES TO GET YOU TO REPLY!”

And Chewie just let out a very long and loud roar that Han barely could make out to be the Wookiee verbalization of Lumpawaroo.

It was so long that Evan, Qi’ra, and Qi’ra’s men had to literally cover their ears.

“That’s it,” Evan lowered his hands, “I’m testing us all for hearing damage later.”

“Bombs went off, Kid,” Han pointed out. “Everyone will need it.”

“Allright,” Qi’ra walked over to what remained of the weapons display. She made a face like she had bit a lemon when she saw how much of a disaster it was. Little of it would be salvageable. “It appears that your sons aren’t here, so we’ll all go carry these weapons to the ships and once your friends have fixed the comm lines, I’ll tell my men to retreat. The boys should be safe for you all to go find them after that.”

Kes glanced at Han, “Uh… that wasn’t what we agreed on.”

“Our agreement was predicated on the fact that your boys would be in the ballroom,” Qi’ra shot. “Well, we’re in the ballroom and the boys aren’t here. We have to figure out Plan B, and that’s mine. You got a better idea?”

Han scowled, “The last time you said that, we ended up hiding in a bucket of eels.”

Kes opened his mouth to question that, but thought better of it.

“Uh, guys?” Evan held up his watch, a side button now lit up, “How about we use the comms that work now?”

All heads turned to Qi’ra.

She sighed.

“Minati,” she ordered one of her minions, a bodyguard she had taken in after Minati had fled from Jakku. “You start having the men load the weapons. I have to make a few calls.”

Qi’ra moved to walk away but Han caught her by the wrist.

“Where are you going?” he demanded.

She pulled her hand out of his grip, “I will call off the hunt of your son… but I’m not revealing codenames and procedures to you and your friends.”

Han sighed and let her pass.

“I don’t trust her, Solo,” Kes said bluntly.

“Oh, I don’t either,” Han replied. “Alright, Hotshot. Make the call.”

Evan lifted his watch and hit the call button to his comm, “Bey One, this is Bey Five, please come in.
Bey One, this is Bey Five, do you read?”

After a minute, there was a crackle, and then a voice.

“Bey Five, this is Bey One,” Poe Dameron replied. “Nice to hear you’re alive, Tharel. Paige would have had Jessika kick my ass if you died.”

Kes let out a breath of relief. His son was alive, well, and snarking.

“Bey One, shouldn’t you be using our codenames?”

“Tharel, I am literally standing next to Kylo Ren. Consider our cover thoroughly blown. Now, what’s this I hear about my dad getting drunk with your mom?”

Evan sighed, “I… Yeah.”

“So my dad’s standing next to you?”

Without a word of warning, Kes grabbed Evan’s wrist and held the watch up to his mouth, “Poe? Are you alright?”

“Yeah, Dad, I’m fine. It’s just some explosions and some gangsters. The usual Tuesday stuff.”

Kes didn’t know if he was annoyed or proud, “I’m assuming you met up with Rose?”

“Why did you bring her here with you? No offense, but from a practical standpoint that’s more a liability.”

“Poe?” Rose’s voice came.

“Yeah?”

“Shower.”

“Shutting up.”

Han stared at Kes, but Kes just shrugged.

“I’ll be honest,” Kes answered, “it’s mostly because she and Waroo were the only sober ones around and he needed a co-pilot.”

“Which brings me to my next question, why is Waroo not attempting to murder Ben Solo?”

“Hey!” Kylo exclaimed.

Han went stiff.

It had been twelve years since he had seen or heard his son, and there he finally was. His son was really in reach, in the same building. A few footsteps more and he would be face to face with the little boy who he had created on the night the Emperor died.

And as Han thought about the fact he could see the face of his son for the first time in twelve years… he wanted to do nothing but throw up.

Even worse was Chewbacca watching the scene, knowing that terrible sin Ben had committed against Felicity. That disgusting, defiling act that had broken Luke Skywalker. The one he had
sworn – and kept that vow – to not share with anyone, not even Han.

That didn’t make Chewie feel too comfortable either.

“Uh…” Kes watched Han, “did you, uh… Did you want to talk to Ben?”

Han stared at Kes, but no words came.

Did he actually want to talk to Ben? In the bar where it had been an idyllic notion, Han would have said yes. But now? Facing the reality of his son who had destroyed so much? Killed so many? Murdered Luke’s daughter?

Han didn’t know if he had the strength.

There apparently was the same conundrum going on on the other end of the comm because Poe soon enough piped up.

“He wants to know what Han’s answer is.”

Han’s breath caught; his son was really there and paying attention.

“I…” Han struggled to find his voice. “I… wanna know if he wants to talk to me.”

There was a pause.

“No, Solo! For the love of the Force, I am not replying with I asked you first!”

“Guys?” Evan awkwardly cut in, not enjoying how his wrist kept getting passed back and forth. “Not to interrupt, but can we figure out a meet up? I have patients to treat.”

“The boy’s right,” Kes dropped Evan’s hand and it smacked him a little too hard in the leg. “You Solos can work out your thoughts on awkward reunions once we’ve met up. Sorry Qi’ra, but I don’t think we’re going to take your deal of helping you take the weapons back to your ship. I think we’re just going to go meet up with our people.”

“Oh, how cute. You think you have a choice.”

Qi’ra let out a laugh that to Han – who had known her true nature as a teenager – sounded like ice. Taking her example, the rest of Crimson Dawn echoed the laughter, everyone’s hands shifting to their belts.

Han and his understood in a heart beat and their hands were on their weapons in an instant. They drew them simultaneously as Crimson Dawn. Everyone stood in standoff not unlike the one on Jakku when Roke violated Aletha’s black sheet rule.

“Oh look, you betrayed me,” Han hand his blasters pointed at Qi’ra while she pointed hers at him. It was impossible to tell who drew first, but Han knew he would have no hesitation to shoot first.

“Exactly as I predicated. What a surprise.”

“We’re not teenagers on Corellia anymore, Han,” Qi’ra replied. “Our lives led us down very different paths. I have no choice but to do this.”

“You’ve always had a choice, Qi’ra. You just keep lying to yourself that this life wasn’t what you wanted.”

Silence clung to the room as if a sneeze would trigger Armageddon.
“Uh… Guys?” Evan awkwardly spoke up. “Do any of you care that since I an Army Medic in a non-active battlefield situation, to directly target and attack me is against the Reasonable Wartime Measures Act and technically a war crime?”

There was more silence as every eye turned on him in annoyance. Evan found that at least ten more weapons had been directly turned on him.

“All right. Just checking.”

Chapter End Notes

Coming Up Next Chapter…

The Same Damn Description That Was Here the Last Chapter

Seriously the whole Kaydel’s Decision thing happens at the end of next chapter. But hey, I guess have this. Evan is horrified to learn of the lightsaber cauterization, Kylo and Sasa’s reunion changes the stakes of the Resistance/First Order truce, Poe asks Finn to join the Resistance, Wiln tries to comfort Kaydel for her PTSD, Timor throws his daughter under the bus, and Kes meets Kaydel’s father… then immediately punches him in the face.

I got the novelization for Solo, and to my surprise there’s a part where it’s revealed that the Imperials intended to sell Chewie “as a pit fighter.” And there is also a Queen who had fighting pits. Apparently the Zygerrian Fighting Pits and Queen Thali (a character from Definitions of Home, sister of Queen Nerissa of Zygerria) I made up are pretty much canon. Now I really want to write an AU where Chewie meets Alyla and Gavyn.

So going through my “Future Parts” document, I found another little excerpt of the original Finn and Poe meeting that now has to be cut. Enjoy.

Back in the TIE Fighter, Poe was mulling over what surname he suggest Finn take. After all, everyone needed a surname, and it would help Finn feel like a regular person to have one. Plus then Finn the Stormtrooper wouldn’t have his paperwork mixed up with Finn Braxol in Communications, or Finn Antilles in Medical, or Finn Treyvon in Mess Hall.

Maybe Poe should have picked a less common name for Finn.

A part of Poe felt like Finn Rhiaon would be appropriate. Poe knew that the Resistance had never actually been able to track down who FN-2187’s parents had been (and Felicity Rhiaon had spent years and thousands of credits searching.) Felicity’s husband, Luke Skywalker had offhandedly mentioned to Poe once during his summer with the family, that Felicity said she would have adopted FN-2187 if she had rescued him.

But then would that mean Finn should be Finn Rhiaon Skywalker? Of course, said hypothetical adoption would have taken place years before Felicity had married Luke Skywalker, but that hypothetical adoption had never actually taken place. Would it be presumptive to give the name Skywalker to Finn without the express consent of Luke,
especially considering the weight of the legacy? Would it be rude to the memory of Felicity Rhiaon to give Finn her surname?

Poe could suggest the name Finn Dameron, but that kind of felt like he had found a wild animal on the side of the road, brought him home and said, “Dad, can I keep it?”

And he was not having that conversation again.

Sorry again about the long wait!
Silence filled the room for a very long time. They all just stood there glaring at each other, fingers threateningly resting on the triggers of their blasters. If someone so much as sneezed, they would spark a chain reaction that would blow everything to hell.

“Uh… Guys?” Poe’s voice came from Evan’s watch. “It’s been like seven minutes since anyone’s spoken to us. What’s going on?”

Evan turned his head to look at Qi’ra. His voice was soft and sympathetic, and his facial expression as meek and courteous as possible.

“May I-”

Qi’ra sighed and nodded at the men with blasters pointed at Evan to lower their weapons.

“Thanks.” Evan answered the comm in a mild tone, “Hey Commander Dameron, sorry, Crimson Dawn has taken us hostage and now we’re in a stand-off.”

“So… regular Tuesday?”

“Pretty much.”

Han finally huffed, “Qi’ra, this isn’t going to get us anywhere.”

“Oh, I know,” Qi’ra admitted. “Honestly, I really had no intention of taking you guys hostage. In
fact, if it were literally anyone but you I made the deal with, I would have kept it. Luke, Leia, hell even your sister-in-law.”

Kes scowled, “Then why are you taking us hostage?”

“If word got back to my husband that I made a deal with Han – my ex-boyfriend who Laertes is so insanely jealous of that he has literally set up a bounty on Leia on behalf of Luke Skywalker’s crazy ex girlfriend.”

“Oh, that’s who Calla hired for that.”

Qi’ra continued, “And that I didn’t backstab Han and take him hostage… well, that wouldn’t be pleasant for anyone involved.”

Evan frowned, “Wait, are you worried he’d get violent with you? With all due respect, crime boss or not, no one should have to go through that. You deserve better, Lady Qi’ra.”

Han stared at Evan, his jaw hanging open, face filled with the are you kidding me version of disbelief, and kind of looking like he was about to be the one to shoot Evan.

“Thank you, Boy,” Qi’ra laughed a little, “but I’ve got a handle on things with my marriage.”

“Are you sure?” Evan asked.

Han shook his head, “Tharel… what are you doing?”

“Don’t worry,” Qi’ra assured Evan. “Laertes and I know where we stand. We’ve literally had a calm, polite conversation many times about how we fully intend on killing each other if the other steps out of line. Anytime I talk to my daughter, the first words out of her mouth are have you killed Dad yet?”

“Tharel,” Han snapped. “Seriously, shut the hel-”

He stopped.

“Your kid’s a girl?” Han looked to Qi’ra.

She shrugged, inwardly cursing herself for the slip of tongue. Thirty years she managed to keep that fact to herself. Laertes wasn’t going to be happy. She was going to have to recruit a lot of new minions to replace the ones he would kill in his anger.

“Huh.” Han’s eyes flicked upwards as he weighed something in his mind, “Qi’ra?”

“Yeah.”

“Keep her away from my kid. His love life is… weird enough.”

Yeah, Qi’ra knew her daughter had taken his son’s virginity… but she certainly wasn’t going to be the one to tell him.

“Guys?” Poe Dameron spoke into his comm. Everyone was gathered around, though Kylo had managed to be the closest. The kid refused to admit he was clinging onto Han Solo’s every word.

“Can we focus, please? I have had more than enough of Solo Junior’s weird ass love life this month.
Just ask Evan.”

“No, please,” Evan begged. “Don’t ask me. General Organa is already going to kill me when I get back to base.”

Kylo frowned at Poe, “What are you talking about? What’s going on with my… Uh, Organa?”

Poe’s face went white. Oh God, no. Why? Why him?

“It’s nothing,” he said quickly. Too quickly.

Kylo’s eyes darkened, “Tell me.”

Poe glanced at Karé, he gave him a pained nod.

He took a deep breath and then admitted the truth… very quickly, “Long story short, we bugged your quarters, accidentally made an audio recording of you having sex, then Tharel accidentally sent the recording to your mother, who accidentally listened to it.”

Ben Solo looked like the world had ended.

“Ok…” Kylo said slowly. “Ok… This… Entire trip… Never happened. For good or ill, Light Side or Dark Side, I will never, ever speak to Leia Organa ever again. …Because I sure as hell am not having that conversation with her.”

“Something tells me that Leia will be happy to sweep this incident under the rug,” Poe patted Ben’s arm supportively. He turned back to the comm, “So what exactly does Crimson Dawn want?”

“They’re stealing what’s left of the weapons from Kation and Connix and want four people to accompany them back to their ship,” Evan explained.

“Why four?” Poe frowned.

“Standard Corellian hostage tactic,” Kylo answered. “When you take prisoners and are at risk of them being rescued, you put one in front of you, one to the back, one to the left, and one to the right. You surround yourself and make a meat shield so if someone shoots at you they hit a hostage instead.”

Everyone stared at him.

“What?” he frowned. “When I turned ten, my… father said he was going to teach me the three things every Corellian kid needs to know: how to take hostages, how to hotwire any vehicle, and how to get away with always keeping ten percent of the product someone gets you to smuggle or trade on their behalf.”

They still stared at him.

“You know…” Poe said, “I’m starting to understand why you turned out the way you did.”

“Look, I don’t see how any of this affects us,” Kylo dismissed. He did not want to keep discussing his father. “They got taken hostage. That’s not my problem. All I need is to go to the lobby. They can deal with that themselves.”

“Are you kidding me?” Poe exclaimed. “We have to save them!”

“Why?” Kylo crossed his arms. “What’s in it for me?”
“God damn it, Ben,” Han’s voice buzzed over the comm. The exclamation was pretty loud considering Evan’s wrist could pick it up.

Twelve years, and those were his first words to his son.

“Are you really that arrogant and selfish?” Karé was amazed and very much angry. “Those are our people!”

“Right,” Kylo shot. “Your people. Not mine. I made a deal with you and Dameron, not the merry band of Rebel Vets.”

Waroo decided to cut in and plead the case. He roared a lot, Kylo replying to his remarks, though not enough to understand what they were talking about. Poe could see though that a little bit of Waroo was getting to him. Not close to what was needed to change his mind, but there was a bit of a soft spot in Kylo for Waroo.

“I said no, and that’s final!” Kylo ultimately snapped at the group. “Now, we are wasting time! I am going to the lobby and my people right now, and those weaklings with delusions of grandeur can get themselves out of the hole they dug themselves into. Let’s move, now!”

He started to walk away.

Rose bit her lip nervously. She couldn’t let Evan be taken hostage, if something happened to him it would hurt Paige so much. And Aletha. Not to mention, Rose liked him well enough herself. Sure, not exactly like an older brother, but definitely more than Paige’s boyfriend and Aletha’s protégé.

She looked around the group feeling a little helpless. Poe and Karé were at a loss for what else they could say. Waroo pleaded with Kylo to change his mind. The Stormtroopers looked dejected, especially Marks’ friend.

But Marks… he actually looked kind of haughty. A haughty hottie with that perfectly arched eyebrow over stormy grey eyes that read a challenge in them.

Ok, at this rate, her thoughts about him were getting so ridiculous, Rose knew she was sounding like a trashy HoloNovel you got out of the one credit bin at a refueling station, the cover bearing a swooning maiden and an Adonis with just the right amount of his shirt pulled open.

That didn’t negate the fact that Marks clearly had an idea. But what could possibly-

“Tharel is a medic,” Marks called after Kylo. “Forgive me, Master Kylo… but didn’t Master Sasa get attacked and badly injured?”

Kylo stopped dead in his tracks.

Oh damn, that was good.

Rose couldn’t see the expression on Kylo’s face as he took a moment to consider Marks’ words. Rose didn’t know who Sasa was, but clearly there was something about her that made him care about her safety.

Slowly Kylo turned around, “MK-6093… what are you suggesting? That I have some sort of selfish personal dilemma or conflict of interest that makes me unfit to make decisions?”

“Of course not,” Marks bowed his head dutifully. “All I’m suggesting is that the events of this bombing have already destroyed two Knights of Ren. We wouldn’t want to lose another.”
Kylo was sure even Rose Tico picked up the subtext.

“No… we wouldn’t.” Kylo sighed, “Alright, how about this? We do a trade.”

“A trade?” Poe raised an eyebrow.

“A trade?” Evan echoed. He had only heard Poe’s voice and was a little confused.

Kylo returned close enough to Poe so his pitch could be heard, “How about we trade one of the people here in exchange for the medic being released? Would that be an option?”

They heard some muffled noises on the comm as Evan and Qi’ra discussed the idea.

“She says she would be open to an exchange, but we can’t have Solo or the Wookiee,” Evan finally said. “Who would we trade me for?”

“I’ll go,” Marks offered.

“You absolutely will not,” Kylo snapped. He glanced at Poe and then walked over to Marks. Kylo whispered, “What are you playing at? Is this some sort of plan surrounding Calrissian? I know Qi’ra is on good terms with him.”

“This has nothing to do with that,” Marks’s voice was low. “Trust me, if I wanted to get in contact with him, I would have already.”

“Oh, I think you do and are just waiting for your chance.”

“I suggest we continue this conversation when we don’t have an audience,” Marks said coldly. “Now, let’s be realistic; I’m the best choice here. Nines and Zeroes are good soldiers, but they’re not the kind of people you send on missions like this. So, what? Are you going to send FN-2187 in Tharel’s place? You’re going to send FN-2187 to Han Solo? We both know if Han Solo finds out who FN-2187 is, we’re not getting him back.”

“Yeah, Solo would probably tie him up, throw him in his cargo hold, and bring him to Organa to avenge Rhiaon,” Kylo conceded.

“Exactly,” Marks said. “So send me, because your only other option is sending someone from the Resistance… or yourself.”

Kylo sighed, “Fine. But if you even mention the word Alyla to Solo or Chewbacca-”

“I won’t. I swear.”

“Alright.” Kylo took a step back from Marks and announced, “We’ll send MK-6093 and trade him for Tharel. Everyone, say what goodbyes you need to. By the time this is all through, Marks will be safely back with my people, and you probably won’t see him again. I know he’ll be greatly missed.”

Rose knew that he was being sarcastic, his voice was overtly dripping with cynicism, yet for some reason she took the words for heart. Her pulse quickened at the thought of not seeing Marks again.

“Wait, he can’t go,” Rose blurted out.

Poe stared at her in great confusion, “Uh… what?”

Her cheeks burned red, “Well, uh… I just meant, that, well maybe…”
Oh God, what were words again? She suddenly understood how her sister felt while meeting Evan’s mother.

“I think what Rose is saying,” Marks cut in. He caught her eye, and the corner of his mouth twitched up in a kind smile, not a mocking smirk, “That… Well, all the fathers came racing to see their children safe. The Crimson Dawn woman said Solo and the Wookiee couldn’t be traded; she didn’t say the elder Dameron couldn’t.”

“Yeah!” Rose latched onto the line of thought. “Trade me for Kes Dameron. Then at least this whole thing would be worth it for the parents… a little. Besides, Poe, you don’t want just a member of the First Order going to Crimson Dawn alone. You’d want a Resistance member to go too.”

Poe just stared at her, “…Huh.”

He wasn’t blind. Poe had seen the way Rose kept glancing over at Marks, though originally he thought it was because of her deep bias and mistrust of Stormtroopers. But now… Poe hadn’t exactly paid a lot of attention to Paige Tico when he first started dating Kaydel, but Poe was fairly certain Paige had given Evan a lot of similar looks before they started their own courtship.

“Tharel, what do you think?” Poe asked Evan. “Swap Rose for my Dad?”

“You’re going to have to make that an order, Commander Dameron,” Evan replied. “Because if Paige finds out I agreed to put her little sister directly into the hands of gangsters in exchange for your father’s life… I’m not going to have a girlfriend anymore... Or certain parts of my body, and my mother will no longer need to have any more no sex before marriage discussions as they will be redundant.”

“Then, it’s an order, Tharel. And don’t you give me any lip about it.”

“Oh, but please, Sir, won’t you reconsider?” Evan didn’t even pretend his objections were real.

“That’s enough, Evan.” Poe looked over to Rose and Marks, “Well? Shall we?”

“So, what’s going on with you and the Stormtrooper?”

Rose frowned as she looked up at Poe. He was leading her and Marks back down the hallway to the ballroom entrance. Poe had originally been in the lead, Marks a few feet behind him, and Rose a few feet behind Marks. She hadn’t noticed when Poe dropped back to speak to her in a hushed voice.

“What?” Rose fiddled nervously with her work gloves. She had forgotten her own back on D’Qar and borrowed a pair from Kes at the ranch. They were quite bulky on her, so her hands were stained with oil and grease when she had to deal with minutia that the mass of fabric on her fingers blocked.

“What do you mean?”

“I’m not Head of the Air Force because I overlook the subtle details,” Poe said. “Those were some looks you were giving the Stormtrooper. And I thought I heard you mutter cheekbones?”

Could she run? Just run fast and far away? Say screw everything, I’m going to go live with Rey on Jakku where no sexy Stormtrooper with heavenly cheekbones and exhibitionist pilots weren’t making her blush up a storm?

She stuttered over her words, trying to think of something to say in her defense, “Well, it, uh, just is,
I kind of—”

“Rose,” Poe grabbed her arm and pulled her to a stop. “It’s okay to be attracted to a Stormtrooper. You just can’t act on those feelings, okay? I don’t want you getting hauled into Nalto’s office for a treason… again. So, if you want to tell me you think he’s cute, that’s okay. I’m not going to get mad.”

She sighed, “Ok, I… I think he’s kind of cute. But I don’t want to talk about it right now.”

“That’s fine with me. I don’t think I have the proper credentials to deal with helping you through your first crush. Although, I will be filing the proper paperwork with Kira’s Council on the issue with a concise report of the events as I understand them.”

“Just make sure you don’t forget Form Q-13,” Rose teased. They began to walk again, “Poe… have you ever, you know, been attracted to someone you shouldn’t?”

“To be honest… no. I think my most risqué crush was the brief one I had on Gavyn Kene’s daughter Miri when I was sixteen. She was like half cat person and both her rather overprotective parents were Jedi so things were difficult for me. Though I never acted on the crush, and once the summer ended so did the feelings pretty much.”

“Oh.”

They walked in silence for a little while. Rose continued to fiddle with Kes’ gloves while Poe watched Marks. His eyes never moved from Marks, inspecting him extra carefully now that he knew of Rose’s crush.

Poe was Kira’s Council’s unofficial significant other assessor. He was protective of the girls, and if you weren’t approved of by Poe, you pretty much weren’t allowed to date one of the girls… though that was mostly the muscle of Jessika Pava would scare off unapproved would be suitors. But Teng Malar was currently Poe’s top approved significant other, mostly because he had literally had a three-hour interview with Poe over the Aletha and Kira’s comms to get said approval. And Teng was the one significant other who get away with dating a girl without approval, what with the whole living on a different planet.

“Hey, Rose?” Poe asked. “Sorry for asking, but I wasn’t really paying attention to your role in things when you explained how you get here earlier.”

Rose shook her head, “Thanks, Poe.”

“How’d you two meet?” he pointed between Marks and Rose.

There was a bit of a smile on her face, “Just luck.”

He laughed a little, “Yeah? Good luck?”

Rose looked back at Marks, who had reached the door into the ballroom, “Not sure yet.”

“Hey guys?” Marks called.

Poe and Rose glanced at each other. Rose nodded, and they raced forward.

“What’s the problem?” Poe asked.

“I can’t get the door open,” Marks answered. “The power isn’t even on.”
“Oh yeah, Solo messed with the cables to secure the door and make sure no one came after us,” Poe explained. “This was before we knew about the rescue party. It’s nothing big, but it was Solo doing the work, so I can’t fix this. Rose, wanna give it a shot?”

“I like a challenge,” Rose grinned.

As Marks opened the control panel next to the door for Rose, Poe got on the comm and gave Evan a heads up that they were on the other side of the door.

Rose shook her head lightly when she saw the mess of wires. As Poe had said, it was something a little too advance for him to fix, but this? This was a walk in the park. The only problem she had was when she tried to grasp the wires, her bulky gloves were just getting in the way.

“Marks, do you mind?” Rose asked once more.

“Hand them over,” Marks held out his hand, Rose having passed the gloves to him a few times in the communication centre. Without a second thought, he shoved them into his pant pocket.

“How’s it going, Rose?” Poe asked.

“Almost got it,” she replied. “Just another few wires.”

“Okay. Now when that door is opened, we need to be armed and ready. There’s going to be a few members of Crimson Dawn waiting for us. They’re going to be led by a woman named Minati. They have been instructed not to hurt us, but be wary. Qi’ra has given permission that if they touch us, we are allowed to defend ourselves.”

“Minati?” Rose scowled. “Why does that name sound familiar?”

She set the last wire into place and suddenly the door flew open. Cocking of blaster filled the hall as a tall, black-haired woman flanked by four burly soldiers came into view.

“Poe Dameron?” the woman asked.

“The one and only,” he winked. “You Minati?”

“Yes,” Minati said. “Are those the new hostages?”

“Yes.”

“Huh. That girl doesn’t seem like much of anything. I’d show her the back of my hand, and she’s shatter into a million pieces.”

Poe said nothing, but openly rested his hand on the blaster on his hip.

“Come on,” Minati gave a shrill laugh like the noise of a dog whose tail has just been stepped on. “Qi’ra’s waiting.”

They began to walk forward. The Crimson Dawn members went first, with the other trailing, Rose in particular caught close to the burly henchmen. The burly men eyed Rose and gave somewhat lecherous laughs.

“I hope Lady Qi’ra lets us keep this one,” one of the men leered at Rose. “Not very pretty, but we could have fun.”

Later that day, Rose would sulk over being called not very pretty, but in that moment she was more
afraid of what would happen to her now. But she had an angel on her shoulder. A hand grasped her wrist and gently pulled her back, away from the men and brought her close and securely to his protection.

Rose turned her head back to thank Poe for keeping her safe, but gasped when she saw Marks holding her wrist instead.

“Don’t say a thing,” he kept his voice low but neutral. He was completely in control of his situation, “I’m here. They won’t touch you. I’ve got you.”

She found herself more relaxed than if it had been Poe who grabbed her. Instead she could focus on something else entirely.

As they entered the ballroom, Rose couldn’t keep her eyes off Minati. She didn’t recognize the woman, but there was just something about that name. Something buried in her memories screamed at her to know that name. Indeed, she knew it, she just couldn’t figure out how she knew it.

But as Rose struggled to recall the name, she was very aware of the blast on one hip and the taser on the other. Deep down, as Rose focused on nothing but this Minati woman, she knew she wanted to use them.

Poe’s focus, however, was on someone else entirely.

“Dad!” he cried out the second he set eyes on Kes.

“Poe!” Kes’ body jerked like a thousand ton weight was lifted off by the sight of his son alive and relatively well.

Kes did not care at all about the dozen blasters trained on him. He just holstered his weapon, dropped the bag of medical supplies and ammunition he had been lugging around, booked it straight across the room, and pulled his son into a bone-crushing hug.

“You’re alright,” Kes whispered, trying not to cry. “You’re safe.”

“Yeah, Dad, I’m alive,” Poe’s voice was quite muffled as Kes firmly held Poe’s face against his neck. Kes was a little taller than Poe and a little stronger, so with the angle, power, and desperation of the embrace… he was kind of smothering Poe. “Dad? Can’t… breathe… help?”

“Sorry,” Kes released his son. Pulling back, Kes set his hands on the sides of Poe’s face and looked him over in a twisted mixture of fear and relief. “Thank the Force you’re alright.”

“Come on, Dad. You don’t need to make a fuss,” Poe waved off as if the situation was as minor as getting in a minor speeder accident. “This sort of thing is a normal occurrence for me.”

Kes arched an eyebrow, “And you wonder why I worry over you on undercover missions.”

“What can I say? Both my parents were Rebels. Honestly, you’re the one responsible for dooming me to such a life. But don’t worry, I forgive you for it. Not only did you and Mom give me your Rebel genes, but you also gave me your extremely handsome looking person genes. On behalf of most of the sight seeing populace, I thank you for that.”

Kes didn’t say anything, rather just gave Poe a look he was far too familiar with.

Poe shuddered, “You know, I think part of the reason I’m with Kay is she’s the only person who can nail the cut that shit out, Poe look as well as you.”
“Poe?”

“Yeah, Dad?”

“Cut that shit out.”

“Yes, Sir.”

“Uh… guys?” Evan finally spoke up. During the Dameron reunion, he and Rose had exchanged their own hugs. “Can we get a move on? I have patients to see.”

“I think that might be up to the hostage takers,” Poe jerked his head to left. “Qi’ra, right?”

“That is correct,” Qi’ra nodded.

“Huh… so you’re the woman I’ve heard so much ranting about.”

Qi’ra chuckled and looked over at Han, “And you try to convince me that Leia doesn’t give me a second thought.”

“She doesn’t,” Han said flatly. “Leia only thinks about you when you decide to interject yourself in our lives. You can cut that out, by the way.”

“Please Han, if Leia doesn’t think about me, why does her prodigy know me by name?”

“Oh, I wasn’t talking about Leia,” Poe piped up. “I was talking about Felicity Rhiaon. Man, that woman really knew how to go on rant. I think she liked to call you Han’s leg stabbing ex-girlfriend.”

“Leg stabbing ex-girlfriend?” Rose scowled.

Qi’ra shook her head, "Ugh, you stab a woman in the leg one time and you're nicknamed for life."

“Fliss did like her nicknames,” Kes shrugged. “What was it she called you again, Solo? The Loud One?”

“Loud Mouth Solo,” Han corrected. He muttered to Chewbacca, “You know, I kind of miss being called that.”

_Graw growl gr?_

“Thanks for the offer, Pal, but I’ll pass,” Han replied. “Loud Mouth Solo was something only Felicity called me, and I’d kinda like it to stay that way.”

“You know, in my defense,” Qi’ra said, “I didn’t even leave a scar on Rhiaon… and she was asking for it.”

“It’s Felicity Rhiaon. She _always_ starts it!”

“HEY!” Evan screamed.

The room fell silent as every eye turned on him.

“Come on!” he ranted. “You two have literally already had this argument. We are going in circles! Now, can I leave and go find the injured people, or are we going to stand around and trade barbs all day?”
Qi’ra sighed, “I suppose since we have been given two people in trade for the two of you, you are free to go. Now, which ones are we keeping? The men?”

“Oh, hell no,” Poe said. “I’ve got a pretty little blonde in the lobby who has been waiting for me long enough. You get the dream team of these two, but I’m warning you, I want Rose back in one piece. Do with the Stormtrooper whatever you want.”

Poe was promptly smacked upside the head by his father.

“And to think the First Order gets labeled the bad guys,” Marks rolled his eyes.

“Come on,” Han glowered at him. “You’re not honestly going to stand here and tell me that you’re fighting on the right side.”

“The fight I fight is none of your business,” Marks seethed. “You don’t know the first thing about me, so you have no right to judge me for the choices I make. I have my reasons, and yes, I do fight the good fight.”

Poe scoffed, “If you were doing the right thing, you would be fighting with the Resistance, not the First Order.”

“I’m sorry I can’t do better, but I’ve got my own problems.”

Han frowned.

“So, to be clear,” Qi’ra spoke up, “I’m getting you and the girl.”

Marks glanced towards Rose, something hard flicking in his eyes, “Yes.”

Qi’ra took a moment to look him over. Her face was tight as her eyes roamed over his body, trying to put some puzzle together.

“Have we met before?” Qi’ra asked.

“No,” his reply was quick and sharp.

“Huh. You know… you seem familiar to me.”

“I imagine I would,” his tone made it clear the discussion was over. “So are we doing this?”

Qi’ra took a moment to examine her fresh hostages, “Yes, I think we are.”

Minati had been at Qi’ra’s side ever since returning. Her eyes had been on Rose’s just as much as Rose’s had been on her. The entire time her face looked like she had just bit into a lemon, and when Qi’ra declared they were taking Rose, Minati looked personally affronted.

“You can’t be serious, Lady Qi’ra,” Minati objected. “I mean look at her. She’s a piece of nothing. We’re going to give up a medic and a man built like an ox in exchange for her?”

Rose scowled. Come on, why did she know this woman? Where had she heard the name before? Wait, wasn’t it from Kira’s Council?

“Minati, having a full member of the Resistance is an important hostage,” Qi’ra said. “If we lose the medic, we lose our edge at making the most damage.”
“But Lady Qi’ra,” Minati started.

“That’s enough,” Qi’ra snapped. “I don’t know what manners they taught you on Jakku, but you’ve been away from it long enough to know better.”

No, not Kira’s Council. Kira herself, Rose realized. Rey had said the name before. But from what and when and why did the thought of Minati make her so angry?

What had Minati done on Jakku?

“Now, we’ve fussed long enough,” Qi’ra took control. “Han?”

He grunted.

“If your people still want this deal, then they need to leave now.”

“Come on,” Poe urged Kes and Evan. “The others are waiting.”

“Yes, I can imagine some of them are in terrible need of medical attention,” Evan readjusted the strap of his medical bag.

“Oh, you’re telling me,” Poe gave a low whistle. “Snap’s down a leg.”

Evan’s face went pale, “Down a…”

He said nothing more: Evan Tharel just bolted out of the ballroom in the general direction of Snap Wexley.

Kes looked stricken, but he walked back across the ballroom to collect the bag he had dropped, “Snap has lost a leg?”

Poe shrugged, “Otherwise everyone seems to be pretty good.”

And then he remembered.

“Hey Solo,” Poe turned his attention to Han. “Unfortunately, Jaina Fel was killed by the bombing.”

He watched it fall over Han’s face. The man looked both upset and annoyed; he was a man sick and tired of hearing about death. Poe knew the relationship the Solos had had with Jaina, and although Han’s hadn’t been as strong, Han would be upset that the girl died.

“Damn it, Qi’ra,” Han glowered at her. “Whoever you owe a favor to have better saved the galaxy or something to kill this many innocent bystanders.”

Qi’ra gave no defense for her action.

“We, uh,” Poe cleared his throat as he glanced in the direction that he and Kylo before leaving the ballroom had placed both remaining parts of Jaina Fel so she could be found by later recovery teams, “we had to leave quickly and didn’t have a way of bringing her with us. You think you could-”

“I’ll take care of it,” Han promised. “Now go and keep my kid from killing anyone else today.”

“Actually, he wasn’t responsible for this bombing,” Poe hated himself for pointing it out.

“I know.” Han kicked the body of an Imperial Loyalist who had been killed by a lightsaber across the chest, “But he did this.”
“Right.”

“Come on,” Kes slung an arm around Poe shoulder. “Let’s go find that girl of yours. Rose, you gonna be okay?”

“I’m with Han Solo and Chewbacca the Wookiee,” Rose grinned. “I’ll be fine.”

Han nervously chuckled, “Yeah… we’re good at keeping people safe and out of harm’s way. My speciality.”

He leaned over to Chewbacca.

“Chewie, kept an extra eye on Tico,” Han muttered. “Leia is going to murder me if we get this girl killed.”

“Come on,” Kes directed Poe out of the ballroom.

“Wait! Wait a moment!” Minati objected, but the Damerons were already gone. She huffed and rounded on Rose, “Really, Lady Qi’ra? You really accepted this girl over that hunk of muscle we just let waltz out the door? I mean look at her.”

Rose yelped as Minati reached her and immediately grabbed jaw, yanking Rose’s face up to look Minati straight in the eye.

No one noticed Marks’ hand rest on his blaster.

“Look at this girl,” Minati scoffed. “Tiny, weak, dirty. Probably an idiot who they only send in when all the grown ups are too busy to deal with whatever simple task this girl barely has the brain power to perform.”

“I remember how she broke down my self-confidence,” Rey’s voice echoed in Rose’s head. She had told a story about Minati, but what story?

“I mean, really,” Minati’s voice dripped, “she’s got no bite to her whatsoever.”

“Minati always knew the exact words that would break my spirit.”

Minati gave a shrill laugh like the noise of a dog whose tail has just been stepped on, “She’s almost as pathetic as that little girl the Kymeri bitch shot me in the knee for.

Rose felt like a bucket of ice water had been dumped on her head.

This was Minati… as in Jarex Zolhar’s Minati. One of the women who had once beat up Rey when Rose’s best friend had only been a seven-year-old… Beat her and made her think she was responsible. This bitch was the reason Rey had struggled with her abilities for years.

Actually, if it hadn’t been for Minati destroying Rey’s self-confidence, Rey might never have agreed to do the fighting ring with Devi, and thus Kira’s Council wouldn’t have formed. Minati was the reason Rose had even met her best friend.

…Ah, screw it. The bitch had to pay.

“Just look at this little face,” Minati used a babying voice like she was speaking to a dumb mutt.

Rose did see the murderous looks on Han, Chewie, and Marks’ faces. Even Qi’ra looked annoyed.
Minati laughed that dog tail laugh again, “Oh, the poor little thing. Bet she doesn’t know the first thing about fight-”

Rose whipped her taser off her belt, shoved it onto Minati’s neck, and turned it on to full voltage. Unfortunately, the Resistance didn’t carry tasers with as high voltage as Captain Electra or BB-9E, but boy could Rose’s taser do some damage. Minati’s screams echoed off the walls as Rose held it to her neck for a good minute straight.

When she turned it off, Minati instantly hit the ground. She curled in a ball, whimpering in pain as Rose stood over her and seriously debated giving her another round.

Rey’s face filled Rose’s mind… or rather the image of five-year-old Rey that Rose had dug out of the archives after Aletha refused to let Kira’s Council have a picture of Rey. Rose actually didn’t know what Rey looked like. Sometimes she thought of her as that five-year-old, and other times Rose conjured different images of the faces of Felicity Rhiaon and Luke Skywalker – again using archive images – mashed together in the best approximation of Rey that Rose could manage.

This time she thought of Rey as that five-year-old… that helpless five-year-old who this woman at her feet had abused.

And it was for that five-year-old that Rose holstered her taser. She had to be better than the monster at her feet. She had to be a better person for Rey.

But that didn’t mean Rose would let Minati go without knowing she paid for her crimes.

Rose dropped down to her knees and bent her head in so close to Minati’s ear, flecks of spit from Rose’s intentionally perfect enunciation were hitting her.

“That… was for Rey Erso.”

Minati looked up at Rose in shock, fear, and above all, confusion.

“I know what you did to her,” Rose whispered. “And if you ever mention her to anyone, or if you even whisper her name to anyone in this room… I will do this over and over again until you beg me for death… Then I’ll tell Chewbacca what you did to Luke Skywalker’s daughter, and he’ll deliver that release of death… after getting to have his own punishments for you first. Am I understood?”

Minati quickly nodded.

“Then this stays between us?”

Minati nodded again.

“Good.” Rose got back to her feet like nothing at all had happened.

She found that everyone was gawking at her in shock.

“Whoa,” Marks simply said. It would be a lie to say he wasn’t kind of turned on.

“Yeah,” Han just stared at Rose unable to formulate words for a very long time. “Kid, if we had you in the Rebellion, we probably would have won the war a good two years earlier. Forget my kid and his serial killer emotional issues. Can I have like five of you?”

“Add me onto that list,” Qi’ra agreed. “If I had a girl like you helping me, this bombing wouldn’t have been such a failure.”
Not going to lie, Rose very much enjoyed the stroking of her ego.

“That’s more than I can say for you, Minati.” Qi’ra narrowed her eyes at the woman still lying in a ball on the floor, “Get up and get to the back of the line. You’ve been demoted.”

Shooting very nervous glances at Rose, Minati got to her feet and obeyed.

“Alright,” Qi’ra said, “we’ve lollygagged enough. Let’s get a move on. Han you’ll be on my left, Chewie to the back, the Stormtrooper will be in the front, and you…”

Rose blushed a little as Qi’ra’s eyes turned to her. There was something a little too pleased in Qi’ra’s eyes. It was the way Leia looked at Poe or Aletha looked at Evan, the desire to groom that person into their own personal mini me.

Maybe she shouldn’t have made a show of dominance in front of the leader of the most powerful Crime Syndicate in the Galaxy.

“You, Rose…” Qi’ra cooed. “you’ll go on the right. I want to keep my eye on you. You have spunk. Have you ever considered joining Crimson Dawn?”

“I think I’ll pass,” Rose said dryly, but still nervously.

“Well… let me know if you ever change your mind.”

Rose bit her lip and glanced at Marks. Wasn’t she was supposed to have just gone to Poe Dameron’s childhood home and fix his droid? Why was she in a position where Crimson Dawn was trying to recruit her?

She sighed. Rose doubted this was what Mama had meant all those times she told Rose to keep her career options open.

“And it’s called Rebalancing?” Kaydel sat with Sasa in their private little corner. They sat facing each other, clasping hands as Sasa finished explaining the Force power to regulate emotion.

“Yes, and it’s very effective.” Sasa looked around conspiratorially, then leaned in and smirked, “You should have seen the mess Kylo was before I started doing this with him.”

“I don’t even want to imagine.” Kaydel shifted nervously, “I don’t know about this. You saw me kill Doxl. How can you take my pain away from it?”

“Oh, we’re going to redirect our focus to something else. Pain that we don’t have in common. Just pick a different painful memory and we’ll use that.”

“…Uh, forgive me, but I don’t think I want to relive any painful memory.”

Sasa paused, “…Oh. Right. Good point.”

Kaydel shrugged.

“Okay, how about this,” Sasa suggested, “you can also rebalance positive emotions. If you think of a memory that makes you extremely happy while I do the same, we can siphon off that happiness and bring it into our current emotions instead of being sad.”
“You’re sad right now?”

“I was just stabbed, strangled, beaten, poisoned, almost blown up, had someone literally sew my skin together, I have a massive headache, and I’m on my period. Yeah, not having the greatest day.”


“It has to be something that makes you extremely happy. One of the happiness moments of your life. The turning point where you knew things had changed to give you the possibility of a happy ending. Do you have a memory like that?”

Kaydel smiled, “Yeah… I know one.”

The scene was from about two years ago. Kaydel sat on the steps built into the hill of the D’Qar base. It was dinnertime, so there wasn’t much activity outside.

She knew that Paige was waiting for her inside and also probably Aletha, but she couldn’t do it. Kaydel couldn’t endure another meal of people shouting lines from the recording of Poe’s declaration of love to her (or rather to BB-8 about her) across the cafeteria, and the room filling with laughter that amplified louder as it echoed off the wall. She wasn’t that hungry anyway.

Kaydel just wished her stomach would stop growling so loud.

“Careful,” a voice came from the bottom of the stairs. Poe Dameron was looking up at her, holding a pair of saran wrapped sandwiches, the kind always set out for pilots to grab and throw in their bags when assigned missions at the last moment. “If your stomach growls any louder, you’ll scare off the local wildlife.”

“Well, the General was trying to find us new safety measures,” she gave a small grin as he scaled the stairs and sat down next to her.

“Nah, we’ll find something else. Here, I brought you this,” he set one of the sandwiches in her lap. “Figured you’d want to avoid the dinner crowd like me.”

“I can’t wait for this whole speech thing to blow over.”

“Me too. I miss hot meals and Snap won’t bring them to our room anymore,” Poe unwrapped his sandwich and took a bite. “The big baby; I make him sleep on rocks and twigs and mud on our missions but spill a little soup on his bedsheet and game over.”

Kaydel could barely manage a nibble of her sandwich.

“Come on,” he leaned over and playfully bumped her. “I heard that stomach earlier. Eat. No one’s going to shout excerpts of an embarrassing moment to you here.”

She obliged, but Poe’s words didn’t exactly make things better, “Embarrassing?”

“Huh?”

“You said it was an embarrassing moment. Are you… ashamed about what happened?”

He let out a puff of air, “I’m embarrassed that it made you a public spectacle and ashamed that I didn’t have the nerve to say the words to your face… but I’m not ashamed of what I said. I take none
of it back. You’re a wonderful woman, and I’d be one lucky son of a bitch to get you to go out with me.”

“Really?”

“Really really.”

Kaydel was silent, waiting for Poe to segue into officially asking her on a date.

Poe said nothing.

She sighed, “You know, it’s cold. I think I might head in.”

He glanced up at the starry sky, “I’ll stay out. It’s a nice night… Could use a better jacket though. I forgot my good one at home on Yavin IV, but I can bear it.”

They sat in silence looking up at the stars, the chirps and calls of wildlife faintly coming from the forest. They ate their sandwiches, staring at the sky, each waiting for the other to do something.

“Weren’t you going to go?” Poe finally asked, glancing at her as she finished the last bite of her sandwich.

Her eyes didn’t move from the stars, “You don’t want me here?”

“I quite enjoy just sitting with you in silence. It feels like some of the weight on my shoulders has been lifted. I don’t have to worry about any of my problems or responsibilities when I’m with you. I can just relax and be me. I love that feeling… but you said you were going to go inside, so don’t let me stop you from your plans.”

Kaydel sighed and set the ball of saran wrap left from her sandwich beside her. She dropped her head into her hands and let out another – this time much louder and frustrated – exhalation of breath.

“What?” Poe asked.

“What is even going on with us?” Kaydel asked. “You ever gonna ask me out, Poe?”

The question had a sobering effect on him.

“I’m just waiting for the right moment,” his voice betrayed no passionate emotion. Mild was not the way of Poe Dameron and it frustrated Kaydel Ko Connix to have him deal with her in such a manner.

“That’s good to know,” Kaydel sounded defeated. She rose to her feet, gathering the ball of saran wrap, squeezing it in her fist like the stress ball she so desperately needed. “Alright, I'll see you around.”

Completely ready to throw in the towel on Poe Dameron after the whole recording fiasco, Kaydel scaled down the stairs. Every step he didn’t follow after her increased Kaydel’s disappointment. She was a fool to think she ever had a shot with Poe Dameron.

“Kaydel, I'm waiting for the right moment cause when I ask you out, there’s not gonna be any turning back for me.”

The words stopped her dead in her tracks. She turned in around, confused but her heart lifting at his words. Poe didn’t get up from the stairs, and his eyes were downturned, but he continued to say
words more wonderful and sincerer than that whole declaration of love for her he had given to BB-8.

Poe continued, his voice still mild but intensely honest, “I’m not gonna date anybody else for the rest of my life. I’m not gonna love anybody else for the rest of my life. I’m not gonna really care about anything else for the rest of my life.”

He took a pause; let his eyes flick up and meet hers. The same hope for love and knowledge that this could be the greatest thing they ever experienced in their lives flickered in her eyes the same way they flickered in his.

Poe took a deep breath, “I’m waiting for the right moment, Kaydel… cause when I ask you out, it’s gonna be the most important moment of my life.”

They were words that would terrify any other woman, but lonely Kaydel Ko Connix who had dreamed all her life of someone loving and caring for her so wholly, they were nothing but the sweetest music she had ever heard.

“And I just wanna make sure that I get it right,” he finished.

Silence hung on the air as Kaydel just stared at him in disbelief.

Poe awkwardly shrugged at her, probably wondering if he had made the wrong move. Kaydel would learn soon enough that with Poe Dameron there was never any half way. It was go back or go home.

“So that’s why,” Poe said, almost trying to brush the moment off.

Kaydel couldn’t think of anything else to say but, “Okay. Good to know.”

Then as if her legs had taken charge without the rest of her body’s permission, Kaydel turned back around and began marching away.

“Kaydel?” Poe called.

Her heart took control of those rebellious legs and forced her body to a halt. She turned back around once more to see Poe, who still had not moved from the stairs.

“You want to have dinner together tomorrow night?” he asked.

Kaydel blinked, confused a little after hearing that huge speech, “Wait... are you asking me out?”

Poe shrugged, “The moment felt right.”

Kaydel smiled at the memory. Poe’s prediction had been right; he had ended up dating only her, loving only her, caring really about only her… Okay, he cared about other people and things, but she was absolutely at the top of that list. Kes and BB-8 came close the rivaling her, but there was no doubt that Kaydel Ko Connix was the most important thing in Poe Dameron’s life.

“Good memory?” Sasa gently smiled. She had been watching Kaydel and even if Sasa didn’t have the Force, she still would have been able to see how calm the memory made Kaydel.

“Yeah,” Kaydel smiled back. “One of my favorite memories to revisit.”
Kaydel thought briefly of the first time she had revisited the memory. It had been when she retold the story to Kira the night she stumbled into Aletha on the comm and first was introduced to the girl. It had been that memory that prompted Kaydel into wanting to get Poe a gift, and ended with the purchase of Poe’s trademark brown jacket. Even after Poe had collected from home that blackish Runyip leather jacket his father gave him for his coming of age, Poe preferred that gift Kaydel had given him.

She knew that nothing would ever make him give up a possession such as precious to him.

“So, since I have a happy memory does that mean we can do the Rebalancing thing?” Kaydel asked.

“Yes, we can.” Sasa grinned as she started the Rebalancing process. Since she was the only Force Sensitive between the two First Order them, Sasa alone would have to initiate it. “But I will warn you, this does mean you’ll see one of my happiest memories. That means it involves Kylo.”

“Sasa, I’ve literally overheard the pair of you having sex. I’m desensitized to your love life at this point.”

“Oh good.” It was very telling that Sasa was not surprised to hear Kaydel had overheard her having sex with Kylo. “Then you won’t mind this memory.”

_Sasa and Kylo were tangled in the sheets together, bare and locked in an intimate embrace. Kylo with that peaceful moment he shared with Sasa looked so much calmer and more relaxed than Kaydel had ever seen… not that Kaydel had really ever seen Kylo before the trip to Nixrye, but that was beside the point._

“Damn it,” Kaydel grumbled. “I brought this on myself, didn’t I?”

“Yes. Yes, you did.”

Kaydel groaned, but paid attention. She was certain General Organa would interrogate Kaydel thoroughly over Sasa in the mission debrief, every crumb she could feed General Organa about her son’s Mistress was one less lecture about the poor decisions of this mission.

_Kylo smiled and brushed back a lock of her hair, “You know, I thought the Chosen were held in enough esteem that you would have your own rooms.”_

“Well, between you and me, Snoke’s ship is really poorly designed when it comes to having enough quarters. He’ll swear against it to his grave, but the last time Hux went on board, he had to room with Tara.”

“How is he even still alive?” Kylo was genuinely surprised.

“I think Hux is smart enough not to make a move on Tara.”

“Or any girl who’s mine,” he pulled her closer.

Sasa’s smile fell.

“What is it?” Kylo asked.

“I’m sorry, it’s foolish,” Sasa shook her head. “Just hearing you say that Tara’s yours… I know we’re not exclusive, but I’d be lying if I said that sometimes I didn’t try to pretend.”
“Sasa,” Kylo murmured. “You know what this is between us-”

“I don’t think either of us know what this is.” Sasa looked down, “But… I know what I want it to be.”

Kylo looked away.

“It’s not going to be anything until there’s a child in the picture,” Kylo sighed as he glanced towards the pregnancy test face down on the desk.

“And what happens when there is?”

“Then I think we become something… more.”

“And if Tara is the mother of that child?”

“…I have no idea.” Gently he eased her off his lap, “Come on. We’ve delayed it enough.”

He went to stand, but a hand on his thigh stopped him, “Wait, Kylo.”

Kylo turned and looked at her.

Sasa bit her lip, “Can I ask you something? Something you’ll answer honestly?”

“Of course.”

“Do you actually want a child?”

The silence in the room was so heavy.

“I…” Kylo finally said, “I don’t know.”

She didn’t say anything, sensing he needed to work it all out in his own head.

“But,” he said after a long while. He wouldn’t look her in the eye as he admitted the truth, “I know I am ready… to have a family again. I truly miss knowing there’s someone out there who cares about me, no strings attached. I can’t change who my family is… was but I do wish I didn’t… I don’t know. I wish I didn’t burn my bridges, but at the same time how can I act like I want the traitors who vilify the Supreme Leader and Vader?”

“I understand that longing,” Sasa said. “The First Order isn’t the easiest place to be. Everyone is about ten seconds away from literally stabbing you in the back. You wouldn’t believe how competitive things were in the Chosen. I only got along with Nera and Nova because they honestly weren’t that interested in being with you. I was honestly so surprised when Snoke chose me for you. It was simply because of the emotional regulation. If you had your shit together, I wouldn’t be here right now.”

He knelt down back on the bed, pregnancy test unchecked in one hand, her legs between his spread thighs.

“Then maybe being an emotional wreck isn’t such a bad thing,” he cupped her cheek.
Sasa laughed, “Kiss me, you fool.”

“Wow,” Kaydel said when the memory faded away. “You guys actually are trying to have a kid.”

“Yes, we are,” Sasa gave a sad smile. She glanced down at her bloodstained thighs, the reminder of her failure at once again bearing a child. “But how do you feel now? Rebalanced emotionally?”

“Yeah, actually, I do. Thank you.”

“It was no problem. I needed it a little bit too, but my suggestion is once you get home, make sure you talk to someone. That sort of thing doesn’t just go away with a good cuddle from your boyfriend.”

“I promise,” Kaydel nodded. She hesitated for a minute, “You know… you’re not that bad for a First Order soldier.”

“And you’re not that bad for a Resistance one. It’s a shame we probably will never see each other again after today.”

“I know… maybe if things were different, we could have been friends.”

“There’s the problem,” Sasa replied sadly. “I don’t think there’s any could. We just can’t pursue the relationship we truly have.”

“Well,” Kaydel sighed, “if you ever want to join the Resistance, I think I’d love to be your friend.”

“And you let me know if you ever want to join the First Order. I could set you up into a very comfortable role.”

“Uh, yeah, my aunt is part of the First Order, and she’s vowed to kill me. I don’t think I would be in any such position.”

“Honey, I wouldn’t let her near you.”

“My aunt is Alecta Anthea.”

Sasa blinked, “Yeah, on second thought, hell no am I sticking out my neck on that. Wow, Captain Anthea… I feel so bad for you.”

Kaydel realized that she and Sasa were still holding hands when Sasa squeezed Kaydel’s right one tightly.

“It really has been a pleasure meeting you,” Sasa said. “We may be enemies outside this hotel, but can we enjoy being sort of friends for now?”

Kaydel smiled. “Alright, but you don’t tell my boyfriend about this and I don’t tell yours.”

“Deal.”

“So…” Kaydel thought to the memory she had seen and what Sasa had previously said about the members of the First Order. “I gotta ask, is this Tara girl really as intimidating as you keep making her out to be?”
Sasa suddenly sat up straight, “Uh, this bombing? Tara put it all into motion just to kill me.”

“Are you sure? That seems pretty excessive,” Kaydel didn’t notice Sasa’s eyes locked at something over her shoulder.

“Oh, I’m positive.” Sasa pointed over Kaydel’s shoulder.

She turned around just in time to see three black clad, lightsaber wielding figures enter the lobby: two men and one woman, all of whom had attire not unlike Berd and Doxl’s.

“Kaydel Ko Connix?” Sasa said dryly, “Meet Tara Ren, Cern Ren, and Wiln Ren. None of them should be able to be here this quickly after your friends fixed the comms.”

“Ladies and Gentlemen,” Tara strode into the lobby and the sea of very confused people. “There is no need to panic, we are here to help.”

“I am so dead,” Sasa muttered pulling her legs to her chest.

Kaydel scooted a little so she was between Tara and Sasa.

“We are representatives from the First Order,” Wiln Ren declared. “We have come to provide assistance in the time of this terrible crime.”

There was a loud buzz from the confused, wounded resort patrons. None of it sounded very positive.

“Ladies and Gentlemen,” Tara said, “we come here in peace. This horrible crime of bombing has been set off by the thieves and murderers who call themselves Crimson Dawn. They have been a blight on society from their very inception, as well as all the gangs and syndicates that it has absorbed: from Pike to Hutt to Black Sun.”

Oh, her father would give Tara an earful about this speech when it got back to him. Then again, he wouldn’t give her more than a lecture considering he was terrified of her powers, but still the last thing she wanted was a scolding from her Daddy.

“My friends,” Tara continued, “the New Republic has abandoned you in this time. They send no aid, no law enforcement, no way to rescue its citizens. But we in the First Order are gracious; we have brought medical teams and supplies. We have come to rescue and help. The first teams should land in about half an hour, and the rest to follow an hour from now. And it is all our gift to you. Our apology for the shortcomings of the government who promised to keep you safe.”

A cheer went up in the crowd and the public favor very quickly was loud and proud with Tara Ren. Hands reached out to shakes hers, clasp hers, even to just touch their saviour as Tara made her way across the lobby with Cern and Wiln.

“So that’s why she did it so publicly,” Sasa murmured. “Not just to make me seem like an incidental death… but to make propaganda.”

Kaydel scowled, “In other words, re-enact the Bombing of Faclov but don’t let it slip they orchestrated it?”

“Exactly.”

“Damn, that's good.” Kaydel glanced back at Sasa, “Hey, should I be on guard? Might Tara attack you here and now?”
“No,” Sasa hissed as she felt another cramp. “Tara won’t attack me openly. Not in front of Wiln, and not when there’s an enormous amount of witnesses.”

“Who’s Wiln?”

“The male Knights of Ren that *doesn’t* look like he tortures tookas as a hobby.”

It was terrifying that Kaydel knew exactly which one she meant.

“Wiln is the caretaker of the Chosen. You mess with one of the girls, you answer to him. I’m under his protection,” Sasa explained. “Besides, Kylo will be here soon enough, and then I’ll really be protected. *Ow!* God, these cramps are so bad and at the worst possible time.”

“Sasa!” Tara called out.

Even knowing she was safe, Sasa immediately tensed up.

“Tara,” she struggled out as her fellow Knights of Ren reached her. Sasa looked at each one nervously. When her eyes met Wiln’s, they quickly directed him to the bodies of Doxl and Berd to give him a bit of a heads up. “What in the Galaxy are you doing here?”

“Why, rescuing you, you dear, sweet, little one,” Tara’s voice dripped with sickly sweetness it was overtly insulting.

“But how did you know?” Sasa shot, her tone still light. “You couldn’t have gotten here by now if you left after the bombing.”

“Well, I had just the most terrible vision of the bombing,” Tara lied, but everyone knew it. “We tried to get a hold of you, but the lines have been blocked all day.”

Funny, Kaydel remembered the lines working early enough in the day for Leia to contact Poe and yell at him about the recording Evan sent her.

“So I gathered the rest of the Knights of Ren and rushed to your side to save you,” Tara continued. “After all, we couldn’t possibly let a little helpless thing like you struggle to survive on your own.”

Snap – who had taken up a position close to Kaydel at the arrival of the First Order – snorted loudly, “Helpless? This girl? Not after that dress idea. The girl’s a damn genius!”

Tara very slowly lifted one eyebrow, “…Dress?”

“Oh, did I not tell you?” Sasa grinned sweetly at Tara. “I made this dress specially for this event. Two layers of Mandalorian warrior fabric and an under netting of bacta pockets to aid healing. It would be so hard to kill me while wearing this dress, as Doxl and Berd learned.”

Kaydel swore she saw Tara’s eye twitch.

“What an… ingenious idea,” Tara’s teeth were so firmly gritted the words were barely understandable.

“What did you mean as Doxl and Berd learned?” Wiln cut in.

“Oh, you don’t know?” Sasa glared at Tara, the words for her rival alone. “They took advantage of this bombing to attack me. They tried to poison, strangle, and stab me. Fortunately, I was able to fight them off with the assistance of the Resistance.”
“The Resistance?” Cern’s voice was terrifyingly cold… though that might have just been since Cern was terrifying in general. “You’ve allied yourself with the Resistance?”

“It was a deal Master Kylo brokered with their team leader,” Sasa objected. “Honestly, I’m just following orders. I’m lucky they did too, because this one here killed Doxl.”

“She killed a Knight of Ren?” Tara turned her gaze onto killed.

Wiln cut in, “Doxl forfeited that title the moment he attacked Sasa. It is clearly laid out in our rules of conduct: no Knight of Ren may harm another Knight of Ren.”

Cern snorted; by that logic, he and Tara apparently forfeited their titles a decade ago.

But Tara’s focus was only on Kaydel, “What’s your name?”

Kaydel knew she couldn’t give her real name unless she wanted to call the wrath of Alecta Anthea down on her.

“Jessika Pava,” Kaydel answered.

Jessika had given Kaydel carte blanche to use her name as a fake one. It was a little easier for Jessika to avoid the consequences of Kaydel’s actions since they were different ethnicities and the two couldn’t be confused for each other. Rose and Paige couldn’t use Jessika’s name for though they came from different planets, they were the same human ethnicity and a more racist person could mistake Jessika for one of the Otomokian sisters.

“Well, Miss Pava,” Tara’s eyes searched Kaydel’s face for something, but she couldn’t what. “I’m happy to hear you protected Sasa.”

“Oh, I’m sure you’re delighted,” Kaydel replied dryly. She glanced at Sasa, “It’s a pity that the truce will end when our groups have all reunited, but honestly, I just can’t wait for Poe to get here. What do you say, Sasa?”

“Yes, I can’t wait for Kylo to get here.” Sasa smirked at Tara, “He’ll be delighted to see you here, Tara.”

For a few seconds, Tara seriously debated the pros and cons of just strangling Sasa to death then and there.

Looking between all the women, Wiln decided to was time to intercede, “Well, if you ladies are all done catching up, I hold like to assess Sasa’s injuries. I need to give the medics a heads up on what treatments she needs.”

“Of course,” Tara bitterly conceded the field to Wiln.

She moved to take a step back from them, but Wiln grabbed her arm and pulled her in close.

“I just have one question,” he whispered to her. “Doxl is easy to manipulate, but Berd? He was a good Knight of Ren. Lasted a lot longer than many others. I can only think of one way you could have convinced him to do it.”

“And what’s that?” Tara smirked.

Wiln looked around to ensure no one was listening, “Were you sleeping with Berd?”

Tara laughed, “Oh, Wiln. You have such an imagination.”
“That’s not a no.”

“You and I know very well that female Knights of Ren and Chosen are forbidden from having sexual relations with any man but Kylo Ren. I uphold my vow to him very seriously.” Tara leaned in even closer, “After all… not all of us are like Nova.”

Defeated, he let go her, very much wanting to slap that stupid smirk right off her face. Wiln hated it when Tara managed to win a round. It was even worse when she dragged Nova into it.

As he knelt down and began assessing Sasa, Tara looked around and realized that Cern had disappeared. That never meant any good, so she went to find him.

“Are you alright?” Wiln asked in a low voice.

“I’m better,” Sasa replied. “I’ll need a medic droid to look me over, but honestly nothing too major.”

“You call being stabbed, strangled, and poisoned nothing major?”

“Tara’s been trying to kill me for two years. It’s nothing I’m not used to by now.”

“The woman needs to stop,” Wiln shook his head. “You know I had nothing to do with this, right, Sasa?”

“Trust me, I know very well that you want me around taking up a spot in the Knights of Ren. We both know who my old roommate was.”

It was only through a lot of training that Wiln didn’t allow the image of Nova appear in his mind. He couldn’t risk Tara or Cern not to pry and see it.

“So,” Kaydel frowned at Wiln, “you had nothing to do with this?”

“Tara was left in charge,” he replied. “She told me she had a vision and ordered me to leave with her on her ship, I obeyed. I didn’t know the planet we were heading to until we dropped out of lightspeed, and didn’t know about the bombing until we came low enough to see it firsthand. I would have stopped it and warned Kylo if I did know.”

“You would have warned Kylo?”

“Believe it or not, some Knights of Ren actually know the meaning of the word loyalty. I may not always agree with Kylo or are particularly happy that he destroyed my dejarik board with one of his temper tantrums, but he’s my commanding officer. I will follow his orders because I trust he’ll at least give me good ones.”

“What about the rest of the First Order?” Snap asked.

“Yeah… he’s a better team leader than Supreme Leader material.” Wiln glanced over his shoulder, “Tara’s coming back.”

Sasa sighed, “I just hope Kylo gets here soon.”

“I hope Evan gets here sooner,” Snap stroked what remained of his leg.

Kaydel watched Tara nervously. One wrong word, and Aunt Alecta would be on Nixrye capturing Kaydel and… she didn’t even want to think of what Alecta would do if she got her hands on Kaydel.
Carefully, Kaydel’s eyes drifted through the crowds with Tara. For a moment, Kaydel’s heart tensed when Tara stopped to watch Dacken who was speaking with Hena and her son. But Tara moved on when she saw someone else.

“Timor Connix,” Tara’s voice didn’t sound happy as she narrowed in on the man.

Even he could tell the trouble he was in, “Master Tara… so wonderful to see you. How are you do-”

“Cut it, Connix,” Tara snapped. “You oversaw this conference; you were in charge of organizing a strong security force and now three Knights of Ren were almost killed. How do you answer for that?”

“Master Tara, I assure you that before the conference I did everything in my power to keep my clients safe. I promise you that I-”

Tara held up her hand, “Before you go on, I would like to inform you that Captain Alecta Anthea – your sister-in-law – is the Captain who is leading the resources to Nixrье. She’ll be here in an hour and I promise you that she’ll be extremely interested in what went wrong here. So you should know that whatever you say right now, I will be reporting directly to Alecta.”

The hearts of Timor and Kaydel Ko Connix stopped. They had mirror images of horror on their face as they thought about facing Alecta and her wrath.

But what Timor did next was something Kaydel never would even have fall upon her enemies in her most selfish and evil dreams.

“Like I said, Master Tara,” Timor started again, “I promise you I did due diligence… but I was not ultimately in charge of this conference. My daughter, Katha was responsible for such measures as security. Alecta will have to take up the issue with her.”

Kaydel audibly gasped.

No. She didn’t just hear… May the Goddesses curse him, Timor had just thrown Katha, his own daughter to the non-existent mercy of Alecta. Sure, Kaydel knew firsthand that Timor had no problem with throwing out a daughter, disowning her, and allowing her to bring on her aunt’s wrath for her own choices and actions. But making his daughter a scapegoat?

Katha may have just handcuffed Kaydel to a wall and left her for dead, but Kaydel still felt rage on behalf of her sister. Maybe Kaydel was just a better person than Katha. She definitely was a better person than Timor.

However, Kaydel was not so good a person to speak up on Katha’s behalf.

“Very well,” Tara said. “When Captain Anthea arrives, I’ll see that Katha Sindal answers to her. Unless you wish to speak on behalf of your family?”

“I’ll pass. Alecta doesn’t hold me in very high regard.”

Tara arched an eyebrow, “I can’t imagine why.”

“So, you knew that this bombing was going to happen?” Kylo repeated as the group headed towards the lobby. Poe, Evan, and Kes had met up with the group about ten minutes previous and the group
was finally headed in the correct direction. “…But you didn’t give anyone a heads up about it because you were all too drunk to come up with the idea?”

“What can I say?” Kes shrugged. “Your old man sure knows how to drink. Of course, I’ve drunk him under the table many a time, but he can really knock them back.”

Kylo refused to acknowledge how his mind kept trying to go back to the memory of his father after Uncle Luke’s bachelor party where Han had complained about Kes Dameron’s drinking prowess.

“For what it is worth, Ben, I do sincerely regret my actions and apologize for the harm that has befallen the people in this resort due to my neglect.” Kes caught his look. “I refuse to call you Kylo, so deal with it.”

“Just like how you’ll have to deal with the fact that Snap lost a leg because you got too drunk to call for backup?” Poe teased.

“Poe, I did not raise you to be so disrespectful to your elders.”

“I feel Vice Admiral Holdo would disagree.”

“Ugh,” Kylo scoffed. “She’s still around?”

“Oh yeah, and guess who her new favorite person to hate is?” Poe grinned.

“For once I genuinely pity you.”

“Would you two act serious for just a moment?” Karé glared at the pair. “My husband has lost a leg, and you two are making jokes.”

“Now Karé, it wasn’t actually at Snap’s expense,” Evan pointed out. He was walking backwards in front of Nines, fixing up an injury on the Stormtrooper as he had been doing to everyone ever since meeting up with the group.

“Oh, that’s right,” Kylo smirked, “you weren’t here when we learned of your friend’s injury. What was that lovely thing you asked, Poe?”

“Please don’t do this,” he begged.

“I remember!” Kylo’s face showcased he was up to no good. “He asked Wexley if he was, I quote, pulling his leg.”

Kes gaped at his son, “Are you kidding me?”

Poe chuckled nervously.

“We all heard Dameron say it,” Kylo said.

“Hey, don’t you use the name he got from me for that,” Kes objected. “Now, if you’ll excuse me, I’m going to desperately search the Bey family tree to find someone to pin that on.”

“Come on, Dad,” Poe teased, “that was pure Dameron.”

“You shut your haughty mouth.”

“Yes, Sir,” Poe rolled his eyes.
“Uh, if we could focus?” Evan cut in, finishing up with Nines. “May I – the trained medical officer – talk to the man who lost his leg?”

“Go for it,” Poe nodded. “You know his comm line number.”

It didn’t take long for Evan to get a hold of Snap. As they chattered back and forth, the group continued to make their way to the lobby. Kes had a hand on Karé’s back – she had been quite pale since learning of Snap’s lost limb – and he was working with Poe to find some way to bring her comfort. Poe admittedly was doing so mostly to redeem himself for the slip of the tongue.

Kylo spoke to Waroo in a much lower voice than anyone else as they discussed things of the past. Things that he didn’t dare mention in front of Snoke or Tara. Things he might not even discuss in front of Sasa.

Nines and Zeroes kept conversation to themselves, mostly about their strange temporary truce with the Resistance, Slip’s death, and generally trying to figure out just what the hell was all going on. Missing the knowledge of Kylo Ren’s family tree and past history with the Dameron family led to a pretty bizarre scene unfolding before them.

As for FN-2187 – or rather Finn he supposed he should now think of himself as – he stayed closer to Poe than Kylo. Secretly Finn wondered if he should actually take on the name. Kylo Ren likely wouldn’t be pleased if he used a name the enemy of the First Order gave him. Besides, Kylo did have plans to one day call FN-2187 “Fyrn” should he ever join the ranks of a Knight of Ren. Of course, that was still a far day off and he liked having his own name. He always yearned to be more than just a faceless number. Maybe taking on the name Finn would balm that desire.

Of course, he would only use the name if Sasa liked it. Oh, how he hoped Sasa was alright. His heart ached for her, praying that she wasn’t hurt. Then again, he always ached for her, so that was nothing new.

Man, what would it be like to be in love with a girl who actually loved him back and not some temperamental Darth Vader wannabe with – as FN-2187 learned that very day – a lot of unresolved Daddy issues?

It was strange to FN-2187. He had no idea who his father was and yet he didn’t have issues about it. Sure, sometimes he wondered who his parents were, where they were, if they were alive, and if they even wanted him. But that didn’t mean he destroyed control panels with a lightsaber anytime Hux pissed him off.

As the group walked towards the lobby, things were quiet, and relatively well…until Evan asked Snap how they stopped his bleeding.

“YOU USED A WHAT?”

“Holy hell,” FN-2187 was wide eyed.

Kes gave a low whistle, “I thought Kaydel’s aunt gave questionable medical advice.”

“Yeah, don’t give my girl a medical license.” Poe glanced at Kylo, “Or apparently yours.”

“Sasa’s not my… Shut up, Dameron.”

“A fucking lightsaber?” Karé growled, glaring down the First Order soldiers.

Despite his objections, Kylo gave a pleased smirk and thought to himself, “That’s my girl.”
Thought to himself because if Tara found out – and Tara would find out – that he audibly called Sasa “his girl” that he would wake up one morning to find Sasa’s head on a spike left in his bed. Tara probably wouldn’t even give a damn about hiding that she was behind it.

And considering Kylo’s meeting with Snoke about Sasa seven weeks ago, he wasn’t sure if Snoke would care either.

No. He promised himself he wouldn’t think about that on this trip. No matter how bizarre it had gotten, Sasa couldn’t know about that, and if he thought about it, she would find out.

But Evan Tharel did not give a damn about the relationship politics of First Order High Command. He was too focused on the fact Snap Wexley had just had his leg intentionally cauterized by a lightsaber.

“What could possibly possess a person to…” Evan was beyond an easily described emotion. “What is wrong with you people?”

“Look,” Kaydel had taken the comm to defend herself, “none of us have had much medical training, and we thought cauterizing was our best bet considering the circumstances. We know cauterization is not ideal or recommended, but we had no other choices. We’ve literally run out of bandaging material to the point I have been walking around shirtless for over an hour.”

“Wait, what?” Poe chirped up.

“Don’t even right now, Dameron,” Evan warned.

“Look, Evan, we’re sorry but we had limited options, and since there was no one to consult—”

“FOR ALL FUTURE INCIDENTS, I, A MEDICAL OFFICER, AM TELLING YOU THAT CAUTERIZING WOUNDS WITH A LIGHTSABER IS A HARD NO!”

Three hours later, Doctor Kalonia would be very confused by a memo ordering her to give all departments a re-education seminar on battlefield and emergency situation medical treatment. Especially puzzling was the footnote signed by Eval Tharel – using his Geno Namit signature no less – that said, “Remind all officers in no situation are lightsabers appropriate medical tools.”

Of course, being the former doctor to the New Jedi Order, Kalonia just shrugged, “I’ve seen weirder.”

“Hold still, Paige, it’ll be over in a minute.”

Paige tried her best to hold back screams, but she couldn’t stop herself from crying out as Shayna dabbed a cloth of rubbing alcohol around the shrapnel in Paige’s head.

“I’m so sorry,” Shayna set the cloth down on the bunk, next to Paige’s head. “I know it hurts.”

“It’s alright. I know it’s not your fault. Thank you for helping treat me. You’re pretty good with dealing with shrapnel.”
“It’s because I used to help Genie study when he was in med school.”

“Really?”

“Yep, he would sit at the dining table doing his job of colorizing Holos from blue to their scene’s original colours, and I would read to him and quiz him.”

“Evan colorized Holos?” Paige asked.

“One of his jobs. Actually pretty good at it. He can eyeball any Holo and tell you off hand what their original colours were,” Shayna said proudly.

“I didn’t know he had a job in med school.”

“He had three. Had classes in the morning, worked as a janitor at night, flipped nerf burgers on the weekend, tinkered with Holos the rest of the time, and snuck in an occasional meal if I held him down and force fed him. I genuinely think there was a two-year stint where Geno didn’t sleep.”

“I would not be surprised,” Paige said mildly. Her eyes drifted across the ship to where two figures were standing at the docking entrance, “They’re still talking.”

Shayna turned and saw Rose and Marks enthusiastically chatting as they had been ever since they returned to the ship after Qi’ra let them free when they reached hers. Han and Chewbacca had been forced to stay with Qi’ra to load the stolen weapons, but Marks and Rose had been let free. Marks had insisted on being a gentleman and walking making sure Rose got back to her ship safely.

“Indeed, they are,” Shayna said. She looked back to Paige, “You want me to stop them?”

“No. Let them be… this could be entertaining.”

But Paige pushed her luck, for at that moment Marks’ comm beeped and he finally received his awaiting orders.

“The First Order has finally arrived, and I have to go report to Captain Electra,” he told Rose. “I’m afraid I have to leave now.”

“Right,” Rose nodded. “You have to go.”

They stared at each other but neither moved.

“I, uh,” Marks cleared his throat. “It was nice meeting you.”

“It was nice meeting you, Marks.”

He smiled at her, “Take care of yourself, Rose. Don’t let me catch you getting into trouble again.”

“Trust me, you couldn’t catch me if you wanted to.”

“Oh, I’d find you… but I wouldn’t catch you,” he winked at her. “I’ll see you around.”

“No, you won’t!” she yelled after him as he started down the ramp.

He called back, “We both know that’s a lie!”

Rose continued to stare after him with a dopey, refused to admit that it was lovelorn grin, way past after he was long gone.
And then she realized Paige and Shayna were watching her.

“What?” Rose crossed her arms defensively.

“What was that?” Paige’s face was filled with amusement… mixed with pain because she still had a freaking piece of metal stuck in her skull.

“What was what?” Rose shot back. “That was nothing!”

“Oh, it was something,” Paige grinned. She patted the empty part of the bunk at her feet for Rose to sit, “And you are going to spill everything.”

“That should be the last of it,” Han said.

Chewie heaved the final box up into the overhead compartments that lined the walls of the hallway in Qi’ra’s ship.

She may live in an elegant Kalevalan star yacht – Han knew how important it was for Qi’ra as the head of Crimson Dawn to maintain the First Light in its towering glory as her home base – but Qi’ra still owned a fleet of luxury ships for her personal use. Due to the extravagance of the resort, Qi’ra had arrived with her own small team of personal soldiers (the others had snuck in ahead of time to set up the bombs) in her favorite ship, a CR90 corvette, sometimes known as a Corellian corvette.

This model of ship had been the one Han pictured he and Qi’ra escaping on when they were young and dreaming of freedom. Ironically the woman who did show him freedom was thrown into his life by the capture of her ship, the Tantive IV, a CR90 corvette.

“There,” Han pulled shut the compartments. “All loaded. You go back to the transport and I’ll finish up with Qi’ra.”

Roar rah ree raor.

“I’ll be fine.”

Grww rah roar graw.

“Oh no, don’t you bring Leia into this. She’s going to be mad enough, we don’t need her getting involved while Qi’ra is still in proximity.”

Grah?

“I won’t. Trust me, the flame I held for Qi’ra was well snuffed out years ago. Heck, you were there!”

Rah roar rah.

“Yeah, yeah. Just getting moving. This won’t take long.”

He watched Chewie exit the ship and sighed. The sound of laughter drifted in from the lounge area. He took a deep breath and readied himself.

“Alright, let’s do this.”
Han gave no courtesies as he entered the lounge. It was filled with uniformed Crimson Dawn soldiers reclining on plush furniture, everyone with at least one drink in their hands. He didn’t care that Minati was in the middle of telling a story. In fact, Han was glad to interrupt when she gave a shrill laugh like the noise of a dog whose tail has just been stepped on.

“Everything’s loaded, Qi’ra,” he caught her in the middle of taking a drink.

“Mmm,” she quickly swallowed and set the drink on a table beside her personal couch, which she was reclining across like a Queen. “Good.”

“Well,” Han wiped his palms on his work pants, suddenly very aware of how dirty they were. “I’m going to go.”

“No, stay. Have a drink. Minati was just telling the story of how she fought a Jedi, a Doctor, and a Vrogem in the desert of Jakku.”

“Yeah, I don’t think that story will mean a damn thing to me,” he said bitterly. “So, I’m going to go.”

Qi’ra sighed and looked around the room, “Would you all excuse us for a moment?”

There was a slight grumbling, but everyone set down their drinks and made their way out of the lounge.

“Sit,” Qi’ra gestured to the couch across from her. “Please.”

Han sighed and gave in.

“What do you want from me, Qi’ra?” he picked up someone’s abandoned drink and took a swallow.

“I wanted to thank you… and apologize.”

“For turning your weapons on me? It’s what I expected.”

“I meant about Ben. I’m sorry. I genuinely didn’t know he would be here.”

“Just stop, Qi’ra,” he put down the glass much harder than intended. “God, what you did here was despicable. Killing and maiming thousands because you want to take out one person. That’s Bombing of Faclov level of heartlessness.”

“What can I say? I owed someone a favor,” Qi’ra demurely sipped her drink.

It wasn’t true, she didn’t owe Tara any favors. But Tara was her daughter, and she would do anything for her daughter. Tara was the greatest thing Qi’ra had ever done in her life; worth more than money, power, or the cost of any person’s life. Qi’ra didn’t like what Tara had asked of her, but whatever Tara wanted, Qi’ra gave it to her.

Because if she didn’t, then Tara would go to Laertes and this situation would end so much worse.

“Besides,” Qi’ra set the glass down, “it’s not like these people were innocent.”

“How could you possibly claim that?”

“Come on, Han. These are the same kinds of people who profited during the Empire and turned Corellia into the pathetic wasteland it become. They are only rich because they step on the backs of
Han just shook his head, “It’s truly amazing… How can you honestly sit there and pretend that you did not become the very thing that oppressed us as children? A more fashionable Lady Proxima. What, you think because you don’t let the women of Crimson Dawn be whored out for profit and advantage anymore that it somehow makes you righteous?”

Qi’ra dropped her eyes from his. Han didn’t even have the slightest notion that her daughter was doing that exact thing to his son. Not that Qi’ra necessarily approved of it, but at least it was Tara making the choice. Technically since Tara was not a Chosen, nor had Snoke ever given a directive to Kylo to sleep with her specifically, so if Tara wanted to end things with Ben, she could.

Instead she chose to end her competition.

Like mother, like daughter.

Qi’ra fought to find her objection, “Han, you don’t play the same game as I do. The object isn’t to win. It’s—”

“To stay in it as long as you can,” he finished. “Yeah, I remember. I also remember Beckett telling me the only way to survive in the game was to trust no one. Assume everyone will betray you and you’ll never be disappointed. You and he solidified that in my mind. Took eight years before someone undid that mess.”

“Your precious princess?” Qi’ra’s voice dripped with acid.

Han narrowed his eyes, “Don’t be like that. Don’t you dare! You chose to leave me. I held on for three years, even a little bit longer after you abandoned me. You gave up on us.”

“You don’t understand—”

“You’re right, I don’t understand! I don’t understand how you had the chance to have freedom – we could have gone, we could have disappeared, started a new life together – and you chose to become the master to slaves.”

“Because that’s all there is in this world, Han: masters and slaves.”

“You’re wrong. There’s more to life than that.”

“No, there isn’t.”

“You could be more than a crime boss, Qi’ra. It’s not too late.”

“Too late?” she shot. “I have everything I had ever dreamed of in the slums of Corellia. Wealth, power, a soft bed with clean sheets, beautiful clothing, the ability to do whatever I want, a child—”

“And a loving husband?” Han shot right back.

Her face narrowed, “I didn’t dream of love like you did.”

“Certainly fooled eighteen-year-old Scrumrat Han on that. You know what I dreamed of? My own ship, the freedom to fly wherever I wanted, and a loving woman at my side. Guess I was a fool to think that woman would be you.”

“Well, I’m glad things turned out for you but love… I learned long ago that it was nothing but weakness. Not in others – no, that was a good tool to use against them – but in myself it was. So
now I don’t let it happen. The only thing anyone can turn against me is my child… and I’ll be damned if I let someone do that.”

“Trust me, it’s not a fun place to be,” Han leaned back, heaving a sigh. “You know… sometimes I miss the Qi’ra I knew on Corellia.”

“And I miss the Han I used to know… but we’re not those people anymore and you know it.”

Han scowled, eyes darting down as he remembered when Qi’ra had made it clear. It was en route to Kessel, and Han had been walking to the cockpit after Beckett confronted him about Qi’ra. He stopped when he heard Qi’ra and L3 talking.

“What are you going to do about your little problem?” the droid asked.

“What problem?” Qi’ra said in surprise.

Now the droid indicated out the door and down the hall from the cockpit, and rotated her head to look at Qi’ra. She pointed at Qi’ra’s wrist where she had a brand of the Crimson Dawn.

“That brand says you’re committed, but that human male’s heart palpitations indicate that he is in love with you,” she said, her voice taking on a tone that implied Qi’ra was an idiot.

Qi’ra laughed nervously, “Han is not in love with me.”

Han’s heart fell at the proclamation. Why was she trying to deny it? She loved him, and he loved her. He had fought for three years to rescue her, and now she was embarrassed about him?

The droid and Qi’ra went on with their conversation. Han didn’t interrupt, frankly not knowing what to say about the implication Lando Calrissian might possibly have had sex with his droid. (Han knew well enough to never mention the conversation to Alyla Kene years later.) But then the pair transitioned into a new conversation about Qi’ra’s life after Han left her behind.

“How long until Dryden made you kill someone in front of him?” L3 asked.

Han swore he felt his heart drop. Sure, Qi’ra had done some terrible things on Corellia, but this… it seemed to cross a line.

Qi’ra looked up sharply, “How did you know-”

L3 swiveled her head around again. “Dryden’s right hand, Dryden’s killer slave girl, doesn’t matter what they call you; you’ll do whatever it takes. You’re a survivor. Dryden Vos’s cruelty is no secret; if you were high in his inner circle, he made you kill for him.”

Qi’ra looked the droid directly in the ocular sensor, “When I beat Dryden in the training room, he was so proud of me, he brought me a prisoner to kill. I snapped his neck before he had time to plead for his life.”

Han couldn’t listen to anymore. He pushed himself against the hall and slammed his eyes shut. He tried to block off his other senses, not wanting to hear another word.

Lady Proxima had made good on her threat to throw Qi’ra to the crime syndicate, that she had been sold like stolen goods. He tried to swallow back the guilt that threatened to overwhelm him. This is my fault, he thought.
It took a few minutes for him to calm himself, but he did. He took a deep breath and opened his eyes. There still had to be hope in her, good in her.

How could he give up on someone he loved?

Her heard the footsteps and Qi’ra appeared from the cockpit. Han stepped into her path and didn’t even try to pretend he hadn’t eavesdropped.

“What happened to you after Corellia?” he asked, his voice low and insistent.

She knew she couldn’t flirt her way out of this one. She leaned against the wall and looked at him with a steady gaze. “I won’t tell you all of it. It’s over and done with, and no amount of what if and if only will change that. I had to do what I could to survive. Lady Proxima sold me to a slave dealer – I barely remember his name – who in turn sold me to the Crimson Dawn.”

Han later learned that she remembered the slaver’s name very well. After purchasing her, Dryden Vos had been very amused to allow her to track down Sarkin Enneb and kill him. But that was something she didn’t want Han to know, not that it had stopped him from eventually hearing about it from Lando of all people.

At the time, all he focused on was Dryden Vos.

“Did he– hurt you?” Han looked like the words were hard to get past his lips.

She frowned, “Of course he hurt me, Han. I was – am – a slave, and I did everything I could to get away. But slowly a respect started to grow between us and he saw where I could be useful. So now I’m his lieutenant and help him with strategy, reading a room, and calming him down during negotiations. If you hadn’t noticed, he has a tendency to let his temper get the better of him.”

Han blew out his breath, “No kidding. What’s with him, anyway? What’s that red stuff under his skin?”

“Ah, I call that the Passenger, although I am pretty sure that Dryden is not quite human. He doesn’t reveal that kind of thing to me, and I can tell you he doesn’t take kindly to people who ask. He’s quick to anger, and quick to calm, and I try to make sure that in the interim he doesn’t ruin too many deals or kill too many people.”

“And you’re the only one who can calm him down,” Han said, jealousy coloring his voice.

Qi’ra had had enough of men telling her who she could talk to or be with. “Did you expect me to wait for you forever, Han? I didn’t even have a chance to wait before I was just trying to survive being passed from owner to owner. I do what I can to benefit myself, and right now the greatest benefit to myself is serving Crimson Dawn and working with Dryden Vos. I’m not a droid you left behind, turned off, with nothing happening to it until you came back to turn me back on.”

“I heard that,” L3 warned from the cockpit.

“Sorry,” Qi’ra snapped over her shoulder. She refocused on Han and forced her voice to be calmer. “I wish we could go back to those early days, Han, but too much has happened to both of us. We’re not the same people we were.”
Proxima’s Scrumrats would have recognized.

“I’m sorry, Han,” Qi’ra was truthful. “But I think we both know this was never meant to be.”

“Yeah… I figured it out a while ago. But sometimes I wonder…”

“What?”

“Sometimes I wonder if I was always nothing more than a tool to you. Did you ever really love me, Qi’ra?”

It took her a long time to answer.

“…Not as much as you wanted me to,” she said quietly. “What about you? Did you love me?”

“More than anything in the Galaxy… And then Leia came along.”

“You love her more than you loved me.”

“Yeah.”

“Good… She deserves it.”

Han couldn’t manage much of a smile, “What about Mr. Crimson Dawn?”

“Technically Laertes is Mr. Black Sun… but Crimson Dawn did overtake his syndicate.”

“And you married him to seal the deal.”

“He treats me better than Vos did, if that’s your fear. It’s just you he hates.”

Han leaned back against the bench, “Nah, I know he’s no Vos… but I do wonder if you love him.”

Qi’ra shrugged, “He makes me smile.”

“That’s not what I asked.”

“I know.”

They sat in a not not uncomfortable silence for a while.

“I should get going,” Han finally stood. He knocked back the rest of the drink he had stolen, “Chewie will be waiting, and I’m almost certain some shit’s going to go down between Ben and Poe.”

“Better take care of that then,” Qi’ra said a touch of humour to her voice. “I’ll see you around, Han.”

“God, I hope not.”

Han gave Qi’ra a nod, stole another drink, and started out the room.

“Han?”

He stopped at the doorway.

“Yeah?” Han turned to face her.
There was a small, genuine smile on Qi’ra’s face, “Tell Leia… That I hope she’s well.”

“Alright,” he gave another stiff nod, his face still unsmiling but softening a little. “And you tell Laertes…”

Qi’ra waited for him to continue.

He did not.

“…Yes?” she prompted.

“Tell him that if he ever shows his face near my wife or kid again, I’ll shoot him in the knee,” Han said simply.

And without another word, he turned on his heal and walked away from Qi’ra once again.

He refused to admit that the thought of her still made him smile too.

“There we go,” Dacken said, the little boy finally asleep in his arms. “Out like a light.”

Hena smiled at him gently, her eyes tired but gracious, “I can’t believe you got him down in such a stressful scene as this.”

“I have a lot of cousins, nieces, nephews, and assorted younger family member,” he gently passed her son back into his arms. “You learn a thing or two about getting a kid down for sleep. Worse comes to worse, slip him a little cough syrup and don’t tell his mom.”

Hena frowned.

“Right,” Dacken scratched the back of his neck. “You’re his mom.”

“Remind me never to ask you to babysit.”

“Yes, Ma’am.”

Hena chuckled a little, then looked down at her son. He looked so carefree as his slept, not having to think of the life before him having no legs.

“At least he’s alive,” Dacken said, understanding her thoughts from the look she gave her son.

“Yes, I suppose.” She gently kissed her son’s forehead and began to stroke his hair. “I just don’t know how I handle this. I’ve been through hard things in my life, but I never imagined-”

“The Goddesses like to look at our plans for life and laugh. The more determined you are to live one way, the more likely they’ll do everything in their powers to stop you.”

“They don’t sound like very nice Goddesses.”

“They’re Goddesses. Why should they be nice to those mortals they govern?”

“It’s that mindset that keeps the stars at war.”

“I suppose.” Dacken smiled down at Hena’s son, “He’s a brave little boy. What’s his name?”
“Derryn, but I call him Ryn,” Hena answered. She glanced at Dacken’s arms and hesitated, “How long have you been sober?”

He blinked, “What?”

“You’ve got track marks on your arms, but your pupils are the right size, you don’t shake, your head is clear. It’s been a while since you’ve had spice. I’m sorry if I’m out of line-”

“No, it’s okay. Uh, it’s been about a year.”

She smiled, “Four for me.”

Dacken blinked, “Really? You?”

“For a very long time. My husband and I. Once I got pregnant I went clean, but Pash… he could never give it up. Tried but… failed. I tried to support him, but one day I had enough and put my foot down. We separated, and he promised he would come home once he went straight and stayed that way. A few months later he took too much, had a heart attack and dropped dead in an alley in Coruscant.”

“I’m so sorry,” Dacken was genuine. “It takes a very strong person to overcome that sort of addiction, but I admire you for it. There are some days I struggle not to give in to temptation.”

“Trust me, I understand. I would kill for just one more buzz…” Hena sighed, looking at her son, “but then I look down at Ryn and remember there’s more important things in life.”

“At least you have something to keep you in line. My Dad tries to do the same for me but he’s so busy with the family company that he’s barely around. The only reason I think I haven’t relapsed is that my grandparents have held over my head how much I owe them for saving me.”

“Saving you?”

“My brother got arrested for smuggling a very large amount of spice into Mallarex. He’s in jail for a while longer. He got me into spice to begin with, but once we started getting really addicted, we abandoned our family. Once word got back to my family what happened to Deek, my grandparents paid an exorbitant amount of money to find me – which they did – and they put me immediately into a very expensive rehab. After that I was forced to live with my grandparents and work at their company. They make no secret of the fact that they basically own me at this point.”

Hena frowned and glanced over at Timor – who was pleading with Tara to get Alecta to show mercy once she arrived.

“Do they… do they typically hold that sort of thing over people’s heads?” Hena asked nervously.

“Yep,” Dacken answered simply. “Once you’re in debt to a Connix, you never can escape.”

She swallowed hard, “But… but he offered to pay for Ryn’s medical costs.”

“Then I guess it’s a good thing we’re getting to know each other, because once you make that official… you’re not going anywhere.”

The thought terrified Hena, “No, I… I can’t do that. I can’t live like that. What if I just let the medical aide being offered to everyone in this incident be the way I get Ryn treatment?”

“Then you’re indebted to the First Order, and trust me, that’s worse than being indebted to a
Connix.”

Hena’s breathing became so fast, her face white with panic, that it seemed she was on the edge of hyperventilating, “No, no, no. I can’t. Please, there’s got to be some other option. There’s got to be a way to save Ryn other than your family or the First Order. Please, isn’t there something?”

Dacken’s eyes drifted over Hena’s shoulder, “Maybe there is.”

Kaydel Ko Connix stared at her hand. No matter how many times she blinked, Doxl Ren’s blood wouldn’t disappear from it.

She could hear that death rasp play over and over again in her mind. In one small move she had ended the life of a man. It was easy to pull a trigger and let the killing happen far off, but to slit a man’s throat… Kaydel felt like she was going to throw up.

“First murder?”

She looked up to see Wiln Ren standing next to her.

Kaydel dumbly nodded and gestured for him to sit beside her.

“I remember mine,” he settled on the floor. “I was fifteen. One of the Blessed – our Force Sensitive cadets – tried to start a rebellion against the Knights of Ren and claim the group for herself. She went for a killing blow at Kylo, and I ran her through. Had nightmares for months, but it earned me a spot in the Knights of Ren. Third one to join after Tara and Cern.”

Kaydel said nothing.

Wiln sighed, “You did a good job of it. Clean. Efficient.”

“That’s not comforting,” she murmured, tucking her knees to her chest. She was starting to get very tired of not wearing a shirt. She didn’t like feeling so exposed.

She also really wanted to wash her hands.

“Well,” he patted her knee. “It gets easier with every kill.”

“I don’t want it to get easier,” she seethed.

He just smiled at her, “And yet, it will.”

Kaydel opened her mouth, absolutely ready to rip into him when something cut her off.

“I swear to God, Solo, I will slam your head into the wall again!”

The sound of Poe’s voice made everyone’s heads shoot up. Relief poured over Kaydel when he came strolling into the room a minute later. He was burnt, bloody, tired, and surrounded by First Order soldiers, but by the Goddesses, he was alive.

“God?” Kes Dameron came strolling in after his son. “I didn’t raise you to believe in any Gods. Did that sweet little Connix girl convert you to the Mallarexian ones?”

“Actually Mallarex only has Goddesses,” Kaydel called out. “Maybe he picked up something from
Poe’s head snapped to her, “Kay!”

His eyes were wide and he looked wired with adrenaline, but the amount of relief that fell over him was astounding.

The world narrowed in on Poe. Kaydel saw nothing but him, and she was on her feet, running to him in an instant.

It was something liked out of a cheesy HoloVid for Kaydel; the world slowing down as the pair of lovers raced into each other’s arms. She didn’t care how cheesy it was, her mind needed that moment to slow down, process all that had happened and comprehend that Poe Dameron was really there alive in front of her. He was racing to hold her, to love her, to take her into those warm strong arms and protect her from whatever else this crazy day – or indeed life of theirs – threw at them.

When the collision happened and his arms were around her body, Kaydel collapsed in his embrace. Poe caught her, lifting her slightly as she clutched him and sobbed tears of both joy and sorrow. He held her tight, relishing in the softness of skin he had long ago memorised. Her touch wasn’t exactly as he recalled, some new cuts and bruises, but she was alive and safe in his arms, and he dared the world to take her from him.

“You’re safe,” she sobbed, her arms still locked around his neck as he placed her back down on the ground. “You’re safe. You’re alive.”

“Course I’m alive,” he murmured into her neck. Poe pressed a kiss in the short hairs of said neck, then slowly pulled back. He stroked her cheek, dispelling the tear leaving a wet streak down her face. Poe smiled at her, “Did you really doubt me, Babe?”

A laugh betrayed her, “Maybe a little. I was just so scared you weren’t coming home.”

“Never going to happen, My Love. 108. That’s my promise to you.”

Overcome with emotion, Kaydel grabbed him and pulled Poe down for a truly passionate kiss. One that Poe was happy to deliver and did not give one damn about the fact they had an audience, nor that said audience included both of their fathers.

Not that that audience was very large for a long time. Karé immediately went for her husband, rushing to his side, dropping to her knees and throwing her arms around his neck. Snap clutched his wife like his life would end if he let go of her. Any worry of Karé leaving him for losing his leg was quickly dismissed with a:

“Snap Wexley, we have not been married long enough for you to make me a widow,” Karé scolded when she had pulled back. She glanced down at Evan, who was already at Snap’s legs, taking care of them the best he could. “And if you make one more comment about me leaving you because you lost a leg, I swear I will divorce you.”

Snap paused.

“Okay, I’m… I’m shutting up about it,” Snap sighed.

“Damn right you are,” Karé said. She pulled Snap in for another hug, “How’s he doing, Tharel?”

“I swear of all the stupid medical things I’ve seen on a battlefield,” Evan grumbled, shaking his head. “You understand that Aletha Kymeri is my mentor, and this is still in the top ten stupidest and
weirdest medical treatments I have ever seen? The woman once fixed a broken arm by dislocating it and spreading animal dung on the joints."

Karé frowned, “How is she our second highest ranking doctor?”

“Most of the medical staff are droids.”

“Ah.”

Poe’s threat to Kylo as they entered the room had also caught the attention of Sasa Ren. She was lying on the ground, resting a little, but her eyes never moving from Tara. Sasa knew that Kylo was on his way and that both Kaydel and Wiln were nearby, but she still didn’t trust Tara not to try anything.

Then Poe Dameron yelled, Sasa’s head went up, and Kylo walked into the lobby.

Their eyes locked in a heartbeat, and she felt that familiar Forest Green reach for her Cerise. Setting sight on her, Kylo’s shoulders dropped a little with the exhalation of a breath. Sasa smiled; he was relieved at the sight of her.

Had they lived in another world, Sasa would have shot to her feet and they would have raced into each other’s arms the way Poe and Kaydel did. They would share a passionate kiss in front of their audience, but Sasa knew what world she lived in.

So she simply smiled at him and bowed her head.

Kylo bowed his head back.

“Sasa!”

When Kylo turned his head back to look at the newly arrived FN-2187, Kylo could see FN-2187 recognized his mistake. He quickly muttered an apology, bowed his head, and took a step back.

Kylo may not have exclusively been Sasa’s, but Sasa was exclusively Kylo’s. It was a death wish for FN-2187 to express such joy at seeing her.

Kylo knew FN-2187 was in love with Sasa, that didn’t mean he had to support such feelings. Sasa was his, and no one would take her from him.

“Kylo!” Tara called out.

Speak of the devil.

Kylo had to fight every urge in his body not to grab Tara by the throat as she came up to him. He had sensed the presences of the other Knights of Ren before, that didn’t mean he was prepared to actually see Tara, Wiln, and Cern before him in the aftermath of Tara (and Berd and Doxl and most likely Cern’s) plot to murder Sasa.

And he definitely wasn’t prepared to deal with the fact that Tara thought it would be wise to greet Kylo by throwing her arms around him and hugging him tightly in a grand show of relief.

“Oh, Master,” Tara cooed, very aware of the death glare Sasa had on her. The little bitch wanted to be the one in his arms… which was exactly why Tara made sure she was first. “I was so worried about you. Thank the Force you’re alive and well and safe.”
“Tara,” he stiffly pushed her away, “what are you doing here?”

She wasn’t phased, “Why, Master, I had a horrible vision of this bombing and I just couldn’t stay back and let it happen. So I ordered Cern and Wiln to come with me here and ensure the safety of our fellow Knights of Ren.”

“Safety?” Kylo raised an eyebrow. He nodded to the wounded Sasa, the unconscious Berd, and the dead Doxl, “You call that safety?”

Tara took a minute to observe the scene, “I didn’t say we did a good job.”

When she turned back to look at him, he was glowering at her.

"You know you show me a lot of respect," she scoffed. "I come here to help and save you, and you look at me with disgust."

He wasn't buying it for a moment, "You couldn't have gotten here by now if you had your vision after the bombing. You knew of it ahead of time."

“Yes, I did,” Tara honestly told the truth. They both knew it was said truth, and also that she would never outright say she knew it because she plotted it and that that she had a vision of it.

“Then why didn’t you communicate with me, warning us of the attack?”

“I attempted to, but the signal was bloc-“

She yelped as Kylo suddenly grabbed her by the throat.

“Give me one more lie,” Kylo growled, squeezing gently enough to cut her breath short, but not to full on kill her. “Trick me, deceive me, show me disloyalty. Give me a reason to crush your windpipe and I swear I will do it, Tara.”

Panicking, Tara did the only thing she knew would make him calm again whenever he wanted to rip out her throat. She reached out and touched his cheek, showing him a memory of a time she had been there for him.

---

_Tara replaced her hand on his leg and back to stroke his thigh. The shudder he made was how Tara learned of his sensitivity in that area._

“I’m a little overwhelmed right now,” Tara lied. She followed it up with a truth, “In Snoke’s training, pain is used a tool to discipline softness. Like how punching a tree trunk over and over will make your fist tough and less susceptible to pain. I just don’t know how to deal with this sort of... emotion.”

Kylo relaxed, “It’s alright. My father is quite emotionally stunted. I’ve had a lot of experience in terrible comforting styles. Sure, never hit me, but I dreaded the times my mother would go away for her work and leave me alone with my father."

“I pity that you endured Han Solo as a father.”

“I pity myself.”

“About a great many things, I suspect.”
“Kylo couldn’t help but smile at that, “Insubordination.”

“Keeping your ass in line,” Tara bumped against him playfully.

“And I’m thankful.”

She took her hand from his face and he looked back at her, much calmer, barely holding onto her throat anymore.

“Kylo, please,” Tara’s voice was uncharacteristically soft, her face gentle and innocent. “You think after everything we’ve been through, I would throw it away on something like this? That I would kill two other Knights of Ren because I was jealous of a redhead you’ll tire of in a few months.”

He let go of her throat but said nothing.

Tara took a deep breath and continued in that unnatural for her gentle tone, “I’ve always she that I would never love you. Love is weakness… but that doesn’t mean I don’t care about you. That doesn’t mean you haven’t become something more to me. Please, Kylo… I would never betray you.”

And damn it, he believed her. A part of him screamed at Kylo that Tara was lying. It only made sense that Tara had arranged this, but the thought of her being so dark in her heart to have killed hundreds of innocents and turned two Knights of Ren against him simply because she was jealous of Sasa? …It was ridiculous.

So he fought the part that screamed at him. Maybe it was the logic, maybe it was the history they shared, maybe it was that part of him that had always craved Tara’s love, or maybe it was a straight up manipulation in the Force, but Kylo allowed himself to move on from blaming Tara.

At least… in that moment he thought he would be able to move on. He had no idea that everything they knew about the bombing aftermath was about to be turned upside down.

But all that said and done… Tara wasn’t the one he wanted in his arms right now.

“Eight-Seven,” Kylo ordered. “Go tend to Sasa. See what her injuries are and how she is doing at the moment.”

“Yes, Sir,” FN-2187 nodded and crossed the room.

As FN-2187 walked away, Kylo began to speak to Tara about the First Order reinforcements on the way. But FN-2187 didn’t care, all he could focus on was Sasa and her glorious smile as she saw him coming toward her.

“You’re okay!” Sasa pulled him into a hug when he reached her. She didn’t care who was looking, she outright cried and clutched him tightly. “Thank the Force. I was so worried about you.”

“I was worried about you too,” FN-2187 tried to memorize every little detail of her touch. The softness of her skin, the pressure of her arms pulling him against her, the smell of her hair, the drip of her tears. It was an image to carry him through the lonely nights. “I’m also mildly worried Master Kylo is going to murder me for hugging you.”

Sasa laughed as she pulled back from FN-2187, “Don’t worry, Eight-Seven. Kylo isn’t looking.”

“Right.” FN-2187 paused for a minute, “Huh.”
“What is it?”

“It’s nothing, just…” FN-2187 glanced over at Poe Dameron reuniting with his girlfriend. “You called me Eight-Seven.”

“Oh?”

“Well, I was just thinking… maybe you could call me Finn.”

Sasa smiled, “Alright, whatever you say. I was so worried about you… Finn.”

Finn grinned at her, “I was worried about you too.”

By the time that Kylo and Tara’s threatening conversation was over, Poe and Kaydel had disentangled from their kiss. They just stood there holding each other, their foreheads bowed together, and Poe’s hands lazily rubbing up and down her back.

Then Poe’s hand hit the clasp of her bra and he very suddenly took in the fact that, yes, Kaydel had indeed been parading around in nothing but a bra.

“Ah damn it,” Poe pulled back from her and immediately started to strip off his shirt. “Here. Put this on.”

“But Poe,” she protested as he shoved his bloody and burnt shirt into her hands, “what about you?”

“I’ll be fine. Besides,” he winked at her, “gives you a chance to admire the goods.”

Kaydel shook her head, “You are impossible.”

“Sorry, Kaydel,” Kes approached them, digging through the bag of medical supplies and ammunition he had been hauling around. “Clearly I went wrong somewhere in the raising of my son.”

“Probably naming him peacock was a mistake,” she grinned.

“You’re probably right,” Kes winked, looking identical to his son. “But here, I’ve got something for you, Poe.”

Kes pulled out the blackish Runyip leather jacket that had once belonged to him, and Poe had – once again – forgotten home on Yavin IV.

“Put this on,” he shoved the jacket at Poe. “We are civilized beings that wear clothes in all respectable circumstances, and I did not give you my old war jacket for your coming of age just so you can keep leaving it at home. Put it on and don’t give me any lip about it.”

“Yes, Sir,” Poe chuckled, pulling it on. “But may I ask one thing?”

“What’s that?”

“You were too drunk to call the Resistance for help, but not drunk enough to bring me a spare set of clothing?”

Kes blinked, “…No. You may not ask me that.”
Kaydel laughed and reached out for Kes, “Come here.”

Kes gladly pulled her into a hug, relieved at her safety almost as much as Poe’s, “Ah, Kaydel… you are a lot more durable than I give you credit.”

“It’s alright. I lucked out by standing next to three Force Sensitives. It was mostly dumb luck.” She sighed, holding him tight, “Oh, I’ve needed this. My family has been driving me insane all week.”

“So I’ve heard.” Kes caught the eyes of a man who looked not unlike Kaydel, over her shoulder. “Your family been treating you well?”

“The First Order has been friendlier.”

“Don’t worry, Babe,” Poe’s eyes locked on Dacken, who was approaching the group when Hena, who carried the still sleeping Ryn. “I won’t let him come a step closer.”

Seeing the danger and aggression in Poe’s eyes, Dacken stopped dead in his tracks. Innocently he held up his hands in surrender.


“Wait, wait,” Dacken backed up, glancing briefly at Hena, who had the sense to step away from the scene. “Let me just explain.”

“Explain what?” he growled. “I know what you did to her.”

Kaydel realized what was going through Poe’s head and instantly tore away from Kes, “Wait, Poe, no!”

It was too late. Poe smashed his fist across Dacken’s face.

The man cried out and clutched at his face. Blood poured freely from his probably broken nose, and he stumbled back as Poe reared his arm back for another punch.

“No, Poe!” Kaydel yelled out again.

Poe swung forward, but Kes grabbed his elbow and yanked him back. He struggled, confused by the intersession, but was even more surprised when Kaydel darted in front of Dacken, holding out her arms to shield him from Poe.

“That’s enough,” she demanded.

“But Babe,” Poe started, “he-”

"I know what he did! You don't have to tell me!"

Poe blinked, unable to find any words in response. He lowered his arm, Kes releasing it when Poe dropped his fighting stance.

Kaydel took a deep breath, “Poe, I love that you would protect me from anything, especially those who would hurt me. But this is my decision to make.”

“Kay,” he leaned in close. “He set your hair on fire.”

“I don’t care, at least not right now. I don’t need you to be my attack dog. Please Poe, if you really love me you would respect my decision on this matter.”
He glowered at her a little, “I hate it when you play the love card.”

“So?” Kaydel asked his choice.

Poe heaved a heavy sigh and pulled her into his arms.

“Alright, fine,” he kissed the top of her head. “But you’ve got a lot of explaining to do, Lieutenant.”

“Yes, Commander,” Kaydel smirked. She pressed herself against him suggestively, “I’ll make sure to give you a thorough briefing tonight.”

Poe pressed her tight against him and bowed his head to kiss her passionately.

“Guys?” Kes piped up. “I’m right here.”

Poe groaned and pulled his head back.

“Kaydel Ko Connix, you let go of that man right now,” Timor Connix suddenly called.

Kaydel dropped her face against Poe chest and moaned at having to deal with this.

“Uh? Who is that?” Kes frowned as Timor strode up to the trio.

“Kes Dameron,” Kaydel sounded like it pained her to make the introduction, “meet my father, Timor Connix.”

When Timor reached Kaydel, her grabbed her wrist and yanked her back from Poe, “Ko, you will come here right now.”

“Hey!” Poe’s reflexes were faster, and he grabbed Kaydel’s other arm and pulled her back to him. “Don’t you handle her like that!”

“That’s enough! Both of you let her go,” Kes stepped between the men and forced her hands off Kaydel. “This isn’t a game of tug of war. Are you alright, Dear?”

“I’m okay,” Kaydel shot a nervous glance back at her father as she pressed herself against Kes. She had had more than enough of Timor, and she’d been damned if she let him take her away from the Damerons.

But Poe was ready to go right back on the attack – probably some of it left over from the denial of hurting Dacken further. He stepped right up into Timor’s personal space and got in his face.

“Where do you get off treating her like that?” Poe snapped.

Timor’s face looked aggressive, but his body language was meek, “She’s my daughter. You stay out of it, this has nothing to do with you.”

“Oh, it has everything to do with me. I have had to hold my tongue around you for far too long. You’re despicable and spineless. How dare you call her your daughter after the way you’ve treated her?”

“Poe…” Kaydel nervously reached for him, but she was pulled back by Kes.

“Careful, it might get dicey,” Kes warned.

“Can I back away like really quickly?” Dacken, who had been watching the scene from the
sidelines, came up and muttered to Kaydel.

“Go for it,” she whispered.

Dacken scampered away as fast as possible.

“Poe,” Kes tried to calm his son, “come on, take a deep breath and walk away.”

“Oh, he’d like that,” Poe gritted his teeth. “You want me to back away so you can pretend you won. Make me just another one of the crazy stories you tell business partners while trying to sell off your daughters to them.”

“I have no idea what you’re talking about,” Timor denied.

“Oh please, don’t pretend you haven’t spent this entire trip trying to convince Kane Nilar to divorce or cheat on his wife with your daughter Kaydel, without consulting her. How many other men have you offered her to?”

“Ko is my daughter to do with as I please.”

Poe looked like he was about to murder Timor, “She is not your property.”

“Oh, is she yours then?” Timor snapped. “Forgive me if I want good prospects for my child. She should act like a proper Mallarexian woman, marry a mild mannered, compliant, pale skinned, blonde haired, blue eyed man.”

“Excuse me?” Poe said.

“The Goddesses are described like that,” Kaydel groaned; great now her father was being racist. “Having different coloured eyes aren’t so bad, but the rest of it is the ideal husband on Mallarex. Meek, non-rebellious, and pale.”

Kes Dameron finally understood why Aletha Kymeri had picked Antar Kymeri and Diego Nalto. Her Jakku ex-boyfriend probably looked like FN-2187.

“So you can imagine my disappointment at my daughter openly coupling was a foul-mouthed, violent, coloured xeno,” Timor spat the Mallarexian slur for foreigner. “And to make it worse… a Yavinese xeno. You Yavinese… everyone knows what an embarrassment you are. You’re lazy, lecherous, violent criminals. You know you have pretty light skin. How many times have you pretended to be to be Mallarexian or Corellian just to avoid the embarrassment that comes with being from those backwater moons?”

Poe grabbed Timor’s shirt and yanked him off the ground, “You listen here-”

“No!” Kaydel cried. “Don’t!”

“Poe, stop,” Kes ordered.

“Dad, you heard what he said,” Poe shot back. “I can’t just stand here and take this.”

“Poe, let him down right now,” Kes demanded.

“But Dad-”

“Let him down!” Kes snapped.
Poe looked between Kaydel and Kes. Kaydel gave him a small nod; her father wasn’t worth all this. When he looked at Timor’s terrified face, Poe knew she was right.

Slowly, Poe set Timor back on the ground.

“Good,” Kes said. “Remember, he only said those things to pretend he was better than you, but he’s not. Good men don’t have to put down others to feel tall. You’re a better man than him, Poe. *Act like it.* Be a man. Step away and be better than him.”

“But Dad, what he said about us—”

“It doesn’t make it true. You and I know what we’re like, and what Yavinese men are truly like. Getting angry is justified but reacting with violence only gives his words power. Step away.”

Poe took a deep breath and looked at Kaydel.

She nodded.

Alright,” Poe held up his hands and stepped back. Without even looking at her, Poe wrapped his arm around Kaydel’s waist and pulled her against him protectively.

Kes nodded and calmly said, “Good.”

He immediately spun around and decked Timor across the face, sending him to the ground.

“Spout all the Yavinese stereotypes you want,” Kes told the reeling Timor who was struggling to get back on his feet. “Call me lazy, aggressive, say we steal jobs we don’t deserve, I don’t care. At least I don’t throw my daughter out like garbage.”

Poe knew Timor had really pissed off his father when Kes pulled out from under his clothes Shara’s wedding ring, hanging from the chain always around Kes’ neck.

“The way you treat your family disgusts me,” Kes spat. “The ones you love should always be treasured and respected because you never know when the Force will take them from you. Even more so they should be treasured and respected because *that* is what it means to love someone. If you didn’t want Kaydel, then you never should have had her. But you made that choice to bring her into this world, and you don’t get to take it back because she didn’t end up how you wanted. You think I like the exact way my son turned out? Hell no, but I still love, respect, and support him, no matter what bad decisions he makes.”

“You have no right to judge me,” Timor wobbled to his feet. “If you even understood the danger her rebellion brings to this family—”

“Then good news; she’s not your problem anymore. You don’t want her? Fine, I’ll take her.”

Timor shook his head, “It’s not that simple.”

“Sure, it is,” Kes said plainly. “Don’t you worry another second about Kaydel; she won’t ever embarrass or endanger you again… because if you come within ten feet of her ever again, I’ll break your god damn neck.”

Timor stared at Kes in horror.

“Huh,” Kes laughed, looking slightly deranged. “Guess Yavinese men *are* quick to violence.”

“You’re- You’re bluffing.”
“Am I? I’m a Rebel Veteran. I’ve killed men; heck, I’ve killed men today. You think I’d hesitate to kill another one?”

Timor just swallowed.

“Thought so.”

With that, Kes Dameron turned and walked away without another thought for Timor Connix.

“Wow,” Kaydel stared after Kes with Poe, both looking equally gobsmacked. Kes had preened to be a fighter before, this was the first time he had outright threatened to hurt someone and mean it in front of Poe and Kaydel. She glanced at Poe, “So, that’s where you get it from.”

Poe scowled, recognizing the look on Kaydel’s face, “Are you turned on right now by my dad?”

“Little bit,” she admitted.

He shuddered.

“They should be arriving any minute now,” Tara said. She, Kylo, Cern, and Wiln had been discussing the impending First Order troops. “I figured Alecta Anthea should lead the charge considering the connection to Connix Industries.”

“The Force have mercy on their souls,” Kylo shook his head. “Now if we’re going to spin this into good propaganda, we’re going to need a scapegoat.”

[Ben?] Waroo growled.

“Cern, can you get a hold of a member of Crimson Dawn? But not their leader, I’m not starting an all-out war with the crime syndicates.”

“I think I could catch one,” Cern chuckled. He would have way too much find picking off one of them.

[Ben?] Waroo growled.

“Now how long until the New Republic will get here?” Kylo asked. “We want to be already set up by the time their first team even arrives. Already giving aid and cleaning up this mess.”

[Ben?] Waroo growled.

“We’ve got about an hour,” Wiln reported. “Master Tara, you work best with Captain Anthea. Maybe you should run coordination with her.”

“I agree,” Tara accepted. “I’ll oversee this. Now what of the Resistance soldiers? We’re not just going to let them go.”

Kylo shook his head, “We can’t hurt them, Tara. I did make and agreement and to go back on my word is not the-”

[Ben!] Waroo roared.

Kylo whipped around, “What?”
Waroo grabbed Kylo by the shoulder and spun him to look over at Sasa. FN-2187 was still tending to her, but Evan Tharel had still been to occupied with Snap to pay Sasa a visit.

“What about Sasa?” Kylo asked, completely confused, and desperately hoping no one spoke Shyriiwook and could understand Waroo was calling him Ben.

Then Waroo and Kylo started into a very loud and hard to understand argument. From the one side that everyone around could understand – Kylo being the only one who could fully understand Shyriiwook, but Poe and Kes knew a bit – the argument appeared to be that Waroo was shaming Kylo was not taking care of his mate. Of course, Kylo was arguing that basically shut up, she’s not my girlfriend, and you’re embarrassing me in front of my new friends.

But more eloquent.

“Fine!” Kylo threw up his hands in the air. He called out, “Tharel!”

“Yeah?” Evan glanced over, not really paying attention to the Knights of Ren.

“Have you finished with that leg yet?” Kylo chided. “My Knight has been waiting for you in agony.”

Evan sighed, “Just, please, give me five more minutes, but I promise she’s next on the list.”

“May I suggest something?” Kaydel hesitantly interjected. She knew she and Sasa agreed not to continue being friendly once they were reunited with their people, but she had come too far with tending to Sasa’s injuries to give up now. “Maybe Sasa should be moved to a private area? We still have that sheet set up in the corner.”

Kylo sighed, “Alright, Eight-Seven, would you bring-”

Waroo smacked him upside the head.

“OW! Fuck! WAROO!” Kylo roared. Getting smacked upside the head by a Wookiee was like getting a speeder slammed into it. The fuzzy jerk didn’t know his own strength.

…Or maybe he did, and that was the point.

Still. Damn, that hurt.

“What, Waroo?” Kylo growled. “What do you want from me now?”

And then Waroo said something to Kylo. No one quite understood what it was, but it was long, it was gentle and kind, earnest, something only lifelong friends could tell each other. And it was about Sasa. The speech was about five minutes in length, and through it, Kylo got calmer and kinder, shooting guilty, longing looks over at Sasa.

At the end of that five minute speech, whatever it was that Waroo told Kylo, it worked.

Kylo sighed, “Wiln?”

“Yes, Sir?” he replied.


“And what about you, Kylo?” Tara asked.
Kylo’s eyes locked across the room on Sasa, “I’ll see to the recovery of our injured troops.”

Without another word, Kylo pushed past Tara and crossed the room to Sasa’s side.

“Are you alright?” he dropped to his knees beside her.

Finn awkwardly got to his feet and went to stand by Wiln, though considering first standing by Poe.

She smiled at Kylo, “I’m fine. Now that you’re here, I’m perfectly fine.”

Sasa reached out and touched his cheek. Not caring of the repercussions, Kylo relaxed and leaned against her hand.

“I thought you were dead,” he whispered.

She stroked his cheek, “Nah. I’m not done with you yet. I promise.”

Kylo smiled.

Sasa yelped as he suddenly picked her up. She barely had enough time to lock her arms around his neck, less she wanted to end up on the ground face first.

Holding her bridal style, Kylo turned to look at Kaydel like the scene was nothing, “Where is that curtained off area?”

Kaydel couldn’t hold back her smile, and pointed in the right direction.

Kylo carried off Sasa without another word.

“So, uh… what was that about?” Kes frowned.

“Oh, that’s Ben Solo’s girlfriend,” Poe said. “Not that he’ll outright admit it.”

“Wow… I did not expect him to get a girlfriend who looks like her.”

“Yeah, she’s way too hot for him.”

“That’s not what I meant.”

Poe frowned, “Then what do you mean?”

“A Skywalker dating someone who isn’t brunette?” Kes asked. “What interdimensional portal have I fallen into?”

Meanwhile FN-2187 was reporting to Wiln, “Since the situation is contained here, should I join Marks to greet the First Order troops arriving.”

“No, I want you here in case Master Sasa needs a bodyguard,” Wiln replied. “Just linger and do what you can to help until I call for you.”

“Yes, Sir,” FN-2187 saluted and started to walk away.

Tara grabbed FN-2187’s sleeve as he passed her, “Who is that?”
“Who?”

“The creature,” Tara pointed to Waroo, who was talking with Dacken and Hena of all people.


“Of Chewbacca?”

“I guess he and Master Kylo are childhood friends or something. Still on pretty good terms, apparently.”

Tara released FN-2187, and he didn’t stay a second longer.

“Interesting,” she said to herself, watching Waroo. “Very interesting.”

Sasa didn’t say a word as Kylo carried her off behind the curtain. He didn’t address her, heck, he didn’t even look at her. Frankly, she was very confused by the events of the day. First he hadn’t come see her when they reunited, then he strangled Tara but she started getting all touch feely with Kylo and everything seemed forgiven, and then Kylo listened to a Wookiee for the guidance to come deal with Sasa privately.

Did… did Kylo not care about her any more? Had this event shown him that she was weak and he didn’t want her any more?

Then the second he set her down, he was on top of her and his lips were desperately on hers, and any doubt Sasa had was gone.

“I was so worried about you,” Kylo’s sentences came between overpowering kisses. “I thought you were dead… I thought she had taken you from me… I am going to kill when we get back to the First Order… Nice and publicly too… Show all others who plot against you what happens if they try to touch you… And I swear if Doxl wasn’t already dead, I’d kill him myself.”

“Well, you have Kaydel Ko Connix to thank for that one,” Sasa moaned as his hands caressed her body. One hand started to drift up her leg and she stopped it, “No, no, no. Not here.”

“Yes, here,” Kylo’s lips moved down her neck towards her breasts. “I can’t punish Tara yet for this, not at least violently, but I can piss her off. Just think of it, fucking you in the midst of the destruction she made would be perfect.”

Her mood changing in a heartbeat, Sasa roughly pushed him off her.

“What the-” Kylo tried to gather himself, staring at her in confusion. “What was that for?”

She glared at him, “There is a time and place for that sort of thing. Fucking me when I’m bleeding, stabbed, poisoned, and on my period for the sole purpose of pissing off Tara is not the place.”

“But… But you’ve never turned down having sex to piss off Tara before.”

Sasa rolled her eyes, “Let me make this clear, I am happy to have sex with you and piss off Tara, but only when we do it because you also want to have sex with me. Not only to piss off Tara. You want to pull that crap, you go find one of your threesome girls or take up another another Chosen.”

Kylo swallowed. Did she know?
Sasa’s argument was cut short when she gave her loudest shriek yet and grabbed at her pelvis.

“What? What is it?” he caught her. Without a thought he pulled her into his arms. “What’s wrong, Sasa? Is it the poison?”

“No,” she groaned. “It’s these period cramps. Apparently when stress delays your period for two months straight and you finally get going, your system has twice as much to clear out, and the cramps are more intense.”

“Are you… are you crying?”

God this one cramp… it felt like her body was trying to push out her entire uterus.

Sasa grunted, trying to wade out the pain, “Seriously if it wasn’t for getting those pregnancy tests every month, there is no way I could track when I should or should not be getting my period. It may be a bitch to hear a negative every single month, but at least I have consistency.”

“I… can’t offer you anything but a mild nod of the head,” Kylo admitted. “I have no supplies to help you with this and no experience to relate to. How can I help you?”

“Just hold me and try not to say anything stupid and insensitive,” Sasa moaned. It was starting to subside.

“Alright, I’ll try, but I make no promises at succeeding.”

“I know. It’s you. I lowered my expectations two years ago.”

“Good,” he smiled. “…Wait! Hey!”

At least it felt good to laugh.

By the time the last twinges of the giant cramp had faded away, Evan Tharel finally ducked under the sheet.

“Sorry about the wait,” he said as he pulled out a fresh pair of gloves from his medical bag. “It would have been shorter if someone here didn’t decide to play DIY Doctor.”

“Hey, you know what? It worked,” Sasa threw up her hands.

“Just don’t do it again,” Evan shook his head and knelt down beside her. “Alright, Snap briefed me a little on your injuries: stabbed, poisoned, all that nice stuff. They also told me about the bacta, so you should be on the road to recovery already. I guess we should focus on the most pressing matters, so what hurts the most?”

“Honestly?” Sasa laughed. “I’m having my period and the cramps are really bad.”

“Oh, I got something in my bag for that,” he started digging through said bag. “When was the last time you had your period?”

“Do you think that’s an appropriate question to ask?” Kylo cut in.

Sasa swatted his arm, “Don’t piss off the guy who’s going to give me painkillers. I swear, I will Force Bond our minds to make you feel this pain.”

“Remark withdrawn.”
It’s been about ten weeks since I had a period,” Sasa answered. She caught Evan’s look, “My cycle is off due to stress. I’ve had three negative monthly pregnancy tests since, so my system is backed up about two months. Hence the major pain of period cramps and the – as I’ve seen on my clothing – larger blood clots.”

Evan gave her an odd look, “Forgive me, but backed up?”

“Sorry, is there a different medical term for it.”

“No, because, with all due respect, that’s not a thing. You don’t get backed up on your periods; you have it or not. Did you say your blood clots were larger than normal?”

“Uh huh. There was even one I just physically felt I past.” Sasa didn’t like the expression on Evan’s face, “What’s wrong?”

“Maybe nothing, but…” Evan hesitated. “I’m not a gynecologist, but do you mind if I took a look at you? Made sure that everything was alright?”

Sasa felt Kylo’s fingers involuntarily tighten on her skin. Her entire life, only medical droids had done her gynecological examinations – in particular Kylo’s personal droid, Max after their introduction – and the fact was Kylo was the only person who had ever seen her bottomless. Frankly, she didn’t want anyone else to see.

Seeing his error, Evan quickly corrected, “You don’t have to take your underwear off. Look, how about I turn around and you put any… uterine discharge from your underwear on the skirt of your dress. Then you return your underwear on, and I can examine it without you having to be exposed. It’s only the discharge I want to see.”

“But my dress!” Sasa loved it so dearly.

“Sasa,” Kylo murmured encouragingly, “the dress is destroyed already. Burnt, stabbed, torn, cut up, stabbed with bacta and blood. We’re going to have to get rid of it once you’re out of it.”

She sighed and admitted Kylo was right.

Evan held up his end of the bargain, looking away as Sasa pulled down her panties and wiped the bloody mess onto her dress. She pulled them back on and told him she was ready.

Sasa couldn’t meet Evan’s eyes as he got between her leg and knelt down, but Kylo’s eyes wouldn’t move from Evan, watching him like a hawk for any mischief. Evan laughed anxiously, unnerved by Kylo, his eyes slowly moving down to look at the bloody mess on Sasa’s dress.

And he went silent… very silent.

“What is it?” Kylo demanded. He didn’t like the way the silence unsettled Sasa, her breathing increasingly rapidly with worry.

Evan looked up at them, mouth open but unspeaking, loss in both his word and his eyes. His throat was dry and his brain a scrambled mess. It was a standard medical condition, one he had seen in a dozen textbooks… but facing it in real life was another story.

How could he tell them?

“Ten weeks you said?” Evan’s voice was so week. “Yeah… I’d say that’s about right.”
Kylo and Sasa exchanged a look.

“What is going on?” Sasa begged. “Please tell me.”

Meeting her eyes, his own looked so scared and sad. Absolute dread hung over him like a cloud, but he was a medical professional, and he would tell his patient about their condition… no matter how horrible it was.

Evan cleared his throat, “Master Sasa, I’m afraid your hypothesis is wrong. You aren’t backed up and having two periods at once. The fact is, these aren’t blood clots… these are pieces of genetic material.”

The silence was heavy. Evan’s words didn’t make any sense to the couple. What could he possibly mean by genetic material?

Unless he meant…

“Master Sasa, I’m sorry to tell you this, but you’re not having a period… you’re having a miscarriage.”

Chapter End Notes

Coming Up Next Chapter…

You Know What’s Coming Up Next Chapter

Blaming Sasa’s miscarriage on the negligence of Kes and Timor and unable to make Tara pay, Kylo betrays the Resistance by taking Poe and Kaydel hostage. But he shows himself to be even crueler when Kylo forces Kaydel to decide between her life and Poe’s.

Credit for the flashback of Qi’ra and Han to Mur Lafferty from Solo: A Star Wars Story: Expanded Edition.

Credit to Poe asking out Kaydel to the movie Life Itself which has Oscar Isaac actually giving that speech.

Credit to Kare’s I’m divorcing you line to Charles Soule from Poe Dameron #27 for a similar line.

Credit to fictionfreak101 aka me for the Sasa and Tara flashbacks because I was too damn lazy to write new ones.
Kaydel's Decision

Chapter Summary

Cern breaks into Kylo's room, Evan tries to get it in Kylo and Sasa's heads this miscarriage is actually happening, and Poe meets BB-8's evil twin.

Chapter Notes

Fun Fact I didn’t realize until I had to check the timeline for this story: it’s actually been seventeen months since chapter 49 (Before the Awakening) began. Luke must seriously be going insane over his lack of answers for Ghost Alyla.

So, I reread the last chapter and noticed a typo. I don’t write the scenes of my chapters in order, and originally I was going to have Marks stay with Kylo and Poe’s group. When I changed my mind, I took out all references to Marks being in the lobby, except apparently for this line:

When Kylo turned his head back to look at the newly arrived FN-2187, with Marks trailing behind him,

I have since edited out the line, but in case anyone is confused: no, Marks is not in the lobby. He’s off meeting with Captain Alecta Anthea, and the next time he appears is later in this chapter.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The Long Way Home

Chapter Fifty-Six

Kaydel’s Decision

FN-2187 was tired. Not tired like sleepy tired, but rather than tired of physical exhaustion. His body was begging for rest, and he struggled to stay upright on his feet.

Someone who didn’t know him would think it was from the events of the bombing, but this was not a tiredness he was unfamiliar with. The First Order did its best to make sure that he didn’t experience it a lot, but sometimes things slipped through the cracks.

Taking a deep breath, FN-2187 stretched out a hand and braced himself against the wall. He slumped gently forward, resting his weight against the ash-covered paintjob. FN-2187 tried to make his tiredness and downpour of sweat from his brow discrete, but a strange hand grabbed his shoulder.
“Hey, Buddy,” Poe used his grip to help Finn stand upright better. “Are you alright?”

“Yeah,” Finn tried to gather his strength, “just a little… off.”

“Eight-Seventy?” another voice came.

Poe glared at Wiln Ren as he came up to them without invitation. Wiln had worry on his face but he didn’t trust any Knight of Ren. Before Poe could object, Wiln started looking over FN-2187 the way he had Sasa’s injuries. While Wiln was technically only the supervisor of the Chosen, he did also keep an eye on the Blessed – which FN-2187 had become an unofficial member of upon his entrance into the Expert Lightsaber Class.

Wiln’s eyes narrowed in on the sweat of FN-2187’s forehead, “Did you take your medicine?”

“Medicine?” Poe frowned.

“No,” Finn grunted as Wiln guided him to sit down. Poe helped Finn down, still looking confused, but Finn took comfort in the way Poe patted his shoulder when he reached the floor. “I broke my backups in the bombing.”

“Figured.” Wiln used the Force to summon one of the bags of supplies he had brought in with Tara and Cern to the lobby. It had been the first wave of supplies for the victims of the bombing to look like they totally weren’t responsible. “I brought Master Kylo’s emergency kit with me. I know he keeps a few vials with him in case he decides to parade you around.”

Poe’s eyes narrowed as Wiln held out a vial of strange blue liquid to Finn. A thousand thoughts ran through Poe’s mind as he glared at “medicine.” What was it? A sort of poison? Were they drugging him? Did it have brainwashing powers to keep Finn in line?

“Drink,” Wiln ordered.

“Hey!” Poe swung his hand to knock away the vial.

Wiln’s closed upon his wrist before Poe could do so. The vial of blue medicine hung in the air, held by the Force. Fury flashed in Wiln’s eyes. His hand had a grip so tight it felt like he wanted to crush Poe’s wrist into dust. Quick and controlled, Wiln shot to his feet, twisted Poe’s wrist in the opposite direction it was supposed to bend, and slammed him against the wall.


Finn snatch it and chugged.

“Now…” Wiln turned his head back to Poe, “what the hell is your problem?”

But Poe didn’t cower, the attack filled him with confidence and righteousness… also he could see his Dad and Kaydel making a beeline for Wiln, so he knew he’d be fine.

“Is that how the First Order keeps their soldiers in line?” Poe laughed. “You have to drug them?”

“Oh please,” Wiln scoffed and let Poe go. There was no point in pressing a further attack. “I was helping him.”

“Helping him?” Poe echoed.

“What’s going on here?” Kes demanded, arriving with Kaydel.
“Poe!” she threw her arms around him, trying to protect her boyfriend from the man who had tried to be her life coach for murdering people.

“I’m fine, Babe. Just stopping some injustice.”

Wiln rolled his eyes.

“Poe, I don’t understand,” Kes’ eyes did not move from Wiln. “Why did he attack you?”

“Because he tried to attack me,” Wiln said.

“Poe?” Kes said in that fatherly way he would command when he discovered Poe had left a chore unfinished.

“This Stormtrooper,” Poe nodded to Finn, “is FN-2187.”

Kes’ eyebrows reached his hairline, “Excuse me?”

“Yeah, meet FN-2187,” Poe said. “You were on that mission, right, Dad?”

Finn frowned, “Uh… what mission?”

“You be quiet,” Wiln ordered, “and don’t ask that question again.”

Finn held up his hands in surrender.

“What?” Poe scoffed. “You didn’t tell him?”

Wiln shot back, “Do you think I wouldn’t hit you because your dad is standing there?”

“Well… after all these years, here he is,” Kes stared at FN-2187 in disbelief. He did remember that mission, when he, Luke, Felicity, and a few others tried to save a dozen children, but left one behind.

Kaydel, not quite recalling the story at that second just frowned, “Okay, but Poe, why did Wiln have you pinned against the wall?”

“He tried to destroy the medicine I was administering to FN-2187,” Wiln answered.

Poe shot, “Oh please, you were drugging him, probably to brainwash him.”

Wiln rolled his eyes, “Listen to me, you arrogant, idiotic, flyboy. FN-2187 suffers from a blood disorder. That vial is his medicine that he is required to take every eight hours or else very bad things happen.”

“Or that could just be a cover story while you slowly kill him.”

“Trust me, it is far more beneficial to keep him alive and flaunt him to you and the Resistance and Eswolla, than to let him die.”

FN-2187 frowned, “Wait. Am I special or something?”

“That may be,” Poe ignored him, “but that doesn’t mean you’re not going to kill him.”

Wiln raised an eyebrow, “Dameron, if we wanted him dead, he would already be.”

FN-2187 glanced at Kaydel, “Uh… Do you know what’s going on?”
Kaydel shrugged, “I assume more Kylo Ren drama.”

“Oh,” he replied, both knowing that didn’t explain a thing at all, but it was enough to make neither want to learn more.

“Dad, back me up on this,” Poe turned to Kes. “It’s suspicious to be giving him that stuff all of a sudden. I didn’t see him with any vial of strange blue liquid before.”

“That’s because the First Order medics are in charge of giving it to me,” Finn explained. “They make sure no one sees. Most of the other Stormtroopers don’t know about this. They administer my medication in a clockwork routine: three times a day, an officer with no embellishments on their uniform takes me aside, gives me my medicine, I drink it, and then I return to my cohorts a minute later.”

“But what if there’s no officers around?” Poe asked. “What if you’re in battle?”

“In case of emergency, I have a stash in the pants pockets of my uniform. Usually if a dose is missed, I would just take one of those. Unfortunately, when I woke up after the bombing, I found the way I landed had shattered my emergency vials. I was hoping to stick it out without anyone noticing before I got my dose, but that didn’t work out.”

“I don’t know,” Poe exchanged a look with Kes. “I’m not buying this.”

“Look, it’s a documented disorder,” Wiln said.

“And what is that disorder?” Kes asked.

“It’s called Cerlean Disease. His midichlorians attack and kill his white blood cells. You’ve got the Jedi doctor in the Resistance; just ask her about it.”

“Any way we could allow her to verify your claim?”

Wiln crossed his arms, “Verify as in-”

“A sample of your medicine and a sample of his blood,” Kes said.

“Say what now?” Finn blurted out.

Kes stood a little taller, “How about we make a deal… Wiln is it? The medicine for this kind of disease is expensive and most likely hard to get for a private individual. You must go through a lot of buyers and middlemen to get it. The only people who can legally access medicine to deal with midichlorians related diseases are technically doctors registered with the Jedi Order.”

“Oh yes, that arcane law the New Republic brought back after the Empire repelled it,” Wiln shot. “Just another way Luke Skywalker and his lot controlled the way people used the Force.”

“Actually, when your little Knights decided to burn Rornian, Luke was literally in the middle of a month-long Senate meeting determining the extent of Jedi authority as a governmental agent, particularly in the field of medicine. He was arguing that the Jedi Order should not be the only people with access to medicine to deal with those diseases. The Order had already given out over 200 certifications to distribute licenses to doctors throughout the Galaxy. Kalonia – the last remaining member of the Order – has continued to give out those licenses, but 600 of them. Hell, I think Evan even has one. Luke didn’t want it to be exclusive and fought for your right to administer it to FN-2187.”
“Finn,” Poe muttered the correction.

Kes ignored his son, “But then, you know, you Knights of Ren brutally murdered Luke’s wife and toddler daughter, so he pretty much dropped all the projects he was working on.”

“What’s your point, Dameron?” Wiln rolled his eyes.

“You give me a sample of his blood and his medication, we verify it, and then the Resistance will make arrangements to grant you legal access to the medication,” Kes offered. “It’ll save you guys a lot of money, which you can them use to take or more mob hits on your own soldiers or build another Death Star or whatever you people are currently working on.”

Wiln couldn’t help but smirk at the thought of the under construction Starkiller Base. Leia Organa would love that when she learned of it.

“All I want is a sample of his blood,” Kes finished his spiel.

“Excuse me,” Finn spoke up. “Do I get a say in whether or not people are going to take a blood sample from me?”

“Come on, Buddy,” Poe patted his shoulder. “It’ll be good for you to have a consistent supply of medicine if you really are sick. And if you’re not—”

“He is,” Wiln snapped. “Clever idea, Dameron Senior—”

Wiln wouldn’t admit he had forgotten Kes’ name.

“I’m not letting you have his blood,” Wiln said. “I know exactly what you’ll do with it.”

“But isn’t that the point?” Kes countered. “To have him? To flaunt him? You said it yourself: it is far more beneficial to keep him alive. Why don’t you make it easier on yourself to do so?”

Wiln said nothing, but he crossed his arms and considered the offer. It took a very long time to get an answer, and Poe was fairly certain Wiln was mulling over more factors than Kes and the Resistance were privy to.

“Alright,” Wiln decided. “We’ll do it, but I want that legal establishment. I will touch base with you personally to ensure it.”

Something very dark filled Kes’ eyes, “Of course… If I recall correctly, you know where I live.”

Poe’s eyes slammed shut as the image of his mother pushing him into their house filled his mind.

______________________________________________

*Kes, keep him inside. I’ll take care of this. It’s going to be okay, Poe. Everything’s going to be alright.*

______________________________________________

Poe had never told Kes that bundled in a pile of blankets on their living room couch, Poe had heard the shot that killed his mother.

“We have a deal then,” Wiln said. “I’ll go find supplies for that blood sample.”
“Dad?” Poe asked as Wiln walked away, “why is it that you want Finn’s blood?”

“I too would like an answer,” Finn piped up.

“Because Felicity Rhiaon had a theory about you,” Kes explained, “and if this blood is able to prove that theory… then the Resistance is about to secure itself a very important ally.”

Finn blinked.

“Oh… Okay.” Finn looked at Kaydel, completely lost, “…Do you have any idea what he’s talking about?”

Kaydel sighed as Poe slung his arm around her waist, “Not a clue.”

“Miscarriage,” Kylo repeated quietly. He looked at the speechless Sasa, his own face filled with confusion and anger, “How could you possibly be having a miscarriage?”

“Miscarriages are a lot more common than you would think,” Evan answered as if the question had been directed at him. “Something like 1 in 4 pregnancies will end in miscarriage.”

“No, you idiot!” Kylo snapped. “How can she possibly be pregnant?”

Evan frowned, “Uh… considering that audio recording I accidentally sent your mother, I assumed you two had the mechanics down. You guys did mention a few times …wanting that to be the result of the encounter.”

Kylo glanced at Sasa. Why did she have to have the habit of using the act of impregnation as dirty talk? Even worse, why did it have to turn him on so much?

But Sasa’s mind wasn’t on sex; her face was just perfectly white and frozen. The only motion on his face was the dab of tears from the corners of her eyes, trembling and ready to fall.

“Pregnant,” she finally whispered. “I’m… I’m pregnant.”

Evan hesitated, “Well… technically it’s you were pregnant.”

Their heads snapped at him in unison, and the looks on their faces literally made Evan shrink back. Maybe that wasn’t the best thing to say to two Dark Side Force Users with a track record of murder suffering through a rage filled tragedy.

“I thought that we couldn’t…” Sasa’s voice was weak as she looked up at Kylo. One of the tears turned rogue and spilled down her literally ashen cheek. “I… I didn’t know. We had negative results, three negatives since I last… How could I be pregnant? Oh God, I wasn’t acting pregnant. Kylo, I drank, I ingested caffeine, I used the hot tub in our suite, I had sex, and For Snoke’s sake, I ATE SHELLFISH!”

“Relax,” Evan grabbed. “It’s alright. You didn’t know, and the sex thing is fine during pregnancy. Encouraged even.”

“Don’t tell me to relax!” Sasa shoved him away, turning out to be a lot stronger than Evan expected her to be. “Stop making your oh so witty commentary and save my baby!”

Evan took a moment to gather himself, “Sasa-”
“Master Ren,” she growled.

He nodded, “Master Ren… I can’t.”

Kylo grabbed him by the back of the neck, like he was about to hoist an animal up by the scruff, “What do you mean you can’t? You are a doctor-”

“Nurse.”

“Just fix her!” Kylo roared.

“I can’t!” Evan snapped. “You need a reality check? Fine! I don’t give a damn if you’re Sith or the fact you’re my boss’ son! I’ll give you a reality check! I cannot save your baby. It is too late. This is happening. I cannot reverse it. Believe me, if I could save this child, I would. I took an oath to protect and save every life within my power… This is beyond my power.”

Kylo and Sasa said nothing, the words sinking in. Their hearts thrummed fast, their emotions screeching, reaching, and even battle each other’s for dominance in the Force. This baby they hadn’t even known existed… they wanted it and they mourned it.

“No,” Evan’s voice calmed even though the look on Kylo’s face suggested that if this baby died, he would make sure Evan did too, “I do have something in my bag I can give you, Master Ren. A pill to help things along.”

“Help things along?” Kylo’s voice was ice cold, his eyes sharp in a look Evan had seen a time or two on the face of General Organa and had always prayed he never be on the receiving end of it. “What kind of things?”

Evan dug through his bag, “Basically it’ll clear out her system and prevent there from being negative side effects from the miscarriage.”

Kylo ripped Evan’s arm out of his bag, “You are not giving her an abortion pill.”

Sasa grabbed Kylo’s own arm and forced him to let go of Evan, “Stop it! That’s not what he’s doing.”

Evan hesitated, “Well… technically this pill can also be used for this.”

Kylo grabbed him by the throat and ignited his lightsaber.

“No, please!” Breathing heavily, Evan looked Kylo in the eyes and begged for his life, “I’m just trying to help.”

“Let him go, Kylo,” Sasa calmer than him, had transitioned anger into desperation. “Please… for my sake.”

Kylo glanced at her; their eyes meeting. Those shining forest green eyes made him think of his Force Signature. How much more darkness would he infect his soul with if he committed this murder?

…And what Force Signature would the baby have had? Kylo reached for the blue or red hue (obviously the baby would have a shade like the Skywalker or at least Sasa’s cerise) but found nothing. It could be that the child had been too young to be perceived by him… or it could have been that the shade had already been snuffed out.

He had a child… and that child was dead.
“Now,” Sasa gently grasped Kylo’s arms, a half-hearted attempt to control him and protect him from his anger, “Please, Evan… There has to be another way.”

“Another way? Another way? Look at that!” he gestured to the bloody mess on her dress between her legs. “Look at that pile of blood and pieces of genetic material! Those… shreds are your baby. It is gone. In pieces at your feet, staining your dress. This isn’t something that can be fixed. This is beyond any power. Beyond any medicine or magic, beyond the abilities of humans, alien species, any God, or even the Force… Your baby is gone before we could even tell its gender. Before it even changed from an embryo to a fetus. It is too late. You lost it… I’m sorry, but it’s true.”

And those were the words that broke Sasa. She wailed, hard and hysterical. More painful that Kylo had ever witnessed her do, or even imagined her capable. It wasn’t just grief, it was terror at the thought of what Snoke would do when he found out. If he found out his chosen mare had miscarried the heir to the Skywalker bloodline… There were no second chances. Snoke already doubted Sasa enough, when the Supreme Leader learned Sasa had lost a baby there was a very real chance he would take her from Kylo.

Kylo held Sasa tight in his arms, daring the universe and the Force itself to tear her from his embrace. He wouldn’t let anyone take her from him.

But Sasa’s cry wasn’t just grief and terror, it was brutal anger at the one who had murdered her baby. If Tara Ren was standing in front of Sasa right now, Sasa would torture Tara with Force Lighting until she screamed out as loudly as Sasa in pain… and then Sasa would tear her apart with her bare hands.

At least… that was what Kylo wanted to do.

“What did this?” Kylo seethed. He looked to Evan, and when he received no answer, he demanded, “Tell me what did this!”

Evan took a deep breath, “There’s no way of telling. Like I said, miscarriage in the first trimester is extremely common. It could be any number of factors: biological, medical, external, it could even just end because the embryo wasn’t strong enough.”

“Don’t give us that,” Sasa’s voice was choked, her eyes red. Her words were barely able to come out as more than desperate gasps as her lungs fought for air, “Tell us the truth. You know the truth.”

“The truth is I can’t diagnose the reason for this miscarriage due to our environment and circumstances,” Evan said. “If we were in a medical unit of some sort… all I got is a basic bag of supplies in the aftermath of a bombing, and a child already gone.”

“Tharel,” Kylo said slowly, “this isn’t the first miscarriage I’ve been around. I know they’re hard to give cause to… but in your educated opinion what is your best guess at the cause of this miscarriage?”

Evan sighed, “Alright, it could very well be just one of those miscarriages that happen early in pregnancy or it could be from the stress of this whole situation. But in my professional opinion, that fact you were in an explosion, in a fight using physical violence, were choked, poisoned, stabbed, and who knows what else… If I had to give you a firm answer, that would be the reason this miscarriage happened.”

Kylo clenched his fist, “And if this whole bombing situation hadn’t happened?”
“I believe Sasa Ren would still be successfully carrying this child to the next trimester.”

Perfect silence filled the room. What could even be said? Tara had murdered their baby.

Sasa felt numb. She had done it, she had conceived and carried the Skywalker Heir. Would Snoke be upset and punish her for losing it? Would the blame go to Tara? Or Kylo perhaps? Would something as serious as this continue in the trend of things Tara got away with?

She wanted to be held. Sasa just wanted to be home in her bedroom, crying and mourning in the safety of Kylo’s strong and loving arms.

Never in her life had Sasa had something that was just her own. Finn was just as good friends with Marks as with her. She may be a Chosen, but there were eight girls who had been chosen. The dejarik board, speaker system, and sewing room in her bedroom were conditional gifts from the Supreme Leader dependent on her being in his favor. Hell, the bedroom itself she could be kicked out of at any moment. Not even Kylo was hers alone, but if she had a baby, that would be her own. Kylo would be busy with the same job he always had, but her entire life and role in the First Order would be to care for the Skywalker Heir.

Now Tara had made sure Sasa still had nothing of her own… but this time it went too far, this time she had killed Sasa’s baby.

Abruptly, Kylo got to his feet.

“Stay here,” he ordered Sasa. “Take the pill, have Tharel clean you up, and both of you come join the rest of us when you’re ready.”

“Where are you going?” her voice struggled to be heard.

“Tara and I need to have a very serious conversation.”

Sasa couldn’t help but smile at the image of Kylo running Tara through with his lightsaber.

Kylo knelt back down and held her cheek. His thumb darted out to wipe away a tear sliding down that red from crying skin. Realizing he didn’t actually care that someone was watching, Kylo gently pulled her head forward and pressed a kiss to her forehead.

“I’ll take care of this,” Kylo whispered. “I promise.”

Sasa sniffed, “What about the baby? What do we do with… what’s left?”

Kylo’s eyes drifted to the mess between her legs.

Evan, having heard the tearful question looked to his medical bag and sighed, “You guys were going to get rid of that dress, right?”

As Sasa wiped her eyes on her arm, Kylo frowned but nodded.

Without a second thought, Evan turned his bag upside down, dumping medical supplies on the ground. Before they could ask for an explanation, Evan grabbed a pair of scissors and (with a bit of a struggle considering the material) cut off a large section of the skirt of the dress, including the part with the products of miscarriage. Tenderly he folded the fabric over the mess, carefully wrapping it up before placing it in the medical bag.

“You deserve to at least lay your child to rest in whatever fashion you desire;” Evan handed the bag
to Sasa. “Take it with you when you leave.”

Sasa didn’t know what to say to the gesture, “But… it’s your bag.”

“I can get another,” he shrugged. Then his nervous eyes flicked to Kylo, “Or if you didn’t want it bring it with you, I understand.”

It took a moment for Kylo to reply, “I’ll remember this.”

“Just part of the job,” Evan said.

Kylo nodded, “Take care of her. Don’t keep her away too long.”

He got back to his feet and turned his body towards the curtain. Kylo paused and looked down at Sasa. He reached out and gently touched her face, his hand lingering for a moment, and then headed for the curtain.

And through her teary gaze, Sasa watched his disappearing form and made herself a vow:

If by some miracle Kylo didn’t end up killing Tara for this, someday Sasa would.

Tara sensed Kylo Ren’s anger before she even saw his return, but she was not prepared for when the Force violently yanked her off her feet and an invisible hand squeezed her throat to kill.

“How did you know?” Kylo roared as he sped across the lobby directly towards her. “How the hell did you know?”

“What are you talking about?” she gasped, clawing at her throat for relief, very aware of the eyes on her as she floated above the floor. Of course, none of the cowards were going to step in to help her.

Reaching her, Kylo yanked Tara with the Force down so her neck landed directly into the grip of his outstretched hands. If he was going to strangle Tara to death for murdering his child, he was going to psychically feel the last breath leave her body.

Meanwhile, Karé, Poe, Snap, and Kaydel – Kes and Waroo were actually being useful and coordinating with Han over a comm – stared at the scene from the sidelines in shock. Whatever their conversation had been about was long gone from their minds.

“Uh…” Karé glanced to Poe, “what is that all about?”

“Probably the usual Skywalker drama,” Poe shrugged.

“Should we intercede?” Snap asked.

“Hell no am I getting in the middle of that,” Poe scoffed. “Considering what Kylo did to Alyla Kene – a woman he liked – there’s no way I’m finding out what he’d do to me, a guy he hates. If the First Order wants to obliterate itself, I’m going to let it. Although… anyone got their recording device? Someone film this for General Organa.”

Kaydel frowned, “Why?”

“If she’s going to forgive her son for his sins, I’d like her to make an informed decision.”
Karé punched his arm. **Hard.**

Of course, with Finn seeing Kylo in such a violent and sudden rage, his mind only turned to thoughts of Sasa. Had something happened? Finn wasn’t strong enough with the Force to sense her Signature? What if she had just died in Kylo’s arms?

His heart broke at the thought, but he quickly pushed it away. If Sasa had died, Kylo would have already murdered Tara. Finn didn’t need to be privy to the details to know exactly where Kylo stood in his relationships with Tara and Sasa.

“How did you know?” Kylo’s grip on Tara’s throat was tight, but just barely loose enough to ensure she would die a slow death. As she gasped and struggled, he loosened it even more to allow her enough breath to talk, “Speak! Tell me!”

“I… don’t know what you’re talking about,” Tara struggled. She couldn’t help but think that if her mother – only a kilometer away at most – knew what was happening to her daughter, Qi’ra would be storming the lobby with her best soldiers immediately, need for secrecy about their relationship be damned.

“You know damn well what I’m talking about,” he growled. “How the hell did you find out? Even we didn’t know!”

“Didn’t know what?”

Something inside of him snapped.

“TELL ME RIGHT NOW OR I WILL BREAK YOUR NECK WITH MY BARE HANDS! HOW THE HELL DID YOU KNOW SASA WAS PREGNANT?”

The room went silent. Even Tara stopped fighting against his attack, an action her lungs were quick to remind her was not a good idea.

“Sasa’s pregnant?” Finn whispered as Tara sputtered and began her fight anew.

“I’m sorry…” Poe stared at Kylo, “you did what now to that girl?”

Kes shook his head, “When we get to the ship, I am not telling Han.”

[Bond-Brother!] Waroo exclaimed. He raced forward to pull Ben into a literal bone-crushing hug, [Congratulations to you and your flame-haired mate!]

Before Waroo could reach him, Kylo shot the Wookiee a dirty glare and Waroo stopped in his tracks. When he saw the hug would not be welcome, Waroo huffed and crossed his arms.

[I’m telling your mother you didn’t say thank you,] grumbled Waroo.

Kylo’s heart fell. Oh God. What was his mother going to make of the fact that he had gotten his not even girlfriend pregnant but his other not even girlfriend had made her miscarry in an assassination attempt because Kylo liked sort-of girlfriend one better than sort-of girlfriend two?

Maybe running away from home had been a good plan if this was going to be his life.

“Pregnant?” Tara whispered, looking completely shocked. Then that stunned look became downright pissed off, “How the *fuck* did you get that *bitch* pregnant?”
Kylo went for his lightsaber.

Without a second thought, Tara flung out her hand and used the Force. A plank of wood from the crumbled staircase swung out and leveled Kylo off his feet.

As he hit the ground, Tara wrenched free, and gave him a kick in the face for good measure. Tara was not obsessed with fashion, but she did have a signature look: boots with cleats. Had her kick been an inch higher, Kylo would be blind.

She used the opportunity to go for her own saber, but something roared and yanked her off the ground. Before she could figure out what was going on, Waroo threw her straight into the wall. It was only her involuntary reaction of using the Force to cushion her impact that prevented her death. Because when a Wookiee throws you into a wall that hard, usually you ended up being nothing more than a bloody splat.

[You don’t touch him!] Waroo bellowed at her, putting his body between her and the slowly moving Kylo.

Waroo guarding Kylo from Tara was one of the most overt displays of protection that Poe had ever seen. In fact, the only other time he had seen such a display had to be one time Chewbacca had done that to Han when some pirates had very seriously threatened Han and Poe after they got stranded in the middle of nowhere on Mandalore.

Long story.

“Huh,” Poe said mildly as he watched the scene, “I guess that’s what Wookies mean.”

Karé frowned, “What are you talking about?”

“When Wookiees swear life debts,” Poe explained, “they say Your life, the life of your children, and the life of your children’s children will be protected by my life, my children, and my children’s children. It’s a literal three generation to three generation promise. Go figure.”

But Tara could tell by the way those dark eyes fixed on her that it wasn’t for Chewbacca’s Life Debt to Han Solo that Waroo was protecting Ben.

Kylo and Tara were slow to gather themselves, but they jolted to their feet at the same time. They were halfway charged at each other when Wiln and Cern came out of nowhere and forced them apart. Not with the actual Force, but literally Wiln grabbed Kylo and Cern grabbed Tara, tearing them away from each other.

“What the hell?” Cern declared as he and Wiln struggled to hold Tara and Kylo back. “I leave for twenty minutes, and this happens? Dang it, Wiln, can’t you keep things together for while?”

“Hey, this wasn’t me,” Wiln grunted as Kylo tested his strength. “He flipped out on his own.”

“Let me go, Wiln!” Kylo ordered. “She has to pay for this!”

“Seriously, what the hell is going on here?” Cern asked. “Tara, what did you do?”

“I didn’t do anything!” she exclaimed. “I don’t know why he’s attacking me. All I did was ask a question – albeit not in the nicest terms – but not enough to merit this reaction!”

Cern knew how to cut through Tara’s crap, “What did you ask him?”
“Sasa’s pregnant,” Tara struggled to utter the words. She was surprised that Cern didn’t even blink at that. “All I did was ask how the hell that happened.”

It took about two seconds for Cern to figure it out.

“Oh shit,” Cern started to laugh. He released his hold on Tara, knowing that if Kylo wanted to kill her there was nothing Cern could do to stop it. Cern’s eyes turned to Kylo’s, “I get it.”

Kylo’s face went a little paler and the fight seemed to die out of Kylo a little at the revelation that Cern knew.

“Get what?” Wiln frowned.

“Sasa’s pregnant… and Kylo is pissed.” Cern grinned at Kylo in a way that he had no right to during such a serious matter, “She’s having a miscarriage.”

The group fell silent. Even the Resistance members traded heartbroken looks as the implications set it. It was about a minute before anyone could find their voice to speak.

“…Kylo?” Wiln was the one to ask, “is that true?”

Ben Solo took a moment – feeling weak – and then let out a huff of air, “Surprisingly stabbing, explosions, and poisoning are not conductive to pregnancies.”

Waroo let out a truly painful howl: his voice filled with terrible grief. It was the howl all Wookiees made when one they were life-bonded to died. The same howl that Chewbacca would one day make when Han Solo died.

There it was: Sasa Ren was having a miscarriage.

Finn’s heart broke as he thought of the pain Sasa was going through. All he wanted to do was shove everyone out of the way, race to her, and pull her into the strongest hug of her entire life. She didn’t need this, she didn’t need a man who would turn to anger and violence in the face of tragedy, she just needed someone to hold her.

…Why couldn’t he hold her?

Wiln blinked as he tried to process it, his mind going to Nova and what this would mean for their future. What if Sasa got pregnant again? Would they have their chance to be together? Or what if this miscarriage made Snoke lose faith in Sasa and he picked another Chosen as the new Knight of Ren? Every time a spot opened, Wiln did everything in his power to stop Nova from being picked. It had worked almost a hundred times already… but someday they would run out of other candidates.

Cern viewed it the same way he viewed everything: laugh as you watch the world burn and don’t give a shit for anyone else’s feelings.

It would be a lie to say that Kaydel wasn’t upset at Sasa’s miscarriage. By no means did she want Kylo Ren to have a child, but she had reluctantly grown fond of Sasa and didn’t wish this pain upon her. Not to mention, what would General Organa feel when they told her in debriefing that she had a miscarried grandchild?

It would also be a lie to say that Poe wasn’t a little bit pleased. He had no emotional attachment to Sasa, and as for Ben… all Poe could think of was revenge for the murder of Rey Rhiaon Skywalker. Sure, he had empathy, but truth be told, he didn’t have sympathy.
All Karé Kun could think was who’s going to tell Han and Leia?

Kes Dameron felt a cold fear inside of him. What if they had given Poe’s group a head’s up about this? Could they have saved Ben’s baby? In a way, wasn’t he responsible for the death of this child? …Was Han responsible for the death of his own grandchild? Han was going to handle that guilt with about the same grace as Luke was handling Rey’s death.

Snap felt sympathy for Sasa – his feelings on Kylo were a big pile of nothing – as the girl seemed actually pretty decent. …But his leg was also really fucking hurting and he wanted to be safe on their own ship already.

Dacken and Hena weren’t paying, whispering to themselves their plan of action to get out of there with their lives and debt-free from any Connix, or worse, Anthea.

Waroo roared out in grief again. Not only had he failed in his task to protect the child of the child of his father’s Life-Bond, but Ben Solo did not deserve more pain. True, his Bond-Brother had committed some terrible acts, but if the Rebellion had taught him anything it was that the Galaxy needed forgiveness, not revenge.

And Tara was horrified as she realized the danger she was in. She had just accidentally murdered the heir to the Skywalker legacy. She had to work fast or Snoke would nail her to the wall.

Catching Kylo’s burning eyes, Tara knew there was a chance that Kylo would tear her to pieces first. Defense mode NOW.

“I didn’t do it,” Tara literally held up her hands in surrender. “Kylo, please, I swear-”

“Why should I believe a thing you say?” he snapped.

“Kylo…” her voice turned gentle. “Kylo.”

Against his will, Kylo’s body automatically relaxed at that familiar soothing tone. That voice had helped him through so many painful moments. Through Rey’s death. Through Luke’s murder attempt. Through the gas attack on his mother. Through Nera Ren’s death. That voice was hardwired in his brain… and it was hard to fight off its effects.

“No, Tara,” he shook his head.

“Kylo,” she made the move to cross to him.

He let her reach him – Wiln and Cern backing off to the sidelines – but when she moved to touch his chest, Kylo took a step back.

Tara reconfigured her plan and held up her hands again.

“Kylo, please,” she said in that voice he couldn’t resist. “Please, Kylo… I didn’t do this.”

“Stop lying to me,” his voice was low and Kylo wouldn’t look her in the eyes.

“I’m not.”

“Stop lying!”

“I’m not!” she said firmly. Tara forced his chin up to look her in the eye. Her grey irises were strong but soft, and his brown couldn’t help but find easy comfort in them. “Kylo… please.”
Poe grimaced. Whatever his feelings on Ben Solo were, he really hated watching the kid get manipulated like this. He made sure his Holo recorder was running. Leia would want to see this.

“Why did you do this, Tara?” Kylo’s voice sounded lost. He genuinely didn’t understand how his right hand could betray him. “Why would you do this to me?”

“I swear to you,” Tara hesitated over her next words, “regardless of whether or not I had anything to do with this, I didn’t know she was pregnant.”

“You’ve been so obsessed with this heir thing, it’s not hard to believe you would take out solid competition.”

“Kylo, I would never hurt a child. You know that!”

“I don’t know what I know about you anymore,” Kylo stepped out of her arms.

“Listen to me,” Tara stayed strong and firm, “after everything we’ve gone through… after what I went through, do you think I would inflict a miscarriage on someone? After the pain that I went through?”

Kylo looked away. Only the two of them knew about the miscarriage Tara had when Kylo was twenty-one. Indeed, it had nearly broken Tara when she went through it, and she had sworn to Kylo after the competitors started dropping like flies that Tara would never instigate the pain they had suffered.

The only question was if he believed her.

“I didn’t know about her pregnancy,” Tara repeated. “Please, Kylo-”

“I don’t think I can believe you,” Kylo cut off.

Tara paused a moment to take a deep breath and regroup herself.

“Forget my animosity with Sasa,” Tara said, her voice very quiet. “Do you really think me such a monster?”

“Honestly?” Kylo replied. “I don’t know anymore.”

“Kylo, I swear to you, I did not know she was pregnant.” There were tears in Tara’s eyes, but Kylo couldn’t trust they were genuine. “Please, I swear it to you, Master… How could I know? Her pregnancy tests have been negative for years, just like mine.”

“You’re right, Sasa’s have been… So how did you do it?”

Tara blinked, genuinely taken by surprise, “Excuse me?”

“You had to have done it somehow,” Kylo accused. “Tharel said ten weeks was about right, and that’s been how long Sasa’s period has been late. She was pregnant for ten weeks at least, and in that time had three negative pregnancy tests. So how did you do it?”

“You don’t actually think-”

“Only my droid Max does the pregnancy tests for the female Knights of Ren. All it would take is one person screwing with his programming. How did you do it?”

She couldn’t believe it, “Kylo, I don’t even know the code to get into your room. How would I
know to reprogram your droid to give negative pregnancy test results? It couldn’t have been me!”

“So you’re suggesting, what? Someone broke into my room and screwed with my stu-”

Kylo stopped. His eyes were wide as hit him and Tara at the same time. In unison they turned to face the smirking Cern Ren.

“Well, it’s about time,” Cern laughed. “I was starting to think you’d never get it.”

“You,” Kylo seethed, his long legs crossing the room in four strides to be up in Cern’s face. “How dare you?”

“How dare I?” Cern grinned. “If you’ll recall, it was quite easy.”

The day after Kylo had his nose broken by Sasa for suggesting a threesome, Cern came to him with a lead on Lor San Tekka. Wanting Tara away while he tried to fix things with Sasa, Kylo sent Tara after Tekka.

Since Cern had been the one who found the lead – as well as being Head of Intelligence – he had assumed he would take the mission. When Cern learned that Tara had been sent, Cern was furious and got into a conflict that made Kylo seriously regret his decision. It had been such a bad conflict that the next time they got a lead on Tekka, Kylo let Cern go alone to track him for a whole three months.

But the reason things had been so bad was that Cern’s anger at the situation had led to a very… interesting result.

“How did you get in my room?” Kylo Ren had not expected to open the door and find Cern sitting on his bed and smirking at him.

“Solo, you don’t keep me around to just intimidate people,” Cern’s voice was ridiculously casual. “There is not a lock on the Finalizer that I can’t pick. Not a code I can’t break. Not a system I can’t get into, reprogram, or even destroy. You think you’re special because you can force your way into minds, do miracles with machines, and come up with intricate and advantageous battle plans? You may be a better pilot than me, but I’m everything you are, just without the special Skywalker sperm. If my grandfather was Darth Vader, you would be nothing in the eyes of Snoke. I’m essentially you, but I don’t waste my time on empathy… Yeah. I can break into your room.”

Kylo really didn’t want to admit how much those declarations had cut him down.

“Cern, you cannot break into my room.”

“I feel the results speak otherwise.”

“Cern!”

He stood up and crossed his arms, “This happened. Deal with that fact and let’s move this conversation along. I didn’t come here to banter.”

“And why did you come?” Kylo still couldn’t wrap his head around it, “Gods, Cern, what if I had been bringing a girl here with me?”

“Considering Girlfriend One is away on my mission and Girlfriend Two broke your nose last week
for suggesting a threesome, I figured I’d roll the dice.”

“So that’s what this is about? Tara going after Tekka?”

“That mission was mine, Solo. It was my lead.”

“Just because you’re head of intelligence, doesn’t mean you get whatever mission you want. I need Tekka to speak to, not die a slow, horrible death.”

“I get that,” Cern’s voice was unreasonably calm, “but you should have spoken to me about it; not sent her behind my back because you’re trying to fix your love life with your airheaded concubine.”

Kylo moved his hand for a Force Choke, but Cern moved faster. The Force knocked Kylo off his feet into the wall before he could even squeeze.

“That’s another reason you keep me around,” Cern watched Kylo struggle back to his feet. “Don’t try something like that again.”

“Are you challenging me?” Kylo didn’t need his mask in that moment to look terrifying.

“Uh… yeah,” Cern chuckled, “I think I am.”

A beat of silence hung heavy in the air as both waited to see if this would break out into an actual fight. Kylo’s eyes flicked to the altar in the corner of the room particularly to Alyla Kene’s lightsaber on an altar of Darth Vader’s helmet sitting on a blanket of ashes.

Kylo’s fingers twitched as he concentrated on the saber. The real reason Cern wasn’t allowed to teach a lightsaber class wasn’t that he would kill the students – Tara had yet to be stripped of her class for doing that – but rather one simple fact: Cern was good against one lightsaber… but he couldn’t defend against two.

“I know what you’re thinking,” Cern said. “How about we just call this a truce?”

“Fine,” Kylo agreed. “But answer me one thing: have you broken into my room before?”

Cern laughed, “If you’re asking if I’ve broken in before, the answer is yes. If you’re asking if I’m the person who broke into your room and altered what your medical droid calls you, unfortunately that was not me.”

“Well, then who was it?” the mystery had frustrated Kylo for years.

“I don’t know, but my money’s on Hux.”

“Why are you in here, Cern?”

“I actually took a leaf out of that burglar’s playbook. To express my frustration with your decision on the Tekka mission, I broke into your room and screwed with fifteen things.”

Kylo blinked, “You… You what?”

“I messed with fifteen things in your room. Small things; more annoyances than anything, but good luck finding them all.”

“What exactly did you do to my room?”

“You don’t actually think I’m going to tell you?” Cern laughed. “Give up that moment of discovery
and the paranoia that everything might be a trick? That’s half the fun.”

Kylo growled, “If you don’t undo them right now-”

“You’ll never make me reverse it all. Sure, you could hold me here against my will for ages, but I’ll never give in. You might as well get hunting.”

Kylo sighed, a sense of defeat setting in, “And what exactly should I look for?”

“Nothing worth ratting me out to Snoke, so you can drop that idea. He won’t care if I switched the hot and cold water in your shower or cut off all the toes to your socks – not things I actually did, by the way.”

“I don’t understand,” Kylo shook his head. “You’re not petty like this. You usually more explosive… violent.”

“I can’t use violence in something like this. I want to keep my neck.”

“But there are other ways of getting back at me.”

“What? Going after your mom?”

Kylo was very quiet after that.

“Ben Solo,” Cern chuckled, “anyone you care about is outside of this Order and not worth my time going after.”

“There is someone,” Kylo muttered.

“Oh yes… Sasa.”

Kylo’s hand touched his lightsaber.

“It’s a good idea,” Cern admitted. “Go after Sasa, but she’s already pissed at you, so there’s nothing I could do that’s worse than what you’ve done to yourself.”

“There are things you could do to her.”

“I’m not Hux, Kylo. I’m not going to try to screw Sasa just to piss you off. Now, sure, killing her is a good idea. She’s not that highly regarded by Snoke, and it would show Tara that while she was on my mission, I did the thing she couldn’t… but I’m not going to kill Sasa.”

“You’re… you’re not?” Kylo scowled.

“No,” Cern said. “Not now, probably not ever.”

“…As terrible as this question is, why not?”

“Because if I ever wanted to hurt Sasa,” Cern said, “if I ever wanted to take her out, remove her from the equation, get rid of this little problem we all have, I’m not going to use violence. I’m not going to kill her, poison her, stab her, or even slap her… No, if the time ever comes where I am the one to take out Sasa, I have a way that is so much more effective, and so much simpler than a murder. If I take out Sasa… I’m cleaning house.”

Kylo’s reply was dangerous, “And who in this house needs to be cleaned out?”
“Berd and Doxl, but they’ll probably take care of that for me. The ones I would do are Sasa and Wiln… anyone else is yet to be decided.”

Kylo’s eyes narrowed.

“But for now… I’ll settle with doing petty things to your bedroom.” Cern patted Kylo’s shoulder, “Happy hunting. Let me know how many you can find.”

Fourteen things. He had only found fourteen of Cern’s tricks.

For seventeen months, Kylo had been looking for the final thing Cern had done to his room. And now… Kylo was furious.

“You manipulated my droid to give false pregnancy test results!” Kylo roared.

But Cern just laughed, “I genuinely didn’t think it would take you this long to figure it out.”

Kylo grabbed him by the throat.

“Hey! Hey!” Cern exclaimed. “Let me go!”

“You think you can get away with this with no consequence?” Kylo seethed. “You helped her do this!”

“I didn’t do anything but fuck with your droid,” Cern snapped. He took a deep breath and glanced at Tara. He said in a low voice to Kylo, “Come on, we both know who is responsible for this.”

“Don’t you do that.”

“Oh, I’m not going down for this. Okay, yes, I screwed with your droid. It’s been giving negative pregnancy results… but don’t you think that’s actually a good thing? What if Tara knew about the baby? Wouldn’t she have gone after it before Snoke found out about the pregnancy? True, he wants the heir protected, but he never knew about it… if you never knew-”

“Sasa would tell me immediately.”

“I’m not saying she wouldn’t.” Cern chuckled, “I guess it’s about time I tell you why I chose to mess with your droid. I’m not the first person to screw with Max-”

“I can tell by the name he calls me,” Kylo shot.

“Well, I don’t know if she did that, but Tara did do something to your droid. You see, it’s a well-known fact in the First Order that only Max administers the pregnancy tests for the female Knights of Ren… so years ago, Tara secretly made it so your droid sends her a message with the result the second the test is completed before he even tells the person he’s testing. Tara would know of Sasa’s pregnancy before even Sasa, before even really Max.”

“…So that means you reprogrammed Max to always give false negatives not only to take a shot at me, but to-”

“Thwart Tara,” Cern finished. “She genuinely had no way of knowing that Sasa was pregnant. No one did… Not even Snoke… Unless, he did-”
“Don’t!” Kylo snapped. “The Supreme Leader would never withhold such information.”

“You believe what you want, but Kylo, let’s take a moment and just think about what’s happened here today.”

“Think about what?”

“What was exactly Tara’s plan here, assuming she did it,” Cern said. “Think about it, did Tara really intend on hurting so many people? Is she truly responsible for Sasa’s miscarriage?”

“You go too far.”

“I don’t go far enough. Come on, Kylo… think about it. What was Tara’s plan? How about this?” Since Cern actually knew what Tara’s plan had been, it was an easy tale to weave. “The places that had the bombs set up were the ballroom, the lobby, and the gardens. It was about an hour and a half after check-out and three hours before check-in. There weren’t supposed to be a lot of people in the lobby, and the location of the bombs were pretty far from where people were meant to be gathered in the lobby. They were on the staircase, at the far walls, the extra space. Not the desk, not the couches, not the valet or concierge… they were far from people.”

Kylo’s eyes flicked around the room. Cern was right.

“And the gardens?” Cern continued. “Those pathways were blocked, construction being done on them. They were only accessed by emergency exits – which the action plans in this building for the alarm going off, directs people to the lobby – and the workers fixing those paths were all on lunch break. No one was meant to be on those paths.”

Kylo frowned. Again, Cern was right.

“What about the ballroom?” Kylo asked. “There was bombs under the chairs.”

“But not your chairs. Captain Anthea arranged for the First Order to sit elsewhere. And the people who were filling the seats with the bombs were corrupt billionaires who made their money from the sales of weapons. War profiteers.”

Kylo didn’t like how right Cern was.

Cern continued like silver in his ear, “My guess was the plan went like this: Set off the bombs in areas where there aren’t a lot of people, and those who do get hurt aren’t innocents. Plant them in multiple places so it doesn’t look like a specific attack. Sasa probably would be killed by the bombs, or by Berd and/or Doxl when you were distracted as the bombs went off. Worse comes to worse, Sasa doesn’t die, Crimson Dawn storms the ballroom, and they start shooting. In the blaster fire, Crimson Dawn hits several people including Sasa who happens to be an innocent bystander.”

Kylo’s eyes moved to Tara. She was watching Waroo but looked as confident as ever. Tara knew he wouldn’t kill her over this… no matter how intricate her plans were.

“Alright,” Kylo said, “say that was the plan. Why didn’t things go that way?”

“Like I said, when the fire alarm goes off, people are directed into the lobby and use the garden paths from their emergency exits. The only reason so many people went towards the bombs was because of the fire alarm… Now how did that get set off?”

Kylo remembered:
"Come on, let's go!" Evan grabbed Paige's hand and they crossed through the door.

The fire alarm went off the second they opened it.


"Yeah," Cern smirked. He had been casually searching the memories of the people around him ever since arriving on Nixrye that way he could turn things his way however this situation ended up. Cern was just a lot more subtle about his invasion of minds, Kylo not having the patience Cern did to sneak in rather than force his way in. "The Resistance set it off. Didn’t they? This all happened because of the Resistance… Because of their leader."

"Is that Dania?" Sasa exclaimed.

Kylo blinked, "Yeah, I think…I think it is."

In perfect unison, their heads snapped over to the Nilar group. Dania and her bodyguard, Thon were making a very suspicious and quick exit. Dania’s husband seemed to be urging them to move fast.

And then Kane Nilar’s head turned just a little too far.

"Dameron," Kylo growled. He turned to the others, "Everyone move! We have Resistance members present. You know your positions."

"Oh, fuck!" Poe exclaimed as the First Order started to move. "We’ve been compromised. Everybody move!"

Figuring there was no point to secrecy now, Jaina turned and yelled to the crowd, "EVAN! PAIGE! RUN!"

"If Poe hadn’t made that call, Sasa might not have been attacked," Cern whispered as Kylo watched Poe from across the room. "If things had gone to plan there’s a possibility you would have saved your baby. Saved Sasa and been the hero. Get your happily ever after with them both."

Kylo’s eyes narrowed at Poe, who had his arm slung around Kaydel.

"You love her," Kylo chuckled. "I can sense it. It's not just a role you're playing of pretend husband and wife. You love this girl."
Kylo balled his fist, “And now he’s the one standing with a woman at his side. A woman he’s allowed to…”

“T’ll wait for you, Kylo,” said Sasa. “It doesn’t matter how long it takes, I’ll wait. I know we’re meant to be… but you have to make a choice. And you’ll have to make it soon.”

Her words taking hold of him, Kylo exhaled deeply and pulled her into a hug. He held her in silence, burying his face into her copper hair, the background noise of space, opera, and mechanics filling the air.

He battled and lost to a shaky breath.

“Kylo?” Sasa looked up. She frowned at the tears in his eyes and touched his cheek, “Are you alright?”

He struggled to swallow.

“I’m fine,” he lied. “You’re just… you’re right. I need to make a choice.”

But as Sasa looked up at him with the tender smile on her face and love in her eyes… he knew he already had.

“Poe Dameron’s responsible for this,” Kylo whispered.

“Perhaps,” Cern said, “but I wouldn’t lay the entire blame on him.”

“Oh?” Kylo gave him a side glance. “And who else would you blame?”

“Just think, Master… what exactly triggered the confrontation with the Resistance?”

Timor Connix signalled to his daughter to turn the slideshow to the next picture.

"Kaydel Ko Connix, my youngest girl, named for her older sister who died before they could meet, and a proud member of the Resistance."

“Connix,” Kylo’s eyes turned to Timor Connix.

Timor stood awkwardly in the corner, trying to figure out exactly where he should be. He didn’t want to be too close to the First Order, but if he moved near the Resistance, Kane Nilar’s father might attack him again. Helping the injured was out of the question; there was barely any blood on his outfit so it might still be salvageable. Getting dirtied by the victims’ injuries would just make his outfit a waste of 1000 credits.

“Connix had a deal with us,” Cern said to Kylo. “He was supposed to protect us. Provide security,
and yet he let this happen. He promised to keep our people safe above all else.”

“Oh, don't thank me, Love,” Timor grinned wide enough that Kylo’s arm tightened around Sasa's a bit more. "It's strict orders from Alecta, and I don't want to get on her bad side.”

“But I guess that you can’t quite blame the man.” Cern brushed some imagery dirt off his shoulder, “After all, it’s not like anyone knew this bombing was going to happen before it happened… Right?”

Kylo’s eyes flicked to Kes Dameron.

“So, you knew that this bombing was going to happen?” Kylo repeated. “…But you didn’t give anyone a heads up about it because you were all too drunk to come up with the idea?”

“What can I say?” Kes shrugged. "Your old man sure knows how to drink.”

Kylo gritted his teeth, “So, what are you suggesting, Cern?”

“I’m merely suggesting that you stop focusing your anger on the person who may or may not have set the pieces for a different disaster, and a focus on the one who triggered this one. Tara didn’t set off these bombs-”

“Dameron and Connix did,” Kylo finished. “Junior and Senior in both cases.”

“Exactly.”

Kylo watched Kes and Timor in turn for a while, “But they… they didn’t do it. Tara did.”

“Crimson Dawn did, and trust me, I’ve found someone to punish for the pain they caused… but the Dameron and Connix fathers are not innocent in this. They could have stopped it all from happening. If Tara’s original plan had gone through, your baby might have been saved. It was the negligence of Timor Connix and Kes Dameron that lost you your child.”

Just that moment, the men sensed a familiar Cerise Signature approach the group. Kylo and Cern turned to see Sasa return with Evan.

She was crying, bloody, and broken. Evan’s medical bag was slung over her shoulder, Sasa barely having the strength to hold it up. Her heart was utterly broken.

Wiln approached the pair, and after a moment of speaking, he carefully took the bag from Sasa. It slowly was soaking up the blood of the dress wrapped baby within.

Sasa and Kylo’s baby who never got to see the light of day.

Kylo balled his fist. He wanted to hurt something, hoping it would dispel a bit of his never-ending
pain. For a moment he considered just punching Cern, but that would only make things worse. Besides, the man who just trying to help him and redirect his focus on the true inflectors of this torment.

“This experience is a painful one, Kylo,” Cern said, “but it could have been stopped. They took your child from you.”

Kylo looked over at Poe and Kaydel.

“So take their children from them,” Kylo whispered.

Cern smiled and bowed his head, “You are my Master, and the Leader of the Knights of Ren. I do as you command, and if you choose it, I will help you punish the true culprits.”

Kylo’s face hardened as he stared at Kaydel and Poe.

His work done, Cern slowly backed away from Kylo.

“You so owe me one,” Cern whispered to Tara, stopping by her side.

“Alright,” Evan said loudly, looking around the room, “since everyone’s been reunited and dealt with, I guess it’s time to head home.”

“Good idea,” Poe turned to face him, his arm locked around Kaydel’s waist. “I want to get out of here before the First Order cavalry arrives.”

Kylo narrowed his eyes at the arm around Kaydel’s waist.

"But above all, do it with grace," Kylo panted as Sasa gripped his shoulders. His arms were locked around her waist, pulling her as close against his body as possible. "Bring it all together with fluidity and grace."

 She pulled his head down and his lips were on hers without hesitation.

Kylo’s eyes flicked to Sasa. He should holding her right now, not Dameron holding his lover. Dameron should be the one hurting: Poe who set off this whole mess, his father who wanted to play hero rather than protect them, his girlfriend’s dad who should have prevented it, his girlfriend who should have-

“And I swear if Doxl wasn’t already dead, I’d kill him myself.”

“Well, you have Kaydel Ko Connix to thank for that one,” Sasa moaned as his hands caressed her body.
No… Kaydel had saved Sasa’s life. He owed her. And yet he needed to punish her, but how could he possibly-

Then it hit him.

“All right then,” Poe declared, “Solo… it’s not remotely been a pleasure, but hey, at least you didn’t have to see your father. So, we’ll be on our way now. Good luck with this mess.”

Waroo whimpered [Ben, please come with us. We’ll protect you and your mate. Please, Bond-Brother. I miss you.]

Kylo said nothing. His eyes wouldn’t move from Poe as he got the Resistance people in order.

“Hey, hey!” Dacken raced up to Kaydel. Hena was following closely, carrying the still sleeping Ryn, “Can Hena come with us?”

“Hena?” Kaydel frowned.

“Ryn needs medical attention, and I don’t trust the First Order,” Hena begged. “Please, can the Resistance help us? I don’t want to be indebted to the Connix family.”

Kaydel glanced at Poe, “Well, she does have good instincts.”

“All right, but we’re not running a daycare center,” Poe said to Hena. “You’ll need to sort out things regarding your son with General Organa.”

“Of course.”

“Well, then, welcome to the Resistance.” Poe glanced at Dacken, “Kay, do we really have to bring your nephew?”

“Yes, Poe,” Kaydel answered sternly. “We’re giving him a second chance.”

“You’re giving him a second chance. He’s still got to earn it with me.”

“I’ll try my best, Poe,” Dacken promised.

“That’s Commander Dameron to you,” Poe warned as Kes and Karé approached, helping Snap walk. “Oh, and word of advice? When dealing with Doctor Kymeri, you must accept any drugs or shots she wants to give you without question or objection. She absolutely never drugs people when they annoy or disagree with her.”

Karé frowned, “Seriously, we need better doctors.”

“Or at least hold them accountable better,” Snap agreed.

“I won’t argue with that,” Evan joined them. “Come on, I want to see how Paige is doing… and if Crimson Dawn ended up kidnapping Rose. Lady Qi’ra was really impressed when Rose electrocuted that gangster.”

“Rose did what now?” Kaydel scowled.

“I’m sure your Council will discuss it later,” Poe patted her on the arm. He turned and called to Waroo, “Come on, Fuzzball. Let’s go!”

But Waroo was watching Kylo, whose eyes were yet to move from Poe.
Something was about to go very wrong.

Finn was watching Poe too. Truth be told, part of him wanted to go with the man. It was nice to have a friend with no strings attached – even his relationship with Marks was complicated some days. But Finn knew his fate, and FN-2187 only hoped that some day Poe might join the First Order on their heroic quest.

“Alright,” Poe double checked they had everyone, “let’s move out!”

The Resistance group started to hurry forward, then Kylo made a gesture that dropped FN-2187’s heart to his stomach.

“So what exactly are you saying?” Poe asked.

"I'm willing to offer a truce. A momentary truce. Once we have our people all accounted for, then things are back to normal. I can take you into custody and you can try to take us prisoner."

Seven _snap-hisses_ filled the room, and the Resistance was surrounded by the Knights of Ren. All five surviving members stood in a circle around the Resistance. Even Sasa, as she struggled to stay on her feet, had her saber ignited.

Tara and Wiln wielded two lightsabers each, using Berd and Doxl’s sabers. Tara had found Berd’s where Hena ended up stashing it, not wanting to hold onto a Sith lightsaber indefinitely, just while Berd was trying to kill people.

Hena regretted not holding onto it.

“You’re not going anywhere,” Kylo stalked forward, his lightsaber pointed straight at Poe.

But Poe just laughed, “Really, Solo? We’re doing this? After everything my people have done for you – Evan saving who knows how many of you, my father coming to the rescue, Waroo helping fix the communication lines, Karé having your back in the ballroom, Snap shooting Berd, Kaydel saving Sasa, Dacken giving medical aid-”

“Hey, you mentioned me in a positive light!” Dacken brightened.

“Shut up,” Poe said not even looking at Dacken. His eyes were locked on Kylo’s, “Seriously? After all of that, you’re really doing this? Instant face heel turn the second our truce ends and taking my group hostage?”

“Oh no, not your group,” Kylo turned his lightsaber toward Kaydel, “Just you and your girlfriend. The rest are free to go.”

As the others looked at each other in worry and confusion – Kes moving however subtly he could to protect Kaydel – Poe just stared at Kylo.

“…This is because I slammed your head into the wall, isn’t it?”
It wasn’t unusual for Aletha to return from a trip and be greeted with a smile and the call of Doctor Kymeri, thank goodness you’re back!

But when twenty-eight people did it before she had even thrown her luggage in her quarters, she knew something was up.

“Welcome back, Aletha,” Meredyth Kalonia smiled as the other doctor set her old Rebellion medic bag on her desk. “Good trip?”

“Very productive,” she powered up her computer. “Anything exciting happen while I was gone?”

“You missed Han Solo showing up and Tharel’s mother arriving on base, but other than that, not much.”

“I hope Shayna is settling in fine.” Aletha had met Evan’s mother a few times and thought her a nice woman. “Wonder how long it’ll take for her to find a placement?”

“Actually, she’s apparently going to live with Kes Dameron for a while.”

Aletha arched a brow.

“It’s a long story, but nothing romantic is going on.” Kalonia grinned, “Not that their sons believe it.”

“Do you believe it?” Aletha grinned, amused by the antics of Evan and Poe.

“I believe Kes and Shayna are going to have fun tormenting the boys about it.” Kalonia paused her typing, “Oh, sorry, just remembered, I should probably give you a head’s up. Half the base is plotting to kill Commander Nalto, so be on the look out.”

“Well, that explains a few things. General Organa off-loading his duties as damage control?”

“No, she’s taken the day off to get over the traumatic incident that happened yesterday. Let’s just say that Hot Shot is not going to have a good time when he returns to base.”

Aletha frowned but didn’t inquire further. She was fairly certain she’d hear the story eventually, if not from Evan than at least from the Resistance rumor mill. Gossip didn’t stay hidden in the Resistance for very long.

Instead Aletha turned her attention to the work waiting for her on her computer terminal. It was much of the same as usual, but there was one piece of business that made her frown.

“Have you seen this message from the Ninka?” Aletha asked.

“Oh, the personnel request from Holdo?” Kalonia replied. “Yeah, apparently one of her non-droid medical staff is pregnant and will being leaving in about six or seven months.”

“So, she’s demanding we send a non-droid medic to her for maternity leave coverage?”

“Not maternity leave coverage; the medic is bowing out of the Resistance entirely to raise her child. The position is permanent.”

“And we’re being ordered to send one of our people to her,” Aletha’s words were not remotely a query.

“Not ordered, but definitely strongly encouraged,” Kalonia grinned.
“The kind of encouragement she gives Poe and Kaydel to break up?”

“Oh, even worse than that.”

Aletha shuddered.

Kalonia’s comm beeped, and both women’s heads turned instinctively.

“Speak of the devil,” Kalonia muttered as HOLDO lit up her display. She flicked on her earpiece – doctors were always required to wear ear insert comms except while sleeping – and answered, “Doctor Kalonia.”

Aletha idly pecked at her keyboard, not really paying attention to her pile of work. Her eyes drifted over a message from Diego about his official declaration that RSVPs were too much of a headache for menu planning so screw it, they were going to have a buffet. Aletha made no secret of watching Kalonia receive Holdo’s message.

She didn’t like the look on Meredyth’s face.

“Oh huh,” Kalonia’s complexion had gone oddly pale. “Understood… Yes, Ma’am. Right away.”

“Well?” Aletha asked as Kalonia clicked off her comm and powered down her computer.

“We need to get a transport,” she rolled her chair back from her desk. Aletha was on her feet at the same time as Kalonia. “There’s been a bombing and we have soldiers injured. They’re not sure how long it will take to get them to us, so we’re going to head out to the Ninka. Commander Nalto is going to join us.”

Aletha was in action mode instantly, following Kalonia to prepare the supplies, “Situation bad enough to warrant the Second-in-Command of the Resistance?”

“Honestly, Leia might be using it as an excuse to get Nalto away from the stress of event planning.”

“You know, I told him to go small. He only has himself to blame for this stress,” Aletha grabbed her bag, happy she hadn’t unpacked the one left back in her and Diego’s room. “Any idea of the types of injuries?”

“Not much, but we do have a report of a lost limb,” Kalonia answered. “The Ninka is en route to intercept and treat, but the doctors they have on the Ninka can only do so much with amputation. You and I are the only ones with a lot of experience with treating lost limbs. Those injuries have quite fallen out of fashion in the past decade.”

“Thank goodness.”

Suddenly Kalonia grabbed Aletha’s arm.

“Doctor Kymeri,” she brought her to a halt. Kalonia paused and said softer, “Aletha… I should inform you of something, but first I want you to know that the only reported Resistance casualty of this is a woman you don’t know.”


“All of them are reportedly fine,” Kalonia assured her. “Little banged up – Tico is the worst with some shrapnel in the head and a broken leg – but nothing that won’t be quickly fixed. They’ll be fine.”
Aletha took a deep breath, “Yeah… I know. It’s just that whenever those kids get up to something, they always manage to find a way to make a bad situation… so much worse.”

(Excerpt from communication log between BB-8 and Poe Dameron.)

BB-8: Bep bree?

POE: What’s my dad like? He’s the toughest – and kindest – soldier I’ve ever known.

He made me into the man I am today.

- Poe Dameron’s Flight Log

“I said move,” Kylo Ren’s voice was cold, but Kes Dameron didn’t move a muscle.

“I’m not going anywhere,” Kes dug his heels in.

“Listen to him, Old Man,” Cern said, “things will only get worse if you don’t cooperate.”


“Dad,” Poe started in a calm voice. “It’s okay. I’ll handle this. You don’t need to do-

“Yes, I do,” Kes cut him off. “Poe, you are my child. It is literally in my job description to do this.”

“Alright, let me make this simple then,” Kylo said. “You obey the order to leave and I’ll go with the original plan of taking him prisoner in other words, not killing him. But if you refuse to leave, I’ll tell you exactly what I’m going to do. Not only will I kill your son in front of you while I hold you back with the Force, but I’m going to get every single one of my people here to open fire on him, film it, and leak that footage to the public just like how it went down when we murdered your wife. Only this time, we’ll be the ones who leak the footage. Oh! And how about we get Poe to recite his mother’s final words too? Heck, we could edit the footage and play the scenes side by side!”

The look on Kes Dameron’s face suggested that if Kylo didn’t have the Force, Kes would literally be ripping Ben apart with his own two hands.

Probably could do it too.

“So the choice is yours, Kes,” Kylo tried to pretend it didn’t feel weird to call the man ‘Kes’ instead of ‘Mister Dameron, Sir’ as he always did in his youth. “Continue being stubborn and your son dies.”

His face falling, Waroo turned sad eyes on Kylo and roared something mournful.

Waroo was wrong, Ben thought to himself; he did have to do this. The poor Wookiee was just misguided. Waroo always did have an unearned amount of faith in Ben, his Bond-Brother. Sins and all.

Ben Solo wondered if Chewbacca knew that Waroo sent a message to the First Order every month asking Ben to come home and offering forgiveness. There had even been the occasional crude plan
of Waroo plotting to hide away Ben, and the two of them finding a ship and going on adventures like their fathers.

There was a time Ben would have admitted the thought tempted him.

“Kylo!” Sasa suddenly cried out, knees buckling under her as she clutched at her abdomen.

His head jerked to the side at the cry and he was on his knees next to her in an instant. Out of the corner of his eye, Kylo could have sworn he saw Evan move to join them but Karé yanked him back.

Poe seriously considered having the group make a break for it with the distraction, but that felt like he was playing dirty… plus there were still five lightsabers and a blaster – Finn was forced to also hold them hostage – pointed at them.

“I got you,” Kylo whispered, as he grasped her lightsaber and switched it off. He then gently wrapped his arms around her as he desperately fought the urge to kiss away all those tears. This scene was really not good for his image, but he honestly didn’t care. “I got you.”

“The baby…” Sasa gave a soft moan. “I’m so sorry.”

“It’s not your fault. Don’t cry. It’ll be okay.”

Waroo gave a very soft growl, the translation of which Kylo was glad no one else could understand.

The words made Kylo looked up, and when he did he found the eyes of everyone on him. The eyes of Kes Dameron and Timor Connix on him: pitying him.

How dare they pity him?

Without a word of warning, Kylo shot to his feet, lifting Sasa into a bridal hold. Sasa let out a slight yelp, arms locking around his neck automatically as she struggled not to fall to the ground. Eventually settled, she squirmed in his hold, and Kylo felt her Signature probing against his as she sensed his inner turmoil.

“Why are you doing this?” Kes asked.

“Why am I doing this?” Kylo echoed. “I’m doing this because of you.”

“Me?”

“You and Timor Connix,” Kylo nodded to the latter. “Look at the pair of you, standing there like you’re innocent of this disaster.”

Kes raised an eyebrow, “Oh, I’m very interested in this logic. Tell me how I’m responsible.”

“Master Ren,” Timor Connix gently tried to interject, “I assure you I had nothing to do with any of this.”

“Exactly,” Kylo shot. “You did nothing. You were supposed to protect us, provide security, and all of that literally went up in flames. You should have done due diligence and prevented this from ever happening!”

“Please, Master Ren, my daughter Katha was the one in charge of-”

“No! This is not her fault, this is yours! You didn’t provide proper security! You didn’t screen your
guest list! You put in the Holo of Kaydel that set off this confrontation! You didn’t even recognize your own daughter! This is your fault, and now you will be punished.” Kylo turned to Kes, “And as for you…”

Kes crossed his arms, “Go on.”

“This is also your fault,” Kes seethed. “You knew about this bombing and you didn’t warn anyone about it. No, you decided to be a hero and now I have to pay the price. My child died because you didn’t make one comm call… No wonder you’re friends with Luke Skywalker.”

Poe’s jaw dropped. He and Karé could barely grab Kes before he lurched forward to attack Kylo. Thankfully Waroo deigned to assist, and a great big furry paw wrenched Kes back from Ben.

“Come on, Dad,” Poe urged. “It’s not worth it.”

“Fine,” Kes grumbled, stopping fighting Waroo, but the Wookiee did not yet release him.

“You made a mistake, Kes Dameron,” Kylo continued. “Because of your negligence, I have lost my child. I figure it’s only fair that you get to lose yours.”

Kylo looked to Timor.

“Both of you,” Kylo growled.

Kes’ eyes narrowed.

“Now, for the last time,” Kylo said, “everybody but Poe and Kaydel are free to leave… and I strongly recommend that you do so.”

“Dad, please,” Poe begged. “Get everyone out of here. Kay and I will figure this out.”

“Listen to your son, Kes,” Kylo smirked.

Kes shook his head, “You like that, don’t you? Standing there pretending to be strong.”

[Ben, please.] Waroo begged. [Don’t do this. Just come home with us. We’ll forgive you, and we’ll protect your mate.]

Kylo’s arms shifted into a tighter hold on Sasa. She was his lifeline, tethering him to the reality of the situation and maintaining control of it. He couldn’t get lost in fantasies of outsmarting gangsters with a Wookiee at his side. What was important now – maybe even the most important thing in the galaxy to him – was serving his magnanimous mentor, Supreme Leader Snoke.

Or maybe it was the woman who was far too kind and loving for her position in the Galaxy, that was bleeding in his arms, losing their baby because Kes Dameron couldn’t be bothered to make a damn comm call.

“You’re wasting time, Dameron,” Kylo felt more comfortable with that name for Kes. “Not only are you risking your son, but you’re risking the rest of your people as well. One of your men has lost a leg. He needs proper medical treatment and you’re holding him back.”

It was a cheap move, Kylo was willing to concede, but he had to do something to get everyone moving. He felt the weight of Sasa in his arms like a responsibility. This wasn’t just about getting rid of people inconsequential and a waste of time and resources to him. He needed to get Sasa out of there as quickly as possible.
“Dad, please,” Poe interjected. “Snap needs help. Paige needs help. Karé needs help with her leg. You need to get the others out of here. I’ll be fine. Kay and I will find a way out. Please, just trust me.”

Kes sighed, “How can I do that? How can I just let you go?”

“Because I’m thirty-years-old, Dad. I think by now I’ve figured out how to take care of myself.” Poe glanced at Kaydel, “And because I love Kaydel. I won’t let anything happen to her, and she won’t let anything happen to me.”

Kaydel smiled and grabbed his hand, squeezing tight.

Her eyes flicked to the side and they found Sasa’s for a moment. Sasa’s were so filled with shame that they lowered but a second later.

Kes sighed and admitted defeat. He pulled Poe into a great big bear hug and held him for what felt like an eternity.

“Promise me you won’t die,” Kes whispered when he gathered the courage to let go, but didn’t do it quite yet.

Poe grinned, “Keep the ship running. We won’t be long.”

Kes released him and patted Poe on the shoulder. He turned to Kaydel and pulled her into a hug as well.

While Kes did that, Poe’s eyes were on Timor, “Aren’t you going to say anything?”

“About what?” Timor asked.

Poe rolled his eyes, “The First Order is about to take your daughter hostage. Considering the things I’ve heard about her aunt and what she wants to do to Kaydel, I would think you’d be worried.”

“My daughter has made her own choices and now will face the consequences for picking the wrong ones.”

Poe glared at him, “Kay, can I punch your father?”

“Now’s not the time, Poe,” Kaydel answered.

“…So, later?”

“Yeah, if you get the chance.”

Timor scowled at his daughter, “This is why you got written out of the will.”

“Eh,” Kaydel shrugged, “Aunt Aletha wrote me into hers. Not much of a payout, but I certainly want it more than anything you could offer me… though I do have to split it three ways with a Vrogem and a girl on Jakku.”


“Waroo, could you just carry Snap?” Karé asked as they started to struggle forward. “I don’t know if I could do this all the way to the ship.”

The Wookiee roared and scooped up Snap.
“Wow, being carried in the arms of a Wookiee,” Snap said to Karé who followed at Waroo’s side. “This is literally a childhood dream of mine come true.”

“I know, Babe,” Karé smiled. “You’re welcome.”

“Dacken!” Timor frowned as his grandson started heading forward with Hena and Ryn. “Where are you going?”

“Sorry, Granddad, but we got to have at least one Rebel every generation. Just call me Aletha Ko Tokani.”

Timo looked genuinely confused.

“Never mind,” Dacken waved off the name.

And he literally ran away, Hena following on his heels.

One by one, each member of the Resistance headed out the lobby until just Poe, Kaydel, and Kes remained. Kes Dameron still had one final thing to say to Kylo Ren.

Kes Dameron walked right up to Kylo so there was only a step between them, “I don’t care who your parents are. If something happens to my son, I will come after you.”

Kylo took a step closer, “And if you really loved him so much, you would have warned your child what was about to happen with this bombing… and I wouldn’t be losing mine.”

Kes clenched his jaw and took a step back, “I’ll leave the ship running, Poe… This shouldn’t take long.”

And with that, Kes Dameron left behind his son.

“Alright,” Kylo looked to Poe. “Let’s get down to business.”

“Sure,” Poe gave a fake smile. “So, who talks first? You talk first? I talk first? Because if I talk first I’m going to call you a dick, and then swear at you in Yavinese while I rant about telling your mother about this and what she’ll do to you when she finds out.”

Kylo sucker punched Poe across the face, sending him to the floor.

“Son of a bitch,” Poe clutched his nose as blood poured out of it. That damned Grandson of a Sith probably had broken it.

“Poe!” Kaydel moved to rush forward, but Tara grabbed her, yanked her back, and held her lightsaber a dangerous distance from Kaydel’s throat.

“Let her go,” Poe lurched forward, but before he could get to his feet Cern’s lightsaber pinned him back to the floor.

“You feel that heat?” Tara whispered that well practiced speech. “You feel that burning your skin? See how close this blade is to your throat? Isn’t it so simple? How little effort it would take from me to end your life right now. Twitch but an inch, you’re dead without even a drop of blood spilt.”

“Tara, enough,” Kylo ordered. “Let her go, but don’t let her get away from us.”

She scowled, “But Kylo-”
“Let her go.”

“You’re being ridiculous!” Tara exclaimed. “She’s our hostage, we need to treat her as such! Kylo, as your second-in-command I must insist that we make an example of this pair. Let me kill her right here, right now.”

“You get away from her!” Poe roared. He noticed out of the corner of his eye that Timor Connix was still watching, “Really? You’re seriously not going to do anything? They’re about to murder your daughter, and not even a tear?”

Timor just shrugged.

“Damn, Babe, your family is so messed up,” Poe rolled his eyes. “I’m genuinely surprised no member of it has hooked up with a Skywalker.”

---

**That Same Moment On Jakku**


“No. Our two families uniting is a nightmare.” Luke shifted his food from one side of the plate to the other. “Miss her like crazy, though.”

“You and me both, Pal,” Quom smiled. “…So is the corporeal ghost of your dead friend Alyla still sitting next to you?”

“Yes,” Luke glanced at Alyla Kene sitting next to him, Quom unable to see her due to not being Force Sensitive. “Look, not that I haven’t appreciated a whole week long visit, but am I going to get any answers from you any time soon?”

“Probably not,” Alyla shrugged. “Honestly, I’m just avoiding Ben until this whole Nixrye nonsense is over.”

“Nixrye nonsense?”

“Oh, you don’t want to know. I had to lie to Ben and say I was going to be with my son just to get away from that disaster.”

“Any chance you’ll at least tell me who your son is, how you got him, or even who the father is?”

“Trust me, Luke,” Alyla replied. “You wouldn’t believe me if I told you.”

Luke let the silence last for a minute as he wracked his brain once more for some sort of answers to Alyla’s mysteries.

Quom looked between Luke and the spot he assumed Alyla was sitting (though Quom was looking at Luke’s left side and Alyla was actually sitting on the right.)

“You guys do know I can only hear one side of this conversation, right?”

“Tara for the last time, let the Connix girl go,” Kylo ordered.

“No, Kylo,” Tara yanked Kaydel back against her. She could see the deadly look Poe Dameron was giving her. “You chose me to be your right hand so that I would keep your ass in line, and therefore I am giving you a second opinion. Now heed it!”

“I will not heed it!” Kylo snapped. “You are my second opinion, but I have the final word! Now be quiet and let her go or I will strip you of that rank! Am I understood?”

Tara fell silent, startled by his lashing out. He had never done something like that so publicly before. Frankly, it threw off her game.

“I, uh… Master Kylo,” she stumbled when she found her voice.

“And on that note.” He took a step closer, close enough to impose on her personal space… which was frankly very awkward for Sasa still cradled in his arms. “Considering the devastation around us, I would second guess your judgement right now, Tara.”

“Kylo-”

“Don’t you dare think I buy that I had a vision bullshit for a second,” Kylo growled. “You’re lucky I’m not running my lightsaber through you right now.”

Tara’s eyes flicked to Sasa. She hated the smug look on the copper-haired whore’s face, but she knew a way to wipe it right off the bitch’s lips.

“Trust me, Master Kylo,” Tara smirked, her eyes locking with Sasa’s, “I know have vigorously you can thrust your lightsaber into me. In fact, didn’t you do it right before you went to meet with Sasa when you set off on this trip.”

Oh, Kylo didn’t need the Force to sense how pissed off that revelation made Sasa; the way her nails pierced his arm made that loud and clear.

Furious at Tara’s taunt, Kylo genuinely had the thought to slap Tara. If it wouldn’t compromise his image in front of the other Knights as well as Kaydel and Poe, he might have.

Plus, he was still holding Sasa, so if he tried, he would probably drop her. He then noticed the downright terrifying look Sasa had fixed on Tara, and Kylo decided to set Sasa back down on the ground. If there was going to be another catfight between those two, he wanted to be out of eye gouging range.

“I would choose your actions very carefully, Tara,” Kylo threatened, unhooking his lightsaber from his belt as he rose back to his feet. “I am the one who gets to call the shots here, and my decision is that we’re not going to blindly murder these two. So, if you have a problem with that, then I’m more than happy to replace three Knights of Ren rather than two.”

That shut Tara right up, but her eyes burned into him as she shoved Kaydel forward.

“No… Cern,” Kylo turned around to face Poe, “back off of this one too.”

Cern Ren knew there was a time and place to disobey, but this sure as hell wasn’t it.

“So, Dameron,” Kylo folded his hands behind his back, “back to business.”
“Gonna sucker punch me again?” Poe slowly got to his feet. He glanced at Kaydel, and when he saw she was safe, yanked her against him. They would literally have to pry his cold, dead hands off her to get to Kaydel. “You know that was a cheap shot and I’m fully capable of kicking your ass.”

Kylo laughed, “Dameron, do you not understand that I can literally kill you with a thought?”

“That doesn’t make you better than me.”

“No, you’re right,” Kylo agreed. “It’s actions that makes someone better than another person.”

“A truly good person doesn’t keep a scoreboard of who they’re better than,” Kaydel said coldly.

“But how about we look at the scoreboard?” Kylo smirked. “Let’s compare how Dameron behaved during the truce and how you did. Now, we agreed to truce; no one hurts the other and we work together until our groups are all reunited. I look at you Connix, and what do I see?”

“Your mother’s Mini-Me?” Poe shot.

“No, I-” Kylo paused and took a good look at Kaydel. “Huh… you really do look like her. Go figure.”

Poe rolled his eyes.

“But what I was saying,” Kylo refocused, “was that this woman does appear to be a good person. She upheld the truce excellent, defending and aiding my people. Frankly, I owe you, Sasa’s life, and I thank you for it.”

“Oh,” Kaydel blinked. “Uh… you’re welcome.”

“Now as for Dameron…” Kylo turned to the aforementioned.

Poe grinned like he wanted Kylo to give him his best shot.

“You attacked me multiple times,” said Kylo. “You attacked Wiln, you tried to shoot Marks-”

“Hey! That was an accident!”

“You put nonsense in the head of FN-2187, you stole my lightsaber-”

“That was before the truce!”

“You stole his lightsaber?” Kaydel sounded impressed.

“Yeah, I fought him with it,” Poe grinned. “It was so cool… and I bet the image would turn you on.”

“Can we not, right now?” Wiln asked.

Kylo continued, “And worst of all, Dameron, you attacked your own people.”

“Dacken literally only just became one of my people,” Poe objected. “Besides, he set my girlfriend’s hair on fire. If you can almost murder your own second-in-command for trying to murder your girlfriend, I can punch a guy who isn’t on my side for trying to kill mine.”

“Sasa’s not my girlfriend,” Kylo automatically objected.

“Are you fucking kidding me?” Sasa muttered to herself. “I am literally miscarrying your child, and
you’re pulling that juvenile nonsense? Unbelievable.”

FN-2187 – who was standing close and was the only one to hear – bent down and patted her on the shoulder.

“Poe,” Kaydel fixed him with a stare. “Didn’t we have an agreement? I didn’t want you telling people about the burning hair thing?”

“Ah, shit. Sorry, Babe.”

Kaydel shook her head.

“What I’m trying to say is that this woman right here appears to be genuinely good person,” Kylo said. “So, I’m going to make you an offer.”

“I’m not joining the First Order,” Kaydel shot.

“Oh, no, I’ve heard Alecta Anthea’s intentions for you, it’s quite gruesome and I don’t imagine you would survive in the First Order for very long. No, my offer is about the freedom of you and your little boyfriend.”

Kaydel arched an eyebrow. While intrigued by the mysterious offer, she wanted to wield as much power in this situation as possible. So, in order to get one over on the First Order and Ben Solo, Kaydel smirked and said something Kylo Ren really didn’t want to hear… nor did her father.

“Trust me, Solo,” Kaydel said, “there is nothing small about Poe. And judging from the scene we overheard on your balcony, he can use it a hell of a lot better than you can use yours. He makes sure I don’t have to fake anything. You can’t make the same promise to Sasa.”

“Hey!” Sasa exclaimed.

Poe snorted.

“Balcony?” Tara said slowly.

Kylo was very aware of FN-2187, Cern, Wiln, and Tara’s taken aback eyes on him.

“I didn’t fake anything!” Sasa objected. “He’s good; really good. I mean, Tara can probably also vouch for-”

Poe lost it.

“Sasa, please,” Kylo begged as Poe howled with laughter, “just… stop.”


Poe absolutely could not stop laughing… until Kylo pointed his lightsaber to Poe’s neck. Then Poe shut right the hell up.

“If we could get back on track,” Kylo lowered his lightsaber, “let’s get to the deal. Kaydel, if we take you back to our ship, Alecta Anthea will torture you for a very long time and then give you a very painful and drawn out death. Dameron, if we take you back to our ship, I will torture you for a very long time and then give you a very painful and drawn out death. Either way, no one here is in for a lot of fun in the First Order.”

“You don’t have to tell me twice,” Sasa muttered.
Tara’s glare shut her up.

“So what’s the offer?” Poe shot. “You going to be merciful and kill us both right here?”

“As much as I would enjoy seeing you watch us murder the woman you love, that’s not what’s going to happen here today,” Kylo said.

Poe was taken aback, “That’s… That’s not?”

“No.”

“Why?”

“Poe!” Kaydel elbowed him in the ribs.

“Like I said before, I owe Kaydel for saving Sasa’s life,” Kylo said. “And I will reply that debt here and now. Instead of taking you both prisoner, I’m only going to take one… and you pick which one.”

“What?” Kaydel blurted out.

“Excuse me?” Poe asked.

“Kaydel Ko Connix, you get to make a decision that is truly the stuff of an epic romance,” Kylo taunted. “One of you gets to walk out of here unharmed. We’ll let you walk straight to your ship, get on, and go home without chance. The other will be taken into custody, and, well, let’s not beat around the bush, they will be tortured and murdered. I will be nice and send home the body this time. No trash compactors. Knight’s promise.”

“You are a sick bastard,” Poe glared at him. “Kaydel, you go. I’ll figure out a plan to escape.”


“No argument. She’s going.”

“No, no,” Kylo shook his head. “It’s not your choice, it’s hers. So what’s it going to be, Kaydel?” Kaydel sputtered, “But- I- Wh- How- What am I supposed to do?”

“Walk out the door and go with our friends,” Poe said. “I’ll be fine.”

“No, I won’t! Poe, I’m not going to let them torture and murder you!”

“Don’t worry, they won’t.”

“Yeah, we will,” Cern said.

“We’ll film it too,” Tara promised.

“So what’s it going to be?” Kylo asked. “Are you going to save your skin from the terror of Alecta Anthea and condemn the man you love to death, or are you literally willing to die for him?”

Kaydel couldn’t stop trembling, her eyes burning as she glowered at Ben Solo.

“How dare you ask that of me?” Kaydel growled. “After what I did for Sasa-”

“And I’m being generous, allowing you to be rewarded with either the life of yourself or the man you love going unharmed.”
“Living without Poe or making him live with my death on his conscious is far crueler than just killing us both.”

“And if those are the options on the table,” Poe grabbed Kaydel’s hand. “Then so be it.”

She stood strong with him, “We’re willing to die together if it means we don’t have to live apart.”

Sasa’s eyes slipped shut. Her stomach churned at the cruelty before her. If Kaydel felt for Poe the way Sasa felt for Kylo… Sasa didn’t know what she would do in their situation.

But she couldn’t shake the feeling that Kylo wouldn’t stand there and agree to die together.

“No,” Kylo growled. “That is not an option.”

“Neither of us will abandon the other,” Poe said.

“I’m not leaving without him,” Kaydel vowed.

Kylo had a look on his face that when his mother got it, Poe and Kaydel knew to run and duck.

“You both dying is not an option!” Kylo roared. He had reached his limit of Poe fucking Dameron. “So you Connix, pick, or I swear on the mangled, torture body of Felicity Rhiaon, who I shot in the head and threw down a trash compactor that I will torture and murder Poe here in front of you, and then drag you out of here by the hair, throw you on your damn ship, and then send every single resource the First Order has to D’Qar to burn it to the ground. I will make the Bombing of Faclov, the Destruction of Alderaan, and the Burning of Rornian look like child’s play. Do not test me.”

“You’re a monster,” Kaydel whispered.

Poe clutched her hand so tightly that he appeared to be close to breaking it.

“Call me what you want, but that won’t change a thing,” Kylo said. “My child is dead, and I am not playing around. So, I suggest you stop challenging me and do what I say. Walk out a free woman and lose the man you love or die for that love. The choice is yours, Kaydel… You have five minutes to decide.”

If things go really wrong on the other hand, we have to scuttle and ditch.

- The Journal of Paige Tico

“Come on! Come on!” Han urged everyone towards the transport as he saw Kes’ group running towards them. “Let’s get out of here.”

Person after person whizzed past him up the ramp, but Han scowled as he took inventory of the passengers. He grabbed Kes suddenly by the arm, stopping him and nearly making Dacken fall off the loading ramp.

“What’s going on?” Han asked. “Where’s Poe?”

“What’s going on,” Kes replied, “is that your son is being a petty dick.”
Han blinked, “So… nothing new then?”

Kes rolled his eyes, “He’s doing this whole petty, dickish taking prisoner situation with Poe and Kaydel. I tried to rescue them, but he refuses to let them go.”

Han groaned. He had half a mind to storm into that lobby, take his son by the ear, and drag to the transport and his mother. But as ecstatic as it would make Leia, Han was fairly certain that would end with him probably getting a lightsaber through the chest.

“Hey, _pst_, Tharel!”

Evan stopped as he was halfway up the loading ramp. He frowned as he saw Marks hiding in the trees, motioning for him to come over.

He hesitated before deciding it wouldn’t hurt. So far Marks hadn’t given Evan a reason _not_ to trust him.

Looking for an excuse to backtrack, Evan grabbed Kes’ bag, which he had set on the ground while arguing with Han. Certain that Kes wasn’t watching, Evan chucked it over towards Marks.

“Oh no,” Evan called out a little too loudly. “You dropped your bag, Lieutenant Dameron. Here, I’ll get it.”

He raced over to Marks.


“I heard what the Knights of Ren did to your people,” Marks said. “I wanted to apologize and try to make it up to you.”

“Marks, I don’t think there’s anything you can do to make this up to me.”

He held up a small medical bag, “What about give you a bunch of advanced medical supplies that should tide your people’s injuries over until you reach your medical ship.”

“Yeah, that’ll do it,” Evan snatched the bag and tossed it in Kes’, not realizing the zipper on the First Order bag was undone. “Nice seeing you again, Marks.”

“Hey, wait,” Marks caught his arm. “I just wanted to ask… that punching me in the face over Paige’s sister… does that still stand?”

Evan narrowed his eyes, “I’m going to walk away and pretend I didn’t hear that.”

“Good plan.”

“Kes, for the last time we can’t stay,” Han argued as Evan Tharel zipped past him, carrying Kes’ bag.

“Please, Han, just a few more minutes,” Kes begged. “We have to give Poe a chance. I mean, that’s why we came here in the first place. Please… what if it was Ben we were talking about?”

Han sighed. He really hated when people played the Ben card because honestly, he never really knew anymore how he would deal with his son.

“Chewie,” Han looked up at the Wookiee, “do you think I should-”
“I know, Pal, but-”

“Fair point, but this is Ben we’re talking about. When he takes people hostage-”

Alright, you win.” Han looked to Kes, “You think your boy can take care of himself?”

“He’s gotten out of worse scraps before,” Kes smirked.

“Fine, we’ll give them thirty minutes,” Han said. “But if they’re not here by then, we leave without them. Deal?”

“Deal.”

“Kay, go.”

“For the last time, Poe, I’m not going anywhere. You go.”

“I’m not going to let your aunt have you.”

“And I’m not going to let Kylo have you.”

“Enough, Kay. It’s been decided.”

“You’re right, it has,” Kaydel crossed her arms. “You’re the one going.”

“I’m not leaving,” Poe stubborn refused.

“I’m not going either.”

“This isn’t up for discussion.”

“No, it isn’t. The choice was put to me, Poe. I get the final say.”

“They will kill you, Kaydel. All I’ve got on my plate is torture… probably. I’m fairly certain I can avoid the actual murder, and come on, what has a little torture ever really done to a person?”

“I won’t let them do that to you!”

“Suggestion,” Tara cut in. “How about we just torture and kill them both?”

“I second that motion,” Cern held up his hand.

“No,” Kylo smirked, “this is so much worse, making them choose their own safety or their lovers, having to live with the fact that one of them must die without the other. Knowing that the one they love is in agony and it was all their-”

A hand grasped his wrist.
He turned in shock to look upon Sasa. She was struggling to stand as Poe and Kaydel resumed their argument. She looked so pale and broken, her beautiful dress stained with the blood of their baby. Her eyes were soft and pleading, those forest green pools enveloping him as her Cerise Signature reached for his Forest Green Signature.

“Oh no, Sasa, please don’t do this,” Kylo whispered.

But what passed through them said it all.

“Damn it,” he winced.

Maybe it was the knowledge that Kaydel had risked her life to save Sasa’s. Maybe it was some vague attachment he had held to the childhood friendship he and Poe once had shared.

Maybe it was remembering how Uncle Luke had literally tried to murder him when he had taken Felicity from Luke the way he was trying to separate Poe and Kaydel.

Maybe it was the friendship Kaydel had shown Kylo and Sasa during her undercover mission. Maybe it was the kindness of Evan Tharel and his treatment of Sasa.

Maybe it was the respect he had for that momentary truce. Maybe it was because his mother cared about Poe and Kaydel.

Maybe it was because Sasa was miscarrying the baby they had tried so hard for. Heck, maybe it was just because it would piss off Tara.

…Or maybe it was simply because Sasa asked it of him.

Whatever the reason, Ben Solo found himself uttering the words, “You both can go.”

Everyone just stared at him.

“I’m sorry, what?” Poe asked.

Kylo huffed, “I’ve changed my mind. I’m not going to fully spare one of you, I’m going to give myself the chance to kill both of you.”

Poe blinked, “…Okay.”

Kylo sighed, “Two minutes. You will get a two minute head start to run to whatever piece of garbage your friends managed to fly here in. If you reach there, you may go, but if we catch you… whoever we catch we keep.”

“Master Kylo,” Wiln started hesitantly.

“Silence!” Kylo cut him off. “The choice is made.”

Poe and Kaydel didn’t quite know what to say. This wasn’t how they expected things to turn out. Then Kaydel caught Sasa’s teary eyes from across the room. She really was thankful to Kaydel.

And even more importantly, Ben Solo really did love her.

Kaydel had made a promise to give Leia Organa a good word on Sasa, and truly Kaydel could. Though she wasn’t looking forward to even having that conversation, especially now that it would involve her telling General Organa that her grandchild no one even knew she was going to have, had
been miscarried.

Maybe she’d pass that bit to Evan.

“So, you’re really going to let us go?” Poe asked. “Kay and I… can make a run for it?”

“I won’t stop you,” Kylo replied.

“Yeah, but someone else might. How do we know we’ll get out safely?”

Kylo sighed and his eyes drifted among his people; they set on one man in particular. It was risky, but it might be the only way to demonstrate to Poe that he meant the truth.

“FN-2187,” Kylo ordered. “You will accompany them and stop anyone from harming them. Once you’ve brought them to their ship, you will return to our ship. We will use my ship docked in the resort garage, assuming it hasn’t been harmed by the bombing.”

“It went untouched,” Wiln reported, his trio having sought out the dangerous areas before entering the building, preventing putting themselves in further harm’s way.

“Do you understand?”

“Yes, sir,” FN-2187 saluted. He turned to Poe, “Should we… go now?”

Kylo hated just how gleeful Dameron looked at having FN-2187 go with them. Oh, Poe was so going to try to steal FN-2187 to the Resistance; Kylo would put money on it.

“Come on, Babe,” Poe grabbed Kaydel’s arm. “Let’s go.”

“No, wait!” Tara yelled.

It was too late; Kaydel, Poe, and Finn raced out of the lobby. No one noticed – nor would they care – that Timor winced and stared after Kaydel longingly as she ran off without a second thought for him. It was a shame; if only she would stop this Resistance nonsense.

But Tara… Tara was pissed.

“You,” she growled, turning to face Kylo.

Wiln glowered as he watched her and rested his hand on his saber hilt. Cern noticed, caught Tara’s eye, and then nodded at Wiln. She saw what was going on but couldn’t focus on that at the moment. Kylo and his little whore were the problem.

“I don’t believe this,” Tara advanced on him. “You let them both go? How dare you!”

“It was my choice to make,” Kylo dismissed.

“And it was the choice of a coward!” Tara roared. “That display… what just happen… That was pathetic!”

“Stand down, Tara.”

“No, I won’t. How dare you stand there and pretend to be so all mighty leader. That was a show of weakness, one I have fought so hard for you to never display to the Resistance. So Sasa got hurt, so what? I have been the one who has worked for years to model you into the fearsome Master of Ren you rightfully are. I have pushed you and worked you and made you what you are! And with one
bat of the eyelashes, that literally good for nothing whore destroyed your imag-"

He hit her. Plain and simply, Kylo Ren slapped Tara.

No one dared to make a move as they watched the scene in utter shock.

“You’re right,” Kylo said coldly, “you did make me what I am. You taught me that there’s really only two ways for me to work through my anger: fighting and fucking. Considering that I’m very much not in a position to do the later, I highly suggest you back off.”

Tara took a step back.

“Do not think you are secure in your position.” Kylo glared at all his Knights of Ren, “Any of you. You all can be replaced in a heartbeat. Yes, everyone. Tara, Cern, Wiln, hell even Sasa.”

Sasa winced.

“I do not replace any of you because I have faith and confidence in you,” he said. “I want every member of this team standing in front of me. I think we’ve forgotten that fact: this is a team, not a competition. You each have your own role, your own duties, your own place. There is no hierarchy to clamor over. I am the Master, you are the Knights. End of story. And if any of you have a problem with that, I am more than willing to clean house.”

His eyes lingered on Cern for a moment.

“Now,” Kylo said a little less intensely, “we’re going to reset. When the two empty spots are filled, we will be the New Knights of Ren. We will work as a team and follow my orders without our own singular motivations to cloud that duty. If I have to wear my mask in front of you all just to emphasize my superiority, then I will. And if any of you have a problem with working as a team with any other member of this Knighthood… I’m more than happy to make it be three spots to fill. Am I understood?”

“Yes, Master,” Tara, Wiln, Cern, and Sasa answered in perfect unison.

“Good,” he looked around at all of them. “Just so you all know, when we return to the Finalizer, it will not be to stay long. I will arrange an audience with the Supreme Leader so we may answer for the events of this disaster in person.”

Kylo eyed Tara.

“So everyone’s answers better be good,” Kylo seethed. “Am I understood?”

“Yes, Master,” Tara, Wiln, Cern, and Sasa answered in perfect unison.

“Now, Cern,” he turned to the silver-haired Knight. “You said you tracked down a member of Crimson Dawn?”

“I’ve got a few Stormtroopers holding her hostage,” Cern replied. He was not silver-haired as in old – the man was in his mid-thirties – but rather he had hair literally the colour of silver. It shone in the sunlight if you looked at him at the right angle. “She’s one of Lady Qi’ra’s nearest and dearest, though not so much after a run-in with the Resistance midget. Honestly I don’t know how valuable my catch will be. She doesn’t seem to be the best at putting up a fight, sort of gimped by an old leg injury. I think Qi’ra Ores holds her so dear because of a sense of kinship.”

“Then bring her to Captain Anthea. If anyone could make a scene out of an execution… it’s going to
be her. Does anyone else have any business?”

“Sir?” Wiln stepped forward. “What about Berd and Doxl?”

“You and Tara will bring them with us,” Kylo replied. “They’re not going to get away with this easily. I fully intend on making an example of them.”

“Yes, Sir,” Wiln nodded. He and Tara immediately went to collect the pair while Cern departed from the group.

“Kylo,” Sasa moaned, she had been reclining all of her weight against him. Kylo was genuinely surprised she hadn’t collapsed to the ground. “What about us? What are we to do now?”


Sasa’s movements were very slow as she obeyed. Just when she had the bag securely on her shoulder, she yelped as Kylo picked her up bridal style again.

“And I’m going to take you somewhere safe,” he kissed her forehead. “I promise you, no one – not even Tara – is going to touch you while I’ve got you.”

She nuzzled her face against his neck and whispered in his ear, “I love you.”

He buried his face into her hair and exhaled strongly, “I know.”

Tara glowered as Kylo tenderly carried Sasa out of the lobby, she and Wiln awkwardly hauling out Berd and Doxl.

Cern and Hux were never going to let her live this plan down.

Reaching outside, Finn, Poe, and Kaydel were just about home free when Kaydel suddenly yelped. Before Poe could realize what was going on, Kaydel yanked him behind a cluster of trees. They weren’t very large trees, and if you were staring at them, no doubt would you see the petite blonde clutching onto her boyfriend.

It wasn’t the action of someone thinking their plan through, rather one of someone desperate and terrified. Kaydel was indeed terrified, literally shaking as she held Poe in front of her, using him as an honest-to-the-Goddesses human shield. Her skin was pale as a sheet, and she fought not to burst into sobs.

“Don’t let me go,” she begged Poe. “Don’t let her take me.”

“I won’t. I won’t,” Poe was confounded. “I promise, I won’t.”

Poe had never seen her so terrified… which was saying a lot considering he had had that thought at least twice already that day.

“Please… please don’t let her see me,” Kaydel held Poe like her lifeline sticking him awkwardly in the low hanging branches so they poked him in multiple uncomfortable places.

“Let who see you?” Poe glanced at Finn as if that would somehow explain things. “Babe, what’s going on?”
Kaydel’s breathing was ragged, “It’s her.”

“Who?”

“Her,” she flung out her arm to point behind him.

In unified confusion, Poe and Finn turned to see what had so frightened Kaydel.Exiting from a newly landed transport was a tall, somewhat familiar blonde woman, leading a few dozen Stormtroopers down the ramp.

A tall, somewhat familiar blonde woman who did not look unlike Aletha Kymeri.

“Who is that?” Finn asked.

“That,” Poe couldn’t take his eyes away from the woman, “I believe is Alecta Anthea.”

Kaydel clutched him tighter.

“Oh,” Finn nodded. “…Who’s Alecta Anthea?”

_BWAH BWOH!_

A sleek and squarish, black BB unit came rolling down the transport ramp and settled at Alecta’s feet.

“Oh dang…” Finn’s eyes widened at the sight of BB-9E. He knew who owned that droid, “That’s your aunt? Tara wasn’t kidding about Timor Connix getting his ass kicked for all this. She’s going to actually murder him.”

“Or murder me,” Kaydel whimpered as Poe pulled her in closer.

“She’s not going to get you, Babe,” he vowed. Poe held her so tight it was like he was trying to absorb her into his own body. It would take the strength of all the Gods of all the worlds combined to tear Kaydel Ko Connix out of his arms. Ben Solo had almost taken her from him that day, Alecta would not finish Ben’s work. “Everyone just stay quiet and still.”

“But why?” Finn asked.

“She’s vowed to kill me,” Kaydel answered.

Finn’s heart fell. He had seen the murders Alecta Anthea liked to commit, he wasn’t going to let that happen to the woman who saved Sasa. He owed her for saving the woman he loved, even though he knew Sasa would never return those feelings.

They stood there in silence for what felt like an entirety. Alecta spoke to the various troop leaders and directed medic teams. Frequently she spoke in a comm – probably directing other troops – and there were a ton of people going to and from her ship.

Poe’s eyes never moved from her.

BB-9E stayed her faithful assistant at her feet. He frequently electrocuted Stormtroopers who dropped their shoulders into a relaxed pose for even a second. One man sneezed, and his screams of pain carried probably all the way to D’Qar.

Odd. Poe frowned at the droid, remembering Nalto’s debriefing on his maiming. What was BB-8’s evil twin doing with Phasma?
“I don’t think they’ll be there for much longer,” Finn had taken up a protective position in the trees in front of Poe and Kaydel. If anyone looked over at them, it would be him they spotted first, giving Poe and Kaydel the chance to run. “We’ve been hiding here for about ten minutes. I’m certain that Master Kylo will be calling for her soon.”

“We have to get out of here, Poe,” Kaydel said.

Poe held her tighter, “No, if we go now, she’ll find you and I won’t let her have you.”

“She’ll kill you if she finds you with me.”

“I don’t care. I almost lost you too many times today, if someone is going after you, they’ll have to get through me first.”

“But Poe, our ship is going to leave without us.”

“If they leave you, they’re leaving me too. End of story.”

“Guys, we might have to move,” Finn whispered. “We got company.”

“Well, it’s about time you arrived,” Cern Ren called out. He was dragging behind him a tied up black-haired woman wearing a Crimson Dawn emblem prominently on her belt. “Thought you’d never show.”

Alecta Anthea narrowed her eyes, “Do not be so cavalier with me, Cern.”

Before he could get out a witty retort, BB-9E shoved a few dozen volts into his leg. Cern cried out and stumbled, but his grip on the woman did not loosen.

“Damn it, Captain!” Cern after BB-9E as he gave a satisfied bleep and rolled back to Alecta. “Call off the little trash ball.”

Alecta narrowed her eyes, “9E, shock him again.”

He did so with glee and another scream from Cern.

“Don’t insult my droid,” Alecta warned.

“I surrender,” Cern held up his free hand. He glanced over at the woman he was dragging. She was trying to subtly wretch her arm from his grasp. Cern gave her a sharp yank and warned, “Don’t you even think about it. The three of us are the last people you want to piss off.”

Alecta regarded the woman as mildly as a flower growing in a field, “Who’s this?”

“My catch from Crimson Dawn,” Cern smirked. “Her name’s Minati, and she was one of Lady Qi’ra’s top soldiers but apparently Qi’ra is quite pissed off with her at the moment.”

“Officers, please,” Minati was trying to get away, but there was something in her voice that was a little too secure in her position, “can we talk about this? I have a lot to offer.”

Alecta ignored her, “How did you get her?”

“One of the Resistance attacked Minati, so she was creeping about trying to find them and get revenge,” Cern answered. “I told her I could help her… and then took her hostage. I was going to just maim her until she was too weak to fight back, but then she started saying some very interesting things.”
“Really?”

Alecta grabbed Minati’s wrist and threw her to the ground. Her skull hit the concrete with a sickening thud and Minati squealed in pain. Alecta slammed down her foot onto Minati’s back and dug her heel in painfully. Based on the noises coming from Minati’s ribcage, it was very possible that Alecta was breaking a few ribs in the simple action.

“Speak then,” Alecta coldly ordered.

*bwa bew bwah!*

BB-9E rolled up to Minati’s face. Half a dozen pointy and/or electrified tools popped out of his circular body.

“Or we’ll make you speak,” Alecta simply said.

“There’s no need for torture,” Minati begged. “Please, I have information, *important* information. Information about a girl on Jakku.”

Kaydel’s ears perked up. The acoustics of the area made the conversation carry straight to Poe, Kaydel, and Finn in the trees.

“Jakku?” Kaydel whispered. Thankfully their location did not have the acoustics to carry *their* conversation to Alecta, Cern, Minati, and BB-9E. “Wait… I know the name Minati. Isn’t that… that’s the woman Aunt Aletha shot in the knee?”

“Huh,” Poe watched the scene curiously. “Your family really likes torturing that woman.”

“Poe,” Kaydel whispered to him. “What if this is about Kira?”

He blanched at that, but there was not a single cell of his brain that could think of a way to stop the conversation. If he went out there, there was no doubt in his mind it would result in Alecta discovering Kaydel. He had to do something. There was no way that if Cern, Alecta, and BB-9E learned Kira’s secret, they wouldn’t act on it.

…Not that he knew the secret, but still, principle of the thing.

Meanwhile, Kaydel had her eyes set on a much closer First Order officer. Forget Alecta or Cern, could *Finn* keep whatever Kira’s secret was?

“Alright, you have information,” Alecta’s foot still dug into Minati’s back. “Then speak it.”

Minati regarded BB-9E’s tools in her face, “Please, Officer-”

“*Captain,*” Alecta corrected.

“Captain,” Minati nodded, “this is a huge piece of information. If I tell it, I would be putting my life at risk.”

“Then why bring it up if you don’t intend to divulge it?” Cern asked.

“Oh, I can divulge it… you just have to make it worth it to me.”

Cern and Alecta traded a look.

“Worth it?” Cern echoed.
“About… 500,000 should do it,” Minati replied.

“And why would we pay you for this information?” Alecta’s voice was as cold as ever.

Minati thought of the threat for a moment but pushed it aside. Some small Resistance girl was nothing compared to the wrath of Luke Skywalker. He would no doubt come after her, but that money would give her a nice head start. Maybe she could even track down Jarex and frame him for the reveal.

The bastard was still probably hanging around Maz Kanata’s bar.

“Because,” Minati said, “when you hear this piece of information… it will turn the Galaxy upside down.”

Alecta and Cern exchanged another look.

Poe, Kaydel, and Finn didn’t dare to even breathe.

“This information…” Cern started, “is 500,000 the lowest you’ll go for it?”

“Of course not,” Minati brightened. She was actually going to get her way, “I’m open to negotiation on the reward.”

“What about no reward?” Alecta countered.

“I’m sorry,” Minati smiled at her, “but there is absolutely no way that I will reveal my secret without getting a reward.”

Alecta simply nodded, “Alright then.”

It happened too quick to make out. One moment Alecta had her boot on Minati’s back, then her foot flipped over Minati, and it drove down stepping on her cheek, forcing her head and neck to bend in opposite directions.

Then came the SNAP that made Poe, Kaydel, and Finn jump. Ten years ago, Aletha Anthea had threatened to murder Minati, and now her sister had finished the job.

And Alecta Anthea had broken Minati’s neck using only her foot.

Not going to lie, Poe was a little impressed.

“Damn it!” Cern exclaimed. “What’d you do that for?”

“I don’t pay for information,” Alecta simply said, lifting her foot off Minati’s corpse.

“What if we needed that information?”

“If we did, she would have played that card by giving us a tidbit about it to entice us. We don’t need gossip from Crimson Dawn lackeys.”

“We needed her to make an example of Crimson Dawn.”

“And I have,” Alecta gestured to the unmoving corpse at her feet. “If you wish for me to do it publicly, we can hunt down another easily.”

Cern sighed, “Alright. I guess there’s nothing I can do about it now, but jeez… That was an awful
“Hated her?” Alecta raised an eyebrow. “I didn’t give a shit about her. That was an easy death; cruel but quick. The kind I give to people whose names I will have forgotten by the next morning. If I cared about her… if I were truly personally involved in this situation, the kind of death I would give her is unthinkable. You have no idea what I’m capable of. The stories you’ve heard are mere children’s tales.”

The words piqued Cern’s interest, “Wow… who would really get you angry?”

“Cern, there are three people I intend on killing in a truly terrible fashion. It’ll be painful, gratuitous, and above all slow.”

“And who are those people?”


Without a second thought, both Finn and Poe took a step in front of Kaydel.

“Now come,” Alecta signaled to BB-9E to put his tools away. “I have to go punch my brother-in-law in the face.”

“Oh, wait for me!” Cern eagerly ran after Alecta as she led the Stormtroopers towards the hotel.

The corpse of Minati was left abandoned in the street.

“Well…” Kaydel said after a while, “that’ll be a story for Aletha.”

“I say we run in the opposite direction of that psychopath,” Poe voted.

“Okay, run,” Finn ordered. “Run!”

They all took off in an instant.

“You know,” Poe glanced at Kaydel as they sped in the direction of Han’s ship, “you were the one who said before we left that you hoped you would come home with a story to tell Kira. Today certainly gave you a few of those.”

Kaydel shook her head, “I’m just glad we were able to keep Kira away from all this violence and ugliness. Who knows what thoughts Kira might get in her head living on Jakku if she heard about all these lightsabers and electricity shock torturing?”

“Yeah. I mean, it was just Jessika you left her with.”

Kaydel stopped dead in her tracks.

Poe frowned, “What is it?”

“I left her alone with Jessika.”

“…Oh shit.”
“And that’s how you hotwire your speeder to make sure no one steals it, and give a good shock to those who try,” Jessika finished. “See, we don’t need Aletha around. Why learn how to drug people against their will when I can teach you how to electrocute them?”

There was a long silence from Kira’s comm.

“I’m starting to see why Kaydel doesn’t leave us alone unsupervised,” Kira said.

Jessika raised an eyebrow, “You were taking notes, weren’t you?”

“Copious amounts.”

“Read them to me.”

You could hot-wire it but I intentionally left a wire loose. When I’m exploring a wreck, I attach that wire to the hull and it electrifies the whole thing. It’s not enough to kill someone but it will definitely make them think twice about doing that again.

- Rey’s Survival Guide

Jessika grinned, “Atta girl.”

“Now, tell me about land mines.”

“There they are!” Poe called as the transport came into view. The ship was started, but the ramp was down, and Han was standing on it yelling for them to hurry up. “Come on, Kay! We’re almost home free!”

“Go! Go!” Finn yelled, pulling back from the pair. “I got your backs. I’ll cover you two. You go before my people get here!”

Kaydel shot a smile back at him, “Thank you, Finn. It was nice meeting you. I’ll try not to shoot you if we run into each other on the battlefield.”

Poe frowned.

“Come on!” Han yelled as he saw Poe and Kaydel racing towards the ramp, some guy halting at the end of the landing platform. “Move it, Dameron or I’ll leave you!”

“What was that?” Kes Dameron’s voice shouted from in the ship.

“Just strap in Kes!” Han called back. “He’s close enough that worse comes to worse we tow the kid home. MOVE IT, POE! DON’T THINK I WON’T LEAVE YOU!”

Poe and Kaydel ran as fast as their legs could carry them. Their hearts pounded as adrenaline pulsed their veins, burning them as relief started to set. They had done it, they had survived. They were free of the First Order. They had escaped the clutches of Snoke and Kylo Ren.
Then Poe thought of someone standing at the end of the landing platform, who could not say the same thing.

Poe stopped running.

Kaydel frowned back at him but kept going, “Poe, come on!”

He hesitated, then turned on his heel and raced back to Finn.

“What are you doing?” Finn exclaimed. “Run!”

“Wait,” Poe skidded to a stop. He took a moment to catch his breath, and then placed a hand on Finn’s shoulder. Poe looked into his eyes and said seriously, “Finn… come with us.”

“What?” Finn exclaimed. “Are you crazy?”

“I’m dead serious. Come with us to the Resistance. Join us in our fight.”

“Why would I ever join you?” Finn pushed off Poe’s hand.

“Uh… because it would free you from dealing with shit like this? Leave behind the First Order and fight for the right side.”

“The First Order is the right side. This whole mess – yes, it was complicated, and I hated every moment of it – but at the end of the day, it was Crimson Dawn and the actions of one member of the First Order. The rest of the First Order is good, Poe. We bring peace and justice to the galaxy. You just want to stop us.”

Poe’s face fell, “…You’re not ready. You don’t understand. I thought you would-”

Kaydel called, “Poe!”

He and Finn turned to the ship. Kaydel was at the top of the loading ramp with Han Solo at her side.

“Come on, Dameron,” Han yelled, barely sparing a glance at the other boy. “We gotta go! Don’t make me get your dad! You know he will drag you.”

Setting his jaw, Poe turned back to Finn and locked his eyes with such an intensity that Finn was too afraid to look away.

“You’re not ready now,” Poe’s voice was firm, “but that’s okay. Someday you will be. And when that day comes, I want you to know the door will always be open. If you ever want to join the Resistance and fight the good fight, just come find me.”

Finn had no words to say. He just stared at this crazy Resistance pilot in utter astonishment.

“Dameron!” Han shouted. “On the ship now or I’m leaving you behind!”

“Coming!” Poe smiled at Finn, “We’ll see each other again, Buddy. I promise.”

Then Poe Dameron turned and ran to the ship.

FN-2187 just blinked. What the hell was that? The pilot had been absolutely ridiculous. Join the Resistance. Leave everything behind. It was all utter nonsense.

…He still liked being called Buddy, though.
“You done with your flirting?” Han asked as Poe reached the top of the ramp.

“I had something important to do,” Poe simply offered as he wrapped an arm around Kaydel’s waist.

“Getting our asses out of here is an important thing to do,” Han countered. “So, if we could avoid any further—”

He went perfectly still. Poe and Kaydel exchanged a look and turned to see what had so shaken Han Solo.

The First Order group had just emerged out of the hotel complex on their way toward their own ship.

And Ben Solo had locked eyes with his father.

Qi’ra reclined on the couch of her lounge area, listening to the familiar sounds of hyperspace, clutching a glass of wine in each hand. They weren’t her first round, and they certainly wouldn’t be her last.

Truth be told, she didn’t want to leave Tara behind on Nixrye, but she had no choice. Part of protecting Tara was making sure no one knew Tara was her daughter. Still, as she swirled the wine in her glasses Qi’ra couldn’t help but worry what Han Solo’s son would do to her daughter. The second the whisper of miscarriage had swept across Nixrye, Qi’ra had gotten Crimson Dawn the hell out of there.

Honestly, could this day get any worse?

“My Lady,” Tyrel, her right-hand man approached her from the cockpit. “Your husband, Laertes Ores is calling the ship’s comm. I guess he heard about Nixrye and wants you to… explain a few things.”

Qi’ra sighed. Why did she have to tempt fate?

“Tyrel, how many times must I tell you?” Qi’ra swung her body around to sit up rather ungracefully, “you don’t have to announce he’s my husband when telling me Laertes is calling.”

“My Lady, you told me to always announce your relation to the person who is calling you, that way you never forget.”

“Yes, but he is my husband. I should hope I wouldn’t forget.”

“Of course.” That was when he took in the nervous expression on Qi’ra’s face, “My Lady, do you want me to tell your husband that you are not feeling well enough to take his call?”

Qi’ra looked down at her glasses of wine, considered it, and then each back in a single gulp.

“And Ben Solo stared at each other from across the landing platform. No one around them dared say a word, and the Solo men certainly weren’t blabbing either.
Poe thought it was actually sort of an odd sight. Han Solo was as unmoving as a wax work, and honestly, that freaked out Poe a little as Han Solo had always been a man of movement and activity.

Then there was the frozen Ben… who was carrying Sasa Ren in a protective cradle hold.

Poe could only imagine what Han was thinking at the sight of his son carrying a strange copper-haired Knight of Ren in such a loving fashion, her dress all torn and bloody. Even Sasa had picked up on the awkwardness, shifting uncomfortably in Kylo’s arms despite her tears and the injured collarbone and leg.

Part of Poe was glad that Han didn’t know Sasa was literally in the process of miscarriage his grandchild.

For a very… very… very long time no one said a thing. No one even dared to move the slightest muscle. All that mattered in that moment was Han Solo facing his runaway son for the first time in twelve years.

And then… they spoke.

“What are you all staring at?” Kylo barked at his contingent. “Get moving!”

The Knights (plus FN-2187) didn’t need to be asked twice. The First Order set about scrambling for their ship, preparing to do the role expected of them.

Still… Ben Solo didn’t move.

For a long time, Ben and Han stood there in the chaos surrounding them just staring into identical sets of eyes.

Then with a hard swallow, Han turned his back on his son and moved to enter his ship.

“Han Solo!” Ben called.

He stopped in his tracks.

Hoping against hope, Han slowly pivoted back towards his son, even though worry was permanently etched onto the faces of Poe and Kaydel. His eyes locked with Ben again, now taking in that the other female Knight – he had learned of Tara Ren years ago, though didn’t know yet who her parents were – had settled at Ben’s side.

Han heard a faint growl from Chewbacca who had come to investigate with Waroo. Poe held out an arm and gave Chewie and Waroo a quick shake of the head. Chewie glanced towards Waroo, gave a small moan, and settled on the balls of his feet. Han deserved the chance to interact with his son as much as Chewie deserved to have Waroo standing next to him.

But Han just stared at his son. He didn’t dare say the first word. His son had something to say to him and Han would let him say it.

Kylo spoke, “Looks like you got rid of that garbage Millennium Falcon.”

Of course, he would say that.

“Just temporarily misplaced it,” Han slid his hand into his pocket and gripped his golden dice.

Sometimes you lost the things you love… but that didn’t mean you couldn’t get them back.
Once in a while.

“Then do yourself a favor,” Kylo said, “don’t get it back. That thing should have been hauled to the scrapper years ago.”

Han laughed, “Oh please, you’re upset I lost it, and you know it. I don’t need to be a Jedi to read that on your face.”

Kylo quickly looked away as Tara turned her eyes on him, “I want nothing from that life.”

“Is that so?”

Han reached back on his weapons belt and pulled out something from the back, tucked under his jacket. It was something no one knew he had secretly taken over a decade ago. Kylo’s eyes widened in shock, fear, or maybe something sentimental as Han held it up.

It was the blaster his father had given him for his thirteenth birthday.

“You left this behind when you ran away from home,” Han said. “I always thought it might have been a mistake. Something you overlooked in your panic.”

Kylo stood there frozen. His throat felt so dry, he couldn’t imagine ever being able to swallow again.

“I carry it with me everywhere,” Han continued. “Just in case I ever ran into you… In case you wanted it back… In case you did overlook it.”

“I… I didn’t,” Kylo found the words.

Han smiled; he knew when his son was lying.

“Here,” Han disassembled the blaster and power cell.

It was the same sort of DL-44 he had carried since Beckett gave him his first that night by the fire when he was twenty-one. Forty years had ravaged his life. His ship was gone, his hair was grey, his skin was wrinkled, a Wookiee owed him a life debt, his father-in-law was a Sith Lord, his son was an agent of the First Order, and he was married to an honest-to-God Princess… but Han Solo still trusted nothing better than a good blaster at his side.

Han threw both components towards his son. Kylo let them hit the ground and made no move to collect them, but Han was pleased to see that they hit the ground softly… a work of someone using the Force.

The work of someone who wanted to pretend they didn’t care.

“Take it,” Han urged. “I know you want to.”

Kylo hesitated, but he felt Tara’s eyes on him. He turned to look at her, and that forbidding, dangerous scowl shut down any thought of the blaster in an instant.

“The only thing I want is to take all of you under arrest,” Kylo sneered. He glanced to Poe, “But we had an agreement, so…”

Poe nodded.

Han tried not to let his heart’s thoughts show on his face.
Why couldn’t Ben have just picked up the blaster? Just give him a small flicker of hope that his son wasn’t lost forever?

He squeezed the dice in his pocket.

“Two-One,” Kylo ordered.

FN-2187’s head jerked up, knocked back to reality from the strange display.

Kylo said nothing, simply snapped and pointed at Sasa.

FN-2187 was quick to scamper to Kylo’s side. He took Sasa carefully, almost lovingly into his own arms and made for the First Order ship.

“Come, Kylo,” Tara said loudly. She placed her hand on his arm not unlike the way Han had once seen Qi’ra touch Dryden Vos on a couch forty years ago. “We have work to do.”

Oh fuck. Han scowled. He had heard the rumors about Ben and the possibility of some weird harem situation… but he seriously wasn’t doing the sort of thing he had watched Vos do with Qi’ra all those years ago?

As silly as it sounded, Han probably had never felt more directly disappointed in his son than in that moment. At least he hadn’t had to watch Ben burn down Rornian, slaughter the Jedi, or torture and kill Felicity.

“We’ll be on our way. And Solo?” Kylo called.

Han grunted.

Ben smirked at his father, “Ask Dameron about what happened to Felicity Rhiaon.”

Chewbacca let out a vicious growl, no doubt already guessing what Ben had finally confessed. He, Luke, and Quom Tinadar had been the only ones before that day not involved with the First Order that knew the truth.

This was going to get ugly.

Han Solo said nothing more to his son. He just urged everyone to follow him into the ship, and soon enough they had taken off and were gone.

“That was a good display,” Tara rubbed his arm. Her voice had that silky, seductive edge to it that always drove him wild. “Very strong move. A very-”

“Tara,” he said stiffly. “Go onto the ship. Now.”

She frowned and took a very confused step back. There was something hard and dangerous in his eyes. She didn’t understand. Why was he-

“Wiln?” he called. “Is Sasa safe on the ship?”

Oh… that’s why.

“Yes,” Wiln reported. “The… bag and its contents are with her. I’ve also got Doxl’s body separated from the others and Berd heavily sedated. Would you like me to-”

“I need answers before his execution,” Kylo cut off. His eyes narrowed at Tara, “I’m certain that he
wasn’t acting alone. After I interrogate him, I’ll execute him. Understood?”

Tara and Wiln knew the question hadn’t been for him.

“Understood,” Tara whispered.

“On the ship. Now.”

She still held her head high as she returned to the ship. Tara Ores was not the daughter of the two most dangerous crime bosses since Jabba the Hutt to be intimidated by the offspring of Han Solo.

Soon enough, only Wiln and Kylo remained on the landing platform.

Kylo’s eyes were locked on the sky where the dot that was his father’s ship was disappearing into the horizon.

“Sir?” Wiln asked. “Are you coming?”

The dot disappeared.

“Are you…” Wiln hesitated. “Are you okay?”

Kylo was silent a moment.

“I’m fine,” he said at last.

He reached out his hand and summoned the blaster and power cell. Ben Solo quickly hid his blaster beneath the folds of his clothing.

“Come on,” Kylo said to Wiln. “Let’s go home.”

Chapter End Notes

Coming Up Next Chapter…

Blood and Ash

As the First Order and Resistance deal with the aftermath of Nixrye, Poe struggles to tell Han what Ben did to Felicity. Meanwhile, Rey tries to learn more about the religion her mother was born into and takes part in a ceremony she really shouldn’t.

Yes, before anyone asks, the Finn suddenly having a blood disorder thing is me trying to work in a new idea for a future plot. Just bear with me on any continuity errors it may have caused.

You know, the funny part about it taking so long to get to the chapter titled Kaydel’s Decision is that I’m really not even fond of the name. But yes, finally we’re at the last chapter of the Nixrye storyline… and then we have four chapters dealing with the aftermath before we move into a storyline I’m very excited for. Although one of those chapters involves writing Felicity again, and I’ve missed her so much.
Warning: a lot of extremely uncomfortable shit is about to go down in the First Order storyline we’re about to go into. If you have any triggers involving sexual assault, abuse, harassment, non-con elements, anything sexual PLEASE CONTACT ME. The next storyline is one of the ugliest we will see in the entire story, and if you need any censoring, trigger warnings, or even a summary of the important details so you can skip over the entire chapter, let me know. I am willing to provide any accommodation you need.

Also I would like to point out to everyone who kept thinking all those times during this storyline that Kaydel was going to die, in chapter 49 (the chapter before this storyline started) there was a line that said Kaydel would be alive during TFA to give her blessing to Poe on murdering Kylo. I’m glad people were too involved with the current storyline to remember that.
Back to Roots

Chapter Summary

Rey explains the significance of her hair buns, Marks listens to audiobooks, and Quom sneezes flames.

Chapter Notes

Warning, chapter includes an aggressive (but consensual) sex scene that might be uncomfortable for some people to read.

I split up this chapter into three parts, so the next will be A Religious Experience and then Ash and Blood.

So, any of you haven’t heard the songs Dead Girl Walking and Dead Girl Walking Reprise they are honestly Kylo and Sasa’s soundtrack for the next storyline. (Warning, the first one is rated R.) Hell, just the entire Heathers soundtrack is so good for this next storyline. That’s right, the next storyline we are now doing is something I like to call: Kylo, it’s time to get your shit together and fix your love life.

Naturally it’s going to be at least the next ten chapters long because this is the story of Kylo getting his shit together. The universe is not letting a Skywalker get off that easily… pun intended.

Can you tell I miss writing Felicity? Her jokes are starting to leak into my author’s notes. I was happy to hear a few people excited at the return of Alyla and Felicity. It truly makes me feel great that I have written OC love interests for canon characters that people have become attached to.

Also, I got curious and checked: the last time we actually got a full on Felicity scene was Chapter Thirty-Eight… Twenty chapters ago. I am entitled to writing some Felicity Rhiaon Why the Hell Did I Ever Marry a Skywalker content.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

The Long Way Home

Chapter Fifty-Seven

Back to Roots

But that was before the First Order came and took control of Hays Major’s industries. Once that
happened, it was just a matter of time before they crushed the life out of our homeworld.

- The Journal of Paige Tico

“This is ridiculous!” Kylo Ren exclaimed as he stalked down the hall of the Finalizer, Wiln easily following Kylo’s long strides. “How could the Supreme Leader do this?”

“It’s not our place to question his decisions, Master,” Wiln answered with no passion in his voice. “The Supreme Leader is wise.”

“Of course, he is, I just… struggle to find the wisdom in this. I should be the one to choose who fill the empty spots of the Knights of Ren, not him.”

“The Supreme Leader trusts your judgement normally, but this is a delicate situation. Things are getting tempestuous among our ranks. He merely wants to ensure that the newest of our Knights are not the disasters they’ve replaced.”

“But he doesn’t understand what I need on a daily basis. This newest edition? What point is there to them?”

“Master, I have counselled the Supreme Leader on this addition the same way I advise you in your own selections,” Wiln said. “I believe that his choice will be a valuable member of our team. Not quite the usual pick of the draft, which might be a good thing.”

“You really think she’s that good?” Kylo asked.

“I have complete confidence in the woman the Supreme Leader has chosen,” Wiln answered honestly. “Don’t worry about what the others will think. This selection will bring balance back to our ranks.”

Kylo sighed, “Alright… let’s meet this Chosen.”

The door slid open, and a beautiful woman was seated at a large dining table. They were conducting this business in a private dining area used for the most honored of guests aboard the Finalizer.

When she saw Wiln and Kylo enter, she smiled and rose to her feet. It was a rather pretty smile, Kylo couldn’t help but think as he crossed the room to meet her. Then again, it was nothing compared to the smile on the woman who had shared his bed the previous night.

“Good evening, Master,” she bowed her head to Kylo. “I’m pleased you chose to meet with me.”

“Well, the Supreme Leader has decreed you to be the best soldier for this job,” he offered his hand to shake. “I hope you do not disappoint me.”

“Master, I live to serve your every whim, provided it does not go against the wishes of the Supreme Leader.”

Kylo scowled as Wiln let out a groan behind him. What an impression the girl made. First conversation and she had already accused him of treason.
“Uh… forgive me, I misspoke,” she saw her error. Quickly she accepted Kylo’s handshake.

Kylo tried not to grimace as she placed her hand in his: the woman had a manicure. Dear Lord, what Knight of Ren had a manicure? And now that he took a better look at her, why was she wearing a dress? It was black, but it was handsewn and intricately designed, some sort of hybrid of Alderiaan and Nubian fashion.

What kind of girl was Snoke trying to pawn off on him?

“Master Kylo,” Wiln said, “I’d like to introduce you to our newest Knight, Sasa Ren.”

“A pleasure,” Kylo said flatly. He was quick to drop her hand, not wanting to touch her any more than Snoke required him to. “I hope you are the missing piece to making the Knights of Ren a well-rounded team.”

“The Supreme Leader has taught me never to brag,” Sasa lowered her eyes to the ground. “But I hope to play a vital role in the Knights of Ren, and do not fear, I will not step on anyone’s toes. Simply tell me what you want of me, and I shall do it.”

Oh, God, this Sara wouldn’t look him in the eye or speak at a normal volume and was a demure, modest, submissive beauty queen? This girl was a nightmare.

“Tell me,” Kylo’s voice was as dry as Tatooine, “why did the Supreme Leader choose you for me? Is it your lightsaber skills?”

Sasa eyes widened, “Oh, did they… not tell you?”

Fidgeting her hands, those forest green eyes glanced at to Wiln. Oh good, she had eyes the colour of his Force Signature. That wasn’t an obvious ploy at all.

Seriously, had he pissed off Snoke or something?

“Tell me what?” Kylo turned his own eyes to Wiln.

“You see… Master,” Wiln cleared his throat, “Master Sasa has been ordered to join the Expert Saber Class.”

Kylo lifted an eyebrow, surprise sparking in his eyes, “You’re taking over for Tara? You must be very good.”

“Uh… not-” Sasa lowered her eyes again. “Not exactly.”

“She’s to attend the class as a student,” Wiln explained. “Sasa still needs to polish her skill.”

Kylo had to focus on not letting his jaw drop, “Are you serious?”

“I wouldn’t joke about that sort of thing, Sir.”

“You’ve got to be kidding me!” Kylo rounded on Wiln. “You sent me a Knight of Ren who can’t fight?”

“I can fight!” Sasa objected. “I just need a little more training.”

Kylo blinked as his brain processed her interruption. His face became stuff and his eyes narrowed and darkened dangerously as he slowly turned to face her.
“You don’t get to talk back to me,” his voice was low, and he took a step toward her that made her instinctually take one back. “You are new here. You have not proven a damn thing to me.”

“But…” her voice was weak, but she still pressed on, “I haven’t had the chance to prove anything yet.”

Even Wiln was getting a little uneasy at the look on Kylo’s face.

“Alright then,” Kylo challenged, “prove yourself to me here and now. Are you politically savvy?”

“No… particularly.”

“Good at constructing military tactics?”

“No.”

“Skilled at hand to hand combat?”

“No more than any of the Stormtroopers.”

“Using the mind trick? Torturing people?” He took a step forward and another and another. With every suggestion he forced her backwards until he had her pinned against the table. “Pushing into the minds of enemies? Good at extracting information? Skilled at making propaganda? Hell, are you even decent at battlefield medicine?”

He stared down at her, her breathing heavy as he body towered over her and her forest green eyes looked up at him in fear… much like the fear that always simmered under the surface of his own forest green signature.

“No,” Sasa whispered. “No, no, no, no, and no.”

The air between them was hot and stiff, danger lurking in the darkness of his own eyes and his soul… and yet Kylo couldn’t help but notice how perfect her lips were.

His eyes flicked down her body, and Kylo understood. Wide hips, large breasts, taunt stomach with only the tiniest hint of muscle on her body, a decent looking ass, long legs and lashes, a swanlike neck, smooth pale skin, and an outfit that screamed femininity.

He knew exactly why Snoke had chosen her.

Kylo let out a bitter laugh as he took a step back, “Nothing… You’re valuable in nothing I’m looking for.”

“Master Kylo-”

“Silence!” he snapped. “You do not get to talk back to me. The only people I allow to talk back to me are those I like and those I value. You fall under neither of those categories, so you will be silent in my presence unless I initiate conversation. Do you understand?”

At least the girl had the sense to demurely lower her eyes and nod rather than respond verbally.

“Good. Now, Wiln… come.”
“That’s the girl?” the door hadn’t even closed behind them, leaving Sasa awkward and alone in the dining room, before Kylo started into his ranting. “That’s the one the Supreme Leader thinks will be a valuable asset to the Knights of Ren?”

Wiln sighed, “Look, I know she doesn’t seem good at face value, but under the surface, she’s got a lot more going than you know.”

“Oh, she’s got it going on, but that’s not what I need. A pretty face in a battle is nothing more than a liability. I need a warrior, not a sex doll.”

Wiln grabbed his arm and roughly pulled Kylo to a stop.

“The Chosen,” Wiln’s voice was low, his eyes flashing dark, “are not sex dolls.”

But Kylo was up for the challenge, “That’s what they’re trained to be. Molded to be someone I desire. Someone for me to impregnate and raise a child with. That’s what Nera was made for. What Alix is made for. What Cleo is made for. What Nova is made for.”

Wiln’s hand clenched Kylo’s bicep tighter.

“And that’s what Sara is made for,” Kylo finished.

“Sasa,” Wiln corrected.

“It doesn’t matter! I don’t need her! I don’t need Snoke to stud me out to a bunch of brainwashed girls who might not even look at me twice under any other circumstance. If Snoke wants to have a harem for me on standby, whatever, fine! But do not drag one of these girls in front of me and pretend that that girl is Knight of Ren material. Nera deserved her spot on the Knights of Ren, but this one… I’m embarrassed to have to bring her before Hux and Phasma and Tara and say, hey this is our newest Knight of Ren. She’s ridiculously underqualified and useless to the cause, but you need to respect her as one of our ranks because the Supreme Leader says so. Why? Oh, well isn’t Sansa pretty?”

“Sasa! Her name is Sasa!”

“I don’t care!” Kylo exclaimed. “I don’t care about her at all! Don’t you get it? I’ll never care about her! And she’s just be like all those other pointless Knights that get themselves killed far too quickly to have deserved the title of Ren.”

Wiln’s eyes narrowed, “We use the name Ren because it was simply the surname of the founding member of the Knights. Ren is a title only because Cade Ren made it a title.”

“But that titles means something,” Kylo said coldly. “Yes… Cade Ren died at the hand of Luke Skywalker, but his legacy lives on. Because of him, the New Jedi Order was brought to ash, Felicity Rhiaon was slaughtered, and the seed of Luke Skywalker exterminated.”

His lips wouldn’t dare utter the name Rey with such violence.

“Cade Ren destroyed the Jedi and brought balance back to the Galaxy. Not a battle of Jedi vs Sith, Light vs Dark, but a mixture of both, recognizing the shades of grey in the universe. That is why I take the title of Ren so seriously. He was flawed, but he did more than Maul or Tyranus. He did the work of Darth Vader and Sidious, and Cade followed those beliefs and actions all the way to his death. This… Sana, Sala, Sama, or whatever her name is… she doesn’t have that strength or conviction. She is not worthy of the title of Ren… or to be the mother of my child.”
For a long time, Wiln said, just letting Kylo’s words sit on the air. But it was a silence of victory, a small smile quirked the corner of his left lip, and Wiln shifted back on the balls of his feet.

“I think you underestimate her,” Wiln crossed his arms. “Is she a Tara or a Cern? Hell no. She’s a Sasa, her own style of Dark Side and Light, and I am willing to bet you anything that soon enough she’ll become one of the most valuable members of our team.”

“And I think you overestimate her,” Kylo mirrored Wiln’s stubborn pose. “I bet you my own personal transport, the Dark Destiny, that within twenty months, I will have completely forgotten who this Sasa is.”

Wiln smiled and offered his hand, “Deal.”

“Deal.”

They shook on it.

---

Kylo Ren was not nervous. He was never nervous for his first couplings with new female Knights of Ren. In fact, he usually was rather bored, and tonight he was a little mad about the earlier events of the day. Kylo was still willing to consent to sex with… what’s her name, but it wasn’t going to be the highlight of his day.

Still, he found himself anxiously chugging his nightly cordial. Maybe if he got this done fast and fell asleep almost immediately after his climax, the girl would take the hint to leave him alone.

He was looking forward to putting the girl back in her place after all her arguing. This was ridiculous. Was Snoke punishing him by making Kylo consort with… Oh God, seriously, what was her name again? Something with an S?

Kylo heard the chime of his door as he recorked Phasma’s cordial. Sighing, Kylo summoned his black night robe and pulled it over his naked body.

His clothing and boots were neatly set next to him bed, ready to be pulled on quickly after their coupling. It was normal for him to greet the new female Knights of Ren naked on the nights they coupled. But he still put on his robe just in case someone was escorting them like that one unfortunate time Wiln accompanied Eosi Ren to Kylo’s room for their first time.

“Enter,” he called.

The door slid open and… the girl (crap, what was her name? This was going to bug him all night) was standing there alone. She was wearing a rather ornately embroidered grey silk robe that was very short and left little to the imagination. His eyes drifted over her body unabashedly; she was all skin, silk, and submission.

Not going to lie, the sight turned him on.

But she didn’t move a muscle. She just stood there fidgeting, her eyes flicking around like she didn’t know where to put them. When their eyes met for a moment and she bit her lip, Kylo wanted to throw her down on the bed and fuck her until she bled.

…Until she bled? Maybe Alyla was right. He did have issues concerning sexuality.
But the girl still hadn’t moved… and when her eyes drifted down, she could clearly see what her image did to his body.

He narrowed his eyes as she continued to linger in the hall outside, “I said enter.”

Bowing her head, Sasa scampered inside and turned her back to him to close the door. When she turned back to face him, she gasped in surprise. He had dropped his robe and was sitting naked on the bed.

“Don’t sound so shocked,” he said as if his state of undress were as ordinary of khakis and a t-shirt. “This is exactly what you came here for.”

“Yes, of course,” Sasa’s eyes darted everywhere. Should she look at him? Not look at him? She was alone with a naked man she’d been told for years she would have to make love to. How was this supposed to proceed? “I just didn’t expect you to get to that part so… quickly.”

Kylo raised an eyebrow, “I assure you, I am only fast when I want to be.”

A red tinge spread across her body.

“You can look at me,” Kylo said. He shifted to spread his legs a little more, making it very obvious what he was telling her to look at. “I’m going to be putting my cock inside of you. You may as well see what you’re getting into, or rather what’s getting into you.”

He always used crude and bold language when first interacting with a new partner. It was a blunt way of making sure the girls knew that there wasn’t going to be anything romantic about the situation. They were here for him to fuck and impregnate, end of story.

Sasa took a deep breath and gathered herself. Yes, she was going to be submissive to him – it was what Snoke had trained her to be – but she wasn’t going to fall for such a blatant power move. No, she would get her confidence, straighten her back proudly, and look right down at his-

Holy fuck.

Kylo Ren was tall and muscular. He was naturally broad, hell his pecs were roughly the same size as his head. Kylo was a very large man… and his cock was… proportional.

And he wasn’t even fully erect yet.

Okay… she was in for an interesting night. She felt herself involuntarily clench at the thought of him putting that inside of her. Sasa wasn’t some naïve innocent – she wasn’t going to wonder how it was going to fit – but she was… cautiously optimistic.

She hated how he smirked at her.

“Thoughts?” his voice was either arrogant or mocking her, though it was probably both.

“Well, um…” she cleared her throat, not sure if she should keep staring at that… pillar between his legs. “You won’t have any problems reaching my cervix.”

He blinked, “Well, that’s a… that’s a new one.”

Sasa shrugged.

Kylo sighed, “Alright, but other than that, any thoughts?”
Okay, she understood. He needed his ego stroked; she could do that.

“That, Master Kylo,” Sasa played with the sash of her robe, trying her best to be seductive, “is a very generous gift you’re about to give me.”

Shit, he rolled his eyes. Pull back. Pull back!

“What, would you, um… like me to do with it?” Sasa stumbled over her words. She still wanted that seductive edge on her voice, but not push too far too soon.

“Don’t worry,” Kylo turned to the side where he had set a bottle of lube on his bedside table, “you won’t have to worry about pleasing me. I’ll prepare myself.”

Sasa couldn’t hold back a giggle, “Oh, but Master Kylo, why would you let your already well-acquainted hand play with yourself when you’ve got a waiting and willing woman to do it for you?”

He… didn’t reply.

Kylo sat there for a moment, just staring at her. Sasa shifted on the balls of her feet, her smile dropping from her face. She started chewing her bottom lip when she saw his eyes darkened, and she waited nervously for him to say something, anything. Then he rose to his feet and crossed the room.

For a moment, as he stood his naked body mere inches from her own clothed figure, Sasa thought he might kiss her. Indeed, he lifted a hand to her cheek and stroked a thumb across the lip she was biting.

Then suddenly her yanked lip down from her teeth.

“Don’t bite your lip,” Kylo ordered. “And I have had just about enough of your backtalk. It’s time for a reality check, you’re not some mighty Knight of Ren or a great seductress. You’re here to let me fuck you, and if you’re lucky, I might get you pregnant. That’s why you were chosen, isn’t it? It’s your fertility that impressed the Supreme Leader.”

She nodded. Now didn’t seem to be the right time to bring up emotional rebalancing.

“This isn’t some fairy tale, Sa…su?”

“That’s, uh, not my name.”

“Yeah, I’ve forgotten it already.”

Sasa didn’t think that was an invitation to remind him of it.

He roughly lifted up her chin, still holding her lip, “Do you understand what I’m telling you, here? You’re not the great love of my life that I’ve been waiting for. You’re not the great love of my life that I’ve been waiting for. You’re here to be fucked when I get bored with Tara. Do you understand?”

Sasa mutely nodded.

“You are not my number one,” Kylo warned. “You will never be my number one, and I will never give enough of a damn about you to let you sass me. Now stop biting your lip, or I’ll bite it until it bleeds.”

Panting heavily, Sasa stared up at his dark eyes as he released her lip.

Why was she so fucking turned on right now?
Kylo grabbed her hip and pulled her in closer, “Do you know how this all works? The mechanics.”

“Uh huh,” Sasa whimpered as he fiddled with the hem of her robe.

His hand was on her thigh, his hand was trailing up her thigh.

“So, you know what it takes?” Further and further his hand slid up her thigh. “You know what I’ll have to do to your body?”

“Yes,” she closed her eyes and shuddered when he reached the hem of her panties.

“You want that?” his fingers traced the edge of the black silk garment guarding her from him. “You want me inside of you? Pounding deep to quell your most erotic ache?”

Slowly he dragged a fingertip across her panty-clad pussy. Sasa let out the most desperate moan.

“Yes!” she willed his finger to move just a little higher.

“You want my cock inside of you,” his voice was low and dark. “You want me to fuck you hard until I empty my seed in your core, claiming you and marking you as my sperm impregnates you?”

His finger found her clit.

Sasa cried out.

“Are you ready for that?” Kylo whispered. “Are you ready to take my seed?”

“Yes,” Sasa breathed as he slowly pulled her panties to the side. Oh, so was so ready for his fingers to drag across her bare sex and play with her clit until he made her cum. “Oh, Master Kylo, I want-”

Suddenly, he crudely shoved a thick finger up her still dry quim. Sasa yelped at the invasion. She continued to grunt and pant as his moved his finger around inside of her, his face dropping into a scowl as he assessed the most intimate part of her body.

Without much ceremony, he pulled his finger out of her and wiped on his robe what little of her moisture clung to his finger.

“You’re not prepared for me,” Kylo said in disgust. “Not in the slightest.”

Oh, but as her body tingled from the dark eroticism of his words, Sasa was starting to be. Why did she like him dominating her so much? He was about a second away from just throwing her on the bed and pounding into her until she screamed his name.

She would not be unhappy if he did. To hell with her virginity; she’d been waiting for Kylo Ren’s cock for years.

“I won’t waste my time with pre-amble,” he stalked back to the bed and grabbed the lube. “You will undress and touch yourself until your body is ready to take me. You better put on a good show, I’ll be watching.”

Sasa smirked and bit her lip as he spread the lube across his stiffening cock, “I’m not sure watching is the correct term. I think jacking off would be more appropriate.”

He froze. Dangerously his eyes flicked up at her, and the smirk froze on Sasa’s face.

_Oh shit._
Kylo didn’t say a word, just set the lube bottle next to him and gestured for her to come forward. Silently she obeyed, but when she stood right in front of him, he still gestured for her to get closer. She bent over, giving him a clear view down her robe of her breasts, he teeth nervously baring down into her lip hard.

When her face was inches from him, yanked her lip away from her teeth, grabbed her head, and roughly pulled her forward. It was not for a passionate kiss, rather his teeth bore down on her lip hard until his bled.

She cried out as he pushed her face away.

“I told you,” he warned, “I told you *not* to bite your lip and *not* to sass me. What part of that was so hard to understand?”

“None of it,” Sasa touched her lip and stared at the blood on her finger. “I’m sorry, Master Kylo.”

“You’re forgiven.”

Fuck, that was hot.

“Now,” he ripped out the silk belt holding her attire closed, yanked off her robe, and pushed it to the floor. His eyes drank in the sight of the matching black, lace bra and panties hugging her body. For a moment he thought to grab one of those generous breasts and lavish it with his tongue, but instead he pushed her back from him. “I’m tired of waiting. I told you to undress.”

She hooked her thumbs under her bra straps and started to pull down, “Yes, Master.”

Maybe it was because it happened the same moment he grabbed his cock, but the second she uttered those words a jolt of pleasure went through his body, and he gave a rather undignified grunt.

“Good,” he murmured his she pushed her panties down to her ankles. His eyes roamed her naked breasts and bare quim. He pumped his shaft eagerly, growing hard at the sight of the body he was about to claim. “Now, make yourself ready for me.”

It would be a lie to say it wasn’t awkward, Sasa standing there – kind of cold – naked and playing with her clit as the second-in-command of the First Order masturbated openly to the sight. But eventually she was able to collect her enough to relax and try to enjoy as much as possible. After all, she was turning on *the second-in-command of the First Order*. She was going to *fuck* the second-in-command of the First Order.

And if he was going to bite her lip again like that, she would be very happy at the end of the night. Oh God, what she wanted even more was for him to bite her nipple. She dragged a fingertip across her excited bud at the thought.

Yes, this… this was good. Kylo Ren sat there, legs spread, erection growing in his palm, enjoying the sight of her. Yes, he wanted *her*. Of all the Chosen… he wanted *Sasa*.

Sasa’s fingers quickened at the thought. Oh she wanted him hard and rough, biting and scratching her, fucking her until she knew nothing but his body in hers.

Oh fuck! She was close. She was *so close*.

“That’s enough,” Kylo ordered.

*Damn it!* Sasa pulled her hand away.
“Get on the bed,” he stood and gestured for her to lay down.

Sasa cautiously approached, awkwardly climbing on the material. This was it. This was happening.

“Come on,” Kylo urged impatiently as she climbed on all fours to the middle of the bed. He grabbed her hip and flipped her over, “On your back. Spread your legs.”

Sasa swallowed but nodded, her eyes flicking to his manhood. His rigid cock bounced with every step, and he heavy balls were pulled tight to his shaft. It was time; he was going to put that inside of her.

She tried to control her breathing as he shoved her legs apart. She watched nervously as Kylo poured a little bit of lube on his pointer and middle fingers. Sasa panted heavily as they stroked once across her sex and then pushed into her entrance.

Sasa’s head hit the pillow and she tried to comprehend what was happening to her. She didn’t hate it, and she didn’t want him to stop, it just… what she had imagined all these years. She dreamed of Kylo making love to her, his hands and mouth lazing across her body in a beautiful and romantic display, but… he wasn’t interested in making this good for her. He just knelt at her feet, spreading her legs apart, and pumping his fingers in and out of the most sacred part of her body.

He hadn’t even kissed her.

“Alright, you’re ready,” he pulled his fingers out of her. He couldn’t have even fingered her ten times.

“Already?” Sasa frowned as he spread some more lube across his manhood. Her ears pounded as he shifted over her body and hooked one of his legs over his hip.

Oh God, she could feel his cock against her quim. She didn’t know if it thrilled her or terrified her.

“No point in delaying the inevitable,” Kylo reached down and aimed his cock at her entrance. “Just relax, and it will go a lot easier.”

Wait, wait, was there not going to be any-

He shoved his cock into her.

Sasa gave a sharp gasp, but thankfully he didn’t start ravaging her instantly. Instead, he just stayed still with his cock locked inside of her cunt as she adjusted to the feeling.

His cock was inside of her. Sasa Ren was no longer a virgin. Kylo Ren had penetrated her with his feeling a lot larger than it looked – and that was saying something – cock. She still wanted this, but this wasn’t how she expected it to go… to feel.

Sasa panted as she took in the sensation of penetration and his manhood deep inside of her. He had pushed himself all the way on, his cockhead resting against her cervix. His penis burned and stretched her, part of her wanting to push him off of her, but she stayed still. She had been told that sexual intercourse was pleasurable, and she wanted to see this through.

Besides, what would Snoke do if she rejected Kylo?

It is alright, My Daughter. Young Solo will soon turn his affections to you. This night will bring you both satisfaction. You just have to make him see your worth.
“Yes, Master,” Sasa replied in her mind and Kylo loomed over her, his eyes focused forward at the headboard and not at her. Clearly he didn’t hear the Supreme Leader.

Did the Supreme Leader really have to be spying on the moment she lost her virginity? Kylo had just thrust into her without asking, and yet it was Snoke who made her feel violated.

Okay, deep breath. She could do this. She could do this.

“Are you…” he hesitated. “Are you okay?”

“Uh… yes,” Sasa tried not to grunt as she grabbed his arm and adjust herself into a slightly more comfortable position. Damn, his bicep was huge. “Yes.”

“Alright,” he glanced down at her briefly. “Let me know if you want me to stop or if anything is uncomfortable.”

You mean other than this general situation? She thought to herself.

“Oh course,” she said. She thought about the rough way he had previous pumped his fingers into her, “Just… could you go slow at the start?”

She was slightly surprised that he listened to her. When he started thrusting into her, his hips dragged him in and out of her at a slow but steady rhythm. Sasa did her best to enjoy it, but her body wasn’t aroused enough to really have a good time.

Oh, what was wrong with her? For years she had been picturing and preparing for this moment. It was supposed to be the ultimate scene of pleasure and eroticism. The man of her dreams – literally, Snoke would push images of Kylo into her actual dreams – was taking her virginity. She should be writhing and moaning beneath him, absolutely filled with the pleasure he brought her.

Instead the room was terrifyingly silent as the bedsprings awkwardly squeaked with his thrusts, the barely wet sounds of his balls slapping against her.

This was not what Snoke advertised.

But she knew why it was so uncomfortable, Kylo barely wanted to touch her. His hands should be roaming her body – caressing and exploring – their lips locked in a sensual kiss as he stared deep into her eyes.

Instead he just stared at the headboard and humped her dispassionately like they were breeding nerfs.

No, Sasa wouldn’t give up. She was the one the Force ordained to be the mother of his children, and his consort. His cruel words of her unworthiness in the Knights of Ren echoed through her mind. Sasa would make him see what she was worth, she would make him care about her as more than just a vessel for his heir.

She just never expected how much they would grow to care for each other.

Sasa closed her eyes and took a moment to gather herself. She felt him moving in and out of her, and it was starting to feel… actually rather nice.

Yes… Yes, she could… She could work with this. He didn’t seem to be interested in touching her body, but as the pleasure mounted with every thrust, she started to crave that he would. Maybe if she showed her pleasure, arch her back, lift her pelvis to his thrusts, and start to moan… he’d get the hint.
So, taking a deep breath and slowly fluttering her eyes open, Sasa Ren started to moan.

The bedsprings squeaked and the moans sounded rhythmically to the pace of his thrusts. They sounded fake, Kylo Ren bitterly thought. Of course they were fake; the women who visited his bed merely put on a show for him. Everyone knew that it didn’t matter if they enjoyed it, or even if he enjoyed it. As long as he ejaculated, Snoke was happy.

The only upside to the visits was that no First Order officers would bother him for a good thirty minutes.

And sex, Kylo supposed. He guessed even getting sex this way wasn’t so terrible.

As he pondered the boredom he felt with the whole situation – most of his passion being used to bring this upstart in line – he was positive his assessment to Wiln had been right. Twenty months from now, he wouldn’t even remember or care she existed at all.

Still… he had to commend her on her optimism.

---

21 Months Later…

“I got you, Sasa,” Kylo murmured in her ear as he carried her into her quarters on his private shuttle. Wiln and Cern were preparing the ship to leave the disaster of Nixrye behind. “It’s okay, I’m here. I have you.”

Sasa was the only one who had her own quarters on Kylo’s ship, the vessel having four rooms with beds in them. He wouldn’t go so far to call the rooms other than his and Sasa’s actual bedrooms as the others were so barren of personal touch and they were basically just rooms with bunks that pulled out from the wall.

He carried Sasa in bridal style, her arms locked around his neck. When he laid her down on the bed, Kylo moved to stand back up, but Sasa didn’t let go. She clung to his neck and started to cry.

The weight of everything falling upon him, Kylo lost his strength and collapsed to his knees. He buried his face in her breast and just wept, her hand stroking through his hair.

Together they cried. They cried, and cried, and cried, and they cried for a long time. That was all that they did in the world. It was all that could be done. Together they held each other and wept.

No amount of rebalancing in the world could fix this.

Kylo had been so close; so close. He had been so close to finally proving himself to the Supreme Leader. So close to finally having the Skywalker Heir. So close to finally being able to be with Sasa without anyone or anything standing in his way.

And now it was all gone.

Tara had been the one to take it from him. Tara had decided to do the unthinkable. And worse yet, Tara wouldn’t confess a damn thing. He would make her pay, oh he would make her pay.

But for now, he and Sasa just wept for their child.

Her hands in his hair just felt perfect, and they brought him so much comfort. Sure, Sasa was crying
too, maybe even more than him, for good reason too. She had more to lose with the death of this baby. This was her entire purpose in the First Order and she had failed.

No. She hadn't failed. She had succeeded where no one else had. Not only had Sasa gotten pregnant, Sasa had gotten pregnant twice. Once with the chemical miscarriage and now with a full-on miscarriage.

Frankly that gave Kylo hope. He could have a child; he could have a child with Sasa. It was actually possible. Sure, this pain was unbearable, agonizing, and unending but… but he could have a child. He would have a child.

He would have a child with Sasa.

“Kylo,” she whimpered. “Kylo, I’m-”

“No. You didn't lose it. Our baby was taken from us.”

“I lost the baby,” Sasa whispered.

“Don't say it,” he said, lifting his head. His heart broken when he saw the tears in her eyes. “It's okay. I’m here.”

“I'm sorry.”

“No. No, this wasn't your fault.”

“Yes, it is.”

“Don't blame you!” he exclaimed. “Do you understand that? I don't blame you. You didn't do anything wrong. Don't you dare think that you did.”

“I lost the baby,” Sasa whispered.

“Kylo brushed a tear from her cheek, “No. You didn't lose it. Our baby was taken from us.”

“I should have been stronger.”

“You were amazing, and don’t you dare think otherwise. The work you did with that dress, and fighting off Berd and Doxl! Forget what Kaydel did, you're alive not because of Kaydel or Snap or any of them. You are alive because you are a smart, courageous, badass woman who I am honored to l-”

He stopped himself.

But Sasa caught what he was going to say, and she smiled.

“It's okay,” she stroked his cheek. “It's okay. You don't need to say it.”

“I wish I could,” he murmured.

“You will,” Sasa’s voice was filled with confidence. “Someday you will. You know, it's like what you told me about Alyla and Lando. I don't need to hear it to know it.”

“This is a very dangerous conversation, Sasa.”

“You're right. So, let's have a dangerous conversation that's a little bit more practical. What are we going to do about Tara and Cern?”

Kylo sighed, “I will tell the Supreme Leader what they have done.”
“No,” Sasa snapped. “That's not good enough. They murdered our child.”

“I'm not sure if we can pin it on Cern, but Tara was absolutely responsible.”

“Why is she still alive? You were going to kill her. You almost killed her. She murdered our baby and she tried to murder me. Why have you allowed to let her continue to breathe?”

“You don't understand-”

“You're right. I don't.”

“Sasa, if I wanted to kill Tara, I couldn't.” He caught her look, “Not yet at least.”

Sasa frowned at him.

Kylo sighed, “I am not allowed to kill Knights of Ren without the explicit permission of the Supreme Leader. That is why I have not killed Berd and why we are bringing the body of Doxl to present to him. Knights of Ren can be killed in self-defence, but not a straight execution without Snoke’s permission. I will go to him and make the case for Tara's execution. I promise you that.”

And as morbid as the thought was, Sasa smiled a far too mischievous smile.

They were interrupted by Wiln clearing his throat.

“What is it?” Kylo demanded, but he didn't move from Sasa’s side. He stayed on his knees next to her, torso hovering over her torn dress that was stained with his tears and the blood of his child. Kylo hovered over her like a panther protecting his mate.

Wiln took a step back accordingly.

“My apologies for interrupting,” Wiln said, fiddling with Evan Tharel’s bloody medical bag on his shoulder, “but I brought you the…”

Sasa burst into tears again.

Kylo pulled her in tight and said in a hollow voice, “Put it on the desk.”

Wiln didn’t say a word as he obeyed. He silently crossed the room and set the bloody bag on the desk. It made an agonisingly heavy thump.

He sighed, sharing in the weight and the misery of the grief. He had never experience something like that, but it had been Nova that was taken from him, or a child he and Nova had created taken away… He didn’t know what he'd do.

Wiln took a deep breath, collected himself, and turned back to them, “Masters, I assure you that I did not play any part in this.”

“I know that, Wiln,” Kylo cleared his throat. “I know what this situation means to you.”

“Thank you, Sir,” Wiln bowed his head. “Now, I know you two need your privacy, but we are about to take off.”

“Thank you for informing us,” Kylo answered stiffly.

“Will you be flying ship, Sir?” Wiln hated to ask but knew he had to.
Sasa’s head whipped over to watch Kylo, her eyes filled with confusion and fear.

“Yes, Wiln, I will fly the ship,” Kylo answered, “but I will be spending most of my time on the trip in these quarters with Sasa.”

“Very well, Sir.”

“Where has everybody been stationed?”

“I thought FN-2187 might stay in here with Sasa during your absence,” Wiln answered.

“Good,” Kylo said. “And MK-6093?”

“Marks will be watching over Berd. Marks is the best at sedating people, so we have Berd contained in your room and Marks will be keeping an eye on him. Doxl’s body will be guarded by Nines and Zeros.”

“What of Tara and Cern?” Sasa inquired.

Wiln shifted on the balls of his feet and looked to Kylo, “I am awaiting your orders on that, Sir.”

Kylo sighed and rubbed his face, “I… I will speak with them and make my decision.”

Sasa stroked Kylo’s hair. She knew he would make the right choice… at least in this matter. She didn’t fall in love with for being great at making life decisions.

“Very good, Sir,” Wiln said.

“That will be all, Wiln,” Kylo dismissed.

Will bowed his head and turned for the door. When he reached it, he paused and looked back at the scene of Sasa and Kyla together.

Sasa stroked Kylo’s hair and whispered something before pressing a kiss to his cheek. Kylo sighed and looked longingly at the bag on the desk and leaned again Sasa for comfort.

Wiln smiled.

“Not to be out of line, Master Kylo,” Wiln said, “but I believe you owe me a ship.”

Kylo scowled, “What do you mean?”

“Twenty-one months ago, we made a bet.” Wiln gestured to Sasa, “I told you this girl would become one of the most valuable members of the Knights of Ren… You on the other hand, bet that you’d forget she even existed twenty months from then.”

Sasa’s head shot up, “You what?”

Kylo chuckled nervously.

“He bet this very ship on that,” Wiln added.

“You did, did you?” Sasa’s eyes flashed at Kylo, and it looked like the reason she was pissed off was no longer because of Tara.

“Wiln?” Kylo said.
“Yes, Sir?”

“Get out.”

“Yes, Sir.”

Sasa smacked Kylo the second the door closed.

“Ow!” he rubbed his injured arm. “You really that mad about that the bet?”

“No, I’m just remembering the first day we met and all the things you said to me,” Sasa crossed her arms. “I mean my god, you told me to never speak unless spoken to, said you didn’t value me, and when we had sex that night, you bit my lip until it bled because I accidentally sassed you while I was trying to get you to use me to get hard rather than sit on your bed and jerk off, and then you just hunched over my body and shoved your cock into me without asking if I was ready.”

“What are you saying?”

“What I’m saying is the first day we knew each other, you were a total dick to me and the sex wasn’t even good.”

“Okay, maybe I wasn’t the greatest to you that day, but you didn’t exactly make a good impression. Plus what about round two of sex?”

“Oh please, round two only happened because you wouldn’t let me get off in round one. Also, may I remind you that you forgot my name, told me you didn’t care that you forgot it, and then after you fucked me you asked what it was.”

“In hindsight, I should have remembered. Your name literally has the word Sass in it.”

“And don’t you forget it,” Sasa leaned forward and kissed him.

He held her there, little that soft, sweet kiss prolong. When they pulled apart, they just looked in each other’s eyes and shared a silent moment.

“I’m sorry,” Kylo whispered. “I’m sorry how I treated you that first day. I couldn’t understand why Snoke sent you, and I thought he was wasting my time with someone like Berd or Doxl.”

“I should have told you about the emotional rebalancing,” Sasa said. “Maybe if you knew that was my purpose—”

“I would have hated you and pushed you away. I would have resented the sentiment and never... gotten close to you.” He stroked her cheek, “I’m glad that I did.”

“I love you,” she whispered. “Not because the Supreme Leader brainwashed me to, not because of what anyone else has said or done, I love you because I love the man you are. The man in the mask and the one inside. It’s not just about heirs or the Force or dynasties... if you were an ordinary man and I an ordinary woman, my feelings wouldn’t change. I truly do love you.”

“Sasa, I wish I could say the same thing. I want to so badly,” he ghosted his lips over his.

She touched his lips and shook her head, “I understand. For now, let’s just savor this in whatever capacity we’re allowed to be together.”

Kylo bowed his forehead to hers and took a long, deep breath, like it cleansed his soul.
“You know,” Kylo nuzzled her, “no one’s around. How about I make up that first night to you right here, right now?”

“Kylo… I’m literally having a miscarriage right now. I don’t think sticking your cock in me is going to help anything.”

“Right, sorry.”

Sasa shook her head and kissed him. Kylo was an idiot, but he was her idiot, and Tara could fight her for him.

Kylo smiled as she pulled back, but then his eyes drifted the bloody bag on the desk. Sasa’s heart fell.

“This won’t be our last time,” Kylo said.

“I know,” Sasa’s voice was soft. “But that doesn’t mean this doesn’t hurt.”

They stared at it in silence, Sasa’s fingers threading through his, and Kylo squeezing her hand tight.

“We should name it,” Sasa said.

“What?” Kylo frowned.

“Let’s name it,” her voice was stronger. “That way we can always remember our first real child. I don’t want to forget.”

“We won’t,” Kylo promised. “What do you want to call it? Any baby names I have I kind of want to save for a child who does survive.”

Sasa lifted an eyebrow, “Kylo? Let’s not pretend I don’t know your picked-out boy and girl names are Anakin and Padmé. I’m not an idiot.”

“Sorry,” he said quickly. “So? What name do you want? We don’t know if it was a boy or girl, so it would have to be gender neutral.”

She thought about it.

“Nix,” Sasa declared. “Our baby is called Nix.”

“Why Nix?” Kylo wasn’t going to argue the name but was interested in the thought process.

“It’s a name for boys and girls, and it can be short for Nixrye, so we don’t forget this ugly mess. Not to mention the meaning of the name, night, because right now all I feel is Darkness. We’re in the black of night and… and I don’t know if we’ll be able to pull through.”

Kylo sighed and kissed her hand. He thought about the words we wanted to say. He fought against them so hard, but no, he couldn’t call on that, draw on the memory of her.

But then he looked at the woman he couldn’t admit to himself he loved, and all his defenses melted away.

“Hope is like the sun,” Kylo repeated his mother’s words, “if you only believe in it when you can see it, you’ll never make it through the night.”
Sasa smiled and squeezed his hand tight, “Nix Ren.”

“Nix Ren,” he nodded.

In an unspoken but mutual agreement, they leaned in to kiss.

A knock at the door interrupted them.

“Come,” Kylo leaned away from Sasa.

The door slid open to reveal FN-2187.

“Uh…” he looked between the pair who had obviously just been crying, “Wiln says we need to get going, Sir.”

Kylo sighed and got off the bed, “Yes, of course.”

He didn’t see the helpless way Sasa reached for him when he let go of her hand.

Finn did.

“I’m going to check on Berd and Doxl and then we’ll get on our way.” Kylo stopped in the doorway and looked back at Sasa.

She gave him a watery smile.

He sighed and nodded.

“FN-2187?” Kylo looked to him, “Take care of her.”

“Yes, Sir,” Finn nodded.

And Kylo was gone.

Then was when Sasa started to cry again.

“Are you–” Finn sighed, “Are you alright?”

Sasa gave a humourless laugh, “No.”

“Anything I can do?”

Sasa took a deep breath and nodded, patting the spot next to her. Finn hesitated but joined her.

His breath hitched when Sasa wrapped her arms around him. He didn't dare move as she buried her teary face into his neck.

“I know this is kind of cruel considering the feelings you have for me that I don’t return, but you’re my friend,” Sasa sniffed. “So, could you please just hold me for a little while?”

Finn sighed and wrapped his arms around her tight, “Of course.”

And as he sat there holding the crying Sasa in his arms, Finn oh so badly wished he could hold her forever.
Kylo headed towards his own quarters to where Marks had been assigned to watch Berd on their voyage home. Berd was handcuffed to the wall and heavily sedated, Marks supplied with more sedatives to administer when the current ones wore off.

Everyone was too afraid to ask Kylo why he had wall shackles in his bedroom.

Reaching his room, Kylo went to type in the code when he paused. Faintly he could hear a familiar voice coming from inside the room.

The voice of Lando Calrissian.

“And there’s the rub, right? How was I supposed to know she was an Imperial Spy? I thought she loved me.

So, there I was standing with my pants around my ankle, surrounded by Imperial Officer, and in a none-too-mistakable embrace with an Imperial Spy.

What did I do? What I do best... lie my ass off to get out of danger.”

Wait a minute, Kylo knew that story.

He punched in the code, and his door slid open to reveal Marks sitting on Kylo’s bed, watching a HoloProjector play the recording of *The Calrissian Chronicles: Volume Two: Lando Calrissian and the Blood in History*.

‘Oh, this? I tried to wave off to the General, ‘I’m just helping Cadet Renyu with her research.’

*The General didn’t buy it, ‘You’re helping with genetic testing and experimentation... in that manner with Cadet Renyu?’*

‘We were, um,’ Mina Renyu searched for an example, ‘Lando was helping me with fetal research. He was donating a sperm sample.’

I was thankful for her lie, but not necessarily the content of it. What happened next is a story that is far too personal and embarrassing to proclaim on an internationally selling Holo series, but... long story short, boys and girls, I donated sperm to the Empire.

...Audience, if you have children, they should probably not be reading this book.”

“What are you doing?”

Marks scrambled as he realized he had been caught.

“Nothing!” he shoved the HoloProjector behind his back. Marks didn’t quite hit the off button, so the blue reflection of Lando Calrissian lit up the hall as he voice narrated just one of the many exciting and sexy adventures of his life. Marks sighed, knowing there was no hiding, “I was just reading. I thought it’d be a fun way to pass the time on our trip home.”

“Fair enough,” Kylo said. “It’s a good story, and I suppose it wouldn’t be of any use telling you not to play it.”

“Not unless you want to supervise me the whole trip.”

“I’ll be flying the ship and spending the rest of my time with Sasa.”

“Of course,” Marks nodded. “She needs you right now.”
Kylo glared at him, “Have you seen Alyla?”

“Uh, no Sir,” Marks was Force Sensitive, so he was one of those who could perceive the not really ghost. “Not recently.”

“Then where the hell is she? She should be back by now.”

“Maybe she’s with Calrissian… Or maybe with-”

“If you say Skywalker, I will kill you.” Kylo’s voice was actually quite casual, albeit tense, “Look, the events of today have been very stressful, and I’m about ready to snap and murder someone. I’m not saying this as a threat, just a statement of the facts. If you piss me off right now, I’m going to hit my limit and break your neck. I don’t want to do that. Understand?”

“Yes, Sir,” Marks nodded. “If you are going to snap and murder someone, maybe you should go talk to Tara now. If anyone deserves it.”

“Good idea,” Kylo turned for the door. “Let me know if anything happens with Berd. He should be sedated every three hours. Oh, and Marks?”

Kylo stopped in the doorway and looked back at the man.

“You’re almost at the end of that book,” Kylo said. “When you finish it, I recommend reading Lando Calrissian and the Spices of the Galaxy. He takes down a drug smuggling ring on Bespin.”

“Oh, that is a good one. Thanks,” Marks smiled.

Kylo nodded and left.

Marks sat there, waiting and watching the door for a few minutes.

Then he grabbed the HoloProjector, tore out the recording and shoved in a different one. He knew Ben Solo would catch him listening to the series. There were very specific ones Marks was allowed to read, and ones he definitely was not allowed to read. If Ben thought he was reading Lando Calrissian and the Blood in History, he wouldn’t bother Marks as he listened to the one Marks actually wanted to read.

Getting himself comfortable for the very long journey home, Marks pressed play.


Prologue.

I never expected to see Han Solo again. I never expected to see Chewbacca again. I never expected for the Millennium Falcon to dock at Cloud City on the run from the Empire, fighting for the Rebellion.

Of course, life has taken me down many a crazy path, but none more crazy than the story I am about to tell.

Now, this is an interesting one, and I’m sure many of you picked up a copy of this to hear the story of how Luke Skywalker lost his hand and learned the most evil man in the Galaxy was his father. And you will be satisfied to some end for Luke has agreed to share that part of the story – though according to him, what happened on Dagobah, stays on Dagobah – but this is not that story.
This is a story where I am not a hero, not least, not until the end. It’s a story of how I learned the value of friendship and truly became a good and responsible man. It’s how I learned that some times fighting for the greater good does not result in the greatest goods. It’s how I came to tell the Empire, enough is enough, and take a stand that lead to the execution of both Palpatine and Vader... keep an eye out for that book.

No, this is the story of how I joined the Rebellion.

...and got strangled by a Wookiee.

Chapter One.

Boba Fett was not exactly a man I was afraid of, but I did acknowledge the danger we brought with him... especially when he brought a legion of Stormtroopers with him. So when one day, I opened my front door and found him standing on my doorstep, I knew…"

Tara was sitting in a chair of the small lounge area, talking to Cern when she saw Kylo and Wiln heading for the cockpit.

“Kylo!” she shot to her feet.

He stormed right past her.

“Kylo! Wait!”

Tara chased after him, Cern following at a leisurely pace, staying by Wiln who had the sense to put a few feet between himself and the scene with Tara and Kylo. Pulling in front of Kylo, she grabbed his arm and tried to pull him to a stop.

“Come on, Kylo, please, let’s talk about this!” Tara begged.

He wrenched his arm from her grasp, “I don’t even want to look at you right now.”

“No, please!” Tara called as he stormed away from her.

Her head raced. Oh what was she supposed to do? All those lessons from her mother, and no idea how to proceed. What was she supposed to do? What would her mother do? How did her mother deal with her father when Laertes was in a similar mood?

Desperate, Tara called out, “Kylo Ren, I am your second-in-command, and you will give me the respect of listening to me!”

Kylo stopped dead in his tracks.

Wiln and Cern groaned in unison.

“Respect?” Kylo slowly turned around. “You want my respect?”

Tara folded her arms behind her back and held her head high, “Yes. I deserve it and you will give it to me.”

Wiln and Cern took a step back in unison.
“Respect?” Kylo whispered. “You deserve my respect?”

Then he lost his mind.

“WHERE THE FUCK DO YOU GET OFF DEMANDING MY RESPECT?” he roared. “Because of you hundreds are dead and injured. You think this is a fucking good piece of propaganda? The First Order will forever be remembered for this as the new fucking Faclov because of you! You think this demonstrates good judgement? You think this justifies your spot as my right hand? You think this justifies you even being in the Knights of Ren?”

“I have earned my spot!” Tara snapped. “Unlike your little whore!”

“Oh please, who was the first one to crawl in my bed? Tell me, Tara, how many officers are you fucking?”

“You fucking bastard, how dare you? Ever since I started sleeping with you, I haven’t been in anyone else’s bed, and trust me that’s a punishment in itself.”

“You took out a mob hit on Sasa! Forget our whole personal situation, you turned against a member of this team.”

“No, I didn’t,” Tara denied.

“You betrayed us and turned Berd and Doxl against her too,” Kylo snapped. “You have torn down the foundations of everything we worked towards!”

“I didn’t do it.”

“Who gives a fuck who I’m sleeping with, you can’t honestly expect me to keep around a right hand who betrays me and lies to me.”

“Come on, Kylo! You really think I would throw away everything I’ve worked for for a decade because I’m jealous of some redheaded bitch? I didn’t do this! I didn’t hire Crimson Dawn, I didn’t turn Berd and Doxl, and I didn’t betray the Knights of Ren!”

“Enough, Tara!” Kylo roared. “Enough! Enough with the lies!”

He took a deep breath.

“I get it, alright? I made a mistake,” he said. “I condoned what you did with the others for years and now with Sasa things have changed. Alright, that’s my mistake. I never should have let you go unpunished, but now… now things are different. Now your hatred and jealousy have resulted in the death of my child, something you swore you would never harm.”

Tara opened her mouth but found no words.

“I just…” Kylo sighed. “I don’t believe this. All these years, everything we’ve been through and you do this? Not only have you destroyed our image and devastated your fellow Knights… but now you’re looking me in the eye and lying to me? I haven’t lost respect for you because of this bombing, I expect such things from you. But you standing there, lying to me, and staying true to those lies? …That is how you’ve lost my respect. And if I don’t respect you, how can I trust you? How can I believe another word you ever say to me?”

Tara’s hands shook. No, no. She wasn’t losing. She couldn’t. She had worked so hard. She couldn’t lose her grip on Ben Solo. She needed him to trust her, to respect her.
She only had one choice.

“So, please, Tara,” Kylo continued. “For once in your life, would you just tell the truth and admit you did this?”

“Fine! Alright!” Tara exclaimed. “I did it! Alright, I did it! I said it. I did it. Are you happy now?”

Kylo went silent.

“I’m sorry…” Wiln blinked. “What did you just say?”

Tara let out a loud huff of air and crossed her arms. She was in severe damage control mode, by being honest and admitting her guilt it would win back the tiniest bit of trust she had lost with Kylo. He may be pissed at her actions, but if she freely admitted them, at least he couldn’t say she wasn’t being honest with him.

“You… did it?” Kylo repeated.

Tara took a deep breath, “Yes, alright? I did it.”

He glanced at Wiln and Cern, but neither of them had any help on what to say or do. None of them had expected her to actually admit.

“And what…” he turned back to her, looking a little lost. “What exactly did you do?”

Tara sighed and crossed her arms, “Before I joined the First Order, I was a runner for Crimson Dawn. I still have some connections in the organization, so when I got sick of dealing with Sasa, I called them up and asked for their help. Crimson Dawn planned the bombing, I didn’t, I swear it. I just asked them to do something to her.”

“What about Berd and Doxl?”

“When everything was set, I found out I wasn’t allowed to come on the mission. I needed someone to act in my stead. Berd and Doxl always hated how much importance Sasa had among us, even though they joined us first. It was easy to convince them to kill her and make it look like an accident.”

“And the baby?”

“I didn’t know. I swear it on my mother’s grave.” Her mother obviously wasn’t dead, but Kylo didn’t know that. Though she legitimately didn’t know about the baby. “Look, Kylo, if I were going to make her miscarry, I would do it using someone else through a non-poisonous adhesive medicine patch they snuck onto her clothing. I didn’t know about the baby, trust me, I’d start throwing punches. Break some shit. Beat you up in our sparring room. Deal with trauma the way you do: public violence.”

For a long time, Kylo didn’t say anything.

“So that’s the truth?” he asked. “You’re really admitting to trying to kill Sasa?”

“Yes,” Tara nodded. “I hired Crimson Dawn to kill her, and convinced Berd and Doxl to help.”

“Well… Thank you for your honesty.”

He knocked her out with the Force. Instead of catching her like most of his Force Faint victims, he let her hit the floor before he picked her up.
“Wiln, go get the extra set of handcuffs from my quarters,” Kylo ordered as he carelessly lifted Tara. Kylo threw her over his shoulder and stormed into one of the plain bunk rooms, Cern trailing behind him. Kylo tossed Tara not on the bed, but the floor next to it. Her head hit the ground with a *thunk* just as Wiln entered with the handcuffs.

Quickly and securely, Kylo handcuffed Tara to the bedframe. He smirked at the image, pleased with his work.

“I do appreciate her honesty,” Kylo told Wiln and Cern. “Even more so that I can use it as evidence to ask Snoke to allow her execution.”

Wiln sighed. He didn’t think it would be that easy.

“I want her guarded,” Kylo said. “Always someone in here while we return home. You two can alternate with Nines and Zer0es. I don’t trust her loose on this ship, and if she goes near Sasa…”

“Man,” Cern shook his head, “what a manipulative bitch.”

“Oh, you are no better than her!” Kylo snapped, whipping around to face Cern. He took a powerful step forward, forcing Cern to walk backwards into the hall. With every word out of Kylo’s mouth forced Cern further backwards, “You are involved in this, I have no doubt about it! You helped her kill my child, and even if you had nothing to do with Nixrye, you still manipulated my droid, putting my child in this fatal danger. Give me a reason not to ask Snoke for permission to kill you too.”

Cern’s back hit the wall.

Wiln had the sense to take a few steps away from them.

“Kylo, listen to me, I didn’t know about the kid, I swear it,” Cern said. “I didn’t mean for this to happen.”

“I don’t care what your intentions are, all I care about is what *did* happen.”

“I will find a way make it up to you.”

“How could you ever find a way to make amends for the death of my child?”

“I will find a way,” Cern insisted, surprisingly calm for having Kylo in his face.

“No, no,” Kylo pointed a finger in his face. “*How?* How will you make it up to me?”

Cern rolled his eyes, “Okay, Dryden Vos.”

Wiln lifted an eyebrow.

“I listen to the HoloNovel *Lando Calrissian and the Kessel Run* on the way here,” Cern explained. He turned his focus back to Kylo, “Look, I don’t have a plan right now, but you know me, you know how clever I am. Give me three days, just three days, and I promise I will come up with a way to atone for what happened here.”

Kylo stared at him so a silent moment, “…Alright, but only because I know how clever you are. You have three days to make this up to me, and if you don’t, I’ll get permission from Snoke to kill you.”

“Deal.”
They shook on it.

“Alright, people,” Kylo announce, “let’s get on our way home. Wiln, you’ll be my co-pilot.”

“Yes, sir.”

“Everyone to your duties!”

Two hours later, Tara Ren woke up on the floor, dazed and handcuffed to a bunk.

Even worse, Cern was sitting on the bunk just casually reading a celebrity gossip magazine.

“Well, Tara,” Cern flipped a page without even looking down at her. “That whole Nixrye stunt was one of the most spectacular disasters I have ever seen. I do commend you on the admitting your part to gain back Solos’ trust, while still pinning the blame elsewhere ploy, but I don’t think it ended the way you wanted it to.”

Tara looked at her handcuff and sighed, “Yeah… That could have gone a lot better.”

I live in a toppled AT-AT walker in the Goazon. It’s a strange place, but it’s mine.

- Rey’s Survival Guide

Luke Skywalker sighed as he scratched another tally onto the list. For a minute he just stared at the wall, his eyes drifting over the multitude of tallies. Then his heart broke at the sight of one of them. With a shaking hand, he touched a tally that had a small v above it.

The tally of the day Felicity surrendered to the First Order.

He fought back tears; he should have been there. He should have found her and stopped her from having to make that decision. Felicity had waited so long for him to rescue her, but when push came to shove, she had done what she had to to protect their child. Rey lived because Felicity died.

But there was one tally that was even more heartbreaking than the day she left Rey. His eyes slid five places over.

The tally of the day she died.

Luke lost his battle against his tears. He clutched at the wall, grasping at that two dimensional representation of the day his true love died. It was only that hand on the wall that kept him from collapsing to his knees. He looked pathetic, sobbing uncontrollably, alone in an AT-AT in the middle of the desert of Jakku.

“Wow, seriously?” a dry voice came. “Twelve years, and you’re still crying? I mean, I appreciate the gesture, but doing that for twelve years kind of undercuts the whole badass Jedi image, and that was at least thirty percent of the reason I married you.”
His heart froze. That voice. \textit{That-} No, it couldn’t be.

He whipped around to face the entrance of the walker, and nearly had a heart attack.

Felicity Rhiaon Skywalker was standing there, hand on a cocked hip, a spark of mischief in her hazel eyes, and that one corner upturned smirk plastered across her face.

“Hey Sweetheart,” she smirked. “I’m home.”

She was in his arms in an instant. Holding her tighter than he had ever held a person in his life, Luke Skywalker hoisted his wife into the air and crushed his lips to her. Felicity’s hands were all over him running over his neck and pulling her hair by the root, her lips eager to taste him as much as possible.

“How?” he asked between kisses, setting her back on the ground. “How are you alive?”

Felicity laughed as his lips moved down her neck, “Seriously, Skywalker? Twelve years apart and \textit{that’s} the first thing you say to me? Makes a girl feel loved.”

“I love you,” the words flew from his lips in earnest. “God, Felicity, I love you so much. My entire heart belongs to you. I’ve been in love with you from the moment-”

“Okay, stop,” she pulled back. “There is such thing as overdoing it.”

Luke laughed and then pulled her in for a desperate heart. His heart warmed as she rested her head in the crook of his neck and let out such a breath of relief.


“I missed you too,” Luke pulled back and took in the sight of her. He was old and grey, but she looked exactly like he last saw her. “But, please, Felicity, tell me what happened. I thought they killed you?”

Felicity laughed, “Oh come on, Skywalker, shot in the head and thrown in the trash compactor? You didn’t really think I’d go down \textit{that} easily.”

He smiled but his face softened, and he stroked her teary cheek.

“All right,” Felicity sighed. “I’ll tell you everything, I promise, but first there’s something you need to do.”

“I’ll do anything. What is it?”

She gave him an all-too-familiar look, “Luke Skywalker, it has been almost thirteen years since I got laid. You are going to \textit{fuck me} like you’ve never fucked me before.”

He practically threw her on his cot. Their mouths mangled together desperately as they tore off their clothing. Felicity’s body was just as he remembered as he ripped off her pants and underwear in one fluid motion.

“No time for foreplay,” Felicity groaned as Luke laid over her. It was the same position they had last made love to her in, and he didn’t want her going anywhere any time soon. Felicity clutched his shoulders, wrapping her legs around his hips and grinding her hot clit against his cock. “Please, Luke, just \textit{fuck me}!”

Needing no further encouragement, Luke grabbed his cock and positioned it at her entrance. And
Luke woke up on his cot, staring at the ceiling of an empty AT-AT walker. His breath was heavy, and his heart hammered in his chest at the impossible images of his beloved wife.

He was alone. Just like every morning, he woke up alone. No Felicity, no Aletha, no Quom, no Teng… No Rey.

It was the fifty-fifth morning he woke up, looked over at Rey’s hammock and remembered she was gone.

Rey wasn’t gone gone, he still saw her every single day, but they didn’t live together anymore. Luke understood her reasoning, someone needed to stay on the ship that she restored – the still nameless ship. Originally, Teng had volunteered to live on the Good Ship Restoration – what Luke and Quom had taken to calling the nameless ship – but then Rey got the idea that it was time for her and Teng to have permanent privacy and they should move into the Good Ship Restoration together.

Luke didn’t fight them on it. Although his daughter was only seventeen, they were the closest thing to married that people got on Jakku. Not a lot of actually legal binding ceremonies happened on the drab planet and people typically just adopted the title of married – although if he remembered correctly Jarex Zolhar and Fallah Menuk were legally married before Fallah left Jarex for beating Rey. Heck, as far as Niima Outpost was concerned, Luke and Aletha had been married for a few years there. So, figuring he’d still be able to keep an eye on the kids, Luke agreed to let Rey move onto the Good Ship Restoration with Teng.

And Luke Skywalker woke up every day with no one at his side.

Luke sighed, staring at the ceiling for a while, then he turned over and used the Force to summon Holo. At first it wriggled a little, but then it shot into his outstretched hand. With Luke not using the Force on a daily basis, his powers had started to weaken a bit. As he taught Rey, his proficiency increased but he was not nearly at the level he had been the night Rornian burned.

Eh, still better than Rey. She couldn’t summon objects to her to save her life, Luke just dearly hoped that never turned literal.

He sat up and turned over the disc in his hands. Luke took a deep breath and flicked it on. It was Felicity: those mischievous eyes, that glorious smile, those lips that belonged to him. She laughed and held Rey, a sweet little mother/daughter moment Luke had been lucky to record.

A tear shook in the corner of his eye as he reached out with his natural hand and stroked the small blue image of his wife. It was a mere formation of light, so his fingers went through it, a fitting metaphor. Felicity Rhiaon Skywalker was constant in his life, he could see her so perfectly, his soul always reaching for her once more, but he could never grab her. His dream was not the first he had had, and he doubted it would be the last.

Yes, he had accepted and moved on from Felicity’s death… but that didn’t mean he still didn’t miss her every damn day.

Rey Erso loved waking up in Teng Malar’s arms. Sure, the man hogged the blankets like they were
the last ones in the Galaxy, but she loved his body on hers. Jakku was a dark and dangerous place, having a wall of warm and strong muscle at her back made Rey feel that much safer.

Besides, she had inherited her father’s Force vision sleep kicks, and considering her cousin most often connected their minds while Rey was sleeping, Rey had soundly gotten her revenge on Teng.

Rey was usually the first of them to wake up. If she let Teng, the boy could sleep for five years straight. But Rey rose with the sun… which had resulted in many jokes about her name over the years. She liked her name well enough but being named after beams of light did have its drawbacks.

“Teng,” she gently shook her slumbering boyfriend. “Teng, wake up. It’s morning.”

“Ugh, five more minutes,” he groaned, rolling over. It was a small bunk, so Rey had to grab his shoulder to stop him from rolling right off it.

Rey laughed and shook her head. Teng wasn’t exactly the image of beauty in morning; limbs splayed awkwardly, crust in his eyes, breath worse than Quom’s, his long black hair stuck at weird angles on his face, his morning scruff dark and patchy, and a little bit of drool always rolling down his chin.

“Come on, Moonshine,” Rey teased, leaning over him to speak right into his ear. “Up and at em.”

Teng moaned and rolled onto his back. He fought to open his eyes and scowled at her when he did.

“But I was having a very good dream,” he told her.

“Oh really?” Rey rested her chin on his chest. “And what was it about?”

“You.”

Rey blushed a little; she may have been regularly shagging Teng, but words like that still made her feel bashful.

“But I suppose I should wake up.” Teng sat up, grinning. He hooked an arm around her waist and yanked her close, making Rey give a startled – but happy – yelp. “After all, why dream about a beautiful, young woman when I can have her right here, right now?”

Teng pulled her in for a kiss, but Rey put a hand on his chest and pushed him back.

“Oh, no, not with that morning breath,” she climbed off the bunk. “There’s a reason Aletha sent you that prescription strength mouthwash.”

“Curse you, Doctor Kymeri,” Teng groaned as Rey walked across the room and started to dig through their bag of hygiene items.

“Hey, don’t you curse Aletha. If it wasn’t for this mouthwash you wouldn’t be kissing me at all,” Rey threw the bottle to him.

She watched as Teng reluctantly used it, and as she did, she glanced down at their box of hygiene items. Her eyes fell on the unopened packages of hair ties Aletha had sent in the epic care package. It was a nice gesture, but those hair ties were unneeded unless Teng decided he wanted to use them. Rey already had the ties she needed… even if they were falling apart.

Absentmindedly, Rey ran a hand through her slightly greasy hair. They traced over the dishevelled buns. Hair was falling out and she needed a good wash and retie.
Usually Rey would take her hair down while she slept, but she had been exhausted from scaling the *Inflictor* after her grappling hook broke. Teng had offered she used his, but Rey’s name involved the words *Rhiaon* and *Skywalker*, so she was stubborn as hell. The last thing she remembered was having dinner with Luke and Teng at the walker, so she was fairly certain Teng just brought her home and put her to bed without adjusting her appearance at all.

Rey frowned; she didn’t even say good night to her father.

“Hey,” Teng’s arms suddenly wrapped around her. His breath smelled a whole heck of a lot better. “Whatcha thinking about?”

She sighed and rested her weight back in his embrace, “Nothing, just my hair.”

“You are your father’s daughter.”

She swatted at him, “I was just thinking how messy my hair is.”

“Well, I think we’ve saved up enough to visit the bathing station,” Teng played with said hair. “Hey, how about this, we’ll go get your hair washed and then why don’t we maybe play around with your hairstyle?”

Rey frowned.

*Hands stroked through her hair, pulling, pushing, and styling until Rey’s hair was set in her signature three bun look.*

“There, functional and fashionable.” Felicity proclaimed with a wink, “That’s the Rhiaon way.”

“N- No,” Rey said quietly. “I… I like my hair like this.”

Teng sighed, “Rey, I know why you keep your hair like that. I thought you were over the whole your mother being alive thing.”

“That’s not why I do it.” Rey reached up and pulled out one of the ties. “It’s because of these.”

It was very ratty and used to be a deep blue. Six tiny unfamiliar symbols were printed in silver across it.

Teng frowned, “I don’t understand.”

Rey set the tie down, “I don’t think I’ve ever told you the story of my hairstyle.”

“Didn’t your mom give it to you when you guys crash landed in the desert?”

“Yeah, but there’s a little more to it than that. It happened a couple weeks after we came to Jakku. We were getting ready for bed.”
“No, no, Sweetheart!” Felicity stopped her daughter when Rey started to take out her hair buns. “Leave them be.”

“But Mommy, my head is itchy,” Rey scowled as Felicity pulled her into her lap on the hammock and fixed her hair. Rey had gotten them so far undone that Felicity would have to just start from scratch and redo the whole thing.

“I know, Sweetheart,” Felicity said. “Mommy’s going to try to get water here tomorrow so we can wash our hair.”

“Can we use Daddy’s special shampoo?”

Felicity winced, “We aren’t using any shampoo.”

“What?”

“We’re just going to have to make do. We’ll rough it like we did back in the Rebellion. Hey, how about Mommy tells you a story about the time Uncle Chewie got absolutely covered in stinky murklurp mud?”

“Ew,” Rey scrunched her nose but let the story continue.

“I don’t remember the story the story she told me,” Rey told Teng, “but I do remember asking a certain question.”

“Mommy, why can’t I take out my hair buns?”

“Well, Sweetheart, it’s a special hairstyle,” Felicity answered.

“It is?”

“Yep, it’s a Valrian one. You know Valra, right? The planet my parents were born.”

“Do my bun got something to do with your Gods?”

“Sort of,” Felicity smiled. Her hands knotted one of the ribbons in Rey’s buns, “The ties in your hair have little symbols on them. Six symbols, each the symbol of one of the Gods. Itar. Ipgyn. Djun. Ethys. Koena. Imar. This hairstyle is one young girls who follow Valrian religion wear, and the symbols of the Gods bring them luck.”

“Why don’t you wear something with the symbols so the Gods can bring you luck?”

“Oh, Sweetheart, I think Mommy’s just about used up all her luck. You want some luck, you go ask your crazy Uncle.”

“Which one?”

“Fair point,” Felicity laughed. “But I meant good old Uncle Loud Mouth.”

“He’s my favorite!”
“Yeah, I think mine too. So, this hairstyle, the girls of our religion wear them. If a Valrian sees a girl wearing this hairstyle with ribbons bearing the lucky symbol, they know she’s one of us and they’re obligated to protect and help her. That’s why I want you to keep them in while we’re on Jakku. I don’t know if there’s any other Valrians around, but if there are, you can ask them for help. But that doesn’t mean you’re allowed to go off with some stranger without Mommy’s permission, even if they’re Valrian. Do you understand?”

“Yes, Mommy,” Rey nodded. “Mommy, are the Gods real?”

“Uh… probably not, but don’t ever say that to a Valrian helping you. They don’t like hearing that.”

“Only the Force is real, right?”

“Sweetheart, Mommy is far too thirsty, hungry, and tired to get into that discussion. Can we put a pin in that and talk about it when we go home with Daddy?”

“Okay,” Rey nodded. “Mommy?”

“Yes, Sweetheart?”

“When are we going home with Daddy?”

“Soon, Rey. He’ll be here soon.”

“Why is he taking so long?”

“I don’t know,” Felicity sighed. “Maybe he’s taking the long way home. But he’ll be here soon, I promise.”

“Wow,” Teng said when Rey had finished. “That’s a sweet memory but at the same time—”

“It’s total downer when you realize my mom had no clue when my dad would get to us and she was contemplating what would happen to us and the possibility of having to leave me on my own, hence the warning to go to Valrians for help?”

“Not to mention the running out of luck line is super depressing.”

Rey sighed, “You don’t think you’re close to running out of luck, right?”

“Are you kidding?” Teng snorted. “You’re going to be dragging me on your crazy adventures for decades.”

Rey grinned as she rested her head on his shoulder.

“Alright, you want to keep your buns in for Valrian protection, I can go with that,” Teng said. “Just as long as you still let me take your hair down when we’re getting frisky.”

“Deal,” Rey laughed.

Teng laughed with her a little and pulled her in for a kiss. It was a playful kiss, but then it turned a little too playful.

“Someone’s frisky this morning,” Rey ran her hands through his hair as Teng nipped at her
collarbone and his hands cupped her breasts. “Why so eager?”

“I had intentions last night, but you fell asleep,” Teng slid his knee between her legs and ground it against her.

Rey moaned, “Well, maybe we can fulfill those intentions now.”

“Bunk?”

“Floor.”

Teng pushed her on the ground, hands tearing at her gauze while she unfastened his belt. Their lips and tongue took in each other frantically as Teng started yanked up her tunic.

“Good morning, you two!” a man called.

“Dad!” Rey shoved Teng off her.

With crossed arms, Luke watched the teenagers try to collect themselves, now frantic to redress.

“Hi Daddy,” Rey always used the younger term when she felt guilty, and her found had just walked in on her taking off her boyfriend’s pants, so Daddy it was. She pushed back a loose bit of hair, “You have a good night?”

“Clearly not as good a night as you two,” Luke countered.

“Actually, we didn’t do anything last night,” Teng said. “Hence the attempt now.”

Rey elbowed him in the gut.

“Don’t worry,” Luke held up his hands in surrender. “I get it, you two live together now. Besides, if Rey is anything like her parents—”

“No!” she exclaimed. She shuddered at the involuntary image of her parents canoodling in her mind. “This is your revenge, isn’t it?”

“Little bit,” Luke shrugged. “I just came to tell you two that Dirk has arrived.”

Dirk would watch the Good Ship Restoration during the day for Rey to make sure no one stole it. Truth be told, he would just sleep on it – those days he would do the night guarding shift for Plutt – but after his defeat of Roke in the Fighting Ring, everyone knew not to mess with Dirk, awake or asleep.

“Really?” Rey got to her feet with Teng. “You came all the way out here to tell me Dirk has arrive?”

“Well, Rey, it’s not like I had to go very far,” Luke said.

That was another reason Luke was okay with Rey moving onto the Good Ship Restoration with Teng. The ship was literally parked just behind the walker.

“Come on,” Luke urged. “Let’s go have some breakfast and make sure Quom hasn’t gotten into any trouble alone overnight.”

“You know he’s found a way,” Teng said.

“Oh, without a doubt.”
“You guys go ahead,” Rey smiled. “I’m going to finish retying my hair.”


“Love you, Starlight,” Teng kissed her lips.

Rey waved as she watched the men depart, the pair chatting jovially like Luke hadn’t just walked in on Teng trying to screw Luke’s daughter.

When they were out of sight, Rey sat on their bunk, pausing for a minute to make the bed. Her hands threaded her hair with ease as her pulled and twisted her brown locks in the same style she had worn everyday since she was five-years-old.

She smiled as she thought of that simple memory of her mother. She had grown a larger yearning for her mother ever since Aletha left. Rey still considered Aletha Kymeri as her second mother, but Felicity Rhiaon would always be a part of her.

Then she frowned as she thought over a certain part of the memory.

Who was Uncle Chewie?

Kaydel knew she shouldn’t be spying on the Wookiees, but she couldn’t help it. She spotted them as she passed the large cargo room on her way from Dacken’s room – Poe had arranged for his to be as far away as possible from everyone else’s.

Nobody would notice if she was hiding in a corridor for a while.

Evan was working on Snap and still yelling at him about using a lightsaber on it. Of course, Snap only argue back about how freaking painful it had been, and he learned his lesson, but Evan was still pissed.

Han was securing Jaina Fel’s body bag – keeping his promise to bring her home – and talking to Leia over the comm. Waroo had ultimately been the one to break it to Han… by breaking it to Chewbacca, who broke it to Han. Han had decided he would be the one to tell her that he saw their son, their son had almost made their grandparents, and now their son’s… lover (what better word was there for it) was having a miscarriage.

He had also asked Poe what Ben had meant to ask about Felicity, but Poe practically ran out of the room when Han asked him. Whatever Kylo told Poe – Kaydel didn’t even know – Han was not going to get it out of Poe easily.

Karé was having a nap. If anyone needed one, it was her. Her accomplishments had really been underrated in the grand scheme of things, and now that she knew her husband would be okay, she didn’t want to wake up for nine hours.

Dacken was trying to stay out of everyone’s way, though he kept asking how Hena and her son were doing.

Shayna was keeping Hena company, and Hena’s son, Ryn distracted. Ryn was trying out Shayna’s wheelchair, racing along the corridors (with Shayna’s permission and encouragement) as the boy would probably need to use one for the rest of his life. He clung to stories of Shayna’s own triumphs without being able to walk. Hena confessed to Shayna that the only reason Ryn didn’t feel scared about his legs was that “the cool pilot who being so tough about his. I’m at double the pain, so I’m going to be double tough.”
Snap almost cried when Shayna told him that.

Evan almost cried when Shayna told him she loved playing with Ryn so much, she wanted a grandkid now. Apparently, Evan had turned a shade so pale that Stormtrooper armor looked black in comparison.

Rose and Paige were resting in a small lounge area, just holding each other, and celebrating that they were both fine. Paige was also grilling her sister for every scrap of information about Marks, while Rose tried to deflect, asking about Paige’s father’s riding lesson that felt like a lifetime ago.

And Poe… Poe had disappeared. He had asked to see Kes in private for a moment to chat, and Kaydel could not find any Dameron for the life of her.

It was fine, Kaydel needed to wander around alone for a while and just clear her head. That was how she came upon Waroo and Chewbacca.

Kaydel stood there and watched as father and son tended to a job they had been working on with Han before this whole Nixrye nonsense. It was long overdue, and probably wouldn’t end up completed, but it was a way to pass the time and bond.

They growled back and forth, sharing tales of their adventure on Nixrye (though Kaydel couldn’t speak Wookiee, so they could be trading jamba fruit pie recipes for all she knew) and just… spending time together. Chewbacca would scruff his son’s fur, Waroo would boast about her fighting skills, they would share memories of their times together, Waroo would seek guidance on how he dealt with Ben Solo.

…That was how a father and child were supposed to be.

Kaydel sighed and pressed herself against the wall.

She was safe on a ship away from Nixrye because three fathers, a sister, and a mother had decided to brave all and rescue the ones they loved. Even Kylo Ren’s father had wanted to save his son? But her family?

Her father had been a coward, throwing both her and Katha and anyone else he could to the wolves when he was in danger.

Her sister had handcuffed her to a wall and left her for dead.

Her mother had thrown her out on the street when

Kaydel Ko Connix had never had a good family. She tried not to resent the people that did, but as she watched the Wookiee father and son, her heart burned with jealousy.

Then she glanced down the corridor from where she had come. Off towards Dacken’s room.

Dacken. Her nephew looking for a second chance.

Kaydel sighed. No, she was wrong; despite the overpowering figures of anger and evil among their ranks, her entire family wasn’t terrible.

Her relationship with Dacken was new, but he gave up everything to follow her to the Resistance.

Her brother, Keth financially supported her, even though if he was found out, he would put his wife and children in danger from Alecta.
Her sister, Kyra, was a bit of a bitch but in the way Holdo was. When that bitchiness was against you, may the Goddesses help you, but when she was on your side, nothing could stop the two of you.

And her Aunt Aletha was her friend, mentor, and second mother. Sure, sometimes she struggled with the insanity of Kaydel and her friends, but more often than not, she was right there playing a part in it.

So with a smile on her face, Kaydel left the Wookiees to their bonding.

---

Kes Dameron just stared at his son.


It had been about ten minutes since he blurted out the fate of Felicity Rhiaon Skywalker to his father. Kes had no words for a full ten minutes, and when he did, they were a simple:

“…Holy shit.”

Poe sat back against the wall, they were sitting in a corridor alone. The Eravana was a huge ship, so it was easy to find a corner where no one would discover or hear you.

“Yeah, I had about the same sentiments,” Poe sighed. He wouldn’t cry. He couldn’t cry. “I also… kind of threw up a bit.”

“I don’t blame you. I’m feeling a little nauseous myself.”

“Oh, it’s not that part that made me sick. That son of a bitch decided to give an extremely graphic description what happened to her.”

“Poe, what have I told you about insulting Ben Solo?”

“Not to call Leia a bitch in the process?”


“Fine,” Poe rolled his eyes a little. “The little bastard gave me a play by play of what happened to her. It was awful… I actually tried to kill him for it.”

“I’m not going to lie and say I’m angry with you for it. I just can’t believe it, all this time, Luke’s had to carry that burden.”

Poe hesitated, “Do you- Do you think that’s why he left? That that’s what broke him?”

“Hey,” Kes grabbed his son’s knee, “we’ve talked about this. It’s not your fault. You were an eighteen-year-old boy trying to give words of comfort to a grown man who lost everything. It’s not your fault that Luke left.”

“I know.”

“But you don’t believe me.”

Poe sighed, “I… I want to, but-”
Kes pulled his son in for a hug. Poe stayed in his father’s arm for a minute, just frozen, but then he gave him. He broke down. He clutched and wept in Kes’ strong arms.

“How am I going to tell them?” asked Poe. “Kylo called me out in front of Solo. How can tell… How can I tell Leia? How can I tell her this after already hearing about her grandkid?”

Poe may hate Leia’s son, but he wasn’t stupid. He knew she would mourn the grandchild that would never be. For a moment Poe’s mind flicked to Sasa, and he thought that poor girl.

But he couldn’t have sympathy for Ben, not after what he had done to Felicity Rhiaon.

“How do I tell them what he did?” Poe asked. “I don’t know if I can.”

Kes sighed and squeezed his son, “Then I’ll do it for you.”

“Really?” Poe pulled back.

Kes smiled and stroked his son’s face, “I am your father. I am here to protect you and care for you. It’s literally in my job description.”

“But Dad-”

“It’s okay, Cielito,” Kes promised. “Let me take this burden from you.”

Poe smiled, and he felt ten tonnes lighter.

“Hey, Connix?” Han stopped Kaydel as she passed him in the wall. “Do you mind going into the fresher and grabbing some more bacta pads for Hot Shot? I keep an extra box in there.”

“Sure.”

Han pointed her down another hall and told her it was three doors on the right. Kaydel entered the fresher and immediately set eyes on the medicine cabinet. She reached up to open the cabinet but paused.

Her hands were still stained with Doxl Ren’s blood.

Shaking her head, Kaydel glanced at the sink and grabbed the box of bacta pads from the cabinet. She set them down and turned on the water. There was no real thought in her head as she casually washed the blood off her hands, just a smile when she realized that the hand soap in the fresher of Han Solo’s enormous shipping freighter was Leia Organa’s favorite kind. Soon enough the blood was scrubbed all away.

Satisfied at the job she had done, Kaydel turned off the tap and turned toward the towel rack. She reached for the rather grody looking towel and froze.

Doxl Ren’s blood was back on her hands.

Kaydel frowned and turned the tap back on. She scrubbed extra hard this time, even taking the time to get under her fingernails. Her hands clean, Kaydel smiled and turned off the tap. She reached for the towel and froze.

Her hands were bloody again.
Kaydel’s heart pounded in her chest as it came to her again.

Kaydel was fighting Doxl Ren. He was trying to hurt her. Kill her.

She slit his throat without a second thought. His eyes bulged, his blood stained her hands. He burbled, choking on his blood as Kaydel held him in her arms. She held him there, didn’t move to help Doxl as he drowned in his own blood.

Then she dropped his body to the ground with a sickening thwack.

Frantically she turned on the tap again and scrubbed furiously. Her skin chaffed as she rubbed soap into it over and over again, desperately trying to get rid of the blood that wouldn’t disappear down the drain.

Thwack!

Thwack!

Kaydel couldn’t get the sound of his body hitting the ground out of her brain. She didn’t notice that she had gone through half a bottle of soap as she scrubbed her hands raw.

“Kay?” Poe called.

She instantly shut off the tap as the Poe ducked into the fresher.

“There you are,” he grinned. “Solo said he sent you here. You found the bacta pads alright?”

“Oh, yeah,” she grabbed the box and held them out to him.

Poe frowned; Kaydel’s hands were red, raw, and dripping with water.

“Are you okay, Babe?” he asked.

“What?” Kaydel scowled. “I’m fine.”

“You sure?”

“Of course, I’m sure. What kind of question is that?”

“Alright, I was just asking.” Poe grabbed the box, then turned and yelled out the door, “Hey, Solo! Incoming!”

Poe whipped the box far away from him.

“Nice catch!” Poe turned back to face Kaydel. “Uh, Solo’s down the hall waiting for those.”

“I assumed as much,” Kaydel replied. “I’m fairly certain you wouldn’t throw something and make Han Solo go fetch it… Evan maybe, Dacken absolutely, but not Han Solo.”

“Ah, you know me so well.” Poe reached to take her hand, but she pulled it away. “Kay?”
She realized what she had done.

“Sorry,” she a little too eagerly grabbed his hand. Kaydel squeezed it in what she thought was a reassuring way, but to Poe it felt like she was trying to break it.

Still he didn’t pull away, “Babe, is something going on?”

“No, of course not.”

“Kay, remember we promised never to lie to each other.”

“I’m not lying!” her objection wasn’t angry. “Look, Poe I’m just a little frazzled from the events of today.”

“Makes sense,” he stroked the back of her hand with his thumb. “It was very a stressful and traumatic event. I would understand if there was something that… put you out of sorts.”

“Poe, I swear, I’m o…” She stopped herself. “I will be okay.”

“Allright,” he said quietly. He heaved a sigh and pulled her in for a hug, “Alright, but if you need anything, I’m here for you.”

“I know,” Kaydel smiled. She felt so safe in his arms, “I know. You always are there for me, especially today. I haven’t thanked you for saving my life back there.”

“Saving your life?” he laughed, pulling back a little. “Kay, if it wasn’t for you, Ben Solo would have my head mounted on his wall right now. You saved my life today, no question about it.”

“Well then, I guess you’re welcome. I still can’t believe we got out of any of that.”

“Me neither.” Poe hesitated for a moment, “Kaydel, there’s something I should tell you. I… I almost died today.”

“Yeah, I know, I was there.”

“No, I meant in the ballroom.”

Kaydel tilted her head.

Poe took a deep breath, “After the explosion… I almost died. I was lying there on the floor, already accepting that fact. I was thinking of seeing my mother again and how my father would take the news… and then I thought of you. I thought that there was still a chance you could be alive, and I knew I had to find you. I could have died today, but I choose to live for you.”

He didn’t mean to make Kaydel burst into tears with his words, but he was happy to hold her in his arms when she did.

“I love you, Poe,” Kaydel clung onto him tightly. “I love you so much.”

“Not as much as I love you,” Poe bent down and kissed her.

They stood in the fresher for while just clinging to each other and kissing. They were alive; they were in each other’s arms and they were alive. They had survived it all: bombs, Crimson Dawn, angry relatives, psychotic aunts, Knights of Ren, Imperial Loyalists, Stormtroopers, and high society parties. They had made it out alive, and they were in each other’s arms.
When they finally finished their kissing, they still held each other, Kaydel’s head resting on Poe chest and Poe with his chin atop her head.

“I’m so glad you made it out alive,” Kaydel whispered.

“Kay, I told you already, I’m not going anywhere. 108, that’s my promise.” Poe glanced out into the hall, “Hey, Babe?”

“Yeah, Peacock?”

“Well, I know my dad’s on the ship and there’s a small child in the vicinity… but do you want to go have Thank God We’re Alive sex in a supply closet?”

“Yeah, okay,” she pulled out of his arms.

He grinned, grabbed her hand, and they ran out the door.

“Chapter Seventeen. When the door to the cell slid open, Han was on his lying back, the Princess and Chewbacca crowding over him. For a woman who had fought for so many years to deny her feelings for Han, there was no denying anything in that moment as Leia tenderly stroked his forehead.”

Marks sat on the bed, knees curled up to his chest and a smile on his face as he listened to Lando Calrissian and the Treason on Bespin.

“Thankfully Han didn’t have any true external wounds, though I knew better than to think the Mighty Dark Lord Vader would use traditional torture methods. The sounds of Han’s screams echoed in my head once more, and they’ve never truly left me since. It is only in the arms of a beautiful young Jedi named Alyla Kene that I found any solace.”

Marks winced. It was painfully clear that the thirteenth volume of The Calrissian Chronicles, had been recorded four years before Alyla Kene’s death. The ones written after had a slightly more depressing tone whenever Alyla was mentioned. The nineteenth volume, Lando Calrissian and the Heart of a Jedi, detailing how Lando met and fell in love with Alyla was hailed by critics as heartbreakingly genuine. Calrissian had actually won a few awards for that book.

Of course, it was volume twenty-four, Lando Calrissian and the Death of the Morning Glory that was a real punch to the gut. Even Han Solo had cried when he heard Lando telling the story of Alyla’s death.

“Chewie let out a mighty and protective roar at me as Leia softly told Han of my arrival. It roused Han, but he struggled to find the strength to sit up on his own, Leia’s delicate hands guiding up his back to help him.

When I came to a stop, Chewie let out an even more dangerous roar. I thought back to Numidian Prime when Han ordered him to tear off my arms. He had joked later that he didn’t mean it, but there is no doubt in my mind that if Han hadn’t found that card up my sleeve, my nickname would be ‘No Arms Calrissian.’

Han was no less dangerous to me than Chewbacca. He looked upon me with pure hatred, no sympathy whatsoever for my position and responsibility to the people of Cloud City.
He said to me, ‘Get out of here, Lando-’

‘Shut up and listen!’ I snapped. Thankfully the group allowed me to speak, though the looks on Han and Chewie’s faces were anything but pleasant. I wasn’t playing games in that moment, I hurried my explanation while they gave me the chance to say my peace. ‘Vader has agreed to turn Leia and Chewie over to me.’

‘Over to you?’ Han scowled.

‘They’ll have to stay here, but at least they’ll be safe,’ my voice pleaded with them to understand I was on their side. Of course, at that time I had yet to grasp how stubborn and unforgiving Han and Leia were, though they did end up making me their son’s third-in-line Godfather (assuming nothing happens to Luke and Chewie first) so I guess I’ve done something right since then.

‘What about Han?’ Leia asked me.

It truly hurt me to have to say the next words, there were almost tears in my eyes as I did so, ‘Vader’s giving him to the bounty hunter.’

Leia just looked at me like I was stupid, ‘Vader wants us all dead.’

‘He doesn’t want you at all!’ I snapped. ‘He’s after somebody called Skywalker!’

The words touched something in Han. His demeanor changed in an instant, a look falling over his face, not unlike one I had seen him give Qi’ra a time or two.

Han’s voice was soft as he uttered the name, ‘Luke?’

‘Lord Vader has set a trap for him,’ I explained.

Leia – bless her heart – figured it out in a second, ‘And we’re the bait.’

‘Well, he’s on his way,’ I told them.

I would later find out how unremarkable a statement that was. Luke Skywalker would rush headfirst into any danger that befell his friends. I can’t tell you how many times Luke rallied the troops for a rescue mission. I’m sad to say that I was the center of a few of them, but my favorite rescue mission had to be the time Luke’s wife got kidnapped while pregnant.

Alas, that is a tale for another volume, and at this point Luke had yet to meet Felicity.

Thank God. That woman’s a menace... She’s going to kick my ass when she listens to this. Sorry, Fliss. You’re not exactly a people person.

Yet it was despite this insistence of Luke to rush into insane traps, Han still felt such a swell of anger at the thought I had helped set such a trap using him against Luke.

‘Perfect,’ Han growled, raising slowly to his feet. ‘You fixed us all pretty good, didn’t you?’

I turned my head away from Han, trying to think of a way that would make him understand. Even though Han and I had never really gotten along, clearly our bond had meant a little something to him, because his voice dripped with acid.

‘My friend!’ Han spat out at me.

The next thing I knew, Han hauled off and punched me right in the face. The blow forced me back
around from him. I heard the crash to the floor and the Imperials set on Han. My heart pounded fast. No! This was my friend. I might have betrayed him, but Han was my friend. If anything, I owed him for at least saving L3.

‘Stop!’ I roared.

Eyes filled with fear at me, the Imperials immediately backed away.

I sighed as I took in the sight of my visage. My cape had been thrown off and my jaw ached with pain. A man always has to look dignified, so the first thing I did was set my cape back on right. I liked that outfit, a lot, and the cape just goes so perfectly with it.

But I digress.

‘I’ve done all I can,’ I told them. They just couldn’t understand. I was doing right, I had to have been doing the right thing. ‘I’m sorry I couldn’t do better, but I have my own problems.’

‘Yeah,’ Han growled on the floor, ‘you’re a real hero.’

The words stopped me for a moment, and I looked back at this man I once thought a friend, lying on the floor of my city in pain and utterly betrayed by the man who promised help in one of his darkest moments.

And considering that man was Han Solo, that’s saying some.

In that moment as Han stared at me with such utter hatred, my faith started to waver.

Was I doing the right thing?”

“What are you doing?”

Marks looked up in shock. He instantly slammed down on the stop button when he saw Kylo Ren standing in the doorway.

“Nothing, Sir,” Marks scrambled to his feet, shoving the Holo player away. “Just… enjoying a HoloNovel?”

Kylo narrowed his eyes, “Who told you that you could read that one?”

Marks glanced at the HoloChip case sitting on the bunk next to him. It was a twenty-five HoloNovel set with a heroic and cape-clad Lando Calrissian armed with two blasters dramatically splashed across it. Small images of the characters of his adventures – Han Solo, Chewbacca, L3, Lobot, his Wampa friend Emri, and of course beautiful but scarred Alyla Kene – appeared in scattered circles. Gold pen had scrawled across the case an autograph with the epigraph, “To My Little Buddy, Ben, Who I Endeavour To Corrupt. Love, Fun Uncle Lando.”

Not only did Kylo own the complete set of the first twenty-five volumes, but he owned the other three subsequent books in the series, and had pre-orders in for the next two books, Lando Calrissian and the Search for the Millennium Falcon, and Lando Calrissian and the Rebel of Tomorrow.

“Uh…” Marks frowned at Kylo, “didn’t you say I could read this series considering… you know?”

The look on Kylo’s face suggested that was not the right phrasing.

“Master Kylo,” Marks tried again, “I did seek your permission-”
“I said you could read *Lando Calrissian and the Spices of the Galaxy,*” Kylo snapped. “I said you could read *Lando Calrissian and the Blood in History.* I’ve told you before that you could read *Lando Calrissian and the Treasure of Scarif, Lando Calrissian and the Yavinese Courtesan, The Emperor of Nowhere, The Sounds of the Swamp, The Pantego Pact, The Memory in the Mountain,* *The Temple of the Sharu, The Cloud City Conspiracy,* hell, you can read *Lando Calrissian and the Crimson Dawn Showdown!* I did **not** say you could read *Lando Calrissian and the Treason on Bespin!* I do not want that Rebellion propaganda blasting in my room. The only reason I keep that volume is to maintain a complete collection. You know how annoyed Sasa can be over missing pieces, it would drive her insane to get rid of one.”

Marks had to hold back a snort. Oh, Kylo kept that volume for a reason, but it certainly wasn’t to complete his set.

Kylo held out his hand, “Give me the chip.”

Reluctantly, Marks pulled out the data chip containing the recording of *Lando Calrissian and the Treason on Bespin* and surrendered it to Kylo.

“Good,” Kylo shoved it in his pocket. “Now I don’t want to catch you listening to this one again. You can read any other of the series, but not this one, am I understood?”

Marks’ face hardened, “Understood.”

Kylo turned and stalked out the room.

Marks stayed where he was for a long while. He clenched his fist, thinking of all Kylo had taken from him. Certain that Kylo was not going to return, Marks yanked out another book data chip and shoved it in the HoloNovel Projector.

The handsome, but older figure of Lando Calrissian beamed up, looking and sounding as charming as ever, but there was a sadness in his eyes as he narrated this volume.

*“The Calrissian Chronicles: Volume Twenty-Four. Lando Calrissian and the Death of the Morning Glory. Written and narrated by Lando Calrissian. Published by High Cloud Publishing House.*

**Prologue.**

*Alyla Kene was the love of my life. I am not ashamed to admit that. Sure, I’ve had many great loves in all shapes and sizes. I’m a man with the taste for the finer things in life, and Alyla Kene was my finest taste of all.*

*It wasn’t that she was a Jedi – that was just a bonus – and it wasn’t because of her beauty – and any man who tells me those scars marred that beauty can fight me – but that woman… Oh that woman. She was everything I wanted and needed. She was kind, courageous, clever, calm, and a multitude of c and c-sounding words. Cloud City might have turned me into a responsible man, but it was Alyla Kene who made me a better one. I would have followed her into the Unknown Regions if she asked me. I wanted her by my side until my dying day.*

*But unfortunately, her dying day came first.*

**Chapter One.**

*Ben Solo was always a troubled kid…”*
Solo didn’t know MK-6093 kept a bootleg copy of it in his pillowcase, watching it with headphones in in the dead of night.

*Lando Calrissian and the Death of the Morning Glory* always broke his heart, but Marks was drawn to it like a moth to flame. He couldn’t deny his connection to the story and wonder what if…

It was ridiculous to even finish that thought.

His hands were balled into fists so tight, Marks’ fingernails were starting to cut into his palms. He was angry, but that didn’t mean he had to hurt himself. Trying to distract himself, Marks shoved his hands into his pockets.

He paused. There was something in his pocket.

Frowning, Marks pulled it out, not knowing quite what to expect. But he smiled when he saw what he had accidentally smuggled from Nixrye.

“*Marks, do you mind?*” Rose asked once more.

“*Hand them over,*” Marks held out his hand, Rose having passed the gloves to him a few times in the communication centre. *Without a second thought, he shoved them into his pant pocket.*

He had accidentally stolen Rose Tico’s gloves.

Marks smiled to himself, fiddling the gloves as he thought about Rose while Lando Calrissian explained the loving connection Lando held between Alyla Kene and the morning glory flower.

“Well,” Marks said to himself, but worse came to worse, he could pretend he was talking to the unconscious Berd on the floor, “it’d be rude not to give them back to her.”

“Okay, almost got it… there!” Kes exclaimed as he fitted the large black primary photoreceptor onto the cranium of the orange and white droid. He apparently had not been too drunk to bring the half reassembled BB-8 to be worked on during the long trips between Yavin IV and Nixrye, and then from Nixrye to D’Qar via meeting the *Ninka* halfway.

…Or maybe drunk Kes Dameron had thought *I’m going to bring my son’s droid to him* and not taken in the fact that BB-8 was just a bag of parts at the moment.

Probably the latter.

“*Good job,*” Rose smiled at Kes, having mostly gotten over her outrage at him by that point. She was helping him out with BB-8 while keeping a side eye on Paige, lying on a bunk in the corner, being tended to by Evan. “*Why don’t you check the wiring I just did, and I think I’m work on repairing the swappable circular tool-bay disks. Anyone know which ones Poe usually has on BB-8?*”

Evan looked confused.
“The orange circles,” Rose elaborated. “They’re where BB-8 keeps his tools and can be replaced and upgraded with minimal programming. Do you know what tools BB-8 usually has?”

“No, you should probably ask Poe,” Evan turned back to looking over Paige’s head wound.

“Where is Poe?” Kes asked. “Why am I working on my son’s droid without him being anywhere near here?”

“You want the honest answer?” Paige sat up, despite Evan’s urgings to lay back down.

Kes’ face fell, “I think I already know it.”

“Yeah, you do,” Paige said. “He’s probably humping Kaydel in a supply closet, celebrating they’re alive.”

Evan shook his head, “Some people have no restraint.”

“What are you talking about?” Paige frowned. “If I didn’t have this headwound, we’d be doing the same thing.”

“Ugh!” Rose pulled a face.

Evan just gave an awkward laugh, pulling at his collar, “Paige! We wouldn’t- That is completely improp- I would never-”

“Hey, Hot Shot?” Kes set down his pliers. “Your mom’s three corridors down, having a nap. She can’t hear any of this.”

“Oh, okay, yeah, if Paige didn’t have a headwound we’d getting down to business too.”

“Ew! Evan!” Rose covered. “That’s my sister!”

“Yeah, and I’ve been sleeping with him for almost two years. Deal with it, Rose,” Paige rolled her eyes.

“I hate you,” she glared at her sister.

“Alright, fine,” Kes huffed. “I know what a sex fiend my son and his girlfriend are. I’m not going to get his help with BB-8 any time soon.”

“Wow,” Evan shook his head, “you’ve really heard that many stories of their sexcapades?”

Kes lifted an eyebrow, “Nope… I figured it out when I caught them a year ago having sex in my bed.”

Evan and the Ticos groaned in unison.

“Kaydel, no,” Paige whispered.

“Is nothing sacred?” Rose asked.

“Yeah, lying to my mother about being a virgin is much better than pulling that kind of stunt,” Evan said.

“Alright, now that you’re all sharing in my misery, I think I’ll check out your wiring, Rose,” Kes flipped over BB-8 cranium. “Could you hand me the gloves I loaned you, Pobrecita? I want to be
protected from electrical shock.”

Rose went into her pocket but came up with nothing. Scowling, she slipped her hand into another pocket, but it too was empty. Frantically, she patted and rechecked each pocket at least six times.

Then she checked her small breast pocket – too small to contain the gloves – and found her answer.

She was still carrying Marks’ little rose.

Rose couldn’t help but smile.

“Pobrecita?” Kes called. Though the term meant poor little girl he liked having a teasing little nickname for her. “Rose, do you have those gloves?”

She remembered what happened to them, how she so carelessly handed them off to Marks and never got them back. They had simply forgotten about them, and while she should be ashamed that she lost something that had been loaned to her, Rose couldn’t bring herself to feel too bad.

All she could think about was the little red rose in her hand and the man who had given her said flower.

“No,” Rose said. “Sorry, Mr. Dameron. I think I lost them.”

“Oh, that’s alright. Hey, Hot Shot, could you check the tool box under Paige’s bunk? I think Solo said he keeps a pair in there.”

Evan pulled out the toolbox, and he and Kes chatted about wiring and BB-8 and whatnot. Neither man noticed the look passing between Rose and Paige Tico.

Paige’s eyes were on the little rose in her sister’s hand. She knew where it came from, who it came from, and if the scene she and Shayna witnesses between Rose and Marks was anything to go on, she knew what it meant to Rose. Paige lifted a coy eyebrow at her sister and sent her the same knowing look Rose once sent her when Paige first fell in love with Evan Tharel.

Rose smiled and just slipped that little rose back in her breast pocket.

That flower could be their little secret… okay, her, Paige, and Rey’s because Rose was so squealing about this with her best friend.

Oh, who was she kidding? SHE FINALLY HAD SOMETHING TO TELL THE COUNCIL!

…That she might have accidentally fallen in love with a Stormtrooper with the Galaxy’s most perfect cheekbones.

Damn it.

When Luke and Teng joked that Quom had found a way to get into trouble, they didn’t expect to find him lying on the ground in his tent, in the fetal position, moaning like a dying animal.

“Quom!” Rey exclaimed dropping to her knees.

“MG,” Quom groaned in pain, clutching his stomach. “It hurts so much.”
“What hurts?” Luke got down next to her and Rey held the Vrogem. “Quom, what happened?”

Teng behind them raced to pull out the medical kit.

“My stomach,” Quom writhed around, maybe a little too dramatically. “Something’s wrong inside of it. It feels like it’s… bubbling.”

“Bubbling?” Rey looked to her father, hoping he had an explanation.

Luke did not, “How long ago did this start?”

“I woke up like this,” Quom answered. “But that’s not all that’s happening. I keep… I keep… Ah… AH…”

Quom gave a mighty sneeze… and shot out burst of flame from his nose that missed Teng by an inch.

Everyone just stared at each other.

Rey got to her feet, “Yeah, okay, I’m calling Aletha.”

“Alright, Meredyth’s in the cargo hold prepping all the supplies she can,” Aletha announced, entering the cockpit where Jessika was flying their transport. In relief she sunk down into the co-pilot chair, “And I finally got Diego down for a nap.”

Jessika raised an eyebrow.

She pulled a face, “Ugh, I sound like his mother.”

“Yeah, it sounded kind of creepy. So, Nalto’s been wound tighter than a violin string lately, how’d you get him down?”

“Oh, I have my ways.”

“So… sex or sedation?”

“Jessika!” Aletha scolded. She paused. “It was both.”

Jessika high fived her.

“So everything go good with the vendors?” Jessika asked.

“It’ll be a lovely event,” Aletha said. “And I expect you to wear a dress.”

“Leggings and a long top that ends with a skirt.”

“Deal,” Aletha laughed. She patted Jessika’s arms, “Oh, I’ve missed you girls. Everyone been behaving themselves?”

“We’re literally heading to the Ninka because Kaydel, Paige, and somehow also Rose managed to blow up a billion credit resort.”

“Fair enough,” Aletha said. “Hey, I forget, which one of you girls has my Kira comm?”
“I’ve got it right here,” Jessika patted her pant pocket.

“Thanks for holding onto it. I just didn’t want to risk it getting lost or stolen on Hosnian Prime. I’m sorry that it’s just been the two of you alone to talk. I’m not quite sure you have a huge amount in common to have long conversations about.”

“Oh, we’ve been fine,” she waved off. “I taught Kira all about grenades and electrocuting people.”

Aletha plucked her comm from Jessika’s pocket, “You’re no longer allowed to talk to her unsupervised.”

“Fair enough.”

The comm started to beep at that exact moment.

“I think Kira missed you,” Jessika grinned.

Aletha shook her head and answered the comm, “Hey, Kira. What’s up?”

Rey grinned at the men around her, “Yes! Aletha’s back!”


“Dad, I’ve been talking to these girls for almost two years. I got the hang of it.” Rey answered the comm, “Aletha! I’ve missed you.”

“I missed you too, Sunshine, but it’s like nine in the morning where you are. What’s going on?”

“Quom’s gotten into a weird situation.”

“…So, nothing new then?”

“Oh, this bit’s new. Quom’s sick, and we’ve never seen this sort disease before.”

Aletha sighed, “Sunshine, you know the rule. I can’t diagnose stuff simply over the comm. It’s better I see it in person, and kind of unethical that could possibly make me lose my license.”

Jessika snickered in the background, “Aletha, there are many things you do that should probably get you to lose your license.”

“Zip it, you.”

“Please, Aletha,” Rey begged. “I wouldn’t ask if it wasn’t super out of the ordinary.”

“Kira, stop it. The answer is no, and nothing you can say will change that.”

Rey shared a look with her father.

“Oh, Aletha?” Rey said. “…Quom’s sneezing flames.”

There was a very long pause.

“Yeah, okay. I’ve got ten minutes.”
Ten Minutes Later…

“Astral Syndrome,” Aletha declared. “Took a bit of searching of my databanks, but it’s definitely Astral Syndrome.”

“What is Astral Syndrome?” Luke asked, Aletha having found some privacy to talk to all of them.

“It’s a sort of weird but rare Vrogem disease. Quom, did you eat anything new recently?”

“Borgus Lye traded us some of that nexu jerky,” Quom groaned, still in the fetal position on the floor.

“Bingo. Vrogem have these special digestive acids that when they interact with certain kinds of proteins – nexu included – it makes the acid bubble, then it goes into the sinuses and you start sneezing out the reactive gases, which happen to combust when met with oxygen. So you’re not sneezing flames, you’re sneezing gas that burns in the air. It’s a tame fire, though. Easy to put out.”

“Oh, that makes me feel better,” Quom rolled his eyes.

“So, how do we fix him?” Luke asked.

“Well, first of all, Quom should not be unattended at all for the rest of the day. It only lasts about a day, but things can get bad if he’s left alone.”

Teng sighed, “Why can I already tell I’m drawing babysitting duty?”

“Oh, come on, Love,” Rey patted his arm, “you be nice to your technically still slave owner.”

“Quom, can you set me free already? I moved out, so it’s not like that I’ll set you free when you pay rent thing works anymore.”

“Teng, I am sneezing flames right now. Can we talk about this later?”

“So how do we treat it?” Luke asked Aletha. “Just sort of run its course.”

“Mostly, but there are a couple weird things you need to do,” Aletha answered. “A paste for him to eat, some medicine to inhale, and then tonight… well, tonight will be interesting. The good thing is that Jedek is close to Jakku right now. I called him, and he’s already got the supplies and on his way to you right now.”

“That’s great,” Teng said. “We usually have to wait at least a month for deliveries.”

“Wait a minute,” Rey frowned, “but Quom and I were going to go do that job at the Sacred Village. We were going to fix some moisture vaporators.”


“No,” Quom answered. “It’s a two-person job at least.”


“Really?” Rey’s eyes brightened.

“Yeah,” Luke smiled. “We’ll do some father/daughter bonding.”
“Sweet!” Rey exclaimed.

“Oh yay,” Teng heaved a sigh. “Babysitting a sick Quom Tinadar duty.”

“My condolences, Teng,” Aletha said.

“Yeah, sorry to burst your father/daughter bubble, but that’s not happening,” Quom said.

Rey frowned, “Why not?”

“Because—” Quom got a weird look on his face. “Uh oh.”

They all dove out of the way as Quom sneezed and set Teng’s old cot on fire. Luke was quick to put it out.


“The job’s in Synael.”

“Oh,” Aletha hissed.


“What?” Rey frowned. “I don’t understand. What’s wrong with Synael?”


“We both are,” Aletha said.

“I don’t understand,” Rey said.

“It’s due to their religious beliefs,” Luke explained. “Rey, I don’t think I’ve ever mentioned this to you, but Synael actually follows the religion of the Valrian Gods, your mother’s homeplanet.”

Rey was shocked, “What? Really?”

“Yeah, unfortunately Felicity never knew about it, otherwise she would have taken refuge there. I only found out about that all roughly three years into living here.”

“So why are you and Aletha banned?” Teng asked. “Your wife was one of them, wouldn’t they welcome you?”

“In theory, but unfortunately I committed an infraction against one of the Five Pillars.”

Rey frowned, “The Five Pillars.”

Luke sighed, “Rey, I think it’s time you learned a little about the religion your mother was born into. Most of all, you need to know about the one thing I greatly respect about the Valrian religion: The Five Pillars of Virtue. Your mother liked to base her values on it… though didn’t always succeed.”

“What are the Five Pillars of Virtue?” Rey asked.

“A set of five ‘crimes’ that are considered the gravest of sins on Valra. Wars had been fought with
other planets when foreign royalty broke one of those pillars.” Luke elaborated, “None of the pillars
rank higher than the others (at least officially) but they aren’t exactly on par. They have the same
amount of dishonour associated with them, but punishments doled out for breaking them are on
different levels.”

And Luke told them that the Five Pillars of Virtue were the following:

**Murder** – albeit killing in self-defence or to protect a family member or innocent about to be killed
did not count.

**Sexual Assault** – even verbal harassment was part of the pillar, Valrians having a strict zero tolerance
policy they kept.

**Abusing Innocents** – child and animal abuse were met with immediate death sentences while the
abuse of the elderly, handicapped, or even power dynamics were dealt with very strictly.

(He didn’t tell the group that technically Luke being Felicity’s boss in the Jedi Order was a mild
violation of that pillar, but Felicity’s exact words when Garvan Rhiaon – her paternal uncle who
sometimes worked with the Resistance – pointed that out to her were “Yeah, but he’s hot, kind, and
has magic powers, so I’m going to keep screwing him.”)

**Arson** – …honestly Luke never really understood that pillar. Sure, he of all people knew the
devastation of fire, but he didn’t understand why arson was on par with rape and murder when there
were worse crimes out there. Luke kind of suspected the reason was that the ecology of Valra was
mostly forests and grassland. One spark and Valra would go up in a blaze that rivaled Mustafar.

**Infidelity** – marriage in Valrian culture was a one-time thing, so if your spouse died, you were still
considered married.

“So, is that why you can’t go to Synael?” Rey asked. “As far as Valra is concerned, you and mom
are still married?”

“And Aletha is his mistress?” Teng added.

“Not just that I’m Luke’s mistress,” Aletha answered. “Luke, you want to take this one?”

Luke sighed, “Yes, that’s the reason I can no longer could go to Synael. When word reached them
that a widowed Ojan-”

“How?” Rey asked.

“A man who married into the faith but does not practice it. When they got word a widowed Ojan had
started dating Aletha, a widowed Elra-” He caught her confused look again, “A female who does not
participate nor is connected to the faith, like your Council friends.”

“Oh,” Rey nodded.

“When they found out that a widowed Ojan started dating a widowed Elra, it had been made clear to
me that I wasn’t welcome in the village anymore.”

“It was bad enough Luke was cheating on his wife, but to do it with someone they considered
married as well was a terrible afront,” Aletha said. “Like I would ever actually commit adultery.”

“Like my wife wouldn’t find a way to kick my ass beyond the grave if I did,” Luke agreed.
“So, does that mean we can’t take the job?” Rey asked.

“Not unless you want to be chased out of the village and be officially set aside by the Valrian religion and all its protections,” Luke answered. “There’s a reason your mother never officially stepped away from the religion, not only does it connect you to a vast network of aid… but they would actually cut off your hair buns, Rey.”

“Okay, no Synael trip then,” Rey said quickly.

“Yeah Valrians go hard with their disowning,” Luke shook his head. “Your mother and I stayed with your mother’s maternal family once before we were married. They were so angry that she was taking up with an Elda – a man not practicing or connected to the faith, like Teng and Quom – that they actually tricked me into drinking Aabane root, which damages sperm production and makes them deformed.”

Rey scowled, “Wait, so they-”

“Drugged me to make sure I didn’t impregnate your mother. Tried to get me to take some home, but Felicity saw it in my bag and lost her mind. She knew it because she used to make a cordial during the Rebellion for birth control. Made a killing selling it around the bases.”

“Wait, she was the one who did that?” Aletha interjected. “That woman was my hero! The medical teams couldn’t get a solid line on birth control pills or patches, and we ran out of condoms as soon as we got them in. You have no idea how many accidental pregnancies and abortions we had to deal with during the Rebellion.”

“Wow, who would have thought it?” Rey teased. “My mom, Felicity Rhiaon, hero of the Rebellion.”

Quom snorted and Luke only didn’t punch him because a couple embers shot out his nose and almost set the roof on fire.

“It’s a pity that we can’t go do this Synael job,” Quom said, not acknowledging how Luke and Teng frantically batted at the roof. “It was going to bring in a lot of money.”

“I’m even more bummed now knowing it’s Mom’s people,” Rey slumped down in a chair. “I’ve just… been missing her a lot lately and wanted to feel connected to her somehow.”

Luke took the seat next to her and slung an arm around her, “I’ve been feeling the same too. I’ve really been missing your mother.”

“Oh, Goddesses, not this again,” Aletha teased.

“Hey, don’t you start that,” Luke grinned. “Rey, told me you have a new boyfriend.”


She laughed a little too awkwardly at that.

Luke sighed, looking down at his sullen daughter. He wanted to give her this connection to her mother. Rey barely remembered the woman, and he wanted her to know everything about Felicity.

Then he saw Teng in the corner of his eye.

“Hey, you know what?” Luke suggested, “Why don’t you go with Teng?”
“What?” Teng asked.

“Really?” Rey sat up straight. “I’d be for multiple days. Teng and I would be there alone and overnight. Are you sure you trust us that much?”


Quom growled at Teng.

“So, you what to go on the trip with Teng?” Luke asked.

“Uh.” Rey looked to Teng, “You wanna?”

“Of course. Sounds great. You and I spending a couple nights alone on an adventure into your past.”

“You would have work to do,” Luke interjected.

“Yeah,” Rey got up and crossed the room to pull Teng into a hug. “But we make the perfect team.”

Teng kissed the top of her head, and Luke smiled.

Quom sneezed more flame.

“Bless you,” Aletha said.

“Alright,” Rey declared. “It’s settled. Teng and I are going to Synael.”

“Good,” Luke beamed. “But one thing before you go, when you arrive in Synael, make sure you’re very respectful and diligent of the culture. Since your mother is the Mara-”

“Mara?” Rey questioned.

“A grown woman who was born in the faith, practices the faith casually, and has a child in the faith,” Luke elaborated. “You are a Mina. A young woman – not a child, but not yet an adult – who was born into the faith, and practices the faith casually.”

“But I don’t-”

“Your insistence on the hair buns alone makes you a Mina. That’s what the hairstyle represents,” Luke explained. “Now, since your mother is Mara, introduce yourself in connection to her, not me. Especially not me, because they hate me specifically. Make sure your hair buns look perfect, and that your clothing is… modest.”

“Modest?” Rey raised an eyebrow.

“Uh…” Luke glanced at the comm. “Aletha, I can’t say these words to my daughter.”

“Rey, cover up your breasts.”

“I-” Rey’s objection died on her tongue. She tugged up her tunic, “Will make sure they’re covered.”

“Damn it,” Teng muttered.

“And one last thing,” Luke instructed, “make sure that when you’re in Synael, you use your religious name.”
“I have a religious name?”

“Uh huh. Rey is your actual, legal, birth name, but—”

“Finally!” she punched her fist. “That mystery’s finally solved! I mean, I’ve never had reason to doubt it, but finally I can be sure!”

Luke stared at her like she had lost her mind, “Do you think I wouldn’t tell you your actual first name? After I’ve taught you to use a different fake name?”

Rey lowered her fist, “Uh… no?”

Luke shook his head and muttered something Rey knew she probably didn’t want to hear clearly.

“Alright, moving on from that.” Luke muttered something to himself again. “Okay, so when you’re in Synael, use your religious name. It’s okay to casually go by Rey, but mostly use your other name.”

“What’s my religious name?”

“Araeya Rhiaon.”

Rey tested it out, “Araeya. I like it.”

“Good, because you’re stuck with it,” Luke grinned.

“Well, Teng,” Rey hefted her bag over her shoulder, “let’s go on an adventure.”

He gestured toward the exit, “Lead the way, Araeya.”

Quom was finally asleep. Six sneezing fires – including one that resulted in the loss of one of Luke’s eyebrows – and Luke had finally gotten Quom to sleep. And it was an interesting sleep to say the least.

Aletha had given Luke very specific directions on how to deal with Astral Syndrome, the strangest of them being that Quom outside in the sand with no blankets or clothing (that God he was the kind of species that could walk around naked without it overtly looking it) …and his arms had to be tied behind his back.

Luke thought it wise not to ask for an explanation, he just kept Quom’s Uzaka powder close at hand.

His eyes starting to droop beyond his control, Luke decided it was time for bed. Since no one else was around, he took Quom’s cot as his bed for the night.

As he settled down in the cot, Luke wondered about Rey and Teng.

Unfortunately, right before they went to set out, a bad sandstorm hit, delaying their plans. It wasn’t a back afternoon. Luke, Rey, Quom, and Teng sat around playing cards and occasionally putting out one of Quom’s sneeze fires.

When the sandstorm ended, it was almost sunset. Rey and Teng decided to head out towards the village of Synael, spending the night at Old Meru’s. She would let them do it once in a while, but Rey and Teng would still get an ungrateful earful about it.
He was glad they were at least together, but he hated them being off on an overnight trip. Sure, he owed it to Felicity to let Rey explore her Valrian heritage... but he didn’t like Rey being where he couldn’t protect her. Of course, it wasn’t like the Valrians were going to betray Rey and Luke to the First Order. Rey had told him about Aletha’s Resistance battle on Valra and how the Governor of Valra, Garvan Rhiaon (Rey totally having no clue the man was her great uncle) had been working with Leia to battle the First Order.

Luke figured Garvan was doing it in the names of Rey and Felicity, still thinking them dead. Felicity may have been estranged from her uncle, but Garvan Rhiaon took his religion very seriously. Felicity hadn’t been officially cut out of the Rhiaon family as she was the Andromias family, so as the head of the Rhiaon line, Garvan did have his obligations to protect his niece and her child. After news of Felicity’s death had broken, Garvan had reached out to Luke and promised the resources of Valra to avenge the girls.

That said, Garvan still hated Luke... but Luke had also killed Garvan’s little brother, Alaric, so Luke wasn’t getting his hopes up to ever be on Garvan’s good side.

No, Luke had to admit that Rey would safe, and if not, well, she was a Skywalker. She was bound to end up having crazy adventures that raised Luke’s blood pressure. Besides... he taught his girl well. Rey could protect herself, and it was only for a couple nights.

Quom on the other hand, well Luke had just stripped his best friend naked, tied his hands behind his back, and threw him into the cold desert night.

Sometimes it was very clear to Luke that Aletha didn’t ever officially finish her medical training.

Luke sighed and pushed away his blankets. He had to go get Quom.

“Oh, don’t worry, Luke, he’ll be fine out there,” a woman said. “He’s naked with his arms tied behind his back. How much trouble can he get up to? Then again it is Quom Tinadar, so...”


Sure enough, there was Alyla Kene sitting on his work bench.


“Oh, turns out that Ben’s not quite done with the Nixrye nonsense, my son is busy, and Lando’s hosting a banquet, so it’ll be hours before he goes to sleep. I figured I’d come hang out with you again.”

Luke sighed and joined her on the bench, “You can’t come to me any time you get bored, Alyla.”

“I’m sorry but I’ve been putting up with Ben Solo for ten years. I think I deserve a break.”

“Fair enough.” Luke hesitated, “So, what was that about Lando not going to sleep?”

Alyla shook her head, “Ben and I... made an arrangement.”

“Oh?”

“I’m not telling you it.”

“Come on, Alyla, it’s been forever since we had a heartfelt midnight talk. Why not have one now if you’re going to interrupt my sleep?”
“Oh, can’t we play cards or something?” Alyla frowned.

Luke shook his head, “What is my life become that I can legitimately play cards with a ghost? This was not in the brochure when Obi-Wan told me about Jedi.”

“Yeah, he did a real bait and switch with that recruitment process.”

“Tell me about it,” Luke held up his robotic hand. “Now come on, Alyla, frankly I’m tired of having no answers about you. You’re one of my dearest friends, and come on, you’ve been hanging around with Ben for ten years. I can’t imagine you’ve really had anyone to talk to.”

Alyla sighed, “I just don’t see how having one of our talks will do anything.”

“Come on, our midnight talks have always been very productive. I got a kid out of one of them.”

“Yeah, and you never thanked me for that.”

Luke rolled his eyes, “Fine. Thank you, Alyla for getting me laid.”

Alyla laughed.

Luke smiled and then reached out and clasped her hand. He liked that her form was solid, there had always been a little something to Alyla and Luke handholds. A little bit of intimacy they didn’t really find the same meaning with with others. It was nothing that would upset Felicity or Lando, but Luke and Alyla had had a strong and close bond of friendship the likes of with Luke only really ever had with Leia.

“Come on,” Luke said. “It’s time for the truth, not matter how much it hurts.”

“It hurts a lot, Luke,” Alyla whispered. She lowered her eyes so Luke couldn’t see the unwarranted shame in them.

“And I’m here to ease that pain. Please, Alyla, tell me the truth. You don’t have to explain how you’re sort of alive, you don’t have to tell me what happened the night you died. You don’t even have to tell me what the agreement about Lando is. But please, just tell me something, anything. How do you have a son? How did I never know about him? Where is he? Who is he?”

She sighed, “Alright, maybe it’s time to tell you at least that part of this story. But it’s not a pretty story… and admittedly it’s kind of ludicrous.”

“Alyla… my parents’ old droids – including one my father built – randomly ended up at the farm I grew up on, carrying a message from my long lost twin sister, after plans got sent to her by my future wife, and then Obi-Wan and I found a Wookiee in a bar to help us who not only had fought with Master Yoda during the Clone Wars, but once upon a time once had his life saved by my father’s ex-padawan. Try me.”

“Fair point.” Alyla took a deep breath, “Alright… the reason you never knew about my son is that I didn’t learn about him until after my death. I didn’t know until Ben found out and told me.”

Luke frowned, “And how did Ben find out?”

MK-6093 sat on the bed, staring the Holo of Lando Calrissian telling the tale of the woman he loved. Such a terrible, but familiar mix of feelings churned in his stomach as he listened to Calrissian’s
"Chapter Seven, Alyla was the one to bring up the idea of kids. It was rather out of the blue, though I could see it was something she had been thinking about for a long time.

The idea was absurd; we hadn’t even said the words I love you and we didn’t live together, but apparently she wanted us to have a kid together… And yet, I said yes without a second thought. I wanted a child with Alyla Kene, and truth be told, I still want a child with her."

"Ben found out because… because my son, my biological son, is the result a bioengineering experiment done by the First Order."

"Bioengineering?"

"Yes, Luke. I didn’t give birth to my son. The First Order took my… genetical material, combined it with the genetic material of a man I hadn’t even met, and created a child."

Marks closed his eyes as he listened to the voice of Lando Calrissian. He remembered the events on Nixrye, not the bombing, but what had happened the day Ben Solo allowed Marks some free time, and the Stormtrooper found himself in the casino.

It had been the last thing in the Galaxy Marks expected, but he couldn’t believe his eyes when he saw Lando Calrissian sitting at a Sabacc table. Evan Tharel hadn’t been crazy, Lando had been at the resort just a few days before the bombing.

Marks couldn’t believe his eyes. He had listened to every single volume of The Calrissian Chronicles, read everything he could about Lando, even had Lando’s picture taped to the wall of his bunk. He had dreamed so many times of seeing Lando Calrissian in the flesh, running up to him, and telling his hero just exactly what Lando meant to him.

Still… Marks didn’t move a muscle.

"But why?" Luke struggled to wrap his head around the explanation. "Why would the First Order bioengineer a child?"

"After the fiascos of Shara Bey and the kidnapping of Prince Akron, the First Order needed to secure another avenue of child collecting," Alyla answered. "They experimented with three things: cloning their current children, purchasing children from terrible parents, and bioengineering children from scratch. My son is the result of the latter."

"How did they get your genetical material?"

"It’s… a long story. One I’m not sure I’m ready to talk about."


There were so many terrible things Alyla has suffered in life, he knew better than to push her to talk about them. Other than Gavyn, Zena, and Lando, Luke was her closest confidant. She would tell him one day, she just needed time.
“Well, what about the father?” Luke asked. “You said that you hadn’t met him when the son was created… did you meet him later?”

Alyla looked away, “…Yes.”

Marks had stood across the casino, just watching Lando Calrissian as he drank, flirted, and gambled. Some people came up to him for autographs and Lando made a whole show out of signing them.

But Marks had just stood there and watched. Over and over, he whispered the words he had been preparing for years to say to Lando Calrissian. Mark just stood there, trying to gather the courage, the strength to walk right up to Lando Calrissian and say them.

He never found that strength, and when Calrissian played his last hand, drank his last drink, and walked out of that casino, Marks hated himself for not following.

Marks had lost his chance.

“Alyla… who is your son’s father?”

It was the first time Luke had seen a ghost cry.

Marks tried not to cry at the thought of his lost chance while he listened to the words of Lando Calrissian he had heard so many times that he could recite them in his sleep.

“Of course, having a biological child with her was out of the question. Alyla had been unceremoniously spayed at the age of fifteen. Adoption was the only answer.

Don’t get me wrong, adoption is fine, but I’m not going to lie, to me there’s always been some charm to notion of having a son of my own biology. My physical features are a true genetic lotto win, and Alyla Kene was the most gorgeous creature in the Galaxy.

I wanted a child with Alyla Kene.”

“Lando?” Luke jaw dropped. “Lando is the biological father of your child?”

“It’s a cruel twist of fate,” Alyla laughed bitterly. “Six months before Lando and I even met, the First Order created our child.”

“A son would be the most amazing gift I could ever be given. Of course, if it was a girl, I would spoil her rotten, treat her like the Princess of Cloud City, and any suitor who sought her hand would be forced to complete some complicated and dangerous test of herculean proportions. Only a man – or
woman, or whatever, I won’t judge my imaginary daughter’s taste in partners – who did the Kessel Run in less time than Han Solo could be worthy of my daughter.

But truth be told, I want a son. I think all men have that thought at one point or nothing. A mini me – maybe this one a little taller and broader like Gavyn Kene – who I could mould to my image. He would have my charm and charisma, Alyla’s kindness and resilience, and hopefully Gavyn’s quick mind… he was a lot smarter than Alyla and I. There’s a reason he was the last Jedi to die.”

“Oh Luke,” Alyla cried, “if I had known… If we had known about our son, I never-”

“It’s okay,” Luke grabbed her hand to calm her. “I know you. I know you and Lando wouldn’t have left him.”

“I just… I feel so terrible. All those years I longed for a child, and out there I had one waiting for me.”

“Alyla… who is your child?”

“Amy, how I dreamed of a son of my own with her eyes, my smile, Gavyn’s bulk, and my mother’s cheekbones.”

Marks reached up and touched his cheekbone.

Alyla took a deep breath and said, “His name is MK-6093… Aka Marcus Kene, experimental product of subject 60 – Alyla Kene – and subject 93 – Lando Calrissian – who in initial compatibility calculations between subjects had been the combination with the highest Marks in the desired attributes of a Stormtrooper.”

Marks watched the Holo of his father, Lando Calrissian, with such longing. His breath shaky, Marks whispered the words he had been so afraid to say but wanted nothing more in the Galaxy to utter.

“Hello, Lando Calrissian. My name is Marcus Kene, and I’m your son. Please… will you help me?”


Alyla gave him a gentle smile, “But you can just call him Marks.”

Chapter End Notes
Coming Up Next Chapter…

A Religious Experience
Rey adores learning about her mother’s culture, while Luke learns more about Alyla’s son. Meanwhile, Holdo has an important talk with Evan, and back on Nixrye, Alecta confronts her family about their failed conference… and it isn’t pretty.

Okay, I know the whole Marks is the biologically engineered son of Alyla and Lando is outlandish, but I promise there’s going to be an explanation next chapter does make some sense. To be perfectly honest with you, this was not the plan when I introduced the story of Alyla having a son.

Originally my plan had been that Ghost Alyla was haunted by the fact she never got to have her child, so she went out and found an orphaned Force Sensitive and basically claimed the child as her son, promising to someday have “Dad” aka Lando find him, and Lando would in TLJ. Because my original plan was to have Temiri aka Broom Boy aka that kid Rose gives her ring to be the son. Lando was going to find him and adopt him and he and Ghost Alyla would raise Temiri as their son.

Then someone asked the ages of certain characters, so I decided to do the math for everyone’s ages. It was awkward enough to deal with the fact that Lando is 14 years older than Alyla… it’s another thing to have Lando adopt a child at the age of 68. That’s just downright irresponsible, and there’s a genuine possibility that that kid will be an orphan again before he’s 25. It wasn’t fair to any of the characters, but I had already introduced the fact Alyla had a son. Cue mad scrambling to find a substitute son.

Then I realized that I didn’t really have a planned backstory for Marks, or that great of one. Originally, he was going to be called Julian – yes, I was going to do Rose and Julian/Romeo and Juliet parody, sue me – and his parents sold him to the First Order, so he was going to be salty at the First Order (and his parents) and that’s why he wants to burn the First Order to the ground from the inside. But Marks was a reasonable age to be Alyla’s son, and I could work with the timing.

Plus there ended up being some good things already built into the story – I merely played with the name Julian for a moment, but I always wanted him to be Marcus, making the MK standing for Marcus Kene be an amazing coincidence – plus that’s why he’s also being watching by Kylo like Finn is (of course the son of Han Solo would keep an eye on Lando Calrissian’s kid), I could do this really great story of Lando having a grown son while dealing with the knowledge that Lando had a biological kid with the woman he loved and they never knew, and I could start up the fact that the First Order has been dealing with genetics, cloning, and bioengineering to set up for a later storyline.

There was the slight problem of the fact that Alyla can’t have kids (my apologies to the person who thought Teng was Alyla’s son, and I gave the lengthy explanation on why she couldn’t possibly have a son that way) but I think I’ve figured out a solution that makes a lot of sense. We’ll get to it later, and it’s a bit of stretch, but I’m basically trying to restructure a few backstories without retconning a bunch of stuff. I’m hoping it turns out more like the correction of Operation Citadel in regard to what actually happened in Rogue One vs fictionfreak101, stop explaining why Quom’s first appearance is inconsistent with his later character, you’ve tried three times already and no one cares.
So yeah, the plot may be a little weird and confusing, but hopefully you can just go with me on this one. My only biggest pain in the butt thing about making Marks be Lando and Alyla’s son is that… neither of them have the cheekbones Rose keeps obsessing over. Hence why I said he got them from Lando’s mom.

And yeah, I’m shipping Rose Tico with Lando Calrissian’s son. Fight me.

Also, for the record, I have named all 30 volumes of the Calrissian Chronicles.
A Religious Experience

Chapter Summary

Tara calls Kylo out, Ivey attacks Poe, and Teng worships a space squid.

Chapter Notes

I moved the Alecta thing back another chapter. Sorry.

Because I keep getting people asking in reviews despite the story saying it over and over: no, Tara and Cern did not know Sasa was pregnant. Honest to God, I swear on my mother’s actual urn, no one knew she was pregnant until Evan announced the miscarriage.

Trigger Warning: While not physically portrayed or described, Alyla does talk about her experiences with rape and her emotions during said acts. In no way is it glorified and there is not a lot of detail about the physical act. The scene tries to purely examine the emotions of the victim, but a little bit of graphic but non-violent detail is present.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

The Long Way Home

Chapter Fifty-Eight

A Religious Experience

Dedicated to tumblr user Corinthia Hale for their glowing review of my fic back in July that I unfortunately only just found recently. Thank you again so very much.

I would move heaven and earth, fight any monster, or take on any villain. I would break the laws of time, space, and the New Republic. I would try any possible scientific or spiritual method to do it. Honestly, there is nothing in this world or the next that I would not do if it meant I could have a son with Alyla Kene.

– Lando Calrissian and the Death of the Morning Glory, Chapter VII

“I’m sorry, you just told me that the First Order bioengineered a son for yourself and Lando months before you two even met, and now that son is alive and serving in the First Order. Are you honestly requesting me not to ask any follow up questions?”

“…Yes?”

Luke did not need to say a word; the look he gave her said it all.


“I’m not sure if I can make that-”

“No, Luke,” Alyla grabbed his shoulders and forced him to look her in the eye. “I mean it. You cannot tell anyone about this. What I’m about to tell you is my secret, and I will be allowed to tell whom I choose about it. This is the same level of secret as to what triggered my scarring event.”

Luke frowned, “Are you… Is that this story?”

Something extremely dark and haunted flitted over Alyla’s eyes. She dropped her hold on his shoulders.

“N- No. Never that one, Luke,” her voice shook. “You don’t need to know. Only Zena, Gavyn, Lando, and I get to know that, and it’s not up for debate. I don’t want to talk about it.”

He understood when to let things go, “Alright. Alright, what about this… Mark?”

“Marks,” Alyla corrected. “What do you want to know about him?”

“Is he on the side of the First Order?”

“Oh boy, Marks is… following his own path.”

“What does that mean?”

“He likes to explain his loyalties as you can’t have a Battle of Yavin without an Operation Citadel.”

Luke just stared at her.

Alyla sighed and rephrased, “Marks hates the First Order, but he wants to burn it down from the inside before getting out of there.”

“And you… support this?”

“Hell no,” Alyla scowled at Luke like he was insane. “I want him away from Snoke and to be with his father.”

“So you want him around as amazing an influence as Lando Calrissian?”

“Oh, are we doing this? Because I’m not afraid of taking pot shots at Felicity.”

“Alright, no need to start that,” Luke held up his hands. “So, how exactly did Marks come about? Is he a clone?”
“No, he’s literally the son of Lando and I the way Rey is the daughter of you and Felicity. Marks was created by combining Lando’s sperm with my egg, the two of us just didn’t get to have fun with the process.”

Alyla frowned as she considered something.

“Although considering Marks was conceived months before I met Lando, and it took almost two years of knowing him before I agreed to a full, consensual, sexual relationship, maybe that’s a good thing,” Alyla admitted.

“But Alyla,” Luke wanted to get back on topic, “how did the First Order get Lando’s… god why do I have to say this phrase? Lando’s sperm and your egg?”

She sighed, “You know the story Lando likes to tell about the Imperial spy geneticist he thought loved him? The one he put in his second book?”

“When he bluffed his way into a sperm donation to the Emp- Oh. Really?”

“Yep.” Alyla cringed, “The story of Lando’s I hate most turned into one of the best things that ever happened to me. Brendol Hux and a woman named Alecta Anthea were working on experiments for the Empire revolving around children – which is why Brendol’s own son, Armitage, is so messed up – during the end of the Empire.”

Luke frowned as he recognized Alecta’s name. He remembered Aletha saying she worked with her sister at an Imperial medical facility before Obik recruited her. He’d have to ask Aletha sometime exactly what the sisters had been working on.

Alyla didn’t notice Luke’s distraction, “When Brendol and Anthea joined the First Order years later, they brought the research and experiments with them, including Lando’s sperm and my eggs. When Snoke ordered they start experiments with children after the death of Shara Bey, Brendol ran the calculations and the highest match – all desired attributes clocked in between 93 to 98 percent – was between Lando’s sperm and my eggs.”

“Okay but…” Luke tried to wrap his head around it, “how did they get your eggs?”

Alyla was silent for a very long time.

“The story I’m about to tell you is not a pretty one,” Alyla whispered. She had only ever told the story two other times in her life: to Lando the night they first made love, and to Ben the night he told her about Marks’ existence. “It’s a terrible, ugly story with no heroes or happy ending, not for a very long time. The actions in it are unjustifiable and atrocious. But I don’t want your pity. I am not just a victim; I am a survivor. I made it out of that darkness, and I don’t want you to pretend I still live in it. Do you understand that, Luke?”

He nodded but knew better than to speak.

Alyla took a deep, but very shaky breath, “When Gavyn and I were captured with our mentor, Vonar Ghyron, we were immediately sold into slavery on Zygerria. Since we were only thirteen, they couldn’t put us in the Pits right away. So, for two years we trained, listened to the horrible stories from the other slaves of what was yet to come, and clung to each other while we slept, daring the world to tear us away from each other… And then when I was fifteen, they did.”

Luke clasped her hand.

“One night… I woke up to a couple of men tearing Gavyn’s arms off of me. They threw a bag over
my head and I screamed for Gavyn. He fought so hard, trying to protect me, but they held him down and sedated him. Then they plunged a needle into my arm and everything went black. I woke up one week later, Gavyn sitting at my sitting, face ashen. Struggling through tears, he told me what they had done: the hysterectomy. They… cut me open and tore out my uterus. A fifteen-year-old girl had her reproductive system removed so men wouldn’t have to worry about impregnating her when they held her down and raped her.”

Luke flinched, imagined images unwillingly flooding his mind of what terrible people had done to his friend.

Alyla struggled to continue, “I’m not going to lie, at the time – after I had healed – I was somewhat thankful. That first night, when the man who paid an exorbitant fee to “break me in” left me crying on the floor, the feeling of him left between my legs, I was glad they unceremoniously spayed me. I didn’t have to worry about having this evil man’s child grow within me. For years as I was violated, rented, and raped, I was thankful I couldn’t have children. It wasn’t allowed among the Jedi, as Vonar taught us, and I didn’t have to raise the child of a man who paid money to rape me. Every time a man spilled himself inside of me, I felt so dirty… I still feel dirty sometimes…even when it was Lando.”

Luke fought with all his might not to pull a face. One of his dearest friends was opening up to him about her history of sexual assault. Now was not the time to be weirded out by the thought of Lando’s bodily fluids.

Alyla refused to look Luke in the eye, her mind far away as she whispered, “I think I would have done something much worse to myself than the scarring if I had gotten pregnant.”


Her head snapped up, “You promised you wouldn’t just see me as a victim.”

“I don’t,” Luke said gently. “You know I don’t… but that doesn’t mean I can’t feel sorrow.”

“I suppose not,” she turned her head away. If she saw him cry, she’d start crying. “No matter how dark this part of the story is, I have to remember that because of it, I got my son.”

“Yes, Alyla, but how?”

“I… I didn’t find this part out until after I died. Ben told me, maybe to curry some favor. He told me everything when he learned about my son.”

“He knows about Marks?”

“Watches him like a hawk.” A small smile crept up on her face, “The son of Han Solo and the son of Lando Calrissian… albeit a lot more explosive, and that’s saying something.”

“It really is,” Luke shared the grin. “Force forbid Waroo and Rey ever get in that mix.”

“God, if that happens, I don’t care what it takes, I will find a way to die and avoid that mess.”

Luke was happy he could manage a laugh, “So, what did Ben tell you?”

Alyla took a moment for herself before continuing, “Apparently, when my slave master had my surgery performed, they didn’t just throw away my uterus. No, they… they scavenged my ovaries, harvested my eggs, had them frozen in an egg storage bank, and then sold them to the highest bidder.”
“Sold them?”

“The eggs of the last female Jedi of the Old Jedi Order are worth a very pretty penny. They held an auction, and people from all over the galaxy came for them. People who wanted to do experiments, people who wanted to clone them, resellers, infertile couples with a lot of money who wanted the bragging rights of their egg ‘donor’ being a Jedi. But none of that mattered, it was clear from the beginning who would win.”


Alyla nodded, “They had the time, money, and resources to ensure they got them.”

“But why? Why would Palpatine want Jedi eggs?”

“My guess is Palpatine had the same plans for you concerning me that Vader had involving Tyla. Turn you to the Dark Side, introduce you to a bride who would play you the way he wanted, and then Palpatine would allow the two of us to have a child only when he allowed. Very much like Snoke, Ben, and Sasa.”

“What do you-”

“Trust me,” Sasa looked very serious, “don’t ask.”

Luke vaguely remembered his mother mentioning the name Sasa and decided not to push the matter.

Alyla thought it best to continue, “The story’s rather simple from there. Brendol Hux went to the auction and purchased my eggs, ordered by Palpatine to be the guardian of them. I think Plan A – back when they didn’t know you were still alive – was to use my eggs to bioengineer a Force Sensitive successor to Vader that was healthier. The Chosen One had served his purpose, and Vader grew more a liability each day. They wanted the experiment to go perfectly, but they only had so many of my eggs. I suspect they didn’t immediately order Gavyn and I to be killed in case something happened and they needed someone to corrupt. Beaten and raped daily, Gavyn and I were subdued and the Empire could keep an eye on the Fighting Pits until they decided what to do with us.”

“And then I came along,” Luke said.

She nodded, “My eggs were to be protected to create the next Skywalker Heir. But then over the next four years, things went off the rails. Hux and Anthea were left with almost nothing but the secret of my eggs. Eventually the First Order rose and Hux approached Snoke with all the information. Snoke wanted what Hux could provide and Brendol hired Alecta Anthea to help him. Took a few years and a lot of experimentation, then Shara Bey was murdered and Snoke gave them the go ahead to do the experiment.”

“And it was a success?”

“ Took a few tries, but sure enough Marcus Kene was created. They used the surname of Kene because I had just joined your Order and they planned to use him against me later. It was only when Ben started his research into how the heck Marks came to be that the First Order realized that Lando was the sperm donor. To them he was just donor #93.”

“Does Lando know about him?”

“No. I wish he did, but that was a secret they were eager to keep.”

Luke nodded, “I’ve heard how hard a man Brendol Hux was. Met him once or twice even. I can
believe he would keep that top secret.”

“Oh, Brendol Hux didn’t ever know. He died before Marks was born, murdered right after Marks made it to the second trimester… Probably actually because of that,” Alyla added.

“What do you mean?”

“Alecta Anthea murdered him.”

“Really? I heard he’d been murdered but not by whom.”

“Word around the First Order is she did it to be in charge of all cloning, bioengineering, and children projects. When Snoke tried to punish her for it, she just threatened to release all she knew and the evidence to prove it to the New Republic. It was a brutal murder, though. Strangled him with a belt in front of his own son.”

“That would explain how Armitage turned out,” Luke shook his head. “So… you and Lando have a son.”

“Yes. We have a son.”

A very long silence ensued.

“So,” Alyla scratched her neck. “I’m still up for that game of cards if you want.”


“Do we play any other way?”

“What about the time Felicity had us play using Valrian rules?”

“I thought we promised never to speak of that incident,” Alyla shuddered.

Luke smiled, “I’ll grab the cards.”

As he walked toward the cabinet holding said cards, he mulled over this new information about the boy named Marks… and how happy it made the ghost who wanted to play cards.

Only a woman as colourful as that could want to be the mother of Lando Calrissian’s child.

The people who live there want as little as possible from outsiders – not even goods from the outside world. They’ve dug their own cisterns, built their own huts, even made their own weapons. I’ve been out to the Sacred Villages a couple of times, carrying messages from Unkar, but I’ve never been asked to stay.

- Rey’s Survival Guide

All of the Sacred Villages looked relatively the same: a group of huts build around a randomly placed vaporator cistern and maybe some bloggin coops here and there. Usually there was a religious symbol somewhere in the village: statutes, artifacts… or in one case the village was constructed
around the cranial mantle of old Niima the Hutt herself, gilded in precious metals and covered with jewels.

Rey really had to see that for herself someday.

In the center of the village of Synael were six large wooden statues of beautiful and strong humanlike Gods. At the base of each statue was carved a different symbol, all of which Rey recognized from her hair ties. The statues were three males and three females, each clothed and adorned with various creatures, accessories, and additional symbols befitting what each God ruled over.

Or so Rey assumed. It didn’t take a genius to figure such things out; even she knew religious iconography usually worked that way.

Synael had a large circle of black rocks surrounding the village, denoting the border. The break between the stones to leave a path to enter the village was extremely narrow. A person could barely walk through it, so Rey had to be careful to guide her speeder without crashing. As much as she liked being held by Teng, she really could have done without his nails piercing her hips.

“Steady, Moonshine,” Rey teased. “I’ll get you there in one piece.”

He only held tighter.

Teng and Rey brought a cloud of dust with them as they entered the village of Synael. The road wasn’t well kept because it was one of the lesser travelled villages.

Rey could kind of understand why. While they had been trapped by the sandstorm the previous day, Luke had done his best to inform his daughter about the Valrian culture she was about to witness. It had become very clear that Valrians had the attitude of “you are welcome to partake in the culture, but woe to you if you break the rules.”

She was never to take down her hair buns, even while she slept as taking them out was a sign to her hosts that she rejected the protection they provided. She and Teng were welcome to eat or drink anything they were offered but they had to finish said offerings as leaving an empty plate was an insult to the person who had chosen to give up their own food for another.

They were allowed to wear their clothing in the fashion of the Valrians, and it was wise to do so. Since Rey was a woman not yet of age, she was not allowed to show bare skin while Teng always had to have a part of his shirt open (which Rey wasn’t complaining about.) Women not of age did it to proclaim to the world that they were not on the market for marriage yet, while men not of age did it to show off their muscles for when women were considering future husbands.

Gods help anyone who gawked at Teng in front of Rey.

Teng was also supposed to grow facial hair, but the Villagers would understand if his face was smooth upon arrival. He was just not going to shave during the visit as his facial hair – actually all of his hair – grew at a ridiculous rate, so he was all set.

But the biggest demonstration of their intolerance to rule breakers was Luke’s status in the village. He was literally not allowed to come within fifty feet of Synael on pain of death – which in hindsight explained a few scavenging site choices.

…Oh, and also Luke had warned them that if Rey and Teng did not abide by the customs of the Valrians while in Synael, they would have to sleep outside the village limits. Outside on the coarse sand with (if they were lucky) only a thin blanket to warm them in the freezing desert night. The giant black rocks around the village limits was an indicator of how far away to send a Daranoh – one
hostile or an enemy to the religion – so the Gods would be happy.

This led to Teng deciding, “You know what? Maybe I should also try this Valrian thing.”

Rey knew he was just doing it for a bed… but also because he loved her. She knew Teng would do anything to make her happy. If she told them they were jumping off a cliff, he would simply ask “Are we jumping at the same time, or did you want me to go first?”

She smiled at the thought of Teng’s devotion as she killed the engine of her speeder. He didn’t do any of it out of obsession, notions of possession, or obligation. Teng did it all simply because he wanted nothing more in the Galaxy than for Rey Rhiaon Erso to be happy. Even if making her happy would mean leaving her.

But she didn’t want him to go anywhere.

Rey leaned over and pressed a kiss to Teng’s cheek.

He smiled but looked a little confused, “What was that for?”

“Just thinking about how lucky I am to have you.” Rey perched her goggles on her head, “And don’t you start with that whole ‘no, I’m lucky to have you’ business. I am a walking disaster, and we both know it.”

“But a beautiful disaster I love being on the ride with.”

Rey couldn’t believe that after all this time, words like that from Teng could still make her blush.

As they dismounted and unloaded their tools from the battered red speeder, they were approached by a group of four people.

The group had two men and two women, all pale skinned and had brown hair and eyes. Their features were sharp like that which Rey did not inherit from her mother. But there was something about those eyes, those jaws, and those collarbones that made even Rey – who barely remembered what her mother looked like – to think those are Valrians.

Quickly Rey tugged off her headwrap – which was actually a ratty old jumper that she wrapped the sleeves of around her head – and primped her hair buns. Usually the headwrap was just good to keep the sand out of her hair and to use as a second layer of shirt on cold nights, but Rey was glad in this case it had preserved her hairstyle.

Seeing the buns made the tallest of the women halt for a second. Her long, black hair was stiffly straight, and her dark purple clothing was a bit more elaborate than any other woman in the village. Her face was naturally harsh, making her always look like she was scowling, but when she saw Rey’s hair, something softened in her face and sparked in her eyes. She smiled and returned to her approach, her strides faster than her companions but not to a run.

Rey fidgeted, taking deep breaths as she desperately tried to think of how to greet the people who were the key to her heritage.

Familiar fingers threaded through her own. Rey looked up at Teng. He grinned and squeezed her hand tight. She smiled back at him and felt her breath flow easier.

“Celum!” the tall woman called as her group reached the teenagers.

“Uh… Celum,” Rey repeated, shooting a questioning glance at Teng.
“Celum,” Teng shrugged at Rey in reply.

The tall woman smiled at that, “It means welcome. It’s a friendly reply.”

“Oh, thank you,” Rey smiled back, though her expression was a great deal nervous. “Sorry, I’m not very familiar with Valrian—”

Her words died when one of the men unhooked a waterskin from his belt and threw the water on Rey’s shadow… and then did the same to Teng.

The teenager just stared at the group in bewilderment.

“Five minutes in, and I’m already confused about this culture’s customs,” Teng whispered to Rey.

“Yeah, I have no insight to offer,” Rey shrugged.

The shorter Valrian woman laughed and touched the man’s arm in a way Rey might touch Teng.

“Forgive my husband,” the shorter woman said. “He’s a little… impatient when it comes to strangers not knowing our customs.”

“Strangers?” the husband snapped. “Una, no Bele who wears her hair in that fashion should ever claim ignorance about our customs.”

“Cadman, settle,” the tall woman ordered. She looked back to Rey, “You must forgive Cadman. Valrians take our religious beliefs very seriously, and as my co-leader, he and I must monitor such situations carefully. I’m sure you meant no offense with your hairstyle.”

“Oh no; none at all!” Rey objected. “Sorry, I should have opened with this. I’m Valrian.”

The man who was not Cadman lifted his eyebrow, “Pardon me, but you don’t exactly look like—”

“If you’re talking physically, I took more after my father. He’s from—” Rey paused as she realized she had no idea what planet her father was from. “It’s not important, but my mother was Valrian. I’m an… oh what was that word again?”

“Mina,” Teng supplied.

“Right,” Rey grinned. “I’m a Mina. My mother was Mara.”

The Valrians looked around at each other, silently debating whether or not they believed the story.

“Well, it would explain the hair,” Una smiled.

The tall woman came up to Rey and gently took the sides of Rey’s face in her hands.

“Keli kai tooah reti puah lue teruah,” she bowed Rey’s head and kissed her forehead.

“Uh, thanks,” Rey frowned as the tall woman released her. “What does that mean?”

Cadman scoffed.

“It’s a blessing of protection,” the other man explained. “It’s customary when you get a guest of the faith to kiss their head and whisper it.”

“Do not misunderstand me, Mina,” the tall woman warned Rey, “I give you this blessing as required
of your hairstyle. Those buns do not give you carte blanche protection. You must still prove your heritage to us.”

Rey’s eyes widened, “But I don’t know how-”

“Come now, my Love,” the other man said to the tall woman. “Are we to deny the customs rightfully afforded to her?”

“Levi’s right,” Una said. “She wears her hair in the style. Who are we to question her heritage?”

Cadman hefted a sigh, “Imogen and I are right to question it. I was concerned that an Elra had appropriated our hairstyle. So many do not understand the significance behind it and the protections it affords.”

“But I do!” Rey objected. “My mother told me to always wear my hair like this, and I do. I have every day for the last twelve years of my life. Please, I didn’t mean to cause any offence.”

“If your mother was so concerned about you wearing your hairstyle, then didn’t she tell you something as simple about our culture as the meaning of Celum?” Cadman shot.

Rey cleared her throat, “My- mom… died when I was five. I… I barely remember her beyond telling me to put my hair up.”

The three icy glares of the Valrians immediately turned on Cadman.

He bowed his head, “Forgive me. I did not mean to insult your line.”

Una crossed to Rey and whispered, “Eh tana, eh toh, eh talh.”

As she said the words, she drew thumb across Rey’s forehead, tracing shapes. Eh tana was a horizontal line in the middle of her forehead. Eh toh was a tailless arrow pointing up. Eh talh was a tailless arrow pointing up.

Finishing her words, Una smiled at the confused Rey.

Rey blinked, “Okay, what’s going on?”

“It’s a blessing for the dead,” Una explained. “Valra is divided into three zones: The Centre, The North, and The South. Each of the words is a salutation to each zone. Eh tana.”

Una traced the horizontal line.

“Means To the Centre,” Una said. “Eh toh.”

She traced the upward arrow.

“Is To the North. And eh talh.”

She traced the downward arrow.

“Is To the South.” Una stroked Rey’s cheek, “It’s a prayer to the Gods that the soul of the deceased has a safe journey into the afterlife.”

“Oh, uh, thank you,” Rey said. “But my mom went to the afterlife a long time ago.”

“Not necessarily,” the man who had yet to be named stepped forward. “Not all souls go immediately
to rest. Souls must wander the planet of Valra, fighting the spirits of evil until the Gods call for them to rest. We must all take our turns driving back the evil spirits for the sake of the world, and not all of us make it to the afterlife.”

Rey raised an eyebrow but said nothing. Evil spirits? Well… okay, guess that’s a thing now.

No wonder her mother didn’t fully practice this religion.

“So, if I get this right,” Teng interjected, “you can die twice?”

Cadman lifted an eyebrow, “Oh, you can die a great many times. The souls of those killed by the evil spirits in turn become an evil spirit… then you can die as many times as you are brought back by the Darkness of the world.”

“That’s… actually kind of cool.”

“Teng!” Rey scolded.

“What? It’s better than the cult I was born into where they said the universe was controlled by a giant space squid and we had to eat nothing but seaweed and muscles because all other sea life were reserved for the God and eating flora and fauna of the land or sky was an abomination. Not to mention the weekly baptisms where we were held under water for three minutes straight to clean our souls.”

Everyone stared at him.

“That’s the cult your parents bought into?” Rey asked.

“Look, people were desperate during the Empire!” Teng exclaimed. “They would have believed anything if it meant bringing an end to the Emperor.”

“So, are we still debating about the heritage of these two youngsters?” Levi asked.

“I think it would be safe to say that the boy is not one of us,” Imogen replied.

“But I’m happy to learn what I can.” Teng glanced down, “For example, why are the men not wearing any shoes. You know we live in a desert, right?”

Cadman shot Teng a look that suggested he shut up before Cadman did it himself.

“As for the girl,” Imogen looked over Rey, “I’m not sure I’m entirely convinced. Tell me, child, what line do you come from?”

“Huh?”

“Who is your family?” Una rephrased.

“Oh, uh,” Rey wracked for brain for what her father had claimed the Rhiaon families religious names were. “My mother was Felicea Rhiaon, sister of Braedan Rhiaon.”

“And their parents?” Levi asked.

“I’m not sure,” Rey admitted. “My name is Araeya Rhiaon, but you can call me Rey.”

“Felicea,” Imogen scowled. “Why does that name sound-”
Her eyes shot wide.

“Oh sweet Ipgyn.” Imogen stared at Rey, “You’re Erso’s daughter, aren’t you?”

Without even looking at each other, Teng and Rey took a step back.

“Uh… yeah, I am,” Rey answered. “That’s kind of why I’m not really informed about our culture. He couldn’t exactly take me here to learn more and honestly talking about my mother is hard for him. He really loved her and misses her some much.”

Cadman’s eyes darkened, “Based on his actions with Kymeri, I find that hard to believe. He’s still cavorting with her?”

Only Teng noticed how Rey’s fist tightened at her side.

“Doctor Kymeri left Jakku three years ago,” Teng said bluntly. “She and Luke are long done. In fact she’s dating someone else. He’s a… pleasant enough man.”

Diego Nalto hadn’t exactly made a great impression on Teng during that elaborate game of hide and seek Rey put them through the year previous.

Levi shook his head, “Getting involved with yet another man. Does the woman have no respect for her husband?”

“Aletha is not a Valrian,” Rey cut in sharply. “Besides, from what I’ve heard about Antar Kymeri, he didn’t treat his wife well. Aletha deserves happiness, and I won’t hear another word of it.”

Imogen raised her eyebrow but smiled, “Very well then. Araeya, I have met your father. I was the one who told him he wasn’t… welcome in our village. Looking at you, I do see a strong resemblance. I will accept your claim to be Valrian, for even if you are not one, we always welcome strangers who want to learn more about our culture.”

“We just get upset when we think someone takes a piece of it because they thought it looked cool or whatever excuse they give,” Cadman added in gruffly. “You can understand why I might get defensive over the hair issue.”

Rey really just didn’t want to argue the point any further, “Of course. Hey, do you mind if I ask what that was you called me earlier? A Bele?”

“It’s a female child born into the faith,” Cadman answered. “Now, I suppose since we’ve settled things, it’s time for proper introductions. I am Cadman Dysar, and this is my wife, Una.”

“Hello,” Una smiled, coming up to take Cadman’s arm.

“Cadman is one of our Village Leaders,” Levi explained. “My wife is the other, and more senior Village Leader.”

“My name is Imogen Lerann,” Imogen said. “That is my husband, Levi. We welcome you to our village, Araeya and… your name?”


Una frowned, “Teng? What kind of name is Teng?”

“It’s Nubian,” he scowled. What he wanted to say was what’s wrong with my name.
“Oh, forgive me then,” Imogen said. “I meant to actually ask your Valrian name.”

“My… I don’t have one.”

Cadman and Imogen exchanged a look.

“Forgive me again, but,” Imogen frowned, “considered Araeya is the daughter of Erso, I assume you are here to do the job we contracted to your furry friend.”

“Where is Tinadar?” Cadman asked.

“Oh, Quom’s sick,” Rey answered.

Levi shook his head, “A Valrian never misses a day of work unless they are on their death bed.”

“But isn’t it super unhealthy to work while sick?” Teng asked.

“It’s honourable to work when you’re sick because you’re telling the person who you’re doing the job for that their time and wellbeing is more important than your own.”

Rey and Teng exchanged a look.

“Quom’s sneezing flames,” Rey simply said.

The Valrians stared at her.

“Okay, I think we can let Esau off the hook this time,” Una said.

“Esau?” Teng questioned.

“It’s Tinadar’s Valrian religious name,” Una explained. “It means hairy one.”

Rey shifted her weight, “I… I didn’t know he had one.”

“Of course he has one,” Cadman said. “In order to legally do business on Valrian territory – even if it’s just a small village on Jakku – you must have a Valrian religious name. It’s to ensure you’ve sworn an oath to honour and respect our customs. Quom Tinadar is one of our most dedicated and humble business partners. He’s almost better versed in Valrian customs than Imogen and I.”

Rey and Teng stared at each other, each expecting the other to give them an explanation. Was this why Quom got so much work in the Sacred Villages? Was behind all those eccentric shenanigans a Vrogem who was a secret badass liaison businessman who was very astute in religious and cultural customs?

That bastard was just lazy to Luke, Rey, Aletha, and Teng!

“That is why I’m surprised that neither Esau or Erso mentioned it to the pair of you before sending you to us.” Imogen eyed them, “Are you certain they didn’t tell you?”

“Positive,” Rey answered. “I guess my dad just… forgot about it.”

Luke didn’t forget the custom, but rather he intentionally left it out of his explanations. Not to leave the kids to hang out dry… but because every time he thought about Valrian religious names, he would think about the time he, Han, and Leia registered for theirs.

And it would always make Luke laugh.
There had been a time when Felicity, Luke, Han, and Leia were forced to attend to some business on Valra. It was the adventure when they all went to stay with Felicity’s maternal family, but as eventful as that had been, that wasn’t the part that made Luke laugh.

In order to lawfully do their business on Valra, one was forced to legally register a Valrian religious name in the Valrian government. Before Luke, Leia, and Han could help Felicity, they had to do just that.

Luke and Leia did their research and selected appropriate names. Leia had actually had a Valrian name for years, though not officially. She had come up with it years ago when Felicity had been her assistant as a teenager.

Luke registered the name of Lucas, which was a Southern Valrian variation on Luke. Leia had chosen Leya, a Northern Valrian name.

Han had left it to the last minute. He had volunteered to accompany – aka gave Felicity a ride – to the registry to file Luke and Leia’s paperwork. When Felicity pointed out to him that he needed one too, Han was forced to come up with one on the spot.

Of course, Felicity and Han were good friends, so Felicity was more than happy to help come up with a name for good old Loud Mouth Solo. Han was eager to accept her suggestion when she came up with Tristan, which Felicity said meant brave warrior.

Then Han worried when Felicity told him that he would need to register a full name, including a Valrian surname and that Valra was one of the few planets in the Galaxy that used middle names. As helpful as ever, Felicity walked Han through picking a middle and surname, suggesting Pinchas as his middle name (which Han hated until Felicity said it meant most loyal of friends) and then Yotam, which Felicity said meant friend of Wookiees.

Han thought it odd that Valrians would have a name that focused on Wookiees in its meaning, but went ahead and registered Tristan Pinchas Yotam as his Valrian religious name.

And then he went home and told Leia.

…Who told him that Valrians don’t have middle names.

Luke remembered how entertaining the ensuing reveal was when Han and Leia came to Luke and Felicity’s apartment demanding an explanation. Felicity was a fit of giggles as she explained to him that Tristan Pinchas Yotam didn’t mean “Brave warrior most loyal of friends friend of Wookiees.”

No… Tristan meant noisy. Pinchas meant mouth of brass. Yotam meant orphan. Together Han’s religious name meant “Noisy Mouth of Brass Orphan.”

And that was the story of how Felicity tricked Han into legally registering the religious name “Loud Mouth Solo.”

Luke still couldn’t even think of the story without laughing, which is why he couldn’t bring himself to tell Teng he needed a religious name to conduct business.

“Okay,” Rey said, “well, I need Teng’s assistance to fix your moisture vaporators so how do we get him a religious name? Is there a form or an oath?”

“I think just picking one here and now would be fine,” Imogen said. “Do you have any idea?”

“Una, would you go get the offerings?” Cadman muttered to his wife.
She nodded and slipped away.

Teng shrugged at Imogen, “I don’t know any Valrian names beyond Felicea, Braedan, Esau, Araeya. Well, plus Imogen, Cadman, Una, and Levi, but I don’t think those would work. Should I maybe just go with Luke’s Valrian name. I think he said he had one.”

“Almon,” Imogen said.

“No, it was Lucas,” Rey recalled what her father had said.

Imogen and Cadman exchanged a look.

“No, it’s Almon,” Cadman said. “He was formerly named Lucas, but after what he did with Kymeri, he was stripped of that name and given a new one. One benefiting of his regard for his wife.”

Rey narrowed her eyes, “And what exactly does Almon mean?”

“It means Forsaken,” Imogen said bluntly. “What he has done to your mother is a great crime. It breaks the Five Pillars of Virtue. He will spend the rest of his life living with the fact he was unfaithful to his wife. He shamed not only his wife, but himself and the woman who he made his mistress. All three of them will have to endure this adultery. You should not try to glorify what he has done to your mother.”

Rey took a deep breath, “When he first started dating Aletha, I one hundred percent agreed with you. I let that anger take over me, and it hurt the people I loved.”

She closed her eyes and remembered that horrible day she scavenged Antar Kymeri’s X-Wing.

Teng bloodied and broken on the ground under the wing of the X-Wing.

Her father angrier than Rey had ever seen in her life.

The pain in Aletha’s eyes as she learned it was Antar’s ship.

Quom throwing in the towel and avoiding the lot of them for weeks.

“But anger can only lead to pain and suffering,” Rey tried to keep control of her voice. A tear threatened to fall from her eye, “I didn’t come here to relive that, so if that’s all you’re going to-”

She was stopped by Imogen gently touching her cheek. Rey vaguely sense the Light Side of the Force coming off Imogen.

“Valra has many customs and rules,” Imogen said, “but what it all comes down to is simply this: Family first, Gods second, Virtue third. Nothing else matters. Your father – while a great sinner in my eyes – is a man who even I know is utterly devoted to you.”

“How-”

“You think Quom Tinadar wouldn’t go around bragging about the literal disarming of Jarex Zolhar and the killing of Sarco Plank?”

Teng snorted, “I suppose not.”

Imogen said, “Valrians honour guests. We believe you must always prepare a meal and a bed for a stranger in need. You have honoured us by coming to fix our equipment, and so we shall honour you in return. You are welcome to stay with us as long as you want, and we will not mention your
father’s deeds again."

“Really?” Rey’s eyes brightened.

“Why is it that you’ve come to see us, Araeya?” Imogen asked.

“Honestly?” Rey hesitated. “I really wanted to come learn about the culture my mother grew up in. I… don’t have many memories of her left. I was hoping that I could use this opportunity to feel closer to her.”

“And closer you shall,” Cadman nodded as he saw Una returning. “But first there’s the issue of a name for this Teng boy.”

“Look, I’m not fussy about names,” Teng held up his hands. “Just give me some ideas to work with.”


“Toryn,” Teng cut off. “I’ll be Toryn. My name starts with a T, I can remember that.”


“Here,” Una presented them a platter laden with small sets of food and what Rey later in life learned were call shot glasses. “Please visitors, partake in our blessings and our protection.”

Exchanging an uncertain look, Rey and Teng rambled out some phrases of gratitude. They reached for the small offerings of food and drink, but neither could decide on what to grab first.

“Start with the water,” Una advised.

“Thanks,” Rey said as she and Teng grabbed the little shot glasses of water. “But you didn’t need to make us anything to eat.”

“Oh yes we do,” Una said.

“Why?” Teng frowned. “Did we just miss lunch or something? Wait… does Quom make you cater his meals on jobs?”

“It’s a traditional ceremony Valrians show to their guests,” Levi explained. He paused. “…and yes, part of doing business with Esau is feeding him – in his words – oh god, anything but rations.”

“I knew he wasn’t eating the supply he takes on his trip!”

“Whatever, Teng,” Rey waved off. “What is this ceremony we’re doing?”

“Like Imogen said, Valrians are all about hospitality,” Levi replied. “We serve these offerings to our guests as a promise of safety and comfort in our homes.”

“After we test their shadows of course,” Cadman added.

“Yeah, what was that all about?” Teng asked. “Why did you throw water on our shadows.”

Imogen answered, “Knowing that Valrians will never turn away a guest, evil spirits like to shapeshift into our forms and trick us. However, their disguises aren’t perfect; they cannot cast a shadow. To hide their shadowless form, evil spirits will extend their bodies, forming a shadowy silhouette that trails behind them. But spirits cannot survive pure water touching them, so we throw water on the
shadows of strangers to test if they are evil spirits. Nothing happened when water hit your shadows, so we know you’re not a mischievous or destructive creature.”

“Clearly you don’t know my girlfriend,” Teng teased, earning a swat on his arm by Rey.

“Serving you this food and drink are acts of protection and honour.” Una motioned for them to drink the water. “Visitors are served clean water to show faith they’re not an evil spirit.”

Teng frowned, “Even though you just splashed water on our shadows to test it?”

“Well, we serve these to any guest we take under our roof, not just strangers.” Una sighed when she saw Rey and Teng still not accepting it, “Look, I don’t make the rule. Just the food.”

Levi grabbed two small purple fruit and thrust them into the hands of Rey and Teng, “Next comes figs, a blessing of good health.”

Rey and Teng accepted the food, deciding it was pointless to argue further.

It was delicious, though considering their lives, any food that wasn’t polystarch or veg-meat was delicious. Even better was the next taste, a shot glass of honey (the wish for a sweet life.)

Then came the meat of the fiercest creature of the planet. It was a symbol that their host would defend them against any evil, whether creature or spirit. On Valra, it was always Roggwart – a truly terrifying creature from the Southern Mountains, but on Jakku, the villagers of Synael served steelpeckers, birds that would rip the flesh off a living creature if given the chance. They always terrified Teng.

Of course, steelpeckers weren’t the most dangerous creatures on Jakku, those were nightwatchers. But no one was stupid enough to try hunting one of those. It was like trying to hunt a sarlaac. Not going to happen.

But it was the final offering, a crunchy red root that made Teng choke.

“Aabane root,” Una said.

Teng nearly spat it out, “Excuse me?”

Rey had to concentrate to not let her jaw drop, “Aabane root? Isn’t that that birth control thing?”

Una politely smiled, “Yes, it’s to prevent to conception of a child.”

Teng and Rey stared at her.

“Why?” Teng asked. “Do you, like… not want us to get frisky? Because I do have self-control.”

“Oh no, you’re more than welcome to do whatever you want in that regard,” Una said.

Rey rubbed her neck and avoided eye contact with anyone.

“But we just don’t want a visitor to get pregnant under our roof,” Una continued. “You see, the Goddess of Children – Ethys – will come around to homes at night and put a blessing of a child on the home. If a child is conceived under another person’s roof, they are considered part of that family as the gods meant to bless that family with a child but the visitor stole the blessing.”

“Basically things get complicated if you get pregnant under another person’s roof,” Levi summed up. “So we take measures to prevent it from happening.”
“Well, I don’t want to have a baby right now, so I guess I won’t argue.” Rey swallowed her Aabane root. “So, why don’t we get started on those repairs? Where’s the moisture vaporators?”

“Levi and I will show you.” Imogen looked to the other couple, “Una, Cadman. I thank you for your assistance. Please, go forth and continue with the preparations for the Festival.”

“The blessing is all ours,” Cadman nodded stiffly.

“Truly it was a pleasure,” Una grinned at Rey and Teng.

Rey couldn’t help but give a smile wave at Una as she and her husband departed.

“This way,” Levi gestured to the north part of the village, and he started to lead the group forward.

“So…” Rey’s head swung back and forth as she desperately tried to take in every sight of the village possible. After the diagnostic, she and Teng would return for their tools, so she was unburdened and free to pause for a moment and even occasionally feel the side of a building, statue or the fabric of clothing left on a line to dry. “What is this festival you mentioned?”

“Well, Araeya,” Imogen replied, “you and Toryn have arrived just in time for our most important holiday of the year. Tonight is the first night of the Solstice Festival. Three days from now, on our home planet of Valra, the winter solstice will take place. Over the next three nights, we honour the Gods, how they came to tame the world, fight back darkness, become a team, and become our gods.”

“It’s why the men of the village aren’t wearing shoes,” Levi answered Teng’s earlier question. “For the duration of the Solstice Festival men do not wear shoes to feel the pain the Gods went through on their journey.”

“Journey?” Rey asked.

“We recite the story over three nights,” Imogen said. “If you would like to hear it, you are more than welcome to join us. In any and all festivities. You are our guests, and you, Araeya, are Valrian.”

“Oh, I’m not really Valrian, am I?”

“You are Valrian if your mother is Valrian. It’s as simple as that.”

“Well, not exactly,” Levi cut in. “If three generations in a row don’t practice, the next generation is no longer Valrian, but your mother practiced, so you’re fine.”

“How do you know she practiced?” Rey frowned.

“Giving you a Valrian name and that hairstyle is enough,” Imogen nodded at five young children playing with a ball. All of the girls wore their hair exactly like Rey.

“But I thought the hair buns weren’t proof of anything,” Rey said.

“They aren’t…but I’ve seen the ribbons in your hair by now. Only practicing Valrians have access to those ribbons. They have the Gods’ symbols on them.”

“I’m sure you could buy ribbons like that anywhere,” Teng said.

“True, but those ribbons have the exact colour and stitching as the ones the Governor of the Andeleans gives to politically elevated children as a gift of birth. That design is strictly controlled. I don’t know what kind of past your father and mother had before coming to this ball of dust… but
they must have been someone important.”

Rey had no idea why they would be so important beyond being Jedi.

She didn’t know that the Governor of the Andeleans was Garvan Rhiaon, Felicity’s uncle. Despite the tension in the Rhiaon family, Garvan held fast to the vows and obligations he held to his family line. It was only proper to present his niece’s daughter with those hair ties.

Of course, he hadn’t been thrilled that Felicity just threw them in the emergency bag Luke kept in his X-Wing. Then again, nothing about Felicity thrilled her uncle. The only reason he hadn’t officially cast her out from the line was that it would be permanent and a great mark against his family. He’d likely lose his title of Governor if he gave such a dishonour to his niece.

It was for that reason he started working with the Resistance after the “murders” of Rey and Felicity. As head of the family line, Garvan was obligated to avenge the honour of his niece and her daughter. So he and Leia came to a truce, and Garvan had become a valuable ally to the Resistance. He had even helped coordinate the Battle of Valra, the attack taking place in the mountain rang until his control.

But of course, Rey knew none of that at this time.

“So, as I said,” Imogen smiled, “you are welcome to participate in any activity of the festival… we just request if you do decide to participate, you participate fully.”

“Well, I guess I’m doing this then.” Teng pulled off his shoes and tossed them in Rey’s satchel.

“Don’t worry, Imogen,” Rey promised, “I will do everything in this festival and this village. In fact, if there’s anything more that you can show me that will help me experience our culture more that would be perfect.”

Imogen glanced at a hut with a green door, “You know… I might have an idea.”

And then you wait for the call to the briefing room for the next mission… when it starts all over again.

- The Journal of Paige Tico

The very first thing Poe Dameron experienced when the group stepped foot on the Ninka wasn’t a swarm of doctors worried about their wellbeing.

No, it was a green droid named Ivee squawking at him and ramming him in the leg because BB-8 was still not reassembled.

“Hey! Stop it!” Poe exclaimed, Kaydel laughing as she came down the ramp of the transport behind him. To him left, Han, Chewie, and Waroo went to talk to Diego Nalto who was coming down a ramp into the hanger, followed by a smirking Jessika Pava. “Jess! Jess! Call her off!”

But Jessika didn’t do anything when she reached the pair, just crossed her arms.

“Sorry, but this is what you get for not fixing up your droid,” Jessika shook her head with a smug
look on her face. “You should really take better care of your droid.”

“Excuse me?” Poe shot. “Am I really getting droid advice from the Great Destroyer?”

Jessika’s eyes narrowed and then did Poe’s. They stood there, arms crossed, glares locked, jaws clenched, and waiting for the other to crack.

And then they smiled and pulled each other into a hug.

“Thanks for coming back alive, Poe,” Jessika said. She grinned at Kaydel over his shoulder, “And for bringing my girls back safe.”

“Actually,” Poe pulled out of the embrace, “it really is thanks to Kaydel and Rose that we got out of there… and a great deal of Tharel. Still, I should have brought you with us.

“Yeah, apparently you messed up Snap,” Jessika shot. “And then cauterized his leg with a lightsaber after making a pulling leg joke.”

“I wasn’t the one who did that!”

“You didn’t ask Snap if he was pulling your leg after learning he lost his.”

“Uh… I didn’t do the other part.”

Jessika rolled her eyes.

Bwah bwa bwah!

Ivee rolled up to Jessika’s side, and Jessika patted her dome.

“You’re right, he does need BB-8 to keep him in line.”

Bee bwooh bu brah?

“Yeah, I’ll fix him up tonight. If we leave it to this lot, he’d never get put back together.”

“Hey!” Poe scowled.

“Come on, people, move!” Evan barreled down the ramp, helping Snap down with Kes, who was really doing the heavy lifting. “We have patients to attend to. Stop hogging the ramp. Can someone bring a wheelchair?”

Poe was bumped to the side as a swarm of medics pushed past him to examine the emerging group. As Jessika turned to greet Kaydel, Poe watched as a medic ran up to Evan and the men to get Snap situated in a wheelchair. The medics gave Poe cursory glances, but seeing that he was in decent enough shape, Poe tended to just get shoved aside.

Quickly separated from Kaydel and Kes, Poe was forced to just awkwardly stand to the side as the ones in most danger – Ryn, Snap, and Paige – were tended to by the medics.

When he saw Kaydel, Rose, Paige, and Jess all reunite, and Karé crouched by Snap’s side as the medics looked him over, Poe could finally let out a breath of relief.

They were all safe. He had brought all of them home.

Then he saw Dacken carry out Jaina Fel’s body bag.
“At least the body count was only one,” the voice of Diego Nalto made Poe jump.

“Commander!” Poe placed a hand on his chest, genuinely surprised he was not experiencing a heart attack. “I didn’t-”

Diego didn’t let him finish, “You did good, Poe. No matter what the outcome was, you still brought home safely more people than anyone had any right to.”

Poe sighed, “But Jaina-”

“Good people die in war, Poe. People who deserve more than you or I to live.”

“People like the fatalities of Operation Citadel?” Poe knew that Diego always thought of Ji-Dan, Gunner, and Riz during speeches like that.

And now Felicity.

Poe’s heart fell when he realized that eventually Diego would also have to hear what happened to Felicity Rhiaon Skywalker. The man had the same connection to the Death Star she did, and they had been truly good friends. Hearing of the Death Star mockery that had been done unto the only other survivor of the mission that haunted Diego… it would be awful.

Diego sighed, “We may be in a cold war, but don’t think that doesn’t mean it’s war.”

“I dunno…” Poe was eager to shift the subject before he cracked and confessed Ben Solo’s dark secret, “this whole thing was actually a Crimson Dawn dealing.”

“Oh, yes, Solo told me,” Diego shifted his weight. “Did General Organa’s son’s lover really have a-”

“Leia was about seven months short of being a Grandma.”

Diego shook his head.

“So, where did Solo go?” Poe looked around, noticing the absence. “I thought he was talking to you.”

“Holdo wanted a word with him. Apparently the reason they didn’t call for backup involved alcohol?”

“I don’t know who I’d be more afraid to face with that: Leia or Holdo.”

“He’s facing both. Leia’s conferencing in on Holo.”

“Oh shit.”

“Yeah, he left with the Wookieees looking very much like a man on the way to the gallows.” Diego frowned as he watched Dacken pass off the body bag of Jaina Fel to another shoulder, “Who is that man? I heard about the child and his mother, but is that the boy’s father?”

Poe replied, “No, that would be Dacken Tokani aka Kaydel’s nephew.”

Diego’s eyes widened, “Aka-”

“Aletha’s grand nephew,” Poe finished. “Yes, I got the full Anthea family treatment. Met Kaydel’s sister, Katha, who handcuffed her to a wall and left her for dead. Met her brother-in-law who pulled a blaster on Snap. Met her niece Sage… who is a lovely enough girl. Met her nephew Dacken, who
I punched in the face and then for some reason Kay made me bring him back here with us. Met her father, Timor, aka Aletha’s brother-in-law, who turns out is racist because of religious beliefs and that’s probably why Aletha’s love interests have been a black man and a Yavinese one... I don’t know who she dated on Jakku, but there’s a reason Kay and Kymeri picked you and I.”

Diego snorted.

“Oh!” Poe remembered, “And I saw Alecta Anthea snap a woman’s neck with only her foot, then vow to kill Kay, Aletha, and anyone they loved.”

“How are you in one piece?” Diego stared at him in shock.

“I’ve mastered the art of intimidating and/or running away from that family.”

“Oh, I should be fine then.”

Poe shook his head, “Well, here’s hoping Aletha doesn’t hate Dacken.”

“Or drug him.” Diego paused, waiting for Poe’s reply. When none came, he scoffed, “Or drug him, right?”

“...You know, maybe Aletha’s got a point.”

“And you know I can convince her to drug you, right?”

“Ah, look at us,” Poe slung an arm over Diego’s shoulder. “We fit right in with our girls’ family.”

“Poe?”

“Yes, Sir?”

“Get your arm off me.”

“Yes, Sir.”

---

“You have a crush on a Stormtrooper?” Jessika frowned.

“All I said was he had cute cheekbones!” Rose exclaimed.

Kaydel shook her head and patted Paige’s face with a cold cloth. Her head had been worked on and now she was in recovery. They hadn’t seen Kalonia or Aletha – the pair were too buys running around fixing males with one or no legs – and Evan was finally forced into a chair to be examined himself. So Rose, Jessika, and Kaydel were watching over Paige as they shared with Jessika their Nixrye adventure.

Rose was just about to get to the part where she tasered Minati when a voice rang out.

“My Girls!”

Before Kaydel could fully turn around, all four girls were pulled into a hug by Aletha Kymeri who miraculously was able to get arms around all of them.

“I was so worried about you,” Aletha released the squished girls, only to immediately pull each one
into their own individual hug. She held Kaydel the tightest when her niece decided to hang onto her like a steel trap, “And Diego said that Alecta was there?”

“Just briefly,” Kaydel sighed in her aunt’s embrace. “Oh, Aunt Ally, our family is awful.”

“I know, Sweetheart,” Aletha laughed. “I know.”

“There you are, Querida!” Diego Nalto’s voice called out.

The girls pulled away to see Diego approaching with Poe.

“My Love,” Diego pulled Aletha into his arms. “You have been far too difficult to find.”

“Yes, well I’ve been doing this thing called my job,” Aletha teased. She smiled as she saw Poe wrap his arm around Kaydel, “How are you doing, Poe?”

“Better that I’m home now,” he answered. “Well, sort of home. I’d rather be on D’Qar than the Ninka.”

“We’re on our way back now,” Diego informed. “What about you, Kaydel? You alright?”

“Yeah, don’t mind the girl who’s recovering from shrapnel to the head,” Jessika rolled her eyes, gesturing to Paige. “Ask Kaydel, the woman protected by three Force Users when the bombs went off how she was doing.”

“Stop it, Jess,” Paige said. “I’m fine, really. Evan took good care of me.”

“He took good care of all of you,” Aletha said. “I’ve been treating Snap Wexley’s injuries, and he’s in pretty good shape.”

Poe raised an eyebrow, “You’re not going to make a comment about someone doing something as absurd as using a lightsaber to cauterize a wound? Judging from Tharel’s reaction, that’s the most insane thing he’s ever seen.”

Aletha lifted an eyebrow in mirror to Poe, “Poe? I lived with Quom Tinadar for ten years. Not even in the top twenty.”

Rose grinned, “You know, I think I’d really like to meet Quom one of these days. He sounds so fun.”

She would come to regret those words.

“Speaking of Snap,” Kaydel looked around from him, “how’s he doing?”

“Temmin will be just fine,” Doctor Kalonia announced coming up behind the group. She was leading Karé, who was pushing Snap in a wheelchair. “We just have to measure him for his prosthetic, and he’ll be back to normal in no time.”

“Good, I don’t don’t want Black Squadron to be grounded for much larger,” Jessika said. “First the wedding, then the mission, then the loss of leg. Do you want to me on this time anymore, Snap?”

“Jess,” Karé warned.

“I’m kidding,” Jessika smirked. “How you doing, Kun?”

“Well, Snap made it back in one and a half pieces,” Karé answered. “That’s more than a lot of
people can say.”

“Honestly, my biggest worry is how am I going to pay for the new leg,” Snap said. In a world where prosthetics were so advanced, losing a limb wasn’t as big a deal. It was kind of like breaking one, a nuisance, but easily dealt with.

Also, he was still in shock, so the idea of holy crap, I lost a leg hadn’t really set in.

“Don’t worry, Wexley,” Diego said. “You’re eligible for the Skywalker Grant.”

“Skywalker Grant?” Rose frowned.

“Luke and Leia set up a fund for soldiers who lose limbs to get free prosthetic replacements,” Diego explained. “It’ll be all paid for, Wexley.”

“Oh,” Snap blinked, “well great. Problem solved.”

Karé sighed.

“Don’t worry,” Aletha leaned over to Karé. “I’ll get you the number of a therapist on D’Qar for him. Antar took months to accept what happened to him, and he cut his own off.”

“Alright, well we’ve dealt with all the major injuries now,” Kalonia said. “Are we ready to move into Phase Two, Doctor Kymeri?”

“Affirm,” Aletha nodded. “I second the motion to proceed. Do we have everyone?”

“Not quite.” Poe spotted where his father had gone, “Hey Dad! Get over here!”

Kes excused himself from where he was talking with Shayna, and came over to the group.

“Need me for something?” Kes asked.

“Yes. We should move the rest of you all into your treatment now,” Kalonia grabbed a bowl from her borrowed workstation. “You’ll all be going through the body scanners. Please remove any metal and deposit it into the bowl; I will return it to you once your treatments are completed. That means any jewelry, hair accessories, dentures, eyeglasses, or tooth Holo projectors.”

Jessika scowled, “What kind of stupid person would have one of those?”

Poe Dameron, with a grip on his false tooth froze, “Uh… yeah. Only someone with way too much money and time on their hands would have one of those.”

The eyes on him were painfully as he awkwardly pulled out his Holo projector tooth and dropped it into the bowl.

“Long story,” Poe muttered. “Hey, is it going to be hygienic to have my tooth in there with everything else?”

“I’ll sanitize everything before returning it,” Kalonia promised.

“Hey guys?” Karé said to Poe and Kaydel. “Since we’re taking off jewelry right now, don’t you think it’s time to return those rings to their proper owners? The mission is over, and I’m sick of pretending to be single while Poe and Kaydel get to pretend to be married.”

“She’s right, Kaydel,” Aletha said. “I think it’s time to give those back.”
Kaydel looked down at the engagement and wedding ring on her finger, “Right. I almost forgot this wasn’t mine.”

“Me too,” Poe pulled off his borrowed wedding ring. “I kind of liked it.”

“Yeah, I think I’ll miss having a ring on my finger,” Kaydel gave him a cheeky grin.

Kes glanced down at Shara’s wedding ring, which he had been about to drop in the bowl. He eyed Poe and began to think.

“Come on, Guys,” Snap urged from his wheelchair. He was unreasonably calm for someone missing a leg. “The jig’s up. You’re not married, so hand over the rings.”

“Alright, alright,” Kaydel shook her head as she pulled off the engagement and wedding ring.

She began to hold them out, but her heart lurched. The rings were covered in Doxl Ren’s blood.

Kaydel sharply gasped as she nearly dropped them. No! No! No! She had corrupted them destroyed them for the one she loved. They could all see it – see the truth – she was a murdered, and none of them would love her anymore. A tear fell down her cheek and dropped onto the rings.

The blood disappeared.

She blinked hard, aware of the eyes on her, but Kaydel couldn’t stop the image that flooded her mind.

Kaydel was fighting Doxl Ren. He was trying to hurt her. Kill her.

She slit his throat without a second thought. His eyes bulged, his blood stained her hands. He burbled, choking on his blood as Kaydel held him in her arms. She held him there, didn’t move to help Doxl as he drowned in his own blood.

Then she dropped his body to the ground with a sickening thwack.

The thwack wouldn’t stop echoing. Her hands were covered in blood.

His blood.

“Kaydel?” Poe touched her back.

Automatically, Kaydel looked down at her hands. There was no blood on them now… but she wasn’t positive she wouldn’t see the blood later. She would never forget the stickiness of Doxl Ren’s murder.

Kaydel took a shaky breath. Why wouldn’t this go away? He was a bad guy; she did the world a favor killing the man.

That didn’t change the fact she was a murderer.

Without a word, Poe’s arm wrapped around her waist and pulled her tightly against him. Kaydel
couldn’t enjoy the embrace; all she could think about was that he deserved someone better than a murderer.

“Sweetheart?” Aletha frowned at Kaydel, Diego’s arm around her in the same way. “Are you alright?”

Kaydel blinked, “Sorry, just… I’m fine.”

Diego and Aletha shared an uncertain look, one Kaydel didn’t want them to have. But Poe cleared his throat and gave a stiff shake of the head.

Aletha nodded back.

_Oh Goddesses. Did they know?

Kaydel looked at Poe, but there was no judgement or hatred in his eyes. She struggled to share a smile, praying that he didn’t know the truth about how black her soul was. A warm smile graced his own features, Poe reached down and tightly clasped their closest hands. Her hand in his, Kaydel found the strength to let that smile grow, and he bowed his head to kiss her forehead.

Slowly, Poe took the rings from her and handed them to their rightful owners… Diego and Aletha.

“Good, that’s one less thing to worry about,” Diego shoved the wedding rings into his pocket while Aletha slid on her engagement ring. “I swear this wedding planning is going to drive me to an early grave.”

“So, I’ve heard,” Aletha eyed his pocket to make sure the rings were secure. Diego was responsible for holding onto their wedding bands until the ceremony in two months. “Apparently in the time it took for me to go on my trip, you’ve gone completely insane.”

“I have not,” Diego contested. “Wedding planning is just so stressful, I’m a little impatient and distracted. If you were to help me more-”

“I told you I don’t care if we have a big wedding or just elope. You’re the one who wanted to make a big event out of it – probably to prove to the world you finally found someone to settle down with – and as such, you get the stress of planning said big wedding.”

“Querida, I already said that I’m not stressed.”

“Commander?” Kalonia said respectfully. “Because it sets you off so much, everyone on D’Qar has started using the word _event_ instead of _wedding_.”

Diego’s eye twitched.

“One by one, the group went through the body scanners which identified all their areas in need of treatment. As Kalonia went over their results, Aletha administered special combinations of vaccines to start their specific treatment. They were mostly mixtures of intravenous bacta, morphine, and adrenaline, but a little bit of other things were administered on a case by case basis.
Aletha frowned when a somewhat familiar blonde man walked out of the scanner and took a seat in front of her.

“Are you an associate of Han Solo’s?” she asked.

“Uh, no, I decided to defect to the Resistance and took my chance when Kayko offered,” the man said.

“Is that so?” Aletha glanced at his results and turned to make her mixture. She had already heard a similar story from Hena, so she didn’t find it out of the ordinary. “Well, welcome to the Resistance. What’s your name?”

“Dacken Tokani.”

She nearly dropped her vial.

“Excuse me?” Aletha stared at him in shock.

“I’m Kaydel’s nephew,” Dacken said. “Who are you?”

Aletha blinked, “…I’m Kaydel’s aunt.”

“Aunt? What do you-” And then it hit him, “By the Goddesses, you’re Aletha Kymeri!”

“Well, for a few more months,” Aletha filled her syringe. “In about two months I’ll be Aletha Nalto. Hold still.”

“This is amazing!” Dacken exclaimed as she injected him. “I’ve heard so little about you.”

“That’s comforting,” Aletha set the needle down and started flipping through Dacken’s chart.

“No, I mean in a good way. Grandma restricts all information about you. I only learned you existed when Aunt Katha told Aunt Kayko about you to ward her off from being a Rebel.”

“And which sibling is your parent? Keth?”

“The first Kaydel.”

Aletha’s eyes turned ice cold.

“So,” she said slowly, “…you did the hair thing to Kaydel.”

Dacken swallowed hard, “Listen, Great Aunt Aletha-”

“Call me Doctor Kymeri.”

“Doctor Kymeri,” he bowed his head, “I’ve done some really bad things in my life, but now I want to make up for them. So please, I want you to know I will do everything in my power to make you and Aunt Kayko forgive me for the things I’ve done. I do want to be a better person.”

“Well, that may be so,” Aletha glanced at her watch, “but I hope you’ll forgive me for being skeptical at first… and taking steps to protect Kaydel from you.”

“Steps?” Dacken frowned. “What are you-”

He hit the ground face first.
Every eye in the Medical Bay turned on her as they observed Dacken Tokani passed out on the floor.

“You know, I don’t think I’ve said it recently, Babe,” Poe told Kaydel, “but I love your aunt.”

Kaydel just shook her head.

“Querida!” Diego scolded as Kalonia rushed forward to check on Dacken. “Did you drug yet another patient?”

“Yeah, but I was in my rights to do so,” Aletha said. “Come on, standard protocol for suspicious intakes is to drug them to knock them out until we run a thorough background check. Technically according to Rebellion rules I should be handcuffing him to a bed right now.”

“Aletha…” Kalonia’s voice was awkward as she rose back to her feet, “we don’t sedate suspicious intakes in the Resistance anymore.”

“What?” Aletha scowled. “Are you sure?”

“Yes, Querida,” Diego answered. “The New Republic determined that to be a personal rights violation, and since we’re an official New Republic entity, we’re not allowed to do it anymore.”

“Oh…” Aletha blinked, staring at her great nephew lying face first on the ground. “I have a few apology notes to write then.”

“Well, it’s not the air density sensors,” Rey called down to Teng as she clung onto the telemetry cone. “Can you check the coolant intake coupling? I’ll climb down and check the binary brain unit.”

“Alright, but be careful,” Teng scowled as he checked the chiller bars for cracks.

“Come on, Teng,” Rey grinned. “Careful is my middle name.”

“Isn’t Rhiaon your middle name?”

“What? No, Rhiaon is my surname.”

“Yeah, but you’ve got two surnames and a first names, totalling three names, the Rhiaon one being the second and ergo the middle one.”

Rey stared at him, “Alright, we’re taking a water break. You only get pedantic when dehydration starts to set in.”

The pair of them sat against the moisture vaporator, chatting and sharing a canteen when they were approached by Imogen and Levi.

“Celum!” Rey proudly greeted.

Imogen laughed, “Celum. How are the repairs going?”

“We’re still trying to diagnose the problem,” Rey replied. “I think it might be the internal mechanics or maybe some wiring. We just needed a water break. We’ll be back at it in a few minutes.”

“Oh no, now’s the perfect time for a break,” Imogen said. “In fact, that’s why we came over.”
Teng sat up a little straighter, “No, it’s alright. You don’t need to tell us when to take a rest. We’re pretty good at timing those sort of things.”

“Actually, I wanted to talk to Araeya about something, but first,” Imogen nodded to Levi.

Levi pulled some small rolls of a rather grainy bread form his satchel and a few sticks of dried spiced blobgin meat, “Please, eat.”

“Oh, thank you,” Rey smiled as she and Teng accepted them. “You didn’t have to.”

“Of course we do,” Imogen’s voice wasn’t particularly casual in a _oh it’s nothing_ fashion, but rather in the firm way a mother reminds her child to wash their hands before dinner. “You are our guests. It is the way.”

“Right, the way,” Teng bit into his roll.

Imogen and Levi exchanged a look.

Levi cleared his throat, “Uh… Toryn?”

Teng stopped chewing.

“You must eat all meat before your bread,” Levi instructed. “An animal gave its life for that meal so you must show it the honour of being consumed first and consuming _all_ of it.”

“Oh…” Teng debated whether or not to swallow the mouthful of bread he had. “My bad.”

When they were done the snack, Imogen told Rey she had a proposal for her.

“Our daughter, Gweneth gave birth last month,” Imogen’s voice was filled with pride. “A month after a child is born, we have a small ceremony for it. I would like to invite you to join us.”

“Really?” Rey stumbled to her feet. “You would invite me to a family celebration?”

“Oh, it’s not really an especially intimate event,” Imogen assured her. “But if you wish to learn about our culture, this might be a good way to do so.”

“So, would you like to come?” Levi asked. “Gweneth would be very grateful. There’s not a whole lot of women her age around.”

Rey clasped Teng’s hand, “We would love to.”

The smiles froze on Levi and Imogen’s faces.

“Oh… I think you misunderstand,” Levi said awkwardly.

Rey frowned, “What do you mean?”

“Toryn isn’t invited,” Imogen answered. “Don’t get me wrong, the more the merrier, but we do certain blessings and prayers, and one not of the faith fully can often be a corrupting influence. It’s nothing personal, but those not of the faith are barred from this one ceremony for the sake of the child.”

“Oh,” Teng dropped Rey’s hand. “I guess… Okay.”

“Teng, if you don’t want me to go,” Rey said.
“No, no,” Teng cupped her cheek. “You go and get closer to your mom. I’ll be fine.”

Rey smiled and kissed him.

“I’ll be back soon, Moonshine,” she promised.

“You take as long as you need, Starlight,” Teng grinned.

There were about two dozen people in the tent when Imogen and Levi led Rey in. It was a larger one, and Imogen explained that pregnant women would spend the last month of their pregnancy and first month of their child’s life in the tent, away from everyone else.

“It’s a bonding experience,” Imogen smiled.

Levi playfully elbowed Rey. “It’s also to keep the husband from getting any ideas. They say the Gods curse a man who gets his wife pregnant twice in one year. I say that’s just something my father-in-law made up to keep me away from his daughter for a while.”

Imogen blushed, “Levi.”

He just winked at her.

“Celum!” a young man approached the group.

“Celum,” Imogen and Levi replied.

“Congratulations once more, son,” Levi laughed as Imogen kissed their son-in-law’s forehead and spoke a blessing. “I hope you didn’t mind, but we brought our Valrian guest to the ceremony. She wants to learn more about our culture and thought this would be the perfect way.”

“Of course,” the man took Rey’s hands in his. He was kind of short for a man, probably no older than twenty-five, and even that was pushing it. He had pale skin, a round face, and a smattering of freckles across his nose. His hair was the lightest brown of anyone in the village, but he had the same brown eyes as everyone else. “Thank you, Araeya for blessing us with your presence. Welcome. I am Micah.”

“It’s my pleasure, Micah,” Rey smiled a little awkwardly. Was everything in Valrian about honour and blessings?

No wonder her mother was a Rebel. Rey was just about ready to snap herself.

“Mother! Father!” Micah signalled to a couple who were fawning over a woman holding a baby.

The couple was like everyone else, dark hair and eyes, pale, and sharp features, but the man was particularly bulky and one of the tallest humans Rey had ever seen.

“Mother, Father, I would like to introduce you to our guest, Araeya,” Micah presented Rey as she reached to shake their hands. “Araeya, these are my parents, Murtaugh and Dierdre Rhiaon.”

Rey dropped Dierdre’s hand in unison with her own jaw.

“Rhi- Rhiaon?” Rey sputtered. “Like my last name?”
“That’s right,” Levi nodded, watching as Imogen went to greet their daughter.

“But,” Rey looked around helplessly, “I don’t. Oh my god!”

“We usually actually say By the Gods,” Murtaugh corrected.

“You’re a Rhiaon!” Rey exclaimed. “I don’t expect this at all. Why didn’t you give me a head’s up, Levi?”

Everyone looked very confused.

“Why would I warn you about their family name?” Levi asked.

“Because it’s my name! Oh my god, does that mean we’re related?” Rey panicked. “Are you my family?”

“Oh,” the group said together.

Levi cleared his throat, “Araeya, they’re probably not your family.”

“How can you tell?” Rey asked.

“Because Rhiaon is the most common Valrian surname in the Galaxy,” Murtaugh answered. “What is it, 150 million Rhiaons on Valra alone, not counting our people living on other planets?”

“It’s basically the Valrian version of Antilles or Smyth,” Deirdre added. “Seriously, there are so many Rhiaons out there. The martyr of Faclov was a Rhiaon. The wife of the Jedi Grandmaster was a Rhiaon. The architect of the first Death Star was a Rhiaon. The current Governor of the Andeleans is a Rhiaon. But they’re not all related to each other, or certainly to you.”

“Oh, right,” Rey blushed. “I’m sorry.”

Actually, all of those figures mentioned were related, and specifically related to Rey. They were her uncle, mother, grandfather, and great uncle. But Rey didn’t know that.

Perhaps if Deirdre had specified that the Jedi Grandmaster she spoke of was Luke Skywalker, Rey would have put it all together then and there. But once more a certain point of view screwed over a Skywalker.

Micah glanced at Rey, “Uh… here, why don’t you all talk and I’ll bring Araeya to meet Gweneth?”

“Thank you for saving me,” Rey whispered as Micah led her away.

“No problem, I know how harsh Valrians can be, Araeya,” Micah grinned as they reached Imogen and the woman holding a baby. “My Love, please greet our newest guest, Araeya Rhiaon. Araeya, this is my wife, Gweneth.”

“It’s a pleasure,” Rey reached out to shake Gweneth’s hand, but grimaced when she realized the woman was too busy holding her baby.

Gweneth laughed, “It’s alright. Here, Micah would you take Kezia?”

“With pleasure,” Micah liberated his daughter from her mother’s grasp. “Oh, who is the most beautiful girl in the entire Galaxy?”

Gweneth’s eyes sparkled as she caught Rey’s.
“I remember when he used to say such things about me,” Gweneth teased.

Rey laughed.

Gweneth was rather pretty. Dark curly hair, hazel eyes, her face soft and round. Gweneth took after her father rather than the harsh, scowling features of Imogen (who had thankfully gone to join the other parents.) She was probably about the age of Paige or Kaydel, and Rey’s heart swelled at that. Even though it was a completely different person, it kind of felt like she was with a member of her Council, and Rey was glad.

Especially since the Council had been relatively radio silent over the past couple days.

“I’m Gweneth Rhiaon née Lerann,” Gweneth shook Rey’s hand. “It’s nice to meet you, Araeya.”

“Please, call me Rey,” she smiled.

“Alright, Rey,” Micah grinned. “So, what’s your story? Why are you just learning about our culture now?”

“Uh, my mother died when I was five, and my father is… Not welcome around here.”

Micah scowled, “What does that mean?”

“Her father’s Almon Erso,” Gweneth said.

Micah winced, “Ouch. Tough break.”

“I’m not going to be mad at what he did,” Rey said flatly. “He and Aletha loved each other. I’m not debating it further.”

“Well, between you and me.” Gweneth glanced towards her mother and then leaned in to whisper to Rey, “I don’t believe in the whole no love allowed after first marriage. I love Micah with all my heart, but if I lost him early in life, I wouldn’t want to spend the rest of it alone.”

“And the same goes for me.” Micah smiled down at daughter, “Although we do have Kezia now.”

“Would you like to hold her?” Gweneth asked.

Rey panicked, “Oh no, no, no! I’ve never held a baby before. I would probably manage to break her!”

Somehow Rey ended up holding the baby.

“Oh,” Rey stared down at baby Kezia. “Not bad.”

“It’s always good to get practice in,” Gweneth grinned.

“Yeah, I suppose you’re right,” Rey said. “Statistically, my friend Kaydel probably going to get knocked up within the next year, so I’ll need to know how to hold a baby as required of the no doubt four-way Godmothership we’ll end up doing. I’m actually surprised Kaydel and Poe aren’t parents already.”

“Actually, I think she meant for yourself,” Micah teased. “Word has spread about that handsome boy you showed up with.”

Rey instantly bowed her head, pretending to be fascinated with the baby and not using the child as a
prop to head her bright red blush.

Actually, the more she looked at the baby, the more she was amazed. She literally couldn’t remember ever seeing one. It was fascinating; this little tiny ball of flesh could someday grow to be as big Murtaugh.

“It’s a little earlier to think about that,” Rey said. “But I do wish Teng could have come to this with me. I feel so out of my element here.”

“Don’t you worry a second about that,” Gweneth promised. “What my mother won’t explain, I will. After all, we’ve all been there before, and someday we’ll have to teach Kezia the same things.”

“Kezia,” Rey said. “Such an interesting name. Does it mean anything?”

“Cinnamon,” Gweneth smirked at Micah. “If it wasn’t for cinnamon, Kezia might not exist.”

Rey frowned, “I’m sorry, I don’t understand. What’s cinnamon?”

“It’s a sweet spice,” Micah answered. “We sometimes get a little bottle of it in our deliveries from Valra. Shortly after my parents and I moved to Synael, there was a delivery of one bottle of cinnamon. Generally food is communal, but spices are not. I wanted that cinnamon, but so did Gweneth.”

“We met by grabbing that bottle at the same time,” Gweneth leaned her head against Micah’s shoulder. “We argued a good twenty minutes before agreeing to share it over lunch. One thing led to another and we were married a year later.”

“That’s so sweet,” Rey smiled. She looked down at Kezia, soft, pale, and the tiniest amount of black hair, “My, you are just the sweetest thing I have ever seen. Aren’t you?”

Rey tickled the babe’s tummy, and Kezia gave the cutest little giggle.

A gasp filled the tent, and then came a buzz of chatter and some scattered clapping.

Rey scowled, “Why is everyone staring at me? Is it because I’m holding the baby.”

“Not at all,” Gweneth held out her arms for her baby. “It’s because she’s laughing. Aren’t you laughing, my sweet girl?”

Rey quickly passed Kezia. She tried not to have her smile be sad as she thought about her own mother holding her like that once upon a time.

Then she remembered that her mother had had Postpartum Depression for the first three months of Rey’s life. Had she ever been held like that? Did people gather to bless Rey like they had come to bless Kezia?

Micah said, “They watched you after the laughter because it is tradition to make a newborn baby laugh. You can't stop trying until it does. It's supposed to bless the lives of all those around the baby. You have blessed us all.”

“Oh, well… you’re welcome,” Rey really didn’t know what she was supposed to say. “What- What other traditions are there in this ceremony?”

That was when Imogen called everyone to attention and came to take Kezia from Gweneth. Imogen smiled and kissed her daughter’s forehead, whispering a blessing.
As Imogen walked to the head of the congregation, Gweneth took Rey’s hand.

“Why don’t we find out?” Gweneth smiled.

Rey returned the grin and let Gweneth lead her forward.

It was a nice little ceremony. Imogen started it by thanking everyone for coming while Gweneth whispered to Rey that the maternal grandmother always led the ceremony.

Continuing the theme of evil spirits can’t stand water, they poured a little on the forehead of Kezia. Micah explained to Rey that spirits take a month before they reveal if they’re good or evil, so water would prove whether it’s an evil spirit.

“But what if it’s a good spirit?” Rey asked. “Don’t you not want to raise one of those either? Wouldn’t you just want a human baby?”

“All humans are are good spirits directly created by the Gods,” Gweneth answered. “ Spirits will continue to appear in the normal fashion – I know what you’re going to ask, no we don’t know how spirits are born in non-human situations – but the Gods craft spirits with their own hands who are special enough to be allowed to enjoy a life of peace before going to fight the spirits of evil. Unfortunately, the Gods can’t control whether a spirit will end up being good or evil, so we must test all children who are born to humans.”

“What if the baby turns out to be an evil spirit?”

Micah leaned over, “Don’t know. Don’t want to find out.”

When Kezia proved not to be an evil spirit, Imogen marked in ash on Kezia’s forehead the symbol of the God she was born under. There were twelve months and six Gods, so in a year each god would possess two months.

As Imogen called a prayer to the Goddess Koena to bless her granddaughter, Gweneth leaned over to Rey again.

“It’s consider good luck to marry someone who is born under either the same God as yourself, or your God’s spouse,” Gweneth said. “For example, I was born under Ipgyn and Micah was under Itar. However, your marriage will end in nothing death and disaster if you marry someone who is the sibling of the God you were born under.”

Luke hadn’t told Rey the story of the fuss Felicity’s maternal family made over their engagement when they learned Felicity – who had been born under Koena – was marrying a man born under Djun, Koena’s brother. He didn’t like to think about how their marriage did death in death and disaster.

Han just found it funny that Luke was born under the God of Sky, Water, Desert, and Language.

“I wonder what signs Teng and I are born under?” Rey mused.

“What’s your birthdates?”

Rey told her.

“I think you’re Imar and Teng’s Ipgyn.” Gweneth paused, “Or would he be Ethys? Either you’re
blessed or screwed.”

Considering her life, Rey had a good feeling which it would be.

Next came the giving of gifts. It was tradition to receive a gift from a baby (in reality, the parents) after they were born. Gweneth and Micah gave woven blankets to everyone, and the grateful Rey ended up keeping hers in her satchel always.

Then came the tradition of gifting the newborn baby an item of the oldest living person in the family. With a dazzling smile, Imogen rocked her granddaughter in her arms and passed on her own three hair ties to wear the three buns when Kezia was old enough.

“Thank you,” Gweneth whispered with tears in her eyes.

Rey winced, her heart aching for a woman she would never know. Felicity Rhiaon would never get to see her grandchild… Since her mother was dead and Teng’s parents were gone, Rey’s children would only ever know one grandparent: her father.

What if she lost him too?

Would anyone give a gift to her children?

Rey closed her eyes and pushed with all her strength into the Force, begging it, pleading with it for it to just give her one moment, one image, one sound of her mother.

Please, Rey begged the Force, there had to be something her heart still held.

She didn’t hear Imogen announce to the group that she and Deirdre would now do the honour of singing the traditional first song of a child’s life. The grandmothers of a newborn baby were always the ones to sing the first song.

…Except for one Valrian child, one named Rey “Araeya” Rhiaon Skywalker at age nine months when her mother found the strength to overcome her Postpartum Depression.

Rey “Araeya” Rhiaon Skywalker did not have any living grandmother to sing to her… but she had a mother… and she had an aunt.

To the rain, to the sun,

You will be safe, my little one.

Two familiar voices sung in harmony with Dierdre and Imogen. The other women were only in the head of Rey Erso.

Close your eyes, and rest your head,

I will keep you safe in your bed.

She could see them. They were fuzzy, but she could see them. She could see the brown hair, two sets of eyes: hazel and brown.

Rey could see her mother and her aunt.

They were beautiful… and they looked so much like her.

To the east, to the west,
Surrender to your peaceful rest.

Rey took a deep breath, her soul filling with the Light Side as she took in their forms. Yes, she knew them… but though she couldn’t quite pin down why her aunt looked so familiar, Rey knew who her aunt didn’t look like.

No, she pushed the thought from her mind. It was time to focus on her mother. She wanted to remember her mother.

And so she remembered Felicity Rhiaon… but not in a memory she would have chosen.

To the mountain, to the sky,
I will shield you until the day I die.

"Oh, Rey," Felicity pulled into a tight hug. "Rey, you know that Mommy loves you more than anything in the galaxy, right?"

"Except Daddy," Rey said.

"No," Felicity shook her head and pulled back. Rey's arms settled around Felicity's neck as Felicity placed her hands on Rey's shoulders, "I love you even more than Daddy. More than anything and anyone in the entire galaxy. I swear that to you, and I don't want you to forget that."

"I won’t."

Rey whispered, “I won’t.”

She hadn’t.

Then Felicity Rhiaon was gone.

Rey’s eyes slowly fluttered open, her mind buzzing with confusion.

Yes, that had been her mother, that had truly been her mother! She could remember her mother. Thank you, Force. Thank you, Valrian Gods. Thank you, Giant Space Squid!

Then Rey frowned.

But her aunt… Rey thought back on the image. Her aunt hadn’t been Alyla Kene. That meant her father wasn’t Gavyn Kene and her aunt wasn’t Alyla Kene.

But if they weren’t… who was?

Did the key lie with the secret of who was Felicity Rhiaon? Rey wanted to find out, and yet… and yet she didn’t.

“Rey?” someone touched her arm. “Are you okay?”

She looked up in surprise at Gweneth. Rey hadn’t realized she had been crying.

“Uh, yeah,” Rey swallowed. “Sorry just… having a religious experience.”

Gweneth and Micah chuckled.

“Mission accomplished,” Micah grinned.
“Come on,” Gweneth urged. “There’s just one more bit, and then the three of us can go sneak off with the baby to go meet that boy you brought with you.”

As Gweneth led her forward into a line, Rey asked, “So, what do we do now?”

“While the village leader holds the baby – man, my mom had a lot of roles in this ceremony, usually there’s at least four people involved – you kiss the baby’s forehead and whisper a whisper in her ear.”

“And it better be a good one,” Micah said. “Newborn spirits do have a little magic in them. Almost always does a wish to a baby come turn.”

Rey thought long and hard what she wanted to request. Her mind buzzed with a million possibilities: learning the truth about her father, meeting Uncle Freighter, marrying Teng, meeting Kira’s Council, getting that hug and pear from Rose, Quom acting remotely sensible for once (okay maybe she should push her luck.)

But Rey already knew what she was going to wish.

Imogen smiled at her when Rey reached the front of the line.

“You have something good?” Imogen asked. “You should give a lot of thought to your wish.”

“I don’t need to think it over… I’ve been thinking about it for years.”

She bent down and kissed Kezia’s forehead, Rey’s heart filled with love and certainty.

“I wish,” Rey whispered into Kezia’s ear. “I wish I would learn something new about my mother on this trip.”

And as the superstition went, sure enough, Rey would learn something new about her mother in the village of Synael.

Only she would be horrified at what it was.

According to Gweneth, lunch was the only meal that was not a communal. It was still a communal event, but everyone could wander in and out the cooking hut – Una and Levi’s domain – over the span of an hour. Then people would eat lunch wherever they chose, some ducking into their tents, but most lounging around the cooking hut.

Teng and Rey sat with Gweneth, Micah, and Kezia in the shade of the cooking hut. They spoke aimlessly, chatting about whatever subject came to mind. When they came to the topic of how they all ended up on Jakku, Rey was amazed that the Valrians came to Jakku willingly.

“The world is getting darker every day,” Micah said. “The First Order is getting far too powerful.”

“Something is going to happen one of these days to catch the New Republic’s attention, mark my words,” Gweneth took care to shield her daughter from the sun. “I don’t want my family to be anywhere near that when it happens.”

“Is that why there’s a Valrian village here?” Rey asked.

“It’s been around since the Empire as a safe haven for Valrians,” Micah said. “During the rebellion,
the Empire made a martyr out of a Valrian man, so we started planning. We didn’t think we’d have
to use the village again after the war, but some people stayed here. Imogen and Cadman led the
group of us back after the Burning of Rornian. Unfortunately, my parents and I didn’t move in the
initial group, but after the Battle of Valra between the Resistance and the First Order, we came here.”

“Actually, I know you guys hate her,” Rey said, “but Aletha Kymeri actually fought in that battle.”

“That’s admirable,” Gweneth smiled. “But… don’t tell my mother. She’s a very traditional woman. I
think what she did to your father was too harsh, punishing a man not of the faith for a belief of the
fate. Madness.”

“Why don’t you tell your mother that?” Teng asked.

“It’s not proper,” Micah said. “Sure, in Valrian culture women are considered above me, but that
doesn’t mean a daughter can challenge a Village Leader on her decisions. Now, if she actually tried
to have your father killed, maybe that would be another story.”

Rey sighed, “I just wish that I hadn’t been held back from my culture for so long. Participating in a
festival sounds so fun.”

“Then you’re going to love this,” Micah grinned, pointing to Cadman as he walked into the middle
of the lunching villagers. “Looks like it’s duel time.”

“Duel time?” Teng questioned.

“Part of the story we celebrate during the Solstice Festival is the meeting of Itar and Ipgyn,”
Gweneth smiled. “There was a misunderstanding between the Gods, resulting in a duel between them. Ipgyn won the fight, but every year her husband challenges her to a rematch. We honour them by re-enacting the duel, one woman fighting against a man with a weapon of choice that alternates every year.”

“I wonder what they’ll choose this year?” Micah mused.

“Mother didn’t say,” Gweneth replied.

“Ladies and Gentlemen!” Cadman announced. “It is time to duel once more. One brave woman will defend the honour of the Goddess Ipgyn against the champion of Itar. Are you ready to see a good fight?”

The villagers cheered.

“Before I ask for our volunteers for the honourable title of Champion, we of course must reveal this year’s weapon of choice.” Cadman signalled to Levi, who was standing off to the side holding something bulky and covered with a blanket, “Come forth with the weapons.”

Levi bowed his head when he reached Cadman. With a bit of flourish that Rey suspected was natural to all Valrians, Cadman pulled off the sheet. A gasp went up in the crowd as they behold the weapons of choice.

“This year we fight with staffs!” Cadman proclaimed.

Rey’s eyes lit up.

“Now,” Cadman looked around the camp, “who will volunteer?”
Teng just sighed and took Rey’s plate from her, “I’ll hold your food.”

Pressing a quick kiss to Teng’s cheek, Rey shot to her feet and raced over to Cadman. She reached him the same time Micah’s father, Murtaugh Rhiaon did.

“I’ll do it!” Rey grinned in excitement, the men looking a little surprised. “I’ll do the fight.”

“You?” Cadman blinked. “But you don’t know anything about the Solstice Festival.”

“Well, Gweneth told me all about this part,” Rey said. “Come on, I can do it.”

“I don’t know,” Murtaugh glanced at Cadman. “I’m not sure I could live with myself if I beat up a defenseless little girl.”

Rey lifted an eyebrow, “Defenseless? Excuse me, but how do you think I got these muscles. I know how to fight… and I know how to win.”

Murtaugh and Cadman exchanged a smiled.

“Well, Murtaugh, it’s your call,” Cadman said. “I’m willing to see if all of Tinadar’s bragging about this girl is true.”

Rey was touched to hear that her furry, weirdo, Uncle wandered the Sacred Villages bragging about her fighting skills.

“Alright then,” Murtaugh said. “Let’s do this.”

“Ladies and gentlemen, we have our volunteers!” Cadman announced. “Rhiaon vs Rhiaon!”

The villagers clapped and cheered as Rey and Murtaugh collected their staffs – Rey’s own was safely stored in the tent she and Teng had been given. Rey couldn’t help but blush when she heard Teng cheering her name far louder than anyone else’s voice.

“Champions, take your positions,” Cadman helped direct Rey to stand directly across from Murtaugh.

Rey grinned as she gripped the unfamiliar staff; she was so ready for this.

“Don’t worry, Bele,” Murtaugh lazily spun his staff, “I’ll go easy on you.”

“Oh, don’t feel the need to handicap yourself,” Rey smirked a one corner upturned smirk that belonged to a woman named Felicity Rhiaon. “I think I know a thing or two about holding my own.”

“Alright,” Murtaugh laughed. “But when you’re lying on the ground bloody, broken, and defeated, just remember that I warned you.”

“And when you’re the one actually in that position, know that I did too.”

“Murtaugh Rhiaon… Araeya Rhiaon…” Levi looked between the pair. He waved his hand as the signal, “Begin!”

So Rey and Murtaugh began their duel… and plainly put, Rey kicked his ass.
“Kalonia’s working on Wexley with Mager and Darkstar, while Kymeri’s working on Paige Tico’s head injury,” Evan told the three medical droids and six human nurses following him around. “I’ve got the rest of the various medical staff with the other survivors, though we might want to send in another to tend to Solo. Rumor has it he likes to put up a fuss during checkups. Krenis and Sona, can you assist Doctors Manx and Gallamby with the boy who lost his legs? Also, maybe give his mother a little something to calm her down? My own mother can only comfort Ms. Narden so much.”

“Yes, sir,” Sona nodded, her hand unconsciously rubbing her pregnant stomach. She was one of the best nurses on the Ninka, and she had been fending off Holdo’s requests to not leave the Resistance. Unfortunately seeing the terrible things that had been done to Hena Narden’s little boy only made her more secure in her decision to leave the Resistance to raise her child. It was more important to her to be with her child than to die for an uncertain future. “Speaking of sedatives, what do we do about Tokani?”

“Oh right,” Evan said. “Nava, you go check on him and send a quick notification of his drugging to General Organa. She’s starting to keep a tally of how many times Aletha pulls that stunt. Sooner or later, the General’s going to be forced to put Kymeri on a formal discipline action plan. Now, can I get someone to check on Lieutenant Connix? She seems fine, but considering her tussle with the Knights of Ren, I want to double check her condition.”

“Right on it, Sir,” Eirta Cari saluted and went to hunt down Kaydel.

“Now, let’s discuss the Damerons.”

Had a stranger entered the medical bay of the Ninka they might have thought Evan Tharel to be the Head of Medical. In fact, as Vice Admiral Amilyn Holdo entered, she had to do a double take. Tharel so calmly and skillfully assigned tasks and compiled the actions most would not even think of. He was not arrogant about it, there was just a job to be done and since his bosses were busy actually practicing medicine, he stepped in to coordinate the insanity of the medical bay.

And truth be told, he was good at it.

Holdo smiled. He was very good.

“Nurse Calhuu, can you give Lieutenant Kun a reflex test?” Evan ordered. “I want to check how her leg injury is doing. GH-49, you have the most comprehensive databank of Wookiee anatomy. Go see if I overlooked anything with Waroo and Chewbacca. 2-4K, I’ll get you to do a neural scan on me. I haven’t checked myself for concussion or brain injuries—”

“Oh, I don’t see how that would be a problem,” Holdo intercut without a regard for if the team should be interrupted. “You seem to be functioning at a higher level than half my crew on their best day.”

Evan didn’t like how quickly the team around him dispersed.

“Thank you, Vice Admiral,” Evan respectfully bowed his head. He wasn’t exactly enthused about the interruption, but he also wasn’t about to go destroy her desk chair with Paige. “Is there something I can assist you with?”

“Well, I’ve been discussing the events of this mission with General Organa, and we’ve decided there’s a conversation that needs to be had.”

Evan’s face went pale, “Vice Admiral, please. I had absolutely no idea what that audio recording truly contained. I did not mean to send it to the General!”
But Holdo laughed, “Oh, no, no. That’s not what I meant.”

“When- Really?”

“Truly,” she nodded. “Now, admittedly, I was there when General Organa heard the recording, and she’s not very pleased with the incident. However, fault lies in multiple avenues, and that will be a discussion for the two of you when we return to D’Qar.”

“Oh, well… I’ll have that to look forward to then.” Evan hated himself for what he asked next, “Out of curiosity… what was her reaction?”

“She threw her headset across the desk and fled from the Control Center.”

“…Ah.” Evan cleared his throat, “So, what was it that you wanted to discuss?”

“Your actions on Nixrye; particularly the ones involving the Knights of Ren.”

“Am I in trouble? For the record, I wasn’t the one who decided to sear Snap’s leg like a steak.”

“Yes, Doctor Kalonia got your retraining request memo,” Holdo smiled. She very much enjoyed talking to one of Poe Dameron’s lackeys without having to hack through a starship’s worth of contempt. “But you’re not in trouble, Corporal Namit. General Organa and I agree that your actions were very admirable.”

“Oh…” Evan scowled. He was so used to being called Medic or Nurse Tharel that it took him a second to remember that technically his official title was Corporal Geno Namit. Not that he minded his official title being used by such a high-ranking officer. Frankly, he thought that quite proper. “Uh, thank you for the praise, Vice Admiral, but honestly I was just doing my duty.”

“And that’s exactly it,” Holdo said, “you were doing your duty. So often we’ve had reckless pilots and doctors and officers of all ranks just doing whatever they wanted regardless of the consequences. It’s that careless attitude of Poe Dameron’s that drives me up the wall.”

“I, um… noticed.”

“But you,” Holdo put her hand on the side of Evan’s arm, “you followed your mandate, and because of it, this whole situation didn’t end it tragedy.”

“With all due respect, I feel Jaina Fel’s parents will disagree.”

“We’re at war, Corporal Namit. There will always be losses, but when we have soldiers like you around, I see a bright future ahead. You stuck to your duty to protect and heal those around you, to be the better person and just do good in the universe. It didn’t matter if they were Resistance, Rebel Vet, Knight of Ren, Stormtrooper, Head of Crimson Dawn, or Innocent Bystander, you helped them. Lives were saved today because of you, Corporal Namit. And because of that kindness towards even our enemies, Kylo Ren let everyone but Dameron and Connix walk out the door unscathed.”

“I’m not sure if I can take that praise,” Evan said respectfully. “I’m sure it was more for the truce that Commander Dameron bartered.”

“The hostage situation Dameron caused speaks otherwise.” Holdo’s voice held the joy see felt for Poe. “You need to work on your confidence, Corporal Namit. You truly deserve this praise.”

Evan gave a small smile. Her words were so genuine and filled him with earned pride. Why was it
again that Poe hated this woman?

“Thank you, Vice Admiral,” Evan bowed his head again. “I hope to contribute positively to the Resistance in the future.”

“I hope you do too,” Holdo said. “In fact, after reading your file, I think I might come to expect it.”

“Ma’am?”

“You did well in the Battle of Valra, you’ve become a top-notch sniper, then there was the Skirmish on Christophis, the Battle of Dathomir, the Ryloth Mission, Operation Amidala, and that make-shift refugee camp you organized during the Occupation of Sullust. You have quite the colourful career.”

Evan shrugged, “I go where I’m sent.”

“And I’ll be keeping an eye on where you’re sent next. Which will be a lot more places I would bet after this.”

Holdo signalled to somebody that Evan hadn’t noticed was waiting in the doorway. If he recalled correctly the woman’s name was Commander Larma D’Acy, Holdo’s second-in-command.

Evan’s eyes widened when D’Acy presented Holdo with a familiar looking box. It was designed to have a lid like a ring box, but the box was far too large to hold any jewelry

“I must apologize for addressing you improperly, Medic Tharel.” Holdo lifted the lid to reveal a shiny new silver, white, and red insignia with the symbol of a straight line. “Because as of this moment, you’re not a Corporal… You’re Captain Geno Namit.”

Evan didn’t know what to say, “Are you- Are you serious?”

“Why waste all our time with promoting you to Sergeant or Cadet? You deserve the rank of Captain.” Holdo took the liberty of pinning the insignia on Evan herself, “You have a wonderful future ahead of you, Captain. Don’t let people like Poe Dameron steer you off-course. Keep to your values, and your path will remain true. Congratulations, Captain Namit, and May the Force Be With You.”

He managed to stay perfectly composed as he shared a salute with D’Acy and Holdo, but once the women were gone, he was off like a shot.

“Paige! Mom! Aletha! Meredyth! Anyone! I” he raced around the Medical Bay, looking for a friend. “Why is everyone always busy when I have good news?”

Rey was quite surprised to find that the Valrians still stayed up when the two moons of Jakku shone in the sky. Usually when darkness fell, you had to seek shelter or face the hostile night wildlife and the freezing air of the desert at night. But with the fires all lit the villagers stayed warm, and the amount of noise and activity they made kept even the steelpeckers away.

Well, except the ones roasting on the spits over the fire. They weren’t supposed to talk about it due to the Valrians banishing the doctor, but Gweneth told Rey in a whisper that Aletha used to be their main supplier of steelpecker meat. Rey knew that Aletha hunted the birds as a bit of extra income, but she had no idea that Aletha used Quom to sell them to the Sacred Villages.
She was also starting to realize that Quom wasn’t actually lying when he boasted of doing business with every Sacred Village. There were only three villages Rey hadn’t been to, and in the ones she had, everyone knew Quom. Apparently, Quom Tinadar was the closest Jakku had to a celebrity.

That was a very sad reflection on Jakku.

The Valrians ate all their meals together. Communal meals were served around a roaring fire, everyone in specially selected seat based on their societal rank. As village leaders, Imogen and Cadman sat at the top the of circle, situated in front of the cooking hut. Their spouses, Levi and Una oversaw serving the food but would sit next to them when the food was all set out.

Since Rey had volunteered to be the proxy of Ipgyn – as well as being guest, who always had the highest seat of honour – she was seated next to Imogen. Murtagh was next to Cadman, with Dierdre next to her husband. Rey may have been the victor of the duel, but Murtagh still had honoured the Gods.

Next to Rey was Gweneth with Micah at her side holding baby Kezia. New parents were always seated as high as possible (but always below a guest and the head of household) so they may get the most food. They needed the strength to care for their child, and sometimes when the food were passed to the last person, the bowl would be empty.

Teng had to face that trial, because as he was an Elda – a man not practicing or connected to the faith – he was served last. Even if a Valrian had an Elra or Elda as their guest, they would always be served last. Since Teng had shone an active interest in learning about Valra, he had been dubbed a Xern – a male not born into the faith, but interested in the faith. Xerns and their female counterpart, Xera were always served before an Elra or Elda, but since there were none to be found, Teng was still last.

“So how does this serving thing go?” Rey asked as she passed a dish of Honey-glazed Steelpecker to Gweneth. “I get the whole head of household/village/whatever thing, then guest, new parents, and then traditional order with people like Teng last, but what is traditional order?”

“Okay, it goes like this,” Gweneth answered. “Meals are dished out from women to men, oldest to youngest, but you don’t just go straight all the women first, you follow a line to completion first. So you would go mother and father, then their daughter, her son, and then his son.”

“Got it.”

“Then you go back up to the son of that first father and mother. Next served is his second born who is a daughter, his fourth born who is a daughter, his first born who is a son, and his third born who is a son. Make sense?”

“Uh… sure.”

“You want a diagram?”

“Yes, please.”

“Alright, I’ll write a number next to each person to describe their generation,” Gweneth said as she started to draw into the sand. “M means Mother, F is Father, D is Daughter, S is Son. Brackets with lower cases are for birth order of the four siblings.”

Rey got it when Gweneth drew it out.

\[
M – 1, F – 1
\]
“If I have this right, then that means even if you weren’t a new mother you would still be in the spot you are because you’re Imogen’s daughter?” Rey asked.

“Now you’ve got it,” Gweneth smiled.

“I guess I do,” Rey nodded, grabbing a dish of imported nuna jerky strips. She grabbed about five and put them on her plate before passing the dish to Gweneth, “Just don’t ask me to host a dinner any time soon.”

“Fair, but speaking of dining customs,” Gweneth immediately handed the jerky to Micah and then took three strips off Rey’s plate, placing them on her own. “Two things to keep in mind. You must forfeit as much as your food as possible to someone who needs it more. Since I have a child, you should have taken less. Second, you must finish all the food you take. You may pass on whatever you’re offered, but if you accept it, you must finish it.”

“Thanks,” Rey redden slightly. “My dad told me that, but I forgot.”

“It’s okay. We’re not going to get mad because you don’t have all this memorized. Besides, it’s a Festival. This dinner is going to have a lot of dishes.”

Rey frowned as she was passed a plate of Chadian and Coriander Ripper-Raptor, “Valrians aren’t big on vegetarianism, are they?”

“Not really,” Gweneth answered. “But that’s not why you don’t see any vegetables yet. Valrians firmly believe that you eat your meat before your bread – or any other dish – because an animal died so you can live, and you should make sure that life is being honoured. An animal should have its bones completely picked clean.”

“Well, I’m not going to argue with that. This all looks so much better than veg-meat and polystarch.”

And indeed it was some much better than veg-meat and polystarch. Rey was surprised she didn’t throw up with how much food she ate.

There was Fig-stuffed Bloggin, followed by tray of boiled and peppered bloggin eggs.

There was a heaping plate of pickled gnaw-jaws (a large shelled bug with too many legs for Rey’s liking that used their scissor-like mandibles on unsuspecting victims) that Rey was quick to pass over. She wasn’t even slightly surprised to learn that those were Quom’s favorite dish on his visits.

Next came cheese made from happabore milk. …Rey didn’t know you could milk a happabore, and did not want to know how.

Finally came the bread, a square, bright orange loaf filled with nuts called Ipipe Bread. Rey was surprised that the Valrians didn’t slice the bread but tore off chunks with their hands.

Then came the vegetables: a mix of dried peas and lentils. Steamed vaporator mushrooms. Leeks prepared in about seventeen different ways.

For some reason the piles of leeks made Rey think of soup and her mother… no wait. Wrong person, Rey corrected her mind. It was Rogue One who liked the roast leek soup; Rey had learned that from Aletha’s care shipment. Right, Rogue One, not her mother. Rogue One not Felicity Rhiaon.
Why would she mix up those two?

But most curious of all was the bowl of Tuanulberries that went completely untouched.

“Is something wrong with them?” Rey dared to ask Imogen.

She looked very uncomfortable with the query, “It is not the berries themselves but rather the origin of the plant.”

“What’s wrong with Tuanul?” Rey knew the berry was named after the Jakku Sacred Village because that was the only place they grew. She had never been to Tuanul, her father always refusing to let her go anywhere near it. Once a villager from Tuanul had come into Niima Outpost, and her father forced Rey to go home rather than get anywhere near the woman.

Imogen took a breath, “Tuanul… has a conflicting religious view from us.”

Rey scowled, “Don’t all the villages?”

“Yes, but… that religion is a bit different. Tuanul is a branch of the Church of the Force, and they worship the Jedi and their so-called powers.”

Wait, what? There was Sacred Village about the Force? No wonder her Dad kept her away from Tuanul… Maybe she should go hang out in Tuanul after Synael.

“I… I didn’t know that,” Rey stuttered out. Then she saw the scowl on Imogen’s face, “Is there something… Valra doesn’t like about the Force?”

“The Jedi,” Imogen said shortly. “There is room in this world for people to believe in other Gods and powers, but the Jedi have insulted us. Araeya, Valra always has open arms for people to join us… but if you insult us, the punishment is swift and terrible.”

Yeah, Rey had gathered that considering her father’s death sentence.

“What’s wrong with the Jedi?” Rey dared to ask.

“You know of Luke Skywalker and his sister?”

“Uh huh.”

“That’s what’s wrong with the Jedi.”

“… Yeah, I’m going to need a bit more to go on,” Rey said.

Imogen sighed, “The Skywalker family has been historically insulting to Valra. Leia Organa caused a bombing that killed hundreds specifically to make a martyr for the Rebellion. Han Solo personally insulted the Governor of the Andeleans – a famous mountain ridge on Valra and one of the most powerful regions on the planet – in a way that almost caused Valra to go war with the New Republic. Luke Skywalker murdered his Valrian father-in-law, and then sent his Valrian wife to die in his place. Solo’s son brutally tortured his Valrian aunt and mocked our funeral rites when she died from that torture. The Skywalker Family hasn’t just broken the Five Pillars of Virtue, but smashed them into pieces.”

Based on the stories she had heard about the Skywalkers, Rey wasn’t sure how many of Imogen’s claims were true. By the time tales reached Jakku, they were often quite warped. The Han Solo thing sounded right on the money, though.
“And because of all that, Valrians hate the Jedi?” Rey asked.

“I won’t lie to you, Araeya,” Imogen said, “if a Skywalker were to step foot on Valra, they would probably by lynched. Oh, that’s another custom for you to learn about. The preferred way of execution in Valrian culture is a public lynching, that way the public is involved and it’s there for everyone to see.”

Rey was starting to understand why her father had kept her away from Synael.

Also explained a few things about her mother.

Rey shook her head and immediately passed the next dish directly to Gweneth, her appetite suddenly gone. Wow, if they hated Dad for dating a widow while being a widower, what would they do if they knew he was a Jedi?

…What if they figured out she was?

No, the world was full of people who stood intolerant of other’s beliefs. Rey was a Jedi (kind of) and her father taught her that the main purpose of being a Jedi wasn’t to play with lightsabers, it was bringing harmony to people like Valrians and Jedi. It must work considering she was the literal product of a Valrian and Jedi.

Plus Luke Skywalker had married a Valrian. They couldn’t have been that hostile to Jedi from the beginning. That was actually cool about Skywalker and his wife. Maybe her parents got along with Luke Skywalker and Rogue One.

Besides, Rey felt safe. If there was one thing both Luke and Imogen had made clear, it was that Valrians protected their own and would rather die than harm a guest. This visit to Synael might be her only chance to ever experience her mother’s culture, and other than this accidental semi death threat (it wasn’t like she was part of the Skywalker family,) Rey had very much enjoyed this visit.

No, she was strong, smart, and brave. She was Rey Rhiaon Something That Was Probably The Name Kene But Let’s Go With Erso Right Now. She would be the one to bring harmony between the Jedi and Valra.

…But like five years from now when she was an actual Jedi. There was a First Order to deal with before mending the bridge between the Jedi and Valra. For now, she would just learn as much as she could about Valra and stop thinking about them probably wanting to murder her if they knew the truth.

“Here,” Imogen passed her a wooden cup filled with a golden mixture. A tray full of them were passed around the villagers’ fireside circle. “Drink.”

“What is it?” Rey accepted it and gave a sniff.

“It’s called Crekia. It’s a mixture of honey and fig juice that we drink during toasts.”

“Is it alcoholic? Because I’m only seventeen. I’m not sure if I’m allowed to get drunk yet.”

“No, Crekia has no alcohol in it.”

Gweneth leaned over with a grin, “Wait until we burst out the Muja Brew on Night Three. Micah and I are determined to get at least five glasses in each you and your boyfriend.”

Rey laughed at Gweneth as they watched Imogen rise to her feet in harmony with Cadman.
“Friends,” Imogen announced to the group, clutching her glass of Crekia. “Tonight we celebrate the first day of the Solstice Festival. Right now on the planet we call home, it is almost the night of the winter solstice. As per tradition, tonight we toast those we have the honour of calling guests. Araeya, Toryn, please stand.”

Exchanging a look, neither of the teen expected the command and awkwardly rose to their feet. Every eye turned to them and the villagers lifted their glasses to Rey and Teng.

“Thank you for expressing such an interest in our culture,” Cadman raised his own glass. “And thank you for gracing us with the honour of hosting you. The two of you are always welcome at our hearth.”

Teng frowned and mouthed to Rey “What’s a hearth?”

She shrugged.

“Araeya and Toryn,” Imogen said, “although the toast is to the both of you, we kindly ask you join in on the recitation of the blessing.”

“Oh, uh,” Rey hadn’t expected to be put on the spot. “What’s the blessing?”

Cadman smiled, “Any time you toast, you say the word Latoha. It means good luck, good health, good blessings, may you prosper, that sort of thing. Will you led us?”

Teng looked at Rey to signal Your move.

She smiled and raised her glass, “Latoha.”

Teng raised his glass, “Latoha.”

“To Itar! To Light, to Men, to War, and to Leadership!” Cadman boomed to the group.

“To Ipgyn! To Dark, to Women, to Peace, and to Service!” Imogen had said the words so many times they were music on her tongue.

“To Djun! To Sky, to Water, to Desert, and to Language!”

“To Ethys! To Earth, to Fire, to Children, and to Art!”

“To Imar! To Death, to Love, to Strength, and to Isolation!”

“To Koena! To Life, to Pain, to Wisdom, and to Travel!”

“Latoha!” the villagers cheered, a sea of smiling and welcoming faces.

There was laughter and clinking as the villagers toasted, drank, and revelled in the festivities, ready to move on to the next part where Imogen would tell the first part of the story of the Gods.

And as they toasted, Rey couldn’t get her mind off the Valrians’ distaste for the Jedi and what the villagers would think about her if they knew the truth.

Somehow a literal drink of honey went down rougher than polystarch and veg-meat.
The Tale of the Taming of Valra

As traditionally told in three parts on each night of the Solstice Festival, Valrians recount the tale of how six good spirits met, married, and made Gods of themselves.

FIRST NIGHT

Once the world was cold and dark and filled with spirits. These were not pure souls, some were mischievous, some reckless, but worst of all, some were downright evil.

The world was divided into three parts: the South with its mountain ranges, the North which was covered in forest, and the Centre that was an expansive grassland. And in each part there lived a brother and a sister, the only truly good and powerful spirits of the world.

Djun and Koena lived in the North filled with light and life. Itar and Ethys were in the Centre caring for the crops and innocent animals during the wars of the spirits. Imar and Ipgyn lived in the dreaded South, dark and dreary from the cold and misty mountains.

Things became desperate in the South, the most evil of the spirits hiding in the mountain caverns. For years Imar fought with his sister, Ipgyn begging her to come explore the world with him to find others like them and defeat the evil of the world. Ipgyn refused; her duty was caring for the innocents of their home. The Gods and Goddesses were not the only good spirits, but they were the most powerful ones. Ipgyn believed she could not walk away from the good spirits of the South who lived under the torment of the most evil of spirits.

One day, the evil became too much for Imar, and when his sister slept, he set out North to find someone to join his quest for peace.

In the North, things were better, their dark spirits being of the mischievous nature, more nuisance than menace. They would hide in the trees and play tricks on travelers and those that made the forest their home. Their hunger was ravenous, stealing and consuming anything they desired.

And then the disaster: a band of mischievous Imp spirits went too far with their merriment and pranks. A fire claimed half of the forest of the North and while the good spirits tried to repair the ashes, the little Imps turned ash to sand and created a vast desert.

Djun became angry, and with the other good spirits rallying behind him, he pursued the spirits that destroyed their land and found their justice. When the Imps refused to undo the harm they caused, Djun banished them from the North. The punished refused to comply, but Djun’s followers threatened them with death if they did not go. Djun objected to the threats, but the Imps cowered to it and fled. However, they chose to lay the blame of their banishment on Djun and stole his sister away with them.

Koena, however, was not a weak woman. She was wise and she was clever. Koena allowed the Imps to take her with them to the Centre. She played dumb and weak, waiting for her chance to break free.

On their journey the Imps continued with their hunger, taking everything they wanted. When it became clear to Koena what they craved was her, she tried them, feeding them a cordial of enchanted Aabane root. When the Imps drank it, their lustful intentions dissipated and found the thought of mating with Koena repulsive.

Years later, the Gods would honour the simple roots by blessing them with their anti-impregnation properties. They could not make the power Koena gave them during her kidnapping permanent, but
they could make it so other victims could have a way to protect themselves from carrying the child of their attacker.

While Koena lay in wait with the Imps, Imar had reached the Centre and began recruiting help. All the good spirits were too afraid to stand up to the ones of evil, the terrifying stories of the South having reached their ears years ago. None wished to join the crusade except for one, the proud and strong Itar.

Instantly falling into a bond of friendship almost that of brothers, Itar and Imar fought against evil spirits for the length of a season. Itar brought Imar into his home and introduced him to his sister, Ethys, a beautiful and kind spirit. She spent her life protecting the young spirits, the children who had not yet shown their nature.

Ethys and Imar became the closest of friends… though Itar worried their relationship may turn to something more.

One day, Ethys was tending to a wounded animal when a group of mischievous Imps came upon her. Itar was off fighting a rather powerful spirit of evil, so Ethys was alone and vulnerable.

However, Imar was returning to the little cottage the three shared, having been out scouting for more followers, when he heard her screams. Instantly, Imar rushed into action to save his friend, but when he found her, he was surprised to find another good spirit fighting the Imps.

Koena had finally made her move and attacked the Imps, freeing Ethys from her bindings. Together the two female spirits fought against the Imps, but Ethys was not a warrior, hence why Imar and Itar didn’t bring her along to their battles. She was easily overwhelmed, but that was when Imar found them.

Koena didn’t question the new arrival, only smiled when she saw him protecting Ethys. She called out to Imar, instructing him when the Imps made a move he didn’t perceive. Soon enough Imar started shouting out the same to Koena, and in no time at all they had become a team.

They fought and fought and fought and fought. The Imps pushed them back and back and back and back. Their backs hit and their breath stopped.

“You okay?” Koena asked.

“Fine,” Imar replied. “You?”

“Could be better,” Koena gave a wiry smile. “I’m Koena.”

“Imar.”

“Nice to meet you. Now if you wouldn’t mind, how about we-”

“Show these Imps who’s boss?”

“You read my mind.”

And together they unleashed their mighty powers and destroyed the Imps.

When the dust settled, and they stood there panting in the aftermath, Imar and Koena truly looked upon each other for the first time. And they instantly fell madly in love.
As Luke laid in his cot, staring up at the roof of the walker, he didn’t have to wonder what Rey and Teng were doing in Synael. It was the first night of the Solstice Festival. They would be with the other Valrians, cleaning off and decorating the graves of the dead with flowers. According to Quom, the Valrians would get Aabane flowers from Valra shipped in for that purpose, though Luke suspected it was also to make some badly needed birth control.

He would remember how Felicity would get at this time of year. She wasn’t the most pious person, but Felicity did love the Solstice Festival. Luke didn’t know how many of those she dragged him-

Ten.

It was always only ten. Ben didn’t let that number ever be higher. Ten festivals, ten years, ten times less than Luke and Felicity deserved together.

Luke sighed. How could it have been twelve years since he last held his wife… Held her in his arms and lied about being together again. If he had known that was the last time he would hold her, he never would have let her go.

He reached for the Holo on his bedside storage crate and gazed at the picture of his beloved wife.

His dreams about Felicity had grown in number drastically. There was rarely a night that Luke didn’t dream of her. He wondered if Lando had the same dreams about Alyla and that was the arrangement she hinted at. The only difference is that Lando’s dreams of Alyla were real, his wasn’t. No matter how right it felt, how perfect every detail was, that wasn’t his wife. Felicity Rhiaon was gone.

Still he yearned for her. Yearned in many ways. And his dreams would always leave him unsatisfied. Whenever he was about to touch her in the ways he burned for, without fail that would be the exact moment he woke up.

Ok, yes, maybe it was a bit shallow, but as much as he missed her emotionally and mentally… God he missed her physically. He missed the touch of her, the taste of her, the feel of her skin against his body.

It had been twelve years he had last had her; hell, it had been three years since Aletha. Luke Skywalker had a thirst that wasn’t because he lived in a desert.

Luke set the Holo down and tried to settle to sleep. He wanted to quickly fall to sleep and find her there in his dreams. Luke wanted to take her into his arms and cross that bridge he throbbed for.

Oh, she would want it. She would want him so bad. He knew how made going without his touch for a month made her, twelve years would leave her as nothing more than a writhing heap of lust.

She would want his lips: rough and chapped tasting every inch of her body. She would want the musty scent of his sweat on her trembling skin as he reclaimed the figure that belonged to him. She would want that fascinating contradictory duet of cold metal and warm flesh as his hands caressed her most erotic areas. Most of all she would want that carnal act that had led to the existence of their daughter. She would want-

No, she wouldn’t.

Sighing, Luke pushed back the covers and summoned his cloak. He gave a final glance back at the Holo and knew he was doing the right thing. If Felicity were alive here and now with him, he knew what she would want to do on the First Night of the Solstice Festival.

And even though it was the dark of night, Luke Skywalker went out and observed the one tradition
of Valra his wife never missed. He gathered what small blooms of flowers he could find poking out of the sand and went to the small graveyard behind the walker. He carefully cleaned off every one of the graves (even Antar’s), adorned them with his flowers, and whispered a prayer to the Valrian Gods, thanking them for blessing him with the chance to be a part of the life of each interred in the sand.

Then he knelt at the grave of his wife and wept.

Sometimes I look into the screened eyes of those Stormtrooper masks and wonder what’s going on inside. Is there a real person behind that mask? Is there sympathy? Regret? Courage?

Is there a hero inside? Someone to change the galaxy and bring Light to the world? Sometimes I look into the screened eyes of those Stormtrooper masks and desperately want to ask… If given the chance, would you mean something to me?

Maybe someday one of them will tell me.

— Lando Calrissian and the Emperor of Nowhere, Chapter XIV

They felt the eyes on them as they solemnly marched to their bunks. Marks and Finn did their best to keep their heads held high as they were led to their beds by Captain Sigma and Captain Roan. Whispers came from every which way, the topic obvious: two teams of Stormtroopers had gone to Nixrye, but only half of the eight were returning.

When they reached the four sets of bunks that belonged to the FN and MK squadrons, Marks and Finn stood in front of their beds, arms behind their perfectly straight backs waiting for the signal.

They stood across from each other, the pair of them having the bottom bunks directly across from each other. It was how they first met. The barracks of the First Order were several dozen narrow strips of corridors, each separated by a thin wood wall with thirty bunk beds lining each wall. You’d get most familiar with those sixty Stormtroopers of your corridor, and with the two side by side bunk beds of the FN squad on the corridor’s south wall across from the two MK bunk beds on the north wall, FN-2187 and MK-6093 had done just that.

It seemed like every Stormtrooper in the corridor watched as Captains Sigma and Roan stripped the personal effects and sheets from the bunks of the fallen soldiers.

Captain Phasma typically was the one to do this, but for multiple teams they would bring on more Captains. Even then it should have just been Phasma and Sigma, but Roan had stepped in because Phasma was in the infirmary with Nines and Zeroes.

The pair were spending the night due to a couple unforeseen – but not life-threatening – complications with their injuries. They’d be fine by morning.

Marks and Finn could do nothing but watch as their friend’s items were thrown carelessly to the floor. The soldiers couldn’t even let a facial muscle twitch in pain. It was a demonstration of how worthless the First Order viewed dead soldiers. A dead Stormtrooper on a successful mission was a hero… a dead Stormtrooper on a failed mission was a disgrace.
Finn struggled not to react as he watched Sigma empty his bed mate’s space. It was a harsh reminder that Slip, his friend, was truly dead.

Damn Crimson Dawn and the destruction they caused! At least Finn could spend the rest of his life serving with the First Order to avenge his friend and bring order to the Galaxy.

But as much as Finn wanted to be upset over such a vivid reminder of Slip’s death, he recognized it was Marks who had it the hardest. Finn had lost one friend… Mark had to stand there as the last survivor of his team.

What would happen to Marks now? A team needed four members. Would they assign Marks to a team that was down a member? Would they create a brand-new team out of other Stormtroopers who had lost their brothers and sisters in arms?

Finn knew the most likely path was that since the MK squad was down to one member, the FN squad was missing one, and the teams had worked together in the past, that Marks would be assigned to the FN squad.

But why did Finn have the feeling that wasn’t what was going to happen?

“Pick!” Captain Roan ordered Marks and Finn.

Finn glanced down at the floor covered the possessions of Tone, Duck, Weevil, and Slip.

As a show of generosity Stormtroopers were allowed to keep a single possession of their fallen comrade. However, while expected to select something, it was severely frowned upon to show much regard for the item. Displaying it openly was a constant reminder of their fallen brother, and you weren’t supposed to bring glory to a disgrace.

That was the reason Marks was careful to pick Tone’s deck of Sabacc cards, which were for the high stakes variant of the game called Jhabacc. Ever his father’s son, Marks collected decks of Sabacc cards, intending to learn all the variants his father had. At over 80 variants, it was no easy feat, especially since he lived in the First Order where Sabacc wasn’t played much among the troops.

Finn simply chose Slip’s weatherproof underboots. He could always keep them on, and no one would know. Then at least he could say that in all his adventures, Slip was with him literally every step of the way.

Items selected, Marks and Finn went back to stand at attention and watch the possessions be cleared from the floor. Though it was never said aloud, everyone knew all those prized possessions were about to be dumped in the trash compactor.

When they were finished, Captains Roan and Sigma didn’t say anything to the Stormtroopers. They just took the bags of stuff and left.

For a moment, no one said anything; then came the loud buzzing of conversations and speculations. Marks and Finn weren’t thrilled by the gossip around them, but they were just happy to collapse onto their bunks.

“Well, that was…” Finn sighed. “Interesting.”

“I don’t care what trouble this will get me in, I’m saying it.” Marks declared, “I’m getting really sick of Kylo Ren’s love life. Can’t they just grow him a kid in a test tube?”

“Would that even work?” Finn frowned.
“Worked on me,” Marks shrugged.

Stormtroopers weren’t exactly given lessons on the practice of bioengineering, fertility, and in vitro fertilization. He only was educated on the process after he asked his superiors when he was ten why a ghost woman had randomly appeared to him and claimed to be his mother.

That had been a very awkward conversation between Kylo Ren and Marks. At least he came to understand why he seemed to have a nickname from birth.

MK-6093… Aka Marcus Kene experimental product of subject 60 – Alyla Kene – and subject 93 – Lando Calrissian – who in initial compatibility calculations between subjects had been the combination with the highest Marks in the desired attributes of a Stormtrooper.

But he preferred the name “Marks” the First Order had given him to remind everyone of what he was: a genetic experiment to make a model Force Sensitive Stormtrooper obedient to their every whim.

Yet Marks didn’t carry the name for that reason, he did it to honor his mother whose body was riddled with marks. He did it to honor his father who had many black marks on his record, and he did it to remind everyone that no matter what the computers had predicted, Marks was still in control.

His mother was a slave and his father a scoundrel, but Marks refused to be either. He preferred to be a turncoat like his father, and work to take down a system of oppression like his mother had done on Zygerria all those years ago.

The First Order made a mistake when they decided to experiment with cloning and bioengineering. They were idiots to make a son of Alyla Kene and Lando Calrissian without the consent or even knowledge of the parents, and Marks would make them regret that decision.

Marks just needed a chance… and maybe with this Rose Tico, he finally had a way.

He smiled as he remembered the gloves stashed in his small satchel. Marks still had to unpack, but he wanted to wait until the alarm sounded and the rest of the Stormtroopers had gone to training. Thankfully, he and Finn had been excused from exercises that day to rest from their ordeal.

Sure enough, a few moments later a loud blaring filled the room. It was followed by the clattering of uniforms and pounding of boots as fifty-two Stormtroopers suited up into armor and filed out of the dorm.

When the last few soldiers made their way into the hall, Marks looked over at Finn. He frowned when he saw Finn clutching his bowed head, sweat gathering on his forehead.

“Looking a little pale there, Two-One,” Marks said. “You okay?”

“Yeah, I’m fine,” Finn groaned. “But, uh… you think you could stop calling me Two-One?”

“What do you want me to call you?”

“How about Finn?”

Marks raised an eyebrow but didn’t press the point, “Okay, Finn. Is it time to take your medicine?”

“Yeah. I think so,” Finn nodded.

“Well, with the mess everything is right now with our schedules, if they send someone to get you,
they’re going to send it to the training room.”

“Sounds about right.” Finn took a deep breath and shakily rose to his feet.

Marks rose up with him and grabbed Finn’s shoulder to steady him, “You gonna be okay? Do you want me to walk you there?”

“I’ll be fine. You stay here and get some rest.”

“Alright, but if they find you facedown in a hallway, I’m not answering to Phasma or Sasa.”

“Marks, I just survived a bombing. A little walk to the training room isn’t going to kill me.”

“I’ll make sure to put that quote on your grave.”

Finn laughed and just patted his shoulder.

Marks smiled, watching his friend go. When Finn disappeared, he gave a giant breath of relief. As much as he enjoyed the company of FN-2187, there were times he just needed a break for himself. Now Marks could smile. Now Marks could breathe.

He was finally alone.

…Except for the woman sitting on his bed.

“Well, look who’s back from the dead,” Marks grinned.

Alyla Kene laughed as her son knelt down in front of her, and she pulled him into a tight embrace.

“I was so worried about you,” Alyla whispered as she held him tight.

“I’m okay, Mom,” Marks gave a chuckle that had come straight from Lando Calrissian. “I promise.”

“And don’t you promise,” Alyla pulled back, a scowl on her face as her eyes moved over his wounded form. “Look at you! You’re hurt!”

“Mom, please,” Marks groaned as she started fussed over his bandaged arm. “Nothing happened.”

“Nothing happened? Marcus Kene-Calrissian, you are missing a piece of your cheek,” she stroked a thumb over the clotted wound.

Marks couldn’t help but think that Rose Tico hadn’t minded.

“And look at your arm. This bandage needs to be changed.” The good – but extremely weird – part of being corporeal was that Alyla was able to start unwrapping her son’s bandages. “Oh Darling, look at this. This is going to scar really badly. Why wouldn’t you take care of yourself?

“Alright, fine,” Marks just sighed in defeat and grabbed the first aid kit stashed under his bunk – standard issue supplies for each bed set. “But honestly, are you of all people going to chastise me for having scars? I think your skin is just one big scar.”

“Okay, cut that out. While we had our moments, neither I nor your father are particularly sassy, so I don’t know where you got that attitude.”

“Gift from Uncle Gavyn?” Marks grinned.
“Well, wipe that smirk off your face before I send you to meet him.”

“No, you won’t. Come on, Mom, you’re not exactly intimidating. Getting threatened by you is like getting threatened by a chipmunk. I’m sure they could mess you up something fierce, but you don’t exactly feel terror on first glance.”

The glare she gave him showed Marks exactly how Alyla Kene had managed to keep Lando Calrissian in line for nearly ten years.

“Sorry, Mom,” Marks dropped his head.

“Apology accepted,” Alyla said. “Now hold still as I change your bandages.”

“So, we’re going to sit here in awkward silence then?”

“Of course not. You could tell me all about your trip to Nixrye.”

Marks shifted awkwardly as he took a seat on the bed next to her, “Oh, I don’t think that’s interesting. Why don’t you tell me what you were up to? Solo was annoyed that you weren’t around. Think he really needed you too. He’s going through some very emotional stuff.”

Alyla narrowed her eyes, “You have that look on your face that you’re hiding something from me.”

“I know, I got that look from you, and it’s on your face right now. Spill it, Mom. Where were you?” Marks paused. “Oh God, you were with Skywalker weren’t you? Mom, I told you to stop going to him. It’s too dangerous. Solo might find out where he is and go after him. No one knows where Ahch-to is, and it needs to stay that way.”

“Marcus, I know it does. Now you leave that to me.”

“What are you hiding from me, Mom? Did something happen with Skywalker?”

Alyla let out a puff of air, “Alright, I’ll confess. I… I told him about you.”

Marks’ eyes bugged out, “What?”

“I told him about you. You, how you came to be, that Lando is your father.”

“Why would you do that?”

“To protect you. To ensure that if you get into a bad situation, you can call for help.”

“Call for help?”

“Luke will protect you. If you need help, you can go to him and he will keep you safe.”

Marks took a deep breath as she knotted the new bandage, “Mom, listen-”

“I don’t need to listen!” Alyla snapped. “I know what you’re going to say. You want to bring the First Order down from the inside. I know it, and I understand. I respect that you’re a grown man capable of making that choice… but is it so much for me to want you to be safe? To be with people who will care for you and protect you. To be home?”

“I don’t have a home!” Marks snapped. “Not one beyond this bunk.”

Alyla’s eyes softened, and with a weak smile on her face, she clasped her son’s hand.
“You have a home,” she said gently. “Your home is with your father… I know what it’s like to grow up the way you did. Danger, just property to be owned… I don’t want that for you. I want you to have a home and family… Like the one we should have given you.”

Marks fought back his tears, “It’s not your fault. You didn’t know I even existed.”

“But I did. For years I dreamt of you, not knowing the visions were real. I dreamt of a little boy who looked half like me, half like Lando, but had my brother’s bulk, and Fayola Calrissian’s cheekbones.”

He couldn’t help his smile as he thought of Rose again. His smile made his mother’s grow stronger.

Alyla stroked said cheekbone, “I wonder if she’s still around. She would be so happy to finally have a grandson.”

“Did she like you?” Marks had never really asked about his grandmother.

“Oh, she loved me,” Alyla chuckled. “Told me that if Lando was going to finally settle down with a woman, he certainly picked the best of the best.”

“The Galaxy’s most beautiful woman and a Jedi to boot,” Marks quoted a passage from *Lando Calrissian and the Death of the Morning Glory*. The book hadn’t gone too far into Fayola Calrissian’s relationship with Alyla, but Fayola did make her cameos here and there in the series.

Alyla shook her head, “I wish people would stop calling me that. I’m not the Galaxy’s most beautiful woman, I’m not Goddesslike… I just… I don’t want to be defined by my looks. I was punished enough in life for having them. If I could do life over again, I would beg the Force to make me less beautiful. Maybe I would then have less pain.”

Marks cupped her cheek, “Your beauty has never truly been on the outside. It’s the beauty within, radiating out of you – your kindness, courage, forgiveness, optimism, and endlessly loving heart – that shows to the world and makes you so beautiful. I would never want you to trade away that amazing gift.”

“Alright, settle down, you charmer,” Alyla laughed and swatted his hand away. “Man, you are really your father’s son when you want to be.”

“Maybe a little,” Marks smirked, thinking about his departure with Rose.

A smile crept across Alyla’s face, “What’s with the look?”

“Look?” Marks played dumb. “What look? I don’t have a look.”

“Yes, you do, and it’s the same look of your father’s I know all too well.”

His face fell as he suddenly remembered seeing Lando Calrissian in the casino.

Alyla caught the shift in an instant, “What’s wrong?”

“Nothing.” Marks grabbed his satchel, “Look, I’ve got to unpack.”

Marks hated the silence that ensued. There’s was little more in life he hated than when his mother just sat there silently, her face pleasant and emotionless as she waited for him to crack and confess. The stubbornness of his Calrissian blood burned him as he roughly dumped his satchel on his bed and shoved the contents into the proper spots.
All the bunks had a small shelf at and head of the bed, and it wasn’t unusual to see some propaganda
or Resistance wanted posters plastered on a soldier’s wall space. While soldiers like Finn kept their
room barren of personal touch, Marks probably had the most extensive collection. Sure, not to the
point he would get in trouble, but it did tend to raise an eyebrow or two.

On his wall was Lando Calrissian’s wanted poster, and next to it was the former poster for Alyla
Kene that was now headed with the bright red letters TARGET ELIMINATED. When questioned
on the posters, Marks would tell people that Calrissian was a target often forgotten and he would
ensure everyone in his corridor knew the scoundrel’s face. When asked about Alyla, he would
simply claim it was to gloat about the destruction of the New Jedi Order and praise Kylo Ren for his
first kill.

Of course, Kylo Ren and Captain Phasma would always glower at it when they visited his bunk. It
annoyed the hell out of Kylo, but he couldn’t get Marks to take them down without causing the kind
of scene and questions he didn’t want Stormtroopers asking.

Didn’t stop Kylo from threatening to tear it down whenever he got mad at Marks.

On his shelf were twenty-seven Sabacc decks, all different variants of the game he was teaching
himself. Tone used to play the games with him, but now… Now he would need to find another
partner.

He also had a HoloPlayer to view propaganda HoloVids and HoloNovels at his leisure. Of course,
they were really for what he kept stashed in his pillowcase: a set of headphones and the eight
contraband HoloNovels. Marks owned copies of *Lando Calrissian and the Death of the Morning
Glory* and *Lando Calrissian and the Heart of a Jedi*. Marks also owed the six HoloNovels of the
second series Lando Calrissian wrote: the *Morning Glory* series.

After the release of *Lando Calrissian and the Heart of a Jedi*, Lando’s fans had fallen in love with
Alyla Kene and demanded more stories about the two. While the subsequent *Calrissian Chronicles*
had many stories about Alyla, the fans wanted more. They wanted a happier story for Lando and
Alyla, unaware that the bittersweet story would one day turn into a tragedy.

They discussed it for years, and eventually Alyla agreed to let Lando write an alternate history story
where instead of Alyla and Gavyn getting sent to the Fighting Pits, they were groomed to be married
off as a concubine and second husband. Lando, running a con job, accidentally found himself in a
position where he was given eighteen-year-old Alyla as a bride. They made an agreement that Lando
would free Alyla from slavery if she helped him finish the job, he signed the paperwork, they got a
ship, and adventure ensued. They fell in love over the course of the story, and when the job was
over, Alyla agreed to stay with Lando and have more adventures.

*Alyla Kene and the Bride Price Gambit* was universally adored… except by Gavyn who wasn’t
thrilled that his fictional counterpart got sold off into marriage in the beginning of the story, and the
novel ended with merely the promise that Lando and Alyla were going to go find Gavyn as their
next adventure. A year later, Lando released *Alyla Kene and the Quest for the Lost Twin*, where they
found Gavyn, who had been married off to Zena, and… well long story short, the book ended with
Zena and Gavyn in love and going off to join the Rebellion while Alyla remained with Lando.

The series was going well, the third book *Alyla Kene and the Toydarian Assassin* topped the
bestseller’s list for eight months straight, even beating the *Calrissian Chronicles* installment, *Lando
Calrissian and the Phantoms of Dread*.

And then Alyla died, and Lando cancelled the series.
For years, Lando told fans that he would not write another *Morning Glory* book, but still they pleaded. It was Leia who ended up suggesting the plot of the next book: *Alyla Kene and the Strength of the Force*. The story was a retelling of the betrayal on Cloud City, but with Alyla in conflict with her (then in the series) husband, which was only made worse when Luke Skywalker arrived.

In the series, Luke had already begun assembling a team of students having met up with Gavyn and Zena, and then collecting Reine and Obik. He brought his team (called Anakin Squadron, also the name of the next book) to Cloud City with them and it became and interesting and epic battle.

Once more the book was well received, and Lando started to write the *Morning Glory* series ago. But anyone who knew Lando could hear how painful the story was. Over the next four books, he rewrote history to include Alyla in his life after he became a good man.

*Alyla Kene and the Anakin Squadron* was about Lando’s struggle to earn the respect of the Rebellion after what he had done to Han, but with a supportive wife by his side.

*Alyla Kene and the Hutt Palace Plot* was a sexy and fun tale of he and Alyla going undercover as a palace guard and dancer for Jabba, while Lando tried to protect Alyla from being thrown in the Rancor pit, and Alyla protecting Lando from being thrown in the Sarlaac pit.

*Alyla Kene and the Shadow of the Death Star* was about Alyla joining the team on Endor while Gavyn was one of the team members on the *Millennium Falcon* during the aerial battle. The real Alyla’s heart broke when Marks told her that the story ended with book Alyla pregnant with a son and looking forward to the peaceful future with book Lando.

Lando had refused to write any further *Morning Glory* novels after that. When asked, he would simply say “I want book Alyla and Lando to get the happy ending they deserve, but real Alyla and I were denied. If I write anymore, I’m going to start clinging too much on a son and marriage I will never had.”

But the part that hurt Alyla the most was the knowledge that the final book ended with Lando and Alyla telling each other I love you.

Words they didn’t get to exchange in real life.

Alyla sighed as she saw the picture of the morning glory taped to the wall of Mark’s shelf. It was a cut out of the cover of *Lando Calrissian and the Death of the Morning Glory*.

“I miss you,” Alyla whispered to the poster of the man she loved.

Marks paused as he was about to set the gloves of Rose Tico on his shelf. He looked down at the gloves and wondered if he truly was attracted to Rose… or did he just want what his parents’ had?

“Mom?” Marks set the gloves down. “I… I have to tell you something.”

“What’s that?” Alyla replied.

He sighed, “Mom, on Nixrye we teamed up with the Resistance for a short while, and… and there were certain people there.”

Alyla watched him carefully, “What kind of people?”

“…I met Han Solo and Chewbacca.”

She winced.
“Mom, I’m sorry—”

“You didn’t tell them,” Alyla’s voice was cold. She didn’t want to be angry at him, but she couldn’t help it. “They were there, your father’s friends, and you didn’t tell them who you were.”

“I couldn’t.”

“Reekshit! Marcus, do you not want to get out of here? Is revenge really that important to you? Don’t you understand what that leads to?”

“I know what it leads to! Of course, I want to get out of here someday. Yes, I wanted to go with them, but I couldn’t!”

“And why not?”

“Because I was scared!” Marks yelled. “I was scared, alright?”

Alyla hated herself when he broke down in tears. Anger dissipating in an instant Alyla pulled her son into her arms and held him as he wept.

“Shh, it’s okay, My Love,” she whispered. “It’s alright.”

“No, it isn’t,” Marks cried into her neck. “I was a coward.”

“You’re no coward.”

“But I am.” He pulled back, struggling to catch his breath, “Mom, I saw him. I saw Dad.”

Alyla gasped, “You what?”

“He wasn’t part of the rescue time with Solo and Chewbacca… he was in the casino a few days before that. I saw him… he looks good.”

She laughed a little.

Marks took a deep breath, “I… I stood there, Mom. For two hours, I stood there, watching him, muttering under my breath Hello, Lando Calrissian. My name is Marcus Kene, and I’m your son. Please… will you help me? Two hours I said that to myself, and I couldn’t find the strength to walk over there and tell him.”

Alyla stroked his cheek, “And why do you think you couldn’t bring yourself to approach him?”

“Because I was scared.”

“Of what?”

Marks closed his eyes, picturing that scene of Lando Calrissian – his father – sitting at that Sabacc table, “Because… he would never believe it.”

Alyla said nothing.

“I’m right, aren’t I?” Mark looked at her. “I could walk right up to him, say those words, give him what he wants most in the Galaxy… and he wouldn’t believe me. Would he?”

“No,” Alyla whispered. “No… Lando wouldn’t believe it. Unless he hears it from someone he would never believe… Unless he had proof, he’ll never believe.”
“And he would hate me for claiming such a falsehood.”

“I wish I could say he wouldn’t.”

“I don’t want him to hate me, Mom.”

“Trust in the Force, my Love. We’ll find a way.”

Marks wiped away his tears and glanced back at the gloves, “What if I did have a way? What if I found a way to get proof?”

Alyla frowned, “Like what?”

“I don’t want to say just yet.”

“Marcus-”

“Please, Mom,” Marks interrupted. “Just… let me see if it works.”

Alyla sighed, “Alright, but I’m working you, I only put up with those shenanigans with your father because I loved him. I didn’t love him because he pulled schemes like no doubt the one in your head, it was definitely in spite of it. Understand?”

“Understood.”

“Now, tell me, when you saw your father… was there anyone hanging off his arm?”

Marks laughed, “Nothing but his usual casual flirting, I swear. Considering the success of the Morning Glory series, I don’t think he could take up with anyone other than you unless he was prepared to go into hiding. You have some rabid fans.”

“Good,” Alyla smirked. “Look, I love your father and want him to be happy, so if that means moving on, fine. But at the end of the day – and you’ll understand this when you’re older – I truly don’t want him kissing anyone but me.”

Marks mind immediately flashed to the thought of Rose Tico kissing him. It made him smile a somewhat dopey grin.

Then he thought of Rose kissing some other man, and his smile fell.

Of course, Marks didn’t know a whole heck of a lot of other people, so when he pictured Rose kissing another man, the only image he could conjure was Rose kissing Finn.

Even Finn looked confused after the kiss.

Scowling, Marks wanted that happier thought again and he switched back to the image of him kissing Rose, not Finn doing it.

That dopey grin stretched back across his face.

“There’s that grin again,” Alyla smiled. “What’s that about?”

“Mom-”

“Don’t you lie to me; I know what I see.”
He sighed, “It’s just… I think I already know what you mean.”

“Oh?” Alyla looked surprised and way too interested for Marks’ liking. Why did mother always want to know about their sons’ love lives?

“I…” he rubbed the back of his neck. “I think I met someone.”

“A resort patron?”

“Actually… a member of the Resistance.

“Oh my.”

“Yeah, I’ve got my very own Blood in History situation,” Marks liked harkening back to his father’s books for shorthand on certain situations.

“Alright, but so help me, don’t you dare bluff your way into a sperm sample.”

“Well, I mean, I exist because of that, so would you really be that m-”

“Marcus!” Alyla snapped.

“Alright,” Marks held up his hands. “No sperm samples. Though I don’t think that’s going to be an issue.”

“Yeah, I would have to have a chat with Leia – assuming she’ll believe for once I’m not just a vision – if that scenario happens. Now tell me everything about this girl who’s got you grinning like that.”

And so he did; Marks told her everything about Rose Tico. How feisty she was. How stubborn she was. How courageous. How… she kept obsessing over his cheekbones.

Even better was the look on his mother’s face as he told her about the girl who managed to set his world on fire but in a very good way. A lovelorn grin stretched across Alyla’s face, a beautiful smile she only ever got when she was thinking of Lando Calrissian. She loved the expression on her son’s face, it bringing back so many happy memories to her.

“She must be some girl,” Alyla said. “Your father used to get that same look on his face when he was with me.”

“Rose Tico,” Marks smiled at the work gloves in his shelf. “I think that girl’s going to get me in a lot of trouble.”

“My Love,” Alyla stroked his cheek, “you are the son of a Kene and a Calrissian. No matter what way the First Order biologically engineered you… you were born to be in trouble.”

---

The Tale of the Taming of Valra

As traditionally told in three parts on each night of the Solstice Festival, Valrians recount the tale of how six good spirits met, married, and made Gods of themselves.

SECOND NIGHT

Ethys and Imar took Koena home with them to the cabin. Once all their wounds had been treated,
Ethys started to prepare their meal, and Imar and Koena took a walk outside together. They spoke for hours on end, long enough for their suppers to get cold, and long enough that Ethys had to track them down and bring them home for bed.

Imar kissed Koena’s hand sweetly and wished her pleasant dreams as Ethys showed her to Itar’s room for the night. Imar dreamed of Koena in his bed until midnight when he was awoken by Koena.

They watched each other for a minute, no words leaving their lips. Then Koena stripped off her nightgown, crawled in Imar’s bed, and they made love.

The next week was pure fantasy, Imar and Koena spending their days getting to know each other and their nights making love. They told each other of their adventures, their siblings, and the state of the world. Seven days flew by like it was nothing, then fourteen, twenty-one, soon enough a whole month had passed.

On their thirty-first day together, Imar and Ethys found Koena crying. She knew it was time to go home to her brother. Koena begged Imar and Ethys to come North with her, but both refused. Ethys had to stay for her own brother – who was due to return home any day – and Imar needed to stay to continue his cause.

Shedding many tears, Koena made vows of love and friendship to Imar and Ethys. She swore she would return to them someday. Koena promised Imar her heart and her hand should he ever want them.

It was three days after their parting that Imar realized Koena’s love was more important to him than the fight for freedom. He bid Ethys farewell and went North to find Koena. When he reached the desert, he braced himself and pushed forward.

Imar would find his bride.

Koena too changed her mind: she was old enough to leave her brother for a husband. On the fifth day since their parting, Koena turned South to return to Imar. She did her best to send word North to her brother of her safety, relaying on a chain of good spirits to pass the story North until it reached Djun. Worse came to worse, she would return to Djun with Imar once they were reunited.

But Koena was not familiar with that part of the world and soon got lost. Journeying further and further South, she found herself in the middle of nowhere in the mountains of evil.

Djun however, was not North; he had searched far for his sister and came to hear of the destruction of the Imps. He tracked down the home of Ethys and Itar, bringing the alone Ethys gifts of appreciation and honour for protecting his sister.

Ethys brought Djun into her home and told him everything. She told him of Koena’s strength and wisdom. She told him of Imar’s virtues and how good a man he was Koena. Though Djun had never laid an eye on Imar, by the time the sun set, he had given his blessing to the love of Imar and Koena.

And by the time the moon rose, he had fallen in love with Ethys.

They stayed in the cabin for a week. They talked and laughed and spent the days getting to know each other, falling head first into deepest, truest love. On that final night they made a vow to marry and made passionate love.

The next morning, they were visited by a good spirit who was a friend of Ethys. They were surprised to find the spirit wanting Ethys to pass a message North to Djun. They heard of what had happened
to Koena, and when they heard she had found her way into the mountains they decided to go rescue her.

A week later, Itar returned to the cabin and was surprised to find it empty. Things became worse when he found a note written by Ethys that simply said “I have gone south with my friend and the man that I love. I will return, Brother, with a husband by my side.”

Poor Itar had no knowledge of Koena and Djun, so assumed Imar had betrayed him and stolen his sister away South to elope. At first, he thought the man she loved and the friend were one in the same.

And then Itar got a Southern visitor: Ipgyn had finally decided to join her brother’s fight and tracked him to the cabin.

The explanation that Ipgyn was Imar’s sister and a series of misunderstandings later, Itar believed Ipgyn had worked with Imar to steal away Ethys.

Falling into a rage, Itar attacked Ipgyn. He expected a simple fight, but Ipgyn wasn’t about to give him one. Angered by accusations against her brother, Ipgyn fought to protect his honour. Itar and Ipgyn fought for a day and a night until Ipgyn stood as the victor.

In the years that followed, Itar always maintained the only reason he lost was that he had been too tired from his mission. Never one to give up, every year on the anniversary of their duel, when Itar started into his complaining, Ipgyn would challenge him to a rematch. Some years Itar would win, but most times Ipgyn will stand victorious.

After their first duel, Itar and Ipgyn sat down to a meal and talked things out. Itar came to see his error in judgement over Imar’s character and heard stories of the horrors of the mountains. They spent the night getting to know each other as thoroughly as Koena & Imar and Djun & Ethys.

Itar and Ipgyn did not fall in love instantly.

When Rey woke up the next morning, she was very excited to get right back into participating in the customs of her mother’s people and the Solstice Festival.

When she and Teng heard what the day’s events involved, they were less excited.

“Fasting?” Rey stared at Imogen and Levi like they were crazy.

Teng couldn’t wrap his head around it either, “You mean, we intentionally starve ourselves?”

“Oh no, not us,” Levi replied. “Just the women.”

“Well, that sounds mildly sexist,” Teng muttered.

Imogen narrowed her eyes, “It’s to honour Koena’s plight as she wandered the dangerous Southern Mountains. In her second year of wandering, Koena did not have a bite of food or a drop of water. On Valra, women honour the Goddess by not partaking in either on the Second Day of the Solstice Festival.”

Levi cut in, “Except we do let the women in Synael drink water because… you know, desert.”

“Araeya,” Imogen placed a hand on Rey’s shoulder, giving her a look Rey suspected Poe Dameron
might get from Holdo. “It’s not that big a deal. You may starve for one day, but in doing so you give the Gods honour.”

The teens just stared at Imogen.

“You know we live on Jakku, right?” Rey asked. “We can starve any day of the week.”

Imogen gave a very thin smile, “Araeya… Valrians take the custom of fasting extremely seriously. If you want to be a Valrian, you must go some days without nourishment. To honour Koena, you must understand what it is to starve.”

Rey’s eyes narrowed, “Trust me, I know the feeling quite well.”

Imogen sighed, “I don’t want to force you into anything, but I ask you to reconsider. How about we look at it this way? You want to experience the Valrian culture to understand, grow closer to, and honour your mother. Giving up your food is one of the deepest acts of love and honour you can give another person. Do you think your mother would have chosen to starve to honour someone she loves?”

A scene from the past tugged at Rey’s mind.

“Araeya… Valrians take the custom of fasting extremely seriously. If you want to be a Valrian, you must go some days without nourishment. To honour Koena, you must understand what it is to starve.”

Rey closed her eyes briefly trying to capture the image to that fleeting memory. She knew the words; they always came to her when she argued with Dad, Quom, or Aletha about them passing part of their food to her. The words were forever burned into her memory… but the face of her mother was nothing more than blurry shapes in the dark.

And the exact sound of her voice was completely gone.

“Yes, she would… I know she would.” Slowly Rey’s eyes fluttered open. She hated the look of pity Imogen had on her face as Rey struggled not to let the tears fall. “Alright, I’ll fast today, but I won’t do it to honour Koena… I’m doing it to honour my Mom.”

Imogen just smiled and nodded.
“I’ll do it too,” Teng offered.

Rey felt like she could breathe when Teng hooked his arm around her. She wanted to snuggle into his embrace and cry, but she refused to do it in front of these strangers.

“No, that’s alright,” Levi said. “The men don’t fast. In fact, it’s an affront to Ipgyn – the Goddess of Women – for a man to co-opt a ceremony meant for only women. Just as much as it would be an affront to Itar – God of Men – for women to participate in the men’s tradition for today.”

Rey smiled and clasped Teng’s hand, “Thank you for offering to join me in my suffering.”

“There’s never any suffering for me when you’re at my side.” he kissed the top of her head.

“Provided there’s no X-Wings involved.”

She laughed.

“So, if women fast on the Second Night of the Solstice Festival,” Teng asked, “what do the men do?”

Levi answered casually, “We shave our heads completely bald.”

Rey did not know eyes could physically get that wide, but there Teng’s went. She had to stifle a giggle as she stared at Teng’s long black locks and the horror struck across an unnaturally pale face.

“Yeah… I don’t have a Valrian mom to honour,” Teng said. “That’s not happening.”

Somehow, despite all the female influences in his life – all the Leias, Alylas, Reines, Tylas, Reys, Felicitys, Zenas, and so on – Ben Solo never really got a handle on dealing with women.

— Lando Calrissian and the Death of the Morning Glory, Chapter III

Tara Ren did not remember when she fell asleep, but she suspected Cern had been hanging out with Captain Electra. Based on the reports Tara had read about Diego Nalto’s fiancée and Electra’s sister, apparently the entire Anthea family was talented at drugging people without their knowledge.

What really pissed off Tara when she woke was Kylo Ren crouched down in front of her and wearing his fucking mask as he watched her like an animal in a zoo. She could sense his hatred simmering in the Force, but there was also fear below the surface.

Maybe he was wearing the mask for the same reason Tara had been moved against the wall and placed in two hand shackles halfway through the trip back to Base. She had hit her limit with Nines and Zeros guarding her, and despite being handcuffed to the bed, she managed to use the Force, her wits, and mostly her raw strength to beat the shit out of the pair. By the time Kylo, Wiln, and Cern rushed into the room to get her under control, she had nearly beaten Nines’ head in. Tearing Tara off Nines had earned Kylo a nice kick to the face when her cleat boots and a nasty gash to the face.

In the corner of her eye, Tara could still see the puddle of blood Kylo left when he hit the floor.

“Comfortable?” Kylo asked, his voice modulated through the mask.
“Really?” Tara had no patience for Kylo’s nonsense. “You’re going to pull the monster in a mask gambit on me? I’ve seen you naked; the Vader 2.0 mask isn’t going to intimidate me. Now, take that fucking thing off!”

Kylo glowered, but obeyed, slamming his helmet down on the floor with a loud thud.

“So, I assume we’re back?” Tara asked dryly, her voice too casual to acknowledge her handcuffs.

“For a little under an hour,” Kylo answered.

“Well, I don’t sense anyone else on Dark Destiny. Where is everyone?”

“At their duties.”

“And Sasa?”

His eyes darkened, “She’s with Max. He’s checking out her condition and… helping her clean up.”

Tara raised an eyebrow, “You’re leaving her with a medical droid that Cern has openly admitted to tampering with?”

“I made Cern fix the changes he made on Max.”

“I still wouldn’t trust it. Heck, I think at this point, considering the multiple cases tampering and what he’s been programed to call you, it might be time to wipe, dismantle, and replace Max.”

“You’re in no position to be dictating what I should do,” Kylo snapped. “But if you’re so worried about Cern, he’ll be returning shortly to keep an eye on you until the Supreme Leader returns my request to speak about Nixrye. You can interrogate him then.”

“And why is it that Cern is allowed to walk free and not I?”

“Because the crimes that he has committed are minor, and he has the means of making them up to me.”

Tara scoffed, “So because I’m not the head of a vast network of underhanded, turncoat spies and scoundrels-”

“Well, you could ask your Crimson Dawn friends for help.” Kylo smirked, “Or are you out of favors?”

“I think I could rally the troops a few more times,” she had to hold back a smile as she thought of what her father would do if he heard she was on death row. You did not fuck with Qi’ra and Laertes Ores’ daughter and get away with it.

Kylo’s eyes narrowed, “So that’s it, is it? You have no remorse? No guilt? No second thoughts?”

“I’m having second thoughts on admitting to my crimes.”

“For the love of- Because of you, two Knights of Ren will be dead!”

“And it should be three,” Tara’s eyes burned.

He stared at her for a moment, eyes slightly wide, “You’re really threatened by her.”

“I’m not threatened by her.”
“You’re threatened by her.”

“I’m not threatened!” Tara exclaimed. “God, you really think I’m so out of control that I’m threatened by that airheaded whore?”

“Don’t call her that!” Kylo growled.

“But she is one!” Tara screamed. “That is her entire purpose! She’s not here to fight the Resistance or New Republic, she not here to work with the spy network or come up with ingenious plans or teach the Stormtroopers or even god damn cook meals! Sasa is simply here is fuck you, wear pretty dresses, and calm you down from your temper tantrums! She is literally nothing more than an airheaded whore, and the fact you have lost your fucking mind over her is a god damn embarrassment. Even Hux is laughing at you.”

“I am the second-in-command of the First Order. No one is laughing at me.”

“You think they’d do it to your face? Even the Stormtroopers are losing respect for you. This girl is destroying everything we’ve built over the last twelve years. I don’t give a shit who you fuck! My job – as you asked me to – is to keep your ass in line, and that is why I tried to have her killed. This emotional rebalancing is a load of Bantha crap! You need your anger, your aggression, your instability to be Kylo Ren. Going to cry in the arms of your bedmate is the action of Ben Solo, and Ben Solo is a coward and a weakling.”

Kylo scoffed, shaking his head, “I can’t believe you’ve let some girl get to you this much.”

“But that’s all she is: some girl. God, Kylo she isn’t worth your time! She isn’t powerful, she isn’t intelligent, she isn’t from some noble line or whatever shit Snoke puts in your head. Sasa Ren isn’t special!”

“She is to me!” Kylo roared.

Tara took a moment to stare at him. A disbelieving smile slowly spread across her face as she took and processed his words.

“Oh my god… you love her,” Tara said.

Kylo looked away.

But Tara just laugh, “Oh my god, you love her. You love her. You’ve fallen head over heels in love with Sasa Ren and you don’t want anyone else by your side.”

The toe of her boat smashed into Kylo’s face. As he fell back in pain, he regretted taking off his helmet.

“Come on!” Tara exclaimed. “Are we doing this? Are we really doing this again? Are you actually going to put me through this shit again?”

Kylo struggled to get himself back upright, “I don’t know what you’re talking about.”

He ducked to the side and narrowly missed another kick to the face.

“Like hell you don’t!” Tara snapped. “You really think I’m threatened by another one of your bimbos when I’ve had to put up with this same song and dance for almost ten years now? God, Kylo, it’s the same shit every time!”
“This time is different!” Kylo objected. “Sasa is-”

“Different?” Tara shot. “Unlike any girl that came before? The one you want to be the mother of your child? The love of your life? I’ve heard it all before, Ben. Frankly, I’m tired of it.”

Kylo narrowed his eyes, “Sasa is different. You want me to say it, fine I will. She’s the only one I want.”

“See, you tell yourself that but a few months from now, it won’t be like that.”

“You don’t know that.”

“I do know that, because it’s the exact thing that happened with Leda.”

Kylo flinched.

“Oh, you remember Leda Ren?” Tara taunted. “You remember what happened. You fell absolutely head over heels with her. You told me that you loved her and wanted no other. We even made an agreement; I would step aside but remain your right hand. Twenty-five months, and your heart belonged to her and her alone. She was your soulmate, your true love. Leda Ren was the one.”

Kylo slammed his eyes shut, remembering what happened next.

Tara smirked, “And then Irni came along. Oh, she was new, excited, exotic. You hopped into her bed the very same day. By the time three months had passed, you barely even glanced Leda. When she got herself killed in battle four months after that, you just huffed in annoyance… So much for true love.”

“I made a mistake.”

“You made many. Let’s think… Hali was the one for eighteen months, Eosi for twelve, poor Yulo got six, and man, you didn’t even give a shit about Irni two months after you pushed Leda aside for her.”

Kylo opened his eyes again. He couldn’t bear the flashes of memories of the women behind his eyelids.

“You see, Kylo, I’m not threatened by Sasa.” Tara leaned forward, a smile on her face. Though in chains, she was the one in complete control. “Because I know exactly how this story will end. In those new two shiny spots of the Knights of Ren, one of them – maybe both – will be filled by a woman. A woman who will turn your head and make you forget all about Sasa Ren, or as you will soon call her whatever the fuck the redhead was called. What I’m worried about is the destruction Sasa will cause until she is dethroned from your affections. I am sick and tired of cleaning up the pieces. Face the facts, you won’t last with this bitch. Stop trying to pretend you will.”

“How do you know that?” Kylo challenged. “How can you be so certain I’ll move on from her?”

“Because you have attention span of a gnat. You are a narcissist; you want all attention to be on you at all times. You want a woman who will stroke your ego as much as your cock.”

“Tara!” he snapped.

She smirked, “You see, Solo, once the girls hit their breaking point and stop putting up with your shit, then you lose interest in her. Why do you think I went after Tekka immediately after Sasa broke your nose for suggesting a threesome?”
Kylo was silent.

“And that proves my point right there,” Tara said. “For as much as you claim to want her and only her, you’ll never be faithful. Does she know?”

“Know what?”

“About all the threesomes we have?”

“Yes, she knows about those.”

“I’d bet not the exact number.”

He said nothing.

“What about the women we have the threesomes with?” Tara challenged. “Does Sasa know how you sometime then call for those women to see you in your room… without me? Does she know that you’re fucking more women than just her and I?”

“Stop it,” Kylo muttered.

“Does she know? Does she know that if a Blessed catches your eye, you’ll invite her back to your room for private lessons and fuck her? Does Sasa know that if you’re walking down the hallway and you see a pretty little communications tech, the two of you will sneak into a supply closet and fuck her until she screams your name? Does she know that every single time Sasa can’t come to your bed because she’s on her period, you’ll find another bedmate? That when she having panic attacks over not being pregnant, you’re fucking some other woman?”

“I said stop!” he grabbed her by the throat and slammed her against the wall.

They stood there, staring into each other’s eyes, panting as the Darkness and tension buzzed through them.

“No,” Tara chuckled. “She doesn’t know about them.”

Then she kissed him.

Kylo didn’t stop her.

His hands were on her neck, pulling her in, desperate for the sweet taste of her lips like a drug he couldn’t quit.

Kylo panted when Tara pulled back, a smirk plastered across her lips.

“That’s why I have no regrets,” Tara said. “Because we’ve been here before, we’ve done this so many times. You get obsessed with a girl, and then forget her for a pretty, new thing. And while those girls stop being a problem, sometimes through disinterest, sometimes through suspicious deaths—”

Kylo gritted his teeth.

“I’m the one who’s always right at your side,” Tara whispered, ghosting her lips over his. “Even when we fight, this is how it always ends. Usually we go scream and each other and kick each other’s ass in my private training room… but it always ends with your lips on mine, facing it the only way you know how to: fighting and fucking. And when you screw me on the floor of my training after every fight we have – never actually resolving any problems – you do both and avoid facing the
truth. *I am your second-in-command, Kylo. And you… you’re living a life that is the same five steps over and over again.*

Kylo released her, forcing Tara to fall to the ground. He took a step back but she still smirked up at him.

"That's the difference between us, Kylo." Tara tugged at her shackles. "I know I'll escape my chains… But will you ever escape yours?"

---

Rey was so happy when dinner was finally served. As part of the Solstice Festival fasting, dinner was served late. They did it after all the men had ceremonially shaved their heads.

It turned out that Teng didn’t actually qualify to shave his head. Coming of age ceremonies (and ergo adulthood) happened when a Valrian was twenty. Teng was only nineteen, which was also why he had to grow facial hair. Adult men wore no facial hair and kept hair short as a sign a modesty. Teng refused to let his hair be any shorter than shoulder length.

Actually, now that Rey thought about it, his hair was probably longer than hers. At least Rey already followed the traditions of women's hair. When she graduated from buns to adulthood, Rey would have to keep her hair as long as possible.

Rey scowled as she appraised Una’s hair, which was down to her hips. Maybe Rey wouldn’t go this far.

“Please tell me there’s no more traditions to follow tonight,” Rey begged Gweneth as they ate. She glanced down the line where Teng was banished once more at the end due to his non-Valrian heritage. “I’m too tired from fixing the vaporators and hungry from the fasting to do anything else tonight.”

“Don’t worry,” Gweneth promised. “All we do tonight is hear the second night story and then do five Crekia toasts to five heroes of the pillars.”

“What do you mean heroes of the pillars?” Rey frowned.

“We tell stories of five people who defended the virtue of the Five Pillars,” Micah answered. “You know, prevent a murder, put out a fire, save a baby, reveal an adulterer, and catch a rapist. Good stories.”

Gweneth frowned, “Well… Some more than others.

After dinner, Rey patiently listened to the stories they told of the heroes. Micah was right, for the most part the stories were pretty good, entertaining even.

She did have to plaster on a smile when they retold the story of the Varian, Kaelan, who epitomized the pillar of protection against rape. It was a truly uncomfortable story, but Rey could understand why such a tale would be remembered. Kaelan was truly a great hero of rape victims.

But it was when they came to the last story that the night took an unexpected turn.

When Imogen announced the Valrian who epitomized the protection of the innocents, Rey choked on her drink.
“To the great hero of the innocents… Felicity Rhiaon.”

Rey coughed loudly. Luckily, no one paid her any mind except Micah, who patted her back to make sure she wasn’t choking.

“What did she just say?” Rey gasped.

“Oh, Felicity Rhiaon,” Gweneth said mildly. “Have you not heard of her?”

Why were they asking her that? Didn’t they realize it was her mother? Why would they tell a story about her mother? Was it because Rey was there?

Then Rey realized it: they wouldn’t know Felicity Rhiaon was her mother. Her mother’s religious name was Felicea, which is what Rey had told them. Considering how many Rhiaons were in the universe, why would they go Felicity is Felicea?

But why were they telling a story about her mother?

“We praise the brave woman that was Felicity Rhiaon,” Imogen said. “Though she married a Jedi, she put her child above all else.”

Rey swallowed hard.

Now, considering the story was being told by a random villager on Jakku, and stories tended to travel very slowly to Jakku, by the time Imogen told it, there were a few details changed.

Particularly the fact that Imogen claimed the whole trek through the desert and surrendering herself for her daughter had taken place on Tatooine.

Still, Rey listened to the story of her mother in stunned silence. The jig wasn’t up because Imogen didn’t know the name of Felicity Rhiaon’s daughter, choosing to call her Sabra, which meant to rest. Rey was thankful that Teng hadn’t said anything either, though he kept glancing at her to make sure she was okay.

Rey couldn’t do anything but listen. She knew parts of it wasn’t true – particularly the part where Rey apparently got buried – but she was captive. She vaguely knew the story of her mother’s death… but to get a clear picture of it?

It made Rey sick to her stomach.

“And even though that daughter was dead and buried, still Felicity did not give in,” Imogen told the story. “All she had left was the honour of her daughter’s memory. She would avenge her child by refusing to let the First Order think they had won. So for weeks Felicity endured her tortures. They cut her, burned her, drowned her, poisoned her, starved her, kicked her, beat her, split her skin open, tore her nails from their beds, shoved electrified rods into her neck.”

Rey had to summon all her strength not to breakdown crying. She knew not all of it was real, but she had no idea what were lies and what was truth.

“They shoved bamboo wedges under her fingernails,” Imogen continued, “they tore her hair out in a mockery of Valrian funeral rites, they whipped her, they lit her clothing on fire while she still wore them, and some say they even raped her.”

That last part was not true, and honestly pissed off certain members of the Skywalker family when it came to light.
“Still,” Imogen said, “no matter what they did to her, Felicity Rhiaon would not break. It was only when faced with a nephew – a practitioner of dark magic, truly an evil spirit allowed the grow its form form – used his dark arts to tear the answer from her tongue.”

Rey’s teary eyes slammed shut.

“And when she admitted the truth, she fell to tears. They dropped her to the ground and Felicity laid sobbing on the floor, mourning her daughter and the villainous acts done to her. But that villainy was not over. Her nephew tied her up, held her down, and pointed a blaster to her head. But Felicity would not go quietly, and when her nephew demanded her final words, Felicity just said _Now no one can hurt my daughter again._ And a second before he pulled the trigger, Felicity used her last ounce of strength to spit in her nephew’s face.”

That too was a lie… but God did Luke wish it was truth.

“Felicity Rhiaon was a hero,” Imogen told the group. “Though she did not save her child, Felicity Rhiaon fought with every ounce of strength so had to love and protect and honour her innocent child. She failed to keep her child alive in the flesh, but she succeeded in keeping her child alive in her heart.”

Rey closed her eyes. They were wrong; Felicity _had_ succeeded. Rey breathed because Felicity did not. That was a debt she could never repay.

Felicity Rhiaon had loved her daughter to her very last breath.

“To Felicity Rhiaon,” Imogen toasted.

“To Felicity Rhiaon!” the Valrian villagers cheered.

Rey just wanted to run away and cry, but it felt like a mockery of her mother’s bravery to do so.

Her mother had truly died so Rey could live… And she died because a Jedi loved her.

So as everyone drank, Rey slowly lifted her glass in a cheers and whispered, “Thank you, Mom. Thank you for letting me live.”

She had never really understood the danger being a Jedi meant. She knew that their life and home had been destroyed, but to hear the way they had targeted her mother… it was awful what the First Order did.

They had hated and tortured her mother because her father loved Felicity Rhiaon.

And Rey Erso loved Teng Malar. Teng Malar, whose concerned eyes were watching her every move. She struggled to take a breath, as she looked up and met his eyes.

Teng frowned when he saw Rey’s were full of fear.

“To Felicity Rhiaon,” Teng whispered and drank. He knew exactly what Rey was thinking, and though it terrified him, nothing would ever convince him to walk away from that girl.

She was worth the risk.

Rey struggled to swallow the Crekia as she watched Teng with worry.

If such an evil act had been done to her mother simply for loving her father… what would happen to Teng for loving her?
Kylo left Tara chained to the wall of the *Dark Destiny* another two hours after they talked. But the worst part about that was Cern standing next to her, guarding her, and laughing at her the whole time.

“I just can’t believe you actually admitted it,” Cern leaned casually against the wall next to her. He completely ignored the deadly glare she shot up at him. “I mean of all the missteps, that has to be your worse.”

That was the moment Tara hit her limit on his laughter. Exploiting the suspension of the chains, she leveraged her weight to pull herself up. Using her momentum, she swung and kicked his knees, sweeping his legs out from under him.

Tara smirked at Cern as he tried not to whimper in pain. There was a reason all her boots had cleats. She felt a sense of victory as she heard footsteps in the hall and smiled sweetly at the new arrival when the door slid open.

General Hux stopped in his tracks, needing a moment to take in the sight of the chained Tara and almost crippled Cern.

“Well, this wasn’t the sight I expected upon your return,” Hux said.

“Things didn’t exactly go to plan,” Tara simply answered.

“So I’ve heard.” Hux knew that Kylo’s precious *Dark Destiny* didn’t have any recording devices on it. “Even the Supreme Leader is furious.”

“Yeah, well, I’ll deal with Snoke later. My biggest concern is getting out of these chains. Are you here to take me to a new location?”

“No. Word is that Wiln will be along shortly to do so. You’ll be spending the next few nights in a cell.” Hux crouched down in front of her and smirked, “I just wanted to see this for myself. Tara Ores, all chained up.”

Tara narrowed her eyes, “Oh please. I bet you’re just doing this because you knew I put on a low cut top to entice Kylo in his grief over Sasa’s death, and this is the only shot you’ll ever get to stare at my cleavage.”

“I wasn’t doing that!” Hux objected.

Then he paused to think about what she said. He hesitated and dropped his eyes down to said cleavage.

The toe of her boot smashed into his face. As Hux recoiled in pain, he was very glad that part of her shoe did not have cleats.

“I’d rather be dead than fuck you, Hux,” Tara growled. “So don’t even try.”

Hux rubbed his jaw, awkwardly scrambling to his feet, “Tell me, Ores, exactly how does such a charming woman as you not have a dozen suitors waiting at your door?”

“Because Kylo would kill any who tried. Trust me, Hux. Kylo may have me chained at a wall right now, but if he saw you pull that stunt right now he’d swing a lightsaber through your neck.”
“I think someone’s just grumpy she’s not Kylo’s number one anymore,” Cern chortled. They had noticed when he got back to his feet.

“Oh, I may be in these chains right now,” Tara tugged at them, “but I’ll be back in Kylo’s bed soon enough.”

Hux lifted an eyebrow, “You truly have that much confidence in your ability to escape the wraths of Ren and the Supreme Leader?”

“I think you both underestimate how much a hold I have over both of them,” Tara answered. “We’ve been down this road before. Kylo’s favors don’t last forever. Sasa will be old news be the year’s end.”

“Funny,” Cern crossed his arms. “Isn’t that what you said last you?”

“I’m playing the long game.”

“Too long.” Cern said, “Frankly, the both of you have become pathetic.”

Hux and Tara glowered at him.

“I would be careful what you say, Ren,” Hux warned.

“Or what? You’ll fight me?” Cern scoffed. “I possess a lightsaber and have had a doctor officially certify I am a psychopath. Who do you think is going to win?”

Tara blinked, “Wait, did I doctor actually certify you?”

“Well, I killed him after he did it – apparently being diagnosed a psychopath get you blacklisted from flying First Order ships and I couldn’t let that happen – so I don’t have the actual certificate.”

Sometimes Hux wondered if he had chosen his allies well.

“Then how is it that Tara is the one here in chains, and not you?” Hux asked.

“Because I’m not as stupid as Princess Crimson Dawn,” Cern smirked.

She kicked him in the leg, “Don’t call me that!”

“Whatever you say, Sweetie,” Cern replied. “You’re the idiot here, not me. You know, if you have just stayed put, not gone to Nixyre, you might have gotten away with this. Hell, if you hadn’t convinced Berd and Doxl to try to kill Sasa, just made sure your mother’s people did it, then you absolutely would have. No blaming us, just Imperial Loyalists or Crimson Dawn. But no… you had to be theatrical. You had to make sure that Kylo would fall right into your arms.”

Tara said quickly, “It was a mistake.”

“A mistake beneath your making!” Cern snapped. “Face it, Tara, this girl is getting under your skin in a way no other of Solo’s bedmates have. It’s been almost two years, why the hell haven’t you managed to murder the bitch yet? It didn’t take this long to get rid of Nera. To get rid of Dyna, Irni, or Yulo! What’s the problem? Do you want to fuck her?”

Hux laughed.

“You’re no better!” Cern turned his anger on Hux. “Seriously? Your idea was to seduce her. You thought she would actually turn again Snoke and all her training and risk death… to fuck you. Hux, I
have had the misfortune of interrogating some of your bedmates because you keep getting tricked by spies. They all agree on one thing: you are a terrible lover.”

“That’s a lie!” Hux exclaimed, immediately looking over at Tara.

Tara just scowled, “Why are you even asking those girls that question?”

“I’m sorry, are you lecturing me on my methods?” Cern snapped. “Between the three of us, who here is in the best standing with Solo?”

“He’s pissed at you too,” Tara shot.

“Yeah, but he’s given me a chance to make it up to him,” Cern shot right back. “Doesn’t seem like he’s done the same for you, and Hux has never been in his good books.”

“I’ll be back in his graces soon enough.”

“You killed his kid!”

“Yes, I heard about that,” Hux scowled. “Was she really pregnant?”

“Yes,” Tara replied.

Hux looked between the two of them, “And… did you two really not know about it?”

“You think I wouldn’t have found a way to exploit it if I did?” Cern shot.

Tara said, “And I would have thrown a more destructive temper tantrum than the one Solo did when Captain Anthea framed him for gassing his own mother. Based on what I heard from that bug I planted on FN-2199, the Resistance still thinks Solo is responsible for the attack on Organa.”

“You’d think considering how much faith she has in her son,” Hux sneered, “that Organa would correct that notion.”

“I don’t know if you noticed, but not every parent and child have the greatest relationship. You didn’t exactly weep when Electra murdered your father with a belt in front of you.”

“I will not speak of that day!” Hux snapped. “Now we’re getting off topic. What are we going to do about Sasa? Her power over Kylo grows every day.”

Tara nodded, “Well, I think what we need to do—”

“No!” Cern snapped. “You’re done. You lost your chance. Both of you have.”

Tara glared at him, “You have no right to—”

“I have every right! You’re not the only one who gets screwed around. The softer and nicer that Kylo becomes because of the redhead, he turns more and more to Wiln for counsel. Sasa doesn’t just bring Tara down, she brings Wiln up, which threatens my position. So, I’m not going to step aside and continue to let the two of you screw over my future. No, you said that when you hit rock bottom, you would consult me. Well, you’re chained against a wall on Kylo’s ship and he wants to murder the fuck out of you. Welcome to rock bottom!”

Hux sighed and looked down at Tara, “We did say that we would try my way, then yours, and then Cern’s. Maybe it’s worth a shot?”
Tara grimaced, but took a deep breath and asked, “Alright, what’s your plan, Cern?”

A faint *hiss* of a door sliding open filled their ears, and their head turned as one toward the hallway. They could hear the footsteps of Wiln leading a few Stormtroopers to come escort Tara to her prison cell.

Cern smiled, “Something I should have done a long time ago.”

Chapter End Notes

Coming Up Next Chapter…

**Ash and Blood**

Poe confronts Kaydel about her PTSD. Rey learns alcohol and religious ceremonies are a bad combination. Kylo admits to Sasa that there’s one more detail about Felicity’s shooting that he didn’t tell Poe.

**Tidbit** I wanted to point out, Valra has two sets of names I pull influence from. Southern Valrians will typically have Irish/Gaelic/Celtic names such as Garvan, Brendan, Imogen, Una, and Alaric (yes, Alaric is Germanic, but you can find it having Irish roots as well.) Meanwhile the Northern Valrians have Hebrew names such as Dinah, Cadman, Levi, Kezia, Micah, and Araeya which is a play on the Hebrew name Ariya, which is a boy’s name because Felicity did not think that through, but hey she was suffering from Postpartum Depression, so what do you really want from her?

Also, if you’re interested in exactly how I picture Sasa, I’ve finally found the perfect facecast for her: Erin Chambers. Particularly the photo at the link [imgur.com/gallery/QtLainD/](http://imgur.com/gallery/QtLainD/) if you want to check that out. She’s my perfect Sasa except her eyes aren’t forest green.
Kylo holds Sasa while she cries, Poe holds Kaydel while she cries, and Teng holds Rey as she cries.

Oh, also Kylo Ren is a monster.

Hey guys, I’m sorry about the long time between updates. The fact is that this story has gotten so huge and frankly out of control that I needed a break. I needed to step back and work on something different for a while. Give myself a reality check and remember how to write reasonable length chapters.

I’ve mostly detoxed now, but there’s going to be a few changes.

First, no more promises how many chapters something will take. I’m not going to pitch a chapter number for when TFA will start. It will start when it starts. That’s the end of it. We are in the final act of the story the takes place before TFA, but that doesn’t mean it’s a short act. Over the next (probably at least) 30 chapters you will see exactly why it has taken so long. I don’t want to give anything away but there are a few huge things about to happen/be revealed that majorly affect how TFA plays out this time. There is something that drastically affects Rey and Finn. There’s a huge change of motivation for Kylo. And there is a plot twist that I have been teasing for literally years that will make you guys hate and love me. Just hang in there, I promise there are so amazing stories coming up.

Second, chapters will be a much lower wordcount. I know I’ve gotten dozens of reviews telling me they love the length of my chapters, but 30k chapters aren’t fair for anyone. I can’t write them and you can’t read them. I can’t do this anymore. I’m not sure how long they will be, but I’m aiming for a max of 16k. I know that’s cutting things in half, but it’s what I have to do. I will also be editing a whole lot more. I will be cutting out jokes, exposition, worldbuilding, anything that can be trimmed, will be. To make up for the cuts, I will have a story on AO3 called The Long Way to the Cutting Room Floor which will be devoted to cut scenes/lines/moments and probably a whole heck of a lot of flashbacks. I’ve already got quite a few cuts from this chapter.

Third, I make no promises, but as a way to reduce word length, I might resurrect and revamp my story Definitions of Home to not just be the story of Luke and Felicity. It will be the new home of any oneshots about this universe I get the inkling to write. I’ve actually almost completely finished the two-parter that has been on cliffhanger for years, so I will finish the story of Luke and Felicity in Zygerria. Whenever I get the temptation of say telling the story of how Evan and Paige became a couple, to there the story will go. Again, this is still only an idea that I’m not sure I’m going to follow through on, but let me know if you’re interested.

The fourth thing is probably one of the hardest decisions I have made concerning this
I love this in theory, but in reality, I hate it. The wordcount will scare off new readers. So, I have decided that when we do actually reach TFA, I’m going to split the story. I’ll tie things up a little bit here, but I’ll post a new story file that directly continues the story. For now I’m considering either the titles The Long Road Home, The Long Way Back, or simply The Long Way Home: Part Two.

When it gets to TLJ and TROS I’ll probably split the story again. But this is how I have to do it; I only hope you’ll follow me to wherever this story leads.

Oh, and I’ll stop trying to make everyone in the Galaxy related. In this interim I seriously considered making Imogen (the Village leader of the Valrian village on Jakku) the daughter of Felicity’s uncle Garvan, and I considered a convoluted plotline that would bring Gavin and Zena’s daughter, Miri back to life, simply because I wanted to write a scene with cousins Miri and Marks. Both plotlines are ridiculous and waste wordcount, so I need to stop doing things like that. From now on, not everyone in the Galaxy knows each other and/or are related.

…For the record, my choice of Sasa’s parents was made before this vow.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

The Long Way Home

Chapter Fifty-Nine

Blood and Ash

When Kylo Ren was twenty years old, something strange happened. His room had been broken into. No one knew who did or how, simply that when Kylo returned to his quarters one day, they were trashed. All the security measures had been perfectly obscured – the camera feed cut, the door locks picked, the vocalized access codes guessed and simulated – leaving no possible leads on who did it. It was the work of an expert.

One would imagine that someone would break into the second-in-command of the First Order to steal secrets, harm Kylo, plant something in the room, or commit some drastic act of harm.

Instead, the burglar did only one thing. They screwed with his medical droid’s protocol function, changing what his droid addressed him as by default, and resetting the passcode to change defaults to a passcode that in ten years, Kylo still hadn’t figured out.

The worst part of that was that Max – Kylo’s medical droid – had too much important information in
him and only him that the First Order couldn’t memory-wipe Max without there being some major issues as a result. They couldn’t even clone is his knowledge, take out the moniker, and reinstall the information. The burglar had deleted all previous backups so if they cloned and reinstalled the information, Max would still need the passcode to change what he called Kylo.

So, ten years later whenever Kylo Ren walked into a room, his Medical Droid, Max would always call out:

“Master Benjamin!”

Benjamin wasn’t even his name.

Kylo sighed as he paused in the doorway of Sasa’s room where his droid was attending her, “How is the examination going, Max?”

Sasa was sitting on her bed, still wearing that stained and bloodied green dress. There was something disconnected in her eyes as she stared blankly at the wall. Her arm was in a split, as to not aggravate her injured collarbone and she winced every time she had to move her broken leg.

“I’ve almost finished Master Benjamin,” Max answered, a quartet of thin metal appendages stuck out of the black floating ball whirring at top speed as he stitched up Sasa’s face. “Just a few more stitches and I should have Master Sasa all fixed up, concluding tonight’s treatments.”

“Tonight’s treatments?” Kylo scowled as he watched Max undo Kaydel Ko Connix’s stitching. Sasa’s wounds had been treated with basic sewing thread as Kaydel had regrettably used up all her medical stitches on her father. “Are you splitting up treatment?”

“Yes, Master,” Max replied. “I’m afraid I cannot allow Master Sasa to go through a round of bacta treatment just yet. Her body has not yet finished dealing with the miscarriage.”

“What does that have to do with anything?”

“The way bacta works is it looks for any biological defects and speeds up the healing process, sometimes helping produce the biological materials to fix those defects: white blood cells, muscular tissue, skin, hair, and so on. It will also attempt to destroy any foreign viruses or pathogens in the body. Bacta is not perfect: it can’t regenerate limbs, fix healed over scars, or recognize a miscarriage. When a woman having a miscarriage undergoes full submergence of bacta, the bacta thinks the child is a harmful virus and attempts to expel the child and fix the womb. Unfortunately, its version of fixing the womb means destroying not only the child, but any other egg it finds as the bacta will recognize the egg is where the child originated from – at least partly.”

Kylo stared at his droid, “Can you make your explanation a lot shorter and just get to the point?”

“If I put Master Sasa in a bacta tank while she’s suffering a miscarriage, the bacta will sterilize her.”

“Oh.” Kylo glanced at Sasa, who was still staring blankly at the wall. “Yeah, maybe don’t do that then.”

“Of course, Master Benjamin,” Max said. “By tomorrow afternoon Master Sasa’s body will have gotten to the point where it can handle bacta, and we’ll do a treatment in the tank for a few hours. For tonight however, she’ll have to cope with a broken leg and collarbone. I have set them properly, bandaged her up, and given her something for the pain. But we’ll have to leave them like that until tomorrow – there’s really no point in making casts for such a short length of time – and Master Sasa will just have to be careful about moving her limbs tonight.”
Kylo frowned as he watched Sasa staring at the wall, absolutely unresponsive to the discussion of her own treatments around her.

He sighed and crossed the room to crouch down in front of her. Sasa’s eyes didn’t even register that she knew he was in front of her. Kylo gently lifted her chin. Sasa blinked, snapping out of her reverie and realizing Kylo was there.

“Oh, Kylo, I-” her eyes rapidly fluttered.

“It’s okay,” he stroked her cheek lightly, and then lowered his hand. “I understand. What we’re going through right now is… a lot.”

Sasa looked down shyly, “Have you spoken to the Supreme Leader?”

Kylo’s throat suddenly felt very dry, “Uh… yeah. I did. He’s actually going to be coming onto the Finalizer in a few days to… deal with this situation.”

“What did he say about Tara?”

“…Nothing quite yet. She’s to be confined to her quarters until all the Knights of Ren go before him. Berd is to be kept in a prison cell, and Doxl is in the morgue to be preserved. But… the Supreme Leader is wise. He’ll deal with all of them in a few days. You just focus on getting better, okay?”

Something dark burned in Sasa’s eyes that Kylo had never seen in her before; but it was something he was not unfamiliar with in his own reflection.

“You made me a promise, Kylo,” Sasa’s voice was dry but intense. “You promised you would deal with Tara.”

“And I will,” he kissed the back of her hand. “I swear I will.”

Sasa didn’t say anything as he dropped her hand back down.

“What about the baby?” Sasa changed the topic. “What did the Supreme Leader say about my… my miscarriage?”

“He’s disappointed.”

Sasa hissed in pain as she dropped her head to shield the tears in her eyes. Disappointing the Supreme Leader was a death sentence to a Chosen.

Kylo lifted her chin again, “But not with you.”

Sasa’s exhalation of relief was so shaky, Kylo wasn’t sure it wasn’t a sob.

“He’s proud of you, Sasa,” Kylo told her, a small lift to the corner of his lips. “He said that he picked the right Chosen. You worried him for a bit there, but you managed to pull through. The Supreme Leader looks forward to the day you successfully bear my heir.”

Somehow Sasa couldn’t quite find her smile.

“Oh, there will be none of that any time soon,” Max interjected. “I’m afraid you won’t be able to engage in sexual intercourse with Master Sasa for some time yet.”

Sasa and Kylo’s head snapped to him in unison.
“What?” Kylo blurted out.

“Beg pardon?” Sasa echoed.

“It is unwise and potentially unsafe to become pregnant so quickly after a miscarriage,” Max said. “I’m afraid I’ll have to ask you, Master Benjamin not to touch Master Sasa for the next six weeks.”

Kylo and Sasa just stared at each other in a complete loss of what to say or do. Their entire relationship had been built on sex, and now they… couldn’t have it?

The hell were they going to do for the next six weeks?

“So…” Kylo cleared his throat. “When you say I can’t touch her, what exactly to you mean by touch?”

The droid didn’t have eyes, but Kylo was fairly certain Max was staring him down in a not unlike Leia Organa doesn’t have time nor patience for the antics of Solo men fashion.

“If you think the answer might be no,” Max said, “then the answer is no.”

Kylo tried not to let his face betray his inner sulking. He saw a lot of games of dejarik in his future.

When Max left, the pair was left in a long, lingering silence. Sasa was sat on the bed, head low and dress bloodied. Kylo stood perpendicular next to her, staring at the closed door. The room’s customary background music was nowhere to be found. If there had been a ticking clock in the room, it would have echoed like an earthquake.

“I…” Kylo started, but no other words came to him.

Sasa sighed and smoothed down her dress, wincing as she stroked her broken leg, “I should probably get out of this. Would you-”

He nodded, understanding and went into her wardrobe to find her something more comfortable to sleep in. Kylo picked out a nightgown that didn’t look too seductive – which was difficult considering the intention of her night attire – mindful that her broken leg would make pyjama bottoms painful to change into.

His thought about her injuries proved correct when he exited the wardrobe to find Sasa whimpering in pain as she tried to unlace her gown. As she stood, her leg cried out in pain, and as she reached backwards, her collarbone protested.

“It’s alright,” Kylo led her towards the dejarik table where he set down the fresh nightgown. “I’ve got it. You just lean your weight against the table, rest your leg, and I’ll take care of your ties.”

Sasa managed to find a bit of a smile as she whispered an almost inaudible, “Thank you.”

The silence kept its firm grip on the air as Sasa leaned against the table with Kylo unlacing her gown. Something awkward but not quite uncomfortable thrummed between the couple as his fingers untied her laces like it was their second nature. It was in fact second nature to him; how many times had he pulled her out of a beautiful dress like that? Fingers frantically flying across lace to get to delicate, seductive skin and the satisfaction of lust.

But lust wasn’t interesting to either of them in that moment, just… tenderness and intimacy. As the sides of seafoam green fabric were parted for pale but familiar skin, the only thought on Ben Solo’s mind was non-carnal comfort. A comfort he scarcely knew.
He didn’t need to look at Sasa’s face to see the tears rolling down her cheeks, and she didn’t need to reach into the Force to feel Ben’s despair.

The last lace loosened, and Kylo pushed down the mass of fabric that had once been the most stunning green dress he had ever seen in his life. Sasa stood before him in just her undergarments, ones he felt like a lifetime ago she had teased him about the seductiveness of them. Had all gone to plan, he would have had a wonderful time with the siren call of her lingerie, but now… Now none of it mattered.

And as she couldn’t fight back her sobs anymore, neither could he.

Kylo wrapped his arms around her waist and roughly pulled her back into his desperate embrace. As she sobbed openly and inconsolably, her eyes unable to move from the door of their would-be baby’s room, he buried his face on her hair and copper dampened with his tears.

He didn’t know how to handle such grief.

And then Sasa spoke.

“Kylo… Is this what it feels like?”

It took him a second to find his voice, “What what feels like?”

“The Dark Side.”

He frowned and lifted his head. Sasa had a blankness in her eyes that he only saw during their rebalancing sessions – the only times she thought of her mysterious parents. Something angry, empty, dark, desperate, but above all fearful filled those forest green eyes.

The looked exactly like his Force Signature… and when he touched her Cerise Signature, he had to recoil.

“I’ve never felt this way before,” Sasa’s voice was distant. “This… anger… ever burning anger.”

Kylo’s throat was so dry the bare moisture of his breath stuck to it, “How does the anger make you feel?”

“Powerful,” she whispered. Sasa looked up into his eyes, begging him for permission to… what she wasn’t exactly sure. “I feel unstoppable, like… like I could-”

“Take on the Galaxy by yourself?”

Something in his eyes echoed in hers, “You’ve felt it?”

“From the moment the Supreme Leader first reached for me… when he chose me.”

“I’ve felt anger before, but this… this is another level.”

“Embrace it. Don’t be afraid,” Kylo whispered. “I feel it too.”

Eyes fluttering closed, Sasa took a deep breath like she was inhaling the Dark Side into her very soul. Her head lulled back into Kylo’s neck, and his brown eyes locked onto her ample chest, watching like a hawk as her lungs rose and fell, deeply drinking in the Dark Side.

“Close your eyes and breathe,” he bade. “Just breathe.”
He felt her body burning in the Force, a darkness and ecstasy consuming her in a way that far surpassed the greatest night of pleasure he had ever given her.

“Kylo?” she whispered in the same way as a day he had never forgotten.

“What do you see?” he echoed his words from long past, his breath hot on her ear the same way as that day Alyla had interrupted them in the training room.

“Power. Great power.”

“Harness it.” His hands drifted down her stomach to caress where their lost baby had once dwelled, “Bring it in, and settle it in your core.”

“Draw on that power by drawing on your core,” Sasa remembered the words.

He gave a small nod, “Draw on the Dark Side.”

“But how?” Sasa’s eyes fluttered open. Those forest green orbs were drawn like a magnet to his lips. “You never showed me how.”

He bent his head down to capture her lips.

_I told you, My Apprentice, that I seek to take care of you._ The voice of Snoke interrupted. _I was right to guide you on this path to Sasa. I have moulded the perfect bride for you, and now we will take care of your faithless deputy._

Kylo abruptly pulled back from Sasa.

She frowned, her line on the Dark Side drawing slack, “What is it?”

“The Supreme Leader,” Kylo explained. “He’s…”

She gave a gentle smile and touched his arm.

_Rest tonight, and gather your strength. Tomorrow is the dawn of the New Knights of Ren. But remember what I told you, Young Solo, the Skywalker Legacy must continue, and it will only grow strong if you find an exceptional mother, unlike the misstep your uncle took._

Kylo’s stomach dropped as he remembered goading his father into asking Dameron about Rhiaon. Any moment now the truth would be out, and they would all know what had happened to Felicity Rhiaon Skywalker. The vile act he had committed that led his own uncle to try to murder Kylo.

Leia Organa – his mother – would know the truth… Or as much of it as he had told Dameron.

“What does the Supreme Leader say?” Sasa asked.

Kylo couldn’t find words as he thought of the day he had been sent out of the room like a petulant child, deemed unworthy to witness the death of Felicity Rhiaon. But he had shown them all what he was capable of.

He fought back the guilt shifting his stomach as he imagined what his mother would think about what he did.

“Just that… he’s proud of you,” Kylo eyed the would-be bride in his arms. He knew that word of the miscarriage would also reach Leia Organa and wondered what his mother would think of the woman
Sasa smiled, “I only hope that I continue to please our Wise and Glorious Supreme Leader. I am honoured that he has shown me nothing but his unwavering faith and favor for me above all other Chosen.”

Something very uncomfortable passed over Kylo’s face as he tried to keep a smile on it.

There was still something he might not have told her about that trip to the Supremacy seven weeks previous.

“Come,” Kylo bade, taking a step back but not without gently rubbing her arm. “Let’s get you to the fresher and get you all cleaned up.”

Sasa smiled and nodded, limping her way forward to the fresher. She stopped when she saw Kylo didn’t follow, but rather bent down to gather the ripped and bloodied dress from the ground.


Kylo frowned as he stood holding the dress, “But it’s ruined.”

“I know, but… Just leave it for now. Maybe I can do something with it later.”

He didn’t say anything, just stared at her.

She sighed and lowered her head, “I just don’t want to forget.”

A sad smile on his face, Kylo set the dress down, crossed to her, and lifted Sasa’s chin.

“We won’t forget,” he said gently. “I promise.”

Sasa managed a smile of her own and then gave him a short but sweet kiss. Then, without another word, she took his hand and led him to the refresher.

“Oh Poe!”

“God, Kaydel!”

Cleared for their injuries from the Ninka’s medical wing and given a set of quarters with separate fresher to help them avoid overeager soldiers asking too many questions, Poe Dameron and Kaydel Ko Connix spent the night doing exactly what everyone expected them to do.

It didn’t matter if they had already had thank god we’re alive sex, thank god we’re alive sex on a bed completely trumped closet thank god we’re alive sex any day.

They made love in Kaydel favorite position: Poe on top where she could bury her head into his neck. As Poe passionately thrust into her Kaydel’s hands alternated gripping his shoulders and roamed wildly over those back muscles and shoulder blades Kaydel adored so immeasurably that – much like Rey once thought about her boyfriend – Kaydel wished she could make it illegal for Poe to ever wear a shirt.
He might go along with it too.

Kaydel was so caught up in the pleasure of it all, especially coming undone when Poe whispered fervent Yavinese in her ear. She opened her eyes so she could see as he moved her lips to pepper a series of small kisses over his ear. It was a small touch, a moment only the deeply bonded of lovers would know to give.

He gave the groan of pleasure Kaydel had fallen so in love with, and like a thousand times, before she ran her hands down in shoulder blades in utter ecstasy.

Only this time, her hands spread a trail Doxl Ren’s blood with them.

Kaydel gasped and instinctively pushed Poe off her. He had barely moved half a second later when Kaydel realized what she was doing and stopped herself. But the gasp and sudden jerk was enough to catch Poe’s attention, and he immediately brought himself to a halt.

“What? What is it?” he asked in a panic. “Did I do something-”

“It’s okay,” Kaydel insisted when she saw Doxl Ren’s blood wasn’t on Poe. She tried to shut him up with her lips quickly on his, “Oh, Poe, kiss me.”

Even Poe could tell she was lying it on a little thick.

“Wait, stop,” Poe pulled back, letting his body hover over hers. “Stop.”

Kaydel scowled, but her heart pounded a mile a minute, “What is it?”

“I just want to make sure you’re okay and enjoying this.”

“Of course, I’m enjoying this,” Kaydel tried to wave off. “I always do.”

He couldn’t help but feel a smug grin spread across his lips, “Well, I do endeavour to please… but is everything alright?”

“Yes.”

“You’re positive?”

Kaydel scowled, “Are you calling me a liar?”

“Of course not, it’s just the past few days have been a lot. No one would judge you – least of all me – if things were a little off.”

She stared up at him in silence as she considered her reply. Anytime else staring into those gorgeous eyes in the middle of that man making love to her would lead to only a passionate of hers lips on his.

But that wasn’t the case this time as she stared in those caring pools of deep brown. She could see in his eyes the understanding. There were few things Kaydel hid from Poe – so few, she would actually have to make a point of thinking what they were to figure it out – but this was not something she could.

Making her choice, Kaydel didn’t say anything, just wrapped her arms around Poe’s neck and hugged him tight. He didn’t say anything, just bowed his head and kissed her shoulders as he got back to work. Kaydel sighed in relief and a moan of pleasure escaped her throat as he felt the familiar touch and weight of his body atop hers as her arms clung to Poe’s neck.
She pulled her arm tight across his throat, crushing it as best she could as she fought Doxl for the blade. His ragged breaths and wheezes weren’t enough to counter that heavy weight of his muscular form pinned her to the ground.

Kaydel cried out desperately as she stretched for that blade. She turned her head away, her focus on nothing but the blade.

She had to grab it. Fight Doxl. Escape. Win. He had to do whatever it took to protect her friends, escape this hell, and fall once more into the arms of Poe Dameron.

Kaydel yelled in the worst pain of her life as it felt like her arm pulled right of the socket, but it was a success. She snatched the knife and without a thought, slashed it across the throat of the man on top of her.

She turned back, and screamed.

Poe Dameron was on top of her; eyes bulged out as he choked on the blood pouring from his throat.

“Poe!” Kaydel yelled.

He practically leapt off of her.

“Whoa whoa whoa!” he held his hands up in surrender as he rolled as far to the other side of the bed away from her as possible. “Babe! Babe! It’s okay. It’s me.”

But it wasn’t okay. When Kaydel looked down at her hands – heart pounding in her ears – they were so covered in blood, it dripped onto the bedsheets.

Then she looked at Poe, and could hardly believe it when she saw his throat perfectly unblemished. Kaydel looked back down at the bedsheet… no bloodstains.

She felt like she was going to be sick.

“I- I… I’m sorry Poe,” her voice was low, but not a whisper. “I… I don’t think I can do this right now.”

He considered his reply, “Yeah… I’m not feeling it anymore myself.”

The way her eyes flicked to him in such fear made Poe think that wasn’t the best thing to say.

“I’m just… tired,” Poe lied. “Don’t think I can keep it up that much longer… literally.”

She made a small sharp inhalation of breath that Poe might have thought was a laugh.

Poe debated himself for a moment, then shifted forward on the bed, reaching out a hand for her, “Look, Babe if you want to talk-”

“There’s nothing to talk about.”

His look made her sigh.
“Okay,” she dropped her head. “I don’t *want* to talk about anything right now.”

“Alright.” Poe set his outstretched hand onto the mattress. “But when you do want to talk, I’m here for you.”

Kaydel smiled and wove hesitant fingers through his on the mattress, “I know… Thank you.”

“Anytime,” the words slipped from Poe’s mouth before he could stop them. Poe figured Kaydel wouldn’t know the reference, but it was instinctual call back to the words shared by Luke and Felicity.

The whole situation with Kaydel had brought Poe nothing but thoughts of Luke Skywalker. How Luke had rejected Poe’s offer to talk about Felicity – and now knowing what had happened to Fliss, Poe didn’t blame him – but also of the stories he heard of Luke and Felicity during Felicity’s postpartum depression. Poe never wanted that kind of distance between himself and Kaydel.

When Kaydel released Poe’s fingers and turned to grab her night clothes from the floor, Poe sighed and got off the bed to collect his own. They didn’t say a word as the pair cleaned up and redressed from their aborted attempt of lovemaking. And when Poe crawled back into bed with Kaydel, seeing her back turned to him, Poe decided to give her her space and turned his own to her.

Poe stared at the opposite wall, praying to the Force and every deity he knew to help him get Kaydel through this.

The mattress shifted and an arm wrapped around his waist. He felt Kaydel’s tears on his back as she spooned him desperately, like she was afraid he would dissipate in her arms.

“I’m not going anywhere, Kaydel,” he whispered, not turning his head a millimetre. Poe wasn’t going to risk spooking her. “Not a mile away from you. 108. I promise.”

It took a moment for her to respond, but they were such sweet and scared words, “I love you, Poe. I don’t want to lose you.”

“You won’t. No matter what you say or do, nothing will ever change how I feel about you.”

Kaydel only wished she could believe him.

Kylo lingered at the doorway into the nursery, eyes drifting over the furniture, toys, clothing, and equipment that should have belonged to Nix. Kylo should have laid Nix down to rest in that lonely crib. Sasa should have rocked Nix in that chair in that corner. Kylo should have entertained Nix with those toys. Sasa should have dressed Nix in those onesies, perfectly coordinating them with her own outfit.

Nix should have taken comfort in the blue glow of that R2 unit shaped nightlight… the same way Rey did once upon a time.

Kylo sighed and slowly entered the room, eyes casting about. Sasa’s fresher had been out of towels, and she sent him to grab some from the only place with extras: the nursery. Kylo wanted in and out of there as quickly as possible. Locating a towel, he snatched it up, and heaved a sigh of relief at completing his mission without incident.

And then it all went silent.
Silent like someone hit the mute button on the world. His breath echoed like a thunderstorm as his heart pounded in his chest.

Kylo looked up and there she stood. Right next to the nightlight he so affectionately nicknamed her, Rey Skywalker was staring at him.

Her eyes burned into him and he felt the weight of his guilt bearing down on his shoulders. He remembered the last time he had seen that face alive. He remembered the last words he said to her after he found her alone and scared in the woods. The words he said before he swung a lightsaber down on her head.

"Close your eyes, Nightlight. I'm going to make sure no one can hurt you again."

Tears shook in their locked eyes, the words echoing in their minds as they both remembered.

Then Rey's eyes hardened.

"I know what you did to my mother."

Kylo’s breath caught as Rey’s eyes burned him hotter than the lavas of Mustafar.

"You're a monster."

And she was gone.

It would be a lie to say that Teng was surprised when he entered their tent and found Rey crying. She had been doing it on and off ever since hearing what happened to her mother.

Without a second thought, Teng rushed to her side, dropped to his knees, wrapped his arms around Rey, and held her while she cried.

"I knew," Rey barely through her tears as Teng kissed her head and did his best to console her. "I knew this whole time, but I… I didn’t know, you know?"

He could guess what she was getting at.

"Our visit is almost done here, Starlight," Teng said. "Just one more night. The vaporators are all fixed. We’ll be home tomorrow. Come on, let’s just enjoy the last night of the Festival."

"How can I possibly enjoy the Festival after last night?"

Teng sighed, "Well, if you’re really that upset, we could always head home now."

Rey took a deep breath and considered.

"Come on," Teng said. "Let’s pack our things, get home, and see if Quom managed to burn down Niima Outpost."

"I completely forgot he had sneezing flames. Have you heard anything about his condition?"

"Your father says Quom’s much better, but is very grumpy as he recovers. Of course, I pointed out Quom is usually always grumpy, so things might be better than we think."
Rey shook her head, “My father… How can I look my father in the eye after learning what happened to my mother?”

“I don’t know, but it is explaining that whole had a mental breakdown and could never get over his wife thing.”

Rey tilted her head against Teng’s, “Has anyone in the village notice how much I’ve been crying.”

“No one’s said anything but I’d put money on them just keeping quiet. Micah did suggested I get you to drink a lot of Muja brew tonight while I helped him set up the barrels.”

“Muja brew?”

“I believe it’s an alcoholic beverage we’re to overindulge in tonight.” Teng kissed the top of her head, “So what do you say? Want to head home?”

“No. I think I should stay. I think it’s what my mom would want me to do.”

“I think she’d want you to do what makes you happy.”

“I’m with you.” Rey kissed his cheek, “That’s all it takes to make me happy.”

“Man, you really don’t set the bar high,” Teng teased, earning a swat for it. “Alright, I surrender, Mighty Jedi.”

Rey’s smile fell, “…Teng?”

“Yeah?”

“Did you think what happened to my mother is why my father hide our powers from me?”

Teng sighed, “Come on, Luke’s told you why. You can see how with your knowledge of your powers they’ve awoken and grown. Ignorance kept you safe from the First Order. All of us safe.”

“And now that it’s awake?”

Teng had no answer.

“Is that what being a Jedi is?” Rey asked, her distant. “Amazing powers, but endangering everyone I love. I lost Aletha because of my powers. What if I lose Quom or Dad or… Or you?”

He thought about his answer for a while, “Rey, I can’t promise you nothing will ever hurt the ones you love. I’ve lost too many people to be that fool. What I can tell you is that the fight to keep what you love safe is never a waste of time and effort. It’s the truest act of love. All I want is for you to be happy. With me? Absolutely. But never be afraid to love someone because you might lose them. Just enjoy the time you do have together, and fight as long and as hard as possible to keep them. Love is never wrong, Rey.”

She couldn’t resist the bait, “What if you’re in love with your brother? Or an animal?”

“Can we not put an asterisk next to my beautiful speech?”

“Only for you Moonshine,” Rey chuckled.

They shared a sweet kiss.
Teng smiled when she pulled back from him, “Now, will that help solve all your massive mommy issues?”

“Teng!” she snapped.

“I’m sorry, I’ve never been really good at comforting people. Especially people who ruin beautiful speech. I just had the one in me; don’t ask for another.”

“Teng, I need you right now,” Rey moaned. “How am I supposed to possibly deal with this? Go out in front of all of them and pretend I’m alright?”

He glanced to the open tent flap. It was enough to see outside, but not open enough for people to overhear their conversation unless they really wanted to.

Teng watched for a moment as the Valrians started to set up for the night’s ceremony. He watched Una in particular who was busy filling glasses on a rough looking table as Micah and Murtaugh hauled over the barrels Teng had helped them with earlier.

“Well… I got one idea,” Teng said. “Something we’ve never done before.”

“What’s that?”

“Want to get drunk?”

Rey looked at him in surprise.


“…Yeah, okay.”

They didn’t say much as Kylo drew the hot bath for Sasa, and he certainly didn’t mention the vision of Rey as Kylo helped Sasa disrobe her undergarments.

Her broken leg didn’t prevent her from getting into the bathtub, but it soon became clear that the combination leg and collarbone issues made washing herself near impossible. It was too much to ask Sasa to stand on her broken leg during a shower – Max’s bandaging was thankfully waterproof – so Kylo found himself tending to Sasa’s cleaning.

Wordlessly – and thankfully with no interruptions from Snoke or Rey – Kylo washed away the blood and soot from Sasa’s body. Across her arms, behind her neck, down her legs, over her breasts, and taking special care up her bloodstained thighs. Tender hands cleaned away the remaining evidence of their miscarriage as the copper-haired beauty in his arms wept. In any other circumstance, Kylo’s hands caressing her thighs would have led to another attempt at making the Skywalker Heir, but in that moment his touches were devoid of sexuality, as sensual as the actions were.

The tears eventually dried, and Kylo turned his attention to her matted, sooty hair. Sasa shuddered as he shampooed her hair, fingers kneading her scalp expertly. And as he rinsed the conditioner from her hair, Kylo snuck a kiss under her ear that made her sigh in a type of relaxation he had almost never heard from her.

“I don’t think we’ll need to do any emotional rebalancing tonight,” he chuckled.
“Oh no, you’ve got me quite relaxed,” she nuzzled him. She drew a long breath and exhaled like she was determined to purge every last ounce of darkness from her soul. “And I thought I was supposed to be the expert on emotional control.”

“We’re in trouble if I’ve become the best one at that.”

“I think you’re better than you give yourself credit.” She drew her thumb over his lip, “Certainly better than sixteen-year-old Ben Solo dealing with his antagonistic aunt by marriage.”

Kylo drew back.

“I’m proud of you,” Sasa said. “It takes courage to admit something like that.”

“I didn’t tell Dameron out of bravery,” Kylo cut off.

She just looked at him, “…I never said you did.”

Kylo had never wished her eyes off him so badly.

“Stay with me tonight,” Sasa said.

He blinked, thrown by the sudden change of topic, “What?”

“I don’t want my bed to be empty tonight.”

“Sasa, you heard what Max said-”

“I don’t mean sex. I mean sleeping at each other’s side. Please, Kylo.”

Kylo sighed, “I thought you didn’t want me to sleep in your room.”

“Then we’ll go to yours.” Sasa looked down, “I just… I just want to be held tonight. Is that so much to ask? Am I that … so much a burden?”

Guilt sunk in his stomach as he thought of the true nature of his visit to Snoke seven weeks ago… when Sasa had been unknowingly pregnant with Kylo’s child.

Sasa is only one of eight whom I have groomed for you. Snoke reminded. There are others to take her place if she continues to fail in her duties to bear your son.

Kylo could barely gather his courage, “Sasa… There’s something I have to tell you.”

“What is it?” she looked at him with those beautiful eyes that he could drown his soul in.

Eyes that could turn on him with such sorrow and hatred.

But a child she conceived and carried, and therefore my faith has been restored in her… for now.

“I… I’ll sleep by your side tonight,” Kylo changed course, desperate to conceal the threat to her.

Sasa frowned, “Don’t treat me like an idiot. I know you’re hiding something.”

He sighed, “I can’t tell you just yet. Not tonight.”

“Kylo-”
“But I will tell you something else as recompense. An even bigger secret than this temporary one.”

Sasa frowned, “Like what?”

Kylo took a deep breath.

“…There’s one more part to the story of Felicity Rhiaon’s body. Something even Luke Skywalker doesn’t know.”

Tiggs is our flight surgeon. She’s a tall, skinny Faust with no sense of humor at all – I mean zero. You don’t joke with Tiggs, because she’s the one who decides if you get to fly on a mission or if you’re grounded and have to go see her boss, Doctor Kalonia. Tiggs doesn’t just look for physical injuries, but also exhaustion, stress, or other ailments that might cause you to panic or freeze up during a hop.

- The Journal of Paige Tico

Poe Dameron was such a light sleeper that it had been eleven years since he had a night he didn’t wake up multiple times. Being a soldier, having to be ready to jump out of bed and go on a mission at any moment, had completely ruined his sleeping patterns. The idea of sleeping eight hours straight was as impossible as Felicity Rhiaon Skywalker coming back from the dead.

Kaydel, however, could sleep through an earthquake, and actually on one mission had. She also had very little patience for Poe waking her up the seven times of night he did. So when Poe woke up two hours after he and Kaydel fell asleep, he didn’t even so much as glance back at her, fearing the wrath of tiny but surprisingly violent and loud when she needed to be girlfriend.

Poe laid there for a minute or so, trying to lull himself back to sleep, but as usual it didn’t work. He decided to try a new position to get more comfortable, and rolled onto his other side without opening his eyes. His sleepy mind then remembered that Kaydel had been holding him when she fell asleep, so he reached out his hand to see if he had rolled onto Kaydel.

His hand felt nothing but the sheets.

Frowning, Poe opened his eyes and found that his hand was resting on the empty mattress. Kaydel was nowhere to be found.

Sitting up, he looked about the room and saw the light on in the fresher. As the door was open, he figured Kaydel wasn’t doing anything too private. Rubbing the sleep from his eyes, he stretched his weary bones, and hauled himself to his feet.

He heard the tap running before he reached the door, but that wasn’t the thing that worried him. It was the sound of Kaydel muttering to herself, words of paranoia and nonsense.

“Come on, off. Off! Why isn’t this working? He can’t see. They can’t see. Poe can’t see this. Get it together Kaydel. It’s just blood. Just wash it away.”

Poe stopped himself in the doorway, and stood there in the shadows frowning. The mirror above the sink of the fresher was inside and quite a bit to the right of the doorway. Unless she was specifically
intending it, Kaydel couldn’t see his reflection in the mirror from that angle.

His mind told him to just walk right in there like it was nothing, as he had done so many times before. But his gut… his gut told him to stay and watch. Never before had his gut failed him, so he listened… and he watched.

The tap never stopped running water. Over and over, as Kaydel muttered to himself about Poe, secrets, blood, and murder, she scrubbed her hands with soap viciously. She rubbed at her hands as if she was trying to slough off the skin… and Poe thought that maybe she was.

At first, Poe tried to count how many times he watched Kaydel run her hands under the water, drew the bar of soap across, scrub furiously, rinse, and repeat. Over and over she did it, never noticing Poe with crossed arms watching and counting.

He lost track after twelve.

Still she cleaned. Kaydel scoured her hands so hard that they started to crack and bleed. Poe’s eyes went wide. She was washing her hands raw… and did not look like she planned to stop anytime soon.

As the blood swelled, her voice rose and her words became more manic.


Poe couldn’t watch any more.

“Kaydel,” he called softly.

She whipped around, the guiltiest look on her face as she stared at him wide eyed and frightened like a deer in the headlights.

“Poe,” Kaydel twisted the tap so hard Poe thought she might have broken it. Like it was nothing at all, Kaydel grabbed the hand towel off the rack and started to dry her hands, dabbing furiously at her red, swollen hands. Trying to keep them low and out of Poe’s sight, Kaydel asked, “Do you need the fresher?”

Not saying a word, Poe marched over to her, took the towel from her, tossed it aside, and held up her hands to display the red, raw, swollen, bloody mess she had made.

“We need to talk,” he said firmly.

Kaydel pulled her hands out of his, “There’s nothing to talk about, Poe.”

He was in no mood to play this game, “How many times have you washed your hands, Kay?”

“They were dirty.”

“How many times?” Poe crossed his arms.

She got the hint, “A… a few.”

“I counted twelve.”

Kaydel shot him an angry look, “It wasn’t twelve!”
“You’re right, it was more than twelve,” he was stubbornly resolute. They were dealing with this: end of story. “I just lost count after a while, and that’s not including how many times I watched you wash them before I started counting.”

“Poe-”

“And I’d be willing to bet you’ve been in here washing a whole bunch more times before I woke up and noticed you gone. Not to mention all that stuff you were whispering to yourself.”

Kaydel hung her head, “Poe, I…”

He waited for her to speak, but she couldn’t find the words. Having laid enough enough groundwork to make Kaydel face there was a problem, Poe felt it was time to move into sympathetic mode. He sighed, uncrossing his arms, and with slow steps, walked around Kaydel. Thankfully, she turned her body to watch him as he walked around her, so they were still face to face when he sat down on the lid of the toilet.

“Kaydel,” he said softly. Gently her took her hands in his and looked up into her eyes. He hoped putting himself lower down than her would make her feel less threatened, and the way her shoulders dropped a little made Poe feel hopeful. “Babe… My love, we need to talk about this.”

She stared at him, eyes slightly glassy behind the forming tears, “But I don’t want to talk about it.”

“I know… but it’s something we have to do.” He turned one of her hands over, and kissed the back of it, “Talk to me. Why do you keep washing your hands?”

Kaydel took a deep breath, “They have blood on them.”

“Only because you’ve washed them until they’re red and raw. You’ve washed them bloody, Kay.”

“It’s not my blood,” she whispered.

Poe closed his eyes, “Whose blood is it?”

When he opened them, Kaydel was crying.

He sighed, hating to see her like this but someone had to push her, “Are they Doxl Ren’s?”

Kaydel startled, “What? How do you-”

“Snap told me what happened. I know what you did.”

“You… you know?”

“Yes,” Poe stared up at her longingly. He wanted nothing more than to pull her into his arms, but knew she’d likely bolt if he did. “It doesn’t change anything. I love you.”

“I killed a man.”

“I’ve killed many men. You love me any less for it?”

“This is different.” She turned her head away, but Poe lifted his hand to her chin and forced her to look back at him. The hand on her face felt so tender and loving, yet she knew he had the strength over her. “Poe… I murdered a man. I… I slit his throat, held him in my arms, and felt his blood on my hands, and let him die.”
Poe withdrew both of his hands from her, and taking a deep breath, leaned forward. He set his elbows on his thighs and looked up at Kaydel assessing and debating.

“War…” he finally spoke, “is not a pretty thing. It’s nothing to aspire to, but it’s sometimes what must be done. Killing is sometimes what must be done. In war, you’re forced to do many unpretty things, killing paramount among them. And it’s not all in battles. Sometimes fighting in a war is murdering people. Not self-defence in combat, but assassinations and murders. You think Nalto is a good sniper because it helps in battles? When he wasn’t flying X-Wings, he was an assassin, and so was my father. Nalto’s original purpose in the Death Star heist was to assassinate Alaric Rhiaon – not that anyone told Fliss, and boy was she pissed when she found out.”

Kaydel wasn’t quite sure how to react to that.

“Life is full of sins and grey areas, Kaydel,” Poe pushed back a strand of her blonde hair. “You’re not going to be able to walk through life always having clean hands… but it’s how you deal with that blood on your hands that is the difference between a good person and a bad person.”

Her voice was low in response, “Are you saying people who… don’t seek help and talk about these things are bad people?”

“Of course not… but it’s not healthy and it’s not going to help anyone. Sometimes you have to put yourself first. Please don’t ever be afraid to ask for help… You went through something traumatic on Nixrye. Let me help you. Let me get you through this.”

“Poe,” she shook her head. “I don’t think I’ll ever forget this.”

“I’m saying you have to or even you should. What I’m saying is, you don’t have to do this alone.”

“But I keep replaying the scene and seeing the blood. I- I don’t know what’s going to trigger it?”

“Well, you know who might be able to help you figure that out? Your Aunt.”

Kaydel smiled a little, “I hope you’re referring to Aletha because if you mean Alecta-”

“Babe, I saw Alecta break a woman’s neck with only her foot. You see Alecta, you run like hell, and you don’t look back.”

A tiny chuckle escaped her lips.

Poe couldn’t stop the grin that split his face. She was calm, relaxed, at peace.

…For now.

“How about this?” Poe suggested, “Tomorrow morning, you and I will go talk to Aletha in private. If she can’t help you through this mental health issue, I’m positive she’ll know where to find those resources.”

“How can you be sure.”

“Well… no offense, but you’re exactly the first soldier to get PTSD. I’m sure General Organa allocated some things in the budget.”

“Are you teasing me?” Kaydel smirked.

Poe stood up and wrapped his arms around her waist, jerking her forward against his, “Maybe a little.”
Kaydel laughed and planted her hands on his chest, “That’s what I get for dating a Peacock.”

“Oh good. She’s catching on.”

Poe bent his head down, and they shared a kiss. At first Poe thought it a simple kiss, but when he went to pull back, Kaydel grabbed the back of his head and forced him to stay much longer.

They stood there, holding each other, loving each other, trusting in each other to find the way forward. They’d been through a lot, but there was a hard journey ahead. But if they stayed this way, trusted this love and the one at their side, there was nothing that could stop them.

“We’ll get through this, Babe,” Poe held her with their lips had had enough. “I promised.”

She sighed. His embrace was so warm and strong. In his arms, Kaydel knew that nothing would ever hurt her there.

Maybe she could see a way forward.

“Are you sure you’re okay with what I did?” Kaydel asked but her tone was much lighter than before. “I did kill a man, Poe. Might scare off most guys from a girl.”

“Nah, Connix,” Poe grinned. He kissed the top of her head, “You’re not getting rid of me that easily.”

Kaydel smiled, “Dang it.”

“I don’t understand,” Sasa said as they entered Kylo’s bedroom. “What do you mean there’s something more to the story of Felicity Rhiaon’s death?”

“I didn’t tell Uncle Luke the whole truth,” Kylo motioned for her to sit in the bed, which she was glad to do with her broken leg. Limping to Kylo’s room had been no fun whatsoever, though it was nice to be in clean clothing. “The truth is, I haven’t told anyone the whole story. Not even Alyla.”

“What does Alyla have to do with anything?”

“She’s the reason I threw Rhiaon in the trash compactor.”

Sasa cocked her head to the side, eyes encouraging him to explain.

Kylo sighed and sat down on the bed next to Sasa, struggling to find the strength to admit what really happened the day he tortured Felicity Rhiaon.

“I never expected for Rhiaon to tell me Rey died in that desert,” Kylo finally confessed the secrets he had carried so long. “When she did, I was left reeling, my faith shaken… And then Rhiaon begged me for her life. Begged me. Felicity Rhiaon didn’t beg anyone, and she pleaded with me for my life. The two of us never really got along, but we actually did for a little while at first. When we first met, Felicity was my mom’s cool old war friend who got to fight Darth Vader himself. Rhiaon liked me well enough, and I thought she was kind of a badass what with her and Uncle Luke escaping that whole business on Zygerria and when Rhiaon’s podracer boyfriend hooked my family up with VIP tickets to the championship race of the season… and then Rhiaon learned that I actually liked Darth Vader.”

Sasa touched his hand, guessing where this was going.
“It was like a switch was flicked in her head. I went from friend to enemy, and she went into me for liking him. She… did try to sort of brush things off and change the subject, but when I sensed that change in her demeanor, her old anger and guard going up, I couldn’t let it stand. I pushed her until she voiced her hatred of Vader to me… and then she berated anyone who would give in to and idolize those dark urges Vader reveled in as if I could control it. From that moment on, I never let the subject drop. For months she tried to avoid the subject with me, but after a while, I wore her down. I forced her to face the reality of what I was and that if she wanted to be with my uncle it meant dealing with the Dark Side. How could she ever expect to be the wife and mother of Force Sensitives and yet hold such hatred for the Dark Side? She never understood, and I came to hate her stubbornness and vitriol for the Dark Side. Her father created the Death Star and she wanted to chastise Uncle Luke for the things his father did? What a hypocrite.”

Sasa said nothing.

“But that wasn’t to say we didn’t have our moments. When Snoke was reaching for me the most, Rhiaon made her cases for the Light Side. When I was 11 and she let me force my way into her mind she… she turned to Uncle Luke and my mother to help me. I could see that was at least with good intentions… It’s not like she knew it would lead to my parents throwing me aside like trash.”

“That wasn’t why they sent you to Rornian,” Kylo heard Alyla’s voice in his head. The coward couldn’t even show her face, probably spending time with the son she wouldn’t even know about if it wasn’t for him. She was so ungrateful; Kylo gave her life, Lando, and a son, and yet she resented him.

Didn’t she know her death had been an accident?

Kylo’s gaze turned to the altar across the room. He stood and walked over to it, eyes taking time for each part of the altar: the ashes, the vial of bloodied hair, the lightsaber, the helmet.

“She’s the reason I have my grandfather’s helmet,” Kylo told Sasa as he absentmindedly handled Alyla’s lightsaber. The few times Marks had been in the room, his eyes always burned when they fell on his mother’s lightsaber, no doubt craving for it himself. “Rhiaon woke me up in the middle of the night and… well, long story short, she took me to Endor, to my grandfather’s pyre and told me that I was on a path that could only led there. A secret grave, not only unvisited, but hidden away because of the hatred people felt was so great a threat that the grave would be destroyed if it were public knowledge. She told me that I couldn’t keeping fighting between worlds, that I had to accept I was both Skywalker and Solo, a Skylo.”

“Or Kylo?” Sasa asked.

“The origin of my name. I decided then and there what I was… Rhiaon offered me an olive branch and I refused it, unable to stomach playing nice with that hypocrite. She wanted to start over, set our petty feud aside, and supposedly help me. But the bitch was the one who needed help. Staring at my grandfather’s grave, I knew what I was: I was the Skywalker Heir and nothing would stand in my way. Not Rhiaon, not Uncle Luke… Not even Rey.”

Kylo set down Alyla’s lightsaber and turned his attentions to Vader’s mask.

“I didn’t kill my cousin, but not for lack of trying,” Kylo said. “It was Rhiaon who ended up destroying her daughter… just like she feared the day that I forced my way into her mind, committing my first true act of the Dark Side… The Dark Side she hated… And the act she begged me to do.”

He shook his head and ran a hand across the mask.
“And then she had the gall to beg me for her life.” Kylo sighed, “But I… I hesitated. Just for a moment, but it was enough for the Supreme Leader to send me from the room. I left her in there, knowing that I could do something to stop it from happening. If I did stop it, it wouldn’t be for Rhiaon. It would be for Uncle Luke or my parents… or Rey. I stood outside that door, as conflicted as the Supreme Leader claimed I was, and debated rescuing the aunt I so hated. Atonement for the cousin I helped murder… and then Alyla showed up.”

Sasa frowned, her attentions drowning in Kylo’s story.

“I didn’t know until later that Alyla’s appearances to me were real and not just a vision. Alyla isn’t omnipotent, so she had as little idea what was happening in that room as I did. Alyla begged me to go in and save Felicity, pleading with me to stop to, telling me that I was a good person, a better person, and I couldn’t allow it… And then a shot rang out.”

Kylo sighed.

“For a moment, neither of us could believe it. Then I reached into the Force and Felicity was… just gone. Lost forever. I had gotten what I wanted: Felicity Rhiaon out of my life forever. For a moment I felt the greatest of joys… and then the terror set in.”

He heaved a heavy sigh, and brushed his fingers through the ashes.

“When I looked at Alyla… the horror and repulsion on her face – the disbelief and anger – I realized what the consequences of my actions were. This was a moment of victory for me… but it was the moment I lost everything. I could never go home. My uncle would hate me. My father would hate me. My mother would hate me… Alyla hated me. And I had lost Rey. No matter what position she had in my way of what was so rightfully mine, I truly love my cousin. That little girl I had seen grow up; that I had helped raise since she was three months old. What I had done could never be undone… Maybe my uncle would have the faith in me he had in his father. Maybe some small miracle would make my mother still love me, but my father… He would never forgive this. And I feared what the people I once called my family would now do to me… What Uncle Luke would do.”

“He tried to kill you,” Sasa whispered.

Kylo looked up at her in surprise.

Sasa stared fixedly at the ground, “I heard you talking in your sleep. You dream about it all the time. Night after night you beg him not to do it… but he did it.”

“He…” Kylo swallowed hard, “He strangled me. Not a joking threat that my father or Rhiaon would say they would do to people. Not the playful headlocks my uncle would put me in during roughhousing as a child or training as an adult. Luke Skywalker – the uncle who swore to protect me like his own child – wrapped his hands around my throat… and squeezed to kill.”

A tear splashed into the ashes supporting Darth Vader’s helmet.

“The only reason I’m standing here today is because Chewbacca owed my father a life debt… because my father convinced a Wookiee not to eat him.”

Sasa pulled a confused scowl but decided now was not the time to pry.

“And the worst part of it all?” Kylo looked to Sasa, his eyes watery in the weak artificial lights of his quarters. “I knew he would do it… the second I heard the blast that killed Felicity Rhiaon, I knew Luke Skywalker would kill me. For a second, I considered I was exaggerating, but then I saw the
look of horror and anger on Alyla’s face, and I knew the truth. I didn’t say another word; just pushed my way back into the torture room and… there she was: feisty, courageous, cowardly, hotheaded, Felicity Rhiaon who would look Palpatine in the eye and spit in his face… lying dead on the floor.”

He took a shaky breath.

“My immediate thought at the sight was it had to be a trick. My au… Luke’s wife couldn’t just be dead. It had to be a rouse. Felicity Rhiaon was snake. She would lie there and bide her time, ready to spring up and take us to the Nine Corellian Hells with her. So I Hux if it was true, if she really was dead. He told me to check for myself.”

Kylo’s eyes slipped shut as he remembered seeing Felicity Rhiaon’s eyes – the eyes of his dead toddler cousin – glassy and unseeing, like he had done to her daughter.

“Every step towards her felt like an eternity, and then I was close enough. I waited a minute, watching for any signs of trickery. The scene seemed safe enough… but I didn’t trust her. I nudged her with my foot… she didn’t move. I nudged her again, this time a little stronger… nothing. Then my eyes fell on her crudely sheered hair, we had cut out the blood much to Rhiaon’s objections. While not entirely devout, Rhiaon followed some of the traditions of Valrian religion. One of those beliefs were women shouldn’t cut their hair. Rhiaon didn’t mind having it cut when she wanted, but she despised when people did it to her against her will.”

“I think anyone would.”

“Fair enough,” Kylo smirked as he turned his attention to the vial sitting on the bed of ashes. A clear glass container held a bloody lock of brunette hair, “We would later take five of those locks that we forcibly cut from her hair. They would be bottled in these vials and awarded to those who took her down as trophy to display to the Skywalkers about our victory. I have this one, Hux has one in his office, Phasma carries one on her belt at all times, the Supreme Leader displays his proudly in his throne room… and we had one sent to Leia Organa. Word is that it stays on her own desk in the Resistance as a memorial. We would have sent one to Uncle Luke, but… well, by then he had his mental breakdown and disappeared.”

Kylo gently lifted the vial of Felicity’s hair. He wondered what Uncle Luke would have done with his prize… the one piece he was allowed for his wife. Bury it? Burn it? Keep it? Kylo supposed he would never know.

“But as I kicked Rhiaon’s body hard three more times, I thought of how cutting her hair would revolt her. Then I thought of another thing I could do that would force Rhiaon to respond… I kicked her over to lay on her back.”

He caught Sasa’s confused look.

“In Valrian culture, you don’t lay a dead body on its back,” Kylo explained. “It leaves the body prone to have your soul killed by the evil spirits – your soul can only be killed by stabbing you in the heart. If Rhiaon was put on her back, even while playing dead, she could not stand such a violation of her religious beliefs. Burial customs were the one thing she never subverted… So I kicked her onto her back… and she didn’t move.”

“But would she knew you were expecting her to move if she wasn’t dead and so stayed still to protect her cover?”

“Which was why I checked every other way to make sure she was dead. I checked her pulse, breathing, reflexes, the works. Nothing. She was gone. Felicity Rhiaon was dead.”
Something hollowed filled his eyes.

“And it wasn’t *my* victory.”

Sasa frowned as she watched something evil pass over him. If she were standing, she would have taken a step back.

Kylo clenched his fist, desperately wanting to smash it through a window, “I should have done it. If I was going to endure the punishments, the *hell* of Felicity Rhiaon’s murder, I should have pulled the trigger. They were going to treat me like it; why shouldn’t I get that sweet taste of victory?”

He gave a humourless chuckle.

“And that shunning- That *blame* had already started. I think Alyla followed in behind me, because I don’t remember seeing her come into the room. As I crouched there in front of Felicity Rhiaon’s body, Alyla knelt down. Her face was a frozen mosaic of horror and disbelief. I remembered how her lips trembled and her hands shook. She reached out and felt Felicity’s cold cheek. Alyla recoiled like she had touched an electrified wire. Then Alyla began to weep.”

Kylo shook his head in revulsion.

“She treated that woman like she was some hero Rhiaon never truly was. They all acted the way she demanded, like she was some grand hero who destroyed the Death Star. She hadn’t done it: survived it all. It was *my* mother who endured the torture probes. It was *my* uncle who fired the shot to destroy it. It was *my* father who tricked the empty into thinking the ship was empty and took the uniforms of Stormtroopers. It was *my* namesake who turned off the tractor beam and made the distraction to let my family escape. Hell, it was *my* grandfather’s *droids* who rescued them all from the trash compactor.”

Sasa dare not point out the fact Kylo had managed to praise Ben Kenobi.

“I looked down into Felicity Rhiaon’s glassy eyes, searching for some answers as to why the ones I loved had become so bewitched with this woman. You know what I saw? A desperate woman. An arrogant hothead brought to level. A woman obsessed with final words choosing hers to beg the lost cause of acting me to spare her life… And her eyes. Her dead eyes carried the final emotion of her life. A simple word, a plea for the one thing she hated to ask for more than anything in the world… the plea for help.”

Shifting uncomfortably, Sasa couldn’t settle it in her stomach or her mind how much contempt Kylo held for the concept of help… Or at least helping Felicity Rhiaon Skywalker escape the cold call of death.

“Then I looked up, and my eyes met Alyla’s… My whole life, whenever I looked up into those eyes, no matter what disappointment she felt in me, there was always a hint of love and forgiveness… But when I looked up into her eyes that day, Alyla had hit her breaking point. As hard as it was, Alyla held on through it all: her sort of death, Reine Agim’s maiming, the Burning of Rornian, the death of Rey, but me kicking the body of Felicity Rhiaon… she couldn’t hold on any longer… It wasn’t Felicity itself that was the trigger: I know Alyla cared for her family more than Felicity. I didn’t kill Gavyn and I didn’t kill Zena… I did kill Miri. In fact, Miri was my first intentional murder… but Alyla didn’t know it at the time, and that’s a tale for another time. No… it wasn’t Felicity herself that was Alyla’s trigger, I had just pushed too far; done too much. So when I looked up into Alyla’s brown eyes I didn’t see anger rimmed by forgiveness… I only saw *disgust*.”

Kylo struggled to fight back his sob as Darkness simmered deep in his soul.
“Over something I didn’t even do.”

A water glass that had been left on Kylo’s desk on the opposite wall suddenly exploded.

“They wanted to pin it on me,” Kylo growled. “Blame me for her murder, and I didn’t even get to do it.”

He gave Sasa a chuckle that chilled her to her core.

“They wanted to treat this so-called Death Star hero like my martyr victim,” the glee on his face did not reach his frozen eyes. Something had been unhooked in his brain at the memory the same way it had unhooked in that moment he looked into Alyla Kene’s disgusted eyes, “Then I would make her into exactly that… I would give her her own Death Star adventure.”

Sasa could barely look at him as she thought of what came next in the story.

“None of them expected it,” Kylo bitterly laughed. “You should have seen the looks on their faces when I picked up her body and carried her out of the room. Hux and Phasma were so shocked, they didn’t even follow me out of the room right away. Alyla didn’t either. I just marched Felicity’s body over to the trash chute, opened it, and looked down at her.”

Kylo set down the vial of Felicity’s hair back into the ashes.

“I don’t know what I was expecting,” he shook his head. “Some divine intervention. My grandfather coming down to me and telling me to stop. Instead I just stared at my aunt by law and thought of what I told her: how similar we were. I wondered if our roles were switched, if it were me in her arms eyes pleading for help… would she help me.”

Kylo locked his jaw.

“Then I felt Alyla grab my arm… She looked scared. Her voice as sad as I had ever heard from her – which is really saying something – she just looked at me and said, ‘Ben… you don’t have to do this.'”

Sasa closed her eyes.

“And so I threw Felicity Rhiaon in the trash, slammed the chute shut, and hit the compact button,” not a hint of remorse filled Ben Solo’s voice.

Hands shaking as she tried to clasp them in her lap, Sasa didn’t understand why the story scared her so much.

“Kylo… I,” Sasa struggled to find her voice. “I appreciate you opening up to me, but I don’t understand. You said there was something else to her murder… What did you leave out?”

Kylo sighed and looked down at the altar, “I told the truth when I told Dameron that I threw Rhiaon in the trash. I told the truth when I told Dameron that I compacted here… I just didn’t tell him what happened between that… and after.”

“Between?”

“Almost the second I hit compact… Hux reached us, and hit the emergency stop on the trash compactor.”

Sasa frowned, “What? He stopped it? But you just said she was compacted.”
“She was,” Kylo replied. “But there was quite a bit of back and forth about that fact. Hux and I argued, each hitting the start and stop buttons with each retort. Neither of us paid attention, and I think Phasma just stood in the corner watching us until we made up our minds… I remember Hux making a loud and insistent point of why we couldn’t destroy Rhiaon’s body when we heard it: that bang CRASH thud of metal mechanics that signalled the point of no return with the trash compactor. Hux’s eyes went so wide when he realized what had happened. He dashed for the elevator, Phasma and I hot on his heels. That… was a very awkward elevator ride down to the ground level floor of the trash compactor.”

“I can imagine.”

Kylo smiled a little, and then his face fell when he remembered the story he was telling.

“I lied to Poe Dameron about one thing,” Kylo’s fingers drew random figures in the ashes on the altar. “Yes, Rhiaon’s body was smashed into bloody pulp… but I didn’t space her.”

Sasa had to force her jaw not to drop, “What?”

“There was a body, mangled and unrecognizable, but a body,” Kylo said. “Phasma had at some point during my bickering with Hux commed Captain Electra to fish out the body, and she was there with a few Stormtroopers when Hux, Phasma, and I arrived. I remember the scene so vividly, though I just saw it for the briefest of second. A pale arm sticking out from a pile of broken, bent trash… and a mass of brown hair surrounded by the blood and gore of what could only be a …burst head.”

She felt like she was going to be sick.

“Then Electra stepped in front of me, blocking my view, and started yelling at me that Rhiaon has a valuable bartering asset, and how we couldn’t give her to Skywalker in this condition.”

Sasa’s nails dug into her palms.

“When she finally got out of my way, the Stormtroopers were zipping up a body bag containing what was left… what they could find of Rhiaon. Then we spaced the garbage to destroy the evidence of the mess. Phasma said she would take care of the body… and she did.”

“And… and what did she do with Rhiaon’s body?”

Kylo stared at the altar intently, and then pressed his fingers into the tiny flecks of smoke grey ashes.

“Her whole life, Felicity Rhiaon made it her mission to never support Darth Vader. She condemned him and every action he committed, good or evil. She would rather be dead than lift up Darth Vader in any capacity.”

Sasa’s eyes widened in horror as she took in the flecks of grey cinders that cushioned Darth Vader’s melted helmet.

Kylo smirked as he lifted a handful of ash and slowly let it spill from his palm back onto the altar.

“I made sure her final action is to do just that.”

Sasa couldn’t move a muscle. She stared at Kylo like a deer frozen in the sights of a hunter, wanting nothing more than to bolt for the door, but her body refusing that freedom. All this time she had stared at the altar like it was nothing. She heard rumors about the ashes… but this?

How did one handle this?
Kylo looked up at Sasa, not recognizing the fear in her, rather smiling like her sought her approval.

“Luke Skywalker won’t be gone forever,” Kylo said. “Someday he’ll return. Something will prompt him, and one way or another he’ll come for his wife’s body… And I’ll let him have it.”

Sasa swallowed.

“I’ll let him have her body, but not before I make him stand before this altar and tell him exactly what happened to Felicity Rhiaon. And then I will take these ashes, and throw her death in his face.” Kylo laughed, “Literally.”

And as Sasa stared in silent horror at Kylo Ren sifting the ashes of his dead aunt through his fingers… for the first time she worried if she had fallen in love with a monster.

Chapter End Notes

Coming Up Next Chapter…

Unintended Consequences
Kalonia makes a discovery about the bag Marks gave Evan, while Evan makes a startling revelation about the Anthea family. Meanwhile, Rey suffers her first hangover and learns she’s made what might be her biggest screw up to date.

Hey guys, I would like to remind everyone of one thing before I close out this chapter. I have been getting quite a few comments on AO3 about how some people don’t like how explicit the sexual content of this story is. For those who don’t like that content, I would like to remind you that I post this to both fanfictiondotnet and AO3. On FFN, the sex scenes are basically cut out. Sure, you get to see the lead in to most of them, but any graphic sexual content is cut out. I even alter some scenes (like the Rey/Teng scene at the wash tables on her 17th birthday) and will censor explicit lines/jokes/words to clean them up a little. So if you don’t like explicit stuff, please go read this on FFN where you still get the story, but it’s a little more likely Lucasfilm would actually approve of it than the AO3 version.

I refuse to discuss the revealed title of Episode 9 The Rise of Skywalker. For this story it is great, but for Star Wars canon… I am so pissed off about this. For them to open that debate back up is just god damn insulting. And don’t even give me the whole Kylo is the Skywalker they refer to. Sit your ass down, it’s the fact he’s a Solo and not a full Skywalker that is the whole emotional arc of his character.

Now, please enjoy my story where Rey is the Non-Mary Sue Skywalker she rightfully is supposed to be.

…God I am seething right now.

Lando was fun, though.

Now give me reviews yelling at me about how I keep finding ways to make the Felicity situation so much worse.
Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!