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**i guess i'll know when i get there**

by [Eisoj5](http://archiveofourown.org/users/Eisoj5)

**Summary**
Everyone lives. That doesn't make the war any easier for Bodhi to fight.

[Bodhi-centric. Begins six months after ANH, and will go all the way out to ROTJ. Ensemble piece with quite a lot of plot and extremely slow burn Bodhi/Luke, as in, that's barely happening, 26k 35k 42k 50k words in...

*The Empire Strikes Back* begins in Chapter 58 and ends in Chapter 73.
*Return of the Jedi* begins in Chapter 94 and ends in Chapter 104.
Completed on 5/25/19.]

Notes

See the end of the work for notes.
Chapter 1: Starting Somewhere

Bodhi’s never been suited to combat.

He’s best in the pilot’s seat, to be sure, but never when he’s also supposed to have his finger on the trigger. Probably why he never made it to TIE fighter training in the Academy. But that’s always been just fine; flying cargo shuttles didn’t mean a whole lot of action, usually, though he tries not to think too hard about the times that it did. And for the Rebellion—well, he knows they need pilots, has seen as well as anyone the losses at Scarif and Yavin. But in simulations, he keeps flying into battles too shaky to ever actually hit anything, his hands slippery with sweat and clenched so hard around the control stick that he’ll find the imprint of its contours on his palms.

(Even in the simulation of the Battle of Scarif, he can’t take out the TIEs that swarm the cruisers and pin down his team. His friends.

He’d stumbled out of the simulator after that one, choking back the horror of what-might-have-been. Cassian and Jyn were there, in the corridor outside the training room, and he’d really almost thrown up, then.

“I can’t,” he managed, finally, sitting down on the floor with his back to the wall, rubbing his face with a hand. “I can’t kill anybody.” He’d looked up, and the understanding in Cassian’s eyes was almost worse than the disappointment in Jyn’s.)

Flying—dodging Star Destroyer fire, spiralling fast through tight canyons, those are things he can do. Just—if the Rebellion wants him to fight, he’ll need a gunner, and there’s hardly any of them to spare.

So it’s U-wings and other transport ships for Bodhi, mostly, running troops back and forth across the Fleet with a rotating series of co-pilots he likes but can’t always name. Sometimes the generals ask him for intelligence on this or that Imperial maneuver, and it’s still a complete wonder that the Rebellion takes him at all seriously, treating him as if shuttling their people across the galaxy is as important as anything. Maybe it is; he gets to see some High Command staff from time to time, and once, has the distinct honor of flying Mon Mothma herself.

He crosses paths with the newly-formed Rogue Squadron on occasion, and shares a couple of drinks with Wedge Antilles, who’s funny, and kind, and puts him in mind of a happier and wiser Misurno, the flight instructor who’d called Bodhi his best friend. But he never gets to see the man who had destroyed the Death Star, the moisture farmer who came out of nowhere to put Rogue One’s stolen plans to their ultimate use.

Bodhi wonders what Luke’s like. If growing up on Tatooine was anything like growing up on Jedha, endless sand and howling frigid winds, holding onto life by the edges and praying. The sense-memory of Jedha rises up in his throat, the taste of his mother’s cooking on his tongue, and he has to remember to breathe, thinking of his home obliterated, buried under tons of unyielding stone.

Thinking about Alderaan is, in a way, much, much harder.

(They’d limped after the Tantive IV and its pursuant Star Destroyer, only to lose them, and after a day searching the closest hyperspace lanes, had scrambled back to Yavin to prepare for the worst. Chirrut had known first, somehow, even before the reports started streaming in; he’d been standing off to the side in the command center, just listening like usual, and then, abruptly, collapsed. Baze, the ever-vigilant, had barely caught him in time.)
Then they’d heard, and despite everything Jyn and Cassian and Bodhi himself had known, had seen, of the power of the Death Star—the destruction of Alderaan is a thousand times worse for lack of watching it happen.

“I failed you,” Bodhi had whispered, staring at nothing, sick.

But then Princess Leia had returned, with a farm boy and a smuggler and a Wookiee, and they’d all barely made it out alive—but they were alive—

—A farm boy and a smuggler and a Wookiee who don’t look like everything they touch turns to ashes.

Bodhi’s wary of Han Solo; the streets of Jedha City had nearly run red with his type underfoot. Of course, in the end, that hadn’t mattered, but old habits, like being excessively careful about landing next to the _Falcon_, start to creep back into his behavior. Plus, he keeps hearing that there’s still a bounty on Solo’s head that far outstrips the one on his.

(Wedge said, “You’re a bigger target than me, Bodhi. I just flew away, but you—you stole more than yourself.”

He’d almost have gone home with Wedge, that night, if he hadn’t caught the glimmer of hero-worship in the X-wing pilot’s eyes. It wasn’t right—he’d cost the Rebellion so much, just because he’d thought he could stop it.)

So. The farm boy.

Rumors in the mess, in the busy dark corridors of the base, and even in High Command are that he’s Anakin Skywalker’s son, the chance for a new Jedi Order. Chirrut won’t reveal anything when Bodhi tries to pry into what the Guardian knows or might have learned through the Force, only taps his staff against Bodhi’s chest. “What have you learned about putting your faith in one man?”

Bodhi shivers at that, has to push away a fragmented, blurry memory of shouting and pain and a sky of falling stone. “Okay,” he says. “I get it.”

Chirrut turns his face to the sky. “Have hope, Bodhi. Trust in the Force that surrounds us all.”

Baze leans down from where he’s sitting on a plasteel container. Knowing him, it’s probably full of explosives. “It’s all right if you don’t,” he tells Bodhi. “He says things like this all the time.”

“I don’t know if I do,” Bodhi says, in response. “I mean—we survived—but what about all the people who didn’t?”

(Galen’s body on a platform on Eadu, surrounded by flames and the engineers he’d tried to save.)

Chirrut says, “All is as the Force wills it,” and that, apparently, is supposed to be enough.

And then, the last day they’re based on Yavin IV, Bodhi walks out of the U-wing, finally satisfied with the results of his diagnostic, at the same moment Luke Skywalker jumps down from of his X-wing, knocking them both to the ground.
Chapter 2

Bodhi goes down hard, sprawled awkwardly on his side, the wind knocked out of him, like the percussive force of an explosion. His left arm wrenches under him, and the permacrete scrapes his already-scarred wrist, a lightning-fast jolt of pain. He registers Luke hastily rolling off his body and standing, a blue-and-white astromech sidling up next to him.

“Are you all right?” Luke is bending down, wiping a hand on his pants before offering it to pull him up. “Stars, I didn’t see you coming out of there.”

He takes the proffered hand in his less-injured right and climbs unsteadily to his feet. “Yeah,” he says, checking his hands for abrasions and finding only a few, nothing he can’t fly with. “Yeah, I’m okay.”

And then he looks up.

For once, his words flee as he stares at the other man; Luke is shorter than he’d expected, practically of a height with Bodhi himself—but that’s where the similarities end. He’d have stood out in any corner of Jedha City just for his pale skin and blond hair, but the real difference is his open, utterly guileless face.

He’d have been eaten alive by the occupation of Jedha.

We’re not the same at all.

“I’m Luke Skywalker,” Luke introduces himself, not seeming to recognize how completely unnecessary that is with the lightsaber swinging from his belt. “You’re Bodhi, Bodhi Rook? The pilot who saved the Rebellion without firing a single shot?” The astromech at his side beeps a confirmatory noise, saving Bodhi from having to answer—it’s scanned Bodhi without him noticing, and his face is probably on file somewhere, after everything.

Luke’s smiling at him, and Bodhi realizes he hasn’t let go of Luke’s hand. He lets it drop, swallowing uncomfortably. “You’re a hero—should’ve been up there with me and Han getting those medals,” Luke says.

“I—no, that’s not what I did any of it for,” Bodhi protests. “And I was part of the team—Rogue One—that’s all of us—”

“I want to hear about it,” Luke presses. “The battle, how you flew the cargo shuttle to rescue everybody. It must have been great.”

Bodhi recoils from his exuberance. “It was terrible,” he mutters. “I was only trying to do the right thing.”

Luke’s brow furrows in confusion. “You did, and you saved—”

“I have to go,” Bodhi interrupts him. “I’m sorry—it was nice to meet you—” and walks away as fast as he can without looking like he’s fleeing outright.

“Wait!” Luke calls after him, but he pretends not to hear. It was bad enough, the way Wedge had looked at him; he doesn’t think he can bear it again.

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“He doesn’t understand,” Baze says, a little while later, in a U-wing on their way to Thila Base, their original Rogue One team reunited briefly for the ease of keeping track of them all in the chaos of evacuation. Bodhi is already regretting having said anything about meeting Luke Skywalker, about how he ran away from a simple conversation about the war. “He is young.”

“Bodhi is young,” Kaytoo points out, unhelpfully, from the co-pilot’s chair. “Bodhi is approximately twenty-five Galactic Standard years old.” He turns—“You haven’t informed me of your birthday,” he admonishes Bodhi.

“You going to buy me a present?” Bodhi asks.

“No.”

“You just want to keep track of the ceaseless passage of time until we all die and you’re left alone at long last?”

“Yes.” Kaytoo sounds pleased that Bodhi understands.

“I’m saying, Bodhi, you have seen many battles. From the wrong side of the war, perhaps, but you have more experience than Luke Skywalker,” Baze continues, as if he and Kaytoo had not spoken. “He will come to understand as you do, as you learned in the battles we have fought together.”

(The first time—all he was ever supposed to do was transport cargo. He shouldn’t have even been close to getting in the middle of a firefight, but there were rebels on the ground, who’d recognized the Imperial profile of his shuttle, or seen him in uniform managing the delivery. Something. He’d put every last bit of his training into staying clear of the particle bolts, cursed the defective shielding as the hull lit up with a corona of flame like something out of myth, and prayed.)

He has to make himself focus on the swirling glow of hyperspace, breathe slowly.

_Luke Skywalker doesn’t deserve this. He should stay fearless._

Kaytoo looks at Baze. “Aren’t you always with the blind one?”

Baze shrugs. He's less imposing without his repeater cannon, more like the men who used to smoke and play sabacc in Jedha City. “Chirrut is telling stories of my youth again. I did not need to hear them.”

“What if he retells something incorrectly?” Kaytoo asks. Baze actually looks concerned at that, brow furrowing darkly, and turns back to the aft compartment.

Kaytoo leans over conspiratorially to Bodhi. “I guessed that you didn't want to hear more of his stories.”

Bodhi blinks at him. “Kaytoo—”

“Your elevated heart rate and dilated pupils indicate a state of anxiety,” Kaytoo explains. “I have observed you in a similar state multiple times over the last six months.”

“You’ve been watching me?”

“I've been watching all of you. It is part of my protocol to monitor the health of my teammates as well as to calculate the odds of your continued survival,” Kaytoo says. “You should know, Cassian and Jyn also exhibit similar symptoms, mostly when they look at each other, right before they kick me out of their quarters.” He tilts his head; hunched-up as he is, it gives him the appearance of a
beakless rock vulture. “But I don’t think they are anxious.”

Bodhi glances over his shoulder at Cassian and Jyn, seated next to each other in the back of the ship, their legs touching from foot to thigh. Jyn is laughing at something Chirrut says, and Baze grumbles as he straps in beside his own partner. “No, I don’t think so,” he agrees, feeling a little envious.

“You can talk to me about it,” Kaytoo says, unconvincingly.

Bodhi looks at him sharply. “I really don’t think so.”

“Good,” Kaytoo says, sounding relieved. “I wasn't designed to be this empathetic. I am much better at killing things. In fact, my service record shows that I have killed—”

“Blast, Kaytoo, can we maybe just fly in silence for a little while, please?”

Kaytoo subsides for half a minute. “Cassian likes it when I talk,” he mutters, sullen.

“I’m not Cassian,” Bodhi says, unnecessarily—

(—Cassian carrying a blaster rifle in a sniper configuration, intending to kill Galen Erso, and he’d known, had done nothing to stop it, had gone back to the ship as ordered—)

“No, you are not.”
Chapter 3

Chapter Summary

Oldest trick in the galaxy.

Chapter Notes

Apparently I can't just write an introspective fic. Welcome to the mission.

(One kiss with dubious consent towards the end of this chapter.)

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

There’s little time to try to settle in at Thila.

Cassian leans into Bodhi’s cramped quarters one morning, and says, “We need you to take us to Kerev Doi.”

Bodhi looks up from where he’s been tinkering with a conversion module, trying to figure out how to squeeze out a little more power without overloading it. It’s the kind of work he can do alone, away from the press of pilots and mechanics crowding the hangars like mynocks. “Nice to see you too, Cassian.” He pushes his goggles up and smiles faintly at his friend.

“Sorry. Hi. In a rush.” Cassian steps in and lets the door slide closed behind him. He’s dressed to blend into crowds, like usual, his blaster well-concealed under his jacket, but obvious to anyone who knows him. “Can you take us?”

“You, Jyn, anybody else?” Bodhi asks.

Cassian frowns at him. “How’d you guess—Kaytoo’s coming.”

“Kerev Doi’s an Imperial world,” Bodhi observes.

Cassian’s smile goes crooked. “Yeah. You in?”

“I can clear my shifts,” Bodhi says, putting down his tools in an attempt to hide the way his hands tremble at the thought of possibly going into battle. “Is this mission from Intelligence, or is Jyn putting you up to going rogue again?”

“Intel,” Cassian says. “We’re going to try to convince a smuggler to turn informant for the Rebellion.”

“And they’re not sending Solo?” Bodhi is relieved that it’s so simple—less chance of any of his friends trying to push a blaster into his hands—and a little angry at himself for thinking of it that way. To cover, he turns away to pull his flight jacket on, thinks about it for a moment, and gets his old Imperial flightsuit out, holds it up inquiringly to Cassian.
Cassian nods at the flightsuit with approval, so Bodhi wads it up and tucks it under his arm. *Not until I absolutely have to.* “He’s already out trying to stop negotiations between the Empire and the Hutts.”

“What, is it Smuggler's Week?”

“Guess so,” Cassian says, and shrugs. “Let’s go. Kaytoo and Jyn are meeting us at our shuttle.”

Bodhi’s breath catches in his throat. *Our shuttle* means only one ship in particular, and he hasn’t flown it since they escaped from Scarif. He hasn’t been able to stand looking at the scars of blaster fire on its hull.

*(The ring of the grenade as it hit the metal deck, bounced once, twice—)*

“You okay?” Cassian is touching his arm uncertainly.

“Yeah.” Bodhi shakes his head a little, as if to clear it. “Kerev Doi, in and out. No problem.”

*****

So *of course* there’s a fucking Star Destroyer parked in orbit around Kerev Doi, sending shuttles down to the garrison on the planet’s surface.

Cassian, standing behind Bodhi’s chair, curses softly. “They’re ahead of schedule. Sorry, Bodhi, reinforcements weren’t supposed to be here yet.”

Heart pounding, Bodhi forces his hands to stay still on the controls. “I think I can get us past if I tell them we’re troops that deployed late from the Imperial Center,” he says.

Cassian taps the back of his chair. “Do it. Kaytoo, slice our logs to match.” He looks up—“Someone *did* remember to change our transponder code after Scarif, right?” Bodhi nods.

“Trouble?” Jyn asks, coming up from below.

“Nothing our favorite pilot can’t handle,” Cassian says, resting a hand on Bodhi’s shoulder.

It works, hardly any questions asked—the destruction of the Death Star and the Scarif base have seriously compromised the Empire’s databases, and the comms officer sounds harried as he confirms their ID. After that, it’s only a matter of minutes before Bodhi’s touching down in the surface of Kerev Doi, a short distance outside town, but out of range of the main Imperial garrison's sensors.

“We’re meeting our smuggler at the Blue Convor,” Jyn says, as they gear up to depart. “It’s a nightclub, supposed to be nice.” She’s saying it to Bodhi, but her gaze is entirely directed at Cassian. “Probably can’t go in dressed like this.”

Kaytoo looks her up and down. “I’ll never understand the human fascination with fashion.” Then he taps his chest with a finger, thoughtfully. “Do you all look at me like I’m naked?”

Bodhi turns his gaze up at him, mildly aghast. “I do *now:.*”

“We could steal you an officer’s uniform,” Cassian says to him, ignoring Kaytoo. “Since apparently only Imperial officers are allowed to carry blasters into the club. And you might know best how to act the part.”

It's an *offer;* Bodhi licks his lips, pointing out quickly, “*You* wore the uniform before.” *Too quickly* —Jyn is frowning at him a little.
“Fair enough,” Cassian agrees easily. He frowns at Bodhi then, too, and says, “Got a cover ID for me?”

Bodhi digs in his jacket pocket and pulls out a stack of Imperial IDs. He fans them out over the console. “Take your pick.”

“We’ll need Imperial credits, too,” Jyn points out, and he nods, reaching into another pocket to present her with a handful of credit chips.

“Bodhi, where did you get all that money?” Kaytoo asks. “And the IDs?”

“Play sabacc with me sometime and I’ll show you,” Bodhi replies, and smiles, for the first time in what feels like forever.

“Oh,” Kaytoo says, sounding surprised. “Okay. I’ll bring the cards.”

Cassian looks at them and gives a little shake of his head. “Kaytoo cheats,” he says.

“Since you’re going to want me to go retrieve a new uniform for you, perhaps you shouldn’t be spilling all my secrets,” Kaytoo mutters, huffily.

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Cassian and Bodhi sit in the shuttle and wait, while Kaytoo and Jyn go shopping—and “shopping.” After twenty minutes in companionable silence, Bodhi calculating hyperspace vectors for their trip back to Thila Command, while Cassian taps away at a datapad—probably paperwork related to his last mission—Cassian sighs, puts his feet up on the console and leans back.

“What did you do with your medal?” he asks. “I didn’t see it out in your quarters when I came by, earlier.”

Bodhi glances at him—Cassian’s gazing out the viewport at Kerev Doi’s soot-stained sky, affecting casualness. “Is that what people do? Hang them up on display?”

Cassian turns his head to look at him. “Some people,” he agrees. “Not us.”

“What did you do with yours?” Bodhi asks.

“Stuffed it in a drawer in our quarters,” Cassian says, letting the smallest of smirks slip along with the “our.”

Bodhi smiles at him, genuinely happy for his friends. “Bunking together at last, huh? About time, Cassian.”

“Yeah.” Cassian lifts his eyes back up to the sky. “Jyn—she saved me, you know? Her, and you. I’d have—I don’t know what would have become of me, in the end.”

In the face of that murmured confession, Bodhi is quiet, thinking of a small, dirty cell on Jedha, and the man beside him now, whispering ruthlessly through its bars. Then he says, “I’m going to bury my medal on Eadu, when the war’s over.”

Cassian’s face stills, and he looks like he’s going to say something more, but there are footsteps in the hold, and he turns to point his blaster to cover the ladder—

“Just us,” Jyn says, poking her head up from below. “Come get changed.”
Down in the cargo hold, wearing clothes he’d never have picked out on his own—crisp collar, all sharply refined edges, nothing like the padded shapelessness of his flightsuits—Bodhi looks down at himself, askance. “Did you spend all of my credits?”

Jyn shakes her head; under her heavy cloak, her sleeveless dress is cut low and clingy, and over her shoulder, he catches Cassian smiling to himself as he pulls the officer’s jacket on. “The exchange rate’s pretty bad, but I saved you a little something for next time,” she says, tucking the remaining credit chips into Bodhi’s pocket.

“Little’s right,” Bodhi says, mournfully, feeling the diminished weight there.

“Maybe there’ll be a sabacc table in the club,” Jyn offers.

Cassian tugs the brim of his cap down. “No time for that,” he says, handing around Bodhi’s cloak. “Let’s go.”

Kerev Doi is—not what Bodhi expected of a spice world, but exactly what he expected of another world under the boot of the Empire. The people who don’t turn away from Cassian’s Imperial disguise and Kaytoo’s deliberate gait look at them with dead eyes, an expression Bodhi had seen all over Jedha—and in the mirror, for far too long. Even the air seems wrong; the sky is a dirty, hazy pink. He guesses it must have been beautiful, once.

The Blue Convor is the only lively thing about the place. Music streams out of its open door, and Cassian is about to step inside when the bouncer puts an arm out to bar them. She looks up—and up. “No killer droids,” she snaps.

Kaytoo actually sags a little at that. “I guess I’ll wait out here,” he says. “No one ever wants to buy me a drink, anyway.”

Inside, shrugging off his cloak and handing it to the attendant droid, it takes a moment for Bodhi’s eyes to adjust to the dim, smoky interior. The club is nice—circles of low, well-cushioned couches around tables lit by tiny levitating candle droids. There’s even hanging flowers overhead, belying the barrenness of the world outside. An oasis—but there’s no chance of Bodhi forgetting what’s just beyond the door, not when it puts him so much in mind of the wasteland the Empire had made of his home.

Cassian slings an arm around each of their shoulders, like they’re his, directing them subtly down into the lounge. Bodhi can’t stop himself; he relaxes and leans into the physical contact for a second. Then he catches Jyn’s narrowed scrutiny from under Cassian’s other arm and jerks back, averting his eyes.

Their contact is a black-haired human sitting at a corner table, a half-empty glass in front of him, whose gaze flits over every corner of the room and back again, before settling on them. “Talon Karrde?” Cassian asks, quietly, as they approach.

The man nods. “Captain Andor. Nice uniform.” He takes them all in, his expression growing amused. “Didn’t realize I rated a costume party. Pull up a seat.”

Cassian sits across from him, gesturing for Bodhi to slide onto the couch next to Karrde. Jyn drapes herself over Cassian’s lap, looking harmlessly decorative—except for her eyes, which scan the club as sharply as the smuggler had.

“I’ll make this short, so you can enjoy yourselves,” Karrde says. “I have no interest in your war.”
A shiver runs down Bodhi’s spine at that—it's an echo of things he's thought or said, before.

(At the Imperial Academy, keeping his head on his studies, just trying to graduate so he can get a job. With a copilot on a cargo run who was overzealous about the glorious Empire, and was disappointed when Bodhi didn't sing the Emperor’s praises.

What he might have said to himself about why he didn't want to ask Galen about his work.)

“My only interest is in turning a profit.” Karrde leans back, rests an arm casually along the back of the couch—“And, I’ll be honest, knowing who you are, the quickest way for me to do that, right now, is to turn you all into the Imperials.” His gaze goes from one person to the other, coolly appraising.

Bodhi’s mouth goes dry. But he manages to say, even he’s never been good at persuading anyone of anything, “Please—please don't do that.”

And then he freezes, seeing Cassian’s hand drift along Jyn’s thigh to the holster on his own hip. “I wouldn’t do that if I were you,” Cassian says.

This was supposed to be simple—

“And I wouldn’t do that if I were you,” Karrde replies, lips curving in a sardonic smile as he glances across at the motion of Cassian’s hands. “Fire a single shot, even dressed like an officer, and you’ll have the local garrison on you in a heartbeat.”

Jyn puts her hand on the table and leans forward, the neckline of her dress gaping, shadowy. “And what’ll Imperials do when they find the head of the Car’das smuggling organization sitting here with us?”

“Hear us out, at least,” Bodhi adds, trying to keep the panic out of his voice as he gestures to his friends.

Karrde looks at him, and he can read the question in the smuggler’s eyes—how can someone this jumpy be part of an Intelligence team? Karrde goes on—“I could buy my way out of here.” But he relaxes minutely, and waves for them to make their pitch, as if the exchange of threats were simply a normal greeting.

“So you’re rich,” Jyn says, as Cassian settles back down warily. “Think of the Alliance as investors. Long-term. We can set up a line of credit for you, but we’ve got other assets to offer besides money.”

Karrde opens his right hand where it rests on the couch near Bodhi’s shoulder. “Please, enlighten me.”

Cassian has one hand idly stroking up and down Jyn’s bare arm, almost as if he doesn’t know he’s doing it. “Protection from the Empire.”

The smuggler's dismissive snort sets off a wave of hot anger in Bodhi, and he has to look away. “Try something a little less ephemeral, Captain Andor.”

“Immunity from prosecution for you and your organization,” Cassian immediately follows up.

Karrde shakes his head. “You got that? With Admiral Ackbar in the High Command?”

Jyn’s lips twitch. “He was overruled.”
The smuggler sighs. “Look, I appreciate what you’re trying to do, but I can’t throw the lot of my entire organization in with a losing proposition,” Karrde says, as if that explains everything. “I’m responsible for a lot of people whose lives depend on my continued neutrality.”

Jyn and Cassian exchange unreadable glances.

“I don’t understand,” Bodhi says, into their silence, even though they probably have a plan and he’s about to ruin it, possibly get them all hauled into custody or killed.

“How can you sit there and do nothing?” His voice is rising, and he can’t seem to stop it, not even for the heads that are starting to turn their way. “Because you’re responsible? The Empire is responsible for destroying an entire world—a Core world—they’ve ruined Mid-Rim planets, Outer Rim planets, they enslave sentients! They won’t stop just because Luke Skywalker blew up the Death Star—there’s a Star Destroyer sitting overhead right now—”

“Bodhi.” Jyn puts a firm hand on his knee, and he stops. “I think our friend here’s heard enough.”

He looks wildly between her and Cassian, his thoughts gone askew again.

What did it take for Galen to convince me? How long before I asked what was really going on?

How many died because I waited? Will die because we can’t get one blasted smuggler to help us?

“I admire the courage of your convictions,” Karrde says, a shade mockingly, but he keeps looking at Bodhi curiously. “Here’s the deal I’m willing to make. I’ll pass along Imperial troop movements to you—”

“Thank you,” Cassian says.

Karrde raises a finger. “Because I’ve also been asked to pass along any information I have about Luke Skywalker’s whereabouts to the Empire.”

Cassian exchanges a glance with Jyn, and shrugs. “Fair enough.”

Bodhi can’t follow it; it’s like sabacc, the value of cards changing even as they land on the table. Chirrut’s reminder comes back to him, suddenly.

Troop movements for the location of one man? Even if he is a Jedi?

“So that's settled, then,” Karrde says, and all of a sudden a tension Bodhi hadn't recognized, doesn’t quite understand, goes out of his face.

“Let us buy you a drink,” Cassian says.

“Thanks,” Karrde says, “but I'm afraid I'm going to have to call it a night.” He inclines his head towards the club's entrance, where a single Imperial lieutenant has just strolled in. Cassian’s comm chirps softly at the same time—Kaytoo reporting in.

“Blast,” Jyn snarls quietly. “Initial recon didn’t have this place as an officers’ watering hole.”

“Maybe he won’t notice us,” Bodhi murmurs, and then instantly regrets his words as the lieutenant steps down into the seating area and starts to make his way around the perimeter of the room.

Cassian reacts first, drawing Jyn down so her face is against the crook of his neck, his hands roving
over her back possessively. She immediately starts to move her lips against his skin. Bodhi can sort of hear her whispering, probably ideas to get them out of here, but to an observer, it would look far more intimate, not the slightest bit out of the ordinary for a couple in a club like this one.

Karrde stares at them, and then at Bodhi, who’s started looking around for a way out and found, worryingly, nothing. The lieutenant’s getting closer to their booth, glancing into the shadows at each table he passes. “You’re pretty recognizable, yourself,” Karrde says, quietly. “Can you trust me?”

“I—no,” Bodhi starts, but Karrde simply leans over, curling his already-outstretched hand around the back of Bodhi’s neck, and kisses him.

He makes a muffled squeak of surprise into Karrde’s mouth, but doesn’t immediately pull away; it’s the best cover he’s likely to get. Karrde rubs his fingers in little circles as if to pacify him, stalling out as he brushes over the patch of scarred skin at the base of Bodhi’s neck.

Bodhi flinches, hard—

(—the memory of his first kiss shredding away into nothing. Saw’s monster holding him down, crawling over his body and inside his head, ripping his mind apart—)

He gets a hand on Karrde’s chest and shoves, not caring that precipitating a fight will draw the Imperial’s attention; his only thought is to get away. Thankfully, Karrde pulls back as abruptly as he’d moved in, and Bodhi takes a shuddery breath, pressing backwards against the couch.

“What happened to you?” Karrde asks, very softly. His eyes look—troubled, almost, for the first time since they’d sat down.

Bodhi tries to summon back some of his earlier fury, but his voice cracks as he says, “I’m—you kissed me—”

“Oldest trick in the galaxy,” Karrde says, but he sounds apologetic instead of mocking. “Bodhi, I—”

“Looks like it worked,” Jyn interrupts. “He’s sitting down for a drink. I think we can get out of here.”

In fact, to Bodhi’s utter shock, the lieutenant actually nods at Cassian as they pass by; Cassian inclines his head in an equally nonchalant greeting, though his hand on Bodhi’s shoulder, out of the Imperial’s line of sight, squeezes hard.

*****

Back at the shuttle, Cassian sheds his jacket, and rubs his face with a hand before turning to Bodhi, who’s stripping off his own layers. “Listen, what you said in there, it will work on some people, but not a man like Talon Karrde. He prefers to wait until—until the last card is dealt, before he acts.”

“I figured that out,” Bodhi says, a little shortly.

“Karrde always had an offer on the table for us, because of Luke,” Jyn explains, already back in her usual nondescript clothes. “He couldn’t say no to the Empire—but he could try to balance it out by giving us what he did. He just needed to know how seriously we took him.”

“He couldn’t say no to the Empire,” Bodhi repeats. His voice is flat. “What about everyone who did, and died for it?”

Cassian scrutinizes his face for a long moment. “Maybe we shouldn’t have made you come with us,”
he says. “I just thought—maybe you’d welcome the change of scenery.”

He points back down the ramp at the ravaged planet beyond, tense. “*This?*”

“It seemed like past time to bring you back into the fight,” Jyn says, frowning. “You could do so much more than—you don’t have to—” She stops, tries again. “All you’ve been doing for months is shuttling people around.”

“I’m a pilot,” Bodhi says. He’s drained, abruptly, and he doesn’t know what else to say, just wants them to stop looking at him like—*like what? Like they’re worried?*

“Coming up on that Star Destroyer,” Kaytoo calls down. “Thought you’d want to know, especially *our pilot.*”

Bodhi gets up wordlessly and climbs into the cockpit. “I thought you weren’t good at being empathetic?” he says to Kaytoo, once he’s strapped in.

Kaytoo turns his head towards him. “There *is* a Star Destroyer ahead of us,” he says. “Let’s go home.”

Chapter End Notes

Kerev Doi--and Lieutenant Thane Kyrell, who is actually on the verge of defecting, himself, are from Claudia Gray's excellent *Lost Stars.*
Bodhi is slowly getting drunk.

(They’d outrun the Star Destroyer easily, and fled back to Thila Base. Cassian and Jyn had each tried to talk to him again, Jyn the more persistent of the two, falling back to walk beside Bodhi as they’d disembarked and headed into the catacombs of the base to make their report. Kaytoo had made some kind of horribly grating noise at her until she’d shaken her head and caught up with Cassian again.

But Kaytoo had leaned down to him and said, “Cassian told me I shouldn’t keep protecting you from things you don’t want to hear. Although I’ve extrapolated from your physiological responses the possible topics that fall under this category, I don’t know all the things you don’t want to hear. Can you make me a list?”

He’d gaped up at Kaytoo, shaken. “Are you serious?”

“He’ll need it before we fly together again,” Kaytoo had replied, matter-of-factly.)

So—Bodhi’s sitting in the dim and noisy hangar on a stack of cargo containers, putting back a third Corellian ale, with a blank fucking datapad on his knee, and actually thinking about trying to make the fucking list. Because Kaytoo’s his friend, and Cassian’s his friend, and they’re trying to help him move past his past—so he can help the Rebellion.

Because that’s what I wanted to do, right? What I yelled at Karrde about?

That’s why I’m here and not flying myself to a slow death for the Empire.

He drops his face into his shaking hands and tries to control his breathing.

And of course Luke fucking Skywalker picks that exact moment, when he’s shivering and trying to hold it together, to stroll up. He’s wearing the yellow flight jacket Bodhi remembers from the medal ceremony, and the same bright smile.

“If you don’t like to talk about fighting,” he says, over the din of fighter maintenance, with absolutely no preamble whatsoever, “What do you like to talk about?” He puts an elbow on the top container on the stack and leans towards Bodhi. Someone working on an X-wing nearby sends a shower of sparks arcing a meter high in the air, the light reflecting, coruscating, in Luke’s eyes.

“Commander Skywalker—”

“Just Luke. I mean, I’d like to call you Bodhi, if that’s all right?” He barely pauses for Bodhi’s confused nod before barrelling on. “It’s okay if you don’t want to talk about the action you’ve been in, I can ask Baze or Captain Andor about that stuff. Or Kaytoo. He gets along really well with my Artoo unit. What about strategy? I figure you must have told High Command a lot about Imperial scanners and TIE formations and things like that.”
“I—” Bodhi stares at him blankly.

“Or you could tell me about what it was like at the Imperial Academy, I was supposed to go, but my uncle needed me on the moisture farm for another season—”

—and Bodhi finally recognizes Luke’s nervous, which is so far beyond ridiculous he actually laughs in the younger man’s face.


Bodhi shakes his head, smothering his laughter with his hand. “I’m sorry. I talk too much when I’m anxious, too.”

“Oh.” Luke gives him an embarrassed smile. “Look, you’re a pretty big deal around here—” Bodhi grimaces and looks away—“You are, even if you don’t want to be, and I just thought I could learn something from you. Maybe get to know you, a little. And I didn’t want—I didn’t want you thinking whatever it was you thought of me, when you stormed off.”

“I didn’t—I wasn’t angry with you,” Bodhi says.

“Oh,” Luke says, again. “Artoo said as much, but you know droids, they don’t always pick up on what us organics are really thinking.”

Bodhi looks down at the blank datapad on his knee. “Yeah,” he says, softly.

Luke runs his hand through his hair, leaving bits of it to stick up with static in a way that only serves to make him seem even younger. “So, can I start again?” Bodhi gives him a little nod to go on, so he says, “What about, where’s home for you? Are you from one of the Core Worlds?”

Bodhi thinks wrly, That’s a nice safe topic. And then—Okay, Kaytoo. No more hiding from this stuff. He takes another long drink from his bottle of Corellian ale. He offers it down to Luke, who accepts, but Luke just holds the bottle and looks at him, waiting.

The sky of falling stone.

“I’m from Jedha.” He steels himself for Luke’s reaction.


“I’ve wondered, sometimes,” Bodhi says, and now he knows he really must be drunk, because he hasn’t said this to anyone, not even Chirrut who might understand it the best, “What if they’re still there? The kyber crystals. I mean, I know the capacity of my cargo ship, I know how many runs I made. The Empire must’ve mined Jedha dry, or else they wouldn’t have been able to—”

He trails off, squeezing his eyes shut for a second, the image of Jedha’s blotted-out sun burning its corona behind his eyelids. Luke’s curious face, the clamor of the hangar; it all seems very far away.

“But I can’t have taken everything. They’re supposed to be waiting there, for people like you.”

When he opens his eyes again, Luke’s still standing there, hand clutching the Corellian ale, his mouth slightly agape.

Bodhi swallows. “Now you know. I’m from Jedha, and I helped destroy it.”

Luke hesitates for a second, and Bodhi thinks his expression is going to close off, that he’s going to turn and walk away, appalled. He’s surprised to find he doesn’t really want Luke to go, and even
more surprised when Luke sets the bottle down on the top of the stack of containers, and starts to climb up. “Let me sit by you,” Luke says.

Bodhi scoots over to make room for him, the datapad falling off his knee and cracking on the stone floor below, making him wince. Luke settles onto the cargo containers a hand’s breadth away from Bodhi, dangling his feet over the edge of the stack and kicking his boots lightly against them. He picks up the ale again and cradles the bottle in his hands for a minute before taking a drink.

“I’m from Tatooine,” Luke says. His voice is quiet, and Bodhi has to strain to hear him over someone starting up their sublight engines nearby. “It’s a dead end, nothing going for it unless you like sand. I guess you might, you’re from a desert planet too. I wanted to get off-world so badly I’d have done anything—I thought joining the Imperial Academy was my ticket out.”

The horror of that hits Bodhi like a physical blow. *They’d have crushed the light out of him, made him broken and afraid like me. Or worse. He has a terrifying vision of—*

[Luke standing over someone fallen on a catwalk, about to deliver the final strike with his blinding blue-white lightsaber—]

“But I don’t know,” Luke continues, almost casually, unaware that Bodhi’s trembling beside him. *What in blazes was that? His eyes flick down to the lightsaber on Luke’s belt—he can’t tell just from the hilt if the blade will be blue or not. How could I possibly know the color of his lightsaber?*

“If Threepio and Artoo hadn’t come, if I hadn’t met Obi-Wan—” Luke hesitates, and Bodhi, paying attention again, can tell there’s something he’s leaving out. Something bangs, hollow and metallic, and there’s an aggrieved whistle from a droid over by one of the Y-wings. “I might have just stayed on Tatooine forever, listening to reports of the war. Wishing I could help, but afraid to take the first step.”

Luke turns sideways to look at him, and his eyes are too earnestly luminous for Bodhi to tear his own gaze away, no matter how much he wants to. “I got pushed far enough to do something. So did you. So did everybody in this whole place.”

He gestures at the ships in the hangar. “I mean, even *Han Solo* came back for me."

“It’s not—” Bodhi starts, not really knowing what he’s going to say. But almost as if summoned, Solo walks out of the *Millennium Falcon* docked a few meters away. He points a finger up at Luke. “I thought I heard your voice,” he yells. “Turn your damn comm on, Ackbar’s looking for you.”

Luke smiles at Bodhi. “I hope I made a better impression this time,” he says.

“Harder to storm off from up here.” Bodhi smiles back, hesitantly.

“Listen, I really do want to learn from you,” Luke says. “Admiral Ackbar probably wants me to fly a different mission than Han and Chewie—they’ve got their orders already. If it’s a two-man job, do you want to come?”

Bodhi sober up abruptly at that. “I—I can’t.” He catches the disappointment starting to furrow Luke’s brow, and amends, “Maybe next time.”

Chapter 5

Chapter Summary

Just a little course correction.

Chapter Notes

All my thoughts and love to Carrie Fisher. This chapter's for her.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Princess Leia Organa is leading Bodhi’s next mission briefing, a week or so later.

It’s the first time he’s seen her up close, and she’s smaller than he’d expected. The title, her upraised chin, and her dark, flashing eyes, had made her seem incredibly imposing, from afar. But her short stature does absolutely nothing to dispel that initial impression; she commands the room, even though she hasn't even spoken a word.

(He hadn’t been avoiding her, exactly. Their paths simply had no reason to cross; she’s a very important diplomat. Strategist. Leader.

All things Bodhi is not.

Almost immediately after the Battle of Yavin, Bodhi had found out from Wedge, who was both pissed off and impressed at the maneuver she’d pulled to get clear of him and Luke, that she’d gone to the Emperor's homeworld. The Empire had been hunting down any remaining Alderaanians; she’d thought she could get to them first.

Guilt had dizzied him, buzzing in his head until he'd had to sit down right there in the maintenance bay, hydrospanner clattering to the floor. It’d taken some convincing to keep Wedge from hauling him down to the medcenter.)

Bodhi can't keep looking at her across the briefing room, afraid she'll make eye contact, irrationally terrified that she'll point him out to everyone as a failure.

He scans the room instead, looking for familiar faces, even though he knows Jyn, Cassian, and Kaytoo are off-world, have been for days. They're on the sort of mission that Kaytoo will cheerfully divulge to the remainder of the original Rogue One team later, despite Cassian’s insistence that Intelligence missions are covert, and secret, and Kaytoo, that's just disgusting, don't tell them about that.

Bodhi’s far from alone, though; in fact, it looks like all of Rogue Squadron is packed into the cramped briefing room with some supplemental ground forces, including Chirrut and Baze. He’s surprised to see the Guardians; last he’d heard, they were working on mapping any remaining Jedi Temples, hoping against very long odds. Chirrut smiles serenely in Bodhi’s general direction, and Baze inclines his head in his usual taciturn nod.
And at Princess Leia's side, talking cheerfully to another X-wing pilot he doesn't know, is Luke. They're both suited up for flight already, garish in orange next to the stark white of the Princess. Luke catches Bodhi’s eye and breaks into a broad grin.

“Next time!” he mouths to Bodhi, and Bodhi gives him a small, acknowledging wave.

But all eyes immediately snap to the Princess as she starts to speak. “As you all know, we have been running low on crucial supplies here, and on our major capital ships. The Barkhesh Resistance has sent word that they can provide vital equipment, but they can't risk sending their own people off-world.” Princess Leia taps a key on the display table, and a topographical map appears, river canyons wrinkling the planet’s surface. “The Barkhesh convoy must first travel through enemy territory in order to reach the safe landing coordinates designated for the cargo shuttles. Rogue Squadron, your mission is to rendezvous with that convoy and escort it to the landing zone, where you'll take possession of the supplies and get them onto the shuttles.”

Her gaze travels around the room. Bodhi ducks his head so he doesn't have to meet her eyes. “I don't need to impress upon you the sacrifices the Barkhesh Resistance is making on our behalf. I know you won't let them down.”

Luke calls out, “Any questions?” When there are none, he nods to Princess Leia, who says, “May the Force be with you,” and dismisses them to their ships.

*****

Bodhi’s assigned ship is a Lambda-class T-4a shuttle. He wonders when the Rebellion had acquired another Imperial ship, or if it had come with any recent defectors; he hasn't been keeping the best track of newcomers. It’s heavily shielded and well-armed, though he’s flying without a designated gunner, just a Twi’lek co-pilot he hasn’t met before.

Chirrut grabs his arm as he goes past the handful of ground troops already strapped into their seats, quietly murmuring to each other. His gaze is aimed at the opposite wall of the shuttle’s hold. “It’s good to see you again, Bodhi,” he says, and laughs.

Baze rolls his eyes. “I keep telling you, no one finds that funny, Chirrut.”

Bodhi puts his hand over Chirrut’s where it rests on his forearm. “I’m glad you’re back,” he says, and means it.

“The Force will always hold us together,” Chirrut tells him.

“The Force is a kind of bonding tape, now?” Baze grumbles, and Bodhi smiles, shakes his head, and goes forward into the cockpit as they start to argue playfully. His co-pilot’s already there, tapping his fingers on the edge of the console.

“Yendor, right?” Bodhi says, strapping himself in and starting to flip the toggles for the preflight sequence.

“You’re Bodhi Rook,” the Twi’lek says, his voice neutral.

Bodhi looks at him, not sure what to brace for. “Yeah.”

“Never thought I’d be flying with an ex-Imperial,” Yendor says, the tips of his lekku twitching. He tenses. “If you’ve got a problem with that, you take it up with Command, okay? I’m just here to carry out the mission, like all those other flyboys out there.”
“Yeah, all right.” Yendor attends to his half of the controls.

Bodhi doesn’t relax. He glances out the viewport at the X-wing pilots climbing into their fighters and closing their canopies, looking for Luke. He spots him still on the ground, not far from the shuttle, talking animatedly to Wedge Antilles, both with their helmets tucked under their arms. Bodhi almost waves, but catching Yendor’s narrow, curious stare out of the corner of his eye, stops himself, and only watches as Luke and Wedge grin at each other before dashing to their ships.

“All systems ready for launch,” Yendor reports.

Luke’s voice comes in over comms, eager. “See you at Barkhesh!”

*****

Yendor doesn’t say a thing to Bodhi while they’re in hyperspace; Bodhi resists the urge to fill the silence with his own nervous chatter. He’s gotten used to the kind of quiet Cassian and Jyn like, that Chirrut is. Although once, he might have tried to tell Yendor about flying a different class of cargo shuttle, comparing their specs and design histories, the Twi’lek’s body language screams distrust. Dislike.

Bodhi sizes him up surreptitiously, trying to gauge if Yendor’s the type to try to corner him on base later, with friends who might be interested in a little petty revenge, against the defector who helped get the Death Star finished. If outranking the Twi’lek’s enough to keep him at bay.

It’s not his favorite thing to gamble on.

“We’re here,” Yendor announces abruptly, pulling the lever to drop them back into normal space. Barkhesh looms up fast in front of them, X-wings and the other Lambda-class shuttle, popping in out of hyperspace.

“Heading for the the supply base coordinates,” Bodhi says, taking them in as the X-wings form up around the shuttles. It’s a bumpy ride down through atmosphere, and then he’s skimming the canopy of a lush, dense rainforest that drops away at the edges of the canyon.

On comms, Wedge says, “Luke, we’ve already got trouble. Probe droids.” Bodhi looks out and sees the black, insectlike swarm moving into position at the Barkhesh base.

“Pick your targets and go,” Luke orders, and then his X-wing swoops down, spitting cannon fire.

The comm line fills with chatter as Rogue Squadron engages.

They’re just droids. Nothing I need to worry about. Bodhi holds the shuttle hovering steadily over the base, though it rocks a bit when one of the probe droids explodes just as he opens the hold door for the ground troops to jump the few meters to the surface. He winces, but Baze waves and gives him a thumbs-up before running towards the supply convoy.

“Okay, Bodhi, we’ll see you at the landing zone coordinates,” Luke says. “Keep an eye out.”

“See you in a few,” Bodhi replies, and lifts off. He sticks to the contours of the canyon, scanning for Imperial armaments out of habit—a flash of turbolaser fire streaks up towards the shuttle—

“Fuck,” Yendor yelps, as Bodhi throws them into an arc out of the way, calling hoarsely on comms, “Luke, I count six AT-STs, heading up canyon to you, and who knows how many turbolasers.”

“Copy that,” comes back tersely. “Rogue Three, Rogue Six, give the shuttles an escort to the landing
Yendor kills the comms— “We can take ‘em,” he says to Bodhi. “Take out a couple of those turrets? Bring down an AT-ST? They’d bump us up to Rogue Squadron for sure.”

Bodhi shakes his head, concentrating on keeping them aloft, but still low enough over the rainforest that Imperial scanners will have a hard time tracking. Emerald-green laserfire spits past, and the near-misses set the tree canopy ablaze. “Those aren’t our orders.”

“But we can fight,” Yendor protests. “Look—full complement of torpedoes—”

“That’s not what we’re here for,” Bodhi snaps, glaring at him. “We engage, they take—take us out, the Squadron won’t be able to get all the supplies back to base.”

Yendor keeps pushing. “You’re a good pilot, they can’t hit you—”

“Will you shut up and watch the damn sensors?” Bodhi yells, as Yendor is instantly proven wrong and a chance blast slaps them sideways out of the sky.

The Twi’lek screams as the shuttle goes plunging into the trees, branches snapping. Bodhi clenches his jaw, heart pounding, and hauls hard on the controls, come on come on come on—

They soar out into open atmosphere, and below Bodhi catches a glimpse of Rogue Six taking out the turbolaser that had almost downed them. “Comms,” Bodhi orders, panting. Yendor switches them back on—

“—endor, you guys okay up there?” Luke is shouting.

“Just a little course correction,” Bodhi says back.

“Copy that.” Relief is audible in Luke’s voice. “See if you can get to the coordinates without any more trouble, yeah?”

“You got it, Luke.” Bodhi toggles off, and chances a look at Yendor. The Twi’lek’s eyes have gone to angry slits as he stares forward, arms crossed.

Yeah. There’s going to be more trouble.

Chapter End Notes

Yendor is also from Lost Stars.
Chapter 6

Chapter Summary

This is going to be unpleasant.

Chapter Notes

Heed the tags. The middle section of this chapter involves a beating and a flashback to canonical torture. If you want to avoid that, skip down to the third set of asterisks.

On Thila, Yendor barely sticks around long enough to help get the supplies unloaded from the cargo hold before he’s walking off, muttering under his breath. Bodhi stares after him until the Twi’lek disappears into the catacombs.

“Everything all right?”

He jerks around, startled—Chirrut is leaning up against the side of the shuttle, gently tapping the end of his stick against the ground in a staccato rhythm.

“Chirrut, you scared me,” Bodhi says.

“You are worried about something,” Chirrut says, ignoring that. “Your co-pilot?”

Bodhi sighs. “It’s fine, really, I don’t need everyone to like me.”

“Not like some people I know,” Baze mutters, appearing from the top of the ramp.

“The Force moves through me,” Chirrut says, sweeping his arms out wide. Baze ducks the arc of his stick. “People are drawn to the Force. Therefore, people like me. I have little say in the matter.” He cocks his head at Bodhi. “Perhaps that is why you like Luke Skywalker.”

“Luke’s nice, and it was kind of him to get me attached to the mission, even if I—yeah, of course I like him,” Bodhi runs off the end of it.

“Oh,” Chirrut says. “So it’s not the Force, then.”

He’s teasing, but Bodhi totally misses it. “Yeah. Just a nice guy who also happens to have a lightsaber and magical powers, which—” Bodhi has a flash of the strange vision. “Which I haven’t seen him use, ever. People like a nice guy.”

Chirrut hooks the end of his stick through a loop on Bodhi’s flightsuit and tugs him over, gently. “Many of the people you care about are not nice.” He smiles. “Like Baze. Baze is a killer, you know that?”

Bodhi looks up at Baze, who shrugs. “So’s Chirrut.”
“Yes, but you were an assassin,” Chirrut points out.

Baze’s mouth twitches under his beard. “It paid better than begging.”

“Anyway. You should know, there are people who think your co-pilot today is a nice guy, and that you are the killer.”

Bodhi swallows. “Okay.”

“You understand?” Chirrut asks. “I mean, we are among people, who mean well, who are fighting for the right thing. But they do not all look at you the same way we do, or as Luke Skywalker does.”

“Yeah.” Bodhi reaches out and touches Chirrut’s hand. The other man turns his hand up to grasp Bodhi’s. “Thanks for the warning.”

*****

Bodhi does his best not to be alone, after Chirrut and Baze leave again, making sure to eat in the mess with Wedge or other Rogue Squadron pilots. Only picking up maintenance shifts during the busiest parts of the day and never in the dead times, the surreal halfway points between deployment and mission completion. Trying to spend more time around Rogue Squadron in general, playing sabacc—and winning, hand after hand, until Wedge was offering to strip instead of pay up—watching holos curled up in the pilots’ lounge.

After a few days of increasingly nice camaraderie, the kind he’d only ever had with a handful of fellow cargo pilots and the Rogue One team, before, he starts to wonder if he’d been reading too much into Yendor’s hostility, if Chirrut had gotten something wrong.

If he’d been paranoid because of his own history, watching over his shoulder as he’d fled across Jedha towards Saw Gerrera. Or from even before that, checking and double-checking every action, every reaction, so the Empire would never be able to doubt his loyalty the way he doubted himself.

Bodhi hasn’t seen Yendor at all for a couple days.

He relaxes his guard.

*****

And then—

It’s always dark in the hangar, but a peaceful, kind of comforting shadow, that he likes. The perpetual dusk reminds him of being in space between cargo runs, hanging between the stars, and the running lights of his ship seeming like the only other illumination in the galaxy. Bodhi’s gotten used to the people, too; mechanics from the Core to the Unknown Regions share the common language of sweat and curses and tools, and droids—no matter their personalities—are by and large comforting in their predictability.

He doesn’t notice how quiet the hangar gets, though, because the darkness doesn’t change; he’s too engrossed in trying to fix a burnt-out motivator, talking himself through the process, and trying to refrain from giving up and simply hurling the thing across the maintenance bay to watch it shatter into a thousand pieces.

Bodhi pushes his goggles up onto his head, and stretches, groaning as he realizes he’s been sitting hunched over for far too long. A lone astromech droid whirs past him softly, chirping to itself.
“Officer Rook.”

He turns around, and—oh, fuck. Yendor’s standing just outside the maintenance bay, and he is, unlike Bodhi, not alone. There’s a Rodian with him, their large eyes reflecting the overhead lights, and someone lingering in the darkness beyond.

“Private Yendor,” Bodhi says, his mouth going dry.

“So, I checked the simulation logs, from when you officially joined up after Yavin,” Yendor says, a little triumphantly, like he’s uncovered some great secret. “You won’t fire on an enemy target, not even when they're trying to kill you. Is that right?”

Bodhi’s heart starts to pound. This is going to be unpleasant.

I wasn’t paranoid enough.

They’re blocking his way out. His comlink is lying on the far end of the work table.

“It’s not what you think,” he says, holding his hands up as if to ward them off.

“Really?” Yendor asks.

He swallows; this fear is a far too familiar taste on his tongue. “I just—I can’t shoot anybody, I can’t. I graduated from pilot training only good enough to fly shuttles, not TIEs—” Why did I say that, don’t remind him! “I didn’t want anyone to die, not on Jedha, not Scarif, not—Alderaan—”

Yendor stares at him. “You didn’t talk this much, before,” he says.

Bodhi huffs a scared little laugh, his eyes wide. “I usually do—it gets worse when someone’s about to hurt me.”

None of Yendor’s trio contradicts his assumption. He licks his lips and tries not to let his eyes flick to his comlink.

There’s always a chance.

The man in the shadows says, “Yendor told us you didn’t want to go after the Imperial defenses on Barkhesh.” He leans down into the light—human, or close to it, not a face Bodhi can place. “Why? Afraid you might see somebody you know?”

The Rodian says something Bodhi doesn’t understand, and shakes their head at his confusion, further damming him.

“No, no,” Bodhi stammers, knowing he can’t make them believe him, but taking another desperate shot at it anyway. “All my friends are—” He gulps— “They were sent home, when the cargo runs were over, or—or they’re dead, they fought for the wrong side, at Yavin—”

The human laughs. “You really can’t help yourself, can you? Friends. You’re still one of them.”

“I’m not,” and there’s sand in his mouth, freezing Jedha wind stinging his eyes— “I’m the defector—”

“Yeah, all right,” Yendor says. “Get him.”

Bodhi lunges to his feet and dives across the worktable for his comlink, fingers frantically seeking the switch. Bits of metal and plasteel fly off the table and clatter onto the floor, the racket echoing out
into the hangar. Yendor’s human friend rushes him, wrestles the comlink from his hands—the momentum rolls him over the edge of the table, and he lands with a cry on the floor.

The Rodian’s grabbing his arm, pulling him up, surprisingly strong for being so small—Bodhi scrabbles behind himself on the table, comes up with a hydrospanner, but Yendor’s at his side, pinning his wrist down, jamming a thumb in between the tendons, and forcing him to drop the tool as he screams. The Rodian holds his other arm down—

(—shackled down in Saw’s cell, the monster coalescing out of the shadows—
—long tentacles creeping across the floor—
—gasping panicky breaths as it wrapped around his body and slithered into his mind—
—memories shredding, scattering like an engine’s ion trail—
—begging screaming thrashing in the chair as it takes him apart, piece by piece—
—what's left of him—)

It’s almost a relief to come back to himself and find they’re just beating him.

Not with the hydrospanner, a small mercy—he’d be dead—but someone’s just hitting him with a closed fist, over and over, in the face. There’s coppery blood in Bodhi’s mouth, and wetness streaking his face, and he has no idea how long he’s been lost in his own head.

His whole body hurts; even pinned, bright warning flares are going off all down his torso, in his ribs. His assailants have been working him over pretty thoroughly, must’ve switched to his face when they realized he’d checked out on them. Breathing—breathing doesn’t feel quite right, there are fireworks behind his eyes every time he gasps, and he just wants to go limp, curl into a ball, get away—

“Hey!”

The voice cuts through the haze of pain. Bodhi’s got enough wits left to recognize a chance; he spits blood in Yendor’s face, yanking his other arm free from the Rodian’s grasp when the Twi’lek curses and recoils. He can’t get his feet under him to run—slides off the table into a heap on the floor. The duracrete is cold under his bruised face, and he closes his eyes, prays that he can take it, whatever they do next.

“Hey,” the voice says again, and it sounds very familiar, and very angry—Bodhi opens his eyes again, and the person standing there looks, even sideways, through his blurry vision, like Jyn.

That can’t be right, she’s on a mission—

Then she’s shaking out her collapsible baton with a jerk—oh, it is Jyn, he thinks, dazed—and yelling, and the human is yelling back something like “damn Imperial bastards sticking together,” the Rodian kicking him in the side, and then:

There’s a weird snap-hiss sound; the maintenance bay goes impossibly bright, and Luke Skywalker says, rage coiling through his voice like a desert viper about to strike, “Touch him again and I will—”

Bodhi lets the darkness take him.

*****
“—should’ve known something was up, I just thought he was lonely without you guys around, and then he won the pants off me—”

“—isciplined? Disciplined? If I hadn’t gotten there in—”

—sounds of a scuffle in the hall, Cassian’s voice shouting, and a single blaster shot—

“—lucky it was Jyn who found Bodhi and not me. I would have torn their arms off.”

*****

Of all the people Bodhi thought might be at his side when he finally wakes up in the medcenter, everything smelling like disinfectant and his mouth tasting like bacta, Princess Leia Organa is not on the list.

Her white uniform matches the white walls of the medbay, and it’s—

“It’s too bright. I know. I’m sorry.” She reaches over and touches a switch, bringing the lights down.

He can’t bring himself to look at her anyway, his eyes focusing on the wall of monitors and displays behind her.

“Yendor’s attack on you touched off a bit of a political firestorm,” Princess Leia says, very calmly, as if she’s briefing him. “Since the start, there have always been factions that thought we shouldn’t accept Imperial defectors into our ranks, even though we have generals who came to us when they saw what the Empire was doing. Wedge, who’s one of our best pilots. You, who helped us stop—”

“No,” Bodhi whispers hoarsely, averting his face on the pillow. “Please don’t. Not—from you.”

She pauses. After a moment, she takes his hand where it lies on the medical bed, and goes on, a little softer. “Things got a little tense while you were out. Some people up and left because they sided with Yendor and his friends, angry that we’re protecting you and the other former Imperials.”

“I heard fighting,” he says, turning back to her. It doesn’t hurt to talk as much as he’d expected. “I thought I did.”

Princess Leia gives him a tight smile. “Captain Andor took it upon himself to stop a few of those like-minded individuals from reaching you. I told him we posted guards, but—” she shakes her head. “It’s complicated, Bodhi. I know you’ll be disappointed—we aren’t discharging Yendor. He, and the two others will be disciplined and reassigned, so you’ll never have to fly with him again, at least, but we need every person we can get to help us in this war.” There’s a thread of cold anger under her words.

“It’s okay.”

“It’s not.”

Bodhi looks up at her and sees how pale and tired she is, dark circles under her eyes. “We have to win.” He tries to squeeze her hand weakly to show her he gets it.

Princess Leia puts her other hand on top of his, warm and gentle. Then she clears her throat, and says, “You should tell me about Jedha, sometime. You, and Chirrut, and Baze. I—I’d like to know what it was like.”

He closes his eyes, and tastes his mother’s favorite spices in his mouth, feels tears slipping out from
under his eyelashes. Opens his eyes again and asks, “You’ll tell me about Alderaan?”

She’s crying a little, too, though that takes nothing away from her beautiful face. “Of course.”
Chapter 7

Chapter Summary

You got out of worse, before.

Cassian has a black eye.

Jyn looks pissed.

“What the hell,” she says.

Bodhi had made himself sit up to see them; now he slumps back against the pillow, fingers plucking at the fraying edges of his medcenter robe. “What?”

“I want you to learn how to fucking defend yourself,” Jyn snaps out. “So Luke Skywalker doesn't have to charge in, lightsaber blazing, to save you.”

Bodhi blinks at her. “I—I—what? I was trying to—what?”

“Particularly not when Jyn believes she had the situation well in hand,” Cassian says, coming over and sitting on the side of his bed, pressing a friendly kiss to Bodhi’s forehead. “Hi. Are you doing better?”

“I don't know, is Jyn going to keep yelling at me?” Bodhi answers, eyeing her anxiously.

“She might.”

“You're damn right I am,” Jyn says, and in contrast to Cassian's relatively light tone, she is furious. “Is it true you haven’t even requisitioned a blaster?” she demands. “What if—what if you’re shot down on a mission, and you have to get out of enemy territory, and I’m—we're—”

Bodhi can’t look away from the hurt in her eyes, and says, too fast, “I—I’m still a wanted man. If I couldn't bluff my way out, I figure I'd be captured for defecting, tortured, and executed, you know, for defecting.”

It's such a foregone conclusion that he hasn't even been thinking about it, not for months.

(His heart had thumped so loud he’d been certain the other engineers, the troopers on Eadu could hear it as he tried to act casual on his way out of the facility and back to his shuttle. He’d sat alone in the cockpit, turning Galen’s message over and over in his hands during the preflight sequence, running his thumb over the ridges of it, calculating the price of failure like a hyperspace vector.

It had been the simplest of equations: failure equals death.

He’d been lucky that success didn’t, too.)

They're staring at him in shared horror.

“You're on painkillers,” Cassian says, shaking his head. “A lot of painkillers. Have to be, because that is—that is just—”
“Realistic?” Bodhi suggests.


“Because I had a ship, or because—” Bodhi leans forward, resting his forehead on Cassian’s shoulder, and Cassian wraps an arm around him. He’s very tired, all of a sudden. “Because you were there, you got me out.” He breathes in the scent of his friend’s worn jacket, comforting after the acrid disinfectants he’s been inhaling all day.

“And I’m saying, when we’re not—” Jyn breaks off.

Bodhi lifts his head from Cassian’s shoulder and shuffles awkwardly back out of his embrace. “Plenty of people died because of me already, without me picking up a blaster on top of it. More die because I bring—” His voice stutters to a halt as he watches their faces, the way Cassian’s expression crumples, hates that he’s hurting his friends, but unable to stop himself from doing it. “Because I bring the Rebellion to them.”

Jyn crosses her arms over her chest, her eyes bright with disbelief. “Do you have any idea what you mean to the people we’ve saved? To us? It’s a war, Bodhi, people die whether you have anything to do with it or not.”

She glares at him, adding, “We have to win,” echoing Bodhi’s own words of an hour ago to Princess Leia. “We need our pilot alive to do that. Don’t be so—so—” Jyn trails off, painfully, and Bodhi flinches. Her voice goes harsh. “You can set it to fucking stun if that makes you feel any better about what you’re doing.” She turns on her heel and storms out of the medcenter.

“Jyn—” Bodhi calls after her, but she doesn’t return. He lets his head fall back against the wall. “She didn’t even give me a chance to say thank you,” he says to the ceiling.

Cassian pats his knee under the blanket. His expression is under control again, except for the persistent concern for him. “I would also be happier if I knew you were carrying a weapon,” he says. “Just in case. I mean, it’s nice—strange, I don’t know—that Luke is watching out for you, too, but —”

“Okay,” Bodhi holds up his hands. “Look, I’m not totally defenseless, all right? I grew up on Jedha, I can run, I know how to take a punch, but they trapped me—I was doing the best I could—” Never mind the part where I panicked because they were holding me down—“I got a hydrospanner, but it was—” and he’s starting to gasp, a little, in pain. Cassian’s looking at him, worried. “It was a gamble that didn’t pay off.” He stops, raking his fingers through his hair, and tries to regain something like composure. “I’m sorry about your eye,” he says.

Cassian shakes his head. “Don’t be.” He squeezes where his hand’s still on Bodhi’s leg. Bodhi expects him to argue, to push for carrying a blaster again, but he just says, “We’ll figure something out, all right?”

He musters a half-smile. “As long as it’s not making Kaytoo stand guard for me.”

Cassian’s own lips twitch. “Kaytoo was getting some minor repair work done when the rest of us were looking for you. When he found out what happened, he marched up and down the base challenging anyone else who didn’t like former Imperials to try him on for size. It had quite an effect.”

Bodhi laughs, and winces, as that pulls on his barely-healed ribs. Cassian’s up like a shot, looking around for a medical droid; Bodhi waves it off. “I’m all right.” He grabs for Cassian’s hand.
“Thanks.”

Cassian looks down at him. “Get back on your feet soon, okay? The Rebellion does need you.”

*****

While Bodhi’s still stuck in the medcenter for the next day and a half, Rogue Squadron visits in a random trickle of pilots. Wedge, apologetic and bearing a deck of sabacc cards, spends the better part of an hour trying to win his clothes back, after Bodhi makes him promise to stop apologizing.

Luke doesn’t come, and Bodhi—

Bodhi doesn’t know how he feels about that.
In love and memory.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

...as if millions of voices cried out...

May the Force be with you.
This is, obviously, not a real update.

I'm absolutely devastated. I went to see Rogue One again this morning, and after crying through basically the whole movie, walked out into a world without Carrie Fisher. There is much being written about how amazing she was, the life she had after this little thing called Star Wars, but this is where I saw her for the first time, and where I'll always hold her in my heart.
Finally released from the medcenter, Bodhi stands in the doorway of his quarters, not quite sure he wants to go in.

It looks like someone’s been through his stuff. *Two* someones, actually. The first tossed the place—he can guess who *that* would’ve been, though he’d never have figured Yendor to slice the lock, the Twi’lek didn’t seem the patient type—and the second tried to put things back, but didn’t have time to finish cleaning up. Cassian and Jyn, maybe. Whoever it was, they’d found his goggles and put them on his pillow.

Bodhi crosses the room and picks his goggles up. They’re suspiciously clean, but still unmistakably his, sandblasted sides and all. He sets them back down on his bunk, trembling, looks around at the mess. Few as his belongings might be, despite his friends’ efforts to sort things out, Yendor’s little revenge exercise had still done a number on his quarters.

He gets to work cleaning up, silently, with shaking hands.

Six minutes later, Bodhi discovers his medal is missing.

His eyes go wide with dismay as he flattens himself against the wall, planes his hand up and down in the gap between his shelving unit and the wall again, drops to his knees and searches the floor.

“No, no—” Bodhi checks a third time, feeling sick. His gaze darts around the room, hoping to see its ribbon tangled up, light glinting off the metal under a flimsy, something. “Oh, you’ve got to be kidding me.” *It’s for Galen, it’s supposed to be for Galen—*

Someone knocks on his door, calls, “It’s Wedge.” He slaps at the plate with his free hand to unlock the door, and Wedge steps inside, freezes.

“What happened?”

“Yendor, I think,” Bodhi says, shortly. “Bastards took my fucking medal.”

“You’re sure?” Wedge notices how he’s jammed up against the wall. “That your hiding spot?”

“Yeah.” He steps away, practically falls onto his bunk, heart thumping fast.

Wedge can’t stop himself—he sticks his hand into the gap, too, running it up and down the same way Bodhi had.

“Where’d you hide yours?” Bodhi asks.
“Under my bunk,” Wedge replies, crouching to look on the floor. “With my—” He snaps his fingers, and straightens up. “Yendor’s not the creative type.”

Bodhi touches his face gingerly where they’d hit him. “Nope.”

“I bet, if he didn’t take it—yep, here we are,” Wedge says, fishing his medal out of the wastebasket. “You want me to hang it back behind here?”

Bodhi gapes at him. “Wedge—thank you.” His panic and rage flood out of him, and he realizes he’s been clenching his hands in useless fists. “I wasn’t going to keep it, anyway,” he blurts, looking away. “I was planning to—”

Wedge shakes his head. “You don’t have to tell me,” he says.

Bodhi glances up, and Wedge is smiling at him, a little. “Thank you,” he says again, and then, “You didn’t come here just to check on me.”

“Rogue Squadron’s being deployed, I thought I’d see if you wanted to come along,” Wedge says, back to business. “It’s a rescue mission, you’d be flying that Lambda-class from Barkhesh again.”

“Rescue mission?” It’s only because he’s been with the Rebellion for the past several months that the idea’s no longer inconceivable. If he’d ever gone down as a pilot for the Empire, no one would have come for him, except to collect his precious cargo—

“Yeah, I’m doing the full briefing—such as it is—in a little while.”

“Wait, you’re in command?” Bodhi checks—Wedge’s rank insignia on his flightsuit is the same as ever.

“Yeah,” Wedge says. “Well, we’ll rendezvous with General Rieekan over Chorax for on-site coordination, but I’m Rogue Leader until Luke gets home. You want in?”

Bodhi nods, his mouth suddenly, inexplicably, dry.

“Okay. Briefing’s in the hangar in ten.” Wedge gives him an acknowledging nod and leaves.

Alone again, Bodhi tries to make sense of Wedge’s words. Luke’s not even here? He left?

Maybe Jyn and Cassian were wrong. Luke’s not looking out for me more than anyone else. He must’ve stumbled in on the fight by accident—I’m just another pilot under his command, now that he knows I’m no hero.

He gets up, mechanically pulling on his flight jacket and goggles. That’s okay. That’s what I wanted. Right?

*****

“Back on active duty already?” Rogue Two—Bodhi digs around in his memory and eventually comes up with the name Zev—asks, when he joins the squadron for their mission briefing. They’re standing in the hangar, in a loose semicircle under a wing of his Lambda-class shuttle, partially blocked off from the rest of the usual commotion. “Wouldn’t have guessed they’d toss you out here with us so fast.”

“Wedge asked me to,” Bodhi says, and he’s actually sort of looking forward to it, now. Getting out of his trashed quarters has him longing to get farther, away from people who keep wanting...
assurances he can’t give, away from the confusing swirl of emotions that threaten to overwhelm him. Back out among the stars where it’s—well, not safe, nowhere in the galaxy is that, but at least he knows what he’s doing right, in space. He looks around the hangar, grimacing as someone blows a fuse and a sublight engine cuts out with a screeching whine.

Wedge is coming over, helmet under his arm. Zev nudges Bodhi with an elbow. “You sure you’re up for this?”

Bodhi straightens his shoulders self-consciously. “Y—Yeah. Gotta help out, do my part, you know?”

“‘Cause it’s not a problem, we could bump someone from escort to co-pilot with Hobbie instead,” Zev says.

“I’m good,” Bodhi insists, lacing his fingers together so his hands won’t shake. He frowns down at them, tugs at the cuff of one of his sleeves where it’s too tight around his scarred-up wrist. “No place I’d rather be, than—where are we going again?”

“Chorax.”

Wedge clears his throat, giving the two of them a pointed look. Bodhi shrugs an apology at him.

“We’re to search for the Nonnah,” Wedge says. “Our troops pushed their luck too far and crashed somewhere on Chorax’s northern hemisphere, after stealing a bunch of Imperial equipment. We don’t know exactly what it is they stole, but Intelligence has already picked up transmissions suggesting that the Imperials want it back.”

“So it’s a race,” Bodhi murmurs to Zev, who grins, and mutters back, “Care to place a wager? Imps get there first, but we find the ship?”

Bodhi looks at him askance, frowning. “I don’t—I don’t bet on people’s lives.”

Wedges clears his throat again, a little louder, and his pointed look in their direction is a bit more pointed. “So, current orders are for Rogue Squadron to fly over possible crash sites, locate the Nonnah, and then send in the evacuation shuttle to pick up any survivors and whatever equipment we can salvage. General Rieekan will have the most updated likely coordinates when we arrive in-system. Any questions? No? Let’s get to it.”

The X-wing pilots scatter to their ships, astromechs whirring in their wakes. Bodhi is about to board his shuttle, when Wedge catches hold of his elbow. “If you don’t really want to come along, you don’t have to, you know.”

Bodhi turns. “What?”

“I’m saying, if you’re not sure about this, the Rogues would all understand if you stayed on base for a while, rested up—”

Bodhi brushes Wedge’s hand off his arm, suddenly indignant. “You’re the one who asked me, remember? Having a change of heart? What if Zev, or one of the generals, or—or Luke—said, never mind, don’t bother coming along, we got this without you? Go on, the war’ll wait, you should rest up? This part of the fight’s my job. Let me do it.”

Wedge holds his hand up in surrender. “Okay, okay—you seemed a little—look, Luke’ll have my head if anything happens to you. Just be careful, all right?”
“Yeah. You too, good luck out there,” Bodhi says, sounding to his own ears kind of pissed-off, and heads on into his shuttle.

But Bodhi calms down the instant he gets his hands on the controls, and regrets his anger. *Wedge doesn’t know what to do, either, but he’s trying. We’re all trying.* He taps a switch and patches into a private comm line. “Hey, Wedge.” Hobbie looks at him curiously, but doesn’t say anything, keeps working on his side of the console.

“Yeah,” Wedge responds.

“I won’t let you down,” Bodhi says, softly.

“Copy that,” Wedge says, and Bodhi can hear the relieved smile in his voice.

*****

Hobbie turns out to have defected from the Empire with Wedge, a few years back, and is also just as apologetic about not having been around when Yendor had come after Bodhi. While they’re in hyperspace, he attempts to commiserate with Bodhi over their shared experiences in the Imperial Academy system, but Hobbie went to an elite flight school, and Bodhi—did not.

“I’m rated for cargo shuttles and transports, and below,” Bodhi says, shrugging.

“But you’re good enough to fly with Rogue, if you wanted,” Hobbie protests, and Bodhi tenses up.

“Did anyone ever let you try out a TIE? I mean, they’re no T-65s, but there’s some fun to be had with ‘em.”

“I was mostly trying to keep my head down,” Bodhi says. “And TIEs—they’re death traps, you know that, right?”

Hobbie doesn’t respond, and he recognizes the shadow of loss in his co-pilot’s eyes.

“Sorry,” Bodhi mumbles.

Hobbie shakes his head. “S’ok. Not everybody who wants to join up makes it this far. Be a surprise if we all make it to the end of the war.” The navicomputer beeps—“Coming up on Chorax,” Hobbie says, and gently pulls back on the lever to drop them into normal space.

The X-wings dive towards the planet; Bodhi hears General Rieekan rattling off possible coordinates over comms and starts entering them into the computer as the shuttle settles into an orbit over the northern hemisphere.

“Betcha it’s the third site,” Hobbie says, and then, “*Shit!*” as a Sentinel-class shuttle pops out of hyperspace with a handful of TIE Interceptors trailing it.

Bodhi’s heart leaps into his throat, but he manages, “When’d they get those Interceptors upgraded with hyperdrives?” He takes their shuttle into a plunge after their squadron, shields ablating the atmosphere with fire.

“I don’t know!” Hobbie hits the comm. “Wedge, Wedge, we got company!” Rogue Squadron swarms back up past them to engage the TIEs, Rieekan calling for more reinforcements.

Bodhi keeps his eye on the Sentinel shuttle—“You were right, it’s heading for the third coordinates.” Hobbie hits his armrest with a hand. “Think we can beat ‘em?”
“Oh, yeah,” Bodhi says, and throws the sublight engines wide open, afraid and giddy, as the shuttle accelerates. Chorax spreads out below them, veined with silvery river valleys that feed into a massive lake. “There!” The Nonnah’s hull glints in the sunlight, but it’s stern-down several meters from the lake’s edge and smoking ominously.

“I don’t see anybody moving around,” Hobbie says, worriedly.

“Try signaling them,” Bodhi suggests. “This shuttle does look Imperial, they might be hiding.” I would’ve.

Hobbie nods, and patches into Rebellion frequencies—“Nonnah, this is Rogue Four with the evac shuttle—anybody alive down there?”

“Rogue Four—Rogue Squadron?” comes back over the speakers. “Thank the Force. Get down here, we’ve got injured—” There’s a squeal of static, and then—“Oh, blast, that’s a walker!”

Bodhi jerks around, and the Sentinel shuttle’s touched down already, about half a kilometer away, and is disgorging an AT-ST and three XR-85 tank droids. “We’ve got you covered, Rogue Four, go get ‘em,” Wedge says, and the X-wings drop down out of the sky in formation, cannons lighting up the Imperial war machines.

“Okay, okay,” Bodhi says, feeling his pulse race as he lands the shuttle gently on the lake shore. Tank droids—“They’re not here for retrieval,” he calls out, unstrapping and hurrying to the ramp; it lowers agonizingly slowly, the smell of algae and water seeping in around the edges. “They’re here to destroy the equipment.”

Hobbie’s on his heels, face grim. “Rogue Leader?” he says into his comm.

“Yeah, I heard. We’ll take out those tanks, concentrate on the survivors,” Wedge orders, and Bodhi releases a breath he didn’t know he’d been holding. The ramp finally goes down all the way onto the sand, and he and Hobbie sprint out into the waves, squinting in the sunlight at the Nonnah’s troops splashing and stumbling towards them. There are a dozen and a half or so; they’ll fit in the shuttle, easy.

On the shore, one of the tank droids explodes, and he ducks as flaming shrapnel shoots meters into the air and an X-wing shrieks past. “Is this everybody?” Bodhi yells.

The woman in the lead, supporting a soaked, limping crewmate, shakes her head. “Captain’s trying to salvage some of the intel,” she shouts at him. They all flinch as a torpedo disintegrates overhead, another X-wing soaring up through the debris.

Bodhi swallows, but there’s no time to lose. “Hobbie, get them inside. I’m going after the captain—”

Hobbie’s face is pale. “Bodhi—Rieekan says TIE bombers incoming—”

“Then hurry!” Bodhi yells over his shoulder, already splashing away as fast as he can, heart hammering in his chest. I didn’t make it off Scarif to die in some lake—Bodhi loses his footing as the shoreline drops out from under him, comes up out of the water coughing and spluttering. I didn’t come here to drown! He kicks off his boots and starts to swim towards the wreck of the Nonnah.

He gets all the way out to it, and then he just stares uncomprehendingly at the bow, which is tilted almost thirty degrees in the air with no obvious way to get inside. He has no idea how the survivors even got out. “Captain!” Bodhi screams, treading water and pushing his wet hair out of his face. I don’t know their name, I should’ve gotten a name! He waits twenty terrifying heartbeats, watching Rogue Squadron wheel and dive at the walker and tank droids—hears the roar of TIE bombers
approaching from the east—

*(Scarif Base on fire all around them, Tonc shouting in his ear, “We have to leave them, we’ll never make it out, they’re pinned down on the beach—”)*

Bodhi shuts his eyes and prays as the TIE bombers start their first run.

Chapter End Notes

Hey, so I just want to say, before I start working on the next chapter, that the response to this story has just blown me the hell away. All of you who have left comments and kudos, subscribed, bookmarked, maybe even found me on tumblr—you're amazing. Thanks for sticking with it—we're not done, not even close, and your enthusiasm and support is keeping me flying.
Chapter 10

Chapter Summary

I think he's gonna go on like that for a while.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

(Bodhi hadn't left them.

Though he’d lost Tonc, in the end, to an unlucky shot when the soldier had leaned out the side of the shuttle’s ramp, screaming for the remainder of the Rebel troops to run, including Baze, carrying Chirrut’s limp body, sand and spray fountaining up around them, death on their heels. The pilot of Blue Squadron’s downed U-wing had been among the survivors; she’d had scrambled straight up to the cockpit to help, taking control of the laser cannons and laying down suppressing fire.

He’d gotten off the ground again, somehow, heart racing but hands steady, always steady, on the controls. Had flown through the gauntlet of TIEs to swoop in and pluck Jyn and a terribly wounded Cassian off the communications tower—Kaytoo sprinting across the platform at the last possible second and leaping across the widening gap into the shuttle—)

“Bodhi?!”

He opens his eyes, and the U-wing pilot from Blue Squadron is swimming towards him from the Nonnah. He thinks, wildly, that the light reflecting off the water is playing tricks on him, or his memories have gotten scrambled once more. But as she gets closer, it really is Laren Joma smiling at him, opening her mouth to call to him again—

—and the TIE bombers’ concussion missiles hit. His vision whites out—he’s gone deaf, too, and it’s only from the flashing heat of the air, the surging percussion of the waves tossing him away, that he can tell the bombers keep coming, keep hitting their target. Molten durasteel rains down, droplets of scalding pain when they burn through his flight jacket.

He gasps at the surface, is swamped again by another wave, but something collides with him underwater—softer than metal or plasteel—it’s Captain Joma. Bodhi flails to grab her arms, breaks out of the waves again, choking as he gulps both air and water, trying to get a better grip around her waist. Hauls her dead-weight body after him as he struggles blindly towards shore and the shuttle.

(“—we’ll never make it out—”)

His bare feet find shifting, but solid, sand. Insistent hands tug him into the safety of his ship, pull Joma away from his grasp. Bodhi falls to his hands and knees, panting, rivulets of water streaming off his face and hair and beard. Someone throws a survival blanket over his shoulders and pushes him into a seat, strapping him in with a pat on the back.

Bodhi feels the vibrations of the engine as the shuttle launches into the sky; he presses his wet hands to his face and shakes like he’s coming to pieces.

I’m the pilot—
They wanted me back in the fight—

Bodhi’s vision starts returning just in time for him to see an X-wing take out two TIE Interceptors, one right after the other, Hobbie throwing his head back and whooping as he soars up through atmosphere towards Rieekan’s command ship.

He looks for Joma and finds her unconscious and strapped in across two seats, her second-in-command tearing through a medkit. The officer glances at him; her mouth forms the words thank you.

We’re not out of this yet—

Bodhi unstraps and stumbles forward to the cockpit, only falling once as the shuttle shudders and spins. Then they’re clear of the fight, running for home, Hobbie grabbing him and shoving him, dripping, into the pilot’s chair, eyes exhilarated and mouth moving too fast to follow.

His hearing is starting to come back, but he immediately regrets that: “—cking promised!” Wedge is bellowing into the comms. “I told you Luke was gonna kill me if I didn't keep you safe and you went out there in some asinine leave-no-one-behind self-sacrificing bullshi—”

“Uh, boss?” Hobbie says, tentatively, dropping back into his own seat. “You know you're on an open line right now?”

There’s a brief pause.

“Let's go home so I can kick your—”

Hobbie toggles off the comms and looks at Bodhi. “I think he's gonna go on like that for a while.”

Bodhi says raspily, a little surprised he even has a voice left, since all his other senses had deserted him, “Technically—” has to stop and cough— “technically I didn't disobey a direct order?”

Hobbie just shakes his head at him in dismay.

But back at Thila Base, Wedge doesn’t get a shot at him, because Cassian’s pushing through the troops and medical team surrounding Joma and marching straight at Bodhi, Jyn right behind. Bodhi takes a couple of cautious steps backwards into the shuttle’s hold at the sight of them both. Jyn still looks pissed—

She surprises the hell out of Bodhi by grabbing him in a tight hug even though he protests, “I’m all wet—” only letting go when he grunts in pain.

“You—you—why—what were you thinking— ” Cassian is shouting, jabbing a finger in Bodhi’s face, more inarticulate than he’s ever seen him.

Bodhi clutches the edges of the soaked blanket around him, swaying on his feet, eyes darting back and forth between his friends, his vision starting to gray out at the edges.

Jyn grins, bright, though her eyes flick up and down at him, worried. “Ignore him, he’s so proud of you, Bodhi—you did it, you got her, everybody, out safe—”

“I didn’t need a blaster,” Bodhi mumbles, nonsensically, and collapses into Cassian’s arms.

*****

White walls—too-bright lights—I'm in the medcenter.
This time, though, when he wakes, it’s to Cassian and Jyn squaring off about something, Kaytoo standing to one side like a referee, turning his head back and forth to watch the scrum.

“What if there are spies among these new defectors?”

Jyn has her hands on her hips, glaring back at Cassian. “Isn’t it our job to make sure that doesn’t happen? You saw the evidence—”

Kaytoo says, “Bodhi’s awake,” and they break off arguing immediately and come over to his side.

“You had a concussion,” Cassian says, as Jyn kisses Bodhi on the cheek. “So did Laren Joma, along with a couple of broken bones, but she’s fine, and she saved us the intelligence on the equipment that the Imperials were trying to destroy.”

Bodhi starts to cough, can’t stop for a few seconds. Kaytoo lifts his hand as if he’s going to pound him on the back and Bodhi’s eyes go wide— “You also swallowed half the lake,” Jyn comments, as Cassian pushes Kaytoo’s hand away.

“Is Wedge—”

“Oh, yeah, he’s fuming in the corridor ‘cause Kaytoo locked him out,” Jyn replies, a little gleefully, but her face falls as she sees Bodhi twisting his hands together on his lap anxiously.

Cassian shoots her a look. “Wedge isn’t really angry with you, Bodhi, no one’s angry because you did what you thought was right. Even if it was ridiculously dangerous—” He cuts himself off as his voice starts to climb.

“I couldn’t just leave her behind,” Bodhi gets out, feeling like his throat is closing up on every word.

“We know,” Jyn says, her eyes shining wetly, and the room goes quiet for a moment except for the sound of choked-back tears.

Bodhi exhales shakily. “So—what were you arguing about?”

Cassian lifts his head and swipes at his own eyes, every inch the professional again. “The equipment Joma was carrying was proof of a biological weapon the Empire used on Dentaal. An Imperial Commander—Crix Madine, do you know of him?” Bodhi shakes his head, and Cassian goes on, “Madine sent information on the Candorian plague he claims to have helped unleash on the Dentaalians, and Joma’s team was trying to confirm it.”

“A plague?”

Jyn touches his hand and says, unhappily, “We haven’t been able to verify if there are any survivors.”

Bodhi stares at her, horrified. The image of Chirrut and Baze withering away slowly on the Temple steps drifts, unbidden, into his mind. At least Jedha died clean, and fast—

“Madine wants to defect,” Cassian says. “We were arguing about whether this, the other recent defections, might be a ruse to get Imperial spies into our ranks.”

“It’s a risk we have to take!” Jyn whirls back to him, instantly ready to resume their fight.

Bodhi glances between the two of them, thinking of how Cassian had talked him slowly, urgently,
back to reality in the cramped and dirty cell on Jedha. “Back—back then, you didn’t think I—”

“Of course not.” Cassian’s smiling at him, fond.

Kaytoo says, helpfully, “You were far too pathetic to have been a spy. I don’t think you should be a spy now. In fact, it’s much safer for you to stay off active duty altogether until you have addressed the many—Cassian, why have you been pressing on my foot with your foot for the last eleven point four five seconds?”

Jyn makes a face like she’s trying to keep from laughing.

“Thank you for that assessment, I wasn't planning on joining up with Intel, no, Kaytoo,” Bodhi says, wryly.

“Princess Leia and the generals want our recommendation on extracting Madine,” Cassian says. “We’re waiting for Joma to wake up, too, see what she thinks.”

Bodhi tries to talk again, coughs—leans hurriedly away from Kaytoo’s descending hand—manages, “It’s a chance.” He looks at them, tries to make them see it the way he does. “I was too late with Galen’s message—”

Jyn’s shaking her head— “Bodhi, no—”

“I was too late,” Bodhi insists, “and I had to make it right. Keep trying to get it right,” hoarse, thinking of the angry distrust in Yendor’s face as he’d hit him, Joma’s limp body weighing down his arms in the water. “Let Madine have his chance to try, too.”

Cassian exchanges glances with Jyn, and folds his arms. “If we do this, we’re gonna need an Imperial shuttle and a pilot,” he says, noncommittally.

Bodhi nods. “I'll—I’ll be ready.”

Chapter End Notes

Again, everyone leaving comments has been just the BEST. Thank you.
Chapter 11

Chapter Summary

Oh, yeah, that.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Bodhi is in and out of the strategy planning sessions for the next handful of days. The mission’s nearly a go, but infiltrating one of the most tightly-controlled, Imperial-occupied cities on Corellia, a Core World apparently requires a lot more preparation than stealing a cargo ship and trusting in the Force.

Cassian and Jyn get an earful from General Draven on the first day about Bodhi’s security clearance, or lack thereof, to know about Madine, so he mostly tries to stay off the general’s radar, only showing up when he’s specifically summoned to answer a question about Imperial communications or security. He spends a lot of time going over the Lambda-class shuttle—it had taken some damage on Chorax, nothing that couldn’t be chalked-up to regular service, but he’d rather it look like it belongs in a gleaming metropolis than stand out, banged-up and battle-scarred.

Wedge continues to serve as Rogue Leader in the meetings, working out insertion and extraction plans with General Rieekan, who’s conferencing with Corellian officials as a cover for snatching up Madine. And Baze and Chirrut are back, recalled to assist in planning for possible urban ground fighting.

Which, after the third day, leaves Bodhi wondering: Where in the galaxy is Luke?

It’s not standard for a commander to just disappear and leave his squadron for weeks at a time; even in the Rebellion, with its looser regulations and occasional deviations from protocol, that sort of thing is strongly discouraged. He figures it’s probably Luke’s special status as a potential Jedi that lets him off the hook, but it’s still highly unusual.

(It never would have happened in the Empire, status or no; even Darth Vader himself answered to the Emperor, and would never have deviated from his duties, whatever terrible things those were.)

The rest of Rogue Squadron doesn’t know where Luke is, and are by and large unconcerned about it. Zev’s hypothesis is that Luke’s off looking for some fabled kyber crystal, which makes Bodhi wince, remembering his despairing, inebriated ramblings of so many nights ago, while Hobbie groused cynically that it’s a big galaxy, and there’s really no way to know what happens to a man out there.

Cassian doesn’t seem to know, either, and gives him a funny look when he asks, over dinner one night, like he’d thought Bodhi already knew. Bodhi doesn’t really want to go higher in the chain of command; as clearly demonstrated by Draven’s relentless, wary scrutiny, he doesn’t have that kind of pull, anyway.

Which leaves—
The Millennium Falcon’s been docked in the hangar since Rieekan and Draven started planning Madine’s extraction; Han Solo’s Corellian, like Wedge, and from what Bodhi’s heard in the meetings, knows Coronet City like the back of his hand.

More important to Bodhi’s personal mission, though: he’s allegedly Luke’s best friend. If anyone would know where Luke’s disappeared off to, why he isn’t leading his squadron on essential missions, or—why he didn’t come visit me—it would be Han Solo.

So on the fourth day, even though his distrust of smugglers still runs deep—especially after that meeting with Talon Karrde—Bodhi puts in a visit to the Millennium Falcon. Chewbacca is crouched on top of the hull, rewiring the sensor dish, when he approaches.

“Hey,” Bodhi calls to him, and Chewbacca growls a greeting. “Is Captain Solo around?”

Chewbacca nods distractedly back, waving a large and furry arm for him to go inside.

Bodhi walks up the ramp into the Falcon, and finds himself wandering a little, hands stuffed into the pockets of his new flight jacket so he’ll keep from poking around curiously in Solo’s numerous modifications. The hyperdrive’s the most legendary, of course, but there’s also weapons system upgrades and an anarchy of wiring running all over the ship. The smuggler’s nowhere to be found, though, so he calls out, “Captain Solo?”

Solo’s voice drifts through the ship to him. “Yeah, come on up. Unless I owe you credits. Then go away.”

Up?

He finally figures it out and climbs into the dorsal turret, where Solo is lying on his back under the quad laser cannon, an over-stuffed tool kit open on the floor next to him, muttering as he works on the weapon.

“I can come back later,” Bodhi says uncertainly, and Solo startles, smacking his head on the underside of the turret’s chair and dropping his tools.

“Ow, blast—”

Bodhi leans down, sticking his hand out to help pull Solo free. “You all right? Sorry about that.”

Solo grabs his arm and shimmies out, wiping his hands on an already grease-smudged rag and standing. “Had a problem with that power cycler on our last trip, gotta nail it down before it takes one of us out while we’re trying to take out—oh, hey, kid,” he says, recognizing Bodhi at last. “What’s going on?”

“‘Kid?’” Bodhi scrutinizes Solo’s face.

The smuggler shrugs, motions for Bodhi to go down the ladder before him, climbs down after. “You, Luke, Leia, your Intelligence buddies, you’re all kids. Don’t get me wrong, age is just a number, but some of us have been around the galaxy a few more times.”

Bodhi says, “I’m twenty-fi—” He hesitates. Age is just a number—try something else or he’s just going to dismiss you—I saw your SLAM overdrive on the SRB42s.”

Solo’s eyes light up as he walks them back through the main corridor. “Yeah. Probably pretty different from the Lambda-class shuttles you’ve been flying with the Rogues.”
“And I flew Zeta-class for a long time before that,” Bodhi says, shifting fully into gear now. “They’re sluggish compared to the P-s3 ions on the TIEs, but the *Falcon* would definitely dust them all at sublight.”

“If you want, I’ll take you out sometime, show you what she can really do,” Solo offers. “But—I got the feeling you didn’t come up to talk shop.” His eyes narrow at him suspiciously.

Bodhi rubs the back of his neck, suddenly feeling kind of silly. “Um. Where’s Luke?”

A slow smirk spreads across Solo’s face, and he stops in the corridor, leaning up against the bulkhead. “Ah-ha,” he says. “I told him if he turned the tables on you, you’d fold eventually.”

Bodhi frowns. “What’s that supposed to mean?”

Solo waves a hand at him. “You know, the whole brooding, aloof, tragic hero thing. I told him to flip it around, make you come to—” Bodhi’s giving him a befuddled stare. “What?”

“*Brooding?’*

“I don’t know, what do you call it? You’re off by yourself, you don’t let anyone except your Rogue One buddies get close to you—maybe Wedge? I’ve seen you with him sometimes, Antilles likes pilots.” Solo leans in conspiratorially, adding, “Are you sleeping with Andor and Erso? You can tell me, I’ll let Luke down easy.”

Bodhi throws his hands up, completely bewildered. “What in the eternal blue blazes are you talking about—” cuts himself off, realizing what Solo had asked—

“*I’m not sleeping with Cassian or Jyn!*”

Solo raises a finger, chuckling, as Bodhi’s flustered shout reverberates throughout the ship. “‘And.’ I said ‘and.’”


“You don’t *know?*” Solo freezes, and starts again, slowly, as if he’s come to some kind of epiphany, like a man walking into an ocean and finally noticing the water’s gone over his head. “Maybe—” he casts a furtive glance over Bodhi’s shoulder at the ramp behind him, his lifeline—“Maybe instead, you forget I said anything at all?”

Bodhi slaps his hand on the controls and keeps it there, glaring, as the ramp rises and closes them in. There’s a questioning, annoyed-sounding howl from Chewbacca on the hull.

“It’s my ship, you know,” Solo points out, sounding amused, but not budging from his casual lean against the bulkhead. “I think this counts as piracy. Also, I *could* just walk around to the other docking port—”


“You got your priorities in a weird order, Bodhi,” Solo says, stretching his long legs into the corridor and grinning, and Bodhi just waits him out, hand firmly planted over the ramp control panel, raising his eyebrows. “Okay, okay. Don’t tell anybody I told you. Luke is in the Devaron system looking for some kind of Jedi thing, ask your monk friend about it. I don’t think you’re sleeping with *him*, by the way, he seems pretty married to that other guy, what’s his name, Baze.”
“They’ve been married for decades.”

Never mind how long it took us to pry that information out of them—Bodhi’s mouth twitches involuntarily at the memory.

“Yeah, that makes sense. I thought you might be sleeping with Andor and/or Erso because everybody’s pairing off around here—” he sounds oddly aggrieved at that—“Something about wartime and taking any chance you get. People see you three together a lot, and they talk.” Solo shrugs again. “And some people go in for more than pairs. Hey, I’m not judging,” he says, holding his hands up. “Whatever fuels your power cells.”

Bodhi crosses his arms, forgetting he’s trying to keep Solo from leaving. “And ‘turning the tables’?”

The smuggler’s lips twitch. “You really don’t know what I’m talking about?” Bodhi shakes his head.

Solo looks up at the ceiling, lets out a long breath. “Luke’s got this—hero-worship thing for you,” he says finally, and Bodhi shivers a little, unhappily, confused by his own reaction, his stuttering leaping heart.

“He talks about you all the time, how brave you are, where you learned how to fly, what it must’ve been like running away from the Empire. He damn near interrogated anybody he could talk to about Scarif, after you first blew him off back on Yavin Four—”

“I didn’t—”

“You weren’t blowing him off?”

“No,” Bodhi says. “I get—I can’t talk about what I did, it—it’s not the kind of story people want to hear.”

Solo points at him. “See? This. This is aloof. Mysterious.”

“What—no, you’ve got it all wrong,” Bodhi protests. “I mean I can’t talk about it, it’s horrible what happened, all because I—” To his horror, his voice cracks, and he stops, swallowing nervously.

“Hey.” Solo puts a hand on his shoulder—Bodhi trembles at his touch, and he immediately pulls his hand back, looking concerned. “We’ve all done things we’re not proud of.”

“Not Luke,” Bodhi points out. He’s pretty sure Luke hasn’t so much as been arrested, even for the juvenile types of stunts he, and other bored adolescents, had tried to pull on Jedha.

“Well. He’s something else.” Solo’s smirk shifts into something like a genuine smile. “You really should put in some effort, get to know him. I mean, the kid did save your life.”

“He saved all our lives,” Bodhi says, puzzled. “When he destroyed the Death Star—”

“Oh, yeah, that.” Solo shakes his head. “No, when he got you out of that fight a couple weeks back?”

“Jyn found me first.”

“Oh, only because Luke knew something was wrong and sent people out looking for you,” Solo says. “You should’ve seen his face. And don’t ask me how he knew, I don’t know how the Force works.” He thumps a hand against the corridor bulkhead. “That about it? We got a mission to prep for, kid.”

“The mission—? Captain Solo, I’ve got more questions now—”
Solo grins and moves to clap Bodhi on the shoulder, but holds back. “Ask Luke yourself. He’s coming with us to Corellia.”

Chapter End Notes

I won't be updating for the next couple days; the upcoming stuff's gonna be long and complicated and I want to get it right. :) So Happy New Year to all of you and yours!! Here's to a brighter 2017.

Thanks to meledea for being my sounding-board on this chapter. Original Trilogy Han is a bit of a dork, and he doesn't always have it right...
Chapter 12

Chapter Summary

Let’s get to Corellia.

Chapter Notes

Heed the tags. No kidding.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Cassian and Jyn are standing behind Generals Rieekan and Draven in the full, locked-down briefing. It’s an Intelligence mission, after all, they’re the Alliance’s left hand—but Bodhi can’t help but wish they were at his side in the back of the room.

“Let me get this out of the way, first,” Draven says. “Yes, Commander Madine has admitted responsibility for releasing the Candorian plague that killed the Dentaalians.” A murmur goes around the room, and Bodhi, unable to separate out general consternation from disgust, braces for the eyes that will inevitably track towards him, Wedge, Hobbie—but only Luke is looking at him, and it’s not with condemnation.

Bodhi drops his gaze. Hero-worship?

“Madine has agreed to stand trial for war crimes—if and when we win this war. We can use his knowledge and expertise to do that,” Draven continues. “General Rieekan?”

“Commander Skywalker, Captain Solo, and Rogue Squadron will escort me to the conference at the Capitol Tower, here.” Rieekan points to the tallest building on the map as it swivels to project Coronet City’s skyline, the wireframe outline of the tower glowing.

“They will then patrol Corellian airspace for any Imperial activity indicating they’ve discovered our presence, and should that occur, they will engage the Imperial forces to further divert attention from the extraction team. Captain Andor and Sergeant Erso’s team—Rogue One—” Bodhi thinks Rieekan’s always had a soft spot for them, not like General Draven—“will take our stolen Imperial shuttle to the Tech Center.”

The map lights up an octagonal compound of buildings a few stories shorter than the Tower, linked by enclosed, but airy, skybridges on their fourth and top floors. “Commander Madine agreed that the Tech Center was the best location to pull him out. The Rogue One team will go in through the Aurek Building, it’s the least secured of all the entrances. You’ll need to find a way to make contact; Madine’s been renting out all the penthouse offices to serve as a rotating series of safehouses until we arrive.”

Solo mutters sarcastically, audibly enough for Bodhi to hear, which means everyone can hear him, “Oh, that’s inconspicuous.” Luke doesn’t hide his reaction, grinning and shaking his head at his friend.
Rieekan spares the smuggler the briefest of glances and possibly an eye-roll. “Corellia is still an Imperial-occupied world. We’ll be going in before local sunrise to lessen the possibility of collateral damage, should the Imperials respond in force.”

Bodhi feels sick. He looks around at his fellow rebels, who are nodding. He pushes down the memories of the ejecta cloud on Jedha falling across the horizon towards the Catacombs of Cadera—desperately outracing the endless killing light on Scarif—

“Commander Madine is an extremely important asset to the Empire. We know the Emperor will be sending his best people to track him down. But we’re sending ours, too.” Draven looks around the room, his gaze skipping over Bodhi and the other ex-Imperials. “May the Force be with you.”

*****

“Rieekan’s conference sounds very boring,” Kaytoo says, in the co-pilot’s chair, already done with his half of the preflight sequence. “I have reviewed holos of the guests and come to the conclusion that most, if not all, public officials should not be allowed indefinite periods of time in which to speak.”

“It’s a good thing you’re not going to the conference, then, isn’t it?” Jyn says, from behind Bodhi’s seat.

“I cannot imagine what the Senate must have been like,” Kaytoo continues. “Thousands of worlds with thousands of equally boring speakers.”

“Princess Leia must have been pretty good, though,” Bodhi offers, loyally.

Kaytoo looks at him. “I suppose,” he allows. “But she is not attending.”

“She’s out looking for Alderaanian survivors again,” Cassian says, from the aft compartment. “Don’t tell anyone I told you that, Bodhi, you’re not supposed to know.”

The words are out of his mouth before he can stop them, ugly and hurting. “What, does Draven think I’m going to try to finish the job?”

Jyn’s mouth falls open, and Kaytoo even makes a little surprised noise. Cassian draws back as if wounded. “Bodhi—”

“Never mind,” he says, already regretting it, and turns back to his side of the console.

Cassian unstraps and comes forward, putting his hand on Bodhi’s shoulder. “I’ll talk to Draven again about upping your clearance,” he murmurs. “I’m sorry.”

“We don’t think that,” Jyn says, low, unnecessarily. “We trust you. We all do.”

Bodhi swallows and ducks his head. “I know. It’s all right.”

“What’s going on up there?” Chirrut calls. “Baze, you aren’t giving me any of the gossip.”

“Nothing,” Cassian says, going back and sitting down. “Let’s get to Corellia.”

*****

Corellia is stunning, even in the dark.

“I’ve never seen a planet like this,” Bodhi says, gazing raptly at the necklace of lights strung along
the coastline as he takes them into the descent. Jedha was—\emph{nothing}, and Bamayar unlivable by any standard.

“They call Coronet City the Jewel of Corellia,” Cassian comes forward again, leaning over Bodhi’s shoulder. “There’s the Tower for Rieekan’s conference—I hear the view from there is spectacular.”

“Baze, tell me what you see,” Chirrut says, imperiously.

Baze snorts. “Nothing. It’s night.”

“I never saw much of the view,” Jyn puts in. “All the \emph{fun’s} down in the Blue Sector.” Bodhi looks up in time to catch Cassian rolling his eyes at her affectionately.

Kaytoo leans over and says, “I have records of all the things Jyn has bought or stolen from this planet. There are some very interesting devices for se—”

Cassian hurriedly interrupts. “I see the Tech Center.”

Bodhi bites his lip to keep from snickering, and puts them down on the empty landing pad outside Aurek Building marked “Reserved.”

“Madine’s signaling us from the Grek Building,” Jyn says. Bodhi looks down at his panel and doesn’t see anything; she taps his arm and redirects his gaze up towards the Tech Center. There’s a blinking light coming from the top floor of one of the buildings.

“Low-tech,” he says.

“Yeah, well, get ready to get past some very \emph{high} tech,” Cassian says. “Let’s go.”

Kaytoo and Chirrut knock out the Aurek Building’s CorSec guards; Kaytoo plugs into the security port and taps the fingers of his other hand against the duracrete wall arrhythmically. “For a Tech Center, that was far too easy,” he says, as the doors slide open. “I have a—”

“Not now, Kay, please,” Cassian says, and leads them into the Aurek Building. Bodhi keeps one ear listening to Rogue Squadron on his comlink as they move towards the stairs.

“Luke, I’m picking up strange transmissions outside the city,” Wedge says. “Looks like Imperial signals.”

“Yeah, I see them, Artoo can’t tell if they’ve picked up on us yet. Let’s do a flyby, see if there’s anything to worry about.” Luke sounds relentlessly cheerful, as always. “Han, you coming?”

Solo’s voice is sharp, irritated. “We’re still being inspected, got CorSec crawling all over us. Can’t take off again to join you until it’s finished, but Rieekan got out the other docking port and he’s on his way to the conference.”

“Sorry, good luck with that.” Luke’s amused. “Okay, Wedge, Zev, you’re with me, let’s check out those transmissions.”

Jyn’s looking at Bodhi; she raises her eyebrows.

He nods at her, shutting off his comlink and dropping it back in his pocket. “Rogues are going to check out something outside the city. Solo’s stuck in—well, customs, but everything seems fine.”

Cassian throws a glance over his shoulder at him. “Don’t worry about them. Come on.”
They’ve gone up a couple of flights when Chirrut stops abruptly on the stairs, his hand clutching at Baze’s arm. “Something has gone wrong,” he says, and then the Tech Center rumbles with a series of small tremors in quick succession, the already dim lighting flickering.

“Bodhi,” Cassian snaps, but he’s anticipated it, is already flicking on his comlink.

“—diversion, get back there now,” Luke is ordering. “We’ve got to stop those TIE bombers before they bring the whole Tower down.”

Bodhi turns wide eyes to his friends, feeling sick again. “They’re going after Rieekan.”

“Okay, that’s our diversion,” Jyn says, grimly. “Let’s make the most of it.”

On the fourth floor, though, the Tech Center shakes again, and a fireball blooms into the night sky, much closer than the ongoing attack on the Capitol Tower. Bodhi rushes out of the stairwell to the side of the skybridge to look down, heedless of how Cassian tries to hold him back—“I think that was my shuttle,” he says, dismayed.

There’s a small squadron of stormtroopers, fewer than Bodhi would have expected, marching towards Aurek Building. “And I’m pretty sure they know we’re here.”

Kaytoo says, “The odds of our mission succeeding are—”

“Not now,” Cassian says, coming onto the skybridge, his brow furrowing. “Bodhi, there’s landing pads all over the city, see if you can spot another ship we can take. Baze, Jyn?”

Jyn presses her lips together, thinking out loud. “They know we’re here for Madine, but they don’t know which building he’s hiding in, so they’ll be tracking us to figure it out. No communications in or out until it’s over.”

Baze says, “We should split up so they must divide their forces, or risk losing Madine to us.”

“All right,” Cassian says, as Chirrut nods agreement. “Bodhi?”

Bodhi’s been leaning against the wall of the skybridge, scanning the gleaming city lights for options. “The closest ship is a yacht on the roof of that apartment complex a block over.” He turns back to his friends, stilling his unsteady fingers by pressing them against the cool transparisteel behind him. “You don’t want to contact Rogue Squadron for backup?”

Cassian shakes his head. “Look.” In the distance, the Tower is on fire; the black specks of Rogue Squadron’s airspeeders just visible against its fatal glow.

“Now can I tell you the odds?” Kaytoo asks.

“No,” everyone says, in unison.

“Okay,” Cassian says, decisively. “Jyn, Baze, Kay, you’re on Madine. Get to him—quickly, but detour a bit if you can—and sit on him. Chirrut, Bodhi, we’re going to lead the rest of the Imperials around by the nose, and then steal that yacht.” His eyes linger on Jyn for a second, as good as a kiss goodbye— “Stay off comms until I call.”

Baze catches Bodhi’s arm as they pass each other. “Are you sure you don’t want a blaster? I have extras.” He flips open his cloak to show the additional three wicked-looking weapons on his belt.

Bodhi shakes his head. Baze looks unhappy, but squeezes his arm gently. “Be careful.”
“Up or down?” Cassian is asking Chirrut, when Bodhi joins them in the stairwell. “Can you sense where they’ll go?”

“It doesn’t work like that,” Chirrut replies, a touch exasperatedly. “I’m still not a Jedi, you know.”

“They’d normally spread out, go floor by floor,” Bodhi says. “But they think we’ll lead them right to him.”

“Up and around, then,” Cassian decides. “Nice and visible on the skybridges. We’re going to have to move fast. Ready?”

Bodhi nods. “I’m with you.”


They run up four more flights to the eighth floor; Cassian slows to a jog across the long skybridge between the Aurek Building and the Esk Building, making a point of getting out a glow rod and lighting their way.

Chirrut stands guard as Cassian picks the lock to get them into the Esk Building; then they’re moving through a labyrinth of silent dark offices before exiting out the northeast door onto another skybridge. Bodhi glances down, once, into the courtyard as they cross, and sees the stormtroopers looking up and pointing.

“They’ve spotted us,” he reports.

“Great,” Cassian says, and grins tightly at him. “Keep moving.”

Bodhi pretends not to notice that Cassian’s hands have gone a little unsteady as he works the lock on the Dorn Building. The Dorn Building’s top floor is a holo studio, shut down since Madine rented it —there are half-written flimsy scripts in the trash and lewd sketches pasted to the walls. And then they’re out in the open again—

A red-haired woman wearing all black is coming towards them from the opposite end of the skybridge, from the Cresh Building, a handful of stormtroopers flanking her. Cassian holds up his hand, and Bodhi stops behind him, his heart already racing from running around the Center; he thinks it can’t possibly beat any faster. Chirrut moves to Cassian’s side, his stick at the ready.

“Going to see Commander Madine?” the woman asks, smirking at them.

Cassian says, softly, smiling back at her, “You guessed wrong.”

She shrugs. “No matter. The other half of my squad will be on your other half in minutes.” Her eyes slide past Cassian and land on Bodhi. “I know your face,” she says. “You’re that cargo pilot from Eadu.” Cassian’s posture stiffens, and he just barely turns his head towards Bodhi.

“Jedha, actually,” Bodhi corrects her, a little surprised at the sudden surge of anger that has him adding spitefully, “I bet all planets look the same to the Empire.”

“Two traitors in one place,” she says, ignoring him. “What are the odds?” Kaytoo would know, Bodhi thinks, wildly. “The Emperor will be very pleased.”

Cassian snatches his blaster up out of his holster and fires—

—and she blocks his shot with her lightsaber.
“Oh, shit,” Chirrut says, and drops into a more aggressive fighting stance, turning his head towards the hum of her magenta blade.

“Bodhi, run,” Cassian snaps, and he starts to obey, but—I can’t just leave them. He thumbs on his comlink, stammers, “We—we’ve got trouble—” to whoever might be listening, before the comlink is snatched from his grasp, sailing across the skybridge into the woman’s outstretched hand as he gapes after it.

The woman waves the comlink at him. “Good try.” She tilts her head, appraising Chirrut curiously. “Take them.” The stormtroopers advance before her, and Chirrut moves to meet them in his deadly dance.

Cassian keeps firing one-handed, yanking Bodhi along with him as he takes cover behind a decorative plant. Chirrut swirls and fights on as the woman keeps coming—she flicks Cassian’s shots aside with her lightsaber, stalking down the skybridge towards them with a predator’s grace. The transparisteel walls are rapidly cratered with fire.

“You are no Jedi,” Chirrut calls, over the firefight. He swats stormtroopers down, launching himself off of their falling bodies towards his next hapless opponent; spinning and leaping backwards, at Cassian’s side for an instant before striking again. “Who are you? Where did you learn the ways of the Force?”

She doesn’t reply, deflects a blaster bolt straight back at Cassian—

Chirrut breaks his step and grabs Cassian’s collar, hauling him aside—the shot takes Cassian in the shoulder instead of the chest, and he spins and crashes to the floor, shouting “Run!” again at Bodhi—

Bodhi turns on his heel, panting with terror for his friend, and dashes belatedly back for the stairs—there’s the click and whine of a blaster rifle preparing to fire.

“O—Okay, okay.” Bodhi puts his hands up and backs away from the reinforcements pouring up from the stairwell of the Dorn Building, glancing over his shoulder at Cassian’s face going hard, eyes glittering with dread where he’s sprawled on the floor.

Too late. Failed again. Sorry, Cassian. Sorry, everybody.

The woman is facing off with Chirrut at the center of the skybridge, the humming magenta blade at his throat magnitudes brighter than the oncoming dawn. Her free hand gestures, and Bodhi freezes as Cassian’s blaster leaps off the floor into her grasp and she aims it squarely at Cassian’s head without even so much as glancing at him. “I’ll kill them both before you can lay a hand on me,” she tells Chirrut. “You know I can.”

Chirrut lets his stick fall to the floor and slowly raises his hands. “Is this the life you were meant to lead?” he asks her.

“Is this where you thought you would die?” she retorts, shutting down her lightsaber and hooking it to her belt. She waves the newly arrived troopers forward to take them.

He smiles and shakes his head as a stormtrooper comes over with a set of binders. “Even your master doesn’t know when or where he will die,” he says. “Maybe you will be the one who kills him? I hear that’s how they do it on the dark side of the Force.”

The woman kicks his staff up into her hands and examines it. “You don’t know anything about me,”
she says, casually.

Bodhi’s eyes go wide as he watches the stormtrooper close the binders around Chirrut’s wrists, and he wants to throw up. The skybridge corridor seems too small, all of a sudden, its clear walls closing on him like the sky of falling stone—

Cassian glares as the stormtrooper puts binders on him next, and hauls him to his knees, not bothering to heed his wounded shoulder.

*(Jyn says, “Until all our chances are spent.”)*

The stormtrooper comes over to Bodhi last—he’s the least of the possible threats—and he’s panting, unable to tear his eyes away from the binders in the trooper’s armored hands.

“No, no no no—please don’t, I’ll go quietly, don’t put those on me—” Bodhi tries to back away, bumps into the end of a blaster rifle nudging his ribs. A heavy hand comes down on his shoulder, holding him fast, and he gasps, frantic, as the other stormtrooper yanks his hands in front of him, slaps the binders tightly around his wrists.

Something like a sob shakes him. The stormtrooper’s implacable grip hurts as they try to close the binders over his quaking hands; he struggles to get free, no longer caring if they kill him—

Cassian hisses, “Keep still!”

“Please—I’m the pilot”— and Bodhi’s voice is no longer his own, incoherent pleas trying to escape his mouth as past and present start to converge in his mind—No, not again—

The woman turns her fierce green eyes towards Bodhi, frowning as she realizes something is very wrong. “Wait,” she says, half a heartbeat too late—

The binders click shut, and Bodhi is lost.

*****

(—a thick tentacle twining around him, Saw Gerrera standing outside the cell watching, waiting for Bodhi to come apart, give up all his failures—)

“Bodhi? Bodhi, stay with me, it’s all right, you’re—safe—”

(“No lie is safe,” Saw says, and the monster burns at his temples, fire tearing through his memories —

—Galen’s body shrouded in flames on the platform at Eadu—)

“What’s wrong with him?”

(“—What’s wrong with him—?”)

Cassian (looking at Bodhi through the cell bars) trying to hold him with his bound hands. “You did this to him.”

(Solo, smirking— “Are you sleeping with Andor and Erso?”

—Cassian’s/Jyn’s kiss on his forehead/cheek—
Luke’s voice—inside his head, clear as sunlight and utterly horrifying, a lifeline shaped like a tentacle— *Hold on, Bodhi! Hold on.*

("—I am one with the Force and the Force is with me—"
—Just hold on—

*****

Bodhi opens his eyes.

He’s hunched-over on his knees, exhausted and drenched with sweat, breath coming in short gasps. The binders are gone from his wrists, but his sleeves have been pushed back on his arms, revealing the scars from Saw’s restraints, pale against his brown skin. His hands, even clenched in fists on his thighs, won’t stop shaking. But he’s himself again.

*Whatever that means.*

At a glance, Chirrut is in a seemingly serene meditation pose, eyes closed and whispering his mantra, the Corellian dawn glowing on his face. Cassian’s ragged breaths hitch in his throat where he’s kneeling more-or-less upright on Bodhi’s other side, his face reddening where the woman must have struck him.

But the woman herself is crouched in front of Bodhi, her expression surprisingly concerned for someone who had just been trying to kill or capture them. She doesn’t touch him, but her gaze flicks down to his wrists before she looks back at his face, registering that his eyes are open again.

“Someone did this to you,” she says, flatly. “Tortured you until you broke. Was it the Rebels? Is that why you betrayed the Empire? Why you’re with them?”

Luke says in his head, a horror Bodhi can’t shake loose, *Buy me some time. I’m almost there!*

Bodhi doesn’t dare look for what Luke might be doing, or again at his friends kneeling next to him. He’s desperate to let go into the darkness and exhaustion still clawing at his mind, but—

*Cassian and Chirrut will die. Jyn and Baze and Kaytoo will die.*

*I can do this.*

He thinks they are his own thoughts, and not Luke’s, and that is a terribly small comfort.

Bodhi shudders and ducks his head from the woman’s steely eyes. “Please—” He can hardly speak, doesn’t have to feign the shakiness of his voice as he fumbles for the words to convince her, keep her focused on him. “Please let me go. I’m—I’m no good to you—I’m just the pilot—”
“Who tortured you?” she asks, and she sounds like she’s trying to be gentle but has forgotten how, her edges barely dulled. “Tell me who did this, and in the name of the Emperor, I swear I will bring the hand of judgment down on them.”

Luke’s airspeeder plummets into Bodhi’s line of sight.

The stormtroopers don’t even have time to shout a warning before he opens fire, and the transparisteel wall behind the woman explodes.

Bodhi, his friends, and the woman, are flung sprawling across the skybridge. The stormtroopers surrounding them fare better, but just for a moment; Luke’s airspeeder spits deadly laser fire over Bodhi’s head through the jagged, smoldering opening, and then wheels away into the sky as the troopers fall.

Bodhi can see TIE bombers approaching from the smoke-filled horizon, the first streaks of sunrise glinting off of their panels.

Go! It’s Luke’s voice again, commanding, and Bodhi clenches his fists at the sides of his head, trying to suppress a moan as he hunches in on himself on the floor.

Chirrut is first to his feet, reaching down for Bodhi’s hands, pulling him up, gently holding him steady. The wind whipping at him is cold, but he’d be shivering regardless, sweaty skin going clammy as he tries to put himself back together. He narrows his focus to undoing Chirrut’s binders.

This is the present.

Cassian’s hurt.

Luke is—no longer in his head.

The woman pushes herself up, groaning—

Cassian levels his recovered blaster at her with his bound hands even as he struggles to his feet, wincing as the movement pulls at his injured shoulder. “Stay down,” he orders. “Bodhi, are you with us?” His voice is laced with pain and poorly-concealed worry.

Bodhi swallows, finds his own voice again. “Yeah. Yeah, I’m here.”

The woman scowls furiously at him, but she lowers herself back down to the floor, keeping her arms outstretched, visibly far from the lightsaber at her belt, even though Bodhi guesses she could easily pull it to her hand with the Force. “Nice trick, traitor,” she snarls, bitterness coloring her voice. “You really had me thinking you were a scrambled fucking mess.”

“Believe me, I wish I wasn’t,” Bodhi tells her, touching his fingers to his temple wearily. She gives him an angry, bewildered look as he steps over to undo Cassian’s binders.

“Get our comlinks,” Cassian says, and Bodhi searches the downed stormtroopers for them while Cassian stoops to pick Chirrut’s stick up off the floor, his blaster held unwaveringly on the woman. “Let’s go,” he says, handing Chirrut’s staff to him. Cassian’s moving more stiffly than Bodhi likes, but he’s in no position to point out anyone else’s liabilities.

May the Force of others be with you,” Chirrut says to the woman, with a grim little smile, and brings his stick down hard on the back of her head. She slumps to the floor.

Bodhi twitches away. “Chirrut—”
“The Force is not done with her yet. I didn't kill her,” Chirrut assures him.

“Let's go,” Cassian repeats, sounding rather like he wouldn’t have minded if Chirrut had. He calls into the comlink as they start to move, stepping over the fallen stormtroopers, “Jyn. Do you have Madine?”

“Cassian,” Kaytoo says. “Are you all right?” His words are punctuated with the sound of blaster fire.

Cassian stops in his tracks, and his voice is terse at the sound of the droid and not Jyn on the com. “Kaytoo—do you have Madine?” Chirrut leans on his stick, turning his head to listen.

“Yes, we’ve got him. I didn’t sit on him, Jyn said I would do permanent damage,” Kaytoo responds. Bodhi is too worn out to smile at that, or even sigh in relief, only sags against the skybridge wall, lacing his fingers together.

Kaytoo adds, “But we’re trapped up here. Jyn and Baze are holding off the Imperials. We won’t be able to get down to you.”

“We don’t have a ship yet anyway,” Cassian tells him.

Bodhi winces guiltily, and even though Chirrut can’t see his face, he turns unerringly in Bodhi’s direction and taps him on the hip with his stick, shaking his head. “Not your fault.”

“All right,” Kaytoo says. “We’ll—oh, no. Oh, no.” The comlink clicks off.

“Kay! Dammit—what’s going on? Kay?!” Cassian shouts, and Bodhi’s heart sinks at the desperation in his friend’s cry.

Kaytoo comes back on. “Baze is letting Jyn use the repeater cannon.” He sounds profoundly aggrieved.

Chirrut snorts a laugh. Cassian just stands there frozen for a second, holding the comlink. “Kay.”

“Yes, Cassian?”

“Don’t —ah. We’ll figure a way out. Stay put—”

“Come on up, the air’s great today!” Solo’s voice sings out across the frequency. “The Millennium Falcon provides rooftop pickup service, free of charge. It’s a bit tight, but I think it’s our best shot.”

“Han.” Cassian straightens up. “Get to Jyn’s team first, they’re in the Grek Building with Madine. We’re over in—” he looks around, uncertain—

“Cresh,” Bodhi tells him, softly.

“The Cresh Building.”

“Copy that, Cassian,” Solo replies, the playfulness gone from his tone. “Luke’s circling back to provide cover. Those TIE bombers weren’t kidding around at the Tower, and we’ve got more on the way.”

“All right, you heard him,” Cassian says, turning his comlink off. “Let’s get up there.”

Standing on the rooftop a couple of minutes later, wind tugging at Bodhi’s hair, his gaze follows the dawn as it traces light over the mountains. The Falcon descends onto the rooftop across the way—Cassian’s relief is visible in his eyes as Jyn waves Baze, Kaytoo, and a sandy-haired man who can
only be Madine up the ramp before ducking into the ship herself. The repulsorlifts fire, and then the *Falcon* is maneuvering, low, over to where he and Cassian and Chirrut wait.

Luke’s airspeeder zips past, pursued by a pair of TIE bombers. Chirrut grabs Bodhi and Cassian and pushes them down, flinging himself next to them—Cassian cries out as he hits the duracrete, rolling onto his back, holding his wounded shoulder. Bodhi’s heart is in his throat as he presses flat on the rooftop, watching Luke flinging his airspeeder completely vertical, trying to shake off his pursuers by pushing his ship past the limits of physics.

The *Falcon* sets down a few meters from them, underside cannon firing—one bomber disintegrates in a ball of flame. The ramp lowers, Kaytoo’s long legs carrying him over the edge of it before it even drops completely—

—Luke is coming back around, killing his speed like he’s going to try something incredibly stupid like land it right here and jump out—Bodhi pushes himself up to his hands and knees, preparing to run, to haul Cassian out of the way—

The pursuing bomber shoots out Luke’s engines—is coming in perfectly aligned to take out the entire rooftop on its pass—

A second airspeeder screams overhead, taking out the TIE with a single shot. *Wedge.*

But there’s nothing Wedge or anyone can do for Luke—Bodhi’s mouth falls open in horror as the airspeeder crashes into the edge of the rooftop and bursts into flame.

“Kay!” Cassian shouts, uselessly—“Get him out—”

But through sheer luck, or the Force, Luke pushes the canopy of his speeder up and climbs out, looking unscathed, exhilarated. He dashes from the flaming wreckage of his airspeeder towards them, calling, “Did we get him? Did you get Madine?”

Cassian waves his hand in relieved acknowledgement as he gets stiffly to his feet, Kaytoo and Chirrut helping him to the *Falcon.*

As spent as he is, Bodhi feels an unexpected wave of rage wash over him as he stands there, hands curling into fists at his side for a confrontation he isn’t planning. *How can Luke be completely fine? I almost failed.*

And, under that, as he’s trembling with anger, a rip current of he has no idea what he's done to me—

Luke runs up, throws an arm around Bodhi’s shoulders, and grins, seemingly unaware of his simmering fury. “Bodhi, you did it, you heard me! I didn’t know if you would, I’d never done anything—”

“Stay the *fuck* out of my head,” Bodhi snaps, and shoves past him up the ramp into the *Falcon.*

Chapter End Notes

Welcome [Mara Jade](#) to the party!

Thanks to meledea for the advice, and thanks to everyone who's sticking this out with me. <3
Chapter 13

Chapter Summary

What did I say about getting any ideas?

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Solo takes one look at them at the top of the ramp, grabs Luke’s arm and points him in the direction of the turrets. “Luke, get down to the quad cannon, you know how this goes. Bodhi—” He hesitates.

“I’m all right,” Bodhi lies through his teeth. He’s both angry and beyond enervated, but the mission isn’t over—there are still TIE bombers in the air, or the woman could wake up and come after them. “Tell me what to do.”

Solo nods, willing to let it go for the moment. He jerks a thumb in the direction of the cockpit. “I don’t trust Cassian’s droid. You’re up front with Chewie, get us home. Don’t break my ship.” He turns and heads for the ladder to the turret.

Luke tries to hold Bodhi’s gaze, starts to reach out to him, but drops his hand before he gets there. “You’re not all right. I—”

“We don’t have time for this,” Bodhi says, shortly, making for the cockpit, unsteady on his feet and reeling against the bulkhead as Chewbacca lifts off. He pushes off with one hand and hurries on.

“After we get out of here, then,” Luke says, trailing after him. “Bodhi?”

“Yeah. Yeah, okay.”

Luke nods, his hair falling in his eyes, and goes down the ladder to the ventral turret.

In the cockpit, the pilot's seat is empty— “Are you sure you don't want to switch?” Bodhi asks Chewbacca. The ship rocks in the air as a TIE bomber darts past, hammering shots off their shields; Solo takes it out with a pulse of laser fire, whooping into the Falcon’s ship-wide comms.

Chewbacca shakes his head and waves Bodhi into the chair. He growls that the navicomputer’s nearly done with the calculations for the jump to hyperspace, but—

“The Capitol Tower's collapsing?” Bodhi’s lingering anger dissipates, transmutes back into dread as he looks to starboard and sees an AT-AT bombarding the tall building in the distance.

“Hobbie and Janson got Rieekan out,” Solo calls.

“But what about all the other people in there?” Bodhi demands, strapping in. He opens and closes his hands, staring down at the controls, uncertain. “We can't just leave—”

“We can, and we will,” Solo says curtly. “Don't get any ideas just ‘cause you’re sitting in my seat.”

Bodhi gazes out the viewport, at the city coming slowly awake below them.
Finish the mission. Get Madine home.

But—

“Yeah, too late,” Bodhi calls back, taking the controls and bringing the Falcon about. Chewbacca huffs amusement as Solo looses a stream of invective into the comm. “We’re going to make a run at the walker, get their attention, and draw it out so the civilians can escape. Then we go home.”

“You got it, Bodhi,” Luke replies briskly, as if nothing had happened between them only minutes before.

He can hear Solo sigh loudly. “Geez, kid, what happened to the pilot who never fired a shot?”

Bodhi flinches guiltily. “I never said that was true.”

There’s a stunned silence from Luke’s end, as Solo barks a surprised laugh. Bodhi can’t stop himself from pointing out, “Also, you’re on the cannons. I’m—I’m just the pilot.”

Chewbacca looks at him, rumbles a question.

“Tell you about it later,” Bodhi says. “Keep an eye out for those bombers!” He throws full power to the sublights, trembling again, but giddily delighted as the fastest ship in the galaxy responds to his touch. Ahead, the remainder of Rogue Squadron is doing their best against the AT-AT, but it’s too well-armored against their light airspeeders.

Chewbacca asks if Solo is sure he fixed the power cycler. “I sure as hell hope so, or this is gonna be a real exercise in futility,” he calls back.

“Here goes,” Bodhi says, and sends the Falcon in a diving pass at the walker. Luke and Solo light it up; he sees its head swiveling to track them—takes the ship spiralling away from its torpedoes, keeping just out of range. It starts to turn, ponderously, away from the Capitol Tower.

“I hope you told everyone to hold onto something,” Solo yells, as Bodhi brings them around for another pass. “I don't want Cassian all pissed at me because you broke his droid—”

“Does he ever stop talking?” Bodhi asks Chewbacca, putting his hand over the pickup. The Wookiee shakes his head and huffs a laugh. On the ground, the AT-AT is moving slowly down the avenue after them, laser fire glancing off its sides as Rogue Squadron harries it along.


Bodhi remembers something from the battle on Scarif, something Joma had described in the debrief — “The joints, go for the joints,” he calls.

“Thanks, kid, I already figured that out,” Solo replies, and the barrage of laser fire from both quad cannons, plus the swarm of Rogue Squadron, has the walker crumpling within seconds.

Comms are flashing on the panel—Chewbacca toggles it, and Wedge says, sounding pleased, “We got it from here—thanks for the help. Get going!”

“Good job today!” Luke calls out on the line. “See you at home.”

Bodhi takes the Falcon up and out of the Corellian atmosphere. “Everybody okay back there?”

Jyn’s voice comes back, sharp. “Cassian needs medical attention,” and Bodhi’s hands clench on the controls, distressed. “But he says to say you did the right thing, saving the people in the Tower,” she
adds. “He’ll be okay until we get back to base.”

Chewbacca points out that the navicomputer’s ready for them to jump to hyperspace, and offers for Bodhi to do the honors.

“Thanks,” Bodhi says, flattered a little. “Let’s go home.” He pulls back the lever, and the stars turn to streaks outside the viewport. He starts to slump back in the seat, tenses up again when the cockpit door slides open behind him, because it’s not Solo, he’d be kicking Bodhi out as soon as he came in, and there’s only one other person who would come up here—


Chewbacca glances back and forth between them, rumbling softly, curiously.

The adrenaline from flight is fading, and Bodhi would like nothing more than to put his head down and close his eyes, but he just looks away, resigned. The Wookiee shrugs, and goes out into the corridor. Luke starts to close the cockpit door behind him, just as Solo crashes into it—

“Hey!” he yells, and pounds on the door. “What did I say about getting any ideas?”

Luke tries to slide the door shut on him. “We’ll give you your ship back, just—go away for a minute,” he calls.

Solo stares at them, and his mouth slowly curves into a smirk. “Oh, I get it,” he says. “Yeah. Okay. Knock yourselves out.”

Luke blushes bright red. “Go. Away.” Solo makes a face and points at him through the crack in the door, but leaves.

“I should really go check on Cassian,” Bodhi lies, badly, as Luke sidles up and drops into Chewbacca’s vacated seat.

“I just looked in on him,” Luke says. “Jyn’s taking good care of him, don’t worry. And your other friends, Chirrut, and Baze? They’re telling Madine stories about Jedha. I think they’re piling it on a little much, the man feels bad enough already.”

A touch of heat creeps into Bodhi’s voice. “Good.”

“What?”

“Welcome to the Imperial defectors’ club,” Bodhi says, bitterly. “Membership costs you nothing except eternal guilt for what you’ve—” he stops. He can’t meet Luke’s gaze, is starting to shiver even though the cockpit isn’t cold.


Bodhi’s shaking his head. “Please don’t say that.”

“Why not? It’s true. I told you before, I was just messing around on some dirt ball of a planet hoping my life would change, while you were escaping from the Empire and fighting—”

“You don’t understand,” Bodhi bursts out. “I’m no one. I’m not a hero—people, planets died because of—I—I can’t be what you think I am—what you want. You don’t know anything about me!” He draws a ragged breath. “And I don’t want you in my head trying to find out.”
“Hey, I saved your life,” Luke snaps, angrily. “If I hadn’t sensed something was wrong—if I hadn’t come after you—”


“What was it, anyhow?” he presses, his eyes narrowing. “What was happening that made you so scared I could feel it an entire city away? Huh? You and Chirrut and Cassian were all on your knees—did I get there just in time to stop them from executing you?”

“She wasn’t going to kill me,” Bodhi spits back at him. “Not there, not then—she figured it out—” He’s past control and getting louder, his words somehow echoing in the cramped cockpit, ringing furiously in his own ears. “She figured it out before any of you—” His voice breaks.

Luke goes very still. For a moment, the only sound in the cockpit is of Bodhi’s harsh, panting breaths as he tries to regain some of his lost equilibrium.

“What was it?” Luke asks, quietly. “What happened to you?”

“They put binders on me and I panicked,” he says, shortly, looking out at the endless vortex of hyperspace. He’s lightheaded with anger and fatigue, dizzy like he’s been trying to fly through a roiling storm on Bamayar.


“Does the Force give you special truth-detection powers?” Bodhi says.

“Bodhi—”

“’Cause you got cheated. That’s true.”

Luke falls silent again, patient for possibly the first time in his life, waiting Bodhi out.

Okay, Kaytoo, here it is. Number one on the list of things I never wanted to talk about.

Bodhi focuses on the buttons on the control panel. Tries to get through it, quickly, stumbling a little. “When I defected, they took me to Saw Gerrera, and he put me in a cell with a monster that could tell if I was lying about—Galen, about defecting, about any of it. He put me in—restraints—but it held me down, too, and—” He stops, licks his dry lips, trying to calm his pounding heart. “It was in my head, you know? The actual—um—the actual torture part.”


“It wasn’t you, not at first,” Bodhi says, not quite an absolution. “They—it really was the binders that did it. Same as when Yendor’s trio pinned me down.”

Luke jolts forward in his seat and is tugging Bodhi’s sleeve up before he can react, pull away. “Did they hurt you?” he asks, eyes bright with worry. “This time?”

“She didn’t even touch me,” Bodhi murmurs, looking at where Luke’s hand is on his sleeve; his hands are still roughened, like a farmer, not a pilot, not a Jedi. “She didn’t touch me, except to take the binders off. I think.”

Luke drops his hand. “I’m so sorry,” he says, again. “I’m—”

“Like I said,” Bodhi says, weary, wanting—what? “You don’t know anything about me.” He can’t muster up any more anger, though, not with Luke this distressed and apologetic at his side.

“I don’t trust myself.” His voice is barely above a whisper.

“Do you trust me?” Luke asks, equally softly.

Bodhi exhales. “You got me out.” He jerks his head in a brief nod.

Luke says, “Only because you were able to stall her. Can I—can I try something?” He holds out his hand, palm up, a peace offering, nodding for him to mimic the gesture.

Bodhi closes his eyes and pushes up his right sleeve from where it’s fallen down again. “Okay.” He holds out his hand, matching Luke’s gesture, and for a second, Luke doesn’t move at all.

Then Luke gently strokes his fingertips over the scars. It doesn’t feel like anything: no tingling, no pain, just the barest of skin contact. “I’m so sorry they hurt you. I hurt you,” he murmurs, and then—

Bodhi’s eyes fly open as Luke carefully encircles his wrist; his fingers are just long enough to meet.


“Yeah,” Bodhi whispers, looking down at their hands. He’s shaking again, and his breath is coming faster, but it’s not entirely from fear.


Minutes pass, the hum of the Falcon’s engines breaking up the silence, and Bodhi steadies, slowly, thinking of his friends and what they would have done if they had known. If they’ll ever let him fly out on a mission again. Wondering who the woman was, and if, or why, she would’ve let him free; marveling at the relentless man next to him, who gazes at him with the kindest eyes, despite everything Bodhi tries to show him.

Then the navicomputer beeps the alert that they’re coming up on Thila Base. Bodhi reaches forward, pulling the lever to drop them into normal space, looks out at the stars streamlining back into a million points of light.

Bodhi says, hesitantly, glancing over at Luke, “I like to talk about flying.”

And Luke turns, and he smiles.
Chapter End Notes

You wanted it, you GOT IT. BODHI/LUKE AHoy.

...but not, I think, *just* yet. XD

All the <3 <3 <3 to the people who just. keep. coming. back for more of this thing. By the way, as of yesterday, it is officially The Longest Fic I Have Ever Written, and there's--well, not "no" end in sight--I know more or less where this is going to wrap up--but that is certainly quite a ways away. Thanks for hanging in there.

Art by stitchy
Chapter 14: Slight Pause in the Action

Chapter Summary

You could benefit from our experience.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The worst thing about the debrief isn’t that General Draven makes them stay in there for hours, after Cassian’s painkillers wear off and it’s obvious they’re all wiped. Bodhi’s still terribly frayed, struggling to stay awake in the darkened briefing room, but sitting up as straight as he can. Leaning on Jyn, to his left, had earned him a sharp poke in the ribs; leaning on Luke is—not an option.

Oddly, the worst thing also isn’t that now everyone knows how messed-up Bodhi is. Wedge, sitting in the row behind him, makes a pained sound when Cassian, his voice flat, describes how Bodhi had gone utterly blank, on his knees on the skybridge, but had apparently recovered enough to stall for time. Bodhi doesn’t bother to correct anyone’s assumption that his abortive, panicky call out had been what summoned Luke to the rescue.

It’s not even that Draven immediately takes Bodhi off of active duty, reaming him out like the worst of his flight instructors for jeopardizing the mission; that was a foregone conclusion the moment he hadn’t obeyed Cassian’s order to run. Jyn’s hand, resting in the crook of Bodhi’s elbow, tightens very hard, then, fingers digging into the muscle. He can’t totally tell if she’s more pissed at him or at Draven, but since she’s not also currently kicking his ass, figures her anger is directed at the general.

The worst thing is that Draven doesn’t believe them about the woman.

“Look, I’m sure you think you know what you saw, but the Jedi are extinct, except for Commander Skywalker.” Draven glances at Luke, who’s been frowning, ever since they’d gone three rounds at the start about his choice to take Rogue Squadron to investigate the probe droid transmissions. Bodhi wonders if he’s frustrated to have missed meeting another possible Jedi, someone else to learn from—even if she was on the wrong side of the war.

After all, I was on the wrong side, before—

“I didn't see anything,” Chirrut points out, irritated. “I felt how strong she was in the Force.”

“I'm sorry,” Draven says, going very stern. “You all have plenty of expertise in your respective areas, but I cannot devote Intelligence resources to looking for someone whom a blind man, a talented but wounded officer, and a coward—”

“Don't finish that sentence.” Cassian’s voice is low, and threatening. Bodhi wants to tell him it’s all right, Draven’s more than entitled to his opinion of Bodhi’s bravery—or lack thereof—but Cassian’s eyes are narrowed flints.

“Captain Andor—”

“You call Bodhi what I think you were going to call him, and we’re done here,” Cassian snaps. “Princess Leia worked hard to make it so defectors could feel safe joining the Rebellion, and you’ve
had nothing but *contempt* for them, even after all they've done for us. *With us.*

“You've been committed to this fight since you were a child, Cassian,” Draven says. “These latecomers—”

Solo interrupts, very dryly, his eyes alight, “Hey, Luke and I showed up *just* in time.”

That drains all the color out of Draven's face. “I take your point, Captain Solo,” he says, after a moment, visibly working to maintain his cool. “Still, my responsibility is to protect the Alliance from probable threats—”

“This woman most certainly *is* a threat,” Chirrut insists.

“Then why has our Intelligence never heard of her?”

No one has an answer for that.

Draven moves on. He goes another round or two with Bodhi, Solo, and Wedge on ‘the decision to expand mission parameters’ to include stopping the AT-AT—Bodhi is too tired to really give a shit—before finally sighing and dismissing them. “Rest up, Rogue Squadron,” he says, before stalking out; it’s an order, and a warning. Luke promptly climbs over his seat into the row behind them and starts to confer quickly with his squadron, holding a *wait for me* finger up at Bodhi.

Bodhi stands up to stretch, yawning, and hears Kaytoo say to Cassian, sounding annoyed, “I’m practically a defector, and Draven trusts me—”

Jyn gets up beside him, touches his arm again. “You okay?”

Bodhi rubs his eyes. “Just need to get some sleep.”

“Yeah, I bet,” she says, not unkindly. “Listen—Cassian and I are sticking around base for a few days; Madine’s got a lot of intel for us to get through. While you’re off-duty—if you need anything—”

“If Draven’ll let me past the door—”

“Ignore him, he’s an ass,” Jyn says, rolling her eyes. “You know where we’ll be.” She stretches up to plant a kiss on his cheek. *Definitely not mad at me, then.* “Go rest. You deserve it.”

Luke wraps up with the Rogues and hops back down to Bodhi. “I’m okay,” Bodhi says, before Luke can ask. “I don’t mind being grounded for a little while.” He manages a small, pleased grin. “I just got to fly the *Falcon*.”


“D’you—” Luke scrubs a hand through his hair wearily, turning back to him. “Do you want me to let you know when Rogue’s taking off again? I’d be happy to sneak you into a Y-wing or something, if you want to come along.”

“It’s really okay,” Bodhi says, realizing the room has gotten quieter—

“I don’t want you to miss out,” Luke says. “None of us do—” He glances up and catches the Rogues all looking down at them and grinning.

“That’s your play, boss?” Wedge teases, and Luke flushes red, moves to put himself between Bodhi
and his squadron—

—but Bodhi’s been a cargo pilot for a long time, and they’re his friends now, sort of, so he retorts in kind, before Luke can get there, “At least he’s offering me a ship.”


Luke is looking back and forth between them, utterly confused.

“I’m gonna win them back,” Wedge says. “I got cards, right here—”

Bodhi shakes his head. “I’m gonna go lie down.”

Wedge doesn’t take a shot at that; they’re all too tired to keep going with it. “Yeah. Hey, we’re all really sorry about Draven,” he says, sincerely, and Hobbie, Zev, Janson, and the rest of them are nodding. “You belong out there with us.”

Luke reaches out and touches his arm, tentatively. “When you’re ready again,” he says, earnest, his eyes very bright, “There’s a spot for you. If you want it.”

Bodhi manages, barely, swiping at his own eyes, “Thanks.”


*****

With nothing to do, Bodhi wanders through the hangar the next day, ducking his head as the ground crews of various ships congratulate him on the successful mission, lighting up when they ask him about what it was like to fly the Falcon. Eventually, though, everyone settles in to work, and he’s left alone, wondering what to do with himself. He’s standing next to an X-wing, thinking about how to improve its defensive shielding, when Chirrut strolls up.

“Okay,” Chirrut says. “While you’re grounded, and we are all together, I’m going to teach you how to break out of a hold.” He holds up a finger.

“What?”

Chirrut holds up another finger. “Cassian is going to teach you how to pick locks.”

“Oh, my stars,” Bodhi says, putting his head in his hands. “Is this really happening?”

A third finger. “Jyn still wants you to learn how to, um, ‘fucking fight,’ but we are taking it one step at a time.”

Bodhi leans against the X-wing, groaning. “This is maybe the most embarrassing conversation I’ve ever had. And that includes my mother talking to me about sex.”

Chirrut pauses, and slowly holds up a fourth finger. “There might be some time to review that, too. Baze is concerned that you have not been with anyone since—”

“Please shut up.”

“You could benefit from our experience.”
Bodhi makes a plaintive, horrified noise.

Chirrut grins. “We may be old, but we still have a very active—”

“Oh my ever loving stars,” Bodhi yells, clapping his hands over his ears. “Chirrut—”

Chirrut taps him with his stick, beckons him to come closer. Bodhi looks around for an escape route, but puts his hands down and leans in dutifully. “I’m also going to help you learn how to find peace in the Force,” Chirrut says. “Luke and I may listen to the Force to help us fight, but you, my friend, need it in a different way.”

“I—” Bodhi, wide-eyed, has no idea what to say to that. *Thanks* doesn’t seem quite right, or *enough*, for what Chirrut’s offering.

“I thought Luke should be the one to help you,” Chirrut goes on. “But perhaps he’s a little too *invested*, if you know what I mean?”

Bodhi glares at him, uselessly.

“If you think I can’t tell when you’re making faces at me, you’re wrong.” He taps Bodhi with his stick again. “Let’s go. If you’re going to join Rogue Squadron, we have a lot of work to do.”

Chapter End Notes

An alternate summary might be, ”Can we get back to politics, please?” I figured we all needed a bit of a breather for a sec. Still a ton of plot ahead!

Also, as always, THANK YOU ALL SO MUCH. I hope to continue to be worthy of the amazing fucking comments you all leave me (um, *every day, how am I this lucky?!?!?!*)
In the emptied-out briefing room, Chirrut begins, “When you were a boy on Jedha,” and Bodhi, dangling his feet over the edge of the console next to him, winces. Not just because he hasn’t talked to anyone about Jedha, not since Princess Leia asked to hear about it, but because Chirrut’s dropped into the kind of storytelling rhythm that used to put him to sleep when he was a boy on Jedha.

“Is that really where you want to begin?” Baze says, strolling into the briefing room and taking a seat at the back. He props his boots up on the chair in front of him. “Reminding Bodhi what we’ve lost?”

“Oh, you showed up,” Chirrut says. “I had no idea you were coming, stomping around through the base like a bantha herd.”

“One full-grown bantha would not fit in the catacombs, much less an entire herd.” Baze points out.

“Whatever.” Chirrut turns back to Bodhi. “When you were a boy on Jedha—”

Baze mutters, quite audibly, “Which was practically yesterday, he’s still so young—”

“Baze. 讓我跟他講話, 好不好?”

“Okay.” Baze puts his hands behind his head and leans as far back as the seat will go.

Bodhi prompts Chirrut, watching Baze watching him, “So when I was a boy on Jedha?”

Chirrut nods. “You must have come to the Temple and seen us meditating. We meditated a lot.”

“Five times a day. I remember,” Bodhi says.

“We meditated five times a day because that was what the Jedi were instructed to do,” Chirrut says.

Bodhi blinks. “I—don’t think Luke is doing that much meditation.”

Chirrut waves a hand. “Luke is following some other instruction manual for how to be a Jedi. I’m telling you about how we, as Guardians, learned to be in tune with the Force.”

“跟他講快一點吧.”
“You’re not helping,” Chirrut calls up.

“I’m not here to help you teach.” Baze is grinning under his beard.

“No shit.”

Bodhi says, inching away from the reach of Chirrut’s stick, “Now I think I get why the generals keep sending the two of you away.”

Chirrut smiles in his direction, and returns to the topic at hand. “Meditating can be very simple, as small as focusing on your breathing. Letting the past fall away and only attending to the present. It’s the past that keeps bothering you, isn’t it?”

“The past, the present, the future—” Bodhi shrugs self-deprecatingly.

Chirrut leans on the end of his stick. “You’re worried about the future?”

Bodhi has a flash of his one—no, two now—strange visions of Luke, but only says, “You aren’t? Not about the— the war, about whether you or Baze or— any of us— will survive?”

Baze calls down, a shade mockingly, “All is as the Force wills it.”

Chirrut points up to him. “What he said. So—meditation. Thinking only about the present, about your breath going in and out of your body—”

“I thought you weren’t going to help teach,” Chirrut says.

“You know. Your little chant,” Baze says. “Or the other one, where you fix things.”

Chirrut nods thoughtfully. “Moving meditation?”

“Yeah. 就是那個.”

Bodhi is looking back and forth between them. “You’re going to make me do more than one kind of meditation?”

“Why, do you have somewhere else to be?” Chirrut asks. “It’ll be good for you. You have to know how to focus on the present, if you’re going to fly an X-wing in Rogue Squadron.”

*****

But—

Bodhi’s not actually sure he wants to join the Rogues, for all that they might be welcoming him with open arms, or that his friends consider it practically an inevitability. Flying an Imperial shuttle to pick up supplies, rescue their people, extract a fellow defector; each of those missions were a far cry from flying into battle in an X-wing built for one purpose.

_I’ve brought plenty of death and destruction already, when I was supposed to bring hope._

Bodhi mentions his trepidations to Cassian, later that day. They’re in one of the Intelligence offices, heads bent together over a set of locked binders that Bodhi’s trying unsuccessfully to pick, Cassian’s datapad of _declassified_ intel from Madine lying forgotten nearby.
“Do you know how many people I’ve killed?” Cassian says, quietly. “General Draven has the number in my file. I lost count and told Kaytoo never to remind me, a while back. But he still reports every one of them to Draven.”

Bodhi’s fingers have gone nerveless, and the lockpick slips out of them, rattling on the console.

Cassian lifts his head and smiles at him, but there’s nothing in it of the kindness Bodhi’s come to know of his friend. “You want to talk about bringing destruction? On Scarif, with—you, Jyn, everybody—that was the first time, in a very long time, that I had something to do with hope. And even then, you know who we lost along the way because I brought only death.”

Bodhi flips the lockpick over and over under his fingertips, its metal warming to his touch. “Does Jyn ever talk about Galen?” he asks, after a moment.

“Not really. I think she got used to not thinking about him, before, and it’s just simpler that way.” His voice is as colorless as Bodhi’s ever heard it. “She still blames me, a little.”

And then—even softer, somehow, “I don’t know if Draven counts him for me or not.”

Bodhi swallows, thinking of Blue Squadron’s X-wings swerving through the storm on Eadu, Galen’s body in the flames. “You’re—you’re very calm about it,” he says.

Cassian shrugs and looks back down at the binders, sliding the thin strip of metal back over to himself and working the lock, a puzzle he can solve. “The people I’ve killed, the things I’ve done, they’re part of my life.”

The binders pop open with a click; Bodhi jerks back, startled.

Cassian says, closing the binders again and sliding them over to Bodhi, “I will have to do more terrible things before this war is over, you know? That’s my job, mine and Jyn’s. She makes it better—easier, maybe, to see the things that need to be done.” He picks up his neglected datapad and gets to his feet. “I think you’d started to find your own way in this fight, Bodhi,” Cassian says. “You shouldn’t lose sight of that.” He smiles, briefly, but warm again. “You’re the pilot.”

*****

Jyn shows up at his quarters in the evening, unannounced, startling Bodhi into dropping his datapad. “I thought Chirrut told you I was going to make you learn how to fight.”

“Blast, Jyn, knock, or something—” He picks up his datapad, frowning at the new scratch it’s acquired and rubbing at it with the end of his sleeve in vain.

Jyn smirks. “Why? Your door was unlocked, it’s not like I was going to catch you in here with anyone. Or was I?” She makes a show of looking around suspiciously.

Bodhi rubs the back of his neck. “Jyn.”

“You hiding any fledgling Jedi under the covers?”

“I—come on, we barely know each other, and all of you—Solo, Wedge, Chirrut, you—” Bodhi sighs. “It’s been a really long day, okay?”

Jyn’s teasing smirk fades. “Yeah. Sorry.” She comes over and sits on the side of his bunk next to him. “Well?”
“This is starting to turn into one of the old stories my mother used to tell me,” Bodhi says, letting himself fall backwards onto his elbows and closing his eyes. “The kind where the boy has to undertake three impossible tasks?”

“What do you get if you complete them?” Jyn asks.

“Usually untold riches or something. Magic objects that help in the next round of impossible tasks. The hand of the princess.”

Jyn bumps his leg with her foot. “I’m fresh out of untold riches. And I wouldn’t bet on winning the hand of the princess, either.”

He cracks one eye open at her. “I haven’t even done your task.”

“You really don’t have to,” Jyn says, and goes on, before he can interject, “I didn’t get it, before. I thought you wanted to fight, and after Scarif it seemed like you were just keeping your head down. Staying out of the way.”

“Trying not to die,” Bodhi murmurs, dryly.

“You’ve been doing a pretty good job of that without my help,” Jyn says. “Except for that run-in with Yendor’s buddies.” Her mouth twists into a grimace.

Bodhi reaches over for her hand, twining his fingers through hers. “I never did thank you for getting me out of there.”

Jyn looks down at him, eyes dark and sincere. “I was returning the favor. And then you did it, again—for Chirrut and Cassian—”

“Is that how it works? We save each other, over and over, until—”

“Until we win the war,” she says, firmly. “No other options.”

*****

So Bodhi doesn’t end up learning how to beat someone to death with a baton, which is all right by him.

Of his remaining “impossible tasks,” Bodhi’s best on the lock-picking—binders, security locks, even a magnetic seal that someone put on the door to his quarters one night while he’d been out winning more credits off of Rogue Squadron, Luke included. It’s closest to the kind of mechanical, technical work he already knows—and what Chirrut’s making him do with moving meditation—but he’s still leery of trying to do it with binders actually on his wrists.

(Kaytoo had helpfully pointed out, “Most of the time Cassian doesn’t even bother with them himself, he just orders me to take them off him.” That had led straight into a conversation about the wide variety of instances in which Cassian had ever been cuffed, while Jyn kept trying, and failing, to hide an ever-widening and delighted grin.)

Chirrut actually does make Bodhi meditate five times a day, or as many times as Chirrut, or Baze, can catch him not doing anything else. Focusing all his attention on repairing an R5 unit reminds Bodhi uncomfortably of his friends at the Academy, at first, but eventually he falls into the rhythm of it, taking things apart and putting them back together, letting go of everything but the work.

“It’s a start,” Baze mutters, plucking Chirrut’s repaired wrist comm out of the air when Bodhi,
“I’m not trying to make him into a Jedi,” Chirrut says, leaning over and snatching his wrist comm from Baze’s hand. “I’m not even trying to fix him. Some things can’t be fixed.”

“Thank you for that,” Bodhi says, affronted.

“This is where he’s going to make up a metaphor that’s supposed to make you feel better about it,” Baze tells him.

“No I’m not,” Chirrut protests.

“I’m guessing it will have something to do with kyber crystals,” Baze says. “That is his favorite rhetorical object.” He snaps his fingers. “I know. Cracked kyber crystals can never be restored to their original form, but the Force can reshape them into something new?”

Chirrut pokes Baze with his stick. “I was not going to say that.”

“Oh?”

Chirrut gives in. “I was going to say something much more depressing.”

Bodhi blinks at them. “Can I go now?”

“Yeah.” Chirrut grins, and then says, a little louder, “He’s all yours.”

Bodhi looks up, and Luke is standing at the top of the stairs, dressed in orange for flight.

Chapter End Notes

All credit to the very talented bodhriook for the concept of incorporating Chinese into the fic for Space Asian Dads, though I did it a bit differently (and less sweetly!) That section is very much based in my own experience of how my Taiwanese-American family, aunties, and uncles code-switch.

讓我跟他講話, 好不好?: Let me talk to him, okay?
跟他講快一點吧: Tell him a little faster.
你傻瓜: You fool [meant lovingly!]
我不是來幫你教書: I didn't come to help you teach.
我想, 他應該用那個, 怎麼說—: I think he ought to use that, what’s it called—
就是那個: That's the one.

Thanks to meledea for looking this chapter over!
Chapter 16

Chapter Summary

You're just as important to the Rebellion.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Luke’s been much busier than Bodhi, of course, over the past week. Rieekan has him drilling Rogue Squadron on different ships, working on new formations with multiple squadrons, looking over new recruits, the sorts of duties that commanders have to attend to. But Luke makes time to play sabacc—poorly—with Bodhi and Wedge and Zev, good-naturedly losing more credits than Bodhi would’ve thought a farm boy could have saved.

And he comes to sit with Bodhi at dinner, talking long after Cassian and Jyn slip off to bed, debating the merits of reducing Y-wing hull and nacelle plating for the ease of maintenance; how to manage the timing problems with S-foil servo actuators; comparing R2 and R5 cockpit profiles. They eventually settle on the idea that Wedge’s perspective on the last matter—that the taller R5 could block enemy fire from reaching a pilot—is kind of warped.

It’s all been perfectly friendly; just regular, downright professional-sounding conversation between a couple of pilots, even if one of them isn’t going to see the inside of an X-wing, let alone a shuttle, for—a while. Nothing for Solo or anybody to misconstrue or gossip about.

Except, of course, everybody does.

Bodhi’s doing his best to ignore it, for the time being; protesting to Jyn that Luke’s being nice because he’s always nice. Giving back as good as he gets with Wedge, because it’s a joke, it has to be, because Luke is commander of an elite squadron, the hero of the Rebellion, the last of the Jedi, bright and shining as the medal hidden in Bodhi’s quarters.

And Bodhi is—grounded.

It’s hard, though, to ignore Baze making absolutely no attempt to disguise the fact that he’s staring up at them and smirking, and Chirrut demanding—not quietly, either—to know what’s happening.


“Leia got a message from an Alderaanian on Gerrard V,” Luke says, gesturing for Bodhi to walk with him in the direction of the hangar.

“I don’t think I’m allowed to know about that kind of intel,” Bodhi says, dubiously.

Luke waves it off. “The planet’s a mess. There’s insurgents trying to oust the Imperial governor, but he’s called in reinforcements to steal everything that’s not nailed down, and maybe take out some of the insurgency while he’s at it.” He pauses. “The Alderaanian who sent the message—she’s a TIE Interceptor pilot.”

“A TIE pilot?”
“Her name’s Kasan Moor. She wants to defect. Wedge and Hobbie weren’t in training at the same time, so she probably doesn’t know them, but I was wondering—”

Bodhi stops walking and shoves his hands in his pockets. “You want someone she knows? She wouldn’t have known me either, I didn’t know TIE pilots, not unless they ran escort for me.”

“Well, you are a pretty famous defector.” Luke’s eyes are amused. “Just got word that the Imperial bounty on you went up another fifteen thousand credits after we got off Corellia.”

“You’re joking.” Bodhi thinks of the red-haired woman peering at his face, and stiffens up against the shiver going cold down his spine.

Luke flashes a grin at Bodhi, oblivious. “Nope. Yours is higher than mine, now, but I don’t think they knew I was there too. You’re climbing the list. Course, no one can top Han’s yet, not even Leia.”

“His is a whole bunch of different bounties added up, not just Imperial,” Bodhi points out.

“You’re right, I guess it doesn’t count the same,” Luke agrees. “Anyway, the recon team said there’s a handful of turbolasers around the city we’d have to take out, plus whoever the governor’s bringing in on his side, and—well, Kasan Moor’s squadron of Interceptors might not be happy she’s defecting. What do you think? Want in?”

“You just said my bounty went up fifteen thousand credits. I’m—I’m a liability in Imperial space,” Bodhi says, his hands closing anxiously into fists in his pockets.

“All of Rogue Squadron combined is already over a hundred thousand. We’ve been wanted men for a while.” Luke sounds perversely delighted about it.

“What about Draven?”

“Ah, forget Draven,” Luke says, cheerfully, as if the chain of command means as little to him as it does to Solo. “What’s your third argument?”

Bodhi hesitates, too many possible responses running through his head.

“You don’t have one, do you. Come on, I’ll put you in a Y-wing, you’d be with Gold Squadron, but —”

“Luke.” There’s the barest entreaty in his voice, a thin thread of fear seeping into his words. “I can’t.”

“Are you sure?”

Bodhi stammers, “I can’t, not when—I’m sorry.”

“Don’t worry about it,” Luke says, disappointed and hiding it badly. “Listen, if it’s really because of Draven, I can get Leia to talk to him——”

Bodhi’s eyes go wide. “No, no, please don’t,” he says, too quickly. Not her—

But Luke guesses wrong, plowing ahead, “I mean, Draven shouldn’t treat you the way he does, he’s not like this with Wedge or Hobbie.”

“They’ve been with the Rebellion longer,” Bodhi says. “They’re fighter pilots, they’re more val——”
Luke cuts him off, shaking his head, exasperated. “When are you going to understand that you mean a great deal to—to”—He ducks his head a little, looking up through his eyelashes at Bodhi. “You're just as important to the Rebellion as they are.”

Bodhi’s comlink chirps. He fumbles it out of his pocket, glad for the distraction—he can’t quite keep gazing back at Luke like this—“Yeah?”

Wedge asks, “Bodhi, have you seen Luke? I think his comm’s off.”

“Yeah, I’ve got him,” Bodhi says, out of reflex, unthinking. “He’s right here with me.”

He winces, a second later, when Wedge sounds far too amused, replying, “Tell him to get his ass in gear, we gotta head out.”

Luke’s turning a faint shade of red. “I—um, I should go—”

Bodhi rubs the back of his neck. “Okay. I’ll—I’ll be here when you get back?”


Bodhi remembers, suddenly, and calls after him, “May the Force be with you,” and Luke flashes that grin again—

*****

Rogue Squadron is gone for ten days.

It's the longest ten days of Bodhi's life.

Chapter End Notes

Hey, if you've been one of the people recommending this thing on tumblr? Thank you, very, very much. It's very, very flattering to poke around in the tags I follow and see this title pop up. I really do appreciate it, and all of you!!!!
Chapter 17

Chapter Summary

Do you want to tell me about the list?

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

It’s partly because Princess Leia and Han Solo are on Thila, together, for the first time in a long while, and their *constant* bickering—above and beyond Chirrut and Baze’s sniping at each other—sets everyone on edge.

“I don’t know why they don’t just sleep together and get it over with,” Jyn says, in the aftermath of another one of their public spats in the mess, the Princess scowling after the defeated smuggler storming off to his ship. “Save us all the headache.”

“Your and Cassian’s courtship rituals were not much different,” Kaytoo observes, garnering him an appalled, wide-eyed glare from Jyn.

“We were *not* like that,” she says, kicking Bodhi under the table when he fails to conceal his snickering. “Our fights were about *principle*, and *duty*, and—”

“Who should have to move out of whose quarters,” Kaytoo says. “I was there. It was very obvious that Cassian’s quarters were better by any objective measure.”

Jyn raises her eyebrows at him. “You’re just saying that because he built a charging port for you.”

“That *was* my objective measure.”

Bodhi’s tuned them out, turning to watch one of Rieekan’s aides hurrying up to Princess Leia and conferring with her briefly. “You’d tell me if you or Cassian heard anything about the mission on Gerrard V, right?” he asks Jyn, over his shoulder. The aide and Princess Leia leave the mess together, in the direction of the main operations room, not *quite* running.

“Yeah, Bodhi, of course,” Jyn says.

“That operation is supposed to be classified,” Kaytoo points out. “Bodhi still lacks the security clearance that Cassian promised to get him.”

Jyn shrugs. “So?”

“I don’t know *how* Draven ever let you become a spy,” Kaytoo mutters.

“Hey, you’re the one who told Bodhi all about what happened on Nar Shaddaa,” Jyn retorts. “Even the thing with the vrblther.”

Bodhi makes a face. “I *wish* you’d kept that classified,” he says.

Bodhi shakes his head, avoiding her just-this-side-of-salacious stare. “About the TIE Interceptor pilot.” He’d racked his memory—such as it was—for every TIE pilot he could recall, if they’d ever shown any signs of the disloyalty he’d felt towards the Empire, and come up very, very short. TIE pilots had been some of the most fanatical people he’d ever met, willing to strap into tiny unshielded death traps for a fleeting shot at glory. “If her defection’s a lie—a trick—I know I said give Madine a chance, but—” He waves a hand helplessly.

“I can’t imagine there’s a single Alderaanian out there who’d support the Empire after what they did,” Jyn says, attempting to reassure him. Bodhi tries to hide a wince at that, but Kaytoo swivels his head towards him instantly. “Besides, Leia trusts her, and she reads people better than me. Better than anyone.”

“I didn’t know Alderaan was on your list,” Kaytoo says to Bodhi.

“What list?” Jyn’s eyes narrow.

Bodhi sags. “Great, Kaytoo, this is really the place and time to bring that up.”

“The list of things that bother Bodhi but I’m not supposed to protect him from hearing about,” Kaytoo explains to Jyn.

“What?” Jyn shakes her head as she tries to parse it.

“It’s—complicated—” Bodhi fumbles for the right words to put her at ease, afraid of her laser-focus scrutiny. “There's no actual list—”

“What’s on it?” Jyn asks. “Anything related to the Death Star or my father, I assume. Right? All the things you don’t want to talk about but you have to face.” She’s gone quiet, matter-of-fact, and Bodhi thinks she might be talking about herself as much as him.

“Yeah,” he says, relieved, commiserating. “That's it, that's it exactly.”

“How is that different from what I said?” Kaytoo asks.

Jyn offers him a glimmer of a smile. “It wasn't.”


“Oh?” There’s the twinge of hopeful, prurient interest in her voice again.

He adds, “About Jedha,” and she stills, looking at him sadly.

“Artoo’s told me some things,” Kaytoo starts to say, but Jyn’s comlink chirps, and it's Cassian, wanting all of them down in the Intelligence offices.

Bodhi’s eyes are wide. “Is it—”

“I don't know,” Jyn says. She pats his shoulder and gets up. “Come on, we’ll find out together.”

He tries not to run through the catacombs—it's not a race, whatever's happened already happened—Luke's fine, he’s always fine— but he still outpaces Jyn quickly, surprising Cassian in the dark little office, Kaytoo on his heels. “Oh—I should've said, it's not about them,” Cassian says, taking in Bodhi’s worried face. “Sorry.”

Jyn comes in and swats Bodhi on the back for leaving her behind. “What's going on?”
Cassian tosses a datapad onto the console in front of Bodhi, greeting Jyn with a chaste kiss. “Remember the phrase the woman said to you?” Cassian says. “The ‘hand of judgment?’”

“You’ve been looking for her?” Bodhi looks up at him in surprise, scooping the datapad up and skimming the first page.

“Collecting rumors, mostly about this group of five elite stormtroopers calling themselves the Hand of Judgment. They’re—well, let’s just say that we must not have run into them, or you’d be in Imperial custody for certain.”

“You mean dead,” Bodhi says, fighting down a shudder.

Cassian reaches over and puts a hand on his arm. “They’re an odd unit, like a vigilante squad. They’ve popped up all over the galaxy, sometimes with the red-headed woman giving orders, but sometimes not. Our informants said they have gone after corrupt Imperial administrators, but they just let the governor of the Poln system go instead of arresting him for treason. A local warlord was holding his family hostage, or something like that. Sound like anyone we’ve met?”

Bodhi’s finished reading Cassian’s datapad—there’s not a lot of substantive information and only a couple brief descriptions of the woman—and passes it over to Jyn. “No name for her, though.”

Cassian shakes his head. “No.”

“Before you start planning something, I’m obliged to remind you that Bodhi is still grounded and can’t fly you and Jyn to the Poln system until he’s been authorized for active duty,” Kaytoo says. “I, however, continue to be a perfectly good co-pilot.”

“You’re still—” Cassian blinks at Bodhi. “It’s been almost two weeks.”

Jyn’s frowning at him, too. “Doesn’t Draven want you back flying again?”

“I don’t know,” Bodhi says, plaintively. “He hasn’t—everyone’s been so busy—”

“Chirrut’s been reporting your progress,” Cassian’s concerned. “I’ve seen it. No one from Draven’s or Rieekan’s staff’s talked to you about when you might be put back on transport duty?” Bodhi shakes his head.

“Blast,” Jyn mutters, folding her arms, her eyes narrowing angrily. “Cassian?”

“Yeah,” he replies, tapping out a message on another datapad and beckoning over an aide, a Bothan with cream-colored fur. “If you could have Princess Leia join us, please? She’s in a meeting just down the hall, I think.”

Bodhi’s mouth falls open. “Cassian, don’t—” The aide hesitates, glancing between them.

Jyn tilts her head up at Bodhi, as Cassian nods curtly to the aide and she leaves. “Bodhi, if the chain of command is broken, we just skip over a few links. No one important’s going to have a problem with it.”

“It’s not that,” Bodhi starts to say, but Kaytoo runs right over top of him. “Alderaan’s on the list,” he reminds Jyn.

Cassian’s eyebrows draw down. “What list?”

“You’ve met Leia before,” Jyn says, ignoring Cassian and giving Bodhi a puzzled look. “She got to
visit you first in the medcenter, and she's on the list?"

He fidgets nervously. “Yes?”

The Bothan aide returns, alone. “Captain Andor, Princess Leia apologizes, but the situation on Gerrard V requires her attention at the moment.”


But Bodhi’s distracted—“What’s happening on Gerrard V?” he asks the aide.

She looks at Jyn. “Yeah, go ahead, and report to us, we would’ve told him later anyway,” Jyn says, with a small smile. Kaytoo makes a barely audible disapproving noise, but doesn't say anything.

“The Imperial governor’s hiding in his mansion,” the aide says, coming to attention, her eyes on Cassian and Jyn. “The insurgents and Rogue Squadron’s fighters disabled all the Imperial yachts he could’ve used to escape, and they’re sieging the mansion right now. Princess Leia is in contact with the insurgent leader, preparing the groundwork for him to take control of the system.”

“She got all that from thirty seconds in the briefing room delivering a message?” Bodhi mutters to Kaytoo.

“She is a spy,” Kaytoo replies, not bothering to modulate his volume. The aide’s fur ruffles a little in amusement.

Jyn nods to her. “Thanks. Let’s make sure I get everything on the insurgent leader as soon as possible.” The aide nods back, and goes back to work.

“I’m sorry you’re caught up in the politics of this,” Cassian says to Bodhi. “It wasn't clear, when we came back from Scarif, who you should've reported to. We never straightened it out before Jyn and I took you to meet Karrde, and then Luke requested you to be attached to Rogue Squadron.”

“Now it's all a bit of a mess,” Jyn summarizes with a grimace. “Not that we’re wholly separate divisions, anyway, but—” She frowns harder. “You’re being left out on purpose. We’ll fix it.”

“Draven doesn’t trust me.” Bodhi shrugs.

“He barely trusts me,” Jyn says, intending to be reassuring. “You heard him, we're latecomers to this fight.”

“Who knows what we might do to the Rebellion?” Bodhi murmurs sarcastically.

“Or what it might do to us,” Jyn says. Cassian touches her hand where she’s gripping her opposite arm tightly. But he asks Bodhi, low, “Do you want to tell me about the list?”

“You know most of what's on it already, I think,” Bodhi says, looking down at his hands where they rest on the console. “The— the meditation, Chirrut and Baze, they’re helping, but I haven’t had to face—I can always fly,” he insists, lifting his eyes back up to his friends. “Nothing on the list is about flying.”

Cassian exchanges glances with Jyn. She nods. “Then let’s make sure you get to,” Cassian says.

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Bodhi’s back on a maintenance rotation pretty quickly after that, at least.
But a couple more days pass, with no talk of letting him fly again—never mind the information from Gerrard V slowing to a trickle—and it’s all starting to make him twitchy—twitchier than usual, anyway. And Chirrut’s moving meditation approach just frustrates him, instead of helping him clear his head.

“What’s the point of repairing it if I’m not going to get to use it?” Bodhi mutters, losing his rhythm and letting the thruster component fall from his hands onto the work table with a clang.

Chirrut’s been sitting on the bench next to him, facing away, humming snatches of an old Jedha folk song to himself. “You know perfectly well that’s not the point of repairing it,” he says, calmly.

“That’s the point of trying to fix me, isn’t it?” Bodhi glares at him. “I’m supposed to be useful to the Rebellion?”

“I’m not fixing you,” Chirrut replies. “I told you that already. This is so you have someplace to go, in your head, when it happens again. Something to focus on other than your fear.”

“When it happens again?” Bodhi pulls his goggles off and runs a hand through his hair. “That’s not very optimistic.”

“You want to be useful to the Rebellion, so you will probably encounter more people who want to hurt you.” Chirrut shrugs. “I’m giving you a way to fight back so it doesn’t hurt as bad. Since you won’t carry a blaster.” He smiles. “Or a stick.”

“Chirrut, have you seen—” Bodhi hesitates. “Did the Force show you something about my future?”

Chirrut turns his gaze in Bodhi’s direction. “I am not a Jedi, Bodhi, I do not have the gift of foresight. Or any kind of sight.”

“Yeah, okay. Sorry.” Bodhi picks up the thruster component and turns it over in his fingers. “It’d just be nice, maybe, to know whether I’m ever going to get to fly again.”

“Steal a ship,” Chirrut suggests. “Go for a joyride. Or—” he turns his head unerringly towards the doorway, just as Threepio pokes his head into the maintenance bay—“You could just ask.”

“Pardon me, sir Guardian, Officer Rook,” Threepio says. “Princess Leia is asking if Bodhi is available to meet with her.”

Bodhi drops the component again. “Right—right now?”

“Princess Leia is a very busy—”

“Okay, I’m coming,” Bodhi says, swallowing nervously. He gets up and checks his clothes over for smudges, snags the strap of his goggles off the table. “Um—Chirrut—”

“Oh, don’t worry about me,” Chirrut says, airily, waving him on. “Maybe I’ll go find that husband of mine.”

“Thanks.” Bodhi rests a hand on Chirrut’s shoulder briefly before he leaves with Threepio.

Threepio says, “Officer—”

“Just Bodhi. Doesn’t everyone end up telling you to leave off the titles?” Bodhi says, perfectly content to match Threepio’s slower steps as they walk through the base towards one of the two women in the galaxy who terrify him the most.
“But titles are important,” Threepio says, dismayed. “Why, Princess Leia herself is not only the Head of House Organa and sole surviving heiress of the Royal Family of Alderaan, but a former Imperial Senator—”

Bodhi quails. “Okay, okay,” he says, ruefully. “You really know how to prepare a person for talking to her.”

Threepio looks at him, puzzled. “Did I say something wrong?”

“No, it’s all right,” Bodhi assures him, as Threepio halts outside a meeting room. “It’s just—me.”

“Hey, Goldenrod,” Solo says, striding up. “Thanks for picking up the kid, I’ll take it from here.” He claps Bodhi on the shoulder and sweeps him into the room.

“What are you doing?” Bodhi asks, looking over his shoulder at Threepio, who’s muttering exasperatedly as he stalks off.

“Oh, I figured you could use a little backup with these guys,” Solo says, and Bodhi is horrified to realize that Princess Leia, in all white, is standing behind a table with Draven and Rieekan sitting on either side of her. His heart starts to race—in the Empire, the only time anyone had ever gone into a room with this many senior officers was to be disciplined or drummed out—but they wouldn’t—

Han, what—” she starts.


“This is hardly a formal hearing requiring witnesses,” she snaps, and Bodhi’s relieved, but—very confused. “Officer Rook, if you don’t want him here, feel free to send him back to wherever he came from.”

Bodhi looks at Solo. He is, of course, smirking, but—he’s been kind—he let me fly his precious ship—

“I guess he can stay?”

“Fine.” Princess Leia looks annoyed, but it’s not with Bodhi, at least. She waves them to seats, and turns to each of the generals, her expression stern.

“Captain Andor and Sergeant Erso have brought it to my attention that one of our bravest and most experienced pilots—a hero of the Battle of Scarif—is not being put to his full potential in the service of the Rebellion. I’d like you to explain why.”

Bodhi’s mouth falls open, and so does Solo’s. “Not what you were expecting?” Solo whispers.

“Don’t get optimistic. This could still go bad fast.”

Rieekan crosses his arms, throwing Bodhi an apologetic glance. “I’d have liked to reinstate you to active duty far sooner—we need all the pilots we can get—but Davits overrode me at every turn.”

“You read my report,” Draven snaps, contemptuously. “Officer Rook nearly botched the whole operation on Corellia when he didn’t follow Cassian’s orders and panicked. How can he be trusted with transporting our most valuable people across the galaxy? The man’s a coward, a wreck—”

Bodhi flinches. Chirrut’s words come back to him—he thinks about the thruster component he was trying to fix, imagines himself welding broken bits of metal back together along a jagged seam.

“Bodhi is sitting right here,” Solo points out, coldly. “Leia, don’t let this guy do this—”
“This guy?” Draven says, louder. “Captain Solo—”

“Gentlemen.” Princess Leia’s voice cuts across them both. “Davits, I’ll thank you not to insult someone who’s risked everything for us, more than once. Han—” she sighs.

“I’ll just sit back and listen.” Solo props his feet up on the table. “Hang in there, kid,” he says in an undertone to Bodhi. “Drinks are on me after this.”

“I am trying to ensure that the orders my people give will be followed,” Draven says, eyeing Solo with distaste. “I am trying to ensure the safety of the Rebellion.”

“Your people,” Rieekan mutters.

“Yes, my people,” Draven spits. “The ones who risk everything so I can point your boys in the right direction.”

“Like you did on Eadu?” Bodhi hears himself say, and immediately freezes, his eyes wide. Oh, that was not helpful—Draven is on his feet, face reddening. Rieekan puts out a warning hand.

“I called them back,” Draven hisses. “I called them back, but it was too—” He stops, and he looks drawn, older. “What would it have changed for you?”

“I wouldn’t have had to see my friend die,” Bodhi says, bleakly, and then there’s nothing for it but to confess the rest. “You called them back too late? I was too late. For Galen, for—for Jedha, for—Alderaan—” He glances over at Solo, who’s frowning. “That’s what I did that I’m not proud of. I didn’t do anything. You were right about me, General—I am—”

Princess Leia interrupts him. “Carlist, Davits, would you give us the room for a moment?” Solo looks at her, questioningly, and she nods. He swings his feet to the floor and exits behind the generals. Leaving Bodhi alone with the former Imperial Senator, the sole surviving member of, and heiress to, House Organa and the Royal Family of Alderaan.

“You want to tell me that you aren’t the things I said,” Princess Leia says, sitting down across from Bodhi and folding her hands on the table top. “You want to say that you aren’t brave, that you didn’t do anything until it was too late. That Draven’s right about you and your fear. I talk to Luke a lot, you know.”

He’s holding his breath, completely swallowed up by her eyes; they are as dark as Jedha’s blotted-out sun.

She continues, free of inflection, steadfastly holding his gaze, “I’d been a prisoner on the Death Star for days after Scarif. I was waiting to die, hoping that all our—your—efforts hadn’t been in vain. But there I was, on the bridge, made a witness to the first demonstration of the Death Star’s true power to the galaxy. And in that final moment, despite all my knowledge, all my years of negotiating and training and fighting, there was nothing I could have done to stop Tarkin from giving the order to fire. I couldn’t talk fast enough. I couldn’t have grabbed a blaster away and shot him. I couldn’t give up the Rebellion, and my homeworld died for it.”

It’s a confession, not an absolution; Bodhi’s trembling, but he can’t look away.

“So. What is your inaction weighed against mine?” Princess Leia asks. “What would you like to do, to atone?”

Bodhi swipes at his eyes, his breathing unsteady, hitching in his chest. “There’s only one thing I’ve ever been good at, Your Highness,” he says, softly.
She smiles, a little, and opens her hands palms-up in offer. “It was Wedge’s idea to name Rogue Squadron for you and your friends, you know.”

“I can’t fly an X-wing, or a Y-wing, or—I’ve—I’ve had enough of death,” Bodhi stammers.

“You’re fine on transport duty? Under Rieekan?” Her eyebrows go up.

He nods. “This war isn’t going to end without more blood,” Princess Leia warns him. “You may still have to be the one to spill it.” Bodhi nods again, and licks his dry lips, thinking of the stormtroopers he’d shot down on Eadu to get Cassian and Jyn out.

“And Rieekan will want to know you won’t panic again,” Princess Leia adds. He opens his mouth to explain— “You don’t need to tell me everything,” she says, quickly. “Luke’s kept the rest of your secrets this long, you can keep them a while longer.”

“Thank you,” he murmurs. And then—“Your Highness—how do you stand it? Knowing what you did—or didn’t—do?”

She looks at him for a long, long moment, considering her reply. Bodhi can hear the rest of the base, alive and humming with activity, just outside the door; he wonders if this was what Cassian and Jyn had thought would happen, or if Draven will come down on them for arranging this strange and terrible confessional. Finally, she says, “I was taught, and I think you might have been, too, that peace can only come from trusting in the Force.”

“Does that work, for you?”

“I’m not a Jedi.” Princess Leia smiles, again, brittle and bright. “And please, Bodhi. Call me Leia.”

Chapter End Notes

Um, here, have 3500 words of basically ALL DIALOGUE. *headdesks*

(By the way, Draven’s honestly not the worst, I swear, he just has a very specific take on what it means to fight for the Rebellion, and Bodhi’s...not doing it. Han is ‘helping’ because that’s what Luke would do if he was here. :))

As always, thanks for the lovely lovely comments!!
Solo’s lounging against the wall, arms folded and whistling tunelessly, when Bodhi’s dismissed from the meeting. He can feel Draven’s eyes boring twin holes in the back of his head, but that’s all right; Leia hadn’t brooked a single one of his objections to returning Bodhi to active duty. Had, in fact, pointed out that Cassian and Chirrut, the only people who’d actually seen him panic—fail, Bodhi had thought—were some of his loudest advocates. Aside from Luke, apparently.

“Hey,” Solo says, pushing off the wall and coming over to him. “I don’t know what you and Leia talked about in there, but you must’ve done something right to piss off Draven that bad. Could hear him trying to take your head off through the wall.”

Bodhi smiles ruefully at that, and Solo’s mouth falls open in feigned shock. “Would you look at that, the kid can smile.” He grins. “I promised you a drink. You can call Cassian and Jyn, the Guardian guys, we’ll make it a party.”

Bodhi blinks at him. “What for?”

“Celebrating you getting off Draven’s shit list and back into the Rebellion’s good graces, courtesy of Her Worshipfulness,” Solo says. “What d’you think? It’s boring around here with your Rogue hotshot friends gone.”

“Yeah,” Bodhi says. “Yeah, that sounds okay.” The confounding mix of despair and relief from Leia’s meeting is starting to wear off, leaving him wanting something to replace it, and he can’t remember the last time he had a decent drink—oh, no, he can; with Luke in the hangar. The first time they’d ever really talked, about Jedha and Tatooine. It seems like ages ago.

“Great.” Solo’s grin turns wicked, for a second, before he adopts a precise military bearing and opens the door behind Bodhi.

Leia looks up from the datapads she and the generals are reviewing. “Yes?”

“Your Highness, could you step out here for a moment, please?” Solo’s face is straight.

Her head tilts slightly in puzzlement—Bodhi knows the feeling—but she gets up and comes out into the hall. “What do you want, Han?”

“We’re gonna go get drunk,” Solo informs her. “Wanna come?”

“Bodhi, you do not have to go anywhere with this man,” Leia says, narrowing her eyes up at Solo. “Especially if it’s going to involve alcohol.”

“Hey, I apologized about that already,” Solo protests, sounding wounded. “Besides, you ruined a
perfectly good shirt that night.”

“You ruined a perfectly—” she breaks off, noticing Bodhi raising his eyebrows at them, more baffled than amused. “Yes, all right, I’ll come by the Falcon as soon as I finish up with the generals.”

“Okay,” Solo says, and smirks at her. She rolls her eyes and goes back into the meeting with a huff. Solo claps his hands together and starts walking away; Bodhi hurries after him. “I’ve got the rest of that bottle of Corellian wine she dumped on me tucked away somewhere.”

“Hey, um,” Bodhi says, and Solo turns to look at him. “Thanks. Thanks for coming down to back me up.”

“Figured I owed you one for getting us off Corella in one piece, even if you did have to take that little detour,” Solo says, as they come into the Falcon’s hangar. The ramp’s down, and Bodhi can see Chewbacca up in the cockpit.

“You didn’t have to, you don’t even really know me,” Bodhi says.

Solo shakes his head and gestures for Bodhi to precede him up into the ship. “Well, it’s always a good time, riling up Draven like that.” Chewbacca growls a greeting to Bodhi as they circle past him on the way to the main hold. Bodhi smiles back, and then ducks, alarmed, as the Wookiee brings his big arm down to ruffle Bodhi’s hair.

“Oh, is that what happened with Leia?”

Chewbacca rumbles a laugh and ambles off towards the engineering bay, but not before warning Bodhi that anything else left on the ship to drink is going to be strong.

“Okay, what’s with the mouth all of sudden?” Solo grouses, rummaging through a cargo container. “I didn’t, it was a misunderstanding.” He comes up with a bottle of something worryingly clear, his eyes mischievous. “And anyway, I wouldn’t try and pick you up, I’d never do that to my best fr—”

“Is this going to be about Luke again?” Bodhi interrupts, exasperated, putting his comlink down. Don’t want them around for this conversation—“You and Wedge and Jyn—and even Chirrut—you can’t stop fucking with me about him, can you?”

“You got me there.” Solo shrugs and takes a swig from the bottle; even from a couple meters away, the fumes make Bodhi’s eyes water. “But they’ll all back me up on this. Stop playing hard to get, brooding Bodhi boy, or I’ll tell Luke to go find some other lost Jedi thing and forget all about you.” He’s abruptly stern, sliding the bottle across the dejarik table to Bodhi.

“I’m not playing a game.” He drinks and coughs, not caring that it burns his throat.

“So let Luke down, already,” Solo says, irritated. “If you don’t want him, let him get on with—I don’t know, Wedge or somebody—”

Bodhi slams the bottle back down, talking too fast. “You just heard me tell two generals and a princess how fucked up I am about everything—I don’t want him? I don’t know how Luke could
possibly want me—"

Solo puts his hands up. “Hold on, kid. Didn’t mean to make you lose it twice in one day.” He sighs and leans towards Bodhi over the dejarik table, crossing his arms. “Are you that out of your own head?”

“I can’t believe I’m having this conversation with you.” Bodhi takes another drink, eyeing Solo over the rim of the bottle balefully.

“Have you even thought about it? Or is this another one of those things you avoid because it’s gonna hurt?” Solo nods at Bodhi’s wide-eyed look of dismay. “Yeah, I talk to your buddies sometimes. Kaytoo really gets me.”

“Solo—”

“Wait, I’m right?”

“I didn’t say that,” Bodhi mutters, sliding the bottle back across to him, his flare of anger fading away. “What in blazes is this stuff? Tastes like the inside of a power cell.”

Solo shakes his head. “Oh, no, you can’t stop me now, I hit a nerve.”

Bodhi folds his arms on top of the table, and puts his head down into them so he doesn’t have to keep looking at the smuggler and his frustrating, smirking face. “Bring Draven over so he can yell at me some more. Couldn’t be worse than this.”

There’s a soft sliding sound of metal on plasteel—Bodhi peeks up over his sleeve and Solo’s actually picked up his comlink. “No, wait—"

Solo holds up a finger. “Cassian? Just a heads-up, you might have to come peel your boy off the floor of the Falcon in the morning. I’m getting him good and drunk so he’ll tell me everything.”

“You’re not holding down the switch to talk,” Bodhi observes.

Solo, his bluff called, shrugs and tosses the comlink back to him. “You really don’t want to talk about it?”

“What could possibly have given you that impression, Captain Solo?” Bodhi asks, sarcastically.

“Fine.” Solo shakes his head and takes another drink. “I’m just saying. You’ve been wandering around base for the last week looking like you lost your pet mooka. You miss Luke. And don’t give me that ‘he’s my friend’ line.”

The lingering taste of whatever they’ve been drinking is bitter in Bodhi’s mouth. “I can’t—I can’t let him be more than that.”

“You can’t even admit to yourself that you might be interested? Understand, I’m just looking out for my friend here—why the hell not?” Solo glares at him.

“He’s Luke Skywalker. I’m not—I’ll never be—” Bodhi leans his head back against the bulkhead and rubs his eyes, remembering a tentative, gentle hand around his wrist, the way Luke had looked at him before leaving—

“Good enough for him?”

Bodhi looks up; Solo’s supposed to be a brilliant sabacc player, better than anyone, but even he can’t
hide the expression of commiseration that flickers across his face for a second. Then he grimaces. “Yeah, that’s a terrible excuse. Luke spent every free second with you before they left. He thinks you’re good enough. Next?”

But Bodhi doesn’t get another chance to try to explain—not how hard it was to trust even the friends who’d saved him, not how much he wishes he could let himself be interested—because Leia’s calling, from the main corridor. “Han? Is Bodhi still with you?”

“Yeah, we’re here,” Solo calls back.

She comes around the corner, looking happier than Bodhi remembers ever seeing her before. “Rogue Squadron just came out of hyperspace into the system. The liberation of Gerrard V was a complete success—the governor’s in the custody of the new leadership, and we’ve got ourselves another very promising defector.” Leia throws Bodhi a small, pleased smile.

“That’s great!” Solo throws his arms wide as if he’s moving to hug her—notices Bodhi’s understanding, wryly amused look out of the corner of his eye and turns the motion, awkwardly, into offering her the bottle. “We could turn this into a real party.”

“Not with that you’re not,” Leia says, wrinkling her nose at the offer and demurring.

“I didn’t brew it myself, if that’s what you’re wondering, your Ladyship,” Solo retorts, putting it down on the dejak table.

“Chewie would never allow you to build a still in here,” Leia points out. “Come on, they’ll be landing soon. Unless you got so drunk in the last, what, ten minutes, that you can’t—”

Bodhi fights back the urge to put his head down on his arms again to shut them out. “I’ll go down there,” he says, standing up. “Thanks for the—the drink.”

“Yeah, you’re welcome.” Solo grabs his arm as he goes past; Leia watches them, sniffing warily at the abandoned bottle. “Think about what I said? This is the most patient I’ve ever seen him about anything. Don’t miss your chance. If you want it.” Bodhi gives him a tiny, acknowledging nod, and heads out.

Bodhi’s comlink chirps while he’s wending his way through the connecting corridors, thinking about—well, Luke, and his persistent, bright smile. Whether he can stand to see it aimed at himself again. He flicks on the comlink, and Jyn’s voice says, “Bodhi, I thought you’d want to know Rogue’s coming home from Gerrard V right now. Stop by for dinner after you greet them?”

Bodhi hesitates. “Maybe?”

“Oh, whatever you want, let me know,” Jyn says, sounding slightly amused. “Say hi to Luke and the boys for me.” She signs off.

When Bodhi gets to the hangar, most of the X-wings are already docked, and the usual commotion of debarking has him dodging maintenance staff and droids. He spots Luke and Wedge climbing out of their respective ships—his heart gives a wild little leap of relief—and there’s a battered-looking Lambda-class shuttle being tucked into the last available free space.

As Bodhi approaches, Luke jumps down from his X-wing and runs over to the shuttle, where a short, dark-haired woman with pale skin who can only be Kasan Moor, is coming down the ramp. “Welcome to Thila Base!” Luke calls, and she makes a amused, derisive noise, looking around at the catacombs.
Wedge comes up behind them, throwing his arm over Luke’s shoulders. “Better’n living out of our X-wings for the last ten days,” he says to her.

Luke slings his other arm around Kasan—“First stop, the ‘fresher,” she says, making a face.

“I don’t think we smell that bad,” Luke says, and then he notices Bodhi—“Bodhi! This is Kasan Moor.” He’s smiling down at her fondly, tossing his mussed hair back out of his eyes, and she’s smiling back at him, and—

Oh.

Bodhi’s uncertain heart crashes to a halt.

_Dammit, Solo—you were right—_

He tells himself it makes sense, of course. They’ve spent the last ten days flying and fighting together, while Bodhi’s been trying to get his head on straight enough just to get behind the controls of a transport. He’s not jealous. It makes sense.

_It makes sense._

But he doesn’t get very far trying to parse what that means about how he actually feels, because Kasan is sticking her hand out and saying, “It’s a pleasure to finally meet you,” and he has to be polite.

“Hi,” Bodhi says, shaking her hand, trying not to think about the comparison they make, nervous ex-cargo pilot from a backwater Mid-Rim planet next to a pretty, brilliant TIE pilot from a sophisticated—if _utterly destroyed_—Core World. “Glad you could join us. Um, weren’t you flying an Interceptor?” he asks, indicating the Lambda shuttle, puzzled.

“We stole it.” Luke grins.

“It’s not much to look at, right now,” Kasan says apologetically. “But Luke told me about your shuttle that got blown up on Corellia, and I didn't want to fly all the way here in my cramped Interceptor, anyway, so—here. It’s all yours.”

“Kasan’s going to be Rogue Seven,” Luke puts in. Bodhi barely hears him, looking past them at the shuttle—he can tell from here it’s not one that’s been retrofitted for an officer’s personal use, it’s probably all scratched-up from stormtroopers banging around inside on their way to battle, and it probably needs a new shield generator, but—_hang on_—

“You—you brought me a ship?”

“It was Luke’s idea,” Wedge says, meaningfully. “Wouldn’t shut up about it once he got it in his head.”

“For when you're cleared to fly again,” Luke says, beaming at him, a little shyly, and Bodhi thinks, wildly, _it doesn't make sense_—“Since I couldn’t seem to convince you that Y-wings were the way to go.”

Bodhi, overwhelmed, bursts out, “It’s too much—”

Kasan’s blinking at him, confused, her face far easier to read than Leia’s. Wedge clears his throat and offers Kasan his arm. “Come on, I’ll show you where we bunk.” He gives Bodhi an urgent, insistent sort of look as they walk off.

“What? What is it?” Luke reaches out to touch Bodhi’s arm, drawing him under the shadow of his X-wing’s S-foil, out of the way of a passing droid.

Bodhi stammers, feeling his face growing warm, wondering just what was in that bottle—but all-too aware that he’s still sober—“I already owe you—my life—”

“Bodhi, it’s a gift.” Luke is shaking his head firmly, holding onto him. “It’s just a gift. You don’t owe me anything. You never have.”

“You can’t keep doing this,” Bodhi insists. “I barely know how I feel about you, and you keep doing stuff like this.” He gestures helplessly at the shuttle. “What am I supposed to do with this?”

Luke makes a futile attempt to smooth down his hair, the corner of his mouth quirking up. “Just come fly with me sometime, when you’re ready. That’s all. That’s all I want.”

Bodhi stares at him and tries to regroup. “I—blast. Thank you.”

“You’re welcome.” Luke squeezes his arm, and then lets go abruptly and bounds away so he can hug Solo and Leia, who are walking up.

“Welcome back,” Leia says, muffled into his shoulder; Solo’s glancing at Bodhi over the top of Luke’s head quizzically.

Bodhi backs away so they can have their reunion, looking up at the shuttle. His shuttle.

And then he remembers, with a clarity that all his other memories seem to lack, how Luke had lost a long string of sabacc games in a row to him, because—

Luke is a terrible liar.

Chapter End Notes

I don’t know why I keep ending up with Han doing the long relationship-oriented conversations, other than it’s funny to me, because wtf does he know? Heh.

Thanks to meledea for looking parts of this over :)
I might have made a mistake.

But Bodhi mostly puts Luke’s lie out of his mind for a while, because it turned out Solo could throw a hell of a real party on remarkably short notice. Not in the Falcon, not after Chewbacca stood at the bottom of the ramp and roared, but the whole rest of the hangar bay around their ship had eventually filled up with people and droids celebrating the liberation of Gerrard V.

Solo managed to “liberate” quite a lot of alcohol from throughout the base, and Kasan had been surprisingly able to go drink for drink with him. Bodhi thought Leia’s face was particularly interesting, then, through his own increasingly hazy filter. But Chirrut had absolutely wiped the floor with both of them. Baze had grumbled and taken Chirrut’s stick and—any other possible weapons in the vicinity—before the second-to-last glass was even poured.

Jyn, of all people, had been the one who had grabbed Bodhi by the collar and shoved a canteen of water in his hands. She’d smirked at him and then gone back to dance with Cassian, the two of them so wrapped up in each other they might as well have been back in their quarters, instead of surrounded by virtually the entire population of Thila Base.

The water didn’t help, though; he wakes up—alone—curled up in the cockpit of his new shuttle with: a pounding headache, that bitter taste in his dry mouth again, a datapad of jotted-down ideas about what to do with the shuttle, and not a whole lot of coherent memories of the rest of the night before. That last’s all right—Bodhi’s gotten mostly accustomed to trying to piece his life back together, by now, and he doesn’t think he’d done anything too embarrassing besides climb up on top of the Falcon with Wedge, trying to throw sabacc cards into the sensor dish.

With Wedge. He groans quietly to himself, tugging his hair free from its tie and running his fingers through it as the memory floats back to him.

Okay, maybe he’d also rambled at Wedge about Luke and how it wasn’t fair, he had nothing to give in return for the shuttle, there was nothing in the galaxy that could ever be enough for all the things Luke had done. And Wedge had just laughed and thrown another card, way off the mark, and said something kind but ultimately unhelpful; Bodhi can’t remember what, exactly. It’s not the most embarrassing thing he’s ever done, but he suspects Wedge is going to give him a lot of shit about it, later.

He stumbles down through the hold—the ramp is still down, that’s strange—to go back to his quarters and trips over—

“Kaytoo?”

“GOOD MORNING, BODHI,” Kaytoo says, at his absolute top volume, getting to his feet, and all the way across the hangar someone jumps and drops their entire toolkit with a bang, swearing.

“This is going to be a fun morning,” Bodhi mutters, putting his hands over his ears. “What are you doing here?”
“CASSIAN TOLD ME I SHOULD MAKE SURE YOU DIDN’T DO ANYTHING STUPID WHILE YOU WERE DRUNK,” Kaytoo informs him. “AND THEN I STAYED HERE OVERNIGHT TO MAKE SURE NO ONE BOTHERED YOU WHILE YOU SLEPT. AT 0230 HOURS I EVEN SENT LUKE SKYWALKER AWAY. HE WAS VERY UNHAPPY WITH ME.”

Bodhi winces, looking around—no one’s particularly close by, but Kaytoo is loud. “And now?”

“NOW I’M BEING RUDE ABOUT YOUR OBVIOUS HANGOVER. ON PURPOSE.” His eyes are especially well-lit and piercing.

“No one should have ever put you and Artoo in the same room together,” Bodhi says, rubbing his temples. “He’s a bad influence. Could you please—”

“Modulate my volume?” Kaytoo says. “Fine. Maybe I should go wake up Cassian and Jyn.”

Bodhi thinks about it for a second. Cassian told him to—

“Yes, you should,” he says. “Exactly the way you were talking just now, before you modulated your volume.”

“It is one hundred percent certain they will not like being woken up that way,” Kaytoo observes.

“You don’t say.” Bodhi rubs his eyes blearily. “Well, thanks, Kaytoo, I’m awake, and I have work to do, so—”

“Very well, I know when I’m not wanted,” Kaytoo says, and stalks off in a huff. Bodhi blinks after him, for a moment, and then goes in the opposite direction to change his clothes and find some caf.

An hour later, Bodhi’s flat on his back under the console, with his initial diagnostics completed and a bunch of spare parts stacked carefully in the cargo hold. He’s manually rerouting main power away from the stuff he wants to replace; not the easiest task with a head still full of bantha wool, but he’s happy, or as close to it as he can remember being for a long, long time. Like this is Chirrut’s moving meditation in its clearest form, focused on nothing except the present, the cables and parts in his hands, repairing and reinventing the shuttle.

*My shuttle. It needs a name* —

Footsteps in the cargo hold interrupt his thoughts.

*That didn’t take long,* he thinks, both bracing for his visitor and feeling a surprised little twinge of delight that he’s come.

“Bodhi?”

“Yeah,” he calls back.

Luke leans over the back of the pilot’s chair and asks, “You found a new 880 Palisade shield generator?”

Bodhi says, scooting out awkwardly from under the console, “Fixed up one nobody was using, when Chirrut was teaching me some stuff.”

Luke reaches down to give him a hand up. “It smells a lot better in here now,” he says. “Less like sweaty stormtroopers, more like—”

“A sweaty mechanic?” Bodhi suggests, pulling his goggles off and wiping his face with his sleeve.
Luke runs his hand across the headrest of the pilot’s chair, not looking directly at him. “I don’t mind that.”

Bodhi’s face heats. “Did you need something?” he asks, quickly. “Or do you have time to give me a hand? My shift starts in a couple hours. With you to help, I could get the Palisade up and running by then—”

“I’d love to,” Luke says, “but I can’t, actually.” He gestures down at his flightsuit.

“Oh,” Bodhi says, his contentment from working on the shuttle instantly replaced by familiar anxiety, and a new, confusing sort of disappointment.

“Kasan and I talked last night about pulling a couple of quick hit-and-fades today,” Luke says. “Madine and Rieekan approved it. We’re gonna take out an Imperial supply depot on this place called the Jade Moon. If it goes well, we might swing by Balmorra’s factories on the way home. We’re keeping it small and sneaky, just me, her, and Wedge, let the rest of the boys take a breather. Kasan’s excited to get in her X-wing for the first time.” He’s excited, too—Bodhi figures he must not have indulged in any of Solo’s worst cocktails, to be so awake.

“You just got back,” Bodhi murmurs.

Luke runs a hand through his hair. “It’ll be fast. You won’t even have time to miss me,” he says, breezily. “Hey, Leia told me she reinstated you yesterday?”

Bodhi nods, and Luke continues, “Then when we get back again, we should talk. About what you want to do.”

“Yeah, okay,” Bodhi says. Luke taps the back of the pilot’s chair and starts to turn away, but Bodhi remembers something, and asks, “Last night—did Kaytoo say anything to you? When you came by?”

Luke doesn’t turn back around, but Bodhi can see his neck and ears turning bright red. “Nothing important.”

“Okay,” Bodhi says, again, but skeptically. “Have a good flight.”

*****

Bodhi doesn’t get the Palisade shield generator installed before his maintenance shift.

And after his shift—he thinks his crewmates must’ve drunk a lot more of Solo’s evil clear stuff than he had, from the way they’d worked—Cassian pulls him aside before he can head back to get it done.

“I might have made a mistake,” Cassian says, and he’s flushing slightly pink and having an uncharacteristically hard time maintaining eye contact with Bodhi. “Telling Kaytoo to watch out for you last night.”

“Um—”

“Kaytoo’s not a very good wingman.” Cassian is definitely flustered; it’s remarkably endearing. “I probably should have given him some clearer instructions about what to do if Luke—”

Bodhi raises his eyebrows. “Oh, no.”
“Jyn says things, so I don’t know—

Bodhi tries, “Cassian—”

“It’s pretty obvious that he likes you—”

“Cassian—”

“But if you’d wanted—”

“Cassian.” Bodhi grabs him by the shoulder. Cassian stops, and he’s nearly wringing his hands, something Bodhi’s never seen him do before. “Cassian, what in the names of all the stars did Kaytoo say to Luke Skywalker last night?”

Cassian looks away, deeply discomfited by the answer he’s about to give. “That there was a zero point one percent chance Luke was going to get to—”

“Oh, I got it,” Bodhi interrupts quickly, his eyes very wide, but to his surprise, he finds himself trying to stifle laughter.

“I mean, I see you with him, and I don’t know if that’s even what you want,” Cassian offers, frowning a little. “But, um, Kaytoo should not have been—involved—in that conversation.”

“Nope,” Bodhi agrees, rubbing the back of his neck, another appalled snicker threatening to escape.

“So I’m sorry about that,” Cassian says, haltingly. “You—make your own choices—”

“Jyn put you up to this?” Bodhi asks.

Cassian nods emphatically. “But you should know, I won’t let anyone stand in the way of what you want. If it’s Luke, or flying, or anything.”

Bodhi smiles at him. “I know.” Cassian reaches out and squeezes his hand, smiling back.

*****

In the evening, Luke and Wedge and Kasan are home again, piling into the cargo hold of Bodhi’s shuttle by unspoken agreement and talking animatedly about their rampant destruction of Balmorra’s construction yards.

“Did you even see that AT-AT under you?” Kasan asks Wedge, flopping down in the seat behind the co-pilot’s chair.

He shakes his head. “Good thing its armor wasn’t completed, or you’d never have brought it down,” he tells her.

Bodhi blinks at them. “I wasn’t expecting guests?”

Luke shrugs, not exactly apologetically, going past Kasan and sitting in the co-pilot’s seat, running his hand over the console. “It’s okay, though, if we’re here?”

Kasan raises her eyebrows, looking between the two of them, and Wedge just nudges her and rolls his eyes.

“Sure—if you don’t mind being put to work,” Bodhi says, glaring at Wedge.
“He could stand to be ordered around a little,” Wedge comments, jerking a thumb at Luke, who’s grinning, unabashed. “Even Madine—and they’re making him a General, you hear about that? Even Madine practically asks his permission for stuff.”

“Being the last of the Jedi has its perks.” Kasan smirks. Luke makes an exasperated noise at her, which she ignores, saying, “Go on, Bodhi, tell us what you need done to get this baby off the ground.”

He glances at Luke, who’s looking back at him, expectantly, hopefully. “O—Okay, I got the Palisade shield generator up, but I need to test whether it’s actually increasing the power of the existing particle shield or if they’re incompatible, and I haven’t had a chance to see if the R-T0 cannon actually retracts like it’s supposed to—” Bodhi stops, suddenly shy. “I—I made a list,” he says, clutching his datapad tightly.

“It’s gonna smell like four sweaty mechanics in here,” Luke says, amused, but turns to the console and starts flipping toggles. “I’ll check your shields.”

Wedge quirks an eyebrow at Bodhi teasingly. “Tell me what to do, boss,” he says.

“Go poke around that blaster cannon,” Bodhi says, politely refraining from smacking Wedge over the head with his datapad. “Hopefully it won’t accidentally go off while you’re in front of it.” Wedge gives him a rude gesture, affectionately, and goes out to look at it.

Bodhi ends up in the back, alongside Kasan, yanking out the Imperial HoloNet transceiver.

“You sure you don’t want to keep it? Just in case?” she asks.

“Just in case what?” he says, suspiciously.

“Oh, blast, not that,” Kasan shakes her head at him. “I’m never going back, and neither are you. Just in case you need to pick up Imperial transmissions or something.”

“It’s too risky,” Bodhi says. “I—I messed around with Imperial communications on Scarif, and I think it’s what pointed them right at me, in the end.”

She frowns at that, coiling a cable around her hand. “In the end?”

(Tonc shouted, “FUCK YOU!” and threw the grenade back—)

Bodhi swallows. “My landing pad was overrun, and I almost didn’t get out.”

“You had a lot harder time of it than I did,” Kasan says. “I’m sorry about that.”

“I can’t imagine it was the height of luxury, holed up in your Interceptor during the liberation,” Bodhi observes, quietly.

Kasan shrugs. “I didn’t have to do anything, really, except put out the call, and hope Princess Leia would trust me. Luke told me some of what you had to go through—”

Bodhi tenses up, unconsciously pulling at the cuff of his sleeve, but she isn’t talking about Saw—

“—if I’d had to watch Alderaan be destroyed”—Kasan sniffs and swipes at her nose. “I don’t know that I could’ve done anything, after that, except—go numb, I guess. I screamed, in the barracks, when I heard, and they had to sedate me for a week.”

“I’m sorry,” Bodhi says, weakly, and does not think about Jedha.
“Yeah, well, here we are,” Kasan says, and smiles, handing him the coil. “Taking the fight to the Empire, one planet at a time.”

He looks at her. “Where’s Rogue Squadron deploying to next?”

“You know about Kile II?”


Kasan’s eyes are bright. “That’s what I’m recommending to Rieekan and Madine we hit tomorrow. Surprise attack, like today, take out the sensor array, the stormtrooper barracks, and the spaceport. They won’t know what hit ‘em.”

“It doesn’t—” Bodhi hesitates, feeling a little sick. “It doesn’t bother you, to kill stormtroopers?”

She tilts her head at him. “They’re just—” she waves a hand. “Stormtroopers. It’s not like I knew any of them or anything. TIE pilots didn’t, you know, fraternize.”

“Yeah,” Bodhi mumbles, uncomfortable. “Thanks—thanks for the help,” he says, and tries not to look like he’s fleeing back up to the cockpit.

Luke glances over when he drops into the pilot’s seat, looking back to see Kasan stepping down outside to help Wedge. “Everything okay? I could feel your alarm.”

Bodhi freezes in distress, and Luke holds up his hands. “I wasn’t in your head.”

“I’m okay,” Bodhi mutters, shaking it off. “How’s that shield generator working?”

Luke is gazing at him steadfastly. “I promised—” he taps a finger on his temple—“but I could tell something was off, all of a sudden.”

“It’s really all right,” Bodhi says.

“Okay,” Luke says, doubtfully, and then changes the subject—right back into Kasan’s plan, unknowingly. “Do you want to come with us to Kile II tomorrow? It’s more of what we pulled today, just on a bigger scale.”

“Kasan told me—sensor array, spaceport, stormtrooper barracks.” Bodhi shakes his head, looking down at his hands; he’s started to lace his fingers together nervously in his lap. “Luke—I don’t—I can’t kill anyone, not for Rogue Squadron, not for the Rebellion.”

Luke’s head jerks up sharply. “That’s what it was. I can feel it. What did Kasan say? I’ll talk to her.”

“Don’t, please,” Bodhi says. “I know. It’s a war. I have to—I have to fight.” He glances at Luke’s worried face. “But you haven’t seen the simulation logs—when I flew—”

Luke presses his lips together. “I have,” he says, quietly. “I’m the commander of Rogue Squadron. Of course I saw your simulations.” He reaches over like he wants to take Bodhi’s hands in his own, but stops.

“I’m sorry,” Bodhi says, dismayed, some small part of himself wishing Luke hadn’t drawn back. “I’m sorry I can’t be what you want. I can’t be part of Rogue Squadron—”

“You are, you’ll always have a place with us, even if you’re not in an X-wing or some other fighter,” Luke insists. “You’re Rogue One.” He looks down. “And I shouldn’t have kept pushing you. I thought—I don’t know what I thought, except maybe it would make you happy to fly.”
“I missed flying,” Bodhi confesses. He’s abruptly tongue-tied, unable to admit much more than that to himself, let alone Luke. “This shuttle—it means everything.”


Bodhi feels his heartbeat quicken, and he says hastily, afraid of what else might come out of his mouth, “I mean, if the mission ever calls for a shuttle, for some reason—a supply run, or—I’d like to come.”

Luke swallows and leans back in the co-pilot’s seat, disappointment written all over his face. But he asks, “So if it's not an outright assault, or there's no combat in the works?”

Bodhi nods. “I can do that.”

“Okay.” Luke gives him a small smile. He holds Bodhi’s gaze for a long, curious moment, before turning back to the console. “We’d better run another diagnostic, then, if you're ever going to fly this thing.”

****

Kasan’s proposed mission to Kile II is a go the next morning; Rogue Squadron flies out in their Y-wings instead of X-wings, to maximize their firepower against the Enclave’s many targets. Bodhi worries about that for half the day, telling himself it’s because his preference has always been for speed over anything else, and not because he's worried about Luke in particular.

Chirrut, when he catches Bodhi in the corridor, says, “It’ll be all right. All is—”

“As the Force wills it, I know,” Bodhi says, but he can't shake the persistent nagging anxiety, not even when he gets back to his shuttle and starts in on rebuilding the communications system for Alliance specs.

Jyn comes by around midday and distracts him for a while, making him explain every single thing he's doing or plans to do to the shuttle. “In case I need to know for a cover,” she says, when Bodhi asks why. “In case Rieekan can't loan you to me and Cassian for a mission.”

“What kind of mission would you need to know all this stuff for?”

Jyn shrugs. “I like to do my research.” Bodhi thinks she's bluffing, but he’s never played sabacc with her.

And then few hours after that, Bodhi’s on his maintenance shift when Rogue Squadron comes home again, much sooner than Bodhi had thought to expect them. The medical team that hurries into the hangar as soon as the first Y-wing lands starts his heart pounding in his ears and alarm bells ringing in his head.

Bodhi’s not assigned to help with Luke’s Y-wing, but something tells him to get over there now, ignoring the deck officer’s confusion and shouted orders. His hands close into painfully tight fists as he sprints towards the ship, praying please, please, gasping at the lightning-bolt strike of knowing, horribly, that something is very wrong—

He skids to a halt at Luke’s Y-wing at the same time the medical team does, panting in terror. But the team’s not for him—they’re prepping for whoever’s landing the badly damaged Y-wing next to him.

Oh, no—
Luke pops the cockpit and scrambles out, Artoo crying a stream of anxious noises behind him. Luke’s hair is matted with sweat, his face tear-streaked, but he’s completely unhurt, making immediately for the scorched Y-wing—Kasan’s—behind the medical team, and Bodhi follows him, scared. Kasan’s bloody and burned, but conscious—he can hear her crying out as a medical droid carefully lifts her from the cockpit and gets her onto an antigrav gurney.

“I’m sorry, I’m sorry,” Luke calls after her, shakily, as the team gently brushes him aside and whisks her away to the medcenter. “Kasan—you’re going to be all right—”


“Oh, Bodhi—” Luke turns too quickly, nearly falling into Bodhi’s arms. He struggles to right himself. “We ran into an ambush outside the city. There was a canyon—they were waiting with a second wave of TIEs right after we took out the spaceport, and—we split up—” Luke’s breath catches, and he swallows painfully, unable to meet Bodhi’s eyes.

And Bodhi knows.

He jerks his head up and starts counting the Y-wings in the hangar.

No. No no no—

“Kasan was hit—her astromech barely managed to get the jump to hyperspace calculated before he went dead.” Luke’s trembling, pushing his hair back from his face with an unsteady hand.

Bodhi counts the Y-wings again, heart plummeting, as he recognizes each call sign, each droid being lowered down out of their ships. The grim faces of his friends in Rogue Squadron as they come together.

All, save one.


Luke’s eyes are as blue as the ocean of Scarif, surging up to crush his shuttle—“I tried to get there—I wasn’t fast enough—”

Chapter 20

Chapter Summary

Do you trust me?

Chapter Notes

HEED THE TAGS. Two-thirds of this update are not a fun ride.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Wedge is dead.

*****

Bodhi sits in the back of Rogue Squadron's debriefing, numb, too stunned to cry.

Luke pulls himself together and makes his report, standing stiffly at attention and looking through, not at, General Madine.

Bodhi stays put, all the way through Madine’s cut-glass questioning of Rieekan's decision to use Y-wings, to send the squadron out day after day without an appropriate rest period in between.

He watches Rogue Squadron; Wes Janson, Wedge's occasional wingman, is leaning forward in his seat, resting his forehead on his clenched hands. Zev's hand is on Janson's back, between his shoulder blades, not moving.

Bodhi stays, through Hobbie's broken, faltering explanation of his inability to get the pursuing TIEs off Wedge and Kasan in the canyon.

Sometime in the middle of Luke’s description of the ambush, Bodhi realizes that Wedge is the first loss he’s had under his command. It's too much to think about, so he just—doesn't.

Bodhi nearly manages to stay through the whole debrief. But then Luke's Artoo plays back Wedge's last transmission: his horrified yell for help when Kasan's hit, his bleak desperation as each component of his own Y-wing’s computer fails in turn after he’s hit, and—Bodhi gets up and walks out, Wedge’s torn-off final scream echoing in his ears, unable to look at any of his friends still trapped in that moment, not even glancing at Luke's bowed head.

In the corridor, Bodhi turns, and heads quickly towards the simulations. Thanks the Force that the room’s empty, slams in the data tape for—Scarif—swearing to himself he’ll really do it this time, he’ll blast them all to pieces, for Wedge. For Luke. For the friends he saved, somehow. For Tonc, for Galen—

Tears blind him before he can fire a single shot, but they don’t fall.

Bodhi stops the simulation, shaking, and wipes his eyes with his sleeve.
It wouldn’t have made any difference if I was there.

He goes to the medcenter; the staff won’t let him, or anyone, see Kasan until she’s in better condition. Outside, Bodhi slides down the wall and sits with his knees up, head buried in his arms, not thinking. He listens to the faint sounds of the medical equipment behind him—the uncomfortably familiar gurgling of the bacta tank, the metallic voices of droids. And he listens to the sounds of the base, which never falls silent, not even for death.

“They’re not letting anyone see Kasan?”

Bodhi looks up. Luke is pale, and looks utterly exhausted; he seems older, his light dimmed by grief. “No.”

“You shouldn’t be alone,” Luke says, after a moment.

“Neither should you.”

Luke sits down—more like collapses, really—next to him. “Problem solved.”

Bodhi puts his head back into the circle of his arms, looking at Luke over the folds of his sleeve, silent.

“I fucked up,” Luke says, eventually, staring straight ahead at nothing. “It wasn’t Rieekan’s fault we went out a second day in a row. I had—‘more enthusiasm than sense.’”

“Someone could’ve said no to you,” Bodhi murmurs.

Luke shakes his head. “No one ever does.” His voice is hollow. “They’ll all follow me into oblivion.”

“Not Solo,” Bodhi says, nudging a shoulder against him. “Or Leia.”

“Or you.”

Bodhi’s eyes widen, unable to figure out what emotion colors Luke’s voice. “I would, if—if I could.”


“It’s not your fault,” Bodhi says, softly, hanging onto his own composure by a thread. “Wedge defected. He knew as well as anybody what the cost might be. He lost people too, before.”

“I sent him away so he could survive the Death Star.” Luke leans his head back on the wall, covering his eyes with a shaking hand. “He was hit, but he could still pull up, so I told him to get out of there. Me and Wedge, we were the only ones who made it back from Red—” His words catch on a sob.

Bodhi holds out for the space of a dozen heartbeats, listening to Luke trying not to cry. Then he unfolds, gets to his knees, and puts his arms around Luke, turning his face away. Luke buries his head in the crook of Bodhi’s shoulder, muffling his tears, his whole body shuddering in Bodhi’s arms.

A soft, stricken sound at the far end of the corridor makes him glance up. Leia and Solo are coming towards him—he doesn’t know how they knew where to find Luke, only that of course they did, and of course they came. Bodhi watches them, not letting go of Luke, just looking at Leia’s dark,
knowing eyes, the way her hand fits with Solo’s like it belongs there.

“Hi, kid,” Solo says, bringing Leia over to them. “Mind if we crash your party?” He’s somber.

Bodhi shakes his head, reluctantly standing and helping Luke to his feet. Luke swipes the back of his hand across his reddened eyes as Leia moves to hug him and Solo reaches out to pat his back.

“I’m so sorry,” Leia murmurs. “He was a brave man.”

Bodhi turns away, intending to let Luke’s dearest friends console him, but Solo asks, “Bodhi—you gonna be all right?”

“Yeah. Yeah. Just take care of him, okay?”

“Wait,” Luke says, gently extricating himself from Leia's embrace. “Are you sure? You don't have to go. I'm sure Kasan would like to see you.”

“I should—” Bodhi trails off, not really knowing what to say. “I'm gonna go check on Hobbie,” he lies.

Luke nods, exhaling shakily. “Thanks—thanks for staying with me. You’re a good friend.” Bodhi does not miss the sharp-eyed glance Solo gives him at that, but—it’s not the right time. He leaves them to wait by the medcenter, walking away in the direction of Rogue Squadron’s quarters. He winds up in the hangar, staring at his shuttle.

Wedge was working on the R-T0 cannon for me—

Bodhi goes up into the cockpit and toggles the controls for the blaster cannon.

It retracts perfectly. He puts his head down and does not cry.

*****

There are two memorials for Wedge. The first is a brief and formal military ceremony, with all the High Command staff, who look uniformly grim, except for Rieekan, who doesn’t raise his eyes from the floor once.

The second is, of course, a typically informal Rogue Squadron gathering. Luke stops looking quite so much like he’s going to collapse from grief sometime after the fourth beer; he even manages to laugh at some of Hobbie’s stories of his and Wedge’s first exploits after joining the Rebellion, including something very odd about crashing into a volcano. Bodhi spearheads what turns into a seemingly endless game of sabacc with far too many players, which they end up letting Kasan win, just for not being dead.

Cassian and Jyn are apologetic about having to leave right after that, though. They’re meeting Talon Karrde to pick up his latest intel in person, and although it's unpleasant to think about, Bodhi knows that's more important than continuing to grieve over a lost pilot. Even if it was Wedge.

The day after they've gone, Bodhi’s helping Luke, who’s regained his usual composure, if not his smile, to clean out Wedge’s quarters. He’s putting holos, and Wedge’s odd ideas about what mementos should be, into a storage container, when he suddenly remembers, turns, and hauls up Wedge's mattress.

“His medal,” Bodhi says, looking down at it, and—

Wedge’s old Imperial flightsuit.

It’s different than his, of course, black and sleek, even laid out flat, but the insignia at the shoulder’s the same. He kneels to grab the flightsuit and the medal, and then he can’t bring himself to stand back up, staring down at the two pieces of their shared history in his hands.

*Wedge couldn’t get rid of it, either.*

*None of us can ever escape our past—*

He’s stuck there, on his knees, wondering whether Wedge had known the person who’d shot him down. If Wedge had ever gone up against TIE pilots he’d gone to school with. Thinking of his own friends at the Academy and whether they really were all dead; how often someone he knew killed someone he knew.

There’s a buzzing, a roaring, in his ears; his heart is starting to race in a too-familiar nervous rhythm. Everything narrows down to the medal glinting on top of the black flightsuit, and his thoughts start to skitter apart—

“Bodhi?”

He’s trapped, can’t breathe—tries to think of his shuttle, what he was doing with the engines last, but it’s too hard to pull up—

“Hey—”

There’s a hand on his shoulder and a concerned, familiar voice talking to him. “Oh—*sh*t.* Bodhi, come on, stay with me, don’t do this—”

He thinks there are tears on his face, gasps for breath, lost. An arm goes around him, holding him carefully.

“Okay, I’m here, I’m right here. I *promised,* so you’re gonna have to find your way back on your own. But you’re safe, you’re *safe* —” That might be a lie, but is it from now or on Corellia with the *woman standing over him*—“I’m right here with you. Can you put down the stuff you're holding? Can you give it to me?”

He pushes the flightsuit into the person’s waiting hand. The medal ribbon slithers around his fingers for a second, and it feels *wrong*—at least it’s not—something else—he can’t remember *what,* but he doesn’t want it touching his skin. He closes his eyes.

“Bodhi, I don’t know what Chirrut taught you, he doesn’t talk about what he's doing with you, but he taught *me* some things about meditation and breathing. Can you—can you do that? Focus on breathing?”

He manages, somehow, though his throat feels like it’s closed up entirely, “Yeah. Keep talking. Don’t go. *Please.*”

“I won't. I'm not going anywhere. Do you think you want to sit up on the bunk with me?”

He shakes his head. Tries to ignore his racing heart, and focuses on matching his breathing to the steady rise and fall of the person’s chest pressed against his side—*Luke, oh, it’s Luke, who else would it be*—“Just talk to me—tell me something—tell me about flying—”
“I—okay. Um. There's a canyon, back home, it used to be a podracing course, I guess. I used to take my speeder out and fly around, looking for parts from crashed podracers after dust storms blew through. Lots of old, pre-Clone Wars stuff. I don't know why they stopped having races there, I would've liked to have seen some—”

“I used to bet on races,” Bodhi mumbles. “Not as much fun as sabacc, but there's more money in it.”

Luke says, “Well, Han swears up and down that he won the *Falcon* in a sabacc game, so I don't know about that.”

Bodhi lifts his head and looks at him. “Seriously?”

Luke’s eyes are distressed, but his mouth curves, barely, into something like a smile. “Yeah. Off some poor guy who didn't know what hit him.” He takes a deep breath. “Are you all right?”

Bodhi ducks his head again, wiping the dampness on his face away with his trembling hands. Breathes. “I think so.”

“Okay.”

“I'm sorry.”

Luke hasn’t let go. He squeezes Bodhi’s shoulder. “You have nothing to be sorry for.”

Bodhi pushes himself around so he can put his back up to Wedge's bunk without dislodging Luke's hand. “I didn't know that would set me off,” he says, looking at the flightsuit and medal in a pile just behind Luke on the floor.

Luke hesitates, and then he puts his hand over Bodhi's, warm and gentle. “I'm just glad I was here to help. Like you did for me.”

“When I panicked—what did it feel like to you? Since you can—” he waves a hand by his temple. Luke doesn’t say anything for a second. “Like someone turned out the lights on you.”

“And—you’d know if it happened, even if you were clear across the base.”

“Probably. I haven't exactly tested out the range. Coronet City, I was pretty far away, though.” He shrugs.

“Does it work for other people, too?”

Luke stares down at their hands. “Only people I care about deeply.”

Bodhi shudders, but he pushes forward and asks, quietly, “Wedge?”

“Yeah. I felt his pain, and fear, and I couldn't do—” Luke stops himself. Exhales, and slumps against Wedge's bunk next to Bodhi. “If I talk about this more, or other terrible and depressing things—?”

“I think I'll be all right, but I've never tested it.” He manages a faint, rueful smile.


“Don't mention it.” Luke puts his arm around Bodhi. It doesn't mean anything more than simple
friendship, not when they’re both still shaken with grief, but Bodhi’s grateful for the physical contact nonetheless.

Then Luke holds up something in his other hand. “Look what I found.”

Bodhi blinks at it. “A sabacc card?”

“Not just any card.” Luke taps the corner with his thumb. The Queen flickers and changes into the Idiot; he taps it again and it changes into the Star.

“A skifter?” Bodhi yelps. “That jumped-up, cheating Corellian dirt-farmer—” Then he laughs, pressing his face into Luke's shoulder. “And he still couldn’t beat me.” Luke snorts a laugh of his own, and pulls him close, as close as they were in the corridor outside the medcenter. And when tears start to fall onto his flight jacket, it’s impossible to tell if they’re his, or Luke’s.

*****

In the week after that, Bodhi’s life starts to return to something approximating routine; he’s less busy than before because no one’s being deployed again, leaving plenty of time to work on his shuttle—the perfect distraction from grief.

During his regular maintenance shifts, though, Bodhi hears talk of the Alliance having over-extended their forces across the whole galaxy, not just in the random mission that took Wedge’s life. Hard-won systems start to fall back into the hands of the Empire in what’s being dubbed the “Mid-Rim Retreat,” frustrating Luke to no end. But there’s nothing for it; Leia concurs that the Rebellion needs to regroup, and Luke doesn't like to go up against her.

It becomes standard practice, apparently, for Bodhi’s friends to stop by his shuttle if he’s working on it. He’s rarely alone, Luke his most constant—and competent—assistant; though, by unspoken agreement, they don’t talk about anything except speeders and ships and all the remarkably stupid things they did as adolescents trying to go faster.

Baze gives up trying to explain what the shuttle’s changes look like to Chirrut fairly early on in the week. Bodhi ends up finishing some components faster just so Chirrut won’t trip or poke himself or mention that it’ll be easier to do things if there’s some more floor space. He suspects Chirrut is faking some of it to force the issue, mostly because Baze keeps rolling his eyes and sighing dramatically. It makes him wonder, again, if Chirrut knows more than he lets on, about the future.

Hobbie, lonely without Wedge, tries to be helpful, but can’t stop himself from pointing out all the little things that could blow up in Bodhi’s face if he keeps doing that. Eventually Bodhi threatens to tape his mouth shut, and he knocks it off.

And, naturally, Solo checks out the modifications with the most critical eye. After days of additional tweaking—Bodhi increasingly irritated with each visit, even with Luke’s calming presence—he finally pronounces the overdrive acceptable, and promises a bottle of something horrible for when Bodhi finally gets around to picking a name, to christen the shuttle.

At the end of the week, Cassian, Jyn, and Kaytoo come back from meeting with Karrde—a bit overdue because of a recruitment stop, and some extra hyperspace jumps to throw off any possible pursuers. “I still think he’s not telling us something about what he was doing on Esseles,” Jyn says, sweeping in and sitting in the pilot’s chair. “I’m getting better at his tells, he does this thing with his beard—hi, Bodhi. You’ve been all right?”
Bodhi looks down at her from where he’s been fiddling with an overhead light that keeps going out. “Welcome back. I’m okay.” Kaytoo shakes his head and tsk at Bodhi, reaching up to firmly secure the wire, ungrounded—Bodhi jumps off the chair hastily, before Kaytoo can electrocute him.

Cassian reaches out to steady him, and kisses him on the cheek. “Would you go head to head with Karrde in sabacc?”

Bodhi shakes his head. “I only met him once, remember? But he’d definitely be a tough read.”

“Speaking of,” Jyn says, sardonically, flashing a datapad at him and rolling her eyes. “We all love decrypting Karrde’s reports on what the Empire’s been up to.”

Bodhi offers, “Actually, this might be a good chance to test out the ship’s computer—”

Kaytoo asks, sounding pleased, “Are you using the new algorithms I gave you before we left?”

“All based on classified information, I’m sure,” Cassian says. “You’re very inconsistent about what you think should be shared or secret, you know?” He sighs, seeming not to notice his own hypocrisy with regards to what he’s let Bodhi know. Kaytoo makes a rude gesture back at Cassian. “Kay, who taught you that one? It’s very inappropriate.”

“I’m not telling.”

“Yeah, you—you’re all really lax about your data security with me,” Bodhi observes. “Not that I’m complaining, mind.”

Jyn raises an eyebrow at him, but hands him the datapad. “Sure, give it a shot. I’m sure Karrde wouldn’t have a problem with you looking at this”

He plugs it in and tells the computer to do a running display of the decryption. “How is he?”

“Same as usual. Mercenary to a fault.” Cassian shrugs. “He asked about you.”

“Karrde? Really?”

“He remembers everything from when we first met,” Jyn says, making a face.

Kaytoo says, affronted, “Karrde did not remember me.”

“He was disappointed you didn’t wear that dress again,” Cassian says to Jyn. She punches him on the arm, not gently.

“What did he ask about me?” On the display, there’s some stuff about the ongoing blockade of Kashyyyk. Bodhi has a pang of guilt for not knowing about it; Chewbacca hadn’t mentioned anything, but of course, he’d never asked. At least the decrypt seems to be working correctly.

Cassian rubs his arm and looks uncomfortable. “If you’ve gotten over—whatever happened to you.”

“Oh,” Bodhi says. “That’s kind of personal, yeah?” He looks down at the screen again; something about rumors of a second Super Star Destroyer being buried on Coruscant. “Kaytoo, this doesn’t look right.”

Kaytoo checks the code and taps the datapad. “No, that’s what it says. Buried on Coruscant.”

“That’s what we told Karrde,” Jyn says. “None of his business.”
Bodhi picks up the datapad to see how much is left to decrypt; it’s going pretty quick, but true to his word, Karrde had provided a lot of information. He glances over at the computer’s display; there’s only one decrypted line scrolling past, about a prisoner transfer from Kile II to the spice mines of Kessel.

Prisoner transfer from Kile II—

Bodhi’s heart leaps—he drops the datapad and runs down out of the shuttle, ignoring Jyn and Cassian’s bewildered calls after him, Kaytoo going loud over top of them. He sprints through the base, almost falling when he doesn’t dare slow down around the corners; slams up against Luke’s door and bangs on it in syncopation with his frantic heartbeat until Luke opens it.

“Do you trust me?” Bodhi asks, out of breath. “We’ve never actually flown together—I know—I know I fall apart, I can’t do any of the million things the Rebellion needs me to do, but I know things about the Empire, and if I’m right—” He tries to slow the words spilling out of his mouth. “When it’s about the Empire—do you trust me to know what I’m doing?”


“Then we have to go. Now.” He slaps his palm against Luke’s door frame. I’m right. I’m right. Let me be right. “Wedge isn’t dead! He’s not, he’s a prisoner on Kessel, he’s alive. We have to go, before it’s too late. We have to go right now!”

Chapter End Notes

"Right now" is going to actually take quite a bit of work! I fully intend to have the update done by the end of the week, at least, but I also have to teach and stuff. ¯\_(ツ)_/¯

But don't go anywhere--the next one's gonna be a LOT of fun.

THANK YOU to all the new people who've found this recently and left such nice comments, and THANK YOU, as always, to those of you who check in with every update. <3 You rock.
Chapter 21

Chapter Summary

I can do this.

Chapter Notes

A couple of mouseover translations that do not work on mobile, towards the end.
Translations for mobile users in the end notes.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.


“Please believe me,” Bodhi begs. “It was in Talon Karrde’s report—there was a prisoner transfer from Kile II to Kessel, I know what it means, please, Luke, we have to get Wedge out of there—” He doesn’t know how to persuade anyone, least of all Luke, but if he just keeps talking—

_I won’t be too late._

Luke shakes himself. “Okay. Okay, I trust you.” He swings into motion, shrugging his flight jacket over one shoulder and grabbing his pack. Bodhi slaps his hand against the door frame again, delirious with hope; turns and starts to run back towards his shuttle, a plan beginning to come together in his head. Luke runs after him, calling into his comlink, “Zev, scramble the squadron, we’re going to Kessel to get our man back! Bodhi, wait—”

“It’ll take too long to get all of Rogue Squadron up. My shuttle’s ready now,” Bodhi says, breathlessly.

“Bodhi—” Luke catches at his arm. “We can put together an extraction team—”

Bodhi’s shaking his head, hardly slowing down. “No one lasts long on Kessel. We can’t wait. I know I can do this, I can get us in and you can find him, the way you found me on Corellia.”

“Leia’s going to kill me,” Luke mutters, but his eyes are bright, brighter than they’ve been in days, when he squeezes Bodhi’s arm and says, “Let’s take your shuttle.”

Jyn and Cassian and Kaytoo aren’t still in his shuttle when they get to the hangar; are nowhere to be seen, probably trying to find him. Bodhi’s comlink chirps incessantly in his pocket as he hits the controls for the ramp and hurries to the cockpit, glad he’d cleaned up some before they’d come home, tucking stray parts into his pockets so they won’t bounce around the hold on take off. He thumbs on his comlink—“What?”—keying the engines for preflight, looking at Luke taking the copilot’s seat like—_like he belongs here with me_—

“Bodhi, where are you?” It’s Cassian. “What’s going on? You ran off—Kaytoo looked at the datapad—”
“Wedge, it’s Wedge,” Bodhi calls back, giddily. “He’s alive on Kessel, I have to go get him—”

“What?”

Jyn’s voice cuts across Cassian’s. “We can help. Give me an hour and I can—”

“No time,” Luke calls out, grinning at Bodhi, flipping switches on his side of the console as fast as he can. “We’ll be back before anyone else notices we’re gone.”

“Luke?” There’s sounds of a brief scuffle over the comlink. Bodhi winces, punching coordinates into the navicomputer, as they both hear someone drop the comlink and it hits the floor with a loud squeal of static.

Zev’s voice from Luke’s comlink—“Commander, we’re scrambling X-wings as fast as we can, we’ll be right behind you—”

Cassian comes on again, urgently. “Commander Skywalker—Bodhi, wait—”

“Don’t worry, Cassian, I’ll be careful!” Bodhi shuts off his comlink and takes the controls, thrilled at the crescendoing hum of his engines, almost laughing in disbelief as he glides the shuttle out of the hangar. Over the shuttle’s comm comes, “Rogue One, you haven’t been cleared for departure. Return to base, shut down your engines and report to General Rieekan imm—”

Luke leans toward the pickup and says, “This is Commander Skywalker—if we don’t make it back, tell Leia I'm sorry, but we had to try!” He toggles the comm off.

Bodhi gives him an alarmed look as they climb rapidly towards space. “Did you have to be that dramatic about it?”

Luke shrugs apologetically, leaning forward as the navicomputer alerts them for the jump to hyperspace. “It’ll get their attention.” He grins, and pulls back on the lever; the stars turn to streaks, and Bodhi breathes for the first time since he saw that line scroll up the display. He leans his head back against the chair, and smiles. Going rogue again.

“There’s going to be hell to pay for that, when we get back,” Luke says—Bodhi realizes he’d spoken aloud—but Luke’s smiling, too, his face lit up, eager. “What’s your plan to break Wedge out?”

Bodhi swallows nervously and sits up straight. I can do this. “I’ve—I’ve seen your wanted posters; they don't really know what you look like, still, but they know me, my face, so—if you say you're a bounty hunter and you're claiming me—I can get access to a console and find where Wedge's being held.”

Luke's already shaking his head. “I won't risk you like that. Besides, you'd have to have binders on to look like a prisoner.” His mouth twists as his eyes flick down to Bodhi’s hands.

“I can handle it,” Bodhi insists, even as he breaks out in a cold sweat at the thought.

Luke throws him an all too knowing look. “Give me your arm.”

Bodhi tenses up, but holds his arm out to Luke, who produces binders from his pack— “Okay, why do you have those?”

“Picked 'em up on Gerrard V as a souvenir,” Luke says, cheerfully. Then, he adds, more gently, “If you can't handle this, with me sitting right here next to you, we're not doing your idea.”
Wedge. We have to get Wedge out. “Do it.”

Luke snaps one side of the binders shut around his wrist.

Bodhi stares into Luke’s earnest, watchful eyes, doing his best not to think about the pressure against his skin or being trapped. Wonders, instead, whether the little oscillation he’d picked up from the sublights is going to be a problem, vaguely aware that he’s stopped breathing and his heart rate is starting to accelerate like a ship making for hyperspace—

“Yeah, this isn't going to work,” Luke says, taking the binders back off, his fingers accidentally brushing the inside of Bodhi's wrist. Bodhi shivers. “See?”

Bodhi rubs his wrist, trying to ignore that his reaction to Luke's touch had not been one of fear, not in the least. “Well, we're not exactly going to be able to just walk in and demand they give us a prisoner of war back.”

Luke gets an odd, thoughtful look on his face. “Hmm.”

“What?”

Luke smiles. “Obi-wan Kenobi used the Force to convince these stormtroopers that Artoo and Threepio weren't the droids from Leia's ship. It's a trick that only works on the weak-minded, or so he said.”

Bodhi ducks his head and asks, self-deprecatingly, “Do you want to test that out on me, too?”

Luke’s brow furrows in alarm. “Bodhi, no, what in blazes would make you say something like that?”

He shrugs. “You took the binders off me because you thought I was going to panic.”

“That doesn't—you're fear doesn't make you weak-minded,” Luke says, grabbing the armrest of his chair tightly, a hint of distress in his voice. “Here, I'll prove it to you.” He moves his right hand in a deliberate sort of gesture, and says, very calmly, “You will turn this ship around and report to General Rieekan.”

Bodhi blinks at him. “Um, I don't think so.”

“There. Now you know.”

“Maybe you're not doing it right,” Bodhi suggests.

Luke huffs a laugh. “Which one of us is the last of the Jedi?”

“Okay,” Bodhi says, dubiously. “Do you think it'll work on a prison guard?”

“If it doesn't work, there isn't going to be much of a prison break.” Luke grins again, looking up through his eyelashes at Bodhi. “But if we have to make a run for it, at least I'll get to see how well you can fly this thing.”

Bodhi fights down another shiver. He trusts me. I won’t fail him.

I can do this.

*****

Kessel is a spectacularly ugly, potato-shaped and rust red little world, without a single redeeming
feature to recommend it. Without much of anything, except the spice mines and, of course, the worst prison in the galaxy.

Bodhi puts the shuttle into an orbit that should keep them out of range of Imperial sensors, and starts up a long-range scan. Most of Kessel is on local night; looking out the viewport at the few and faint lights of the prison complex makes Bodhi wonder whether he should plan to fly dark; he’s done it before, on a dare, but never on a planet he didn’t know.

Luke leans over to his side, looking down at the display, not seeming to notice how he’s pressed up against Bodhi’s arm. “Okay, okay. I know this layout,” Bodhi says, tapping the screen. “These are the main detention centers, they must feed prisoners right into the mines. One in three chance of picking the center where Wedge is being held—unless—” He looks up at Luke. “Can you tell where he is?”

Luke makes a face. “Apparently my range is not a whole planet.” He shrugs and smiles briefly down at Bodhi. “One in three’s not such bad odds, though.”

Bodhi nods. He turns back to the display, and his surety—such as it is—immediately dissipates. “It’s better garrisoned than I expected,” he says, dismayed, looking at the number of barracks surrounding the command post. “Didn’t think they’d have this many stormtroopers.”

“What’re these?” Luke puts a finger on one of the smaller structures dotting the canyons.

“Fortresses. Heavily guarded, turbolasers everywhere. I’ll keep out of range of those as much as I can.” Bodhi takes a breath. “Glad I didn’t paint that starbird on the fin yet.”

“We’ll manage. What else do you recognize?” Luke rests a reassuring hand on his shoulder; Bodhi relaxes a little.

“Atmosphere factories—don’t care about those unless we want to slowly suffocate everyone on the planet. They’re using DSS-02 shield generators, one for each center and one for the command post.” Bodhi looks over at Luke. “We’ll still have to get past that. Can your—” he waves his hand in a vague imitation of Luke’s motion—“work over comms?”

Luke shakes his head. “I don’t think so. I think it has to be in person.”

“Then—you should tell them you’re bringing in a prisoner,” Bodhi says. “We’re too far off the cargo delivery schedule to try that angle.”

“Bodhi—”

“Once we’re past the shield and on the ground—”

“They’ll take you away—” Luke’s hand clenches on Bodhi’s shoulder.

Bodhi smiles at him, tremulously. Nothing can be worse than—he pushes that memory down. “So convince them not to.” He reaches for the controls and starts their descent before Luke can register another protest, and Luke has to sit back properly in his seat. The Imperials are good; the comm lights up the second the shuttle hits the range of their sensors.

“Unidentified shuttle, this is a restricted world—”

“Yeah, I know,” Luke replies, quickly. “Kessel’s famous prison. That’s why I’m here. I brought you a—a prisoner worth paying a lot of credits for.” He makes a face at how unconvincing that sounds, and Bodhi, despite his nervousness, can’t help noting the way Luke shifts in his chair, another one of
“Bounty hunter, huh.” The Imperial on the other end of the line sighs. “More of you scum every day. All right. What’s your identification, shuttle?”

Bodhi has a flash of inspiration—“Cadera—” he hisses, shuddering, thinking of Jedha’s sky of falling stone.

**Jedha’s ghosts, rising.**


“Land at these coordinates and we’ll send someone to negotiate your fee. If your prisoner’s worth anything.” The Imperial sounds skeptical. Bodhi looks down at the coordinates the Imperial’s transmitting, for a landing pad at one of the detention centers, and starts their descent.

Luke’s mouth quirks up. “Oh, he’s worth more than you can even imagine,” he says, and signs off.

The landing pad is several meters off the ground, illuminated by floodlights; no concealing shadows or even any equipment scattered around to hide behind. It’s connected to Detention Center Aurek by a glassed-in walkway. Bodhi bites his lip. “There should be a control station at the end of that walkway, if we can just get that far—”

“No problem,” Luke says, getting up and unholstering his blaster. “We’re going to find Wedge. I can feel it.”

Luke’s mouth looks at him, wide-eyed. “Is he in this part of the prison?”

“I don’t think so, but—” Luke takes a deep breath. “I trust in the Force. We’ll find him.” He gestures for Bodhi to precede him through the hold. “Look scared.”

“I am scared.” Bodhi starts for the ramp controls. Luke catches hold of his arm, and they’re standing too close together, Luke looking deep into Bodhi’s eyes, and—

“We’ll find him,” Luke repeats, sincerely, but Bodhi doesn’t think that was what he’d intended to say.

Or do.

*No time for that now—*

—*maybe, after—if we get out of this—*

It almost doesn’t bear thinking about.

The ramp lowers; there’s a lieutenant and two stormtroopers waiting on the landing pad for them.


Bodhi’s hands go up, reflexively, as he walks towards the Imperials. *Okay, okay—no one’s shouting “It’s Luke Skywalker—”*

“Nice, uh, place you got here,” Luke says to them. “I’m Lars Darklighter—your man here was trying to hide out on Theron, but he couldn’t hide that pretty face from me. Found him winning big at the underground podraces.” He’s talking too much, all his gestures broad and loose—Bodhi realizes Luke’s acting like *Solo* and has to fight down a horrifying urge to snicker.
“You didn’t have him cuffed?” The lieutenant frowns at Bodhi.

“He’s harmless,” Luke says, smirking and holstering his blaster. He gives Bodhi a shove in their direction. “Go ahead, scan him, look him up. He’s just a very expensive cargo pilot.”

The lieutenant shakes his head. “Still.” He gestures a stormtrooper forward and Bodhi holds his breath.

“You don’t need to cuff him,” Luke says, very calmly, waving his hand, and the stormtrooper stops.

“We don’t need to cuff him,” the stormtrooper echoes in his filtered voice, and a chill runs down Bodhi’s spine. It worked.

“You will escort us to your control station,” Luke says, again in that eerily calm voice, turning to the lieutenant, who nods.

“We will escort you to my control station. This way, please.” They follow him down through the walkway, the two stormtroopers falling in behind them. Bodhi chances a look back at Luke—he’s barely containing his excitement, fairly springing off the ground with every step. They come to a halt at the end of the walkway, in front of a door, where there is, as Bodhi expected, a control station for processing new arrivals. Luke looks at Bodhi; he gives him a tiny nod, certain he can access it.

“You will all go into the detention center and leave us alone,” Luke says, to the Imperials. Bodhi hears the filtered voices of the stormtroopers muttering it to themselves inside their helmets, at the same time the lieutenant repeats it. The lieutenant slaps at the door controls, taking the stormtroopers inside with him.


Bodhi’s already jumped behind the control station’s console, fingers flying across it quickly to bring up the right files. “Found him—they processed him here two weeks ago—he was in cell block Dorn until—"

Shit.

His heart sinks. I tried. I’m sorry. “We’re too late.” He pounds a fist against the console, despairing.

Luke’s leaning over the back of the console. “Bodhi, what is it?”

“Wedge is scheduled for termination. They’ve already put him on the hovertrain to the command post.” Bodhi looks up from the console at Luke, horrified. If I’d found out sooner— “They’re kilometers out already.”


“How?” He runs it down in his head— the pair of KX-5s, GA-60s double laser cannons, the R-T0—“The shuttle’s not packing anything that can get past a hovertrain’s armor.”

Luke’s face lights up like it had when he’d climbed out of his burning airspeeder, heedless of the flames. “But I am. And you don’t have to hit the train in order to stop it. Come on! There’s still a chance!”

Bodhi stares at him, wide-eyed.

(Jyn says, “—and the next, and the next—”)
“Okay. Okay!” He erases his tracks on the console hurriedly and darts after Luke. *I can do this.*

They run back out onto the landing pad, too exposed in the floodlights, but no one’s looking their way. Bodhi realizes, though, that the second they lift off again, there’ll be questions that can only be answered with a firefight; tries not to think about it, hurrying to get them in the air before the shield goes up again. Luke starting up a scan to find the hovertrain.

“Got it,” Luke says, running off the coordinates. “Go, Bodhi—let’s get ahead of it and take out the track.”

“Copy that,” Bodhi replies, and then they’re soaring up and out, a few belated streaks of emerald turbolaser fire chasing them into the night sky. “I think they know we left.”

“And they didn’t even pay me,” Luke says, feigning annoyance, and Bodhi laughs, dizzy with fear and adrenaline. *We’re coming.* “Look—I see it—” The hovertrain is a silvery shadow under the stars; Bodhi pushes more power to the engines and rapidly outpaces it, keeping one eye on the scanner to follow the track out in the direction of the command post.

Luke’s looking out at the terrain, checking it against Cadera’s scan and sensors. “Okay. Set down over behind that ridge; they won’t be able to see us, coming around that curve in the canyon. Timing’s gonna be important—don’t want to blow the track too early so they see it coming, but too late and we derail the train entirely—”


Luke nods back at him. “Yeah. Oh—I bet I can find him, now.” He closes his eyes, and Bodhi watches his face go still, barely visible in the dark. “Yeah. Wedge is definitely on that train. I’ll go in and get him. You stay with the shuttle, you might have to cover me.” Bodhi flinches, and Luke smiles apologetically at him. “I know, but—”


“Commander Skywalker, this is Rogue Two. You and Bodhi need a hand down there?”

“Your timing couldn’t be better, Zev,” Luke says. “We’re about to blow the hovertrain track, but we could use some cover to get me on the train. You’re off the hook, Bodhi. Ion cannons should take out their weapons and shields, give us a chance to get to Wedge.”

Bodhi, relieved, watches the train snaking up the canyon on the shuttle’s display, hands resting lightly on the controls. *Not yet—*

“You got it, boss,” Zev calls. “Waiting on your signal.”

*Not yet—*

“Oh, you’ll know when,” Luke says, grinning. “Keep an eye out for Imperial defenses, they know we’re out here messing around.”

The hovertrain starts to come out of the blind curve.

*Now—*

Bodhi lifts the *Cadera* up and over the ridge, spraying laser fire indiscriminately down onto the track and at the walls of the canyon, collapsing boulders into the train’s path. There’s some return fire as
soon as the train gets around the bend, mostly vaporizing rocks out of the way, but three X-wings drop down out of the sky with a barrage of ion pulses, and the defenses quickly shut down, the train itself decelerating rapidly before it can crash into the obstruction.

“Nice shooting, boys. Okay, my turn,” Luke says, clapping Bodhi on the shoulder as he sets the shuttle down again, within shouting distance of the last train car. “If reinforcements do show up—get out of here, let the Rogues take care of them.”

Bodhi’s eyes widen. “I’m not leaving here without you.”

“Hopefully you won’t have to,” Luke says, smiling. He unhooks his lightsaber from his belt and heads down the ramp, Bodhi trailing after him. “Shouldn’t be long.” He tosses off a salute in Bodhi’s direction and disappears into the darkness.

Bodhi wishes he’d thought of something encouraging to say, standing on the ramp and watching Luke ignite his lightsaber and slice through the rear hatch. Sparks sputter to life and die on the edges of the cut, and then he pulls the hatch open, jumping up into the train car. A few stray blaster bolts streak out the rear of the train, the only illumination in the night, and then everything goes dark again.

Bodhi holds his breath, praying.

A minute passes in relative silence; something chitters unnervingly out in the canyons, and Bodhi shivers. _Kessel’s native lifeforms include—he can’t remember what. Nothing friendly, probably._

Another minute. His hands curl into fists at his side. _I won’t leave without him._

There’s a flare of light coming back out of the train, and Bodhi’s heart leaps in relief as he can see a second figure by the light of Luke’s glow rod. He runs down the ramp to help Luke get Wedge into the shuttle; their friend is far too thin for having been imprisoned for only two weeks, and there’s yellowing bruises on his face, but he’s alive, _he’s alive._

_We did it._

“It’s just the two of you?” Wedge asks, disbelievingly, slumping in the jump seat as Bodhi carefully straps him in.

“Us and a handful of Rogue Squadron,” Luke says, pointing skyward, just as there’s a familiar roar of TIEs in atmosphere, followed by the sound of an X-wing spitting laser fire, red and green flashing off the viewport— “Guess the Imperials figured out where we went. Time to go.”

Wedge grabs frantically for Luke’s arm and misses, falling back against his chair. “Luke, we _can’t_ leave.” Bodhi twitches in dismay, hearing his own thoughts on— _on Scarif—Corellia_—echoed back to him.

“Sure we can. We’re outside the shield.” Luke pats his shoulder gently.

“No,” Bodhi says, his voice trembling as he understands both his foolishness in thinking they could just pull Wedge out and run, and the fullness of what he’s committed them to, because— _I can never just leave._ “There’s more of our people in there.”

“My cell block’s all Rebels. Don’t know how many more in the whole prison.” Wedge says, wearily. “Luke—they’ll be killed.”

Luke’s eyes are wide. He glances between them and exhales slowly. “They won’t all fit in the
shuttle.”

Bodhi sags in relief. “Were there pilots in with you?”

“Yeah. Good ones.” Wedge’s voice is starting to fade. He’s paler than before, but his eyes are still open, at least, fixed on them; he shakes his head at their worried faces. “I’ll be all right, but you’ll have to do it without me.”

“Ohay,” Luke nods, dropping into the co-pilot’s seat and strapping in. “Hold on, Wedge. We’ll get back in past the shield, break our people out—

Bodhi adds, “Steal a transport ship—”

“Okay, you make it sound complicated,” Luke says, lightly. “And then we’ll run back home so High Command can write me up for recklessness and insubordination.” He sounds oddly excited at the prospect of it.

“You’d have to have been insubordinate to someone who actually outranked you,” Bodhi points out, bemused at his enthusiasm for the idea. Too much time hanging around Solo, probably—“How are we going to get back through the shield?”

Luke’s eyes light up, but he reaches over and squeezes Bodhi’s hand in preemptive apology. “You’re not going to like this.”

*****

Bodhi hates it.

Fortresses have the hardest defenses to bring down, and the most firepower, and going up against one is almost certain death. His hands are slippery on the Cadera’s controls as he waits, listening to Rogue Squadron calling back and forth. Wedge has his head tilted back against his chair, eyes closed, grimacing at his squadron’s near-misses. Luke is craning up over the console to try to watch out the viewport; it’s still too dark to make out much, but laserfire is far too identifiable.

Rogue Squadron’s taken point, hammering away at the closest fortress to Detention Center Aurek with everything they’ve got, darting out of range of return fire like zess flies. A few more X-wings jump in from hyperspace and immediately drop down to help, chasing TIEs over the darkened landscape, away from where the Cadera is hidden in the canyon.

“Here they come,” Luke murmurs, strapping back in, looking at the three dots converging on the fortress on the shuttle’s display. “Get ready—”

The shield around the detention center drops, and Bodhi soars out of the canyon, wings still up in landing position, and sends the Cadera diving past the fortress, narrowly dodging the stream of particle bolts as someone tries to track the newcomer. Swerves past the trio of AT-ST walkers sent from the detention center to assist the fight; cuts the engines almost a second too late, bringing them skidding to a halt at the edge of the landing pad they’d just left.

Luke whoops in triumph. “Blast, you can really fly—” He collides with Bodhi as they get up at the same time. Bodhi’s gaze drops to Luke’s hand on his chest, and the thought flashes through his head, almost too quickly for words, okay—I don’t mind, not at all—Luke is grinning at him, dropping his hand, squeezing past to help Wedge change seats.

“You’ll be all right by yourself?” Bodhi asks Wedge, unconsciously putting his own hand where Luke’s had been, over his heart.
“If you rebuilt everything to specs,” Wedge says, toggling all the shuttle’s weapons active and looking up at him expectantly.

“Better,” Bodhi promises.

“Hmm.” Wedge smiles faintly; it’s a good sign, though Bodhi still doesn’t like how shaky he is.

“We’ll be right back,” Luke says, pressing his blaster into Wedge’s hands, and they exchange a solemn, knowing glance. Bodhi looks away unhappily.

In the walkway, they don’t meet any Imperial defenses immediately; Bodhi figures they must be scrambling to respond to Rogue Squadron’s attack, still and haven’t decided what to do about their shuttle. He taps back into the control station’s console and pulls up a map of the center.

“Cell block Dorn,” Luke reminds him, his fingers skimming along the hilt of his lightsaber.

“I found it,” Bodhi says, his heart pounding, adrenaline flooding the back of his mouth. “Let’s go.”

Luke slaps the door controls; no one’s waiting behind it to ambush them, thankfully, but Bodhi thinks that maybe Luke already knew that. “Stay behind me and tell me where to go.”

“It’s not far.” Bodhi directs him down the right corridors, and into the cell block’s antechamber and halts—the lieutenant from before is there, behind the console, calling out on prison-wide comms for backup—he snatches up a blaster and starts firing. Bodhi ducks back out into the corridor, flattening himself against the wall next to the door, but none of the half a dozen wild shots off make it out past him, because Luke deflects every bolt, lightsaber flashing.

“Don’t kill him,” Bodhi says, softly, sidling cautiously into the antechamber. The lieutenant has his hands up, though the blaster’s still in his hand. Luke circles the console, a beautiful menace, lightsaber blade humming. “We can use his access codes—”

The lieutenant aims his blaster at the console and fires two shots into it before Luke can get to him. Then he drops the blaster on the floor, smug. “My access codes are useless.”

Luke tilts his head, exasperated. “Oh, come on, now what are we supposed to do with you?”

“I’m not afraid to die for the Empire,” the lieutenant says, raising his chin. “I’m not like him.” He’s looking at Bodhi contemptuously.

Luke’s eyes glitter with fury. He swings—

—Bodhi shouts “No—”

—and Luke closes down the blade halfway through his arc, bringing the hilt crashing down on the lieutenant’s head. He crumples.


“I wouldn’t kill an unarmed man,” Luke says, a little plaintively. “Even though he was trying to kill us.” He ignites his lightsaber again and slashes horizontally through the door to the cells; halfway through his cut the door irises open, and Bodhi looks out onto the open floor of the cell block. There are nine cells with people still in them, and they’re magnetically sealed, it’s going to take forever—starts to say to Luke, “Can you cut through—”

“Hey!” It’s a human woman, pressing up against the magnetic field, heedless of how it crackles and
pops at her touch. She doesn’t look nearly as bad off as Wedge, but she’s not well; Bodhi can see it in the sallowness of her face, the stiffness of her hands. “Don't just stand there, get us out!” Then her expression goes horrified—“Behind you—”

Luke spins, lightsaber igniting in his hand once more, and barely manages to block the first bolt of the fusillade; Bodhi’s heart sinks as he sees the detachment of stormtroopers arriving, spreading out into the antechamber and blocking their exit. But Luke simply strides forward to meet them, twirling his lightsaber into a different grip—“Bodhi, hurry,” he calls over his shoulder.

Bodhi bites his lip and hurries over to her cell, pulling Cassian's lockpicks from his jacket pocket. “Okay, okay—”

“You're doing this manually?!”

“Guard shot out the controls,” he replies, ruefully, starting to work the lock panel, willing his hands to stop shaking. Blaster fire flashes off of Luke’s lightsaber blade, throwing sparks and shadows everywhere. “What’s your name?”

“Toryn Farr,” she says. “Used to operate ground communications on Malastere until the Alliance lost it. You're Bodhi Rook, aren't you—what in blazes are you and Luke Skywalker doing here?”

“Isn't it obvious?” A bolt Luke missed sizzles past Bodhi's head. He ducks, and Toryn flinches back from the magnetic field.

“Maybe I should just stay in here until after he’s finished them off?” she offers.

Bodhi doesn't bother to reply to that—“Got it,” he says, triumphantly, and the field snaps off. “Can you help me with the others?” She nods; he hands her another pick and points at the cells across the block.

He turns to see Luke closing with his foes, cutting a swath of destruction through the stormtroopers, dealing death with his blue-white lightsaber—Bodhi claps his hand over his mouth so he won’t cry out at the shock of recognition. *The second vision was real—*

*No time for that*—Bodhi runs over to the next cell; it's easier now that he’s done one, and he breaks out a human man who reminds him, fleetingly, of Tonc. “Thanks!” the man says, and dashes across the cell block, sliding past Luke to snatch up a blaster from one of the fallen stormtroopers. He takes up a position behind the console to cover Luke's unprotected flank, and Bodhi is grateful.

He starts in on the third lock, releasing a green-skinned Duros, who grabs a blaster rifle off another dead stormtrooper and yells “Catch!” at Bodhi. He catches it awkwardly with both hands, blinking —“What am I supposed to—” *Oh*—points it at the lock and pulls the trigger, cringing at the recoil of the rifle and the panel spraying sparks back at his face.

After *that*, though, it's only a matter of minutes before the rest of the prisoners are freed, and, behind Bodhi, the stormtroopers’ blasters finally fall silent. There’s a clatter of plasteel armor hitting the floor.

For a moment, the only sound left is that of Luke’s humming lightsaber. Bodhi hands the last prisoner—a short, too-pale Mon Calamari woman—off to Toryn, who’s scrounged a proper medkit from somewhere, and comes over to Luke's side. He looks down at the stormtroopers toppled at their feet, their helmeted visages already and always fixed in the rictus of death.

“No wonder Yendor stopped hitting me when you showed up,” Bodhi mutters to him, attempting to sound light, and not stunned by the devastation Luke had unleashed. And then he sucks in an
astonished breath as the realization hits him, like a lightning bolt out of the clear blue sky: *this man, this incredible man would always have my back, if I let him—*

*If I want him—*

Luke huffs out a long exhalation and closes down his lightsaber. He’s sweating, hands shaking a little as adrenaline from the fight wears off. “Are you all right? I tried to make sure nothing got past me.” He nods his thanks at the human and Duros who had covered him.

“I’m—we’re all okay,” Bodhi says, putting aside his bewildering feelings, looking around at the nine prisoners. “Let’s go get the rest.”

Toryn blinks at him. “Is it just you two?”

“Well, some of the Rogues are here, too, but they’re tied up at the moment,” Luke tells her. “Think you’re going to be able to help?”

“Yes, sir,” Toryn snaps out, drawing herself up, and Bodhi recognizes the career soldier in her, the same instinct to *serve*, to *fight*, as in Cassian. Then she hesitates. “D’you—d’you know what happened to Antilles? He was in here with us—”

Luke beams at her. “We found him. He’s waiting on our shuttle.”

“Oh, thank the Force,” Toryn breathes. “Damn Imperials beat him pretty badly. Being a Rebel’s one thing, but a *defector*—you got here just in time.”

Bodhi winces. “You don’t know the half of it.”

“This reunion’s great ‘n all, but we gotta get out of here,” the Duros says. “You said there’s a shuttle?”

“We’ve got to get the rest of the prisoners out,” Luke says. He looks the escapees over, turning back to Toryn. “Officer—”

“Toryn Farr,” she says.

“Can you take whoever’s able with you and Bodhi to get our people? I’m going to go take the shield generator down.”

Bodhi looks at him, alarmed. “By yourself?”

The whole building shakes with the force of an explosion, the lights flickering overhead. Luke shrugs. “Okay, I guess I don’t have to, anymore. Toryn, and you two—you’re with us—the rest of you, get to the landing pad, keep our exit clear.”

Clearing the rest of the detention center goes faster with five; the human—Roja—has no compunctions about wiping out anyone or anything standing in their way, and Bodhi is only too happy to have Toryn helping him at the consoles to unlock the remaining cells. His hands won’t stop shaking, even when Luke notices and pulls him aside for a moment to calm down, murmuring, *it’s all right, it’s all right* over and over.

Fifty-odd escapees and too many dead stormtroopers to count later, the five of them retreat back to the landing pad, Bodhi trying to scan down a docking manifest to pick out a ship.

“I don’t think you’re going to need that,” Luke says, as they run out onto the landing pad, where
their escapees are being escorted onto—

—a Rebel transport ship docked next to Bodhi’s shuttle.

Bodhi’s mouth falls open. Toryn laughs. “Here comes the cavalry,” she says, and swings around, grabbing first Bodhi and then Luke, in a hug. “Thanks. I don’t know how you did it, but thanks.” She breaks into a run, Roja and the Duros going after her.

“Look who came,” Luke says, and Bodhi turns to look towards the Cadera—Cassian, Jyn, and Kaytoo are silhouetted at the end of the ramp.

*Oh, they’re going to be pissed—*

But Cassian hugs him fiercely, and Jyn says, “Couldn’t very well let you go rogue again all by yourself,” tilting her head and grinning at Bodhi. “And honestly, Bodhi, if you’re going to plan a prison break, *I’m* the one to talk to, not the sweet farm boy who’s never even seen the inside of a drunk tank.”

Kaytoo says, sounding put out, “I helped break you out of the Wobani labor camp. Bodhi, the chances of you succeeding without our help—”

“Okay. *We’re* the ones to talk to about a prison break,” Jyn interrupts him. Cassian is rubbing the bridge of his nose helplessly, shaking his head.

“Hey, I think we did pretty well,” Luke says, gesturing to the escapees going onto the transport. “For a farm boy and—and—a pilot.”

“They’re going to have to give you another medal for this,” Cassian mutters to Bodhi, who blinks, startled. *I didn’t*—

Then Cassian says, louder, “If you’re up for it, Luke, we’ll head for the command post on General Madine’s signal. He’s got two other assault teams hitting the detention centers right now, we’ll converge once the rest of the prisoners are freed.”

“Great,” Luke says. He peers past them up into the shuttle. “Is Wedge—?”

“He blew the shield generator to pieces so we could land,” Jyn tells him. “We put him on the transport first thing so the med team could check him out.” Her gaze lands on Bodhi, who’s started to sway on his feet as the adrenaline bleeds off— “Are you all right? Should I get someone to check you out?”

“I’m okay, I’m okay,” Bodhi says. “It’s—I—we need to go, right?”

“Yeah,” Jyn says, still eyeing him with concern. “You okay to fly us to the command post in a minute?”

He can’t help but smile at her, delighted at the idea. “Come see what the Cadera can do.”

*****

With the full force of General Madine’s ground troops plus Rogue Squadron, the battle for the command post is over within the hour. Bodhi emerges from the Cadera, where he and Toryn had been monitoring—and jamming—Imperial transmissions, and runs out to meet Chirrut and Baze bringing up the rear of their squadron of ground troops. The wreckage of AT-ST walkers smolders at the outskirts of the post; there are dead stormtroopers *everywhere*, but to his immense relief, almost
no fallen Rebels lie among them.

“It’s done,” Baze says, as they walk up to Bodhi. “Kessel is ours. Not that anyone really wants it, but —” he shrugs. “Maybe I should’ve invested in the spice market. Prices are going to go up.”

Chirrut says, ignoring Baze’s highly illegal speculation, “Jyn said you named your ship Cadera? Like the Catacombs of Cadera where we met?”

Bodhi nods jerkily. He hadn’t quite thought that part through, picking the name, but it makes sense. Where we all met. Where I defected. Where—but there’s no point in dwelling on that last, not when he’s standing here with the people who had saved him. “Yeah. For—for Jedha’s dead.”

Chirrut smiles. “I like that. We are angry spirits—”

“Don’t get poetic,” Baze mutters. “It always ends badly.”

Bodhi turns away from their familiar, fond bickering, as the rest of his friends—and Luke—arrive from different parts of the command post. Jyn’s got a bacta patch on her side where her shirt’s scorched away, and Cassian’s limping, leaning on Kaytoo’s arm, but they’re alive—they’re all alive.

Luke, of course, is utterly fine, if a bit mussed. He’s chattering away to them about something that makes Cassian smile. From the way Jyn is looking at Bodhi, the corners of her eyes crinkling, he suspects the subject is himself, but—for a wonder—he doesn’t mind, not really. Luke breaks off, though, as they approach, and greets Chirrut, “Master Îmwe. Hi, Baze.”

Baze claps Luke on the shoulder, making him stagger, as Chirrut says to Bodhi, reproachfully, “You never call me 老師.

“I—what?” Bodhi stammers. “You never said I had to—” Jyn suppresses a laugh, then winces as that pulls at her injury. Cassian moves to support her, his hands familiar and intimate on her skin; Kaytoo mutters something about just picking them both up and carrying them back to the ship if they’re just going to keep trying to walk it off.

“Ignore him,” Baze says, rolling his eyes.

“Luke is being respectful,” Chirrut says, pointedly. “You could learn some things from him.”

Bodhi rubs his face with a hand, looking to Baze for support. But the Guardian just shrugs at him, not unsympathetically. “Since we won, and we’re all here and not dead, can we please go home now?”

“Yes,” Cassian says. “I’ll even make it an order, not that any of you ever listen to me.” Jyn kisses him on the cheek, unrepentant.

“I listen to you,” Kaytoo says. “And then I ignore your directives if they do not make sense.”

Luke grins at them, turning to go into the Cadera. “Captain Andor, I’m pretty sure I outrank you.” Cassian raises his eyebrows at Luke, and he has the grace to look a little abashed. “Sorry. Are you all flying back with us?” He pushes his hair out of his eyes. “We’ve got room enough.”

Baze says, gazing off at nothing, “我們應該讓他們一起回家.”

Bodhi doesn’t quite pick up all of it, but from what he understood—his face heats. He glares at Baze, as a slow smirk spreads across Chirrut’s face and Jyn tries, again, to keep from laughing. “C’mon, Cassian, Kaytoo, we’ll ride back on the transport too. No rush getting home, Bodhi, it’ll give us a
chance to head Draven off.”

Luke is looking back and forth between all of them, puzzled, but he nods a farewell and heads towards the Cadera. Baze gives Bodhi a wave as he leads Chirrut off towards the waiting transport ship, the others following a step behind. And as they walk away, Bodhi hears Kaytoo say, “Oh, I understand now. Cassian, is this what you were trying to explain to me? You could’ve just said—”

“Bodhi?” Luke calls, from the bottom of the ramp.

“Yeah, I’m coming,” Bodhi replies, and goes up into the Cadera after him. He slaps the ramp controls, running a hand through his hair, leaning up against the bulkhead and shaking in disbelief, as the enormity of what they’d done hits him. A prison break and an all-out assault on an Imperial world—one I didn’t have to fight.

“I—we—what in blazes was I thinking—”

“Hey,” Luke says, turning back from the cockpit, touching his arm. “I was right to trust you. They all were. We got Wedge back.” He’s smiling, like always, and Bodhi’s heart starts to beat faster at the way Luke’s looking back at him.

Okay. Okay. I can handle this. I want—

But he can’t bring himself to say it, stammering, “I couldn’t have done any of it without you—”

Luke shakes his head, gazing at Bodhi earnestly. “All it took was you.”

He’s so gloriously bright Bodhi can’t stand it anymore—he closes the distance to Luke in a single step, and kisses him.

Chapter End Notes

Thanks to meledea for taking a look at this update when it was in progress!

(HOLY CRAP YOU GUYS, THIS IS NOW OVER 50k WORDS AND 900 KUDOS. I LOVE YOU ALL VERY VERY VERY MUCH. Thanks so much for waiting patiently these past few days! I hope this, uh, was worth the wait. XD)

Translations:
老師: teacher
我們應該讓他們一起回家: We should let them go home together.
Chapter 22

Chapter Summary

What you get for going rogue.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Luke makes a soft, desperate sound against Bodhi’s mouth.

He curls one hand around the back of Bodhi’s neck, up into his hair, to pull Bodhi in harder, like a drowning man dragging his rescuer into the depths. Bodhi surrenders willingly, his heart pounding, tracing Luke’s lower lip with his tongue; he tastes salt—and, he thinks, deliriously, sunlight. He clutches at Luke’s shirt, just above his hip; can’t help but gasp when Luke pushes back, lightsaber jamming up against his thigh.

“Wait,” Luke murmurs, breaking away reluctantly and breathing hard. He doesn’t let go, though, not yet, resting his forehead against Bodhi’s. “We should get off this rock, before—before—”

“Before the Empire sends someone to find out why the place went quiet?” Bodhi offers.

“I was thinking more like, before I shove you up against the bulkhead and kiss you until you can’t—” Luke cuts himself off, the corner of his mouth twitching upwards. “Yeah. Before any more Imperials show up.”

Bodhi releases his grip on Luke’s shirt, unenthusiastically, and smiles a little. “Probably a good idea to head home before our side decides they need to send more people after us, too.” He turns and heads up into the cockpit, abruptly conscious of Luke’s presence at his back in a way he’s never been before. And while they prepare for launch, Bodhi’s hyper-aware that Luke is watching him, lips slightly parted, and he has to really focus to finish the prep.

But then they take off, the Cadera’s wings folded down properly for flight, Bodhi marveling again at the sensation of his ship humming to life around him. They soar over Kessel’s empty landscape, the morning light burnishing the surface, finally lending the terrain something like beauty.

It almost looks like Jedha.

Bodhi frowns at that thought, and points them towards the stars. The navicomputer finishes working out the calculations for hyperspace, and Luke pulls back on the lever almost before it finishes beeping the alert. The stars turn to streaks, and then to the swirling vortex, and Luke says, softly, “Where were we?”

Bodhi licks his lips unconsciously, and Luke, his eyes amused, shoves out of his seat, squeezing into the narrow space between Bodhi’s knees and the console.

“You’d tell me if this isn’t what you want, right?” Luke asks, resting his hands lightly on the sides of Bodhi’s face and skimming a thumb along the line of his beard.

“I kissed you,” Bodhi points out, letting his eyelids slip partway closed. He tilts his head back and
gazes up at Luke through his eyelashes. “You're the Jedi. What do you think what I want?” It comes out more of a challenge than he’d intended. His heart is drumming an eager rhythm he hasn't felt for a long time. *I want—*

Luke pauses, closing his eyes, his face going still like when he’d tried to find Wedge. He stays true to his word, though; Bodhi doesn’t feel anything in his head besides his own hopeful longing for closeness, for certainty. Then Luke smiles, almost mischievously, and leans down to kiss Bodhi, much more *thoroughly* than he would've expected from—what had Jyn called him? *A sweet farm boy.*

Bodhi pulls at him, seeking more contact, and Luke shifts, off-balance, putting a knee up on Bodhi’s chair, and one hand on the back of the seat to brace himself. Luke’s nearly in Bodhi’s lap, warm and excitable, and he never stops kissing Bodhi’s mouth, his neck, hand slipping down under his shirt to stroke the line of his collarbone, thumb rubbing into the divot.

*Oh, my ever loving stars, what did I get myself into with this man—*Luke’s thrown away every last bit of restraint and is clinging to Bodhi like a mynock, tongue in his mouth, hand tangling into his hair. Bodhi slides his own hands up under Luke’s shirt, along his sides, cautiously exploring, and Luke makes a muffled noise of surprise into Bodhi’s mouth, muscles twitching across his stomach. He pulls back, panting, his eyes half-lidded and his mouth gone red, and Bodhi smiles up at him, delighted. “You’re ticklish.”

Luke denies it, lying, “You surprised me, that’s all—” and Bodhi runs his fingers, very lightly, down the line of Luke’s ribs, making him gasp and squirm—*oh, yes—*

“Probably not a good idea to tickle a Jedi—” Luke grabs Bodhi’s hand, looking into his eyes, and Bodhi’s breath catches at the intensity of Luke’s gaze.

“Yeah?” Bodhi gets up out of his chair, catching Luke off-guard and pinning him back against the console, wedging his knee between Luke’s legs. He lowers his head, kissing Luke along the edge of his jawline. “What else isn’t a good idea to do to a Jedi?”

“Making one fall in love with you,” Luke murmurs, utterly sincere, and Bodhi jerks backwards in shock. The backs of his knees hit the edge of his seat and he falls into it, Luke gazing at him in confusion. He brushes the back of his hand over his mouth, shakily. *Okay, too much, too fast—*

Luke’s eyes are very wide, and very, very blue. “Oh—*blast,* Bodhi. I didn’t mean to—” He comes around to the side of the chair and kneels, carefully not touching Bodhi again, but putting his hands on the armrest, close.

“It’s all right,” Bodhi manages. “It’s just—me. I got a little overwhelmed.” He tries to smile, make it seem less like he’s afraid. *Of what?* “You’re—full throttle ahead, and I’m—I’m just starting my engines.”


“Deal,” Bodhi says. Luke smiles, the barest curve of his mouth, and Bodhi hesitates for only a moment, thinking, *But what if I can’t?* before leaning over his armrest to kiss him again, more gently.

*I can try.*

*****

And then they’re back at Thila Base.
Bodhi almost doesn’t want to take the *Cadera* in to dock; he imagines the stern reception waiting for him from the generals, the speculative teasing from his friends.

Luke, seeing his face—or sensing his feelings—reaches over and grabs his hand. “I’ll make sure you have nothing to worry about from the generals, all right? We saved Wedge, and hundreds of other people. Madine was there, he’ll stick up for you.”

But it’s not the generals who are waiting in the hangar. The only person standing at the foot of the ramp, arms folded, glaring daggers at them, is *Leia*.

Bodhi takes a step back towards the *Cadera*, quailing. He’s seen her quarrel with Solo, hold her own against generals, and he has absolutely no interest whatsoever in finding out what her anger looks like when it’s directed at him. But Luke has taken ahold of his hand again, and he can’t run from it—

“Whose laser-brained idea was it to go screaming off on an unauthorized rescue mission for someone we all thought was dead and gone, on the basis of the *smallest* possible scrap of intelligence from an untrustworthy smuggler?”

Bodhi gapes at her. “Your Highness—”

She doesn’t let him get any further than that. “Oh, that’s right. It was *yours*.” Her eyes narrow at him. “Because that’s how to pull off something that normally requires *months* of advance recon and planning. Just jump in your ship and fly away with barely a word to anyone else who cares about you. Cassian was beside himself with worry until they got in the air.” Bodhi winces guiltily.


“And you.” She whirls on him, and Bodhi is a little gratified when Luke actually backs away from her pointing finger, letting go of Bodhi so he can put his hands up in front of himself defensively. “You dragged my name into the whole mess. Do you have any idea what I had to promise in order to get Rieekan to release the rest of Rogue Squadron to come after you? To get Madine to scramble the ground troops?”

Bodhi’s eyes widen. *Maybe Madine wouldn’t stick up for me as much as Luke thought.* And to have pissed off Rieekan—*shit, shit, shit. He’s not going to let me fly—*

Luke shakes his head, tries futilely again to interrupt. “Leia—”

“I *promised* you’d both stay the hell out of anything resembling a mission where you’d have to follow *orders*. For a month. Because right now, who knows if either of you can be trusted to follow anything except your own *fucking instincts*.” She stops and takes a deep breath, regaining something like her usual composure, though her eyes still blaze at Luke. “Now, what did you want to say to me?”

“I’m sorry,” Bodhi blurts out, horrified, before Luke can get a word out. “I’m sorry—I had to do it. Wedge would’ve died.”

Leia’s face, when she looks at him, is impossible to read. “I probably should have expected nothing less from you,” she says. “Can’t leave anyone behind, is that right?”

“No, ma’am,” Bodhi says, softly.

“That’s going to get you killed someday,” Leia snaps out.

“*Leia.*” Luke matches the cold fury in her voice.
She relents. “Fine. It was a very brave, if extraordinarily reckless thing you did,” she says, to both of them. “Wedge, and a lot of our people, owe you their lives.” Leia crosses her arms again, raising her eyebrows at Luke. “But don’t you ever drag me into another one of your ridiculous rescue attempts again.”


Leia huffs a sardonic laugh. “I’m done with you. Draven wants a shot at Bodhi next.”


“I don’t know what he wants. He wouldn’t say.” Leia smiles tightly. “I told him to go easy on you, or he’d answer to me.”

It’s the barest of assurances. Bodhi licks his dry lips. “Now?”

“I wouldn’t put him off,” Leia says, warningly. “Better to get through the gauntlet quickly, I think.”


Luke’s brow furrows, “Leia, this is—”


“It’ll be all right,” he says to Bodhi. “I promise. Whatever Draven does—I’ll find a way to make it right.”

Bodhi can only nod, his heart in his throat, and walks off in the direction of the Intelligence offices. Behind him, he hears Leia starting to ask Luke something about him, but ignores it, trying to think about taking apart a shield generator and putting it back together, not letting himself fall into fear. I already know what Draven’s going to say: I’m not fit for duty. It’ll be over quickly, and then—

He doesn’t know what comes after that.

But Wedge is alive.

I got that right, at least.

Draven is leaning on the edge of his desk in his office, but he’s not alone; Cassian and Jyn are seated in the chairs in front of him. Jyn’s still got a bandage wrapped around her waist, and Cassian is keeping one leg stretched out before him somewhat stiffly, but they’re both freshly scrubbed. And, to Bodhi’s bewilderment, Cassian is even smiling.

He doesn’t have a clue as to what he’s walked into, doesn’t know what to focus on except his friends’ faces. Jyn looks tired, but pleased about something.

“You determined that Antilles was still alive from one line of an intelligence report,” Draven says, by way of greeting, sounding stern but not angry, and Bodhi draws himself up to attention.

“Yes, sir,” Bodhi says, hoping he sounds more confident than he feels.

“And in the course of breaking Antilles and dozens of our people out of Kessel’s prison, you broke past Imperial security. Repeatedly.”

“I had Commander Skywalker to help with that,” Bodhi tries to explain.
Draven frowns curiously at him. “I spoke with Toryn Farr. Luke's a good commander, a good soldier, if a bit reckless with his own life, but he wasn't the one doing the slicing.”

“I don't understand, sir,” Bodhi says, hesitantly. “Are you—debriefing me? I don't report to you—”

Jyn shakes her head, the tiniest of gestures, and she reaches over the back of her chair to pat his hand.

“I was wrong to call you a coward,” Draven says, abruptly. “What you did—don't get me wrong, it was foolishness itself, on the face of it—but I was wrong about you.” Bodhi blinks at him; it's as close to an apology as the man can probably get. I really don't understand what's happening—

Draven stops leaning on his desk and straightens up. “Cassian and Jyn had a long conversation with me before you got back. Rieekan wants to ground you again—” Bodhi can't stop himself from flinching, but Draven continues, “Your friends convinced me there might be something Intelligence might use you for, instead.”

“You and Luke,” Jyn says, and she smiles up at him. “Since Rieekan's pretty furious with him at the moment, too.” Bodhi wonders just how much of a head start she and Cassian had, in order to plan; how many conversations he's never been a part of, and feels a rush of guilt, and gratitude, that they've spent all this time trying to help him.

Draven says, “You understand the Empire's capabilities inside and out. Their scanning technology, their patterns and maneuvers, how they'll go about looking for us after your little stunt on Kessel.” He folds his arms and looks searchingly at Bodhi. “We need a new base. Some place well hidden from all of that.”

Bodhi is completely at a loss. “Sir—”

“You'd still be able to fly,” Cassian offers.

“I—I'd be working for Intelligence? For you?”

Draven crosses the room to him, and Bodhi is so thrown by the turn of events that he's still not entirely sure the general's not going to take a swing at him, noticing something in the man's closed fist. “For the Rebellion,” Draven corrects him.

Bodhi breathes out. This is my part of the fight. “Yes,” he says. “Thank you. I'll do it.”

Draven nods, his usually solemn, severe face lighting up with a smile. His hand comes up, and Bodhi catches the glint of metal in it, uncertain. Then he pulls himself up even straighter as Draven pins the rank badge to his flight jacket, gaping at Cassian and Jyn, who are both openly grinning.

“All right, then, Lieutenant,” Draven says, stepping back. “Go find us a new home.”

Chapter End Notes

I might cross the 1k kudos mark in the next couple of days today. That BLOWS MY FRICKING MIND. As I said on Tumblr, some weeks back, this is the first time I've ever had this much of a response to a fic in pretty much my entire fannish existence. I am incredibly thankful for everyone who's out there reading, rereading, binge-reading, staying up way too late reading, however you're doing it.
“Are you going to come with me?” Bodhi asks, later, curled up on Cassian and Jyn’s bunk, looking at the suggested parameters for the new base on Draven's datapad. He’s been up for at least forty hours now, well past the point of exhaustion, but he doesn't want to go back to his quarters alone—he’s not entirely sure why, but there’s something about the idea of his empty bed that is profoundly unappealing. And he's fallen asleep here now and again, since Chorax, usually waking to find Jyn watching over him and Cassian protectively.

“I don’t see why we couldn’t.” Jyn says, tasting a red-orange sauce off of Cassian’s proffered spoon. They’re making dinner on their tiny camp stove, bumping hips, elbowing past each other in an affectionate little dance. Cassian’s proven to be an astonishingly good cook; his favorite spices are a bit different than the ones Bodhi grew up with, but their sporadic dinners together have been immeasurably better than yet another ration bar. “Hm. Could be hotter, Cass,” Jyn says, and then, to Bodhi, “It’d be like a vacation.”

Cassian raises his eyebrows, wiping the spoon off with a dishtowel before dropping it back into the pot. “A vacation?”

“Depends on the planet, I suppose.” she says, shrugging. “But it’d be nice to get away.”

“The Rebel Alliance doesn’t take vacations,” Cassian points out. “I don’t think you’ve ever gone on a vacation in your life. I certainly haven’t.” He looks over at Bodhi. “Have you?”

Bodhi shakes his head. “Hard to 'get away’ when you’re under Imperial occupation.” He glances down at the datapad, surprised he’s not more distressed at the thought of Jedha, but then, he’s pretty tired. “Nothing on here about scenic beachfronts or mountain views, but I’m sure I could find something that fits the bill.”

“A beachfront that’s not on fire and filled with Imperials trying to kill us sounds quite lovely,” Jyn says. “I could do with some sunshine. Enough crawling around in these catacombs.”

Bodhi pulls up a map of the Outer Rim and sends it to project as a holo off their console. “Plenty of uncharted systems. I bet I could find us a nice world with an ocean or two.”

Cassian’s holding the spoon up to Jyn again, one arm snaking around her uninjured side. “How’s it taste now?”

“Just like you made it last time.” She smiles up at him. “I don’t know why you don’t just have Kaytoo make it. He’d do it very precisely, exactly the same every time.”

“It’s not about precise,” Cassian says, sounding put out. “It’s about heart.” He goes back to stirring.
“Oh, speaking of.” Jyn looks through the holo at Bodhi, that familiar teasing expression on her face again. “I thought, since you’ve spent so much time together already, I’d invite Luke over to join us for dinner tonight.”

Bodhi groans. “Of course you did. Jyn, what if—what if nothing had happened on our way home? What if we’d just sat there in silence the whole time? Did that ever occur to you?”

“Then we’d just be having a nice dinner together with friends,” Jyn says, amused, but Cassian’s staring very keenly at him.

“Something happened.” There’s the smallest of amused smirks starting to form under his mustache.

“Um—” Bodhi tracks back over his words; can’t bluff his way out, not with them looking very knowingly at him. “Ah, shit.” He tucks his feet further up under him on the bunk. “Well, this is plenty awkward.”

“No, no, this is a good thing, right?” Cassian asks. “You’re—happy?”

Bodhi licks his lips and smiles, briefly. “As far as it goes, anyway,” he replies.

“Well, it’s about damn time,” Jyn says, and flashes a grin. “Was it you who made the first move?”

Bodhi rubs the back of his neck, his face warming. “Yes?”

“Ha. Wedge owes me a hundred credits when they let him out of the medcenter.”

Cassian’s shaking his head, “You really shouldn’t collect on that, Jyn, the man was in no shape to be betting on anything. His judgement was impaired.” He waves them to the table. “Come eat. Where is Luke, anyway?”

The door chimes, and Luke pokes his head in. “Am I too late?”

“Not at all,” Cassian says. “Come in.”

Luke looks as wiped as Bodhi feels, dropping wearily into the empty chair, but it doesn’t dim his eyes any. “Sorry, I got held up by Han wanting to know—” His gaze alights on the new insignia on Bodhi’s jacket. “Hey! Rieekan didn’t mention that. And from Draven, no less?”

“Yeah,” Bodhi replies. “I—I never expected—well, it was really Cassian and Jyn that talked him into it—”

Cassian sounds remorseful. “It should’ve happened a long time ago.”

Luke leans over towards Bodhi—hesitates, with a curious glance at Cassian and Jyn. “Oh, go on and kiss him, if he’ll let you,” Jyn says, smirking. “We’ve been in your corner for ages.”

He blushes, and swiftly kisses Bodhi on the cheek. “Congratulations, Lieutenant.”

“Thank you,” Bodhi murmurs, smiling at him, barely aware that Cassian and Jyn are outright
grinning again.

“Rieekan told me—after he was done yelling, anyway—what we’re being sent to do,” Luke says, brushing his knee up against Bodhi’s leg under the table. “That what you were looking at?” He nods at the holo map of the Outer Rim.

“I want someplace warm with a beach,” Jyn says, around a mouthful. “Didn't exactly get to enjoy the last one. What about you, Luke? What's your pick?”

“I've had enough of sand to last me a lifetime,” Luke says, ruefully. “Besides, I can't swim.” He looks at Bodhi over his fork. “Wait, can you?”

Bodhi takes a sip of water to cool his burning mouth. “This is really fucking good, Cassian,” he says, first, and Cassian grins at him happily. “Yeah. They made us learn how, at the Academy.”

“Really?”

“Yeah,” Bodhi says, again. “It wasn't just flight training and indoctrination. I mean, it was still a school. I picked up a few skills.”

“In all likelihood, you got the best education out of the four of us,” Cassian observes, ironic amusement tugging at his mouth.

Jyn snorts. “I guarantee it,” she says. “I got the basics, sure, but my schooling was more about how to hit a guy so he can't get up again.”

Bodhi looks at Cassian. “My teachers on Fest all died,” Cassian says with a resigned shrug. “Didn't much think about it after that, picked up what I could from the Rebellion.”

Luke's fingers are curled tightly around his glass. “Leia mentioned something about establishing schools for refugees,” he says. “It was—over a year ago, I guess, when she was going out looking for Alderaanians. I don't know if she got it through the Council.”

“Oh, fuck the Council,” Jyn says, but without much heat. “They'd have had us surrender, before Scarif, you know? I was there. So was Bodhi.”

“But we changed their minds,” Bodhi points out. “Sort of? Mon Mothma sent troops after us to help.”

Cassian shrugs again. “We always had Mon Mothma. It was losing Alderaan, and Luke destroying the Death Star, that brought the rest of them on board.”

“We’re still gaining a few new systems every month,” Luke offers, ever the optimist. “Even offset by the retreat, we're stronger now than at Yavin.”

“New systems that need our help in a million different ways,” Cassian says, but he's not castigating them, looking instead at the Outer Rim holo. “Which we can't do if we’re discovered.”

“All right, so it's not going to be a vacation,” Jyn says, grudgingly. “I still want to get my feet wet at least once.”

*****

They spend the rest of dinner working out a flight plan that keeps them out of highly trafficked sectors. Luke observes that Solo would know which are favored by smugglers, and that reminds
Cassian to go through Karrde's data again, complicating the route. But eventually Bodhi’s satisfied with the path, which doesn't restrict them to too few hyperspace lanes, nor open them up to a higher chance of being found.

“Good night,” Jyn says, kissing Bodhi on the cheek, but holding onto his arm as he’s about to leave, keeping him back.

“Jyn—”

“Just wait,” she mutters. “You can thank me later.”

“We’re both exhausted,” Bodhi whispers back. “Nothing is going to happen.” She still smiles up impishly at him, as Luke says to Cassian, “Thanks for dinner. You know this means you're the cook on our trip out, though, right?”

Cassian grins. “Happy to do it if it means I don't have to see another ration bar for a while. Go on, Commander. We'll talk more in the morning.”

Luke claps Cassian on the shoulder, and joins Bodhi at the door. “Try and get some sleep,” Jyn says, smirking, and Bodhi turns to scowl at her, but the door’s already sliding closed in his face.

I'll just kiss him good night, and—

“I'll walk with you,” Luke offers, more brightly than is altogether fair, given that they've both been awake for more than a day and a half. He falls in step with Bodhi, who shrugs to himself. Yeah, all right. Let's see where this goes. “I forgot to ask, is Kaytoo coming along? If he comes, should I bring Artoo? He was pretty upset I left him behind today—yesterday—whatever—but I think between the two of them, we might go mad.”

“I didn't even think of Artoo,” Bodhi says, aghast. “Or Kaytoo. Patching into the prison’s systems would have been so much easier—”

“You did just as well,” Luke reassures him. “Look what it got you.” He smiles, and then—pauses, blinking. “Oh, here we are.” They're at Bodhi’s door, and Luke, for all his eagerness in the Cadera, goes shy, looking everywhere but at Bodhi's face.

“If—if you stay,” Bodhi says, hesitantly, “would it be all right if we just—you know, actually slept?”

“Yeah. Yeah, of course,” Luke murmurs, leaning up against the corridor wall, and Bodhi sees the strain in his face again. “I feel like I haven’t slept in a week.” Bodhi unlocks his door, feeling both a little relieved, and confused by it.

Inside, Luke sits next to Bodhi on the edge of his bunk, taking his boots off with a sigh. He puts his lightsaber on the table, with the tools and parts Bodhi hasn’t bothered to clean up over the past couple of months. Bodhi throws his flight jacket over the back of a chair, his own boots already kicked off by the door. He can’t help but smile, as the overhead light glints off of his rank badge, but—“Oh, the lights,” Bodhi says, wearily, not wanting to stand up again, falling back against his pillow. “Can you turn it off with the Force?”

Luke grins down at him. “Normally I’d give it a try, but I can’t really concentrate right now.” Still gazing into Bodhi’s eyes, he picks up a boot and lobs it at the light plate, missing by a dozen centimeters. “Damn.”

Bodhi huffs a laugh at him. “You made a million-to-one shot on the Death Star, but you can’t throw for shit?”
“I still have another boot left,” Luke points out. “And I wasn’t even looking—”

“Go on, then, Luke Skywalker, last-of-the-Jedi,” Bodhi says, rolling over, muffled into the pillow. “Impress me.”

Luke’s eyes are mischievous, and he leans down, coaxing Bodhi’s face up to meet his, and the moment their lips touch, he throws the other boot behind him.

The lights go off.

*****

—

(—please believe me)

—

[
“ —that’s why I have to go—”
]

—


“What?” Bodhi blinks muzzily at the chrono. It’s not even close to morning.

Luke is up on one elbow, and trembling—“You were screaming. In your head.”

“I was?” He rubs his eyes. “I don’t—I’m sorry—”

“You don’t remember?” Even in the dark, Bodhi can tell Luke’s frowning at him.

“I don’t remember,” he says. “It’s probably for the best. I can’t imagine my nightmares are anything but—” He shudders. “I woke you?”

“It’s all right,” Luke murmurs. “Go back to sleep.”

But Bodhi can’t relax, lying millimeters away from Luke’s side, staring at the dark ceiling, afraid of what else might be in his head that he didn’t know about. And eventually Luke turns over to face him, shadowy, and says, “Okay, if you’re awake I’m awake.”

“Sorry.” Bodhi mutters. “This is a fun test of your proximity to me.”

“I don’t mind the rest of it, let’s be clear,” Luke says, nudging Bodhi’s leg with his own. “But—you didn’t know you were having nightmares?”

“No. I guess I never thought about it.”

Luke hmms. “No one’s mentioned anything to you about what you do when you’re asleep?”

“How Cassian and Jyn never said anything,” Bodhi says, hesitantly. “But they probably have their own
nightmares.” Luke goes tense beside him. “Oh—I just sleep there sometimes, when I don’t want to be alone.”

Luke’s sneaking a hand over Bodhi’s chest possessively. “Well, you don’t cry out, or really move much. If I hadn’t heard you, I probably wouldn’t have noticed, either.”

“I’m going to keep you awake,” Bodhi murmurs unhappily, though he’s finally starting to relax again as the warmth of Luke’s hand seeps into his skin through his shirt.

“We’ll figure something out,” Luke promises. “And anyway, I’d rather be here next to you than—well, Threepio recharges in my room sometimes, and it’s creepy.”

Bodhi snickers into his pillow, sleepily. “Imagine Kaytoo doing it.”

“Now I’m really not going to be able to sleep,” Luke says, and presses his face into Bodhi’s hair, at his neck. “Is that why they moved into Jyn’s quarters?”

“Yeah,” Bodhi says, closing his eyes and putting his own hand on top of Luke’s, to keep it there. “No charging port.”

“I’ll have to remember that for when we evacuate,” Luke mumbles, and then Bodhi doesn’t hear anything else he says, because he’s asleep.

Chapter End Notes

Okay, so this is probably the closest I’m going to get to outright fluff, and even then...

Anyway. On to the next thing.

<3

(BTW, +1 to anyone who can guess what Cassian made for dinner, lolllllll.)
Chapter 24

Chapter Summary

I had multiple mission objectives.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The problem with uncharted worlds is twofold.

The first, of course, is simply finding them.

Luke gets frustrated after the third day of combing empty sectors and planet-less systems. “I usually feel like I'm going the right way,” he complains.

He’s stretched out across the jump seats, one arm draped across his face. To Bodhi, Luke looks nothing like the last of the Jedi, or the savior of the Rebellion, or even Commander of Rogue Squadron, and a lot more like—an Academy student stressed-out around exam time, with the datapad lying facedown on his chest, forgotten thermos of caf wedged between his hip and the seat.

It makes Bodhi’s heart ache, sort of; not that his own Academy days had been as simple as worrying about exams, of course, not when his home planet was occupied and he was just trying to get by. But there’s something about seeing Luke like this, imagining who he might’ve been in another life, free from the responsibilities of command, and war, and the Jedi; what he might’ve been like on Tatooine as an average boy—

No. Luke’s never been average. He's always wanted more.

Well, he certainly got it. And—he’s not afraid—

Luke goes on, oblivious to Bodhi’s reverie about him, “Out here, though, I haven’t felt anything. I don’t have the sense that I’m not supposed to be here, or that I am supposed to be here.”

“That must be terrible for you,” Kaytoo says, in the co-pilot’s seat, where he’s plugging in the calculations to take them away from another lonely star, and, oddly, Bodhi thinks he’s actually being sincere. “Living like a regular human.” Bodhi twitches in surprise, just barely, at the echo of his own thoughts.

Kaytoo turns his eyes on Bodhi. “How do you stand not being able to predict the future?”

“I can simulate some of it in my head too, you know, I understand the basics of causality,” Bodhi says, dryly. “But, um, I usually end up focusing on the worst that could happen, so I guess I don't really stand it all that well.” His baffling visions of Luke and destruction float, unbidden, to his mind, and he shivers.

“I don't predict the future,” Luke clarifies, his hand plucking at Bodhi’s elbow, since that’s all he can reach from his recumbent position, in an attempt to reassure him. “The Force usually just feels—like I know I'm doing the right thing. That I'll find where I'm supposed to be.”
“So you don't get lost?” Bodhi asks, as Kaytoo takes them into hyperspace; Luke hardly flinches at the jolt, even though he really should’ve strapped in properly like Cassian and Jyn are, in the hold, where they're working on something. “You'd always know where you left your speeder?”

“Huh. I hadn't thought about that. I mean, doesn't that seem small, using the Force to remember where I docked?” He's grinning out from under his arm at Bodhi.

“Human memories are unreliable,” Kaytoo offers. “Cassian has forgotten many details of missions that I am—”

“Not supposed to remind me of,” Cassian says, pointedly, walking up and leaning over the back of one of the jump seats. “You always want to specify exactly how much blood I lost, and no one needs that detail except a medical droid.” Bodhi winces, remembering how, after Scarif, Cassian had stayed twice as long as anyone else in the medcenter, even Chirrut.

“What did Draven say, before we jumped?” Luke asks, sitting up partway. “We don't have to take you back for something more important, do we?” Bodhi picks out a funny little hopeful note in his voice. Three days is a long time to spend with five in a shuttle, even if they’re all friends. And Luke’s been increasingly hard-pressed to keep his hands to himself over the last day or so: draping himself over the back of Bodhi’s chair to look at the scanner display; crowding him—carefully, eyes seeking confirmation with every step—up against a cargo container, all warm mouth and roaming hands, while Cassian and Jyn had slept, Kaytoo feigning ignorance up front as they zipped through hyperspace.

Cassian notices the change in Luke’s voice, too, and his dark eyes are crinkling with amusement in Bodhi’s direction as he says, “No, nothing to worry about. You two just keep us flying. We’ll get a chance to stretch our legs soon enough.”

“If we ever find a place to,” Luke mutters, and flops back down again.

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The second problem with uncharted worlds—once they’ve finally found one—is that they tend to be that way because they're unlivable, and no one gives a damn about a place where you’d be dead before you even got a chance to claim it.

About to break orbit over the second such hostile planet, Kaytoo observes, “I and the many other droids of the Rebellion would manage just fine here by ourselves, without you organics.”

“Acid rain,” Luke points out, from the back.

“Are you implying droids wouldn't be able to locate or construct even the most rudimentary shelter?” Bodhi says, “Of course not, but it’s got an acidic atmosphere, Kaytoo. Your plating would be gone by the time you hit the ground.”

“More time than you'd last,” Kaytoo says, and makes a disturbing sizzling sound.

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“I know you two grew up in the desert, but this is ridiculous,” Cassian says, staring at the barren little moon orbiting a blue-green gas giant. “No. Water is a prerequisite for life. And for a beach.”

Jyn’s eyes light up, and she leans over and plants a kiss on his cheek.
In a low orbit over an abandoned, mountainous planet dotted with fjords, Luke says, tentatively, leaning sideways across the console to look at the scans, very much in Bodhi’s space, “This seems okay—what in blazes is that?” He flings himself back into his chair as the leviathan comes lunging up from the water—“Bodhi, get us out of here!”

He nearly makes the engines scream, he banks away so fast, calling “Sorry!” back at Cassian and Jyn and Kaytoo, who stumble and swear at him. “I think I know why those settlements were empty,” Bodhi says, shaking, laughing with the adrenaline of it, once they’re clear of the atmosphere again. “That was way too many teeth.”

“Here be space dragons,” Luke agrees, and makes a note on the datapad.

A day later—

“Wake up,” Luke murmurs, his breath tickling Bodhi’s ear. Bodhi grumbles and pulls his flight jacket, which he’s been using as a pillow, over his face.

“I just got to sleep,” he protests, when Luke tugs his jacket free and it slithers to the floor.

“Naptime’s over,” Luke says, kissing Bodhi’s forehead. “I hit the jackpot at last. Six planets—okay, two are gas giants, but between ‘em there are twenty-two moons. Lots of places to scout.”

Bodhi yawns and rubs his eyes, swinging his legs down off the seats he’s been sprawled across.

“The other four are inhabitable?”

“More or less,” Luke shrugs, straightening back up to his feet. “It’s the Arbran system, we’d be off a couple major trade runs, good places to set up sensor beacons. I want to start on the second planet, it’s got plenty of cover. I think it might be a tricky landing, though, you should handle it. It’s your ship.” He smiles down at Bodhi.

“Okay,” Bodhi says, lacing his hands together and stretching, tilting his head back with a sigh—Luke’s instantly distracted, his gaze trailing down the line of Bodhi’s throat, and he puts his hand on the bulkhead, leaning in, waiting for an invitation—

Cassian calls back from the cockpit, impatiently, “I thought we were going to get down there—oh, sorry—”

Luke starts to straighten up again, but the shuttle jerks abruptly, and he staggers and falls into Bodhi’s lap. “Hey!” Luke sputters, and they both look forward to see Jyn at the controls.

“Hurry it up,” she says, with a laugh. “I don’t know how to fly this thing very well.” Kaytoo’s head whips around in her direction, alarmed.

Bodhi’s eyes go wide, too. “Jyn, wait—stop touching that—” He urges Luke out of his arms and dashes forward, standing over Jyn and fidgeting until she gets out of his seat. “If you were trying to help him along—don’t do it with my ship!” he hisses frantically at her. Cassian’s rolling his eyes, but laughing.

She’s grinning. “I had multiple mission objectives.”

“Conflicting mission objectives.” Bodhi takes them into a much more graceful approach vector to the
second planet. Landing is tricky; the world is densely forested, with only lakes and a few mountains to break the canopy. He folds the Cadera’s wings up and picks a spot just above treeline on one of the mountains, hoping it’s not too steep a walk down into the forest to have a look around.

“No large animals, nice climate—you picked a good one, Luke,” Cassian says, checking over Bodhi’s scans before they set out. “If we can find a way to take advantage of all this natural cover.”

Bodhi gazes skyward in wonder as he comes down off the ramp, rocks crunching underfoot. “I’ve never seen anything like this—some of these trees must be a kilometer or more high.” He reaches out to touch one, the bark crumbling a little under his hand; it smells like pine resin.

“If the whole forest is like this, maybe this isn’t where we should build a base,” Jyn observes, picking her way carefully down the talus slope. “It’d be a shame to have to cut down anything that tall.”

“I wonder why no one’s ever settled here,” Bodhi muses. “It’s a damn sight nicer than most of the planets I’ve ever been to.”

Luke’s face is taut with concentration. “Maybe because something’s not right here.” Bodhi shivers with sudden worry at that tentative pronouncement.

“What do you mean?” Cassian halts and puts a hand on Luke’s arm.

Luke shakes his head slowly, kicking a rock loose and watching it skitter down the mountainside, the disruption starting a small cascade of scree. “I can’t put my finger on it, but there’s something about this place—” He looks at them. “This whole planet feels—dark.”

“Like the—” Jyn hesitates for a second and offers, “The dark side of the Force?”


“Well, let’s see if there’s anything else around to warrant recommending against this place,” Cassian says, dubiously.

There isn’t. It’s pretty much perfect. In fact, after walking for another hour, the scanner even registers a huge subterranean cavern that would be ideal for building a base—if they could find a way to get into it.

“Anytime you want to use the Force and point us in the right direction, Luke,” Bodhi says, stopping and sitting down on a fallen log. He takes off his boot, shaking out a couple of twigs that had somehow worked their way in. A small, white-furred, lagomorphic creature with disproportionately large eyes hops up next to him, completely unconcerned about his presence, and starts to groom itself with its front paws. “What the—” He scrambles back up, balancing awkwardly on one foot and trying to get his boot back on. Luke reaches over to stabilize him, amused, watching the creature.

“I hope it doesn’t bite,” Kaytoo mutters, sarcastically, and then the creature takes a flying leap in his direction. He catches it by the scruff of its neck and holds it in the air, curiously. “Did it understand what I said?”

“They don’t seem very smart.” Cassian circles around him. “It’s not scared of you.”

“It should be,” Kaytoo says, bringing his face close to the creature. “Cassian—it is trying to bite my arm.” Luke is smothering a laugh behind his hand, and Jyn’s eyes dance with amusement. Bodhi looks around, feeling like something’s watching them—another pair of ears and a nose are just visible behind a rock a meter or so away.
“Like I said, not very smart. Just put it down, Kay.”

“It’s draining my power supply!” Kaytoo opens his hand, letting go abruptly, and its already huge eyes are even wider as it falls to the ground.

Bodhi gasps, too late, “Shit, Kaytoo, don’t drop it—” but it lands on all four paws, and Bodhi swears it glares up at the droid before scampering off under the log again.

“Well, that was odd,” Jyn says. “Cute, though.” Her smile is bright.

“It was not trying to shut you down.”

“Let’s see your arm,” Cassian says. “Did it do any real damage?”

Kaytoo goes stiff and doesn’t hold out his arm for Cassian’s inspection. “I retain enough power to return to the Cadera.” He’s terse and formal; Bodhi guesses the real damage is to his ego.

“Yeah, we might as well head back,” Luke says, turning in the direction of the shuttle. “Flora: tall as the sky. Fauna: cute, doesn’t like droids. And there’s a cavern. Somewhere. Let’s call it a night and make camp back at the shuttle.”

“Does the planet still feel off to you?” Bodhi asks, lightly, following on his heels. “Dark, or wrong, or—like little fuzzy rabbits are going to eat your face?” Luke chuckles.

“Very funny,” Kaytoo grouses.

Back at the Cadera, they set up camp in the fading light, Cassian firing up the camp stove and making something that sets Bodhi’s mouth watering. “It’s nice not to breathe recycled air, isn’t it?” Luke says, lying on his back on his bedroll, gazing up at the stars winking into existence. Above treeline, they’re as bright as Bodhi can remember ever seeing them, planetside; on Jedha the Star Destroyers had blotted out so much of the sky, for so long that he doesn't even really recall the constellations of his childhood.

“Yeah,” Bodhi murmurs. “Hey, you didn't say, earlier, if this place still doesn't feel right to you.”

Luke's mouth twists. “I don't know how to explain it, Bodhi, I wish I could—I don't think this is a good place for the Rebellion. I can feel it in the back of my mind.”

“Do you think we need to leave? I'll go have Kaytoo start the engines—”

Luke smiles at him, pulling a glow rod out of his pack and switching it on. “I'm sure just one night here will be fine.”

In the middle of the night, though, it’s very clear that even one night here is not fine, not at all, because Bodhi wakes to find Luke tossing and turning beside him, sweat matting his hair, his face contorted in pain, or fear. Bodhi sits up, checking his surroundings first. Cassian and Jyn are an indistinct, singular shadow under a tree a few meters away from him, and Kaytoo is pacing a perimeter around the Cadera, the two pinpoints of his eyes their own little binary system.

And Luke is muttering in his sleep; unintelligibly at first, but then Bodhi’s certain he says the name Owen, and then, clearer, anguished, “Aunt Beru—”

He shakes Luke’s shoulder, but he doesn't wake up, voice going blurry again. He twitches in his sleep for the next few minutes, sporadically crying out names—Bodhi recognizes the name of the Jedi Master who'd been killed on the Death Star, some of Red Squadron—oh, fuck, they're all people
who died— and last, horribly, Bodhi’s own name, in a tone of desperation and despair, nearly a wail.


“I saw an explosion,” Luke says, panting. “I saw a ship blow up, and I knew you were on it, Bodhi, and—” he gulps, unable to tear his eyes from Bodhi’s face.

“It didn’t happen,” Bodhi whispers, taking Luke’s hand and squeezing, hard, trying to be a physical certainty. “Tenc threw the grenade out. We got off Scarif. I'm all right.”

Luke bows his head, running his other hand through his hair and taking a deep breath, steadying. “It wasn’t just a nightmare,” he mutters. “Something’s here, making me see these things. I can feel it trying to get at me. It wants me to help it escape. I think it’s—it’s fear made real, come to life.”

A chill goes down Bodhi’s spine, and he looks around again nervously, expecting to see—

Tentacles coalescing from the shadows—

But there’s nothing, except the wraith that is Kaytoo, another circuit completed. “Let’s go, then,” Bodhi says, softly. “I'll wake the others, and you can get back to sleep while I fly.”

Luke nods, wearily, and gets up.

Both Jyn and Cassian snap fully awake within milliseconds, for all that they’re they’re tangled in each other’s limbs. “It’s not the rabbits, is it?” Jyn asks, only half-joking.

“No,” Bodhi tells them, quietly, watching Luke pack up by the light of his glow rod. “Luke says there’s something here trying to get him to let it out. Something malevolent. His bad feeling from before.”

Jyn exchanges glances with Cassian. “Well, he outranks all of us,” Cassian says, with a shrug. “He says we go, we go. Too bad. This seemed like a nice place.”

In the Cadera’s hold, Luke is apologetic, trying to explain as best he can; Bodhi notices, though, that he refrains from mentioning the final part of his nightmare vision, the part where he’d seen Bodhi’s ship explode. Jyn wonders if they shouldn’t investigate further, but Luke’s stricken face stops her cold. “I won’t let it out,” he says. “Not when all it wants is fear and—and death.”

So—that’s Arbra, their most promising planet, scratched off the list.

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And finally, on their last day out before returning to base to resupply, in the Sanbra sector, poking around the Golrath system: “This place could work,” Jyn allows, looking at Bodhi’s long-range scan of the highly volcanic planet in front of them. Even from orbit, the place is cracked and angry, blood-orange plumes stabbing at the sky with every second.

“Acid, no, but lava, yes?” Kaytoo asks, dripping sarcasm.

“Free geothermal energy,” Bodhi offers, thinking about the technical possibilities. “We could easily power a big enough force field to protect the base, just off of what one of those volcanoes puts out.”

Luke says, dubiously, “I don’t like it. If we were found, all the Imperials would have to do is drop that force field, and the next eruption would take care of us for them, for good.” As if to punctuate his objection, a particularly large volcano erupts, spewing lava and ash so high into the atmosphere that it looks like—
Bodhi cringes away from the viewport, swallowing hard. **Oh, no.**

“What?” Luke asks, lifting his head and looking at him. Cassian pales visibly, reaching forward to squeeze Bodhi’s shoulder, and Jyn’s face is tight.

“Let’s get out of here,” Jyn says, smacking the back of Bodhi’s chair with her fist. “I’ll tell Draven we just didn’t get lucky with this one.” Her voice is flat.

Luke is blinking at her. “Why does everyone look like they’ve seen a ghost?”

Kaytoo glances around at the humans. “It looks visually similar to another event we experienced,” he explains, after a second to process. “It is like they’ve seen a ghost. The ghost of Jedha’s Holy City.”

Bodhi tastes bile at the back of his throat, and he’s lightheaded—he takes the controls, though, silently, and points the *Cadera* back out of the system, listening to the engines hum and trying not to dwell on the *sky of falling*—

“Experienced?” Luke’s appalled. “I didn’t realize you were there.”

(*Kaytoo, sounding as panicked as a droid could get: “There IS no horizon.”*)

Bodhi swallows again, and again, as Cassian says, shortly, “We escaped through it. Jumped to hyperspace right in the middle of the cloud—”

“Excuse me,” Bodhi says, unstrapping from his chair and dashing for their tiny ‘fresher in the hold to be sick, gazing at his hollow-eyed reflection in the mirror afterwards. *I’m what’s left of Jedha. Me and Chirrut and Baze.*

**Angry spirits.**

*I named Cadera for the dead—*

He forces that line of thought down; tries to think instead about how good it feels to fly, with Luke at his side, all the worlds he’s gotten to see just in the last week. Breaths slowly, fingers turning his comlink end over end in his pocket.

*I’m alive. I’m flying my own ship. I’m alive.*

“Bodhi?” It’s Luke, of course, tapping on the door.

He comes back out, looking through the last of their supplies for water. “I’m okay.” Luke’s searching his face. “I am.”

“I’m sorry.” Luke sighs and pushes a hand through his hair.

Bodhi gulps water from the canteen and wipes his mouth with the back of his hand. He nods at Luke in acknowledgement, uncertain if there’s really anything else to be said, but—“If we’re both back here—who’s flying this thing?”

“I am,” Kaytoo calls back, miffed. “It’s fine. Take your time, it’s not as if I’m attempting to jump to hyperspace without proper calculations again. I wouldn’t want to damage your precious shuttle.”

Luke’s brow furrows. “I guess one of us should be up there.” Bodhi smiles faintly at him, and goes forward to the cockpit, glancing over his shoulder at Cassian and Jyn as he straps in.

“You’re all right?” Cassian asks. Jyn’s resting her head on Cassian’s shoulder, her eyes suspiciously
“Yeah,” Bodhi says, and turns to look out at the stars. “We all lost our homes, right? That’s part of what we’re fighting for?”

“If this ends with you saying something like ‘home is where you are,’ I will find a way to be sick, myself,” Kaytoo mutters.

Cassian snorts a soft laugh at that. “Okay, who’s been letting Kaytoo watch romance holos again?”

Bodhi shakes his head. “Home is with the Rebellion.”

“Aww,” Jyn says, very gently teasing, and Bodhi reaches back to slap her leg for it, forgetting that she’s much faster than he is—“Okay, okay,” he says, wincing, and Jyn stops twisting his fingers, but doesn’t let his hand drop, continuing to hold it in her smaller one. Bodhi looks over his shoulder at her.

“Would you ever want to go back?” Luke is asking Cassian, quietly, but not soft enough to escape Bodhi’s hearing. “To Fest, I mean. If it wasn’t under Imperial rule.”

“Nothing there for me. Home is—” Cassian replies, just as softly, but passionate, and his gaze fixes on Jyn, like she’s a star pulling him inexorably into orbit.

“You’re not wrong,” Jyn murmurs to Bodhi, unaware of how Cassian’s eyes linger, her other hand twisting the crystal on her necklace in her fingers. “It’s where we’re supposed to be now. All of us,” meaning Chirrut and Baze, too. Bodhi blinks, surprised at her serenity and surety; a smile flickers across her face, and she shrugs. “I trust in the Force that brought us together. That brought him to you.” She inclines her head ever so slightly in Luke’s direction.

Kaytoo says, to no one, exasperated, “I don’t know why I ever agreed to be a fifth wheel on this mission,” and pulls the lever to jump them to hyperspace, and home to Thila Base.

Chapter End Notes

Here’s Arbra, the rabbits, and Golrath.
Chapter 25

Chapter Summary

Well, that could've gone better.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

When they get back, there’s a message for Cassian and Jyn: Talon Karrde wants to meet.

“Again?” Bodhi’s sitting on a cargo container in the Cadera’s hold, doing inventory on their new supplies, when Jyn delivers the news. It makes him nervous, for no reason he can figure. “You just saw him a couple weeks ago. I thought he didn’t like to meet more than once a month?”

Jyn shrugs, folding her arms. “Must be something interesting, I guess. Sorry, Bodhi; looks like it’ll just be you and Luke, exploring the great unknown.”

“We’re not going to the Unknown Regions,” Bodhi says offhandedly, and then registers that she’s smirking at him a little, and opening her mouth again—“If you’re going to make a pun about exploring anyone’s unknown regions, you can leave off, I got it, thanks.”

“Think about it, though. You and Luke, alone, spending every moment together, nothing to do but watch the stars go by—”

“Looking at the sensors and trying to find a safe place for the Rebellion to hole up,” Bodhi corrects her. “Making sure no Imperial ships are following us.”

“Sure, okay,” Jyn says, unconvincing. “If that’s your idea of a romantic getaway. I’m still hoping for that beach, personally.”

“I’ll try to find one for you,” Bodhi promises loyally. “Where’s Karrde want to meet? We could take you out there.”

“Gonmore,” Jyn says, and when Bodhi shakes his head, adds, “Yeah, I never heard of it, either. Probably not worth making you divert just to take us there. But thanks.” She kisses him on the cheek, and heads down the ramp, pausing and turning back to say, “Have a good time with Luke!”

Bodhi swallows, considering it, hunching over, elbows resting on his knees. Spending every moment together means—flying, talking about flying, seeing a dozen new worlds side-by-side, exploring sights and terrains he’d never have dreamed of, back on Jedha. The possibilities of the rest of it make him dizzy with want, and with fear. But—Luke would never do anything to hurt me—

“What are you sitting there staring into space for?”

Bodhi looks up at the sound of Baze’s voice; he and Chirrut are standing at the top of the ramp. Baze gestures to the plasteel container he’s just dragged up behind them. “Come move this where you want to put it.”

“Um—” Bodhi blinks at them. “What are you doing here?”
“Surprise,” Chirrut says. “We’re coming with you. Baze, does he look surprised?”

Bodhi attempts to school his face into something resembling surprise and not outright dismay. Baze raises his eyebrows. “Yes.”

“Aren’t you with Madine’s special forces now? The Pathfinders?”

“We are not commissioned officers.” Baze shrugs. “We go where we want.”


“Yes. Come take this into the hold,” Baze directs him, again, and Bodhi recoils as he recognizes the plasteel container—

“Why do you think we’ll need explosives for a scouting trip?”

Baze furrows his brow. “Why wouldn’t we need explosives?”

“Because—” Bodhi actually doesn’t have an answer for that. “If we run into turbulence, that’s not going to blow us up jostling around, right?”

“Never has before,” Baze replies, amiably. “Are you all ready to go, now?”

“Just waiting for—” Bodhi sees Luke jogging across the hangar towards them. He waves, and turns to help Baze secure the container in the Cadera’s hold.

“Master Îmwe, this is a surprise,” Luke says, as he comes up the ramp. “I didn’t expect to see you before we left again.”

“You will be seeing quite a lot of me for the next several days,” Chirrut tells him, grinning.

“You’re coming?” Luke tries to mask his disappointment and fails, as usual. Baze glances from him to Bodhi, increasingly entertained by their reactions. “Don’t you have more important things to do?”

“You’ve been gone a lot lately,” Chirrut says. “We should catch up on your training.”

“Oh, right.” Luke scrubs a hand through his hair, and flashes a smile at Baze. “Um, welcome aboard, then!” Baze nods and heads on up to the cockpit, Chirrut—very comfortable with the layout of the ship, Bodhi notices, not using his stick to guide him at all—following after. “I saw Cassian, he told me they’re not coming, so—”

“We can head out again,” Bodhi says, nodding. “Unless you wanted to trade Kay for Artoo?”

Luke shakes his head. “Leia’s commandeered him again for something. It’s all right, we’d have had to take Threepio, too, and he doesn’t much care for space travel.” He lowers his voice. “I know they’re important to you—they’re important to me, too, but—is there any way we can ditch the Guardians, now that Cassian and Jyn aren’t coming?” His eyes are hopeful.

“I don’t think so,” Bodhi mutters, turning and looking at them sitting up in the cockpit. Baze has stowed his repeater cannon within easy reach, meaning it’s taking up an entire seat all to itself. “Once one of them gets an idea in their head, there’s really no stopping them—they ended up with Rogue One just because Chirrut felt like defending Jyn from a squadron of stormtroopers.”

*Unless the Force had something to do with it?*
“So I’d heard,” Luke says. “Okay. Well, I guess it won’t hurt to get in some more training with him while we’re out and about.”

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From the looks of it, though, it actually seems to hurt kind of a lot.

Once they're in hyperspace, Bodhi straddles a jump seat backwards and watches, curious, as Chirrut makes Luke practice form after form with a stick instead of his lightsaber, in the cleared-out space in the hold. And when he’s finally satisfied that Luke hasn’t forgotten anything, Chirrut promptly, and without warning—at least to Bodhi’s eyes, Luke gets his guard up fast—launches an attack, jabbing at Luke relatively lightly with his staff, but not holding back in terms of speed. Luke defends himself the best he can, Baze swiveling back and forth in his seat and offering commentary on his footwork,

“This is what you've been doing with him?” Bodhi asks. “Even though you're not Jedi?”

“Luke asked,” Baze says. “Said his Master Kenobi showed him a few things, but that it would be an honor to learn from—what did he call us? Something flattering.” Bodhi can’t tear his eyes away from Luke, how the wiry line of him uncoils into grace as Chirrut forces him into the flow of the fight.

“Of course Chirrut said yes,” Baze continues, and there's a hint of gruff humor in his voice. “He always did love teaching the novices at the Temple, until they got good enough to best him.” His voice gets louder on the last handful of words, deliberately needling his husband.

“This novice hasn't bested me yet,” Chirrut calls, pressing his attack once more; the Guardian’s barely broken a sweat, even in his usual long robes, but Luke's already panting, hair plastering to his forehead. He glances in Bodhi’s direction, and parries a couple of Chirrut’s strikes successfully—

—leaps backwards up onto a cargo container, jumping to avoid Chirrut sweeping his stick at his legs, and does a tight flip off of it, over Chirrut's head, barely clearing the ceiling—

—lands, overbalancing and falling to one knee in front of Bodhi, eyes sparkling, laughing at his unexpected success, beautiful—

—and Chirrut immediately smacks him to the floor from behind. Bodhi flinches back into his chair; Luke grunts in surprise more than pain, and rolls onto his back, fending off another blow.

“Stop showing off for him and pay attention,” Chirrut orders, and Baze barks a loud laugh, startling Bodhi.

“You're one to talk about showing off. He would do the most ridiculous things to get me to look at him,” Baze says, to Bodhi. “Walking on his hands over the rooftops of NiJedha—”

“I did that once.” Chirrut shakes his head, and prods Baze unerringly in the shoulder with the end of his stick, calling a halt to his sparring with Luke, who exhaled and flops down on his back, at Bodhi’s feet, chest heaving. Bodhi swallows, his heart starting to race, looking down at Luke’s parted lips, the way his black shirt sticks to him, the muscled lines of his arms—Luke’s eyes darken, and he grins, absolutely delighted, and Bodhi remembers, belatedly, that Luke can sense his feelings—

Baze is saying, “Picking fights with bullies twice his size—”

“Hmm. That does sound like me,” Chirrut concedes, leaning on his stick. “Although I wouldn't call that showing off. More like—”
“A good start to the day?” Baze says, dryly.

Chirrut smiles. “Have I said that before? All right, enough rest, we go again.” He pokes Luke in the side with the end of his staff. “And no fancy moves.”

“I’m taking advantage of the terrain,” Luke protests, pushing himself up from the floor.

“Oh, you should watch out for that container,” Baze remarks casually, nodding to the one Luke had flipped off of a moment ago. “It has explosives in it.”

Luke’s eyes go very wide. “Good to know!” And then he lunges at Chirrut, who dodges easily away in a swirl of his robes, with a laugh.

“Has Luke ever—” Bodhi asks, as Chirrut ducks under a wild swing. “Um—landed a hit on Chirrut?”

Baze chuckles. “No.”

“Has—has he ever beaten you?”

Baze narrows his eyes at Bodhi. “I don’t fight like that anymore.”

“Oh,” Bodhi says. “Wh—” The navicomputer beeps that they’re coming up on the jump back to normal space, and he gets up to go back to the pilot’s seat. “Chirrut, Luke, we’re almost there,” he calls over his shoulder. The clatter of their sparring breaks off, and Luke joins him up front, dropping into the co-pilot’s chair, pulling his shirt off over his head, and suddenly Bodhi understands at least one reason why Jyn’s been so interested in finding a nice warm beach somewhere. Yeah, I wouldn’t mind that, at all.

Luke’s newly exposed skin is pale, of course; no one who lives on a desert planet under two suns willingly goes out uncovered for long. Bodhi winces at the sight of the bruises already blooming blue and purple along Luke’s ribs from where Chirrut had gotten past his defenses, but Luke doesn’t seem to be bothered by them at all. He wipes his face off with his shirt and tosses his hair back, like he’s in some damn holo—“Remind me where we’re headed first?”

Bodhi stammers, blinking at him, “Amal—Amaltanna,” and yanks the hyperdrive lever back harder than absolutely necessary, thinking, Dammit, we should’ve gotten rid of Chirrut and Baze!

*****

Amaltanna’s system has three suns.

“How would anyone get to sleep, here?” Baze wonders aloud, leaning on the back of Bodhi’s chair and looking out the viewport, as Bodhi settles the Cadera into a low orbit around the rocky world, and starts scanning.

“It’s all the same, to me,” Chirrut points out, amused.

“Hey, look at that—” Luke leans over Bodhi’s arm, and even through his sleeve, Bodhi can feel the heat of his bare skin. There’s a large rectangular structure on the display, standing out against the chaos of jagged rock formations that cover the planet’s surface.

“Scanners aren’t picking up any lifesigns,” Bodhi says.

“There is a fortress,” Baze tells Chirrut, reading off the screen over Bodhi’s other shoulder. “Made
out of durasteel. Clone Wars-era.”

Luke rests a hand on Bodhi’s shoulder. “What do you think? Want to have a closer look?”

“If I can find someplace to set down without scratching the paint,” Bodhi says, wryly, and takes them down to the surface. As he skims over the landscape, sunlight glints off of metal—“Did you see that?”

“There’s old ships down there!” Luke exclaims. “Ships, and—oh—”

“What? What is it?” Bodhi’s focused on landing on the flattest patch of ground, tucking the Cadera’s wings up carefully.

Baze grunts. “Separatist droids.”

“What?” Bodhi reaches back for the controls, ready to launch again, but Luke shakes his head. “Nothing’s alive down here,” he says. “Hasn’t been anything alive here for two decades, maybe more. It looks like quite the battlefield.”

Bodhi looks out the viewport, and, if anything, Luke’s understating the matter. The remains of multiple types of battle droids are scattered across the craggy landscape; from his history classes, he recognizes the cylindrical heads of IG lancers, and more commonly, the broken bodies of B1s, and tanks, and—

His eyes go wide. “No one came for their bodies?”

“It was a total loss on both sides,” Baze says to Chirrut. “There are clone troopers’ remains everywhere.” Bodhi realizes there’s no weather to speak of, no wind to erode away at the metal and plasteel; wonders if the clone troopers would look as if they’d just fallen, if he were to take off their helmets. It’s deeply unsettling.

“I don’t like this,” Bodhi says to Luke, who’s putting on a fresh shirt from his pack. “It doesn’t feel right, taking over the site of a massacre.”

Luke nods slowly, raking a hand uselessly through his hair. “I know. But—we should still see what’s inside the fortress. See if there’s anything to salvage.”

“IT’s built out of durasteel,” Baze points out, again. “This is why you need explosives on your scouting trip.” He’s not particularly jovial about it, though.

They pick their way slowly through the jagged rocks, Baze moving bodies and debris out of Chirrut’s path. The clone troopers’ bodies barely seem to have any weight to them, and Bodhi has to stop looking at them, or he’ll be sick. He’s seen the face behind those helmets a thousand times in the holos; the heroes of the Republic, betrayers of the Jedi.

Luke hesitates once, staring up at a gunship impaled on a stone spire, the viewport smashed in and a clone trooper’s armor hanging out at a precarious angle. “This is awful,” Bodhi murmurs, rubbing at his face, trying to steady his breathing. “This—this is like—”

Luke snaps his gaze over to him, concerned. “Bodhi, you could wait in the ship, you don’t have to come.”

“I’m all right, I think,” Bodhi says, averting his eyes from the bodies again, forcing himself not to think of the troops—on both sides—dropping around him on the landing pad on Scarif. Baze is turning back to look at him; he and Chirrut are meters ahead already, looking oddly small against the
massif of the fortress. “Keep going. I'm okay. I'll—I'll yell if I need something.”


The entrance gate is open, but not at all inviting; Bodhi half-expects it to clang closed behind them, trapping them in the darkness, but it doesn’t, which is almost more ominous in its own way. By the light of Luke's glow rod, there are dead clone troopers strewn about the main corridor, their armor more clearly marked by blaster fire, but fewer broken battle droids.

“Watch out,” Baze snaps, holding Luke back when he'd have started down the corridor, and points up at the blasters mounted at points along the ceiling.

“Automatic?” Luke wonders, and Baze shrugs and simply blows them apart with a flurry of shots.

“I hope this place really is empty, or you just alerted a fortress full of droids to our presence,” Bodhi says, hanging back nervously, but nothing moves from the shadows. “It’s a fucking mausoleum,” he mutters, but there are fewer and fewer dead as they go deeper into the structure, and then—

“Huh,” Baze grunts, looking across the chasm. The bridge is in sections, and the middle is missing.

“Did it retract?” Luke asks, looking around for a control panel, and something scuttles down the wall on the other side of the bridge.

Chirrut nudges Bodhi back with one arm, putting his staff up defensively. Luke's got his blaster in his hand, shining the glow rod as far out as he can, and then a trio of spider droids swoop down out of the darkness, pincers opening and closing, trying to make a grab for him and Baze. “Oh, is that all?” Chirrut says, tilting his head to listen. Luke ducks and shoots two of them out of the air, and Baze tags the third clean through the middle, destroying it completely.

“That wasn't so bad,” Luke says, turning to smile back at Bodhi, and then another pair of spider droids fly up from the chasm and latch onto his arm and leg, twisting and dragging him over the side of the bridge, Luke's blaster firing as he falls—

“Luke!” Bodhi shouts, panicking, shoving at Chirrut, but the Guardian plants a firm hand on his chest, pushing him back. “Stay here,” Chirrut orders, and goes forward to the edge of the bridge, where Baze is looking down into the darkness, taking out a glow rod from his belt pouch. Bodhi clenches his useless hands at his sides, mind reeling against the absurdity of it all, the notion of losing Luke to gravity, and a couple of twenty-year-old droids—

There's a blue-white flash of light from somewhere down in the chasm, and a string of curses floats up to him. Bodhi slumps against the wall in relief.

“I'm going to climb back up,” Luke shouts, sounding irritated.

“Are there more of those droids?” Baze calls to him.

“No, I think I took care of all of them,” Luke calls back, and Bodhi can hear the strain in his voice. He goes to look, hesitatingly; Luke's stabbing his lightsaber into the wall of the chasm for purchase to climb, his expression more annoyed than anything else.

Baze crouches down and grabs Luke's arm, when he's near enough, and hauls him up onto the bridge. He kneels there for a moment, catching his breath, and Bodhi gapes at him, speechless.

“Blast, you scared me,” Bodhi snaps, angrily, and Luke reaches up to him, grabbing his shaking hands.

“Hey, hey,” Luke murmurs, getting to his feet, and the way he’s gazing at Bodhi, it’s as if the Guardians aren’t even here. “I’m fine. Not a scratch on me.”

“You should check to be sure,” Chirrut says to Bodhi, as if Luke hadn’t just narrowly escaped falling to his death.

Luke blushes, and ducks his head, asking, “Did you find any bridge controls?”

“Controls? What is wrong with you?” Bodhi yells, astonished at his nonchalance. “You almost died!”

Bodhi yells, astonish at his nonchalance. “You almost died!”

“Is this—do you do this kind of completely ridiculous shit all the time?” Bodhi demands. “You—you crashed your speeder, you cut open an armored hovertrain all by yourself, you just fell—” he glances over the side—“ten meters and climbed back up with your lightsaber—is—is this—” Bodhi gulps, and tries again, despairing, breathless at how much it hurts to think about—“Is this how I’m going to lose you?”

Luke’s reaching for him again. “No, oh no—Bodhi—”

“Because if that’s—I don’t know how anyone could’ve stood it,” Bodhi says, dizzy, his heart pounding. “Being—being with a Jedi—”


“Whenever you’re done,” Chirrut says, from the corridor, tapping the end of his staff against the floor impatiently.

“Okay?” Luke asks, and Bodhi nods, a little reassured, but wondering, again, what did I get myself into?

“Do you want to try to get across?” Baze asks, coming up next to them again. “I saw bridge controls on the other side.”


Baze touches his arm, and pulls a line of fibercord and a grappling hook out of his pack. “More practical.”

Luke laughs, inexplicably. “This brings back memories. Couldn’t you have pulled me up with that?” Baze shrugs, and starts to help him get set up; Bodhi goes back into the corridor, shaking his head.

Chirrut turns his face in Bodhi’s direction. “We all take risks,” he says, quietly. “You’ve risked your own life before.”

“Not like he does,” Bodhi mutters back. “Not like there’s nothing to lose. I—I know what the consequences are.” There’s a familiar sound of repulsorlifts behind him; he turns to see the missing section of the bridge slowly rising back into place, Luke on the far side, looking surprised.
“You think Luke doesn’t know?” Chirrut asks. “You think anyone in this war doesn’t know what the cost might be?”

Bodhi pauses. _Luke’s nightmare list of the dead; when they’d thought Wedge was lost_—“No. You’re right, of course he knows. He’s doing what he thinks is right—”

“Just like you,” Chirrut says.


_Except Luke’s not afraid._

Across the bridge, and down a winding maze of corridors, they wind up in a long-dead communications center. Bodhi runs his hand over the console, looking up at a shattered viewscreen on the wall. Luke crouches to examine a B2 droid that’s been sliced in half. “There was a Jedi here,” he says, excitedly. “No blaster could do this.” He glances at Chirrut. “Did you know? Is that why you wanted to come?”

Chirrut shakes his head. “I had no idea what we would find.” His expression is grave. “I hope we won’t find their body.” Luke’s face goes solemn at that, too.

Further in, at what Bodhi judges must be the center of the fortress, there are a dozen dead clone troopers and pieces of another twenty or so battle droids, all lying before a huge, impregnable door. “Do—we want to know what’s inside?” Bodhi asks, turning his gaze away from the fallen and examining the control panel, which bears the unmistakeable signature gash of a lightsaber. “Whoever did this—they locked something in.”

Baze stops pulling detonators from his pack and looks up at Luke. “We’ve come all this way,” he says.


The Guardian shrugs. “You are the one who led us here. What does the Force tell you about what to do now?”

Luke stares up at the door. “I don’t know. It doesn’t feel like Arbra. If there was evil here, it’s long gone.” He looks back at Bodhi. “They all died for something,” he says. “Don’t you want to know what it was?”

Bodhi bites his lip, running his fingers over the destroyed control panel, thinking about Tonc’s face when he’d been hit, falling dead out of the shuttle onto the sand. “Okay,” he says, softly. “But—if there’s some nasty fucking monster in there, you’re on your own.” He musters up a smile. Luke grins back, but Bodhi doesn’t miss the way his hand drops to his lightsaber hilt before he turns and starts helping Baze with the explosives.

Baze’s approach to blowing things up, of course, is that there’s no kill like _overkill_. The explosion shakes the whole fortress, and Bodhi’s ears ring even where they’re taking cover all the way back in the communications center. Chirrut swears, and says, “I would prefer not to be both blind and deaf,” to his husband, and Baze merely pats him on the arm.

There’s only one body in the formerly sealed room, slumped over a console with viewscreens all around it; it’s not humanoid, with segmented legs and too many eyes. Baze is describing its green carapace to Chirrut, noting the Separatist uniform and the trio of medals pinned to its chest. “It starved to death in here,” Bodhi mutters, disturbed.
“I don’t think so,” Luke says. “The Jedi must’ve shorted out the chamber’s life support.” He moves the chair, slightly, to look at the console, and the desiccated body tips over sideways. Bodhi leaps back as it falls out of the chair and shatters inside its uniform when it hits the floor. Green fragments of exoskeleton scatter out of the sleeves.

Luke grimaces. “Sorry,” he says, registering Bodhi’s horrified expression. “I mean, it was dead already—”

“Get the medals,” Baze says. “We can find out who it was.”

Bodhi holds his hands up. “I’m not touching that.”

Luke stoops and removes the medals, handing them to Baze, who tucks them away in his pack and starts to circle the room, commenting on the firing controls and the other defensive systems to Chirrut. Luke flips a couple of switches on the console, looking down at the viewscreens. Bodhi can guess what he’s thinking—what would the Jedi have been like? Did they know Luke’s father?

“Well, that’s that, I guess,” Luke says, after a minute. “Hey, if we moved here, can you imagine Draven taking over this as his office?”

Bodhi, appalled, can’t help but laugh. “Yeah.”

*****

Chirrut doesn’t make Luke fight him again once they’re offworld, and he doesn’t come up front to the cockpit, either, strapped in alone in the hold, murmuring his prayer.

“Is Chirrut all right?” Bodhi asks, frowning at Baze.

Baze gives him a half-shrug. “There was much death on this planet, even if it was years ago,” he explains, and Bodhi sighs, thinking of Chirrut’s collapse after Alderaan. Luke’s face falls, and he gets back out of his seat and goes back to the hold, kneeling in front of Chirrut.

“He’s a good man,” Baze says to Bodhi, as the Cadera flies through hyperspace. “You should hold on to him for as long as you can.”

Bodhi jerks around. Baze’s eyes are dark, and a little sad, and Bodhi remembers hearing that the Guardian had been devout, once, more devout than Chirrut. “You know something,” he whispers hoarsely, afraid.

Baze nods, just barely. “Only that you will have to be parted, someday. I don’t know when, or why. The little knowledge the Force grants me has never been clear.”

“Why are you telling me this?” Bodhi manages, around a sudden lump in his throat.

“Because I wasted years away from Chirrut,” Baze says, more calmly than Bodhi would’ve been able to. “When I should have been at his side. The Force has given you a chance, but it may be gone sooner than you think.” He leans back in his chair, as Chirrut comes forward to the cockpit; Luke is still back in the hold, sitting in a familiar meditative pose, eyes closed, looking serene.

Chirrut drops into the seat next to Baze. “我告訴你不要跟他講呢個事情.”

“我只想幫助他們,” Baze mutters.

“I swear, you all have a very warped idea of what it means to help,” Bodhi says, flustered and a little
annoyed. “First Jyn practically crashes my ship, and now you’re telling me I’m, what, running out of time?” Then the horrible realization strikes him—“Are you telling me one of us is going to die?”

“That is one type of parting,” Chirrut says, unhelpfully. “Or you might just break up for a while.”

“You see? He is still mad about it,” Baze tells Bodhi, rolling his eyes.

“I’m not mad,” Chirrut says. “All is as the Force wills it.” He nods in Bodhi’s general direction. “But sometimes we can help things along. Go meditate with him.”

“And by meditate you mean—” Bodhi says, sarcastically.

“Well. If one thing leads to another, who are we to judge?” Chirrut grins. “Go on, Baze will tell you if something is happening with your ship.” Baze’s smirking at him under his beard.

“Okay, okay—please don’t touch anything,” Bodhi gets up, distracted, trying to remember something Hobbie had said, months ago.

*It’ll be a surprise if we all make it to the end.*

He shudders, but tamps down his dread, sitting cross-legged next to Luke. Luke opens his eyes. “Please tell me Chirrut isn’t flying the ship,” he teases.

“Nope,” Bodhi replies. “Still in hyperspace. They—” he rubs the back of his neck self-consciously. “They sent me back here to meditate. Um. With you.”

“Oh,” Luke says, smiling, unfolding from his pose and leaning back on his elbows. “Do you think they have an ulterior motive?”

“Pretty sure of it.” Bodhi looks down at him, and, in a flash of an emotion he can’t name, asks, quickly, “Can you promise me something?”

Luke blinks. “Sure, I mean, anything you want, Bodhi, you know you just have to ask—is this about before? I know I’m reckless—” He pushes his hair back out of his eyes, looking very young again.

“If—if you ever have to leave again, for whatever reason—like Jedi stuff, like you did before, I guess—” Bodhi puts his knees up and rests his arms on them, gazing at Luke.

He sits bolt upright, eyes going huge and bright in his face. “Stars. Bodhi. I will always come back to you.”

Bodhi exhales shakily. It’s almost too much to keep looking at him. “Okay.” Luke is uncertain, but reaches over and puts his arms around him, burying his face in the crook of Bodhi’s shoulder, murmuring reassurances. Bodhi glances towards the Guardians; Baze is turned slightly in their direction, but his head is bowed.

*****

The next sector is a wash, as is the next, and—the next. With only Bodhi and Luke to fly, without Kaytoo, they have to spell each other in the pilot’s seat the second day, catching up on sleep in hyperspace for a few hours before jumping back into normal space, Bodhi disappointed that he can’t fall asleep next to Luke, or—do much of anything else, really. But they’re both awake, coming into the Dominus system, their target a pretty blue-haloed world with one small moon.

“This one might have that beach Jyn wanted,” Luke says, lightly, watching the oceans grow larger as
Bodhi settles the *Cadera* into orbit. “Looks nice, except for those storms coming up. Anybody home?”

“No,” Bodhi says, looking at the scanners, and then the proximity alarm goes off, because—

—there is an Imperial Star Destroyer bearing down on them, and a squadron of TIE Interceptors already deploying in their direction—

“*Shit, shit!*” Bodhi hauls on the controls, trying to bring them about and make a run for it, but compared to the TIEs, the *Cadera* is a lumbering beast— “We're not going to be able to outrun them, Luke, we can't take on all of them in a fight.”

Luke’s nodding, already taking firing controls for the KX-5s and snapping out orders to Baze to get in the gunner position on the other cannons. “I know. We'll do what we can to keep 'em off—”

“What do you want to do about that Star Destroyer?” Bodhi flinches as the first Interceptor takes a run at them— “Dammit, those are concussion missiles—” The *Cadera* shakes, but the shields hold. *For now.*

“You can outrun that, can't you?” Chirrut asks. He’s calm as ever, putting a hand on his husband’s shoulder to feel when they're firing back.

“Not their tractor beam, I can’t, not if these fucking TIEs pin me—Luke, *watch it—*” Bodhi pushes the engines hard, throwing them into a spiral.

Luke squeezes off a good ten shots at the incoming fighters, taking out two; Bodhi cringes at the soundless fiery bursts of the ion engines going nova as their trajectories carry them past. “I don't like these odds—” Luke turns his head to look at Dominus III’s blue-haloed glow. “D’you think we could lose 'em on the surface?”

Baze says, “More cover than out here,” and sprays laser fire at the TIEs coming back around for another pass. “The storms?”

“Yeah, yeah, okay, I can lose 'em in a storm, I can get us through and come out—come out somewhere else, out of range of that Star Destroyer.” Bodhi glances at Luke for affirmation.

“I trust you,” Luke says. “Go, go.” Bodhi breaks off their futile chase of deep space, and dives for the planet, hoping against hope that their shields will hold; that the TIE Interceptor pilots won't try to go in after them without their own shields, because everyone knows a storm and an unshielded ship are death waiting to happen.

One of the pilots does try it, ringing more concussion missiles off the *Cadera*’s shields, and the first lightning strike fries their systems, sending the Interceptor spinning down to the surface, impacting with a fireball. Bodhi flinches, but pushes on, looking for a way out, gritting his teeth as hail hammers the ship—“*Fuck, the Palisade’s overloading,*” Luke snaps, and Bodhi frantically slaps at the switch to shut it off, hoping that the power subsystems will keep the shields going without the added generator—

—tears out of the clouds, soaring for the stars, the Star Destroyer coming about after them, but the Interceptors are on the wrong side of the planet, now, and the squadron they're scrambling isn’t going to be able to catch him.

“Shields are gone,” Luke says, tersely.

Bodhi’s hands slip on the controls—“Okay, okay, forget the rest of the run, we gotta get home—”
Luke nods, punching in coordinates to the navicomputer as fast as his hands will move. Turbolaser fire from the Star Destroyer streaks past the viewport, and Baze looses a string of curses Bodhi doesn’t understand.

A blast glances off the Cadera’s armor, and one of the sublights and the overdrive are blown. “Come on,” Bodhi yells, throwing a quick glance at the navicomputer—it beeps after what feels like an eternity, and Luke scrambles for the lever so fast he almost misses his grip, but the stars turn to streaks, and—

“We’re safe, we’re safe,” Luke says, looking at Bodhi, who slumps back in his seat, staring at all the warning lights going off on the console, trembling, thinking about all the shit he’s got to repair before he can fly again, hoping Luke won’t be ordered away to do something else before that. “You did great.”

“Well, that was exciting,” Chirrut says, from behind him. “Can someone please tell me what happened?”

*****

They limp home to Thila Base.

Luke promises to help with repairs, and they spend the next two days just trying to rip the melted Palisade shield generator out—Luke has a tendency to accidentally rub up against Bodhi, lying under the console together, and Bodhi’s torn between helpless, delirious arousal and an odd, increasingly desperate sense that if he can’t fly again, something terrible will happen. He works harder, long after Luke’s been summoned by Leia, falling asleep in the Cadera and waking up only when Luke nudges him anxiously a few hours later.

Jyn and Cassian and Kaytoo come home again, wanting to hear all about Amaltanna and planning something big of their own, with Draven. Chirrut and Baze leave with Madine’s troops, with Bodhi none the wiser as to what Baze knows about the future.

And then, an unknown ship drops in from hyperspace on the third day after they’re back. Rieekan caves and orders Luke to scramble Rogue Squadron to go after it, but it’s gone again before they can identify it.

“But they sent a message,” Luke says, to Rieekan, in the hangar. Bodhi stuffs his hands in his pockets anxiously. “It’s encrypted. Bodhi, can Artoo use your ship’s computer?” He nods, leading the way, and Artoo rolls up the ramp and plugs in, chirping worriedly to himself.

The message is a single line, from Talon Karrde.

Bodhi’s heart sinks like a stone as he reads it off the display.

“If I can find you, so can they.”

Chapter End Notes

The lovely shortcrust MADE ME A FANMIX. It's GREAT and PERFECT and I ADORE the artwork that goes with it (which you can see on tumblr, eeeeeee.)

Happy Lunar New Year. :)
Translations:
我告訴你不要跟他講呢個事情: I told you not to tell him about that.
我只想幫助他們: I only wanted to help them.

And, as always, thanks for reading, commenting, kudos, bookmarks, subscriptions; all of your support has been a wonderful part of what is otherwise a very challenging year. <3
There's one more thing we need to do.

Rieekan's face is ashen. “I need to meet with Princess Leia and General Draven, immediately.” Bodhi turns to run and get them, but Rieekan grabs his arm. “No, I need to talk to you, Lieutenant. Commander Skywalker—?”


Rieekan puts his arms on the back of the co-pilot’s seat, attempting to look casual, but it only reinforces the strain Bodhi recognizes in his eyes. “You're the one who figured out Wedge was alive, because of what this man Karrde sent. Do you trust him?”

Bodhi fidgets. I believe him. It's not the same thing. “I'm not the one to ask about trust, sir,” he says. “Cassian and Jyn are his contacts, not me.”

“And I'll ask them, too,” Rieekan assures him. “What about the fact that he dropped in like that? Is it possible he's been looking for our base this whole time? Would he—”

“Oh—oh, shit,” Bodhi mutters, forgetting that he's interrupting a senior officer. “I jumped straight back here off of Dominus III after they blew out one of my engines—there would've been an ion trail, if they had the right tracking equipment—”

Rieekan looks alarmed, but it's not because of what Bodhi’s saying; he snaps out, stern, “You have to breathe, Lieutenant,” and Bodhi realizes he's been talking too fast, panicky, again. “Don't start blaming yourself just yet, all right? There's a lot of possibilities to rule out.” Bodhi jerks his head in a nod, and Rieekan falls silent, his face drawn. There’s more gray in his hair than Bodhi remembers.

Artoo chirrups a long string of Binary, and Bodhi catches some of it, but he has to look down at the display to get the rest: you nerve burner you know damn well ion trails can't be traced through hyperspace it's not your fault stop worrying Luke is sad when you worry. Bodhi’s eyes widen, but Rieekan’s not looking at Artoo’s words scrolling on the screen, turning instead to conference with Leia and Draven.

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Bodhi frowns at the droid’s photoreceptor, and the display clears, just as Leia comes up to the cockpit and says, “Let’s see Karrde's message again, Artoo.” Artoo obliges, swiveling his dome to track her; Bodhi gets out of the way so she can take the pilot’s chair, but she shakes her head at him and remains standing, frowning down at the display, her lips compressing into a line.

“Well, there's nothing for it.” Draven crosses his arms. “We'll have to evacuate.”

“To where?” Luke asks. “None of the options we reported to you are viable.”

Leia nods at him. “I'll send a message to the Fleet and see what capital ships we might use. It'll be cramped, but I think we can make it work.” She looks at Draven and Rieekan. “What do you think our timeline is?”
“A matter of days, perhaps,” Draven says.

Luke runs a hand through his hair, looking around at them. “Karrde wouldn't warn us and then turn around and sell our location to the Empire, would he?”

“Karrde is clever, and mercenary, but he wouldn't betray us like that.” Draven shakes his head. He looks at Bodhi. “Your friends would be the first to say that the man values loyalty.”

“He's not loyal to the Rebellion,” Rieekan observes.

Bodhi shoves his hands in his pockets to stop them shaking. The trade was intel for us, Luke for them—would Karrde give Luke to them if it meant all of us, too?

“No,” Leia says. “But he's given us a warning; he may have given us time. Let's make the most of it.”

*****

The closest capital ship is the Redemption, a medical EF76 Nebulon-B frigate; it's in orbit over Thila Base within the next local day, hanging in the sky like a particularly architectural-looking cloud. Bodhi had shuttled people to and from the Redemption, in the weeks after Yavin, for Council meetings or treatment, and he knows their routines and preferences; the Cadera's okay for short-range flight, for now, so he’s kept busy flying up equipment and the staff to go with it.

Leia catches Bodhi in the hangar between back-to-back trips, takes one look at his face, and says, “Go rest for a minute, Lieutenant.”

“I can’t,” he says, plaintively. Running from the Empire’s the other thing I'm good at. “Your Highness, I can get another twenty people up there in an hour—”

Leia’s eyebrows go up. “There’s other ships, and time enough.” She firmly takes his arm, marching him out of the hangar, over his polite but increasingly agitated protests. “You are as bad as Luke, aren’t you. Force help the next obstacle you two decide to throw yourselves at together. I've learned to get out of the way.” They wind up at the Intelligence offices, where Cassian and Jyn are packing up the last of the nonessential equipment. “He’s running himself ragged,” Leia explains, and pushes Bodhi at them. “Don’t let him out of your sight until you’re done.” She flashes a little smile at him and walks off.

Cassian’s gaze flickers over Bodhi. “When’s the last time you ate something?” Cassian doesn’t bother waiting for an answer, and throws a ration bar at him.

“Thanks.” Bodhi catches it more out of reflex than any real desire to eat anything, and goes over to help Jyn take apart a console. “Are you all done after this? I’ll run you up,” he says, trying to sound not quite as anxious as he feels.

Jyn throws a sideways glance at him, though. “Can’t wait to get out of here, huh?”

He shakes his head. “I—I don’t like waiting for the hammer to drop. Even if it’s going to be more cramped, living up there—at least I’d feel like we’re on the right track, going somewhere—”

Cassian cuts in before Bodhi can spiral any further. “D’you know where you’re bunking yet?”

He pulls up abruptly. “Yeah. I’m packed in with Rogue Squadron.” Bodhi pulls the last of the cables from the console and makes a face. “Wedge says Zev snores pretty bad, but I stood worse, in the Academy dorms.”
“You can move in with us,” Cassian offers. “We're pretty used to doubling up—” Jyn is shaking her head at him, raising her eyebrows like Cassian's supposed to be remembering something. He pauses. “Luke hasn’t, um, offered?”

“We haven't had a chance to talk about it.” Bodhi shrugs, taking down the console's display screen carefully. “You know he's been coordinating all the additional sector patrols with Rogue Squadron, I haven't seen him practically since we got Karrde's message.” Jyn is disconnecting a power supply, and he winces as she tosses it behind her, without looking, at a cargo container with a few other components already heaped in it. “Hey, about Karrde-- how come he didn't say anything to you about being able to find us, when you were meeting on Gonmore? And what were you planning with Draven?”

“It's not so much a plan, yet,” Jyn says. “Karrde’s got insights into moves some Moff’s been making in the Expansion Region, we might try to cut him off. It can wait until we’re safely off-world, though. And—I don't have a clue how he figured out where we are. We’ve always been careful. A little paranoid, even.”

Cassian throws her a glance. “I am not paranoid for no reason,” he reminds her.

“I know,” she says, affectionately, and turns back to Bodhi. “Draven doesn't think it's your fault, even though you said you jumped straight back here. You weren't anywhere near where Karrde's network is.”

“Maybe he's just that good,” Cassian says, getting down on his hands and knees to follow another set of cables across the floor to where they're plugged into a wall port. “He isn't the head of the biggest smuggling organization outside of the Hutts for nothing, you know. Oh—he said to tell you thanks, by the way.”

“Me? I haven't done a thing for him.” Bodhi blinks.

“The Kessel prison break,” Jyn tells him. “Apparently shutting down the place made the cost of spice go through the roof; he'd been sitting on warehouses of the stuff, he was waiting to move until the time was right. You should've seen his face when we told him it was your idea.”

“Oh, no,” Bodhi says, aghast. “I aided and abetted the spice market?”

“You should get him to cut you in,” Cassian observes, amused, as he gets back to his feet, a tangle of cables in hand. “It'd be more lucrative than this—” He waves a hand at the mess they're making of packing up.

“Ha,” Bodhi says. “Solo got paid a pile of credits back at Yavin. Although—he’s a smuggler too, so that doesn’t prove anything, I guess.”

“He got paid for rescuing Leia,” Jyn points out. “And, I don't know, maybe he negotiated a finder's fee for scraping the last of the Jedi off that rock.”

“He would,” Bodhi agrees, a smile twitching at his lips. He helps Jyn squash the lid of the cargo container down—realizes, suddenly, that his friends have somehow managed to effectively distract him from his worries for the span of a few minutes, and immediately tenses back up again. ”Is that it? Can we go now?”

“Well,” Jyn says, and her eyes are glinting. “If the Imperials are coming, there’s one more thing we need to do.”

*****
Most of the hangar’s cleared out by the time Bodhi finishes loading the Intelligence equipment on the Cadera and joins Solo at the foot of the Falcon’s ramp. He stares at the crates upon crates of explosives sitting on a hovercart there; he’d worried about Baze’s one container of explosives—he can’t imagine flying with this many on board. Solo grins at him, as Chewbacca deposits another container on the stack. “You insurrectionist types sure know the way to a smuggler’s heart,” he says, stepping back and admiring the hoard.

“Don’t tell me you’re charging the Rebellion for these,” Bodhi says, slightly appalled.

Solo laughs. “Of course I am. But just for the parts, mind you, not labor or delivery.”

“Only because Jyn threatened to break his hand,” Cassian points out, bringing down the second-to-last crate with her, Kaytoo carrying one on his own behind them. “Where’s Leia and Draven?”

“Leia—?” Solo turns, surprised. “Shouldn’t she be on the Redemption by now? Shouldn’t all the ranking members of High Command be off this rock, if we’re gonna blow up the base?”

“Rieekan went to coordinate with the rest of the Fleet,” Bodhi offers, and then the two people in question stroll up.

“We’re not simply blowing it up, Captain Solo,” Draven says, sternly. “We’re laying a trap.”

Solo’s eyes light up. “Ah. Okay, I’m on board.”

“This is volunteers only,” Leia says, rolling her eyes. “I’m not putting ‘labor’ on your tab for this one.” Solo turns to her, looking wounded, and they instantly fall into an argument. Draven sighs and settles in to wait it out, folding his arms and tapping a finger against his sleeve.

“I didn’t volunteer,” Kaytoo says, to Cassian. “You told me I had to come help.”

Jyn gazes up at him. “Are you going to wait on the shuttle with Bodhi, then?”

“That’s boring.”

“Hey,” Bodhi protests, mildly offended, as Jyn covers a laugh with her hand. “What the hell, Kaytoo, I’m right here.” Chewbacca puts a heavy, affectionate paw on his shoulder and mutters that of course he’s not boring.

Kaytoo makes a half-hearted apologetic gesture at him. “Fine, I’ll help.”

“All right, let’s get to work,” Leia says, turning her back on Solo, even though she clearly knows he’s making faces behind her. “Bodhi, Chewie, you keep your engines running. This shouldn’t take long.”

Bodhi gets the Cadera prepped quickly, and then—waits.

He gets up, paces the length of the shuttle a couple of times, fingers running over his comlink, wondering if he should ask how it’s going and deciding against it. Wonders if they’ll ever know if their trap gets sprung, once they’re gone—has to wrench his thoughts away from drifting down the path of wondering who the Empire will send to die here. Tries to focus and think about his ship, running down the long list of repairs in his mind; runs out of that pretty fast, though, and then he’s pacing again.

*Think of something else.*
Think about—how Luke’ll be there, on the Redemption, eager to get back to fixing the Cadera, eyes full of stars and excitement, ready to fly and find a new home for the Rebellion, some place where we can be alone—

“Okay, we’re done,” Jyn says, over the comlink. “Coming back!”

Solo takes Leia and, with some obvious reluctance, Draven, in the Falcon. Kaytoo, without prompting, strides up and folds himself down into the co-pilot’s chair; Bodhi almost wants to tell him no, that’s Luke’s—but manages to keep his mouth shut, somehow. Cassian’s hands are a little unsteady, when he straps in next to Jyn, but he smiles, and pulls Bodhi down to kiss him on the cheek. “On we go,” he murmurs.

Chewbacca waves from the Falcon’s cockpit as the Cadera’s ramp closes up, and that’s the last Bodhi sees of Thila Base.
Chapter 27

Chapter Summary

I told you all not to start something you couldn't finish.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

The Cadera and the Falcon are among the last ships from Thila Base to dock with the Redemption, and almost as soon as they arrive, the frigate makes its jump to hyperspace, headed for a rendezvous with the Fleet. Cassian and Jyn and Kaytoo haul their stuff off, with promises to get together for a meal as soon as possible. Solo stands at the bottom of the ramp of the Falcon for a long, long moment, watching Leia’s white-clad form disappear into the corridors. He turns and catches Bodhi staring, and his answering smirk is half-hearted, at best.

“You didn’t have this shuttle, before,” the Redemption’s deck officer says, startling Bodhi. “Or that shiny new badge, either.” She grins at him. “Shall we get started with your ship inspection, Lieutenant?”

It takes an hour; Bodhi is nervously defensive about the repairs that have yet to be completed, but she only smiles wryly and comments that most of the ships coming in look far worse off than his. After she’s finished her inspection, he walks out of the shuttle with her to see Luke, leaning up against his X-wing, looking for all the galaxy like a Rebellion propaganda poster. His orange flightsuit’s rumpled, and Bodhi wonders how long he’s been hanging around waiting; he hadn’t seen Luke when they’d docked. The rest of the hangar bay’s dark, as quiet as it can get with droids buzzing around and the night shift coming on.

“And you remember the regulations about emissions—” the deck officer says, and then she sees Luke waiting, and her eyes twinkle up at Bodhi. “I’ll—just have you sign here, and I’ll get out of your way.” Luke nods to her as she heads off, and then refocuses all his attention on Bodhi.

“Hi,” Luke says, leaning in and claiming a brief, weary kiss. “Wild couple of days, huh? Rieekan had us hiding sensor buoys around the edge of the sector so we’ll know when the Empire really does come poking around. I heard Jyn planned a little surprise for them, though.” He fingers the strap of the goggles hanging around Bodhi’s neck, still standing very close. “You’ve been all right? You look like you haven’t gotten a moment’s rest since we got back from Dominus III.”

Bodhi looks him up and down, not meaning anything by it, but Luke starts to blush. “You haven’t slept much, either,” Bodhi murmurs, yawning.

“Well, I think I can guess where this is headed.” Luke’s amused. “I’m bunking with the Rogues for now, until they can sort out something else for me. You?”

“That’s where I’m assigned, too.”

“C’mon, then.” Luke jerks his head in the direction of the turbolift. “It’ll be crowded, but we could both use the sleep.”
“Yeah, okay.” Bodhi wonders if he shouldn’t just go back and sack out in the shuttle, if he’ll be taking up needed room. But it’s nice to lean against Luke’s shoulder in the turbolift, going up to the crew decks, and just listen to him talk about a comet whose orbit had drifted into the system; how he’d had to convince Artoo to give back manual control of his X-wing so he could ride along its wake.

“—so, um, sorry about that, if you’re on the maintenance crew that ends up having to work on my engines”— Luke’s mouth quirks up. “I mean, I should come help out anyway, it was a silly idea to try to stash a sensor buoy in the comet’s tail.”

“I bet it was fun, though,” Bodhi says, softly.

Luke looks at him, his eyes going warm and earnest. “It was, but it would’ve been more fun if you were out there with me.”

“When I get the Cadera fixed,” Bodhi promises, and Luke’s face lights up. He starts to press in for another kiss, but the turbolift doors slide open and there’s a medic, a Twi’lek woman, standing outside.


Luke smiles at her. “Have a good shift, hopefully it’s a quiet night!” The medic heads off, and Bodhi blinks. “She knows who I am?”

“Of course she does,” Luke says, turning his gaze on Bodhi, his brow furrowing a little, as they get to Rogue Squadron’s barracks—

—where it turns out there’s only one free bunk left.

“What the hell?” Luke freezes, looking around at his squadmates, turning red, not meeting Bodhi’s eyes.

“Hey, Luke, sorry about that, you guys are the last ones to pick, so—” Wedge is perched on the edge of the top bunk by the door, opposite the sole remaining bunk. He’s down to shorts and an undershirt, still worryingly thin after Kessel, but he’s sporting the widest shit-eating grin on his face Bodhi has ever seen. Hobbie, below Wedge, is peering over his pillow at them, his eyes dancing.

“You’re hilarious,” Luke says, shaking his head. Kasan, tugging a brush through her unbraided hair, shrugs at him, as if to say she wasn’t involved, though she’s clearly still entertained by it. Zev, down at the far end, is already out like a light, snoring as loudly as Wedge had warned.

“What are you gonna do, Commander?” Janson teases, and Bodhi’s certain he’s the one who fucked with the room assignments, he’s the best slicer out of the squad. “There’s no more bunks open, not with all of Thila Base crammed onto the ship.”

Luke turns, an apology in his voice, “Bodhi—”

—but Bodhi’s already kicked off his boots, tossing his jacket on the floor, and is climbing up to Wedge’s bunk. “Luke’s commander, he gets his own,” Bodhi says, and flops down next to Wedge, holding back a smile. “You don’t mind doubling up, do you?” Hobbie snorts with laughter, and Janson’s rolling his eyes and grinning at Bodhi.
“Uh—” Wedge’s face is astonished; he glances over his shoulder, flustered, at Bodhi propping himself up on one elbow. “I—wait—”

Luke snickers and starts stripping off his flightsuit, dropping his weapons into his footlocker. “Thanks, Wedge, it’s nice of you to share until this mistake gets resolved.” He’s playing along, for now, but the sideways glance he gives Bodhi, unseen by anyone else, is unmistakably one of longing, and Bodhi regrets his instinctive impulse to mess with Wedge, because now he wants to fold—

Kasan laughs. “I told you all not to start something you couldn’t finish.” She finishes brushing her hair out. “Turn out the lights when you’ve figured out who’s going where.”

Wedge looks at Bodhi again; he gazes back, unblinking, daring Wedge to call his bluff, unsure how long he can keep the game up, himself. “Well, good night, then,” Wedge says, cheerfully, and kicks at the light plate with his bare foot. He waits a full minute, still just sitting there in the dark, and then pokes Bodhi in the ribs, whispering, “Okay, you made your point—I’ll get Janson to fix it.”

“And you’ll all stop trying to help?” Bodhi mutters back, swinging his legs over the side of the bunk to jump back down. The idea of staying, now, with all of them waiting to see what he’ll do—

Wedge’s shrug is more felt than seen. “We just want him—you—to be happy.”

“Then let me get there at my own speed,” Bodhi whispers. “Please?”


Bodhi reaches over and squeezes Wedge’s arm, before dropping to the floor as quietly as he can. “Wait—where are you going?” Wedge hisses, but Bodhi doesn’t reply. By the faint light of the comm and control panel by the door, he can see Luke’s eyes are open, curious. Bodhi collects up his boots and jacket, and then, despite Luke’s outstretched hand grasping at his, slips out the door.

He intends to head back to the Cadera, at first, but, despite his enervation, Bodhi ends up exploring the ship; on all his previous trips to the Redemption, he’d only seen the inside of the hangar bay. And Bodhi had never been able to go about quite this freely in the Empire, of course, as a lowly cargo pilot—even, or perhaps especially, in the Star Destroyer above Jedha. He’s oddly restless, wanting to see their temporary home before it wakes. The crew decks aren’t very interesting; like all the dorms or barracks he’s ever been in, they’re small and lined with the smells and sounds of too many lives jammed in one place.

Once Bodhi’s clear of the crew decks, though, he finds himself stepping off the turbolift in the medical facilities, which are hushed in a way that has nothing to do with the late hour. The thick transparisteel of the walls dull the noise of monitors beeping, the flat orders of the surgical droids, people crying out in pain. There are more patients onboard than he’d expected, for the Redemption to have been able to divert and pick up everyone from Thila Base. Every bed Bodhi can see on the open floor is filled, and almost every bacta tank has someone in it; the ones that don’t are being prepped.

Bodhi shudders, and turns his face away, remembering the taste of bacta in his mouth. I shouldn’t be here.

“Hey, Lieutenant?” It’s the Twi’lek medic from before, frowning at him. “Did you need something?”

Bodhi shakes his head. “Just—just wandering around.”

“Uh-huh.” Her lekku are twitching in doubt. “If, um, if you want something to help you sleep—?”
“No,” he says, realizing how he must look, how many hollow-eyed soldiers must’ve come by for that very thing over the course of the past months—no, the past year, if not even longer than that. “I only wanted to see the ship.”

“Ahh, yeah, of course. Well—main bridge is that way, and you’ll have to go down a couple decks to connect to the propulsion module, if you want to see engineering.”

“Thanks,” Bodhi says, and turns to head in the direction of the turbolift.

“Lieutenant—”

He stops, and looks at her curiously. “Yes?”

“We all know what you did for the Rebellion,” she says. “If there’s ever anything you need; medical supplies, or—or stims, or whatever, don’t hesitate to ask. Okay?”

Bodhi manages not to flinch—they all think they know who I am—and only says, sincerely, “Thank you.”

“Don’t mention it,” she says, with a smile, and goes back to her duties.

Bodhi doesn’t encounter anyone else as he crosses the narrow neck to propulsion. His thoughts meander aimlessly from lack of sleep, starting to swirl like the vortex of hyperspace visible out the viewports.

They think they know—

—no.

I’m just the pilot.

Some part of his mind points out that’s always been enough, for Luke, and he drifts that way: Luke gave me a ship—a chance to fly. He’s giving me certainty, and trust, and time, and all he wants is—Bodhi stops walking, and looks at his reflection in the viewport; his own dark, haunted eyes stare back.

Well, I’m not enough.

“Okay,” he says, aloud. “Think of something, then.” But he’s as stymied as he was that night after Gerrard V.

In engineering, the officer on night duty, a Zabrak almost as tan as Bodhi, frowns at him and asks, “Is there something I can do for you?”

“No, I—” Bodhi starts, but then pulls up short. “Wait. Yes. Do you have spare parts down here? Anything I could fix up and use for my own ship? I can pay—”

The Zabrak purses his lips, and gestures for Bodhi to follow him back to a storage area. “You’re welcome to have at our salvage; there’s not a lot, but if you think you can fix any of it, it’s yours.”

Bodhi slips a credit chip from his jacket pocket, but a flicker of recognition crosses the man’s face. “It’s just junk. You’re doing us a favor. Sir.”

“It’s only fair,” Bodhi says, holding the chip out uncertainly, blinking at him. “You’d be able to sell it for scrap, when we got to a shipyard, otherwise.”

The Zabrak reaches out and folds the credit chip back into Bodhi’s hand, shaking his head. “Take
whatever you need.”

“But—I—”

“Nope,” he says, smiling, and walks away, back to his station, before Bodhi can protest any further.

“Well, this is just ridiculous,” Bodhi says to the air, flustered, looking around for anyone who might try to suggest otherwise. But he looks down at the pile of discarded and broken equipment, and promptly forgets all about the way the medic and the engineer had treated him. *If I can fly*—He bites his lip, a thrill of realization running through him. *I know what I can do to start making it fair.*

When he finally does return to his ship with a hovercart of equipment in tow, more tired than ever, but with a plan finally drawing together in his head, Luke is sitting—well, slumping over, really—at the top of the ramp, barefoot and with only his yellow flight jacket on over a thin undershirt, eyes closed. Bodhi’s heart stutters at the sight of him, and he stumbles to a halt, the hovercart emitting a soft whine as it decelerates abruptly. Luke’s eyes fly open, and for a second, he just stares, a little blankly, at Bodhi.

Bodhi says, quickly, “I’m sorry for disappearing like that. I couldn’t—”

“I knew you’d come back eventually.” Luke shakes his head, not angry in the least. His mouth twitches, looking at the seemingly random parts Bodhi dragged back. “I’ll help you work on all that tomorrow, okay? But—for now—” Luke gets to his feet, and behind him, Bodhi sees a couple of bedrolls spread out on the floor of the cargo hold. “I didn’t want you to have to sleep alone out here.”

“I’m going to get up in a couple hours,” Bodhi warns him, but he comes up all the way into the hold, closing the ramp behind them, and Luke smiles.

*****

Over the next couple of days in hyperspace, in between picking up his regular maintenance shifts—including fixing Luke’s *profoundly* fucked-up engines—and working on his own ship, Bodhi hides in Cassian and Jyn’s quarters to do research on their console. Unlike his ship’s computer, their console is tied into the Rebellion’s system, including its Republic-era databanks.

“You’re keeping secrets,” Kaytoo accuses him, when he activates suddenly in the corner, the second morning.

Bodhi jerks in surprise and nearly falls off the chair. “For the love of—Kaytoo, I thought you were switched off for another hour.”

“You’ve been erasing your tracks in the database. I can tell. Do Jyn and Cassian know what you’re doing?” Kaytoo peers suspiciously at him. “Do they even know you’ve been in here?”

“No,” Bodhi admits. “I sliced the lock.”

“You’re sneakier than I thought,” Kaytoo approves. “Not boring at all. What are you looking for?”

“N—nothing.” He shuts off the console and rubs his sleeve across it to wipe off his fingerprints.

Kaytoo tilts his head. “I could help, you know.”

“It’s—it’s okay, I got it under control,” Bodhi says. “Kaytoo—please don’t tell anyone, I promise I’ll explain everything, just—not yet.”
“Are you going to do something foolish and dangerous again?” Kaytoo’s voice sounds resigned.

Bodhi swallows, and something like a smile tugs at the corners of his mouth. “I hope it won’t be.”

“Then I won’t tell them. Unless you get into trouble.”

“Thanks, Kaytoo.” Bodhi gets up, relieved, and pats Kaytoo’s arm.

Kaytoo closes his hand, carefully, on Bodhi’s shoulder in return. “I don’t think I’ve ever kept a secret that didn’t have to do with Cassian killing someone,” he says.

“Uh—”

“Or the kinds of things Jyn likes to do during sex,” Kaytoo adds, thoughtfully, and Bodhi, wide-eyed, bolts for the door.

*****

During his maintenance shift, later: “Janson can’t fix it,” Hobbie says, appearing out of nowhere, and pulling Bodhi away from the Y-wing stabilizer he’s been working on so they can talk privately. “I’m sorry, honestly—none of us meant for you to have to crash out in your ship every night—we talked about taking turns so you could have, you know, an actual bed. Um. Without Luke in it. If that’s what you want.”

“It’s okay, Hobbie.” Bodhi pushes his goggles up onto his forehead. “I’ve got it covered. I mean, it is my ship, I’m coming and going all hours anyway, I’d wake you up—well, not all of you, I guess. I don’t know if anything could wake Zev up once he’s out.”

Hobbie frowns at him. “You’re sure?”

“Yeah,” Bodhi assures him. “Besides, we’ll get to the rendezvous soon, and everything’ll change again after that, right?”

“Good point,” Hobbie says, and claps him on the shoulder. “Again, really sorry. Hey, are you coming to our sabacc game in a bit?”

“I forgot—” Bodhi frowns. “Luke said he’d come by and help me lock down that problem with my deflector shields.”

“Don’t worry about it, I don’t mind hanging on to my credits a while longer.” Hobbie grins. “Okay. You two have fun.”

Bodhi doesn’t even think to be suspicious of Hobbie until half an hour later, when he heads back to the Cadera to meet Luke. A wave of heat hits him as soon as he sets foot on the ramp, and he realizes his so-called friend had been serving as a distraction.

“You rankweed suckers,” Bodhi mutters, stripping off his jacket, tossing it and his goggles onto a seat in the hold and dashing up into the cockpit. The environmental controls have been sliced to hell and back—trying to just shut the heaters off turns into a circuitous, nonsensical path across the console. Sweat starts to trickle down his shirt as he tries to figure out what Janson had done; it’s nothing that’ll damage the ship, they’d never do that, but—

“Something happen to the environmental controls?” Luke asks, coming up behind him. He’s shed his jacket, too, and his hair’s already starting to stick to his forehead.
“Yeah, your squadron,” Bodhi grumbles, sliding out of the chair and maneuvering under the console so he can tell if Janson had screwed with the wiring.

Luke groans. “Sorry, Bodhi—Janson’ll get into a prank war at the slightest provocation—he must’ve taken that business the other night as the start of something.”

Bodhi wriggles back out from under the console and Luke pulls him back up to his feet. “Everything looks okay down there, it’s just whatever the fuck Wes did to the ship’s computer, I guess.” He’s panting, wiping sweat from his brow. “It’s like a blasted sauna.”

Luke cranes his neck at the temperature on the console display as he slips into the co-pilot’s chair. “Not much worse than Tatooine, actually,” he comments.

“Don’t tell me this feels like home,” Bodhi says, dryly, shaking his head and sitting back down in the pilot’s seat, trying to track Janson’s scheme. Luke takes too long to respond; Bodhi glances at him, and he’s gazing down at the console, smiling just enough that Bodhi can tell exactly what he’s thinking.

Home is where I am—

Luke lifts his head. “There’s a lot less sand.” He grins, but his eyes have gone bright and earnest again.

Bodhi swallows, and tries to smile at him. He turns back to the ship’s computer, acutely aware that he isn’t just hot from the shuttle’s malfunction alone. “Okay, okay, um—if I can trace back how Janson rerouted the internal sensors—”

They fix the environmental controls, a process more time-consuming than complicated, Bodhi making increasingly dire promises about what he’s going to do to Wedge and Janson and Hobbie under his breath as sweat drips off his face, Luke snickering beside him. Bodhi calls a halt to work after an hour, and they go down and sit at the top of the ramp, looking out at the darkened hangar, waiting for the interior to cool off. He pours half a canteen of water over his head, shaking droplets off his hair, watching the way Luke’s lips part at that, and then Luke’s leaning over, kissing water from his mouth, and—yeah, okay, this wasn’t the worst prank ever—Bodhi says it aloud, tilting his head back, clutching at Luke’s sodden shirt.


“Oh, yeah,” Bodhi says, his retribution already plotted out. “It’s all about—” he gasps, as Luke’s mouth moves on to his neck—“the timing.”

*****

The Redemption arrives at the rendezvous point on schedule. Some talk of what High Command’s planning filters down to Bodhi, but there aren’t any moves to transfer personnel to other sectors or ships, which gives him time to take care of parts of his own plan, including admitting to Cassian and Jyn what he’s been doing. Cassian is worried, of course, but Jyn, delighted, approves entirely.

Bodhi also finds the time to make Wedge, Hobbie, and Janson—he doesn’t think Kasan or Zev have been all that involved—increasingly paranoid: walking out of their simulation room just ahead of their scheduled time with tools sticking out of his pockets; deliberately not eating the same food they eat in the galley. Small, silly things to keep them off balance. Jyn notices, thinks it’s funny, and makes a few suggestions of her own, much to Cassian’s dismay.

And, finally, a few days after the rendezvous, the Cadera’s done being repaired.
Bodhi drums his fingers on the edge of the console, watching the diagnostics run, his heart starting to race.

*It’s time. I can do this.*

“Okay, okay, we’ve got shields back, everything looks good. I think—I think I can fly, again.” His mouth is dry, and he’s trembling a little, but Bodhi looks up, and says to Luke, “Let’s—let’s go, right now, you and me.”


Bodhi runs right over top of his surprise, hastily. “We’ll knock out the rest of the scouting runs we were going to do—I got resupplied already, I talked with Draven, there’s nothing more pressing than finding a base, for Intelligence, and—and—”

Luke stammers, “Are—are you—”

“I’m serious,” Bodhi says, trying to sound confident and not desperate. “It’s what we would’ve been doing if those Imperials hadn’t shown up at Dominus III.”

“You realize,” Luke says, starting to smile, “You’re asking me to run away with you?”

“I’m not going rogue again, just—” Bodhi gives him a shy, hopeful smile of his own. “Please say you’ll come?”

Luke thumps the armrest. “Yes, yes, blast, of course,” and he leans over, pulling Bodhi in to kiss him happily.

“Great,” Bodhi says, as they break apart. He checks the ship’s chrono. *Perfect.* “There’s just one more thing I need to take care of, before we go. If you’d please let the deck officer know we’re departing?”

“Yes,” Luke says, puzzled, but he’s already reaching for the ship’s comms.

Bodhi squeezes Luke’s hand, giddy about his plan coming together at last. “I’ll be right back.”

He works fast, hands shaking and heart pounding the whole time, and then races back to the *Cadera*, with barely a minute to spare, when he slaps at the ramp controls to close them in.

Luke’s just getting off the comm. “All set?”

“Yeah.” Bodhi smirks to himself, keying the engines for preflight.

“What did you do?” Luke asks, handling his side of the console adroitly as ever.

“Give it a second,” Bodhi says. “Your Rogues should be getting back from running simulations right about—” His comlink crackles, and Wedge’s indignant voice sputters out, “Lieutenant Bodhi fucking Rook, you put a magnetic seal on the door to our quarters?”

“Yeah, yeah—”

Luke’s eyes go wide, and he starts to laugh. Wedge again, sounding aghast: “It’s keyed to your thumbprint?”

“Sorry, can’t talk now, we’re leaving!” Bodhi thumbs off his comlink and takes the controls, lifting the *Cadera* off the deck and soaring out through the hangar’s forcefield.
“You're full of surprises today, aren't you?” Luke says, delighted, affection shading his voice. Bodhi grins out at the stars. “You have *no* idea.”

Chapter End Notes

Can't write pilots without the silly shit they try to do to each other. I make no promises about future appearances of stuffed Ewok dolls! :D

A note on the timeline: currently we're sitting at right around 1.5 ABY, and there's still a whole campaign from the Rogue Squadron game that we haven't gotten to yet; that should start making its appearance in about three updates. I promise ESB *is* coming, but there's like five or six places I want to go, first.

Thanks, as always, for reading. <3
Chapter 28

Chapter Summary

No one but us.

Chapter Notes

Heed the latest tags, and keep in mind this thing has always been rated M... ;)

(A bit more signposting, just in case: the smut starts after the line "Whatever you want" and scrolling down to the last set of asterisks will get you right past it.)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Once they’re off the Redemption, drifting between the Fleet ships at the rendezvous, Bodhi insists on handling all the navigational calculations himself.

Luke smiles at him. “I know you’d never jump us too close to a supernova.”

“What?”

His smile broadens into a grin. “Something Han said once. You really don’t want me to know where we’re going?”

“Not until we get there,” Bodhi says. “Please? You’ve trusted me this far.”

Luke reaches over and touches his hand. “I’ll even close my eyes, if you want,” he says, lightly.

“I’ll wake you when we arrive,” Bodhi promises.

“I’m not gonna fall asleep,” Luke says, squeezing his eyes shut. But he does, not long after they jump to hyperspace, looking peaceful even as his head slowly nods uncomfortably sideways onto his shoulder. Bodhi doesn’t know all of the things Luke’s been handling since they left Thila Base; it’s impossible to gauge how busy Luke must actually be, when he still makes every effort to spend time with him. But he’s rarely as still as this when he’s awake, always ready to leap into action. Though —Luke’s energy is never from nervous desperation, like his own; Luke burns bright and steady as a star.

Bodhi laughs at himself for that, silently, ruefully. What does that make me?

An erratic orbit.

He throws another look at Luke to make certain he’s asleep, and then pulls his datapad of research out just to check it over one more time. I can do this. For him.

Luke’s head is still drooping, some hours later, when the navicomputer beeps the alert that they’ve arrived in system, and even when the Cadera shudders slightly upon reentering normal space. The
glimmering oceans of Aquilaris grow larger and larger in the viewport as Bodhi takes them in, staying well clear of the wreck of the once-floating city. He spots the place he wants to land on the scanner—it still shines, when he sees it out the viewport, even after all these years—and corrects his trajectory to put down there. Bodhi’s inordinately proud of his landing, so gentle that Luke doesn’t wake, even as he cuts out the repulsorlifts, deploys the landing gear and the ramp.

Despite the serenity of the empty planet, Bodhi’s heart is pounding in anticipation. He gets up from his chair, and slides in between the console and Luke’s seat; leans down and puts his hands on both sides of Luke’s face. “We’re here,” he whispers, and kisses Luke’s eyelids.

Luke makes a soft, sleepy sound of pleasure. “Kiss me again,” he mumbles, plaintively. Bodhi obliges, once, and then repeats, more firmly, “We’re here.” Luke scrubs a hand through his hair, and squints up at him.

“We are? I didn’t even feel you land—wait, where is here?”

“Come and see,” Bodhi says, pulling him up and out of his seat. And as they walk down the ramp into the watery, late-afternoon sunlight, Luke draws an astonished breath, and breaks away from him, running out—

—onto the floor of the ruined stadium, laughing, shouting back, “A podracing track?”

Bodhi’s heart soars as he watches Luke dart out into the empty lanes and tilt his head back to gawk at the huge, shattered viewscreens all around them. He can hear waves crashing against the outer shell of the stadium; it’s a wonder the place hasn’t eroded completely away under the ocean’s endless assault. A salt-scented wind tugs at his hair gently, reminding him of Scarif, but only just.

“How did you even find this place?” Luke calls, his voice echoing off the walls of the stadium, startling a whole flock of bright-winged avians into flight from their nests among the seats. “Podracing’s been dead for decades, except for the underground, and I doubt you’ve been talking to them.”

Bodhi shoves his hands in his pockets and strolls a couple meters away, to where he guesses the starting line must’ve been, though of course the droids that would’ve signaled the start are long gone. He traces a line in the fine sand with his boot, hiding a smile as he watches Luke count the decks that reach up to the clear blue oval of sky. “Your father raced here.”

Luke wheels around, shocked. “My—”

“I mean, the history’s confusing,” Bodhi continues on, trying to sound casual, as if he’d only happened to stumble upon the fact, but deep down, he’s terribly anxious for Luke to appreciate it. “When the Empire outlawed podracing, the records got jumbled up, I don’t know when he was here, the new calendar makes everything complicated anyway—but Anakin Skywalker raced here, Luke, he won against Clegg Holdfast in the Aquilaris Classic—”

Luke starts back towards him, looking stunned, his mouth falling open.

“—and—he set a course record in the Sunken City race—” Bodhi stammers, as Luke gets to him and grabs his arm with a shaking hand.

“This isn’t a possible base—you found this place for me?”

Bodhi rubs the back of his neck. “I wanted you to see it. Even if it’s all gone—”

Luke cuts him off, crushing his mouth against Bodhi’s, a kiss caught halfway between tenderness
“Thank you,” he says, pulling away a fraction, not letting go of Bodhi’s arm. “I never—my uncle let on that my father did some podracing, on Tatooine, but I never thought to find out about it, after I joined the Rebellion, it was always just what he did in the Clone Wars, once I knew who he really was.”

Bodhi says, his heartbeat finally starting to settle now that he’s certain he hit on the right thing, “Your father won races on a bunch of other worlds—we can’t go to some of them, they’re too dangerous right now, even for you, but we’ll go—if you want, I’ll take you to see Mon Gazza and Ord Ibanna, at least.” He swallows, and says the rest in a rush, no longer bothering to mask his intensity, how much he wants Luke to understand. “I know you’ve got your father’s lightsaber, and his name and—and everything that goes with that, but it was really—no one remembers any of this. So it’s yours, it’s just yours to know about, since everyone else’s forgotten.”

Luke squeezes Bodhi’s shoulder. His eyes are brighter than Bodhi’s ever seen them. “You found it, you won’t forget, either. Stars, Bodhi, this is so—” He laughs, suddenly. “Did you have to lie to Draven about where we were going?”

“No,” Bodhi says, imagining Draven’s face if he had said, by the way, while we’re out on this scouting run, I’m gonna tour Luke around the old podracing circuit, because—I put other sectors on the flight plan, I have a few ideas for where to really look.” He smiles. “But let’s just start here, yeah? The track goes down underwater. If the tunnels haven’t collapsed, we could get pretty far, exploring on foot, and you wouldn’t have to swim.”


Bodhi pulls his datapad back out as they follow the racecourse towards the underwater tunnels, the daylight fading the further down they go, but there’s a tenebrous sort of glow ahead, where Bodhi assumes they’ll be able to see out again. The datapad provides enough illumination to see their path by; not only the track itself, as it emerges from the sand, but also the faded black-and-neon arrows that would’ve guided racers to their victory—or, if they took the turns too fast, their doom.

He rambles happily to Luke about all the stuff he’d found on the favored competitors at Aquilaris, their engine specs, preferred approaches to the most notable obstacles. When he hits Anakin Skywalker’s lap times—which aren’t statistically that far off the top marks of the other racers—Bodhi wonders aloud how much he’d relied on the Force to help him win.

“From everything I know about podracing,” Luke observes, “My father probably needed the Force just to help him fly the thing, never mind winning. It wasn’t—still isn’t a sport meant for humans.” He shrugs. “Having extra hands probably helped, you know?” Then he stops walking, entranced by the underwater world opening up beyond the transparisteel-walled section they’ve come to. The outside edges of the wall are streaked with the detritus and grime of decades without maintenance, but there’s still an unblemished three-meter-long window in the center. Sunlight filtering through the crystal-clear water sparkles off of schools of fish, and casts rippling shadows on the tunnel floor that remind Bodhi of flying through a nebula.

“I bet the racers didn't get to take in this view much, at five hundred kilometers an hour,” Luke says, awed, pressing his hands up to the transparisteel.

Bodhi leans against a support strut at his side, and glances further down the track at the split in the course that would've come up in milliseconds, at that speed. “If you looked, you’d probably crash,” he agrees, turning back to watch the closest school of fish split and dart away from an intrusive, predatory-looking creature with three sets of long flippers and an eager mouthful of teeth. “It’s kind of strange, isn’t it? To have something this beautiful, right here, that’d kill you if you spent too much time looking at it, but that no one else would ever have the chance to really see.”
“No one but us,” Luke says, turning. And then Bodhi has to stop looking at the undersea view, because Luke is kissing him, fiercely.

“I’m glad you like it,” Bodhi manages, when he’s able to come up for air again, a couple long and impassioned minutes later.

“It’s the complete opposite of Tatooine,” Luke says, and grins. “Of course I like it.” The shadows around them are lengthening; Bodhi can’t see much farther beyond where the track splits anymore without a light. “What do you think? Should we keep going, or head back to the ship?”

“Let’s go back,” Bodhi suggests. “You should see what this all looks like from the air.”

“It’s too bad the Cadera won’t fit down here,” Luke muses, jumping up and touching the ceiling of the tunnel as they turn and make their way out. He coughs, surprised, as decades-old dust follows him back down. “It’d be fun to fly through one of these courses, see what it was like back then.”

“Maybe on one of the other planets,” Bodhi says. “They’re not all closed-in like this, or at least I don’t think they all are, there’s one track that goes through a volcano—”

“You’re joking.”

Bodhi shakes his head, and then realizes that Luke can’t see him in the dark again. “No, it’s real; it’s on Baroonda, the last course in the Invitational circuit. They called it the Inferno.”


“I’m not sure, I’m sorry,” Bodhi says. “The track favorite was this Toong guy named Ben Quadinaros, but I never found the results from the Invitational.”

Luke goes quiet for a moment, and then says, sounding abashed, “Um. I don’t know what a Toong looks like.”

“There’s not a lot of them left,” Bodhi offers. “They’re sort of—yellow, I guess, and they’ve got big heads and three antennae. Bipeds, though, not really insectoid.”

“How come there’s not many of them left?”

Bodhi has to think back a bit. “A comet hit their homeworld, around maybe thirty, thirty-five years ago. Why?”


“It's a big galaxy,” Bodhi says. “And—I'll fly you anywhere, to see it. I mean, not just on this run, but when the war’s over and we can go anywhere—I never thought I'd get to see any of this, and I want—I want to see the rest of it with you.” He's bold, in the shadows, but he'll never be as forward as Luke; the sound of a sharply drawn breath is his only warning before Luke collides with him in the dark, a hand going unerringly around the back of his head, pulling him in for a grateful kiss.

After that, it’s fully dusk when they emerge from the tunnels and go back to the Cadera; one of the world’s two moons is starting to peek over the edge of the stadium’s walls as they lift off again. The wind’s picked up, and Bodhi has to fight to keep the shuttle steady as it hovers over the stadium, even with the stabilizing wings folded back down. Luke is silent, gazing down at the sinuous and mostly unbroken line of the racecourse under Aquilaris’ moonlit waves.
“My uncle only ever told me my father was a navigator on a freighter,” Luke says, eventually. “He kept all of this from me—the reason I knew my father raced on Tatooine is because he slipped up once, when he was yelling at me about taking my speeder out to Beggar’s Canyon.” He looks at Bodhi, and his eyes are as watery and blue as the world curving away below them. “Thank you for giving me back this part of him.”

“You’re welcome,” Bodhi says, sincerely, and thinks, for the first time, *Okay.

This is going to work.*

*****

Togominda, the next planet, has nothing to do with Anakin Skywalker’s brief but illustrious podracing career, but Luke doesn’t mind at all, grinning at Bodhi as he weaves through the erupting salt geysers, showing off a little. It’s like flying through Bamayar, in a way—Bodhi pulls out of a dive and skims the surface of the planet, letting the *Cadera* spin in the eddies, not worrying about what the salt will do to the hull, the shields—not worrying about *anything*, because Luke is urging him on, exuberant.

“If a TIE got caught in one of those geysers—” Luke laughs.

“It’d be blown clear back out to space,” Bodhi says, smiling at him.

Luke smiles back. “We could use this as a training ground for X-wing pilots, for sure.” He shakes his head, his expression going fond—“Not just fighters. For *any* pilots.”

“Make a note of it for Draven,” Bodhi suggests, touched, and takes them soaring back up to the stars.

*****

He sleeps for a couple of hours in hyperspace between sectors, waking when they hit the Mon Gazza system—a brief dip into the Mid Rim—and Luke attempts, to no avail, to convince the paranoid spaceport authorities to let them land.

“I’m telling you, we are *not* Imperials—check the registry, there is no Imperial shuttle *Cadera!* We just want to visit the podraces—”

The voice on the other end is extremely suspicious. “Podracing is illegal. There’s no podracing going on here.”

Luke blows out a frustrated-sounding breath and says, “*I know*, but years ago there were, and we want—” The spaceport side clicks off, and Bodhi suppresses a snicker, coming fully awake as Luke slaps at the switch, complaining, “They hung up on me!”

“Maybe if you’d told them who you were?” Bodhi murmurs, amused. “I bet they’d take a bribe, no spice mining world is *this* above board.”

Luke’s mouth twitches. “You want to give it another try?”

Bodhi looks out the viewport at the dusty red world. “If they don’t want Imperials poking around, chances are they wouldn’t turn us both in, but—” He shrugs. “Maybe here’s not worth the risk.”

“It’d be hard to explain to Leia why we got picked up on a spice planet this far off course,” Luke agrees, and reverses for the Outer Rim again.
It’s easy to avoid the spaceport on Shuldene, though; it’s a tiny outpost that only has an automated outgoing message directing tourists to the best viewing coordinates.

“We should find someplace else to land,” Luke says, and Bodhi nods, starting up a long range scan—but there’s only the barest handful of other ships on the planet’s surface, and it’s easy enough to put down somewhere on the ice well away from them.

“Probably shouldn’t base out of a tourist attraction, but—” Bodhi throws a curious glance at Luke. “Let’s go see what there is?”

Luke has no sense of balance on the icy, slick surface; his eyes go wide on his first step down as he starts to fall, clutching at Bodhi’s arm; Bodhi manages to grab onto the ramp’s struts and doesn’t tumble after him. “Are you all right?” he asks, hauling ineffectively at Luke’s jacket, trying not to laugh as Luke clambers upright again, looking flustered.

“Did you learn how to skate at the Academy, too?” Luke scowls, and playfully shoves Bodhi out onto the ice, dismayed when Bodhi slides to a stop a meter away without faltering.

“No, but I understand how a mostly frictionless surface works,” Bodhi says, lightly. “Can’t you use the Force to help?”

Luke blinks. “I don’t even know how that would help,” he says, and cautiously ventures out onto the ice again, slipping and crashing into Bodhi’s arms—Bodhi suspects it’s a bit deliberate, this time, but he doesn’t mind. “So—what’s out here?”

Bodhi pulls him around and points at the gracefully curving line of bones jutting out of the ice about twenty meters away. “That.”

“Okay, this is just as creepy as the fortress on Amaltanna,” Luke says, shuddering, when they get over to the creature frozen in the ice; they’d passed over a few other preserved animals, but none quite as large as the one Bodhi’s staring down at now. It’s a cetacean, or something like that, with a long tail curving down into the ice; he wonders if it had been coming to the surface for air, not knowing its world was dying, when it froze. The bones of its spine are only exposed above the ice; underneath, he can see that its flesh and mottled blue-black skin are still intact.

“Yeah,” Bodhi agrees, disturbed. “I hope—I hope it didn’t take long to die.” He contemplates the horror of it, lingering on and on, trapped, waiting for—

“Bodhi—” Luke’s gazing at him anxiously, one gloved hand tight on his arm, and he realizes he’s been holding his breath, heart starting to thump unpleasantly in his chest.

“I’m all right,” he says, and exhales slowly. “Just got—stuck for a second. I’m sorry.”

Luke shakes his head, waving off the apology. “Come on, let’s go back. There’s nothing more for us here. ‘Sides—I hate the cold.”

Bodhi pulls off his glove and holds out his bare hand as they walk to gauge the temperature, grateful for the distraction. “It’s just about freezing,” he says, and shrugs, putting the glove back on. “It could be worse, it could be windy and snowing.”


Bodhi raises an eyebrow at him. “You’ve never seen snow?”
“No,” Luke says. “To be honest—all these places I’ve seen, it’s still hard for me to believe, sometimes, that there’s so much water, let alone water falling from the sky—the first time it rained on Yavin IV, Han gave me so much shit for just going and standing in it for hours.” He smiles at the memory, though, and Bodhi licks his lips unconsciously, imagining how Luke would’ve looked with his hair and clothes soaking wet in the jungle—Luke is staring at him keenly, hunched-up as he is under the furred hood of his cold-weather jacket.

Bodhi averts his eyes, and says, “It doesn’t have to be this cold to snow—I bet I can find a planet that’ll do.”

“I’d like that.” Luke puts an arm around his shoulders, warmly. “You really are taking me on quite the tour.”


*****

They sleep in shifts again for the next couple of days, exploring empty sectors and checking off more uninhabitable worlds. Luke, endlessly curious, makes Bodhi reel off a list of all the planets he’s ever visited, asking a million questions about sentient species—Bodhi finally cracks, after hours of it, and says, slightly exasperated, “I will look up my xeno professor, and if they’re still alive and didn’t end up exiled or murdered by the Empire for harboring pro-alien sentiments, I will kick you out on their doorstep. I don’t know how an Ithorian metamorphoses, or why you only see Gamorreans using vibro-axes, or—”

Luke chuckles. “Didn’t pay enough attention in that class, huh?”

Bodhi makes a face at him. “I passed, didn’t I? It wasn’t like I was trying to become the Empire’s ambassador to non-human beings, I know enough not to be rude, I only ever wanted to—”

“Fly,” Luke says, beaming at him affectionately, not put off in the least. “Okay—tell me about the Academy, then—” He goes on like this, wringing out every scrap of knowledge he can about the galaxy, staying judiciously away from anything Bodhi flinches at, until they’re down to the last day before they really have to turn back. And then there’s one final podrace track Bodhi wants to show him: the Abyss.

Ord Ibanna is a gas giant, its tibanna mining platforms long since converted over for the races. Bodhi hands his datapad over to Luke, saying, “Everyone hated the Abyss, except for Bozzie Baranta—” Out of the corner of his eye, he catches Luke opening his mouth to ask—“I have no idea what species he was, so please don’t start that again, but his Shelba Razor was supposed to be pretty well suited to this track.”

“Razors weren’t the fastest,” Luke observes, scrolling down the datapad. “Probably needed the maneuverability more than speed.” He turns the screen to show Bodhi the course map, tapping the first hairpin turn out of the stadium. “But my father beat him. Just over three minutes, including a track record on the second lap.” He whistles, softly. “Blast, how daring must he have been?”

Bodhi thinks, Just as bad as you, looking at the slender track suspended in the clouds. It seems collapsed in places, at first, but then he realizes the gaps are deliberate; the racers would’ve had to launch themselves across empty air, with nothing to save them if they failed. “And I thought crashing into the wall would be a bad way to go,” he says, absently.

Luke glances down. “You’d fall for a long time.”
“You’d only get through one atmospheric layer before you were crushed to death,” Bodhi corrects him. He licks his lips, and suggests, a little light-headed, “I think—I think we can fly this race.”

Luke jerks his head up, surprised. Bodhi hurries on, “The Cadera’s safer than a podracer, it’s got better engines, and—and shields; if we go over the side it’ll be fine, just pull up before we hit the second layer of atmosphere—”


“Oh, no.” Bodhi gets to his feet, standing over Luke, his mouth quirking up. “You’re gonna fly it.”

“You’re sure?”

Bodhi nods. “I’d leave the wings down for stabilization on those turns—you can cut the ions in whenever you want instead of the repulsorlifts, but don’t push the overdrive—”

“Okay, okay,” Luke says, laughing. He gets up to trade places with him, grazing a hand over Bodhi’s hip as they squeeze past each other. “You’re really sure about this?”

“I trust you,” Bodhi echoes him. “Don’t you want to try to beat your father’s record? Even if we’re the only ones who’ll know?”

“Seems like we’ve got an unfair advantage, with a better ship,” Luke says, but he straps in, hands light on the controls as they descend into Ord Ibanna’s stadium, the gas giant’s clouds hazy but not obscuring the track.

“It’s not as maneuverable,” Bodhi points out, setting up the ship’s chrono to time the splits, his heartbeat picking up speed as Luke settles into position at what they both assume is the starting line. “It’ll balance out.”

Luke swallows. “If you say so.” He throws Bodhi a look, his hands tightening around the Cadera’s controls. “Ready?”

“Go,” Bodhi says, and Luke accelerates forward, grinning wildly as the engines fire—he takes the first hairpin far too fast, yelping “Sorry!” at Bodhi as the starboard wing scrapes sparks along the outer wall, but Bodhi doesn’t care, not when they’re pushing his ship’s top speeds, not when Luke looks like he’s forgotten everything but how to fly.

Luke goes to repulsorlifts only on the second, wider hairpin through the mining platform and narrowly avoids a plunge off the top track that has Bodhi’s heart in his throat—punches the engines back on and blasts around the next two winding curves through the derelict refinery, black and neon lines blurring past. Bodhi laughs, deliriously, his pulse jumping to lightspeed as Luke throws everything to full power on the straightaways. Gasps and scrabbles for something to hang on to when Luke fires the overdrive and tears up the incline, vaulting the first gap effortlessly—shouts “Luke—fuck—” in pure terror and exhilaration as they hit the second jump and soar out on nothing, slamming back down onto the narrowest section of the course with a jolt that makes the console flare with a dozen abortive warning lights.

“I got it, I got it,” Luke yells, throwing Bodhi the briefest of grins as they cross the line for the first lap—Bodhi sneaks a glance at the split, and hides a grin of his own. Yes, yes, he’s going to be so thrilled—

The second lap goes smoother; Luke hauls hard on the controls and cuts out the engines on both hairpin turns, losing time but making most of it back on the straightaways. Bodhi tears his gaze from the course and just watches Luke through the entire third lap, his heart leaping at the way Luke
throws his head back and whoops with giddy abandon as the shuttle roars through the turns in the refinery.

_I found a way to make it fair._

Luke’s eyes shine as he sends the _Cadera_ diving through the clouds across the last gap and soars across the finish line—Bodhi slaps hastily at the chrono—spinning a little out of control when he shuts down the repulsorlifts, laughing and shaking his head in amazement. “What I wouldn’t give to get you in an X-wing so we could both race,” Luke says, releasing the controls. He leans over as far as he can, beckoning Bodhi to meet him halfway, and kisses him joyfully. “Did everything hold up okay? Engines, shields—sorry about that bump on the first lap—”

“Nothing’s damaged,” Bodhi tells him, dizzily aware that he’s trembling with both adrenaline and—and _desire_, for _this beautiful, unbelievable man, whose first thought after pulling off an impossible feat is for me_—“Do you want to know your time?”

“Oh!” Luke sits up straight. “Yes, please.”

“Two minutes and fifty-two seconds.”

“I beat my father’s time?” Luke cranes his neck in disbelief to see the chrono. “Really?”

“Yes,” Bodhi assures him. His mouth is dry, his heartbeat not slowing down in the slightest. _Okay,_ _okay, I want_— “You even beat his lap record.”

“What—what do I win?” Luke asks, brushing his hair off his forehead, licking his lips hopefully. Bodhi gulps, and says, softly, making the offer as clear in his mind as he can, so Luke will _feel_ it—“Whatever you want.”

Luke gapes at him, and he starts to launch out of the chair, his eyes blazing. He jostles the controls by accident with his elbow, and flails hastily to right the shuttle—babbles, “Um—I’m going to put us into orbit—”

“Okay,” Bodhi says, and tries to focus, calm down a little, watching the clouds of Ord Ibanna falling away. He can’t orient himself, even when they’re between the world and the stars, but it doesn’t matter, because Luke is the bright center of his galaxy, and he’s _right here, now._

“You’re sure?” Luke asks, for what seems like the millionth time, as he unstraps from the pilot’s seat again, reaching over and touching Bodhi’s hand as he rises to his feet.

Bodhi glances over the _Cadera’s_ computer display, making sure they’re safe. “It’s—it’s more _fair,_” Bodhi says, not caring that Luke doesn’t seem to understand, getting up and pushing him gently towards the side of the cockpit. Luke stumbles, a little, and Bodhi grabs his shirt, hauling himself along, pressing forward until he’s got Luke backed all the way against the bulkhead. Luke’s mouth is open, his eyes dazzled, and Bodhi kisses him then, fervent, hands roaming down, flattening his palm to trace the hard line of him through his pants—Luke moans and squirms, and Bodhi laughs against his lips. “Okay?”

“Blast, please”— Luke’s hands are in Bodhi’s hair, dragging their mouths back together.

“This is what you wanted, right?” Bodhi murmurs, getting past the buttons of Luke’s pants and wrapping a hand around his length, thumb caressing up and down gently.

Luke gasps, “Yes”— and makes an attempt to get his own hands on Bodhi, but he’s quicker, for

Bodhi just grins and kisses Luke’s neck, scraping the line of his beard along his throat, liking the sound that escapes Luke’s mouth at that. “Is that how you accept a prize? Complaining about how it’s delivered?”


“Did you just—?” Bodhi sputters, but Luke’s beyond hearing; his eyes are intense as he pulls at Bodhi’s shirt, unbuttoning his pants, getting an insistent and very impatient hand around them both, smooth warm skin on skin.

“Luke—oh, my stars—it’s not a race—” Bodhi gasps, striving vainly to hold himself together, but Luke gets there first anyway, crying out, shuddering, pressing his face against Bodhi’s shoulder for a moment.

And then he lifts his head, and Bodhi has barely the space of a heartbeat to register how blown Luke’s pupils are, before Luke’s shoving him back into the pilot’s chair, getting on his knees despite the confined space, and—Bodhi squeezes his eyes shut, trying to remind himself to keep breathing as Luke’s warm, wet mouth closes around him.

But Luke pulls off abruptly, and says, “What if I did this while you were flying?” Bodhi’s eyes fly open, looking at Luke’s flushed, delighted face; he grips the armrest tightly and groans, willing himself not to come just at the thought.

Luke laughs, lowering his head back down, and spends one complete orbit of the planet leisurely finding out all the things Bodhi likes, reducing him to incoherent pleading, and finally making Bodhi shatter to pieces with a startled cry when he does something truly unfair with his tongue. Bodhi gasps through it, mesmerized by the line of Luke’s throat pulsing as he swallows, drowning in the light of Luke’s eyes.

Then Luke pulls away again, resting his head against Bodhi’s thigh, looking very pleased with himself, eyes going languorously half-lidded. Bodhi tangles his fingers in Luke’s hair, and mutters, doing up his pants with his other hand and trying to regain his equilibrium, “And here—here I thought you were such a sweet farm boy.”

Luke huffs a laugh and wipes his mouth with the back of his hand. “Farm boys get bored,” he says, frowning down at his shirt, which still sticks obscenely to him. “As do cargo pilots, I imagine?”

Bodhi leans his head back against the headrest, still breathing hard. “Well, yeah,” he admits.

“Good,” Luke says, and flashes a happy grin at him. “I’m looking forward to our next race.”

*****

There’s time enough after Ord Ibanna to swing through one more sector; Bodhi manages to jump in
between the sixth planet and the system’s asteroid belt, relieved he doesn’t have to try to navigate the latter, as interesting a challenge as that would be. Luke is both apprehensive and elated at the world coming up on the viewport, because—

“It’s covered in snow,” he says, shivering reflexively. “What's this system called?”

“Hoth, I think,” Bodhi mutters, searching for bare rock to put down on, in the mountains; flying by sensors only, through a blizzard, is not his idea of a good time, but he doesn’t trust the depth or stability of the snowpack on the plains below. He settles the Cadera on a wide ledge, turned into the wind. “Oh, this is gonna be a lot colder than Shuldene, sorry.”

“That’s all right,” Luke says cheerfully, shrugging into his cold-weather jacket. “We’ll just have a quick look around, and then we’ll come back and warm each other up?”

“I’ll take that suggestion under advisement,” Bodhi replies, smiling at Luke’s blushing, hopeful face. The quick look turns into a half-hour trek to find a decent spot from which to scan. Luke is entertained by the snow for about ten minutes, letting it catch in his hair and eyelashes, and then he goes quiet, pulling his hood up, edging along the rocky, snowy slope a couple of steps behind Bodhi, occasionally swearing when a particularly icy gust threatens to push him over. The blizzard doesn’t let up, affecting Bodhi’s handheld scanner, and ultimately the best he can do, as the evening draws in, is note that there are possibly caverns inside the mountains, and some poor mammals—they might be reptiles, it’s hard to tell—making a very meager go of it on the frozen plains.

He turns back to Luke—startled to realize that what little he can see of Luke’s face inside his hood and scarf is alarmingly bloodless, and Bodhi only grows more anxious on the walk back to the shuttle as Luke stumbles haltingly over the rocks. *This was a bad idea—should’ve just turned around and gone home instead of coming here—*

Luke grabs his hand, clumsily, shaking his head. “I’m okay!” he shouts over the wind, a bit muffled but still understandable, and Bodhi’s worry lessens a fraction, though he tries to hurry them along.

“I just really *fucking hate* the cold,” Luke stammers, once they’re safely back inside the ship, the ramp closing up behind them.

Bodhi strips his own coat off and wraps it around Luke’s shoulders, running up into the cockpit to get the heat going full blast, calling back, “I’m sorry—” He looks out at the snow falling in the shuttle’s headlights as he keys for the preflight sequence—

—*shit.*

Luke shuffles into the cockpit, looking less frighteningly pale but still shivering, complaining, “My hands feel like they’re going to fall off.” He blows on them vainly, and then glances at Bodhi’s stricken face. “What’s wrong?”

“Engines won’t start,” Bodhi says, trying again, his heart skipping a beat as he hears the ions whine and fail. “The temperature dropped too fast when it got dark. We’re stuck here.”


Bodhi clenches his fists, afraid, and then attempts to start the engines a third time. *Come on, come on—*“Fucking blast it to oblivion—” He looks at Luke again. “You’re not at all concerned about this?”

“No,” Luke says, and his eyes are very, very bright. “I’m with you.” He tugs his scarf down from his
nose and mouth so he can smile at Bodhi. “We just have to wait until dawn, right?”

“I hope so,” Bodhi says, and he bites his lip, recognizing the eager expression on Luke’s face—“Oh, let me guess, you’ve got a couple of ideas about what to do until then?”

“You bet I do,” Luke says, but then he shivers violently again.

Bodhi frowns. “Are you still cold?” Luke makes a face, nodding. “Okay. Give me my coat back, and come here.” They get resettled, huddling together kind of sideways in the pilot’s seat under their two layers of jackets, Luke trying and failing to tuck his bare feet up under him at the edge of the chair.

“Ah—your hands are freezing, don’t touch me—” Bodhi struggles, half-heartedly, to get away from Luke’s attempt to get into his pants, hissing as Luke settles for resting his hand under Bodhi’s shirt.

“I’m trying to get warm,” Luke protests, licking delicately at the curve of Bodhi’s ear, unabashedly grinding against his thigh. Bodhi lets him, for a while, the friction slowly building him up to a pleasant heat, too. But he’s tired; they both are, and eventually Luke ceases rocking his hips against him and just burrows his face into the crook of Bodhi’s neck with a soft sigh.

“Warm enough now?” Bodhi murmurs, putting his arms around him, watching the snow fall silently out the viewport.

“Yeah.” Luke presses his lips against Bodhi’s skin. “Thanks for bringing me out here and showing me all this.”

“Even if it meant you almost froze to death?” Bodhi says, wryly.

“I’d stay out there for hours, if it meant I got to spend the rest of the night with you.” Luke shifts around a little to look into Bodhi’s eyes, bringing one hand up to gently cup his face. “I mean it. You’ve given me the galaxy, when the only thing I wanted—” He smiles, ruefully—“When we first met, anyway, I only wanted you to tell me about what you did to make it possible to stop the Death Star.”

Bodhi ducks his head and Luke catches at his hand, twining their fingers together, continuing, “After —after everything that happened, I wanted you to trust me—and then I just wanted you. But you’ve given me so much —” Bodhi stops Luke's mouth with his own, kissing him like his heart would break if he didn't.

“It’s only fair,” Bodhi murmurs, as they pull apart again, huffing a laugh into the shared space of their breath, resting his forehead against Luke's. “Do you have any idea what a ship like this costs?”

“You're more than worth it,” Luke promises, sincerely, and there's nothing Bodhi can do except kiss him again.

It’s enough.

Chapter End Notes

Aquilaris (and the Aquilaris Classic)
Mon Gazza
Shuldene
The Abyss (which is apparently the WORST, from everything I've googled!)

Happy Valentine's Day. <3

(Oh. And ALL THE LOVE AND THANKS to the lovely and talented meledea, who read this over. Happy one year friendversary!!)
Chapter 29

Chapter Summary

Of course I'll come help.

Back at the Redemption, nearly ten hours overdue, Luke looks out of the viewport and says, lightly, “I told you it’d be all right—Leia’s not the welcoming committee.” Bodhi leans over to look, too, and Wedge is smiling at something Jyn said; neither of them look nearly as tense as he’d feared they might. But Bodhi still twists his fingers together nervously as he and Luke walk down the ramp to meet them; everything that had seemed like such a good idea at the time is starting to pile up in his head with consequences—

Luke turns his head, murmuring, “They’re not mad, I promise,” making Bodhi wonder just how casually Luke draws on the Force in his everyday life; he hadn’t moved anything except Bodhi himself, the one time, and he certainly hadn’t used it to help them get off of Hoth, a couple hours prior.

“Did you find what you were looking for?” Jyn asks, her eyes amused as she snakes one arm around his waist.

“Yeah—yeah,” Bodhi says, breathing a little easier. “Everything I hoped.”

Wedge slaps Luke on the back cheerfully. “Does that mean you two finally—”

Luke clears his throat and looks surprisingly stern. “Wedge.” Jyn smirks, and Bodhi suspects there might be credits riding on the answer again, between the two of them.

“Right, sorry, Luke, none of my business,” Wedge says, not sounding contrite in the slightest, and continuing to watch Bodhi with prurient amusement. “Anyway, hate to split you two up, but I’ve got orders to get Luke in Leia’s sights as soon as possible—”

“—and Draven and Cassian and I want you,” Jyn says to Bodhi. He bites his lip, but her eyes aren’t giving anything away.

“I’ll come right back and help you run that engine diagnostic,” Luke promises. Wedge grins at them, and as the two pilots walk off, Bodhi distinctly hears Wedge say “Is that what you’re calling—”

Jyn moves her arm so she can link through Bodhi’s; not quite like she’s worried he’ll try to bolt if she doesn’t have a hand on him, but also not as if it’s just a friendly gesture. “So you know—we did have to tell Draven what you were up to,” she says, too casually, walking them in the opposite direction. “He was starting to lose his shit, about four or five hours ago, wondering if you’d kidnapped Luke and run straight back to the Empire.”

“Oh, fuck.” Bodhi’s eyes widen, and he almost freezes up completely in horror.

“Don’t worry, we talked him down from that idea, but he might have a hard time looking you in the eye for a while. Bit of a cold fish, that one; I don’t think he’s gotten laid in—”

“Jyn,” Bodhi says, his horror transmuting into—a slightly different kind of horror.
“Just tell him about the places you scouted for the new base, and then we’ll tell you all about what we’re planning.” Jyn shrugs as she slaps at the turbolift controls. “And then you can get back to your precious ship, and your precious Jedi, for a little while. Did you find a beach for me?”

“Only if you like your oceans frozen over and filled with dead things,” Bodhi offers wryly.

“I think I’ll pass, thanks.” Once they’re alone in the turbolift, out of earshot of anyone, Jyn lets go of him, leans in and mutters, “So?”

“We managed to get to two planets where his father raced,” Bodhi replies, rubbing the back of his neck.

“And?”

“And someone really ought to give Luke unrestricted access to a console hooked up to the Alliance databanks, because there are a lot of gaps in his knowledge—”

Jyn rolls her eyes and gently slaps at his shoulder, and Bodhi relents, unable to hide a smile from her any longer. “He didn’t know anything about Anakin’s podracing, Jyn, he was so—it was—I can’t even begin to tell you—”

“Okay, okay, you don’t have to tell me.” Jyn smiles back. “Just give me enough to tell Wedge so I can win our bet?”

“What? No!” Bodhi yelps, as the turbolift doors open and they exit towards the temporary Intelligence offices. “Blast, you did bet on—on—”

Jyn snorts a laugh. “It kept your Rogues distracted from plotting revenge for that little stunt you pulled before you left,” she says. “Which, by the way, very nice, it took them a good thirty hours to crack it.”

“Thank you, I think,” Bodhi says, and then adds, thoughtfully, “D’you think Kaytoo would be amenable to standing guard over the Cadera for a couple of nights?”

“I wouldn’t worry too much about that,” Jyn says, her face going blank and cryptic once more, as they reach Draven’s office, where Cassian waits inside. Cassian’s leaning against the back of a chair, frowning down at a datapad in his hand, but he greets Bodhi with a warm embrace and a swift kiss on the cheek. “Hi.”

“Welcome back, Lieutenant,” Draven says, and Jyn was right; the general can’t quite make eye contact with Bodhi, his gaze fixed on a point somewhere over Bodhi’s right shoulder.

“I’m sorry we’re late, sir.” Bodhi snaps stiffly to attention, ignoring that the best he can. “But I can report about a few potential worlds.” He pulls a datapad out of his jacket and offers it to Draven. “The last one’s where we were stuck overnight because my ship’s engines froze—Luke still thinks it would work out all right if we built along the equator to to take advantage of the warmest region, such as it is.”

Draven nods, skimming the report. “I’ll pass this up to Admiral Ackbar.” He sets the datapad down on his desk. “Did Jyn catch you up on what we’ve been planning in your absence?”

“Didn’t have a chance to,” Jyn says. “Cass, you want to do the honors? It’s your homeworld, after all.” Her face and the genial tone of her voice abruptly don’t match. Cassian’s expression is somber again, too.
Cassian folds his arms over his chest and sighs. “Karrde gave us a bunch of intel on this Moff, do you remember? Right before he warned us off Thila Base. It’s a man named Kohl Seerdon; we’ve been tracking movements in the sectors he controls ever since then.”

Draven looks Bodhi in the eye. “Ever hear of him?” Bodhi shakes his head apologetically, and Draven’s gaze slides off him again. “Fair enough. The Empire’s got every jumped-up despotic governor in the galaxy scrambling for power like krillcrabs in a bucket; one pops up and gets shot down faster than you can blink. But Seerdon’s a cut above—he’s been stepping up production on Taloraan, Fest, and Sullust. We think he might be preparing a significant offensive, especially because he’s deployed so many troops to Fest over the last week and a half.”

“Why? What’s on Fest?” Bodhi asks, a sliver of familiar dread creeping into his mind at the way Jyn’s started to touch her necklace as she looks at him.

Cassian’s mouth tightens, and he hesitates before answering. “A major weapons research facility.”

Bodhi’s breath catches in his throat. *I’m sorry, Galen.* “Oh,” he says, softly, putting his hands behind his back so Draven won’t see how they tremble. “Do you know—is it like the one on Eadu? I can—I remember the layout, I can tell Luke—um—Rogue Squadron where to hit—”

Draven glances at him, brow furrowing slightly. “Rogue Squadron’s going after Taloraan’s tibanna mines at the same time your team will be infiltrating the facility on Fest, which should keep Seerdon’s attention off you.”

“We’re going to find out what the hell Seerdon’s been building.” Jyn says, her fingers curling around the crystal on her necklace. “And if we can—we’ll destroy it.” Her eyes shine with a fervor Bodhi remembers from her desperate, failed speech in front of the Council on Yavin IV; from the moment they’d parted ways on Scarif, determined to win.

He breathes out slowly, shallowly, and nods. *I can do this.* “When do we go?”

“Tomorrow,” Draven says.

“My—my ship’s not going to be ready—” Bodhi protests, startled.

Cassian’s shaking his head. “Jyn’s put together a whole team. We’ll need your other ship.” He smiles, a little crookedly, at Bodhi. “Kaytoo’s prepping for us now.”

“Okay,” Bodhi says, and swallows. “I’ll be ready, then.”

Draven’s watching him closely again. “All right, Cassian, Jyn, I signed off on your team, so we’re done here. Bodhi, I’d like to speak with you in private.”

Bodhi tenses up. Jyn doesn’t move, and Cassian looks between him and Draven, frowning. “Sir—”

“Relax, Cassian.” Draven shakes his head. “I’ll send him back to you in one piece.”

“We’ll be right outside,” Jyn says, touching Bodhi’s arm as she leaves, shooting Draven a wary glance.

Bodhi straightens up as precisely as he can once his friends are out of the office, and says, fast, feeling like he wants to leap out of his skin with nervousness, “Sir, I—I swear I’ll be fine, I’m not—”
“Afraid?” Draven's mouth twists. “Oh, yes, you are, but that's all right, I know you'll do what needs to be done. But that's not what I wanted to talk to you about.” He rubs his face with a hand, and visibly steels himself. “I’ve been given to understand that Luke Skywalker cares for you a great deal.”

Bodhi doesn’t think his eyes can get any wider; this conversation feels like he’s flying dark over an unfamiliar world, where he’ll never be able to pull up in time—

“Look, I don’t give a damn what you do in your personal life,” Draven says, flatly. “But I am compelled to give you a warning. If the Empire ever finds out who you are to Luke, they will use you to get to him.”

Bodhi clenches his hands into fists behind his back and tries to steady. Don’t panic. Luke will know, and that only proves his point.

“You understand? It’s what I’d do. I would send every last person in the Rebellion after Darth Vader’s loved ones, if he had any. If I thought it would give us some kind of chance to put an end to that monster.” Draven’s voice is chilling. “Your friends will protect you as far as they can, but you have to know the Empire will stop at nothing to find and destroy the last of the Jedi.”

Bodhi’s heart is pounding as he takes in Draven’s warning; but then he looks—really looks—at the general, for the first time. Draven’s maybe two decades older than he is, which means— “Sir—did you serve with the Jedi in the Republic? Did you—did you have to—”

“I never met any of them,” Draven says. “But I was already an officer with Intelligence.” He continues, his shuttered expression telling Bodhi to leave it be, “There’s nothing I can say that will keep you from taking risks, Bodhi, I know that. Just—be careful. You’re smart, and fast. Maybe it’ll be enough to keep you from getting caught.”

“I—I understand, sir.” Bodhi licks his dry lips, thinking of—nothing.

“Then you have your orders, Lieutenant.” Draven smiles tightly at him, and he’s dismissed.

In the corridor, Jyn pushes off the wall, scrutinizing Bodhi’s face. “Luke didn’t come crashing in, so we figured everything must be going all right in there,” she says, a touch sardonically, walking beside him back towards the lift.

“What did he want with you?” Cassian asks.

Bodhi shakes his head; he feels off-balance all of a sudden, wishing things would go back to being as simple as flying around empty space. “Just to give me a warning about staying off the Empire’s radar.”

Cassian frowns as they go down a couple of decks in the turbolift. “Does he think you shouldn’t come to Fest tomorrow after all? Kaytoo and I can manage—”

“No, no,” Bodhi says, quickly. “I’ll come, of course I’ll come help,” and Jyn smiles up at him.

“Good,” Cassian says, and squeezes his arm. “We’ll need you.”

*****

“Everything looks good on my end,” Luke reports, a short while later in the Cadera, flipping toggles in quick succession and grinning sidelong at Bodhi. “A night out in the cold couldn’t touch the Cadera, she’s tough. SFS might be on the wrong side of the war, but they know their ships.”
Bodhi nods, and says, absently, “If High Command does end up picking Hoth, though, I don’t know what you’d fly there, your X-wing’s not rated for that far below freezing.”

“I’m sure someone in mechanical will figure it out,” Luke says, and leans over to prod Bodhi gently on the arm. “Hey. Are you still here with me?”

Bodhi shakes his head, as if to clear it. “Yeah. Yeah, sorry. Just—thinking about—” Draven’s warning, and something Baze said—“Going to Fest tomorrow.”

“It’s not as cold as Hoth, at least,” Luke offers. “I know Cassian doesn’t think of it as home, not anymore, but I bet there’s still places he’ll want to take you and Jyn.”

“I hadn’t thought about that,” Bodhi says. “I—huh.”

“What?”

Bodhi’s mouth quirks up. “Are there places you’d want to take me, on Tatooine?”

Luke glances down, his hair falling in his eyes, and seconds too late, Bodhi remembers the first names on his nightmare list of the dead—“Besides the ruins of the old podracing course in Beggar’s Canyon? Not really much else worth seeing.” But he smiles up at Bodhi again, and says, lightly, “So tomorrow I’m going to Taloraan, and you’re going to Fest, and we’re working on your ship again instead of doing something more fun, why, exactly?”


“We’re alone,” Luke says, hopefully, starting to lean in. “I mean, we’re not alone, we’re on a frigate with eighteen hundred other people, but right here—”

“Hey, are you two decent in there?” Solo shouts up the ramp, and Luke jerks back, startled. “Put some pants on, I’m coming in.”

“Did you really have to yell so the whole ship could hear?” Luke swivels around in the co-pilot’s chair to frown at his friend. Bodhi scrunches down in his own seat, trying to make himself as unobtrusive as possible out the viewport, though he doesn’t think anyone’s actually looking up at them.

Solo shrugs. “Not like everyone doesn’t know you ran off alone together again. What’s going on, Bodhi, this guy been treating you right?” Bodhi stifles a smile as Luke slowly turns red.

“What do you want, Han?”

“I got wind of your two little excursions tomorrow,” Solo says. “Thought I’d come see which of you wanted me ’n Chewie to tag along.” He grins, and slings an arm over the back of one of the other jump seats. “Hanging around this floating hospital’s getting to be kinda boring.”

“Oh, stars, you and Kaytoo really do get along,” Bodhi mutters, shaking his head, and then, louder, “You’d have to ask Cassian or Jyn, I’m just—”

“The pilot, I know, but neither of them’s answering their comlink, didn’t wanna interrupt something.” Solo’s grin broadens. “You two, on the other hand, left your ramp wide open for anybody to walk in.”

“And anybody can just turn around and walk back out,” Luke says, pointedly.
“So that’s a no, then? Okay. I’ll just take my finely-honed instincts, my Wookiee warrior best friend, and my **fastest ship in the galaxy** and shove—”

Luke is rubbing his forehead and laughing. “You’re really this bored? Go talk to one of the generals—”

—Or Leia,” Bodhi suggests, wickedly, and Solo shoots him a death glare.

—and get them to put your **instincts** to better use than barging in on—”

“Ah,” Solo says, and smirks. “So I was interrupting something.” Luke shuts up, blushing furiously, and then his comlink chirps before he can find more with which to snipe at Solo.

“Master Luke, Artoo insists you come down here and help him recalibrate your X-wing’s sensors instead of—Artoo, I will not say that, that’s highly inappropriate, and quite the assumption about Lieutenant Rook’s preferred—” Bodhi’s eyes go wide; Solo is chuckling loudly, shaking his head.

Luke jams his thumb on the switch hastily, cutting Threepio off. “I’m on my way,” he says, throwing a regretful look in Bodhi’s direction. “I’ll be right back, don’t—don’t go anywhere?”

Bodhi nods, a little appalled at the growing number of people—and droids—who insist on **speculating**, and Luke flashes a quick smile and shoves out past Solo, his footsteps ringing off the ramp below them.

“So things have been moving right along, huh,” Solo says, and Bodhi lets his head fall back against the headrest.

“Oh good, you’re still here.”

“Yeah, I am,” Solo agrees, sitting in the jump seat, kicking his boots up on the back of Bodhi’s chair with a soft thump. And then, as if it’s been weighing on his mind for a while, he says, “You know, kid, I gotta say, you really fucked this up for the rest of us.”

Bodhi jerks upright and stares at him over his shoulder. “What? I—I—what?”

“You and your **grand** romantic gesture.” Solo folds his arms and scowls. “Exploring the most scenic planets this side of the Core, all alone in your little ship? Taking Luke out to see the glory days of his dead father? Come on, Luke’s not that hard to impress.”

Bodhi gapes at him.

“You and your **grand** romantic gesture.” Solo folds his arms and scowls. “Exploring the most scenic planets this side of the Core, all alone in your little ship? Taking Luke out to see the glory days of his dead father? Come on, Luke’s not that hard to impress.”

Bodhi jerks upright and stares at him over his shoulder. “What? I—I—**what?**”

“Now you’ve gone and set this **example**, none of us regular people can hold a glow rod to that kind of shit—”

“Hey,” Bodhi interrupts. “Don’t blame me for whatever didn’t work with her.” Solo sputters, indignant, but Bodhi ignores that, knowing he’s right. “Luke stole a ship worth **two hundred and forty thousand credits** and gave it to me. I had to do **something**.”

Solo slumps backwards. “Fair enough.”

“I’m sorry Leia wasn’t impressed, though,” Bodhi says, after a moment.

“Yeah, me too,” Solo mumbles. Then he brightens up. “Well, as long as I’m keeping you company, show me what you’ve been working on.”

“When Luke comes back—”
Solo holds his hands up placatingly. “I’m gone, I promise.”

But he’s called away sooner than that, by Leia—Solo tries to hide the way his face lights up at the sound of her voice, but it’s such an obvious tell that Bodhi mentally files it away for if they ever do play sabacc.

Which leaves Bodhi alone, for the first time in what feels like days. His thoughts drift as he works; there’s a few things he’s figured out from the *Cadera’s* problems with the cold that might be useful, if they do end up on Hoth. Shielding helps, but only if it’s been rated for below freezing and not *defective*, like on the Zeta-class cargo shuttles he’d flown for the Empire—like the one he’s flying for his friends, to Fest.

Where—*we’re going to have to put a stop to the Empire’s weapons of destruction, just like we started.* Only this time, Cassian and Jyn and Kaytoo are friends, aren’t just a team of strangers making a suicidally desperate bid for salvation. *But if it goes bad—*

*No.* Bodhi drags his mind off of Draven’s warning, rubbing his wrists unconsciously.

He thinks the *team* probably means Baze and Chirrut again, too, and wonders if they’ll be able to tell that things have changed between him and Luke, if they’ll gossip like the old men smoking cigarettes in the doorways of Jedha City. If Baze will try to warn him again about what the Force has in store, if it means—

*Too many ifs.*

Bodhi looks at his shaking hands, discovering he’d stopped working entirely, his thoughts pulling him down into an all-too recognizable spiral of anxiety.

*This is how they’ll use me to get to Luke—*

He’s vaguely aware his breathing is going short and shallow, and squeezes his eyes shut, willing his panic to subside. *Pull up. Don’t make Luke worry for nothing.*

*Okay, okay.* Bodhi clenches his hands around the *Cadera’s* controls, hoping the physicality of the action, even if he’s not actually going anywhere, will help. *I need something to put back together, a problem to fix besides myself—*

“How Hoth,” Bodhi says, and swallows, hating the way his voice goes dull in his own ears, but trying to push through, focus on the problem. “How is Luke going to fly on Hoth? No—*what* is Luke going to fly on Hoth?” None of the types of the Rebellion’s increasingly battered fighters are cut out for the sub-zero temperatures; none of them have the kind of shielding and armor the *Cadera* has, either, and its own drive had been useless once night fell.

“Because I shut it off,” Bodhi realizes. “If I’d left it running—” He looks around for a datapad to draw a power flow schematic, thinking about how a hyperdrive regulator sheds excess heat, barely noticing his heart has stopped pounding in his chest.

And that’s how Luke finds him, when he comes back, hours later; erasing failed diagrams and calculations that lead to warm-enough engines but exploded hyperdrives, muttering formulas to himself like he’s back at the Academy, cramming for the last final of the term.

“Oh, good, Han left,” Luke says, and Bodhi blinks up at him, still trying to work out how to bypass the—“Have you been working this whole time?”

“I had an idea,” Bodhi mumbles, saving his place on the datapad.
“So did I, if you recall.” Luke’s leaning down, close enough that Bodhi can smell engine grease and sweat, neither of which are unpleasant, on him. “But it’s getting late, and we’ve both got an early start tomorrow. Are you going to sleep here? Wedge said there’s some bunks freed up, now, if you want a real bed instead of—”

Bodhi shakes his head. “I’ll stay.” He narrows his eyes. “Wedge said?”

“Yeah.”

Bodhi frowns, briefly contemplating what they could possibly be setting him up for now. “Then I’m definitely staying here.”

“Then I’m staying, too,” Luke says, and Bodhi smiles, a little, and hits the controls to close the ramp.
Chapter 30: Seerdon Campaign

Chapter Summary

It's a reminder.

Chapter Notes

Teeny bit of smut hiding in the first part of this update? :)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

When Bodhi wakes, tangled in his bedroll, to the chime of the *Cadera’s* chrono going off, Luke is warm, up against his back. His face is buried in Bodhi’s hair where it's coming loose from its tie at his neck, and one arm is tucked warmly under Bodhi’s left elbow. Luke’s soft, rhythmic breath on the back of his neck tickles; Bodhi eases his right arm out from under his head, turning onto his back, and laces his fingers through Luke’s, to hold his hand over his heart.

He wills himself to stay relaxed, keeping his thoughts still and quiet as he can to let Luke sleep, not sure if that’s really how it works, but trying nonetheless. The sight of the gunmetal-gray bulkheads of his ship will never be as beautiful as the lightning clouds of Bamayar IX, or the way a winter sunrise gilded the stone walls of Jedha City, but as his waking minute stretches out into memory, Bodhi thinks he’d let Saw’s monster have those in a heartbeat, to stay here with Luke at his side, a sense of serenity within his grasp.

There’s some clatter from the hangar outside the *Cadera* as flight crews start prepping X-wings. Someone laughs, and an astromech screeches at some indignity; Luke makes a soft, unintelligible sound, and presses his face more insistently into the crook of Bodhi’s neck. “I still have that idea,” Luke mumbles, angling his hips to nudge inquisitively at him.

“Łe'll be late,” Bodhi whispers back, amused, though he has a fleeting, tempting vision of Luke kissing his way down—Luke lifts his head sharply, smiling, but he doesn't pursue it any further right away, getting up and stripping his undershirt off.

The shadows of the cargo hold define every muscle of Luke’s arms and back as he strolls back to the *Cadera’s* tiny ’fresher, cringing as his bare feet touch the cold floor, stepping casually out of his shorts as he goes—“Okay, okay,” Bodhi says, hastily, and scrambles out of his bedroll, shedding his own sleeping clothes as fast as he can, and chases after Luke into the shower.

Luke grins. “Pilots and speed, remember? We won't be late—” Bodhi collides with him, then, dragging their bodies together under the shower spray. Luke clutches back, ducking his head to kiss Bodhi’s neck, hard enough to leave a mark, his hands roaming haphazardly as Bodhi ruts up against him, gone all slippery with water and the soap on Luke’s skin. “And anyway, what’re they going to do, leave without—ah—” He lets his head fall onto Bodhi’s shoulder and finishes, panting, “—us —” Bodhi laughs softly, dizzily, and flies over the edge after him.

Some sense of propriety finally comes back to Luke, once they’re dry, because he doesn’t try to
touch Bodhi again while they’re getting dressed, only watches curiously as Bodhi zips up his old flightsuit. “I don’t think I’ve ever seen you wear that before,” he says, hooking his lightsaber onto his belt. “I didn’t realize you still had it.”

Bodhi hesitates as he closes the seal at his neck. “It’s—it’s a reminder.”


“I guess it reminds me of the things I—” Bodhi starts again, uncertainly.

Luke tucks his helmet under his arm. “You don’t have to explain.” But his expression’s still slightly confused; Bodhi thinks it’s because of the way Luke treats his past, like his life started over when the calendar did, the moment he fired into the heart of the Death Star.

“I will, if you want,” Bodhi says, slowly. “I tried to explain it to Jyn, once, but I don’t think I made it very clear.”

Luke looks at him for a moment. “It doesn’t bother you the way seeing Wedge’s old uniform did?”

Bodhi shakes his head. “This is—part of me.”

“Then I do want you to tell me about it,” Luke says, earnestly, reaching over and touching Bodhi’s arm. He catches a glimpse of the ship’s chrono—“But it can wait until we get back, because we are late!”

The Redemption’s briefing room is shaped like an amphitheatre, and there’s not nearly enough people in it for their tardiness to go unnoticed. In the front, Draven lifts his eyes to the ceiling, giving his head a little shake, but Rieekan just gestures them to their respective teams. Luke throws a brief smile at Bodhi and crosses the room to sit with his squadron; Jyn beckons Bodhi over to her. Neither of the Guardians are sitting at her side, just Roja and a couple of people who look vaguely familiar but whom he can’t quite place, and all of them are wearing shapeless Imperial coveralls like his own, though theirs are the gray of technicians’ uniforms.

Solo, lounging in the back row with Chewbacca, eyes him up and down, and then turns to look at Luke, and Bodhi’s eyes go wide as he realizes the smuggler’s scrutinizing—

—the mark on my neck, the way Luke’s turning red under his gaze—

Solo snorts and says, “Yeah.” He prods Janson in the back with the toe of his boot, holding out his open palm; Janson turns around, sighing, and slaps a credit chip into it. Luke rolls his eyes, and Bodhi hears him start to say, “Do I have to order—” before Rieekan’s clearing his throat and cueing up a shimmering holo projection of a gas planet.

“Where’s Cassian and Kaytoo?” Bodhi whispers to Jyn, as Rieekan goes over the Taloraan side of the mission, Solo unable to stop himself from offering color commentary, as usual, this time something to do with the volatile nature of the tibanna gas mining plant they’re hitting.

“Not off doing what you and Luke were doing,” Jyn mutters back, smirking. He frowns at her, halfheartedly, and she relents. “Kaytoo wasn’t happy about having to wear a restraining bolt, but I guess it’s a regulation on Fest now. They’re working on a compromise.” Bodhi blinks at her in dismay; he can’t imagine Kaytoo forced to follow anyone’s orders. Reprogramming might have made Kaytoo loyal to the Rebellion, loyal to Cassian, but the prospect of his friend losing his free will altogether is deeply unsettling.

“Any more questions, Captain Solo?” Rieekan asks.
Solo shrugs a shoulder. “Yeah. Where’s Princess Leia? She’s the one who signed me up for this thing.” Bodhi turns to blink at him. Chewbacca’s put a paw over his face, as if he can’t believe how badly Solo’s lying, either, but Rieekan doesn’t seem to notice.

“On a diplomatic mission—no, she really is,” Rieekan says, when Solo gives him an incredulous look.

Draven fixes Solo with a stare, and adds, “It’s classified, Captain.”

“Okay, if you say so,” Solo mutters, and kicks his boots up on the empty chair next to Janson.

“Anyone else?” Draven asks, looking at Rogue Squadron. Luke shakes his head, and Draven turns his gaze in Jyn and Bodhi’s direction. “Sergeant Erso, is Cassian—”

“I’m here, go on,” Cassian says, striding in with Kaytoo on his heels. He’s wearing an Imperial officer’s uniform again, but unlike the uniforms he’d stolen on Scarif, or on Kerev Doi, this one seems tailored badly. Or, Bodhi thinks, uncomfortably, maybe it’s just Cassian. He looks stressed, in a way that puts Bodhi in mind of that moment on Eadu in the pouring rain, when he’d shouted at Bodhi to go, his rifle configured for killing Galen.

He looks at Jyn, but she’s watching Cassian, too, her eyes narrowed.

Draven nods, and launches into his half of the briefing. “Here’s what little we know about the work at the weapons research facility on Fest, courtesy of Talon Karrde.” He toggles Taloraan away, and a snowy, mountainous world takes its place. Cassian’s eyes flick over the globe, not lingering on any particular city, but his mouth is grim, under his moustache.

“A few months ago, Karrde intercepted a requisition for pure bronzium ore. Seerdon sent it out to all Imperial mining worlds, and based on our projections, he’s received almost as much as could be mined within this time frame.” Draven keys something on the console, and the holo slowly zooms in on a base set into a mountain range in the southern hemisphere of the planet. Bodhi can see an outer courtyard on one side, and a shuttle port on the other.

Not that much like Eadu, then.

“It’s a sure bet he’s not just casting statues of the Emperor,” Solo offers.

“Unfortunately, there are a lot of possible options for what Seerdon could be doing,” Draven replies, and continues, “In order to infiltrate the facility, Captain Andor and Sergeant Erso’s team will be bringing in an overdue shipment of bronzium—”

Bodhi nudges Jyn and mutters, “Where’d you get that?”

“On loan from Karrde.”

“Oh.”

—don’t have the appropriate security clearances, so Captain Andor will be posing as Colonel Joreth Sward to get the team inside.” Draven’s actually smiling, the barest twitch of his mouth; Bodhi blinks at Cassian, baffled, but Cassian isn’t looking back. “Get in, locate Seerdon’s new weapons technology, destroy it, and get out.”

Draven pauses, no longer smiling, and gazes squarely at Jyn and Bodhi. “I won’t be sending in any backup.”
Bodhi hears a ripple of consternation go through Rogue Squadron, but forces himself to stay calm; Jyn only nods once in acknowledgement, her face very still.


“Colonel Joreth Sward?” someone behind Bodhi asks. He glances over his shoulder for the speaker; it’s one of the two he can’t place, a pale blonde woman with her hair in braids. “Really, Captain?”

Cassian looks up at her, raising his eyebrows, and she subsides instantly. “Just asking.”

Bodhi says, “Do you—?” but Jyn shakes her head, just as lost as he is, and replies. “Guess we’ll find out.”

“Anyone else?” Draven’s eyes pass over the room, and when no one has anything to add, Rieekan nods briskly and says, “Very well. May the Force be with you.”

Luke is immediately at Bodhi’s side once the generals are out of the room. “Why did Draven say he wouldn’t send you any backup?” he demands, grabbing Bodhi’s arm, urgently.

“There’s no other squadrons that’ll be close enough to help,” Jyn says, looking back and forth between Bodhi and Luke. Bodhi shakes his head at the question in her eyes, and lifts a hand in a kind of apologetic shrug. She grimaces at him, but adds, only somewhat reluctantly, “Draven sending backup’s what got my father killed on Eadu.” Luke flinches, and Bodhi, remembering a quiet conversation with Cassian on Thila Base, is glad that he’s out of earshot, fiddling with something that looks like a restraining bolt while Kaytoo looms over him.

“But still,” Luke insists. “If you need me—us, find a way to get a signal out, and we’ll be there.”

The corner of Jyn’s mouth twitches. “Thanks, Luke. Hopefully we won’t need you.” She nods at him, and steps down to the floor to check in with Cassian.

Luke is fairly radiating worry. “Bodhi—”

“It’ll be all right,” Bodhi says, willing himself to believe it’s true, pushing down every thought of Galen, or the shield gate above Scarif closing once the Fleet arrived, or anything else Luke might sense of his lingering fear.

“There’s a million things you’re not telling me,” Luke says, tilting his head, his face starting to take on that quiet look of concentration. Bodhi, startled, holds out his hands as if to ward Luke off, and he stops. “Sorry. I didn’t.” He scrubs a hand through his hair, gazing up at Bodhi through his eyelashes. “I know you think I’m reckless, and I—just—please be careful, okay?”

“I’ll be with Jyn and Cassian,” Bodhi offers, cautiously. “And Kaytoo, and whoever else—” He looks around for Roja and the woman, finding them and another grizzled-looking, still oddly familiar man chatting with Solo, of all people.

Luke’s eyes are bright and anxious. “Bodhi, that’s not an answer.”

Bodhi has to smile, at that; it’s very nearly the tone he’s heard Luke use on comms, giving orders. “Fine. I will if you will.”

“Deal,” Luke says, firmly. And even though he’s never kissed Bodhi in front of Rogue Squadron before, let alone Solo, Luke starts to lean in to seal it—
“Real professional, boss,” Wedge calls, teasingly. Luke freezes for a second, making an extremely rude gesture back at him that has Chewbacca barking a laugh. Bodhi can’t help but snicker, himself, shaking his head, and then Luke’s mouth is on his, warm and soft and hopeful. Bodhi kisses him back, ignoring the way the others are staring at them, reveling in the surety of Luke’s—love—

—wait, wait—

Luke breaks off, and grins, a little sheepishly. Bodhi blinks back at him, touching a finger to his mouth, at a loss for words, his heart pounding—

“If you’re quite finished.” Jyn’s stepping back up to them, smirking, interrupting whatever either of them might try to say. “You should get introduced, well, reintroduced, I suppose, to the others.”

Luke greets Roja with a friendly hug and a smile; Bodhi stares at the two unfamiliar—no, they are familiar people, as they come down a couple of rows. “Wait, I do know you,” Bodhi says, as recognition hits him. “You were on—on Scarif, but I don’t—I’m sorry—” He trails off, trying to remember if he did know anything about them, back then.

“S’ok if you don’t remember.” the man says. “Yosh Calfor.” He sticks his hand out; it’s less a greeting, and more a gruff gesture of gratitude. Bodhi shakes it, glancing at the woman. He has a vague recollection of her shouting frantically at someone in the cargo shuttle’s hold, and not much else.

“I’m Rodma Maddel.” She’s a lot calmer and quieter than that memory, but she brightens up, turning to Luke. “Bodhi got us off Scarif, you know? Saved us, saved Laren Joma—I guess that’s twice now—”


“You too, Captain.” Luke leans over to grip Cassian’s forearm. He gazes back at Bodhi once more, as if there’s something he still wants to say, and then hurries out after Solo and Chewbacca.

“Ready to go?” Cassian asks, and Bodhi stops looking after Luke, turning his attention back to his friends, his team. Cassian’s uniform still seems off, somehow, and his code cylinders and rank badge are askew. He frowns and motions Cassian over, reaching out to straighten them.

Maddel makes a face, but it’s not at Bodhi—she’s sighing at Cassian. “It’s on purpose, Lieutenant, it’s part of the Sward alias.” She folds her arms. “Draven’s idea?”

Cassian nods, and looks at Jyn and Bodhi, strain visible in his eyes. “I guess I should warn you, this alias is—”

Kaytoo interrupts from over by the console, where he’s trying to adjust the restraining bolt on his chest, “Don’t tell them, Cassian, I want to see their faces when you do it.” Maddel and Calfor break into identical grins, and Bodhi remembers that they, and all the others who’d gone to Scarif—

—who’d died on Scarif—

—had been with the Rebellion for years, had probably gone on countless covert missions with
Cassian long before he and Jyn and Luke showed up.

“I don't know if that's such a good idea, Kay,” Cassian says.

“Why would you need to warn us about your cover?” Bodhi asks, puzzled.

“Please,” Kaytoo says. “I ask for so little.”

“This morning you asked me if I could redo your plating in bronzium, since ‘we have so much of it,'” Cassian points out.

“And you said no, as I recall. Repeatedly. As you have turned down my requests for numerous other cosmetic upgrades that other droids have gotten—”

Cassian rubs the bridge of his nose. “All right, but if Bodhi or Jyn gets—”

“It's on me,” Kaytoo says, cheerfully.

“You've lost me,” Bodhi mutters, and Jyn’s brow is furrowed in bewilderment as well. But it doesn't matter, not when Cassian's lost some of the grim tightness around his eyes, and he seems a shade more relaxed, shaking his head affectionately at Kaytoo’s seemingly strange request. “Let’s go, then,” he says.

The cargo shuttle’s hold is nearly filled to capacity with containers of bronzium ore. Bodhi squeezes past Maddel and Roja on one side when they strap in, and has a sudden dizzy memory of Tonc, Sefla, and Melshi, and all the other ghosts, as he hesitates on the ladder to go up into the cockpit.

(“We’re spies. Saboteurs. Assassins.”)

Kaytoo’s finished the preflight sequence, and the deck officer says over comms, “Rogue One, you’re cleared for departure.”

“Copy that,” Bodhi replies, settling his hands on the controls. Jyn moves to go back down the ladder to strap in, but pauses when Luke cuts in, a little tinny, but fond and commanding and wistful all at once—“Good luck, Rogue One.”

Kaytoo turns his gleaming eyes on Bodhi expectantly.

“What?”

“Well, say something,” Jyn urges him, softly, amused.

“Um—” Bodhi leans towards the pickup, as if that’ll make it more private, and not still audible to everyone, and says, in a rush. “May the Force be with you, too.” And, pretending he doesn’t see Jyn smiling at him out of the corner of his eye, he pulls back on the controls to fly them to Fest.

Chapter End Notes

Rodma Maddel
Yosh Calfor
(Roa's from Twilight Company, but I borrowed him for the Kessel prison break, so he's hanging out with our people now.)
Chapter 31

Chapter Summary

Don't get caught.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Getting to the weapons research facility on Fest is, thankfully, nothing like the terrifying, rain-slicked approach on Eadu, the crash from which Bodhi thought they’d never escape. Nor is it much like their more sedate, but equally nerve-wracking approach through the shield gate over Scarif. Instead—

“We're here,” Bodhi calls down, when they’ve made the jump into normal space, and first Jyn, then Cassian, climb up into the cockpit. When he glances back, Cassian isn’t looking at him, his gaze not really even focused on the pale, smoke-stained marble of his homeworld; he folds his arms over his chest and nods, as if reassuring himself of something.

“It's beautiful,” Jyn offers, after a moment, and Cassian exhales. Smiles, just barely, at her, and replies, “From this far away, maybe. But if you were to visit the city where I grew up—you would have to see in a different wavelength altogether, to find the beauty in it.”

“I can see across the whole spectrum,” Kaytoo says, offhandedly. And then, surprising Bodhi with the gentleness of his voice, “Cassian, it’ll be visible from orbit in—”

“I know, Kay, thank you.” Cassian puts a hand on Kaytoo’s shoulder. “Bodhi, you can take us in now.”

“I’d like to see your city,” Jyn says, as Bodhi starts their descent towards the research facility, nervous about Cassian’s tension, uncertain how much of it is this strange sort of homecoming, or about what his friend’s going to have to do to get them in without a security clearance. “I'm sure I've seen worse places, after all.” There’s a touch of challenge in her voice.

“You heard Draven. Get in, get out. No time for sightseeing right now.” Cassian steps forward to stand between Kaytoo and Bodhi as the mountain range begins to come into relief, knife-edged in the sooty sky. But he gives Jyn that almost-smile again, and Jyn’s eyes brighten a fraction, as if there’s a promise in it.

Bodhi hovers his hand over the comms switch—clenches it into a fist when he sees how it shakes, and says, “Cassian, they’re hailing.”

Cassian heaves a sigh, and says, “Stay on your approach vector unless they don't buy this, all right? And Kaytoo, if—”

“It’ll be all my fault, yes, I know.”

Bodhi thinks that if droids could smile, he'd be on the receiving end of a truly unnerving one right now, and swallows. “Okay.”

“Let’s get started,” Cassian says, and nods for Bodhi to hit the comms.
The Imperial flight controller says, sounding suspicious, “Unidentified shuttle, your current flight path takes you into a secured area, and you are not cleared to—”

Cassian cuts him off, in a clipped, all too familiar Core accent, “This is Colonel Sward, and we absolutely should be cleared, I'm bringing in a very valuable shipment of bronzium that I know they’ve been expecting at the facility for weeks.”

Bodhi jerks around, wide-eyed in horror, gaping at Cassian; he sounds precisely like every overzealous, capricious higher-up Bodhi had learned to avoid in service to the Empire. Kaytoo lifts his head, his eyes shining with what Bodhi can only assume is delighted amusement, and Jyn’s jammed a hand up to her mouth, like she’s trying not to laugh.

“I’m sorry, Colonel, you’re not on our—”

“Don’t give me that bantha fodder,” Cassian barks, the haughty, baffled rage in his voice making Jyn’s eyebrows climb higher. “Do you know how long it’s taken me to get here with these people?”

“Colonel—” the flight controller tries, again, but Cassian won’t be put off, or mollified; Bodhi can’t help but cringe a little in sympathy for the poor Imperial on the other end. “I personally guaranteed this delivery to Moff Seerdon. But since I'm not cleared—you—pilot—” he snaps his fingers superciliously at Bodhi, and Jyn audibly chokes. “Let's go. I'm certain I could find a buyer for twenty tons of bronzium somewhere else, and you can deal with Moff Seerdon’s displeasure.”

Bodhi sincerely hopes Moff Seerdon isn’t within a hundred light-years of Fest.

The controller’s voice cracks. “No, wait, Colonel, I’m sure we can sort this out—is there—can you transmit—any clearance you have—”

Cassian looks to Kaytoo, who reaches over to Bodhi's side and keys something on the console. “Will this do?” Cassian sneers.

Bodhi is a second too slow to see what codes, exactly, Kaytoo sent, but they seems to have been convincing enough, because the controller stammers, “Okay, yes, Colonel Sward, I—yes, you can continue your approach while I try to verify—”

“Do that,” Cassian snaps. He waits half a dozen heartbeats, and then says, directly into the comm, dripping condescension, but resting a hand on Bodhi's arm, “Come on, pilot, did you attend a flight school for mynocks? Can't you get us there any faster?”

“Uh—” Bodhi hesitates, but Kaytoo nods encouragingly, so he digs around in his memory for what he would’ve really said, in his previous career, to a blustery, impatient passenger. Think of it like bluffing in sabacc. “I'm sorry, sir, I can't exceed what the safety protocols for this environ—”

“Don't give me more excuses, just get there.” Cassian's looking out the viewport at the mountains they're flying over, and frowning.

Bodhi swallows, wondering what Cassian sees that he doesn’t, or if it's just more of playing the cover, and says, meekly, “Yes, sir.”

The flight controller’s voice is still apprehensive, “Colonel, you can land, there's an opening in Hangar One, if—if that's all right with you? I’ll dispatch the inspection team—”

“Oh, very well.” Cassian sounds as if this is the barest concession he's willing to make. He toggles the comms in the middle of the controller’s sign off, and leans against the side of Bodhi's chair, letting out a long breath.
“So your Colonel Sward is an asshole,” Jyn says, dryly. “Interesting.”

“Did you accuse me of going to a flight school for mynocks?” Bodhi asks, wide-eyed, and Jyn snorts a laugh.

Cassian rubs his face with a hand and peers over his fingers at him and Jyn. “Too much?”

“No,” Bodhi says, reassured by Cassian’s usual accent emerging again, but—“Cassian, I remember hearing about this Sward guy, now—horror stories, mostly, about him and his commanding officer—” and then he just stares up at Cassian in sudden comprehension, and more than a little awe.

“There never was an official report on what happened to Admiral Grendreef in that accident with the Desolator, over Miser—?”

“Colonel Joreth Sward’s incompetence, plus a ‘surprise’ attack by Rebel forces, is what happened to Admiral Grendreef,” Kaytoo says, with relish. “Sward took to his subsequent punishment of exile quite well, I think.”

Jyn is smirking and shaking her head. “So you want to let us in on the rest of your play, now that Kay’s been entertained?”

“You should have seen your faces,” Kaytoo says to Bodhi. “It was everything I could have hoped for.”

“Glad we could be of service,” Bodhi mutters, wryly, looking out at the mountains again and checking their approach.

“All right, we’re doing the wounded Tarchalian,” Cassian murmurs, to Jyn. “I’ll tell Maddel to get prepped for it now.”

Jyn makes a face. “Really? That old gambit?”

“It’s very convincing, when Colonel Sward is the cause,” Kaytoo says, gleefully. “And Maddel’s only gotten better at it since Scarif.”

“Do you want to explain your secret spy code to me?” Bodhi asks, feeling more than a little adrift.

Cassian and Jyn exchange glances. “It might be more convincing if it really is a surprise to one of us,” Jyn observes, shrugging. She eyes Bodhi. “Of course, you’ll probably figure it out pretty quick, regardless.”

“You’ll know the right thing to do,” Cassian says, touching Bodhi’s arm again before he turns to go back down into the hold.

“Jyn,” Bodhi says, helplessly.


The shuttle port is patrolled by a small squad of stormtroopers equipped for the snowy planet. There’s a couple other ships—nicer and newer than theirs—dockered inside the cavernous hangar bay, but it’s coming on local evening, and not much of the ground crew is around. The deck officer and an inspection team comes over with a load lifter; Cassian snaps, “Give me that,” and brusquely snatches the controls from the deck officer’s hands.

Bodhi hangs back, one foot on the ladder to the cockpit, watching “Colonel Sward” berate everyone from the deck officer on down for the slowness of the unloading. Calfor is ducking his head to avoid
Cassian’s ire, but Maddel makes no attempt to hide her irritated expression as she helps Jyn guide another cargo container onto the load lifter.

“Your ID, please?”

Bodhi looks at the deck officer. “Oh, right, sorry,” he says, stepping off the ladder and starting to pat down his flightsuit in search of an appropriate ID, mentally shuffling through his options—

—there’s a bloodcurdling scream from the far end of the hold, and Bodhi whips his head around to see the load lifter turning slowly back away from where one of the cargo containers has fallen off the stack onto Maddel’s left leg, pinning her to the ground.

“Shit—” Bodhi shoves past the deck officer, and runs down to the cluster of the team around Maddel. Calfor and Kaytoo gingerly lift the container off her, and she screws up her face in agony as the extent of her injury is revealed. Her leg is broken, contorted at a painful angle.

Bodhi crouches down beside Jyn and Roja, fearfully, and then remembers—the wounded Tarchalian?

Maddel’s making little whimpering noises, tears standing in her eyes, while Jyn tries to get her to calm down. The deck officer waves the rest inspection team back, wringing his hands as he stands over them, looking anxious.

“I don’t know what happened,” Cassian is swearing, angrily smacking the lifter’s controls against his open palm. “It was her fault, she shouldn’t have been under that side of the lifter—”

“We have to get her to the medcenter,” Jyn snaps, glaring up at him. Maddel’s crying in earnest now, and Bodhi reaches over to hold her hand, letting her clutch at his flightsuit, not needing to feign his own concern; her leg really does look broken. But Cassian wouldn’t really let anyone get hurt—

Cassian scowls back. “You take her. I’ll not leave this valuable a shipment unsupervised.” His eyes are narrowed in suspicion.

“Sir.” The deck officer looks horrified, glancing back and forth between Maddel crumpled on the permacrete and “Sward’s” callous expression. “She’s seriously injured. I—I’ll escort your staff down to the medcenter—”

Cassian waves a hand, turning back to unloading the bronzium. “Fine. Well, you don’t all have to go, do you?” He points at Calfor. “You, and the droid, stay and assist me. The rest of you, hurry it up.”

To the deck officer’s credit, he gets a hovercart over to them almost immediately. Bodhi helps Jyn and Roja lift Maddel onto the cart; Jyn says, “You’re doing great,” ostensibly to Maddel, but she’s looking directly at him. “It’ll be over soon.”

Roja’s on the other side of the hovercart from Bodhi as they hurry through the facility’s corridors towards the medcenter; the soldier’s eyes are sharp, and Bodhi thinks he’s counting the guards they pass, the secured areas. Jyn keeps up a running line of comforting talk to Maddel, but she’s looking directly at him. “It’ll be over soon.”

And—Bodhi mostly just keeps his head down, like he would have on a cargo run, trying to memorize the route to get back to the ship. The facility snakes along the mountain range, outer walkways open to the frigid air; the view is spectacular, compared to Eadu or any of the other Imperial bases Bodhi’s been on, but no one they pass is looking out at it, too consumed with their conversations or datapads.
Galen would have looked, Bodhi wants to tell Jyn, suddenly, the thought catching him off-step. Galen would’ve found out all the names of the mountains so he could tell them to you. He wonders if Cassian remembers their names.

“All right, here we are,” the deck officer says, breathlessly, slapping at the medcenter’s door panel and escorting them inside. There’s a medical droid and a couple of unconscious patients in bacta tanks, being treated for what look like severe chemical burns. “Emdee, this woman needs help—”

Bodhi looks to Jyn, uncertainly, hauling his mind back to their mission, as the door slides shut behind them.

“Now,” Jyn orders, and Roja produces a blaster from inside his coveralls, and fires at the medical droid, overloading its circuits. From the hovercart, Maddel’s no longer crying, and is pointing her own blaster at the deck officer. He puts his hands up, edging slowly backwards, his gaze darting to each member of the team, lingering for an extra second on Bodhi’s face, recognition starting to dawn in his eyes—

“Jy—Sergeant,” Bodhi says, softly, fear of being caught out warring with the instinct to try to keep the Imperial alive. He tried to help.

“I know,” Jyn tells him, and nods at Maddel. She fires; it’s not a blaster bolt, but a blue stun ring that catches the deck officer, and Bodhi breathes a little easier.

“Thank you,” he mutters to Jyn, and she smiles briefly at him.

But it’s not over yet.

Roja moves to guard the door, and Jyn touches Bodhi’s arm as he gapes at Maddel tugging her pant leg up to fix her prosthetic, snapping the pieces of it back together. “Get on the console and see what you can find out.” Bodhi obeys, trying not to stare but marveling a little at how realistic Maddel’s prosthetic leg is, and starts to work.

Jyn takes out her comlink. “Cassian, we’re good on our end,” she reports.

“Kaytoo is going to try to access a console here—the shift’s changing and we got ourselves a little time, too,” Cassian’s voice comes back quietly.

“I don’t know what I’m looking at,” Bodhi says, lifting his hands from the console nervously. Nothing’s been encrypted beyond his ability to slice; Seerdon must’ve assumed the facility was sealed enough on its own. “It’s all chemical analyses—” He stares down at the materials research files. “Bronzium, I recognize, and frazium, and—quadranium, I think—” Jyn comes over and looks at it, too, shaking her head.

Kaytoo says, over Jyn’s comlink, sounding alarmed, “Bodhi, that’s three of the four materials you need to make a phrik alloy.”

Bodhi’s heart skips a beat. Jyn raises a puzzled eyebrow at him—“Phrik’s almost indestructible,” he tells her. “Not even a lightsaber can get through it.” She frowns.

“Oh, I see now,” Kaytoo continues, and there’s a faint whirring sound coming over the line, like he’s processing. “Moff Seerdon gave up trying to find a reasonable source for cortosis, around the time Karde intercepted the requisition for bronzium, and has been mining tydirium instead. Which has sped up the alloying process considerably.” His voice is laced with dread. “He’s managed to make more phrik than anyone not on Gromas.”
“What’s he doing with it?” Cassian asks.

Bodhi pulls up file after file, but of course Kaytoo is faster. He sounds unhappy. “Plating AT-PTs.”

“Well, at least it’s not a Death Star,” Jyn mutters, so quietly that only Bodhi—and probably Kaytoo—can hear her. She’s pulled her necklace out of her coveralls and is unconsciously fiddling with the string.

“What?” Maddel’s put her leg completely back together and is hauling the deck officer’s unconscious body off to one side, where it won’t been immediately spotted by anyone coming into the medcenter. Her face is grim. “Phrik-armored walkers? How many?”

“There’s the good news,” Kaytoo’s voice comes back. “He’s only built three prototypes.”

“Oh, we are so screwed,” Roja mutters, from his post by the door. “How are we going to destroy them?”

Bodhi looks sideways at Jyn. She’s tense, and she’s closed her hand around the crystal on her necklace, but there’s a light in her eyes. “We’re not going to.”

“Jyn,” Cassian says, and hesitates. “This is not like Borgo Prime—”

“No,” Jyn replies, a smirk flicking across her mouth as she meets Bodhi’s eyes. “It’ll be easier than Borgo Prime. Kaytoo, what are our odds?”

“If you’re thinking of stealing them, which—yes, okay, Cassian says that is what you’re thinking—from the present location of the AT-PTs inside the facility, you will have to exit the main gate in order to reach a transport ship,” Kaytoo answers. “Escaping the primary facility won’t be a problem, but there is a sixty-six point three percent chance of being stopped in the outer courtyard before reaching the main gate. But you would be inside a phrik-armored walker, so that’s some small consolation there.”

“The cargo ship’s not big enough for one AT-PT, let alone three,” Bodhi points out, and tries to keep his hands still, pressing them flat on the edge of the console.

“Not to mention Seerdon’s still got the materials to make more phrik,” Maddel says.

Jyn tucks her necklace back into her coveralls. “Your call, Cassian.”

Cassian’s soft sigh echoes down the line. “All right. Kay, download copies of everything. Jyn, you take Roja and Maddel and steal those walkers. Bodhi—find them a ride out of here.” Cassian’s voice is wry.

Bodhi takes a shaky breath, and replies, “What are you doing?”

“I’m taking Calfor to destroy Seerdon’s equipment,” Cassian says.

“What about me?” Kaytoo asks.

“Stay with the cargo shuttle. If anything goes wrong, you take what we know back home.” Cassian pauses, and when he speaks again, his voice is flat. “And—Bodhi. If I tell you to run, you do it, this time. Understand?”

“Cassian —” Bodhi murmurs, trembling, looking into Jyn’s face and finding no contradiction there; bargains, quickly, “If you order me to run, I’m calling Rogue Squadron in to get you out.”
Jyn huffs a laugh at him. “That’s fair, yeah, Cass?” She’s studying the map of the facility, with Maddel looking over her shoulder.

“No one ever listens to my orders,” Cassian says, sounding resigned. “Jyn—”

“Don’t get caught,” she says back, tenderly, and thumbs off her comlink. “Let’s go.”

At the door, Roja presses a wicked little hold-out blaster into Bodhi’s hand. “I’m never going to use this,” Bodhi protests, and tries to give it back to him. “I can’t.”

“Just take it, dammit,” Roja says. “Part of being careful, right?” He grins, and turns away to follow Jyn and Maddel in the direction of the engineering wing.

Bodhi looks after him for a moment, the words echoing in his head with Luke’s voice.

All right. I’m trying to be.

He puts the blaster in his pocket and sets off back towards the shuttle port, trying to look like he belongs, moving quickly, but not too quickly. As he crosses the walkways, a few stars attempt to shine overhead in the haze of Fest’s polluted sky, and the sole moon is dull where it hangs over the mountains. The light strikes him as wrong, somehow, as if it should be—rainy and dark, like on Eadu.

Bodhi’s memories smear together in his head—he can almost feel the ridge of Galen’s message in his boot again. His heart is pounding so loudly he’s certain the lone officer he passes can hear it, as it had when Bodhi had finally made his choice, but here, at least, he knows all the cards on the table, and what else there is, besides his life, to lose—

No.

They all trust me. I won’t fail them.

I can do this.

Kaytoo is waiting for him by the cargo shuttle, the sight of the two together another memory crossing unnervingly into reality. “I think you’re going to want that ship,” he says, though, and points across the hangar at a Y-4 Raptor-class shuttle with all of its boarding ramps down.

“Yeah, yeah, thanks,” Bodhi says, running a judicious eye over its cargo capacity, eager to focus on something other than what’s happening in his head. “It’ll carry 300 metric tons, easy, but it’s slow. Um—is it—empty?”

“I haven’t seen anyone go in or out of it since we landed,” Kaytoo replies. “All yours.”

“Okay. I’m—I’m gonna go get it prepped.” Bodhi scans the area for more ground crew, patrols, anything, but there’s no one in between them and the other ship.

“Good idea,” Kaytoo says. “We may need to make a very quick exit.” He closes his hand over Bodhi’s shoulder. “I know you don’t want to leave anyone behind. If it comes down to it—I will stay, and get them out in the cargo shuttle.”

Bodhi’s eyes widen up at him.

“But the odds are it won’t come to that.” Kaytoo is abruptly cheerful, turning him around and pushing him gently in the direction of the Raptor, calling after him, “There is only a forty seven point
three percent chance of total mission failure, after all.”

“Great, thank you, Kaytoo,” Bodhi says to himself, crossing the hangar. Don’t think about any of it. He keeps his eyes focused on his goal, avoiding a pair of stormtroopers talking about the latest skyhopper engine upgrades. Think about the ship—Raptors are Incom-make, controls just like a U-wing, maybe better shielded— bounds up one of the ramps into it in two strides, and—oh, fuck, Kaytoo was wrong—

There is someone in the ship. A mechanic.

He’s working on the comms relay, streaked with grease, and he looks to be about Luke’s age, like he’s fresh from the Academy. He frowns over at Bodhi with an exasperated grimace. “I said it was gonna take—hey.” His mouth falls open in recognition, and Bodhi’s heart stops.

“Oh, come on, I didn’t get caught on Eadu—” Bodhi fumbles to get Roja’s blaster out of his pocket, points it at the mechanic, who looks just as scared as Bodhi feels. “Please, just go—”

But the Imperial’s expression is growing less fearful by the second as he tracks the wavering end of the blaster. “How did you even get in—”

“Shut up.” Bodhi snaps, trying to channel Cassian’s authority, Jyn’s confidence, praying he won’t have to shoot him. “Get off the ship.”

“You’ll never make it offworld,” the mechanic says, sidling towards the ramp, keeping his hands in the air.

Bodhi keeps the blaster pointed at him until he’s backed down off the ramp. Grabs his comlink out and calls Kaytoo as he hits the controls to close up all the ramps, uselessly watching the mechanic running across the hangar towards the shuttle port’s control station—by some miracle, the stormtroopers don’t see him. “There was someone in the ship, he’s coming right at you—Kaytoo—don’t kill him—”

Kaytoo steps out of the cargo shuttle at the last possible second, and the mechanic crashes into him headfirst, rebounding limply to the permacrete. He looks back in Bodhi’s direction as he drags the mechanic’s unconscious body into the cover of some crates, and says into his comlink, a touch reproachfully, “On Eadu, you asked me to try not to hurt anyone we didn’t have to. I haven’t forgotten.”

“Thank you.” Bodhi murmurs, and goes forward to the cockpit to get the ship ready, willing his heart to stop racing, his memories to stop reeling back and forth in time. He’s just barely gotten everything checked out when the hangar rumbles, overhead lights flickering. The pair of stormtroopers aren’t in sight; Bodhi hopes they’ve simply continued on their rounds.

“Oh, okay,” Bodhi replies, flipping switches as fast as he can, wishing he was back in his own ship, and desperately missing Luke as his co-pilot. “Ready when you are.”

Bodhi sees red blaster fire before he sees Cassian; he and Calfor are sprinting out of the corridor, shooting back at half a squadron of stormtroopers closing in behind them. Bodhi clenches his hands, trying to will himself to fire, cover his friend, his team—but Kaytoo fires off a shot first, clean through the hangar bay door control panel, and the door irises shut, blaster bolts thudding
ineffectively into the durasteel.

“We’re clear,” Cassian pants, from Bodhi’s comlink. “Go get those walkers.”

“I copy,” Bodhi replies, licking his dry lips, and lifts off, veering away from the facility and slowly circling around to the far side of the mountain. Far too slowly. The cargo shuttle’s following just off to starboard, wings folding out for flight. He ignores the shouts of Imperials over the ship’s comms until he hears “—scramble the damn squadron—”

*Oh, fuck.* He glances at the sensors and quails. “They’ve sent TIE bombers out.”

“We’ll keep ‘em off you, go get Jyn,” Cassian orders.

Jyn cuts in, sharp. “Get here faster, they’ve got tank droids on the ground.”

Emerald laserfire lances out in all directions from the cargo shuttle’s five cannons, and Bodhi flinches as the first pair of TIE bombers roar overhead. He finally comes around the mountain and sees the trio of AT-PTs stalking jerkily into the outer courtyard, lit up with floodlights. A semicircle of tank droids is deployed behind them, and a full squadron of stormtroopers is forming up between the walkers and the main gate, laying down a constant siege of blasterfire. The walkers’ angular heads swivel back and forth, cannons spitting, but the circle is closing—

“There’s nowhere to land,” Bodhi calls. “I—” He swallows. “They won’t get past the main gate—”

Cassian and Kaytoo are both trying to tell him something, Kaytoo loud and getting louder, but he doesn’t hear them, fighting down panic, looking at the Imperials advancing on the trapped walkers.

*Wait.* He checks the ship’s armament over again. *Laser cannons won’t do enough damage, but—* there are two concussion missiles left, out of a Raptor’s normal complement of six. “I’ve got it, I’ve got it—”

Bodhi cringes as a TIE bomber hurtles out of the night sky, its panels burning, and crashes into the side of the mountain. He lines up the two missiles squarely on the gate, and some of the stormtroopers on the other side of it start to redirect their blasters in the direction of the ship, even though they’re utterly useless against the Raptor’s armored hull—

—and he freezes up on the firing controls, staring wide-eyed down at them, thinking of the stormtroopers he had killed to clear a path for Cassian and Jyn to escape, before.

“Bodhi.” It’s Cassian, quiet, and far more calmly than Bodhi would’ve been able to manage, if it were Luke trapped on the wrong side of that gate. “It’ll be all right. I trust you.”

*(Jyn, smiling at him. “—No other options.”)*

*I can do this. I have to.*

*But—they don’t have to die*—He targets the main gate again, at a different angle, lower. Prays it’ll be enough, and fires.

“Nice shot,” Kaytoo says, approvingly, as the missiles hit. The gate disintegrates in flame and smoke, and the stormtroopers behind it are thrown back sprawling on the snow, but Bodhi thinks they might survive, if their commanding officers are more like Cassian than Colonel Sward.

It’s not quite a relief.
“Okay, okay, hurry,” he stammers, to Jyn and Maddel and Roja. He lands the Raptor just outside the destroyed gate, lowering the ramps; the cargo shuttle hovers overhead, cannons still spraying laserfire up at the circling TIE bombers and back towards the tank droids rumbling after the walkers. Bodhi hunches up, startled, as bolts zip past the walkers and spark off the Raptor’s hull, sizzling in the hold—looks back and sees panels starting to smoke, but there’s nothing he can do about it until they’re safe.

His heartbeat is racing faster than the walkers can move, but two manage to come aboard without incident. The third, however—

“Roja, what in blazes are you doing?” Jyn barks.

Roja’s walker has turned around, head facing the facility, and Bodhi traces the angle of its cannons down to the fallen stormtroopers he’d tried not to kill outright—slaps frantically at his comlink—“Don’t, Roja. This isn’t—they’re not a threat now—”

“Just get on the ship,” Jyn orders.

Bodhi struggles to find something to convince him. “They—they’re like me, they’re just like me—”

His voice cracks.

“I’m sorry,” Roja says, ragged, harsh. “I’m sorry, Lieutenant, but they are not.”

“Get that walker on board, Private—” Cassian cuts in, furiously.

Bodhi can barely breathe. “Please. Don’t do this.”

The line falls silent.

I brought death again. I was trying to stop it.

I’m sorry.

Then Roja tilts the cannons up and looses a fusillade at the tank droids still arrayed in the courtyard, before swinging back and coming up the ramp into the ship. Bodhi exhales, trembling, watching a stormtrooper slowly rolling over onto his back in the snow. They’re alive. We’re alive. It’s okay.

“Okay, the walkers are secured,” Jyn shouts up to him. “Launch!”

Bodhi tries to put all thought out of his head and takes off again; there’s still a couple of TIE bombers left to try and make a run at them, but the Raptor’s shields hold, and eventually Kaytoo picks them both off with the cargo shuttle’s cannons. They get up out of atmosphere, and then, as Bodhi’s punching coordinates into the navicomputer with a shaking hand, a Sentinel-class shuttle jumps in from hyperspace.

“Oh, shit—Cassian—”

“We see it,” Cassian responds, tersely. “I think it’s Seerdon. Get going.”

The ship starts to turn in their direction, and a new voice comes in over the Raptor’s comms, the man’s clipped Core accent barely masking his rage. “I always believed the Rebellion was made up of terrorists and thieves. Now I have proof.”

Bodhi switches the comm off, pushing more power to the engines, and prays. We’re so close—

Jyn comes up into the cockpit just as the ship rocks from a barrage of laserfire; she swears under her
breath and falls into the co-pilot’s seat, taking over firing controls and spraying shots back in the Sentinel’s general direction. “You okay?”

“I will be, in a second—” Bodhi glances down at the navicomputer just as it beeps. He pulls back on the lever to jump to hyperspace, and starlines flare around the viewport. Slumps back into his seat and covers his face with his shaking hands, adrenaline and fear and memories crashing over him in a wave. “Stars. Jyn.”

“You did it, Bodhi.” Jyn laughs, not unkindly, and leans over to kiss his cheek. “Welcome back to the fight.”

Chapter End Notes

...aka, I have started rewatching Leverage AGAIN, can you tell? :P

*exhales* Getting through Fest took forever, but we're finally past it, yay :) Thanks to meledea for looking over the start of this update!

And, as always, all the <3 for your comments & kudos & everything, dear readers. Thank you!
Chapter 32

Chapter Summary

Is that what you're doing?

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“If we’re in the clear,” Maddr calls forward, “Come help us check these things over for Imperial tracking equipment?”

“Be right there.” Jyn’s still leaning into Bodhi’s space; he can hear her breathing starting to slow down after their escape. He tries to match it. “Are you really—”

“I’m okay.” He lifts his face from his hands. “This is what you and Cassian and Kaytoo do all the time?”

“Guess I’ve got kind of a knack for it.” She reaches over to squeeze his arm. “You did well, too.”

But Bodhi can’t stop himself from shivering, the sense of near-catastrophe still lingering in his mind. “Those stormtroopers—” He gulps. “They were trying to kill you, but I couldn’t—I didn’t want them to die just because—”

Jyn looks grim, but says, emphatically, “It was a fair order, Bodhi. You put them out of the fight. Roja should’ve listened.”

He stalls out. “No, Jyn, I wasn’t ordering—”

“You outrank him. It counts.” The corner of Jyn’s mouth quirks up. “And you saved his life on Kessel, that probably should’ve counted for something.”

“Since when have you been one for ranks?”

Her eyes are dark. “Since a rank badge gets people to listen.”

(—the survivors had called her “Sergeant,” their respect no longer grudging, laced instead with grief and awe and a sort of hysterical disbelief that they’d made it out at all. They’d all looked to her—and only her—for orders, as Cassian had lain dying in her arms, clinging to her like a drowning man as the oceans of Scarif fell away below them.

It had stuck, after that.

Days after Yavin, Cassian had finally been released from the medcenter, and had immediately filed his formal report with her name and rank alongside his, as if daring anyone to even mention striking it from the record.

And Mon Mothma herself had been the one to affix the badge to Jyn’s vest.)

“Don’t get me wrong,” Jyn continues, unaware of how Bodhi’s drifted sideways into his memories
“Again. “There will always be people who look at me and see a petty criminal, or—” She shakes her head. “Whatever else they think I am.”

_Galen’s daughter_. Bodhi thinks, staring at her. _A light, from the shadows. Cassian’s guiding star._

“But now they—the whole _Alliance_—can’t dismiss me, just for that. They _have_ to listen. Like Roja should have listened to you.”

Bodhi stammers, “Jyn, I—I’m not like _you_—”

“I trust you,” Jyn says. “I trust your judgement. So should the rest of them.” She tilts her head. “I mean, if _Luke Skywalker’s_ willing to follow your spur-of-the-moment, life-or-death decisions, who is anyone else to argue?” There’s a teasing edge to her voice.

Bodhi gapes and blinks and fumbles for words to rebut her, to point out that Luke is _something else_, but Maddel shouts up again, “Sergeant Erso, we could really use another couple pairs of eyes on these.”

Jyn pats his arm again, getting up. “Come on, you probably know your way around an Imperial homing beacon better ’n the rest of us.”

Bodhi follows Jyn back, trying not to dwell on the idea of being in charge of anything other than his own uncertain future, focusing instead on the technical details of Imperial tracking devices. It’s not the same as Chirrut’s moving meditation—he’s not calmed by it, not in the least, not when their safety’s still at stake, but it’s a welcome distraction nonetheless.

Three AT-PTs are a cramped fit; they squat and loom over him like cyclopean metal creatures, lined up one after the other, straps criss-crossing the hold to secure them in place. Maddel’s crouched down, shining a glow rod into the nooks and crannies under the first walker’s head; she shakes her head at Jyn’s inquiring look. Roja is just visible in the cockpit, a stream of curses trickling down to them as he wrestles with the Imperial technology.

Jyn gestures Bodhi to the third walker. “Yell if you find anything, inside or out.”

He nods and ducks past the AT-PT, coming up incautiously beside the second and smacking his head against its downturned, sideways-pointing blaster cannon with an echoing thump. “Who left this one like this—” Bodhi puts a hand up to push the cannon aside, futilely, and swears as the metal, still hot from firing, blazes pain across his palm.

Jyn, climbing up the other side, pokes her head around the cockpit hatch. “Bodhi?”

“Just singed,” Bodhi says, gazing at his reddening palm and rubbing his head with his other hand, gingerly.

“Can’t have that,” she says, lightly. “Check for a medkit in the walker?”

He makes a face at her. “Probably isn’t one in there.”

Jyn’s eyebrows draw down briefly. “Oh.”

“It’s not bad,” Bodhi reassures her, closing his hand into a fist and opening it again.

“Well, if the only casualty on our side is a few skin cells, I’m counting it as a win,” she says, dryly. Bodhi finds it in himself to smile at that, the faintest twitch of his lips. Jyn’s answering smile is just as small, and then she swings up into the cockpit, and he turns towards the third walker.
In front of it, Bodhi plays the glow rod over the armor, seeing nothing out of place. Even though he doesn’t really think any tracking devices will be mounted on the exterior, he dutifully circles around to the back, looking at the odd, oil-slick way the light shimmers on the phrik plating, wondering if Seerdon picked the alloy because of Luke—

“Lieutenant.”

Bodhi jerks around, unpleasantly surprised to discover Roja’s cornered him between the AT-PT and the bulkhead. His fingers tighten on his glow rod involuntarily. “Yeah?”

“Blast, you are a twitchy sort.” Roja crosses his arms. “Maybe I shouldn't have given you my blaster.” He's smirking, like he's trying to cover for something, and it's so much like Tonc’s bravado that Bodhi’s reflexive flare of fear morphs into a dull kind of ache as he stares at the soldier.

“I tried to tell you not to,” he says, weakly.

“It's—dammit, that was a shitty thing to say,” Roja mutters. “Since you—” He stops, running a hand over his close-cropped dark hair, and starts again, gruffly, “Bodhi, I'm a trained killer. You didn't have a problem with it on Kessel.”

“Yes, I did,” Bodhi admits. “I mean, I was glad that you were protecting Luke, but—”

Roja shrugs. “Not that he needed it.”

Roja privately agrees, but runs over top of him anyway, trying to make him understand. “Roja, I worked alongside stormtroopers, before. I've seen them with their helmets off, in the mess, in their barracks—they're just people, they—”

“Still aren't like you,” Roja says. “You chose different.”

There’s a familiar gleam in Roja’s eyes, and recognition, unwanted but as persistent as dread, creeps in slowly: Wedge had looked at him like that, once, before they’d become friends. Luke, too, and the people on the Redemption who think they know who I am. Roja reads something of his discomfort, and shakes his head. “I didn’t mean—blast it, I came over to apologize.”

Bodhi rubs at his temples, feeling like he’s trying to stay on target in a shifting storm. “Is that what you’re doing?”

“Yeah, my ex thought I was shit at it, too,” Roja offers, sounding rueful. “Look, I got caught up in it. The fight. They would’ve—” He cuts himself off. “Won’t happen again. Sir.”

“I’m not your commanding officer,” Bodhi says, wearily, willing himself not to fall back into the memory of Scarif. “I’m just the pilot.”

“Still.” Roja draws himself up straight. “It’ll be different, not killing for you, but if that’s what you want.” He smiles, tightly, slapping a hand up against the AT-PT’s head as he half turns to go forward again. “You might as well keep the blaster.”

Bodhi says, “Roja—” and the soldier turns back around, looking at him curiously. “I’m sorry about what they did to you on Kessel.”

“Could’ve been worse.” Roja shrugs. “Could’ve been whatever happened to you.” Bodhi huffs a startled, horrified laugh, and Roja knuckles his forehead, groaning in dismay. “Oh, by all the names of the— sorry, Bodhi.”
“How long have you been divorced?” Bodhi asks, wryly.

“Yeah, yeah.” Roja claps him on the shoulder. “I am sorry. About all of it.”

“Thanks,” Bodhi says, and means it. “Uh, I should really—” he points at the walker next to them.

“Okay,” Roja says, awkwardly, and leaves him to it. Bodhi waits for a second, just to see if Maddel wants to come mire herself in conversational quicksand, too. She doesn’t, so he climbs up into the AT-PT’s cockpit, happy to let Roja’s floundering fall away as he starts poking into the control panel’s innards. It’s a Kuat Drive Yards make, like all walkers; Bodhi’s never seen the inside of the larger versions, except in manuals, and it’s interesting to get an up-close look at—

“Ah, fuck,” Bodhi mutters, staring at the transponder spliced into the communications system. His fingers shake as he lifts it out of the underside of the control panel, isolating it from the rest of the wires, but it’s connected into the system’s power supply.

No, no—

The lights on it are blinking erratically, though, like its signal isn’t strong. He closes his hand around it and yanks, wincing as a jolt of current goes through his hand, and calls, “Jyn, I found something.”

“Oh, Jyn answers, closer than he’d thought she was; she’s standing underneath the open cockpit hatch, looking up at him. Bodhi tosses the transponder out to her and then clambers down beside her while she turns it over, frowning.

“What d’you want to do, smash it?” Maddel says, dryly, joining them and eyeing the device.

Bodhi shakes his head, smudging the grease on his fingertips. “If it’s been able to transmit this whole time, that won’t matter. I’d drop out of hyperspace somewhere and pitch it into the void, and— recalculate a different route home.” He looks to Jyn for affirmation.

She nods, though her mouth twists. “I didn’t spot anything like this in mine.” Maddel shakes her head, too, looking pale. “Okay, Bodhi, find us a nice empty patch of galaxy and we’ll toss it out the airlock,” Jyn says.

Bodhi drops them out of hyperspace somewhere between the Expansion Region and the Mid Rim, where there’s not a single familiar constellation to be seen, and Jyn disposes of the tracer while he runs the navicomputer through picking another route home.

“What’s after this?” Bodhi asks, when she rejoins him in the cockpit, attempting to convince himself that he’s ready for anything.

“Sullust, probably,” Jyn says. “I’ve been in contact with leaders of a resistance movement there. They’ve said they’ll help us take out Seerdon’s Capacitor in exchange for supplies for their people.”

“We’re not going to try to oust the Imperial occupation like on Gerrard V?”

Jyn smiles, but there’s no humor in it. “The Sullustans tried something large-scale once already. The Cobalt Laborers’ Reformation Front?”

He tries to stick the name to an Intelligence report or a HoloNet news bulletin and comes up short. “I don’t remember, sorry.”

“The Cobalt Front’s mostly gone.” Jyn leans her head back against the headrest. “The Empire smashed through their big push on Pinyumb and picked up, oh, probably eighty percent of their
members. I’m hoping this new group will be a bit more careful.” She sounds tired, not judgemental.

“Oh,” Bodhi says, softer, and does not think about Saw’s Partisans.

“But we can talk about all that when we’re back.” Jyn brightens up. “What did you think of Fest?”

*****

Jyn gets on comms the second they emerge into normal space, approaching the rendezvous point and the Redemption, but it turns out it’s not necessary to inform the Alliance they’re in yet another stolen Imperial ship, because Cassian and Kaytoo have been back for half an hour already.

In the hangar bay, Rogue Squadron’s X-wings are thronged with maintenance staff, droids whirring back and forth. Bodhi can’t help but count the X-wings after he docks the Raptor, holding his breath until he’s certain they’re all there. Luke is, strangely, nowhere in sight, though Cassian’s waiting for them at the bottom of the ramp, nodding to Maddel and Roja as they debark and head off to meet with Draven.

Cassian looks like himself again; he’s shed his disheveled Imperial uniform jacket and cap, but his hair’s an unruly mess almost on par with Luke’s. “Where in blazes did you go?” he demands. “Kaytoo said you dropped out of hyperspace, but he didn’t pick up any signs of a problem.”

“Had to get rid of an Imperial tracer,” Jyn says, raising her eyebrows at him even as she cranes up to kiss him and he slips an arm around her waist. “Couldn’t very well call you on an unsecured comm line.”

“Well, next time, figure something out, please, because I had to spend fifteen minutes trying to talk someone out of going after you when you didn’t come in right behind us.” Cassian jerks a thumb over his shoulder, aggrieved, and Bodhi finally spots Luke lurking around his X-wing. “He calmed down once you were detected jumping in from hyperspace,” Cassian adds, in an undertone. “I told him to go find something else to do for a bit—he can be quite overwhelming, you know. Kay was getting, uh. Sarcastic.”

“Aw, you scared him off,” Jyn says, amused, slapping Cassian on the arm. Bodhi watches Luke for a moment, puzzling out what he’s doing, and slowly realizes that Luke is pretending to be checking his wingtip KX-9s, but can’t stop sneaking glances in their direction. Jyn waves, and calls, not caring that she’s drawing the attention of every single person in the hangar, “Yeah, Bodhi’s fine, we’re all fine, come get him—”


Jyn snorts a laugh as Bodhi’s eyes go wide. “What?”

Luke nods at the Raptor behind them. “You stole another ship!”

“Jyn stole the AT-PTs,” Bodhi demurs. “You know, what we were there for? The Imperial weapons research?”

Jyn nudges him with an elbow. “We’ll go get started on the debrief with Draven, you show Luke all of what we brought back,” she says, tucking her hand into the crook of Cassian’s arm. Luke’s grin widens, though he’s also turning slightly pink. Cassian furrows his brow at Jyn momentarily, but lets himself be led off.

Luke leans in to kiss Bodhi, murmuring, “Show me every—” but Bodhi puts a hand on his chest,
stopping him, frowning at his X-wing. It’s streaked black with carbon and the port-side power
couplings are visibly fried; maybe he hadn’t been pretending to examine his cannons after all.

“Luke, what the hell did you run into on Taloraan? I thought it was supposed to be an easy hit-and-
fade,” Bodhi counts the other X-wings over again just to be sure they’re all accounted for; none of
them look quite as scorched as Luke’s.

“Uh—” Luke ducks his head. “Got too close to one of the mining platforms when it went up,
Artoo’s pretty mad at me for it.”

“Is he all right?”

“Oh, it’s nothing a good scrubbing won’t take care of,” Luke says, unconcerned. “Will you help me
fix my ship again?”

“Whenever you need it,” Bodhi promises, and then stammers, “Not—not that I think you’re going to
need repairs every time you go out—”

Luke pushes a hand through his hair and shrugs. “I’d rather take the damage than anyone else, and if
you’re here to help, afterwards—I like working on our ships together.” He smiles, and nods towards
the Raptor. “Show me around your new one?”

“It’s not mine,” Bodhi protests, leading him up the ramp. “My ship is the Cadera.”

Luke turns. “You don't want to start your own fleet?” he says, lightly, but he can’t hide the fond look
in his eyes.

“I don't want a fleet,” Bodhi answers. “Just a fast ship, and—” His face heats, but he swallows and
makes himself say it. “A co-pilot.”

Luke, his eyes shining, takes a single step to him. “And a star to steer her by?” he asks, quoting from
somewhere. He lifts his hand to the side of Bodhi’s face, brushing back wayward strands of hair,
even though they’re in full view of the packed hangar bay and Bodhi can hear Solo nearby.

“Well, I thought I'd use the navicomputer for that,” Bodhi murmurs. Luke laughs, a warm, delighted
sound, and it loosens the last vestiges of fear and tension still tangling Bodhi’s mind and memories.
He turns his head to brush a kiss into Luke’s open palm. “Come on up, I want to hear all about
Taloraan.”

Chapter End Notes

Tiny bit of a breather here. :)

So...because I Am An Adult with a modicum of disposable income (let's not talk about
how I'm currently posting this from the dealership where they are doing the 125,000
mile maintenance on my fourteen-year-old car, haha) I commissioned a piece from
stitchy which can be found on my tumblr, here!!! IT IS WONDERFUL AND
STITCHY DESERVES ALL THE PRAISE <3 <3 <3 <3 <3

Also, as always, thank you for all the comments and kudos, I appreciate every single last one of them, no matter if you've been along on this strange ride for the past, um, nearly
three months with me, or if it's the first time you've stopped by. You keep me going. <3
Chapter 33

Chapter Summary

We watch out for each other.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Inside the Raptor, though, Luke is promptly distracted from telling Bodhi about the mission to Taloraan; he turns and heads straight for the closest AT-PT. He runs his left hand over its armored plating, scratching at it lightly with a fingernail. “So this is phrik,” Luke says thoughtfully, his right hand dropping to the hilt of his lightsaber.

Bodhi steps hastily between Luke and the AT-PT and grabs Luke’s hand on his lightsaber—“Please don’t try to cut it open, we just got them here, and I’m sure the research files Kaytoo copied have materials testing in them—okay, maybe the Empire never got around to testing with a lightsaber, but let the engineers at the walkers first before you start trying to see if you can carve them up?”

Luke laughs, his eyes flicking to Bodhi’s mouth as the words tumble out faster than he can follow. “I won’t, Bodhi, it was only an impulse.”

Bodhi’s eyes widen further, and he tightens his grip, his heart skipping a beat as his fingertips brush the smooth metal of the lightsaber’s hilt. “Luke, you are possibly the most impulsive person I have ever—”

—and Luke’s face lights up, the only warning Bodhi has before Luke darts in to kiss him. Bodhi stumbles back a step, bracing himself to hit the side of the walker, but Luke’s hand is there, cushioning his head, fingers stroking his hair gently. Bodhi clutches at Luke’s other hand, at his flightsuit, kissing him back, the stress of the mission steadily being replaced with a different and —better—kind of desperation. Luke nudges Bodhi’s legs apart with a twist of his knee, and pushes Bodhi’s mouth with his own.

“You might remember,” Luke murmurs, coming up for air, panting a little into Bodhi’s ear, “You’re the one who jumps in a ship and flies off whenever you come up with a good idea.”

“I do not,” Bodhi says, though his tone loses some of its indignation as Luke licks the curve of his ear.

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“I do not,” Bodhi says, though his tone loses some of its indignation as Luke licks the curve of his ear.

“Sure you do. Taking me out to see the podracing tracks?”

“I planned that for days,” Bodhi protests, as Luke grins and lowers his head to his favorite spot on Bodhi’s neck, hair brushing against the fabric of his uniform.


“Mm. Kessel?”

“Ah —okay, that one’s fair, except—” Bodhi manages to wrench free from Luke’s attentions and pokes him in the ribs, making him twitch helplessly. “You were my co-pilot! Both times!”
“That’s where you want me, isn’t it?” Luke grins, putting a fraction of space between them. “By your side, following your impulsive decisions?”

Bodhi blinks at that echo of Jyn’s words. “Yeah, but—”

Luke smiles. “Then that settles it.” He curves his free hand around Bodhi’s neck and starts to lean in again; Bodhi tilts his head, thinking, _that settles nothing_, but if Luke keeps looking at him like _that_, he doesn’t really care—

—and someone raps their knuckles against the side of the Raptor.

Bodhi looks over Luke’s shoulder to see Kasan standing at the top of the ramp. “I hate to interrupt,” she says, as Luke reluctantly disengages, the loss of Luke’s warmth sending a frisson running down Bodhi’s spine. “But it seems your comlink is malfunctioning again, Commander.”

“I said I’d be there as soon as the Fest team got in.” Luke tries to go stern, but the way he tugs on his flightsuit to straighten it only serves to make him look like a cadet called in front of a flight instructor.

Kasan smirks and looks pointedly at Bodhi.

Bodhi rubs the back of his neck, pushing down a faint sense of embarrassment at being caught out like a couple of adolescents. “I—I should probably get up to Cassian and Jyn, too.”

Luke’s eyes are still bright. “Come back here when you’re done, and we can work on my X-wing together?”

“You two.” Kasan’s voice is threaded with sarcasm. “Poster boys for the Rebellion’s dedication, you are.” She eyes Bodhi’s Imperial flightsuit with obvious distaste. “Well, maybe not dressed like that.”

Bodhi raises his eyebrows at her, straightening up a little so the insignia on his shoulders don’t fold in on themselves. He wonders if she’s kept hers, too, or if she left it behind with her Interceptor and her complicity. “Thank you, Lieutenant Moor, for that astute observation,” he says, dryly.

Kasan huffs a laugh. “All right, come on, let’s get these debriefings over with and you can get back to working on your X-wing.”

*****

Bodhi can’t quite tell if Draven’s more pleased with the stolen walkers or the stolen research. But either way—the general’s initial good mood means he keeps the debrief relatively short, even the part where Bodhi has to explain his near-miss with the mechanic, and Cassian’s mouth thins into a line in concern. The part that undoes the feeling of relief Bodhi had been starting to find with Luke.

“Kay, why didn’t you clear the ship?” Cassian asks.

Bodhi furrows his brow, and says, a little exasperated, “I handled it, didn’t I? Me and Kaytoo together?”

“That was still too close,” Cassian says, and Jyn crosses her arms and scrutinizes Bodhi’s face. Her mouth is drawn down in displeasure, and Bodhi slumps a little, as Cassian continues, “And I don’t like that it was the mechanic and not any of the officers recognizing you.”

“I—I’ve still got that bounty on my head,” Bodhi offers, haltingly, though he has no idea what it’s actually up to now. “I—the people I knew, who I worked with, at our level—we would’ve dreamed about what we could do with this many credits.”
Draven’s expression remains impassive, at that, and Bodhi feels a little silly, because of course the Rebellion’s spymaster knows that sort of thing, probably even has a line-item budget for paying off their more avaricious informants. Cassian is watching the general, too, his brow furrowed like he’s trying to guess where the train of Draven’s thoughts might be headed. The worst-case scenario: Bodhi will be grounded again, because he does know too much, and it was a stupid risk, going to get the ship alone, and if—if—

He pulls up, and swallows, feeling his pulse jumping at his neck where Luke had kissed him, and drags his own thoughts firmly towards something else. Ships, think ships, it’ll be all right if I just focus—installing an overdrive on a Raptor means figuring out how to make it compatible with the power flow regulators—

“I want to discuss appropriate safety precautions with you again, Lieutenant,” Draven says, finally, but that's all, and then he's moving on, past Cassian's quizzical stare, to ask a few other questions about stealing the walkers and blowing up the alloying equipment. And after that, Bodhi promises to turn over all of the Raptor’s sensor logs, and they’re dismissed. Cassian lingers in the doorway, but Draven just waves him off.

“What was that about?” Jyn asks, in the turbolift.

“I don't know,” Cassian says, frowning. “Maybe he's thinking of having you scout planets again instead of coming with us to Sullust. Kaytoo, did you pick up anything useful?”

Kaytoo sounds slightly frustrated. “General Draven has gotten very good at managing his biometric readings around me.” Cassian turns to Bodhi, touching his shoulder, looking worried.

“I’m all right.” Bodhi licks his lips, and then, not quite able to keep the words from spilling out, at speed, “I am. You don’t have to keep—I wasn’t an important part of the mission, we stopped Seerdon from making more weapons, right? I’ll go wherever you want me to go, Sullust, the Unknown Regions—” sees the lines in Cassian’s forehead deepening. “Dammit, I’m trying, Cassian—”

Cassian starts, “Bodhi, we watch out for each other—”

Jyn puts her hand on Cassian’s arm, and he stops. “The hold-out blaster Roja gave you,” she says, as the turbolift doors slide open to their deck, and she motions for Cassian and Kaytoo to precede her out. Kaytoo’s head swivels curiously back and forth between Jyn and Bodhi, as she asks, “Do you still have it?”

“Yeah.”

She raises her eyebrows at him. “Use it, next time.” He gapes at her as the turbolift doors close, giving her the last word.

Back in the hangar once more, Bodhi hesitates; Luke is nowhere to found, again. He turns and goes up into the Cadera, falling into the pilot’s seat wearily, discovering his goggles hanging by their strap off of the arm of his chair. Bodhi puts them on, pushing them up onto his forehead, comforted a little by their familiar weight. The prospect of working, and not trying to talk his way through his friends’ concern, is a welcome thought, too. But half an hour goes by with no sign of Luke, and while watching the Cadera’s computer run through a diagnostic is calming, it also, very gradually, puts him to sleep.

*****
“Bodhi?” Luke is kneeling between the seats, gently resting a hand on his shoulder. “Are you back here with me?”

“Was I having a nightmare?” Bodhi lifts his head, rubbing his eyes; he’d drooped forward onto the control panel, and he suspects one of the toggles is imprinted on his cheek. He groans as he sits up. Luke stands and puts his hand alongside Bodhi’s neck, instinctively rubbing where his muscles have gone stiff, making Bodhi sigh and relax into his touch. Luke’s changed out of his flightsuit, and the sleeves of his black shirt are pushed up on his arms.

“I think so,” Luke murmurs. “Do you remember any of it this time?”

Bodhi shakes his head and comes completely awake with dismay—“Luke, please tell me you didn’t leave the meeting just to come down here for me.”

“I didn’t sense anything was wrong until I walked up,” Luke says, and it’s a strange sort of reassurance, but it puts Bodhi more at ease nonetheless. “I’m sorry it took so long, but Rieekan wanted to start planning air support for the Sullustan resistance.” He tilts his head. “You don’t have to come help me; you look like you could use the rest.”

“I want to,” Bodhi says, and Luke smiles, even though he looks tired, too. “Give me a minute to change?” Luke nods and presses a kiss to the top of Bodhi’s head, behind his goggles. Bodhi gets up, taking his Imperial IDs and Roja’s blaster out his pockets and tossing them on the chair. He kicks off his boots and unzips his flightsuit as he walks back into the hold, looking for his jacket.

“This is an EC-17,” Luke says, and Bodhi turns back to see Luke picking up the blaster.

Bodhi blinks at him, draping his flightsuit over a cargo crate, the contents of which he can’t quite remember. “Yeah.”

“Scout troopers get issued these?”

“Yeah,” Bodhi says, again, and then adds, “I don’t know where Roja got it, there weren’t any scout troopers on Kessel.”

“Roja’s the kind of soldier who collects,” Luke says, absently. “Probably picked it up on some other mission.”

Bodhi hops on one foot, trying to balance as he puts his boots back on. “I guess so. Do you see my jacket around here anywhere?”

Luke grins and holds it up. “It was on the floor. No, wait, stay there, I want to see if I can—” His face is taking on the calmly intent look that usually means he’s using the Force, but nothing moves.

“Okay, please just give me that,” Bodhi says, smiling and shaking his head, after a minute of watching Luke holding his hand out to no avail. He crosses to Luke and reclams his jacket, leans
down and kisses Luke’s crestfallen expression away.

Luke curls his fingers into the collar of Bodhi’s shirt, looking up into his eyes. “Bodhi?”

“Yes?” He licks his dry lips, and Luke’s fingers tighten involuntarily.

“I—never mind. Let’s go.”

As they walk down the Cadera’s ramp together, Bodhi asks, shrugging one arm into his flight jacket, “Stars, is Solo throwing another party?” The smuggler in question is strolling up to the Falcon on the far side of the hangar with an armload of mismatched and unlabeled bottles, like he’s been raiding the Redemption.

“Looks like it,” Luke answers, watching Chewbacca growling at Solo at the bottom of the ramp. Solo can’t gesticulate with his arms full, and has to settle for just yelling, the sound carrying across to them in the sparsely populated space. “—right, all right—” Somehow, even across the entire hangar bay, Solo catches on to Bodhi and Luke staring at him, and shoves the bottles at Chewbacca so he can comm Luke. “Chewie says I gotta keep it small, so come on over, I’ll invite, oh, a dozen of your closest friends.”


“Did you two have something else to do?” Solo’s voice is suggestive.

Luke moves his thumb off the switch and looks at Bodhi. “Your call,” he says, easily.

“He won’t let it alone if we do skip out,” Bodhi observes.

“Yeah, you’re right.” A smile flickers across Luke’s face. “We can fix my X-wing later, I guess.”

“What, are you two deciding the fate of the galaxy?” Solo demands over Luke’s comlink. “Get down here, I’m not drinking all this by myself.”

“We’ll be right there,” Luke tells him, and they change direction towards the Falcon. He glances sidelong at Bodhi. “The last time this happened, you went back to your ship alone at the end of the night.”

Bodhi waits for an astromech who’s steadfastly refusing to adjust its course to pass, and then catches up to Luke in two strides. “Won’t happen again,” he replies, casually, making a mental note to make sure Kaytoo has an updated set of instructions from Cassian.

Luke’s mouth twitches up. “Good.”

In the Falcon’s hold, Solo’s lining up shots on the console— “Chirrut’s still not back, right?” he asks Bodhi.

Bodhi shakes his head. “Madine’s last report has it another few days before they finish mopping-up the last holdouts on that space station over Mantooine.”

“I don’t understand why he and Baze don’t accept commissions already.” Luke waves off Solo’s offer of one of the shots; it’s something blue and vile-smelling. He scans the rest of the stuff Solo’s procured and gets Corellian ales for himself and Bodhi. “Or you, for that matter, Han.”

Solo shrugs and drinks the shot himself. “Gotta have my freedom,” he says, flopping down into the chair at the console. “I’m not at anyone’s beck and call, not even for a decent guy like Rieekan.”
“Uh-huh,” Luke says, exchanging skeptical glances with Bodhi. “When are you gonna pick up and leave us again, then?”

Solo laughs. “Worried I won’t be there to pull your ass out of trouble the next time you—” Luke jerks his head up abruptly, making a throat-cutting gesture at the smuggler. “Oh, like Bodhi wouldn’t have figured out you lost your shields and firing controls the second he got a close look at the damage.”

“It looks worse than it is,” Luke insists, glaring at Solo.

“Sure,” Solo says, rolling the word around on his tongue with some relish, looking past them both at people trickling into the Falcon’s hold. “Antilles, what’s your expert opinion?”


“Whether—” Solo is saying, but he stops, at that, looking up at Bodhi, his expression shifting slyly. Luke reads something in Solo’s face and holds up a warning hand, even as he looks back at Bodhi in surprise. “Why are you trying to stir shit up, Han? You can’t possibly be bored already, we just got back.”

Solo’s answering grin is unrepentant. “I need a reason?” And then, louder, “Kasan, I’ve got six flameouts with your name on them.”

“Ugh, I thought I recognized those,” Wedge mutters, as Kasan comes over. Bodhi thinks she looks different, somehow, and not just because she’s out of uniform.

“I didn’t break our deal,” Luke insists, to Bodhi, but he’s ducking his head, more than a little abashed. Wedge starts to slide his arm off of Luke’s shoulders, like he doesn’t want to be associated with whatever Luke’s going to say. Kasan is lifting a shot to the light, frowning at the impurities in it, but chuckles at them.

“I mean, maybe it’s a bad deal,” Luke says, hurriedly. “I mean—there’s no stakes to it, and—”

Solo snorts. “Highest stakes there are, kid.” Bodhi winces, reflexively clutching his drink tighter, but it’s not like he hasn’t been gambling with those same stakes, ever since he met Galen.

“That’s a bit morbid, isn’t it?” Kasan says, and tosses back her flameout. She coughs. “Ah, Solo, it’s supposed to burn and then freeze, not the other way around.”

“Sorry, prin—” Solo cuts himself off and jolts up out of the chair abruptly, scowling. Luke, wide-eyed, doesn’t quite manage to cover his startled laugh with a hand, and Bodhi realizes the thing that’s different about Kasan is that her hair is braided in what must have been a popular Alderaanian style, one that Leia’s worn more and more frequently as of late.

Solo clears his throat and snatches up another shot. “That’s one each.” He glares around at them.


Solo grimaces and points vehemently at Luke. “Go work out your deal with Bodhi.” He drinks, and
slams the empty glass back down on the console. “That’s two, dammit.”

Bodhi stares at Kasan, suspicion sneaking up to the surface of his mind, and apparently onto his face; she shakes her head at him, appalled, and mouths _are you joking?_ around the side of her second glass. He waves his bottle of ale at her apologetically as Luke pulls him along, past the dejark table, where Hobbie, sitting on a cargo container, has started dealing out a hand of sabacc to Chewbacca, Janson, and—Maddel, looking surprisingly prim for someone about to gamble with two Rogues and a Wookiee.

“Antilles, you’re our _witness_, don’t go anywhere,” Solo snaps, and Wedge, on Bodhi’s heels, sighs and turns back around dutifully.

Bodhi stops in his tracks—Luke loses his grasp on his arm—and leans in close over Hobbie’s shoulder. “You know she’s a spy, right? Good at conning people out of things?”

“Oh, Bodhi glances at Maddel; a tiny smirk plays about her lips. “Okay, then.” He pats Hobbie on the shoulder, and follows Luke out to the _Falcon’s_ main corridor, passing Zev, Roja, and Calfor on their way in. Roja tosses off a lazy salute in Bodhi’s direction.

When they’re alone again, Luke gazes earnestly up through his eyelashes at Bodhi. “So maybe I wasn’t as careful as I could’ve been, but—I knew the Force was with me.”

Bodhi raises his eyebrows, and says, lightly, “Wasn’t Wedge also with you?”

Luke laughs. “You trust Wedge more than you trust the Force?”

“I don’t think the Force can shoot as straight.” Bodhi hesitates, and sighs. “Luke—”

“You weren’t as careful as you could’ve been, either.” Luke’s mouth twitches. He hooks his fingers into Bodhi’s belt and tugs.

“No,” Bodhi admits, letting himself be pulled in like a ship caught in a tractor beam.

“Let’s be honest, you’re both _very_ bad at assessing risk,” Kaytoo says, looming up suddenly behind Luke; Bodhi barely manages to stop himself from yelping in surprise. “Kaytoo, what—”

“Cassian said I should observe more social interaction in group settings,” Kaytoo says.

Bodhi represses a shudder at the idea of Kaytoo _hovering_. “The two of us standing in the corridor isn’t precisely a group setting,” he says.

“The key word was _observe,_” Cassian points out, edging past them, carrying a pot of something still bubbling, Jyn behind him with a bemused expression and a handful of spoons. “Not interrupt.” He smiles at Bodhi, his previous concerns evidently forgotten. _Or, more likely_, Bodhi reasons, _Jyn talked him down._

“Oh, very well.” Kaytoo’s tone is reproachful, but he trails after Cassian and Jyn into the main hold.

“Getting crowded in here,” Luke observes, as Solo calls out, loud and clear, “Captain Andor, _I knew_ there was a reason I liked you.”

Jyn pokes her head back out around the corner. “Bodhi, Luke, come get some food before you sneak off.”
“No one’s sneaking anywhere,” Luke promises her.

“Oh, I know,” Jyn says. She smirks, slapping her hand on the bulkhead. “It’ll be incredibly obvious.”


The sabacc game is still proceeding apace; Hobbie’s given up the cargo container seat to Zev, and is crowded in next to Maddel on the bench behind the dejakir table. Maddel smiles coolly as Janson grumbles and slaps his cards down, and rakes the pile of credit chips towards her. Chewbacca barks a laugh and puts his paws behind his head, pointing out that every hand they’ve thought she’s been bluffing, she’s won outright.

“I’m not ever playing sabacc with her, or any of Draven’s people,” Luke says to Bodhi, as he pushes two cargo containers close together with his knee, balancing his drink and a bowl of Cassian’s stew in his hands.

“I wouldn’t, either,” Bodhi agrees, sitting down next to Luke and setting his drink on the floor.

“Yeah, we’re a bunch of liars and cheats,” Calfor says, amused, from where he’s leaning up against the bulkhead with a beverage that is neither a Corellian ale nor a flameout. “If you want, though, she does have a couple of tells—”

A credit chip sails across the hold and bounces off the bulkhead next to Calfor; he catches it before it can fall into Bodhi’s bowl. Bodhi turns to see Maddel winking at them. “For your continued silence, my friend,” she calls.

Calfor grins, tucking it into his jacket pocket, and then ducks abruptly, laughing as Hobbie and Janson pelt him with credit chips and pleas for assistance. He pushes off the bulkhead and goes over to bargain with them. Maddel leans back, draping her arm along the top of the bench, fingers just grazing Hobbie’s shoulder, and Bodhi’s eyes widen as he tracks her gaze. She is cheating.

He looks over at where Cassian’s commandeered the console for his stew; Cassian shrugs back at him, knowingly, and ladles out a bowl for himself.

“Hey, Cassian, this something you learned to make on Fest?” Roja asks, in between blowing on his spoonful to cool it. “Never had anything like it before, it’s good.”

“I helped,” Kaytoo mutters, from where he lurks like a particularly ominous shadow in the corner of the hold.

Cassian shrugs. “I don’t know if anyone there still makes it the way my family did.” There’s a hint of a sardonic curve to his mouth, and his eyes are dark as the void. “I doubt Seerdon’s serving it to his troops.”

“Well, here’s to you for sharing Fest with us,” Solo says, raising a shot—his fifth—to Cassian; the smile, faint as it is already, falls away entirely from Cassian’s face.

Jyn clears her throat, and says, lightly, “What about—to Colonel Sward, for getting us in and out in one piece?”

“Here’s to putting that alias to rest once and for all,” Maddel offers. She’s stacking her credit chips neatly while the Rogues try to make sense of what she’s done to them this time. “Pretty sure you can never use him again, Cassian.”
Cassian shakes his head and laughs, shortly. “I will drink to that.” Solo, puzzled, looks back and forth between Jyn and Cassian, but he doesn't pursue it, not with Jyn staring daggers at him.

“I guess you didn't exactly get to tour Cassian's homeworld,” Luke mutters, for Bodhi's ears alone, under the clamor of Chewbacca roaring with laughter at whatever Janson’s done now.

“He didn't even want to point out which city he came from,” Bodhi replies, equally quietly, watching Cassian move to stand over the sabacc game, a genuine smile slowly reemerging as Hobbie tries to flirt, badly, with Maddel. “I think Fest was a battleground even back during the Clone Wars. I doubt he has many happy memories of it.”

Luke’s mouth twists. “Yeah. That's too bad.” Solo is apologizing to Jyn, offering her one of Kasan’s abandoned shots. “I wish—” He exhales a long breath. “I wish life had been easier for him. For—for all of you.” Luke is gazing down at Bodhi's wrists, where one sleeve has ridden up, exposing the scars.

Bodhi leans over and kisses his cheek, refusing to think about it, not when he's surrounded by his friends. “Thanks.” Luke looks like he wants to say something more, bumping his knee against Bodhi’s, but Zev calls out, “We need a Jedi to arbitrate a dispute. Anyone know where we can find one?”

Luke rolls his eyes. “This better not be about hoverball, or slingball, or whatever the hell ball, again,” he says, getting up. Bodhi starts to go over to them, too, but Kasan comes around the port side corridor, wiping her mouth and grimacing. “Please tell me you have water.”

Bodhi shakes his head. “Sorry, Kasan, just ale. I think. This one wasn't labeled.” He holds the bottle out to her regardless; she waves it off and sits down on the cargo crate, putting her head in her hands. “Why do I let myself get talked into these things?” she says, muffled.

“He can be weirdly persuasive,” Bodhi allows, sitting back down next to her. Solo and Wedge and Jyn have their heads together over by the console; that can't possibly bode well.

Kasan snaps her head back up and frowns at him. “Bodhi, I want to be clear about this, because I don't want anyone getting the wrong idea about me and Solo. Princess Leia is the sole heir to House Organa and the—”

“Royal Family of Alderaan, I know,” Bodhi says.

“Did Jedha have a monarchy?”

“No.” Bodhi frowns as he tries to remember what his mother had said about their history. “Um—not even before the occupation. But the Guardians—we revered the Guardians, I guess. Is that—?”

“I suppose,” Kasan allows. “Princess Leia is—” Her eyes have gone soft, but there's something about her expression that's familiar. “Maybe ‘revered’ is the right word for it. So the idea that I would ever consider coming between her and anything she wanted—” Kasan shakes her head. “I would rather have crashed my Interceptor a hundred times over than do anything like that.”

Bodhi stares at her. “That's, um—” He trails off, blinking. “Not overstating it,” she says. “And, you know, I never crashed.” Then she tosses her head and asks, “So you ran into Kohl on your way off Fest, huh? What did he have to say about your little expedition?”
Bodhi’s eyes widen. “Kohl? You’re on a first-name basis with the Moff we’re up against?”

Kasan sniffs. “If you hadn’t been late, in the first briefing, you would’ve heard my explanation that I used to serve under him.”

“You did?”

“Yeah. Seerdon’s—let’s hope we don’t have to get up close with him.” Kasan makes a face. “Give me one clean shot at his Sentinel.” Bodhi looks down, discomfited, and she pats his shoulder. “Hey, I’d be doing the galaxy a favor.”

Bodhi looks back up at her, seeing the bitterness in her dark eyes, and asks, slowly, “What did he do?” There’s a familiar tightness in his chest. Back over at the dejarik table, laughing at whatever Hobbie is protesting about, Luke’s glancing in his direction. He shakes his head a little; I’m fine.

“I was one of his ace pilots, right?” Kasan says, nonchalantly.

“Wait, no, you don’t have to tell me this,” Bodhi interrupts her, swallowing down sudden dread. The capricious whims of Imperial officers, from Darth Vader on down to types like “Sward,” had been legendary, among cargo pilots; he can only imagine how bad it could’ve gotten for people who were less likely to go unnoticed.

“He liked to pit us against each other for his favor, is all.” Kasan touches his arm again. “It wasn’t like any of my other deployments, where we at least got along. Kohl had us in a state of competition constantly, but whenever he thought one of us was getting too presumptuous about our, ah, status, he’d take it upon himself to correct that opinion.”

“Kasan—”

“He hurt one of my best friends so badly he never flew again,” she adds, reflectively, and Bodhi stops breathing in sheer horror. “It was too hard to work the controls. So I really wouldn’t mind blowing him out of the sky.”

“Blast, Kasan,” Bodhi murmurs. “I’m sorry.”

She shrugs a shoulder, looking up as Wedge strolls over. “Or Luke could do it, or Wedge, or anyone. You, even. Doesn’t have to be me.” There’s a bloodthirsty kind of joy in her voice, like the fanaticism Bodhi remembers of other fellow TIE pilots; he shivers uncomfortably.

“What could I do?” Wedge asks, propping one foot up on the cargo container next to Bodhi and leaning on his knee.

“Take Seerdon out,” Kasan says. “If we run into him at Sullust.”

“Oh, yeah, sure,” Wedge agrees, easily. “He’s flying, what, a Sentinel? Just one proton torpedo—” He catches the stricken look on Bodhi’s face, and shifts gears—“I mean, let’s focus on the Capacitor, first, we’ve got to cut off his resources. Hey, Bodhi, I’ve been going through my stuff for weeks after I came back from the dead, and I can’t seem to find, um. This one sabacc card.”

Kasan rolls her eyes, getting up. “Force help me, I’d rather drink another one of Solo’s poorly done-up flameouts than listen to any more talk about sabacc.”

“You lost already,” Wedge points out, cheerfully. She makes a rude gesture at him and goes off to talk to Jyn instead. He turns back to Bodhi. “So where is it?”
“Where’s what?”

Wedge grins. “The skifter you stole from me, you grave-robbing schutta,” he says, startling Bodhi into laughing.

“How d’you know Luke doesn’t have it?”

“Because I asked, and we both know he can’t lie for shit.”

Bodhi snickers at him and takes a drink. “You’re as good as admitting to cheating, every time we played,” he says.

“And you’re admitting to stealing it,” Wedge retorts, smiling back.

“I’m not a thief,” Bodhi protests.

“Oh, so that Raptor docked out there—?” Wedge jerks a thumb over his shoulder in its general direction. “And the Zeta-class shuttle over there?” He waves his hand vaguely at where he thinks it’s docked. “Those just, what, materialized here?”

Bodhi blinks a few times. “Huh.”

“Yeah,” Wedge says. “So where the hell is my damn card?” He holds out his open palm expectantly.

“It’s not on me,” Bodhi says, amused. “I don’t carry it around like a memento to you or anything.”

“You wound me, Bodhi, you really do.” Wedge puts a hand to his heart, dramatically. “Well?”

Bodhi shakes his head, a smile tugging at the corners of his mouth. “It’s not gonna be that simple.” He looks over at the dejarik table, where Maddel’s sorting through her winnings and Luke’s given up trying to settle whatever Zev wanted and is just leaning back against the bulkhead, laughing at some story Calfor’s telling. “Play me for it.”

“Okay, but if I win, I want my pants back, too,” Wedge says.

*****

Wedge does not get his pants or his skifter back.

*****

At the end of the night, Luke bears the teasing of his squadron for staying behind while they head off to their quarters, but grabs Bodhi’s hand and makes a run for it before Solo can get his shots in—his laughter follows them down the Falcon’s ramp into the darkened hangar.

“Oh,” Luke says, coming to a stop suddenly, and redirects Bodhi away from the Cadera, leading him all the way to the edge of the hangar bay, where the force field is a faint shimmer between them and million systems; billions of people fighting and waiting and hoping. “Have you ever stood this close to it?”

Bodhi puts his free hand up to the force field, feeling the slightest tingle of resistance. “I haven’t,” he says, softly. A transport ship streaks out to hyperspace a few thousand meters off the Redemption’s port side.

“Like if you leaned forward you’d float out into space,” Luke murmurs.
“Where you would immediately—” Bodhi stops himself from muttering cynically about freezing to
death in the void, and says, instead, “That was always my favorite part of a run, when it got peaceful,
and it was just me and the stars, and nothing else—nothing else mattered.” He turns his head, looking
into Luke’s eyes; they reflect a million points of light. “I could never hold on to what that felt like,
before.” Luke squeezes his hand so hard it almost hurts, and kisses him.

*****

They finally get to Luke’s X-wing in the morning, after a few hours of sleep. Luke blushes furiously
as Bodhi runs down the diagnostic with Artoo, who provides a scathing running commentary before
being hauled out of his socket to go do something with Threepio. Even with Bodhi tackling one S-
foil and Luke the other, it takes hours to overhaul the power couplings, and once those are repaired,
Luke swears up and down that he will never let his ship get as damaged again.

Bodhi pulls his goggles off and rubs his forehead. “If you do, it turns out you know a pretty good
ship thief,” he says.

Luke laughs. “Pick something that’s faster than the Raptor, though, please?”

“I’ll see what I can do,” Bodhi replies, climbing up into the cockpit to check whether firing controls
are back online. “Didn’t have much of a selection on Fest.”

“That reminds me, I didn’t get a chance to tell you about Taloraan,” Luke says, standing on the
ladder and peering in at the controls, as Bodhi fiddles with the wiring. “Did you know there are
floating creatures that live in the clouds there? They look like whales, if whales could fly, or had—”
he wriggles his fingers. “Things. Tendrils.”

“What do they eat?” Bodhi asks.

Luke shakes his head. “Haven’t a clue—Han?”

“Han is not a food,” Bodhi says, absently, watching the X-wing’s computer confirming that
everything’s working. Luke jumps down, and Bodhi looks over the side; Solo is standing under the
ship, his face taut.

“Han, what’s wrong?” Luke asks, and Bodhi scrambles out of the cockpit and down the ladder.

“Leia just sent a message,” Solo says. “She's on Chandrila, the classified thing I wasn't supposed to
know about. Chandrila’s Mon Mothma’s homeworld—” Luke trembles, like he's sensing what's
gone wrong, and Bodhi finds his hand, twines their fingers together.

Solo’s eyes are dark, and for the first time since they'd met, Bodhi thinks he sees fear in them. “Leia
got cut off, but she said Seerdon's launched an attack on the capital city spaceport. He's blockading
the planet. She’s trapped.”
Flameouts
I DON'T KNOW WHAT I WAS THINKING, ATTEMPTING TO STUFF FIFTEEN CHARACTERS INTO THE FALCON. That probably won't ever happen again. :P

And, as always, thanks, dear readers, for sticking with this as I crawl ever closer to the 100k mark and beyond. <3 It's been THREE. MONTHS of this thing; it's gone far, far past anything I ever imagined, and it's all thanks to you. <3

Art by daryshka
Chapter 34

Chapter Summary

You sure you got this under control?

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“Well, what are you waiting for?” Luke demands, whipping around, putting one foot on the ladder to climb back up into his X-wing. “Let’s—”

Solo grabs his arm and yanks him back down, firmly. “You charge off again—with or without him—” he points a finger at Bodhi—“and you’re as good as dead. There’s no element of surprise here, Luke. Did you hear me? Chandrila is Mon Mothma’s homeworld. Seerdon expects us to come running.”

“I’m not going to leave Leia out there,” Luke snaps, throwing Han’s hand off his arm. Bodhi pulls his goggles off his head and fidgets with the strap, his heart pounding in his ears.

“No shit, kid, me neither, but me and Chewie and you two aren’t gonna cut it.” Solo crosses his arms over his chest. “Not this time, not with the whole capital city under attack.”

Luke takes a deep breath and straightens up, his initial frenzy falling away. “Okay. Han, call Rieekan and tell him everything Leia told you; I’ll alert the squadron.” Han claps Luke on the shoulder and steps a few meters away, pulling his comlink out.

“What should I do?” Bodhi asks, looking back up at Luke’s X-wing anxiously. “Do you want me to check anything else out?”

Luke shakes his head. “We’re done with that. I need you to—if Leia got cut off, it’s a sure bet Seerdon’s jamming all non-Imperial communication in or out. You built the Cadera’s comms to work with Alliance frequencies, right? Can you still pick up Imperial signals?”

“Yeah, yeah,” Bodhi says. ”I can break through the jamming, I’ll find a way to get through to her, wherever she is.”

“Great. Have Chewie help you with whatever you need to get set up. And—” Luke pauses, sudden trepidation in his eyes conflicting with the resolute set of his mouth. “We’re going to evacuate Leia out of a war zone. I’ll find someone with medic training to fly with you to help with any injured.”


“Me neither, but I’m almost certain Han has. We’ll figure it out together.” Luke half-smiles at him. “Get to work, Lieutenant.”

With Chewbacca’s assistance, Bodhi reconfigures the Cadera’s communications relays to work like a SW-95 transceiver. He explains it to Luke, twenty-odd minutes later, standing in the hangar bay waiting for Rogue Squadron to assemble: “It'll piggyback off of Imperial signals in Hanna City, so long as Seerdon does have communications up and running. Should be able to get a message through
Bodhi nearly chokes on the salt-and-sand memory of kneeling in the cargo shuttle’s hold, desperately hailing the Fleet over Scarif as Tonc held off the shoretroopers outside, but he pushes past it. “So I can tell Leia where to meet us for extraction. Any word from Mon Mothma? She must be—worried,” he finishes, weakly.

“Rieekan said he’d have the latest for us when he comes down.” Luke’s eyes are intent on Bodhi’s face. “The Cadera’s all prepped and ready to go?”

Bodhi pulls himself upright. “Just need a co-pilot and my orders—” He can’t keep himself, even though he’s shaky and anxious, from adding dryly, “Sir.”

“Oh, stop that,” Luke says, shaking his head affectionately.

“Yes, sir.” Bodhi snaps to attention as Janson and Kasan jog up, and Luke makes a face at him.

“Huh,” Janson says, taking in Bodhi’s proper posture. “We doing this strictly by the book now? Spit-shined boots and a stick shoved up your—”

“No,” Luke retorts, but then he does salute General Rieekan as he comes over, who looks baffled and pats Bodhi on the shoulder. “At ease, Lieutenant.”

“The rest of the squadron should be here any minute, General,” Luke says.

Rieekan nods. “And Solo?”

“Right here.” Solo looks like he’s leaning casually up against a stack of cargo containers, but Bodhi’s starting to be able to read alertness and tension in the set of his shoulders.

“Sorry, sorry,” Wedge calls, running up with the other members of the squadron in tow, plus a very young pilot Bodhi doesn’t recognize. “The Redemption’s too big, it’s impossible to find the deck you want even with a map—here’s Dak for you.”

“Thanks, Wedge,” Luke says, shaking Dak’s hand. “Hi. Did they fill you in on what you’ll be doing?”

“Co-piloting with Lieutenant Rook and providing first aid to civilians during the evacuation, Commander,” Dak answers, looking at Luke, more than a little starstruck.

“And gunner, don’t forget gunner,” Zev adds. “Dak’s a good shot, Bodhi, he’ll keep those TIEs off you.”

Bodhi quails. Oh. Great. Another trigger-happy co-pilot who won’t understand.

“Only if you need me to, sir,” Dak says, earnestly, and Bodhi suddenly recognizes Dak’s turning the same admiring gaze on him. This again, too?

“Mon Mothma’s released a statement condemning Seerdon’s attack on their shared homeworld,” Rieekan says. “However, we’ve decided it’s far too dangerous for her to join us at Chandrila; Seerdon doesn’t appear to know that one of our political leaders is already planetside, or he would’ve recruited even more Imperial forces to supplement his assault.”


Rieekan’s face is drawn. “From what Intelligence has managed to gather, a Star Destroyer—”
“—Sure, okay,” Solo mutters—

“—and an Interdictor cruiser are in orbit.”

Bodhi gulps, and a ripple of dismay goes through the squadron. Luke turns his head slightly towards Bodhi, and he wills himself to focus, breathe slowly. Don’t become a distraction.

“Ah, fuck,” Hobbie says. “So much for get in, get out.”

Rieekan throws Hobbie a brief glance. “I’ll be commanding the Liberty and Green Squadron. We’ll handle disabling the Interdictor and breaking the blockade. Captain Solo, you and Rogue Squadron take care of whatever Seerdon’s got planetside; based on an analysis of Princess Leia’s call, there’s TIE bombers making runs at the capital. And from what Draven’s managed to pull out of the data from Fest, I’d bet there’s going to be at least one walker on site.” He looks around at the pilots. “Clear Imperial forces from Hanna City, find Leia and get her out. That’s it. Questions?”

“Two squadrons and the Liberty to break a planetary blockade,” Janson says, in disbelief. Bodhi clenches his hands in fists behind his back.

“That’s all we can spare right now,” Rieekan replies, tersely. “Anything else?”

“Let’s get it done,” Kasan says. Her eyes glitter—Bodhi can’t tell if she’s thinking of Seerdon, or Leia.

Rieekan nods. “Then let’s go. May the Force be with you.”

Rogue Squadron scatters to their ships; Luke waves Dak on to the Cadera, and then throws his arms around Bodhi. “It’ll be all right, we’re flying together,” Luke says, a little muffled against Bodhi’s hair. “But if I tell you to get out—”

“I’ll be stuck in-system until the Interdictor’s down anyway,” Bodhi mutters, holding on to him.

“Still. I will actually pull rank on you if I have to.” Luke pulls away, his eyes very bright.

Bodhi licks his dry lips and musters up a smile for him. “Understood, Commander.”

Luke hesitates for a second; his gaze lingers, the way that Cassian and Jyn’s do, whenever they’re about to part, and then he smiles back, and turns and runs off to his X-wing.

Oh, shit. Cassian and Jyn.

Bodhi pulls out his comlink and calls Cassian as he goes up into the Cadera and checks over the preflight sequence; Dak is looking at him curiously, but says nothing. “I’m going to Chandrila with Rogue Squadron,” he says. “Don’t tell me not to, please, I just wanted you to know.”

There’s a sharp intake of breath on Cassian’s end. “Okay,” Cassian says, flatly. “I’ll clear it with Draven if Rieekan didn’t already.”

“Thanks, Cassian.”

“Bodhi—” Cassian’s voice is insistent.

“I know,” Bodhi replies softly. “I’ll try.” He switches his comlink off and glances at his co-pilot. “They’ve told you about, um, how I like to do things?”

Dak nods, eagerly. “I’m looking forward to flying with you, Lieutenant.”
“Uh—okay.” Bodhi blinks at him. “Everything set for take off?”

Dak leans forward over the controls, checking again. “Yes, sir.”

“Oh, you don’t have to do that.” Bodhi runs a hand over his hair, amused despite himself. “Just call me Bodhi.” His engines start up their familiar hum, and he settles his hands on the controls—

“Technically,” Dak says, “You probably should’ve been commissioned as a Captain to begin with, anyway, sir.”

Bodhi gapes at him. “What?”

“You had your own ship.” Dak looks puzzled. “And now you have three.”

“What?”

Dak opens his mouth again—

“Rogue Squadron, Millennium Falcon, you’re cleared for departure,” the deck officer says, over comms. “Bring Princess Leia back safe.”

“See you at Chandrila!” Luke calls out, and they’re off, weaving through what’s left of the Fleet at the rendezvous point.

“I have one ship,” Bodhi protests, as the Liberty streaks off to hyperspace before them, the small blips of X-wings following behind. The navicomputer beeps the alert for them to jump, and he pulls back on the lever, watching the stars blur. “This one, the one you’re sitting in. Luke gave it to me.”

Dak shakes his head. “Yeah, of course, but you—the cargo shuttle and the Raptor you just brought back, they’re both in the official registry under your name too.”

“That’s not possible,” Bodhi says, utterly bewildered. “This is my ship. The other—I almost died in that shuttle—who would’ve put it in under my name and not told me? I never work on it, I hardly ever fly it, I didn’t even fly it up to the Redemption when we left Thila Base.”

Dak raises his hands helplessly. “I don’t know, but that’s what the computer found when I looked you up in the database. You have three ships.”

“I’m going to fix this,” Bodhi swears, and then—“You looked me up?”

“When Luke called and said he needed me to fly with you—I mean, everyone knows about you, what you did, I just thought I should get up to date on what you’ve been doing since, um, then.” Dak’s face is alight with awe.

Bodhi holds up a finger. “I get the feeling I should probably review what goes into my friends’ reports more often,” he says, wryly. “But, okay, you know a lot about me, I don’t know anything about you, sorry—”

“There’s not a lot to tell.” Dak looks down, his face somber. “Grew up in the prison camp on Kalist VI, escaped with a Rebel pilot who was imprisoned with us, ended up out here, uh, hoping to avenge him.”

“Oh.” Bodhi sighs. “I’m sorry.”

Dak looks back up, shrugging. “Pretty much the same story as everybody else, right?”
“I guess,” Bodhi murmurs.

“But hey, if this goes well, maybe I’ll get to be part of Rogue Squadron, like you,” Dak says, cheering up again.

“Oh, I’m not part—” Bodhi stops. Yes, I am. I’m Rogue One. “Yeah. Yeah, I’m sure you will.”

*****

The Interdictor yanks them all out of hyperspace straight into something out of Bodhi’s worst fears—well, maybe not the worst, but certainly nearing the top of the list: a battle already in progress, streaks of laserfire burning through the sky, death swift and sudden all around him. A Star Destroyer in orbit, casting the same shadow over Hanna City as had loomed over Jedha until the day it died.

But we can still save Chandrila—Bodhi throws full power to the engines and chases Luke and Wedge down towards the atmosphere, blazing past the Liberty—there’s a couple pairs of TIE fighters making a slashing attack run on the Mon Calamari cruiser—a couple of Green Squadron Y-wings break off their push towards the Interdictor and chase after them, far too slowly, in Bodhi’s view.

The Star Destroyer’s turbolasers aren’t firing back at the Rebellion’s ships. It’s a relief, until Bodhi realizes they’re occasionally firing on Chandrila; columns of smoke are ugly gashes in a circle around Hanna City. He swallows and winces as something explodes off to port. Maybe I am too late again. I’m sorry—

“You sure you got this under control, General?” Solo calls over comms. The Falcon banks sharply to cover a third, even more sluggish Y-wing coming about to help the Liberty.

“Get planetside, Captain Solo,” Rieekan snaps. “Charging ion cannons—”

“Incoming,” Dak yelps—a pair of TIEs are roaring past, spitting laser fire; the Cadera rocks, but the shields hold. A couple of X-wings peel off to starboard, chasing the Imperials down.

“Don’t get too far, Rogue Two, Rogue Seven,” Luke orders.

The Liberty fires a pair of ion pulses at the Interdictor; one shot goes well wide, but the other finds its target, hitting one of cruiser’s four gravity well generators. Bodhi breathes out, shakily. We won’t be trapped. Rieekan will take care of it.

“Coming right back to you, Rogue Leader,” Kasan says. “Oh, fuck!”

“Yeah, hold tight,” Luke replies, and beside Bodhi, Dak gasps and grips the firing controls so hard his knuckles go white—there’s an entire squadron of TIE fighters flying straight at them.

Wedge says, “Want to try out that screen formation we’ve been practicing?”

“Do it.” Luke’s picking off TIEs one by one, cleanly; fiery dust blows past the Cadera’s viewport as they continue to dive towards Chandrila. “Rogue One, stay close.”

“Yeah,” Bodhi says. “Wait, screen formation?” Shit, when’s the last time I looked in on what they’ve been doing?

“Ha,” Solo calls. “You boys—”

“Hey—”

“Sorry, Kasan—you kids pull your fancy formation, or whatever, I’ll be down in Hanna City getting
a drink with Her Royalness. Yell if you need me.”

“Zev’s older’n you, Solo,” Janson points out, as the Falcon’s overdrive fires, and it goes spiralling down to the atmosphere.

“Thank you, Wes,” Zev says, dryly. “Okay, Rogue Leader, on your mark.”

“Go,” Luke calls, and suddenly the X-wings around the Cadera shift position, forming up as a loose sphere. But they don’t stay in one position for long, swapping places and weaving about, keeping TIE fighters from being able to get to Bodhi.

Overhead, the Liberty’s closing on the Interdictor, using the cruiser for cover against the Star Destroyer, which is starting to point its cannons back towards the Rebel ships instead of Chandrila, at last. Bodhi shudders, because he has no idea what Rieekan’s going to do about the Star Destroyer, and Green Squadron’s starting to collapse—he can’t see more than five Y-wings coming around for another pass at the Interdictor.

But he has his own problems to worry about; Wedge’s screen formation is tight, and he has to stay right on the lead X-wing’s tail—no matter who it is—the whole way down to the planet, correcting his course when they do, cringing as the X-wing to port takes out a TIE fighter and its panels careen apart towards the Cadera, impacting on the shields and deflecting away. He holds his breath as they get close to the planet’s surface and bombers roar past on a circuit around the perimeter of Hanna City.

Dak is staring, horrified, out the viewport at the bombed-out buildings and smoking gardens; Seerdon’s had most of a day to wreck the place, and he clearly has had no compunctions about doing so. “Seerdon’s from here, too,” Dak mutters. "They're his own people. He’s killing his own people —”

Bodhi trebles. “Luke, we have to help.”

“I knew you were gonna say that, but first things first, okay? We gotta take care of these bombers or we won’t have a chance to save the city. Han, get back here,” Luke orders. “Rogue One, find Leia. Hobbie, you’re on their escort.”

“Copy that,” Bodhi says, his mouth dry, and five of the X-wings break off in pursuit of the TIE bombers; the Falcon swerves around the remaining skyscrapers—Chandrila’s architecture is still graceful even as it burns—and follows.

“Shit, oh shit,” Dak is muttering. “Walkers, Bodhi, there are walkers!” Bodhi glances out, and down; there’s seven AT-STs marching on Hanna City.

Hobbie says, “I really hope you guys got all of the phrik Seerdon was messing around with, or we are well and truly screwed.”

“I hope so too,” Bodhi calls. “Dak, I need you to take over the helm, I have to get the comms up. Look for someplace safe to set down, and tell me where.”

Dak looks terrified, but nods, and Bodhi switches helm controls over to him, starts patching into the Imperial system, his hands shaking as the transceiver locks onto the signal and amplifies. Okay. I can do this— “This is Rogue One calling anyone who can hear me in Hanna City—we’re here to help, we’re—we’re coming in to—” He glances at Dak.

“The—the park, it’s the wild game reserve,” Dak stammers. “There, on the western edge of the city —” Bodhi scans the distance for it and spots its endless fields of green and gold; the bombers haven’t
been hitting it at all.

*It's our only chance.*

“We’re evacuating people out of the wild game reserve,” Bodhi says into the comms. “We’ve got more—more help coming, *get to the reserve.* I repeat, this is Rogue One—if you can hear me, we can get you *out.*” He switches lines, praying that Leia heard. “Rogue Four, I need you to keep the walkers away from there. Do you copy? I need those walkers *gone.*”

“Yeah, I got you covered,” Hobbie replies, and his X-wing swoops down, baiting the AT-STs, drawing their fire as Bodhi takes the controls back from Dak and races off.

Hobbie screams, and Bodhi’s heart leaps into his throat, but he can’t go back for him, he has to get Leia, *my orders are to get Leia—*” Wedge yells, and through the smoke and ruin of the cityscape Bodhi sees his X-wing breaking off pursuit of a TIE bomber to come back around for their friend.

“Ow, fuck me, *ow,*” Hobbie mutters, “Took a bad hit, but I think—” he pants for breath. “I think my R2’s got it locked down—”

“Get out of here, I’ll cover Rogue One,” Luke says, urgently. The *Cadera* shakes; there’s a trio of AT-STs on the sensors, steadily pursuing them along the outskirts of Hanna City.

Dak looks at Bodhi. “Shields are holding, but anytime you want me to return fire, *sir—*” Bodhi closes his eyes for a moment, trying to steady his breathing. Opens his eyes again and shakes his head. *The Cadera’s tough. We can take it.*

“And go *where?* That Interdictor’s still up there, I’m with you for the duration.” Hobbie hisses through his teeth with pain, and Bodhi shivers in fear and sympathy.

“Oh, that *voice,* I remember that lovely voice,” Seerdon says, sounding delighted. “Kasan Moor. How pathetic, allying yourself with the Rebel criminals who stole my research and destroyed my facility.”

Kasan laughs. There’s a disturbing note in it, cruel and cold. “I destroyed your facility on Taloraan, my dear Kohl.”

“Ah, of course. As you *remember,* darling, my retaliation shall be swift and *just.*” Seerdon’s gone silky, and terrible, and Dak is shrinking back in the co-pilot’s chair at the sound of the Moff’s voice. Bodhi trembles, but stays on his heading for the game reserve, watching Luke and Wedge and Hobbie on sensors harrying the AT-STs still stalking him. “Unfortunate to lose such a fine officer, but the weak will die off to make room for the strong. It is the way of the universe.” Seerdon switches off with an equally cold laugh.
“Luke, where is he?” Kasan demands, furiously.

“I don’t know, Kasan. Stay focused on the mission.” Luke’s firm. “Rogue Squadron, keep an eye out; he could be planning something we haven’t picked up on yet.”

Dak covers the comm pickup with his hand. “Couldn’t you trace the transmission back to him?”

Bodhi shakes his head, wide-eyed. “Seerdon could be anywhere on the planet, and even if he’s close—we don’t have the time.” He flies the Cadera over the walls of the wild game reserve and sets down just inside the wide-open gates. “Luke?”

“You’re in the clear,” Luke calls back. “Seerdon was wrong.” He sounds pleased. “Walkers are disabled, and we’re chasing down a couple last bombers.”

Bodhi exhales. “Thank you.”


“Rogue One, I hope you’ve got a medic on board, we’ve got wounded headed to you,” comes a new, and very welcome voice over comms.

“Yes, yes. Your Highness,” Bodhi pounds a fist on the console happily, grinning at Dak. “Get your gear, they’re going to need you.” The ramp lowers, and Bodhi runs down into the meter-high green-and-gold grass, waving frantically at the trickle of people moving towards him from the city limits a quarter kilometer away—a small figure in white bringing up the rear.

There’s too many for the Cadera, but the Falcon’s got room, or we can run people up to the Liberty—out of the city, launching from a pad he hadn’t picked up on scanners, folding down its wings for flight, comes a Sentinel-class shuttle, cannons aimed straight at—

“Let’s go!” Bodhi shouts, his heart hammering in his chest as he sprints towards the evacuees, their staggered line collapsing into chaos as they see the ship, too. “Come on, come on, we have to go!”

*(Running towards the U-wing as Jedha died around them, Tonc screaming for Baze to hurry on Scarif’s beach—)*

*Now’s Seerdon’s chance—*

From behind him, the Cadera’s suddenly spitting cover fire—Dak’s accurate as hell, but the Sentinel’s shields are too good, and Bodhi had never installed anything heavier than laser cannons—it’s not enough. There’s screams from the people running towards him, and he thinks, bizarrely, that he’s never heard anyone scream when they were about to die before. Bodhi flings himself down into the grass, staring up at the sky as the Sentinel closes in, a shadow in the summer sun, praying that it’ll be over quick, the way Jedha had died, that the Chandrilans won’t suffer—

A trio of X-wings soar overhead, and Bodhi rolls over onto his back, shaking, watching Luke—because who else would it be—leading a relentless attack, cannons blazing, driving Seerdon’s ship away and up into the atmosphere.

Bodhi gets to his knees, fumbling around for his goggles in the thick grass, and Dak runs down to him, yelling his name. “I’m okay.” He puts his goggles back on his forehead with trembling hands. “I—thanks, Dak.”

“You’re welcome,” Dak says, pulling Bodhi to his feet. “Sorry I couldn’t do much more than scratch the paint.”
“It did the job.” Bodhi pats him on the arm, gratefully, and looks at the evacuees straggling towards them again; there’s terror and tears on nearly every face, but they’re alive. He takes a breath. “Let’s get the Chandrilans on board.”

It takes a while to get as many people as they can into the Cadera, even with Leia organizing it. The injuries are minimal—a few very bad burns and a broken leg, but Bodhi has a painful suspicion that anyone who’d been hurt worse, in the city, is already gone, and anyone who was really healthy had fled as soon as the attack began.

Leia stands at the bottom of the ramp, looking up after a woman who looks surprisingly like she could be Leia’s twin, were it not for her white hair. “Did they get Seerdon?”

“I don’t know,” Bodhi says, looking up anxiously into the sky after where Luke and the rest of Rogue Squadron had gone. “Are you all right?” He glances down at her face; her eyes are dark, and he wonders if she’s thinking of Alderaan, the same way he’d thought of Jedha, homeworlds and people lost to the deliberate cruelty of the Empire.

She nods, though. “Are you?”

A formation of X-wings—plus the Falcon—drops out of the clouds, and Bodhi smiles, and finally breathes easily, smelling the sweet grass instead of ozone and his own fear. “I am now.”

The Falcon lands next to the Cadera, and Luke puts down just outside the reserve’s gates, making Solo first to them. He jabs a finger at Leia, as she directs the rest of the evacuees to the Falcon, where Chewbacca’s waiting—“So this is the classified mission you were on? Why couldn’t Mon Mothma have just come home to do whatever it was you were—”

Leia whirls on him furiously. “I do not have to explain to you everything I’m doing, Captain Solo, I’m not your wife.”

Solo’s mouth drops open. He splays his hands out to his sides and demands, at full volume, drawing attention from a few Chandrilans making their way to his ship. “Are you still mad about—”

Luke runs up—Bodhi shakes his head, his eyes widening, and pulls him away from Solo and Leia shouting at each other, and Luke laughs.

“Ignore them,” Luke says, throwing his helmet down, and tackles Bodhi into the grass, out of sight of anyone, kissing him giddily. Bodhi whimpers as Luke captures his lower lip and sucks hard, as determined and fierce as when he’d been commanding the squadron.

“Stars, Luke,” Bodhi manages, gasping their shared breath. “We still have to get offworld—the Interdictor—”

Luke props himself up sideways on one elbow and grins. “The Interdictor’s destroyed.”


“Yeah, the Star Destroyer pulled out once they got Seerdon on board. And Hobbie’s on the Liberty, he’s okay, they dumped him in a bacta tank.” Luke grimaces. “Mon Mothma’s on her way in now to lead the repair effort. We can stay and help out some, if you want, after you drop the evacuees off at Nayli.”

“The evacuees—” Bodhi struggles to sit up. Luke rolls to his feet and offers his hand to help him get up. Bodhi looks around the side of the Cadera; there’s a handful of Chandrilans making their way up into the Falcon—and Solo and Leia are storming off in separate directions.
“I guess we’ll pick this up later,” Luke says, amused, and walks Bodhi back around to the Cadera’s ramp, where Dak’s jogging down to them.

“Rieekan wants to know how the evacuation’s going,” he says, breathlessly. “And then he wants you home to discuss hitting Sullust, Commander.”

“I’ll handle it.” Luke nods. “Bodhi, if you want to stay and help Mon Mothma—”

Dak shakes his head. “No, you both have to go back, sorry. Rieekan said.”

Bodhi frowns. “Oh. Um, okay.” Luke kisses him quickly, apologetically, and runs back to his X-wing. Bodhi gazes at the devastated city, wishing there was something more he could do, but Leia’s calling his name, too, and he turns and goes up the ramp into the Cadera.

Chapter End Notes

And...whew. This puts me past 100k words, what. So, as planned, I’m going to do a pretty thorough line edit; no content is changing, just fixing spacing, inconsistent terminology, and the occasional "why did I use the same word twice in one sentence argh" wordsmithing! (edited to add: and sometimes trying to make Kaytoo funnier.) That shouldn't get in the way of having another update for you this weekend...and then it'll be SPRING BREAK and there will be MORE of this coming up incredibly fast.

100k words. WHAT HAVE I DONE?! >_<

As always, thanks for hanging in here with me. <3 Here’s to the next, uh, however many thousands of words we still have to go, together.
Chapter 35

Chapter Summary

Well, at least it wasn't the Death Star.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

There is something more Bodhi can do, before they go home again.

Leia somehow thinks that he, of all people, is a calming enough presence to stay with the people who don’t require immediate medical attention, and who are simply waiting for Nayli City’s aid workers to process them, while she and her white-haired counterpart go to meet with a kind-eyed, but bureaucratic official about short-term plans for resettlement.

“I’m supposed to take you back,” Bodhi says, anxiously. “Rieekan—”

But Leia simply raises her eyebrows at him. He stops, and nods, and watches her walk away. Bodhi supposes she could fly back in the Falcon if he left, but the way she keeps glaring at Solo, even as he’s helping with supplies, makes Bodhi fairly certain Chewbacca’s going to put his hairy foot down about having the two of them screaming at each other in the cockpit the whole way back. And besides—he’d wanted to help, after all, and he can’t persuade anyone like Leia can, or do what Dak’s doing with Nayli’s medical team.

So Bodhi stays put. He sorts out blankets and food and emergency supplies donated by the citizens of Nayli City for a while, wearing a path into the green-and-gold grass where most of the evacuees prefer to wait. The late afternoon sun is warm on his face when he steps off the permacrete; it’s a nicer day than it has any right to be. They’re far enough away from Hanna City that he can’t see the smoke, though there are periodically bright fireballs streaking through the sky from the destroyed Interdictor.

Or TIE fighters. Or Green Squadron. Whoever else didn’t make it.

Bodhi stops looking up.

As he hands supplies around, he reluctantly lets the Chandrilans thank him, quietly, or through tears; lets them sob on his shoulder for what they’ve lost. And some of them talk to him about how it all happened so fast, one minute they were just—and then the next thing they knew—

He mumbles a few scattered reassurances that taste like ash and sand in his mouth, but no one seems to need Bodhi to say much of anything at all. The evacuees just want him there to listen, and it’s easier to do that than it is to think, or remember.

Bodhi doesn’t even know if any of the Chandrilans recognize him for anyone other than an Rebel pilot, but it doesn’t matter. Not while he’s crouched down in front of a three-year-old, attempting to distract the boy with his goggles, his comlink; anything that’ll give the boy’s poor mother a chance to handle the datapad the aid worker’s trying to get her to fill out.

But as the boy shrieks happily and pulls on the strap of his goggles, someone says, too loud and
echoing into the hangar, striving to put Seerdon’s attack in perspective: “Well, at least it wasn’t the Death Star.”

Bodhi flinches, and glances around for the speaker. It’s a young man sitting in the grass, a meter or so away, holding hands with a woman who’s frowning and trying to shush him, whispering urgently, “—from Jedha, from Alderaan, you idiot—”

The boy’s mother presses Bodhi’s goggles back into his hands. “Thank you for playing with him.” Her eyes are wet, but she’s found a smile, somewhere, and Bodhi replies, softly, “Good luck.”

She takes her son’s hand and turns to follow the aid worker. “May the Force be with you, Lieutenant.” Bodhi watches them go, trying to block out the couple arguing about the relative scales of devastation across the galaxy, because it doesn’t matter that Jedha still technically exists compared to Alderaan: his home is gone, and there’s no evacuees to resettle except for him and Chirrut and Baze.

“I’m sorry about those two, Bodhi,” someone says, and he looks over to see Leia’s white-haired colleague grimacing as she strolls up to him. “The Chandrilan political ideal is argumentation and debate, and while that made for a thrilling Senatorial process, it doesn’t hold up as well under these circumstances.” She holds out her hand to him. “You can call me Winter.”

“They just lost their homes,” Bodhi murmurs, shaking her hand. “They just lost everything, and—”

“And it’ll sink in soon enough, you and I both know that,” Winter says, and Bodhi realizes her hair is braided up very much like Kasan’s had been; she’s Alderaanian, too. “The important thing, now, is what they’ll do about it. What Chandrila’s government will do in response.” She tilts her head as Leia joins them, looking pale and exhausted, but her eyes are bright. “Ready to go?”

Leia nods. “Captain Solo’s heading back to the Redemption.” She gestures for them to go back to the Cadera; the Falcon’s already engaged its repulsorlifts and is starting to make its way out of the hangar. “Is your co-pilot back?”

“I don’t know,” Bodhi says, but Dak is already in the ship. He’s sitting in the co-pilot’s seat, staring out the viewport sort of blankly.

“Oh—I should’ve—” Dak starts flipping toggles for the pre-start, not meeting Bodhi’s gaze. “I’m sorry, Lieutenant, Your Highness, it’ll be just a moment.”

“Whenever you’re ready,” Leia says, leaning back in the jump seat and closing her eyes. She’s asleep before they even hit hyperspace; when Bodhi glances back again, she finally looks peaceful even as her head nods slowly sideways onto Winter’s shoulder. He has no idea what they’d done on Chandrila, before Seerdon’s attack, but he’d pieced together from the evacuees that she’d organized everything during it, from getting as many people out at the start as she could, to preparing for a ground resistance in case of a prolonged siege.

It makes him wonder what the hell her childhood must’ve been like. Bodhi doesn’t know how old she is, has never checked the records, but she’s definitely no older than himself, or possibly Luke. He can’t imagine growing up under the shadow of lineage and legacy instead of occupation, but maybe it’s all about surviving expectations.

“Bodhi, was that what it was like, on Jedha?” Dak asks, quietly, some time later, once Winter’s also drifted off to sleep. “When—the Death Star—”

Bodhi turns to look at him, tensing up.
“Did you—did you see it happen—”

“What in blazes makes you think I want to talk about this right now?” Bodhi asks, too sharply.

Dak swallows and drops his gaze. “I thought you were all going to die,” he says. “It’s my first mission, and I thought I was going to have to watch everyone be killed right there in front of me.”

_Oh._ Bodhi breathes out slowly. “Yeah. Yeah, it was like that, except—I was—I knew everyone was already—” Dak’s gone pale, and Bodhi thinks, _that wasn’t in the database, was it._

He bites his lip. “They—the Chandrilans had a better chance, though.” Bodhi can tell, even without checking, that Leia’s awake again behind them, and he wants to ask—_is this what you do, to atone?_ “Because of us.” Dak brightens up a bit, but his eyes still track Bodhi’s face cautiously. “Because we got here in time.”

Bodhi nods; he abruptly can’t trust himself to speak.

Leia reaches forward and touches his arm, but she says to Dak, “For your first time out with Rogue Squadron, I think you handled the situation very well.” Dak jumps in surprise and looks back at her, his mouth falling open a little.

“Your Highness—but I didn’t—”

She smiles. “I know good shooting when I see it, Dak.”

Bodhi gathers himself, and offers, “Good flying, too.” He pauses. “If you want, I can talk to Luke about making your assignment to Rogue Squadron permanent.”

Leia pokes him very hard in the ribs, out of Dak’s line of sight—_okay, maybe I’m not supposed to do that—but Dak’s smiling at the idea, and it’s much, much easier to talk about Rogue Squadron than it is anything else, for the rest of the flight back to the Redemption._ Winter provides a few stories about Wedge and Hobbie’s early days with the Rebellion, the details as precise as if they’d happened yesterday.

Bodhi finds himself laughing, unexpectedly, as they come home; the pilots’ prank war has a long and apparently fairly inglorious history, and Leia _looks_ at him, like she’s never heard him laugh before. Which, come to think of it, Bodhi’s never heard her laugh, either, though he’s seen her smile, sometimes, at Luke, or, when she thinks no one’s watching, at Solo, when he’s not being an ass.

Once they’ve docked, Winter draws Dak back into the hold, purportedly asking for his help going over her report. Bodhi suspects she doesn’t need it in the slightest—there’s something odd about the way she retells things, as if she’s getting them letter-perfect—and is only doing it to give Leia a chance to talk to him alone.

Leia doesn’t get up for a minute, letting Bodhi make his fortunately shorter-than-usual list of repairs on a datapad. And then when he’s done, she stands and rests her hand on his shoulder, gazing down at him for a long moment, and he tries to straighten up under her steady scrutiny. “I hope you haven’t forgotten what I asked of you, a year ago,” she says. “I still would very much like to hear about Jedha. When we have the time, not now.”

Bodhi licks his dry lips. “I haven’t forgotten.” He dares to put a hand on top of hers on his shoulder. “You’re really all right, Your—Leia? Chandrila’s a Core world, was it—was it like being on—”

“Nothing will ever be like Alderaan.” Leia shakes her head, slowly, at him. “But I think—I _hope—_
the Alderaanian refugees will be happy there.”

“That’s what your classified mission was,” Bodhi says, realization dawning on him. “Finding a new home for them.”

She nods. “You do understand you’re not actually cleared to know this.”

“Then why are you—” Bodhi frowns up at her.

“If I can resettle a few thousand Alderaanians, I can certainly find a home to suit the last three Jedhans,” Leia says, firmly. “If you want, for after this is all over.” Bodhi trembles under her hand, his vision blurring.

Leia leans down to kiss his forehead. And then she steps back, and one of her rare amused smiles is on her lips. “Unless Luke’s promised you something?”

He huffs a startled laugh and swipes at his eyes. “No.”

“I didn’t think so, he would’ve told me about it,” Leia says, thoughtfully. “Anyway. Think about it.” She pats his shoulder, turning to go. “Oh—I’ll put in a word about Dak. Your relationship to Rogue Squadron’s complicated enough already.”

“Thanks, Leia,” Bodhi says, and means it.

“It’s the least I can do,” she replies, equally sincerely, and heads down the ramp, Winter following after her.

Bodhi takes a deep breath, pulling himself out of spiralling after thoughts of home, and calls, “Dak?”

“Yeah, Lieutenant?” Dak’s organizing his medical supplies in the hold.

“I bet the rest of Rogue Squadron’s still meeting with General Rieekan, if you want to come see what that’s like.” Bodhi gets up out of his seat, rubbing his eyes.

“Okay,” Dak says, looking entirely too thrilled at the idea of a meeting.

Both Rieekan and Draven are in the briefing room. Cassian and Jyn and Luke stand with them, around the display table, gazing up at the projection of Sullust and Seerdon’s Capacitor, and Kasan is saying, “I’ve never been inside—”

“Bodhi,” Cassian says, coming towards them, and all heads turn towards him and Dak. Cassian grabs his arms and shakes him. “Dammit, Bodhi.” Bodhi tries to get his hands on Cassian’s—Luke’s grinning—

“We’ll debrief you two later,” Rieekan says, a smile flickering over his lined face. “But you actually don’t need to be here for this part. Go rest.”


Draven’s arms are folded over his chest. He shakes his head. “I have something else in mind for you.” He raises his eyebrows at Dak. “Both of you.”

Bodhi looks at Cassian; he’s nodding. “It’s a good idea,” Cassian says. “We’ll talk about it after.” He makes a shoowing motion at Bodhi. “Go lie down for a bit.” Bodhi stares at him uncomprehendingly; over his shoulder, Jyn’s smiling, too.
“You’re dismissed, Lieutenant,” Draven says, more firmly. “I’ll send Captain Andor to get you.”

“Good job today,” Luke calls, smiling at Bodhi through the holo projection.

“Aww,” Wedge murmurs, and Bodhi makes a face at him as he goes.

“That was weird,” Dak says, in the corridor.

“Yeah,” Bodhi agrees, baffled. “Um, I’m gonna go back and work until they get me, d’you have stuff you need to do, or—?”

Dak nods. “I should check in with the docs.” He hesitates, and then says, “Thanks, Bodhi.”

“For what?”

“For letting me fly your ship.” Dak smiles. “One of them, anyway.”

“You’ll get your own,” Bodhi says. “I know it.” Dak flashes a pleased grin at him as he leaves.

Back in the cockpit of the Cadera again, Bodhi stands in the cockpit, trying to orient himself to work and, for once, utterly failing. He can’t bring himself to look at Green Squadron’s casualties, but he looks up Hobbie and finds he’s been transferred to the Redemption for treatment.

The comms flash, and Bodhi hits the toggle. “Cassian?”

“Hey.” It’s Solo.

Bodhi glances out the viewport, across the hangar, and sees Solo sitting in the cockpit of the Falcon, staring at him, apparently unneeded for the Sullust planning meeting too. Bodhi sighs. “She didn’t say anything about you.”

“I wasn’t—” Solo splutters an aggrieved noise into the comm. “I wasn’t calling about Leia. I mean, I was. Am. But not—dammit, kid, I was going to say—” He stops. “That was a useful trick you pulled with the comms, even if it did tip off Seerdon about what you were doing—”

Bodhi smiles faintly down at the console. “Solo?”

“Yeah?”

“You’re welcome. Oh, and, uh, maybe don’t lead off with yelling next time you’re trying to tell Leia you’re glad she’s safe,” Bodhi suggests. “Just an idea.”

Solo sighs. “Yeah. Did she happen to say why she was on Chandrila in the first place?”

Bodhi hesitates for a long moment, thinking of the little boy tugging on his goggles, and angry spirits, and home. His heart aches.

“It’s classified.”

Chapter End Notes

Happy Rogue One digital release day? :)
Winter!
“So where am I going instead of Sullust?” Bodhi asks, trying to keep from sounding frustrated, an hour or so later, as Cassian points him to the empty chair in Draven’s office. He hadn’t said a word about the mission on their way up from the hangar bay, only asked about Chandrila and Luke. Jyn’s already sitting in the other chair, looking over something on a datapad; she looks up briefly at him and smiles, and, unusually for one of these little meetings, Kaytoo is standing at her side. He dips his head at Bodhi in greeting.

“So, Thyferra,” Draven replies. “With a medical team, who are supposed to be—” he checks his chrono—“On their way straight here off shift.” The general puts his hands on his desk and leans forward. “Did Ralter meet your standards for a co-pilot?”

“Ralter? Oh, you mean Dak. Yeah, I’d fly with him again, any time.” Bodhi nods. “Uh, sir, while we’re waiting—?”

Draven tilts his head. “Yes?”

“Do you know anything about why there are three ships officially registered under my name?”

“What?” Cassian comes off of where he’d leaned up against the side of Draven’s desk. “There are?”

“I had no idea until Dak told me,” Bodhi says, flustered and a bit relieved at Cassian’s surprise. Jyn’s blinking over at him, too; not one of the many, many things they actually do keep secret from him, then.

Draven frowns. “That’s not a question I have an answer for, Bodhi.” He taps his console, though, and pulls up the relevant file, the same one Bodhi had checked after Solo stopped pestering him. And there they all are: the Zeta-class cargo shuttle he’d taken from Eadu, the Cadera—the only one with a name and not just a registry number—and the Y-4a Raptor from Fest. “This is interesting, and not how seized Imperial ships are usually processed.”

Kaytoo looks as embarrassed as a security droid can. “It might be my fault,” he admits, slowly.

“Kay, what did you do?” Cassian asks.

“The base on Yavin IV was in chaos when we returned from trying to find Princess Leia,” Kaytoo says. “Someone asked me whose ship it was, and I may have pointed at Bodhi. It must’ve been a deck officer who asked me.”

“Well, that answers that.” Jyn raises her eyebrows, smiling a little.

“I was distracted because Cassian was hurt,” Kaytoo says, defensively, and Jyn’s mouth thins into an
“And the Raptor?” Bodhi asks.

“No, not my doing,” Kaytoo says.

Cassian’s lips twitch. “Bodhi, you are turning pirate on us.”

Bodhi glances up at Draven. “Shouldn’t I—shouldn’t they be the Rebellion’s ships? We need ships, we always need more ships—Kaytoo’s flown the cargo shuttle more than I have since we got it.”

“Consider them on loan to the cause.” Draven’s faintly amused. “If they’re still serviceable after the war, they’re yours.”

Bodhi’s mouth falls open. “You’re—you’re sure.”

Draven shrugs. “No one who’s noticed has said you can’t have them, and frankly, it gives you more options for a mission like this one.” He nods at the datapad in Jyn’s hands.

“I own three ships.” Bodhi sits back in the chair, rubbing his hand over his beard, feeling stunned. “I own three ships?”

“Makes you a rich man, Bodhi,” Cassian says, his mouth twitching again. “You’ll have to come up with two more names.”

“I—” Bodhi starts, but the door behind him slides open, and Dak and a medic come in; she’s the Twi’lek woman Bodhi had talked to, wandering around the Redemption his first night on board.

“Sorry we’re late, sir,” the Twi’lek says to Draven.

He nods acknowledgement, but doesn’t make anything of it. Bodhi’s friends don’t straighten up or change anything about their demeanors at all, but there’s suddenly a tension hanging in the air. Draven says, “Lieutenant Rook, this is Dr. Yraka’Nes. She’ll be going with you to Thyferra, along with Ensign Ralter. Sergeant Erso, if you would?”

Jyn shakes her head. “Kaytoo found it, he should get to explain.” Despite the downward pull of her mouth, there’s a hint of a gleam in her eye.

“You didn’t like my explanation before,” Kaytoo says, petulantly. Draven raises an eyebrow—

“Fine. In the research files I copied on Fest, I identified four recent projects of Moff Seerdon’s: expanding the tibanna mining platforms on Taloraan; the phrik armored walkers we stole; experiments with increasing energy storage in the Capacitor; and a design for a bacteriophage—” Kaytoo looks at Jyn. “I won’t go into the genetic details this time, but it is a virus specifically designed to destroy alazhi.”

“You’re joking,” Yraka’Nes says, flatly.

“Cassian, did you do something to my sarcasm subroutine? I didn’t intend that to sound like a joke.”

Bodhi asks, “Alazhi?”

“Along with kavam, alazhi is one of the key components of bacta,” Yraka’Nes answers. Her rose-colored lekku have gone pale. “The two together are necessary for bacta to function as it does.”

“So we’re going to Thyferra to—to stop an infection from destroying bacta?” Bodhi swallows,
tasting the memory of the fluid in the back of his throat; from the twisted-up look on Cassian’s face, he’s remembering it too.

Draven says, “We don’t know if Seerdon’s had a chance to infect the production facilities or not. Thyferra is neutral space; he doesn’t control it or any neighboring sectors, but—” His mouth twists. “Karrede’s information on his movements was fairly thorough, but there are some gaps we can’t account for. While our own supplies are fine, for now, we need you to go to Thyferra and determine if the bacta there has been contaminated.”

Dak looks sick at the thought. “Seerdon would really do that? Destroy years’ worth of bacta?”

Jyn smiles at him, but there isn’t a trace of amusement in it. “He most certainly would. This is the Empire we’re dealing with. They released that plague on Dentaal, remember? Not to mention a little thing called the Death Star.”

“It'll hurt the Empire, too,” Dak objects.

“Not as much as you think,” Bodhi says, looking down at where he’s laced his fingers tightly together in his lap. “I don’t know that I ever saw a stormtrooper go into a bacta tank.” They’d never have put me in one. Dak makes a soft sound of dismay.

Yraka’Nes asks, “Shouldn’t testing at the facility be able to catch contaminated production?”

Cassian says, quietly, “People can be bought. A manager here, an altered test result there—” Bodhi glances back up at his friend; these sound like things Cassian knows from experience—and Cassian lifts his hands, spreading his fingers to suggest dispersal. “No more bacta.”

“It sounds paranoid, I know,” Jyn says, looking around at Yraka’Nes and Dak’s distressed expressions. Bodhi wonders, briefly, if there was ever a time when his friends weren’t this paranoid. He doubts it. “But Seerdon did create phrik-armored walkers. I piloted one myself.”

“That’s why your team is this size, Lieutenant.” Draven’s leaning forward over his desk again. “You’ll be able to get in quietly. Find out if the bacta’s been infected, and if it has, bring back a sample for our medics and scientists to work on a cure.”

“Or a vaccine to prevent the spread of it to the fungal medium in which alazhi is grown,” Yraka’Nes muses. She exhales slowly. “I need the research files to start developing a test for the bacteriophage. It’ll take some time.”

“You’ve got a couple of days at best,” Draven warns her, as Jyn hands her up the datapad. “We’d like this operation to go off at the same time as the attack on Sullust.”

Yraka’Nes inclines her head slightly. “I assume this information is highly classified?”

“Only the people in this room know about the virus,” Cassian replies. “You can have Dak to help, but that’s it. There’s no sense in starting a panic about a bacta shortage when we don’t have enough information yet.”

She nods again, looking over the datapad. “We’ll get started immediately.”

“Keep me apprised of your progress, Doctor,” Draven says, and dismisses them all.

Out in the corridor, Cassian turns to Bodhi, who’s mulling the mission over; there’s something Draven had said that’s sticking in his mind. “Come have dinner with us?”
Bodhi holds up a finger at him as the realization hits him. “Did—did Draven say this was my team? As in—I’m in command?”

“Of two people,” Kaytoo observes. “Who know a lot more about viruses and bacteria than you.”

“Yes, thank you, Kaytoo, but—Jyn—Cassian, are you arranging things for me again?”

“Come have dinner with us,” Cassian repeats, more firmly, taking hold of his arm and walking them all to the turbolift past a couple of Draven’s aides. Bodhi shuts up, looking back and forth between his friends, bewildered.

“We have been arranging things,” Cassian says, letting go of his arm once the turbolift’s in motion. “Because even though you don’t keep track”—he pulls a datapad out of his jacket and presses it into Bodhi’s hands. “We do.”

Bodhi looks down at the datapad. It’s a running display of names and numbers, and very near the top of the list, just after *Luke Skywalker*, is his own name, and a staggeringly high number of credits. “This is—this is—”

“Why you’re not going to Sullust,” Jyn says. “Too many people. Too many desperate people who’d jump at the chance to buy their way out from under Imperial occupation. You know how it is.” Her eyes are dark. “We can’t stop Luke from going and potentially getting himself caught or killed, but we can keep you out of it.”

“How did this get so high?” Bodhi’s voice cracks.

“You’ve committed quite a list of crimes against the Empire,” Kaytoo points out. “And you are not as sneaky about it as Cassian and Jyn are.”

Jyn tilts her head. “That about sums it up, really. You and Luke weren’t especially good about staying off of security cameras on Kessel.”

Kaytoo says, “It was a prison, they have those.”

Bodhi is trying not to hyperventilate. “Oh my stars, Kessel. Shit, where else—”

“We should not have had you with us on Fest,” Cassian says. His eyes are somber. “Draven thought it would be all right since I was doing Sward, but”—He shakes his head. “Running into that mechanic could have gone much worse than it did.” Cassian’s gaze flicks down to where Bodhi still isn’t carrying Roja’s blaster.

“I’m—I’m not going to hide,” Bodhi protests, uneasily. “I’m in this to the end with you. Luke, Solo, Leia, everyone else on this list, Mon Mothma—they keep fighting even though they’re in just as much danger—”

“That’s why you’re still going to Thyferra,” Cassian says, as the turbolift doors slide open on their deck. “Will you come have dinner, please?”

“Yes, yeah, okay.” Bodhi pushes off the back wall of the turbolift and follows them down the corridor to their quarters, both touched at their concern and a shade annoyed, but still mostly just perplexed. “That doesn’t explain why you’re putting me in charge. I’m a pilot, not a spy.”

Kaytoo swivels his head to look at him. “Yraka’Nes is a doctor, not a spy.”

“And you have much more experience than Dak, of course.” Cassian unlocks their door. “Oh, sorry
about the mess. We’ve been packing for Sullust.”

Bodhi gapes at the arsenal laid out on their bed. “I thought Baze wasn’t back yet,” he says, eyeing some of the heavier artillery.

“No, these are ours,” Jyn tells him. “You steal ships; we steal weapons. This is only half of it.” She frowns, running her critical gaze over the assorted pile. “Cassian, where’s my A-180?”

“Under your pillow,” Cassian replies. He waves at the parts of a disassembled blaster spread neatly across the table. “Kaytoo, would you put that back together?”

Kaytoo picks up the barrel of it. “You took it apart, Cassian.” But he dutifully reassembles it while Cassian starts making dinner, and Bodhi finds their plates and utensils half-buried under a pile of datapads and flimsies, trying not to flinch at the sounds of Kaytoo efficiently fitting the trigger into place, the power pack slotting home.

“It’s not like we’re putting you in charge of a squadron straight out of nowhere, like someone else we know,” Jyn says, lightly. She’s putting their weapons into a duffel bag to clear some space on the bunk. “And Dak knows you already, right? He’ll be a good co-pilot? I mean, he’s not Luke, but you’ve got to share the last of the Jedi around a bit.”

Bodhi makes a face at her, setting their plates out on the table. “Yeah, Dak did fine. Better than I did my first time out.”

“I don’t need this, Bodhi.” Kaytoo picks up the mismatched fourth plate curiously and hands it back to him. “But thank you.”

Cassian’s spoon falls with a clatter against the side of the pan he’s been stirring. “Your first mission for the Rebellion was—was—”

“Defecting from the Empire, getting—getting captured by Saw Gerrera, and watching my home be completely obliterated?” It’s not as hard to get the words out, with them, not anymore; not when they’d been there for it, and everything after. Even if Bodhi still can’t quite bring himself to tell them about what Saw had done.

Cassian shakes his head, and says, a little reluctantly, “Scarif.”

“Oh, that’s a lot better of a comparison.” Bodhi holds back a shudder. “Everyone I was in charge of there died.”

Jyn stops packing. “Is this one of the things on your list?” Kaytoo’s looking Bodhi up and down, whirring faintly; he’s probably exhibiting all kinds of physiological responses.

“I guess it is now.” Bodhi makes a frustrated noise at himself, opening and closing his hands in front of him. “Sorry—I’m sorry. I’m all right.” Jyn is looking at him worriedly, but he pushes on. “Thyferra isn’t an Imperial world, Dak’s a good co-pilot, and the most important thing is making sure the bacta’s not destroyed. The rest of it—fuck the rest. I’m—I’m doing my part.”

“You always do, Bodhi.” Cassian steps over and wraps an arm around his shoulders, pressing a kiss to his temple.

Jyn nudges him with an elbow fondly, too, and he takes a shaky breath and points at Cassian’s simmering pan. “What else can I do to help?”

The rest of the evening is less stressful: Jyn teases Bodhi mercilessly about Luke, but that’s to be
expected, now, and by the end of dinner, Cassian’s nudged the conversation around to Bodhi’s newly acquired ships while he clears away their plates. “What’re you going to name the other two? Our capital ships are all called something hopeful: the Redemption, the Defiance. Unless it’s a Mon Cal ship, in which case—” Cassian shrugs.

Bodhi makes a face. “Imperial ships were named to inspire fear, I think. The Desolator?”

“How like the Desolated, after we got through with it,” Kaytoo offers, gleefully.

Cassian makes a pained noise, sitting back down at Jyn’s side. “Remind me to search for a new humor subroutine for Kay.”

Jyn says, as Kaytoo returns a rude, grating sound at Cassian, “Bodhi, guess what Karrde’s capital ship is named.”

“What?”

She smirks. “Lastri’s Ort.”

Bodhi groans. “Please tell me you’re joking.”

“No,” Cassian says. “All of Karrde’s ships are named like that. The Etherway? Uwana Buyer?”

Bodhi cringes, leaning back in his chair. “Ugh, that’s terrible.”

“His personal ship’s the Wild Karrde,” Jyn adds, grinning.

“I suppose when you’re the multimillionaire head of the galaxy’s second largest smuggling organization, naming one ship after yourself—with a truly terrible pun, no less—isn’t the most egotistical thing you could possibly do,” Bodhi says. “Of course, I’m not calling either of these the Rookery, or—” He gestures dismissively, as Jyn snorts. “Anything like that.”

But Bodhi pauses, and looks at her, an idea surfacing brighter and more certain than memory. He licks his lips, and asks, hesitantly, “Jyn, would it be all right if I named the cargo shuttle for your father?”

Jyn’s mouth opens in shock. Cassian, still pressed up against Jyn’s side, glances away, as if to give them privacy.

“I—if you don’t want me to—I’ll think of something else,” Bodhi stammers, as dizzy as when he’d finally asked, tell me what you’re building, please?

“Bodhi. Of course.” Jyn reaches across the table to grasp Bodhi’s hand, tethering him. And for once, the memories that drift across his mind like smoke coalesce into something that doesn’t hurt: Galen Erso’s sad eyes shining like stars in his daughter’s face.

“So that’s one,” Kaytoo says, and Bodhi draws a steadying breath. “What about the Raptor?”

Cassian’s put his arm around Jyn, kissing the top of her head gently as she swipes at her eyes, but she’s smiling at Bodhi as he thinks it over.

The Cadera for Jedha’s ghosts. Galen for—ours.

The third—

He looks up at Kaytoo and smiles, knowingly.
Chapter End Notes

Please note that *I did not make up a single one of Karrde's ships' names*. I am torn between delight (because I do love a good pun) and sheer horror. :P (I also have not made up a single character name this entire time; here's Yraka’Nes!)

I'm like 80% certain what the name of Bodhi's accidental third ship will be, by the way, but I'm happy to entertain suggestions, if you want to yell them at me here or on tumblr?

Thanks to meledea for looking this one over <3

Also, shout-out to snowconeskywalker for this lovely moodboard inspired by this fic?!

And, as always--thanks for the comments, kudos, everything else--the support you've all shown me continues to blow me away. <3
Chapter 37

Chapter Summary

It’s the least complicated plan.

(A bit of smut at the beginning again!)

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

But Bodhi wants to get it right. He hadn’t looked in on the retrofitting of the cargo shuttle—no, the Galen—back on Yavin IV; if the Raptor’s going to be his, too, it ought to be fixed up as well as the Cadera. Especially with the name he’s got in mind for it.

It’ll have to wait until after Thyferra, though.

After leaving his friends, Bodhi goes up into the Cadera, mulling over how to get into a secure bacta production facility—Jyn had lots of ideas like the wounded Tarchalian gambit they’d done on Fest, though he’s fairly certain she’d kept a few back so as not to horrify him—and Luke is sprawled out asleep across both their bedrolls in the hold. He’s down to an undershirt and shorts, and with every breath, the datapad under his slack fingers is slipping down from where it had fallen on his chest. Bodhi stoops to move it before it can hit the floor and wake him—


Bodhi leans down to kiss him. “Go back to sleep,” he whispers, but of course Luke opens his eyes instead, gazing up at him curiously. “Where are you going instead of Sullust?”

“I don’t think I’m allowed to tell you,” Bodhi murmurs, sitting down on the bedroll beside him and kicking off his boots.

Luke yawns and wriggles around so he can put his head in Bodhi’s lap. He gives Bodhi a wide-eyed, disbelieving stare. “Really?”

“Yeah.” Bodhi puts his flight jacket down for a pillow and goes over backwards onto it. He combs his fingers into Luke’s hair. “Sorry?”

“Really?”

“That better not be your Force trick voice,” Bodhi teases him.

“You know that doesn’t work on you anyway,” Luke says, rolling over and pushing up to his hands and knees to straddle Bodhi. “This okay?” He nods, and Luke grins and leans down to kiss him.

“I’m not going to give you classified information,” Bodhi protests, holding onto Luke’s hip with one hand, trying to tug his undershirt up ineffectively with the other. “Not even for—hey—” Luke’s somehow managed to get his pants open, and is gently stroking him with his fingertips, feather-light. “Nope, not going to give up anything—” He turns his face to the side, and Luke dives at his exposed neck eagerly.
“You were asleep, how are you—Luke—” Bodhi squeezes his eyes shut as Luke shifts his grip slightly, but not enough.

“You don’t have to tell me anything you don’t want to,” Luke murmurs, in between searing kisses along Bodhi’s neck.

“Then what are you doing this to me for?” Bodhi gulps and tries not to lose it entirely, writhing as Luke’s tongue dips into his ear. Self-control wins out, barely.

Luke snickers. “’Cause it’s fun, and I—” He cuts himself off abruptly. Bodhi isn’t sure what he would’ve said, because he redoubles his efforts, arching his back and shuddering into Luke’s grasp. And then Luke rebalances himself on both hands and stifles Bodhi’s gasps with an insistent, thorough kiss, waiting him out.

“Seriously, how are you so—so energetic?” Bodhi manages, opening his eyes again, a dozen racing heartbeats later. “All I ever want after coming off a run is to fix everything I broke and sleep for a week.” He tugs his ruined shirt off over his head and wiggles out of his pants, trying to kick them off without kneeing Luke.

Luke smiles, and drops from his hands down to his forearms. “I’m not trapping you, am I?” Bodhi shakes his head, and Luke lowers himself a little further, centimeters at a time, until he’s lying completely on top of Bodhi. He’s very warm against Bodhi’s bare skin. “Still okay?”

“Mm.” Bodhi finally gets his hands up under Luke’s shirt and skims over his back, enjoying the way Luke’s muscles move as he shivers and sighs.

“What did you break?”

“What?”

“You said you wanted to fix what you broke. And then sleep.” Luke is slowly grinding against his thigh.

“Maybe not in that order,” Bodhi mumbles, as lassitude steals over him. He presses his face into Luke’s hair, though, and works a hand down between them into Luke’s shorts, eliciting a soft moan. “I broke—huh. I guess I didn’t break anything, this time. You—you ‘n Rogue Squadron, you kept ‘em all off me.”

“Don’t talk about the squadron,” Luke pants, thrusting into his fist a little faster.

Bodhi huffs a laugh and wraps a leg over Luke’s. “That new kid—”


“I’m all right,” Bodhi reassures Luke hastily, turning over to face him.

“You sure?”

Bodhi shrugs a shoulder and smiles at him. “Probably better than all right.”

“Okay.” Luke’s eyes sparkle. He’s flushed and his chest is still heaving, and seeing him like this is
better than looking out at the endless shining sea of Aquilaris, very nearly better than *flight*. He touches the side of Bodhi’s face, thumb grazing over his lips.

“So like I was saying, about Dak—” Bodhi starts, mischievously, and Luke rolls his eyes and replaces his hand with his mouth.

*****

Over the next two days, Rieekan has Luke out drilling formations with Rogue Squadron to get ready for their attack on Sullust, and everyone on Bodhi’s maintenance shift stops what they’re doing to watch whenever the X-wings zip past. Anselm, a mechanic about Draven’s age who works on Luke’s X-wing sometimes with Bodhi, frowns and mutters something about needing to lock down the electromagnetic gyros because they’re over-torquing the retro thrusters, but Bodhi just smiles and watches Luke putting his squadron through their paces.

“You’ve never flown one of the T-65s, eh, Lieutenant?” Anselm asks, and Bodhi turns.

“They’re not for me,” he replies. “That’s *my* ship, over there—” He waves a hand at the *Cadera*.

Anselm nods knowingly. “Claustrophobe?”

Bodhi looks away. “Not quite.”

“Hmph.” Anselm doesn’t push it, though, and turns back to watch Rogue Squadron coming around for another pass, their closed S-foils flashing reflected light as they go into a complicated spiralling pattern. “Just like a Skywalker; he’s showing off again. Get him to check over those gyros when he comes in, will you?”

“Yeah, of course,” Bodhi says, distractedly, as Luke pulls a heart-stopping smuggler’s reverse and the rest of the squadron overshoots him. *Showing off?*

*Oh. Of course.*

He resists the temptation to wave.

*****

And as for his mission to Thyferra:

“No.” Bodhi shakes his head at Cassian. “No fucking way.”

“It’s not like you’re going to pretend to be Talon Karrde, just one of his associates.” Cassian pats his shoulder reassuringly.

Bodhi is not reassured. “I am not going to walk into Zaltin Corp—the bigger half of the *monopoly* on bacta—to *negotiate* on behalf of the second-most infamous smuggler in the galaxy about the *one* legitimate shipping enterprise he engages in—”

“—Solo would probably quibble with that ranking a bit,” Jyn mutters.

“Under false pretenses! Karrde *is* going to find out, and spice or no spice—”

Draven frowns very hard at Bodhi for that—

“—he’s going to *kill* me,” Bodhi says, lacing and unlacing his fingers together behind his back.
“He wouldn’t kill you,” Kaytoo says, helpfully. “You’re worth too much alive.”

“Thank you, Kaytoo, that makes me feel a lot better.”

“It’s the least complicated plan,” Draven starts, and Bodhi glares at him.

“Thank you, sir, that makes me feel a lot better about your confidence in me—”

“Lieutenant,” Draven barks, and Bodhi snaps his mouth shut, wide-eyed at the way he’d spoken to the general, but Jyn’s biting her lip to hold back a laugh.

Cassian says, “If it helps, Aves won’t be angry you’re impersonating him.”

“Dak looks more like Aves than Bodhi does,” Kaytoo observes, and Bodhi jabs a finger at him pointedly, looking around at his friends.

“It’s not going to be a problem,” Jyn says, sliding a couple of ident documents over to him. “You’re just having a conversation with Zaltin Corp about the cost of transportation.”

Bodhi raises his eyebrows. “Extortion, Jyn, it’s called extortion.”

“And Karrde’s already doing it, so—?”

“I’m not going to be able to cut him a better deal,” Bodhi protests.

“You don’t have to,” Cassian says, and Bodhi thinks he might be trying not to laugh at him, too. “Xuchpra Corp’s lost a lot of ground to Zaltin over the years. But if you throw their name around, mention quality, all the things Xuchpra can do for Karrde because they’re smaller and more flexible, the Zaltin Corp people will be falling all over themselves to show you how much better their product is. And then Yraka’Nes runs her test and you find out whether—”

“—or not the galaxy is going to be plunged further into chaos because of a bacta shortage,” Bodhi finishes for him, and sighs. “Okay. I’m Aves.”

“And the transponder on the Cadera’s been changed to the Rookery,” Jyn says, her eyes dancing.

Bodhi puts a hand over his face and groans. “Jyn.”

Draven suppresses, just barely, a snort. “All right. Yraka’Nes and Dak should be done with their work by the morning. You’re dismissed.” Cassian nods and leaves Draven’s office, Kaytoo and Jyn following him out.

Bodhi turns to go, too, but Draven says, “Lieutenant?” He looks back.

“I wouldn’t be putting this in your hands if I didn’t have confidence in you,” Draven says. “If your friends didn’t think you could handle it by yourself.”

“Sir—”

“This plan has the fewest moving parts for three people, two of whom aren’t—experienced, to manage,” Draven adds. “That’s all I meant.”

“Thanks.” Bodhi nods jerkily at him.

Draven frowns a little. “You should probably do something about your clothes, though. You don’t look like the right-hand man to the galaxy’s second most infamous smuggler.”
“I’ll take that as a compliment, sir,” Bodhi replies, dryly, and Draven actually chuckles.

“Go see Solo, and tell him it’s on Intelligence’s tab.”

Solo doesn’t ask questions about what Bodhi’s doing that he needs different clothes. But he does insist on making Bodhi carry Roja’s hold-out blaster, producing, with some relish, a spring-loaded miniature wrist holster from a cargo container in the main hold.

“I’m never going to be able to keep this,” Bodhi points out. “Concealed weapons are banned pretty much, uh, everywhere.” He holds his arm out towards Solo uncertainly anyway.

Solo draws a very sharp breath, and just slaps the holster into Bodhi’s outstretched hand instead of demonstrating how to strap it to his arm. “What the fuck, Bodhi?”

Bodhi follows Solo’s gaze down to his scarred-up wrist, and his heartbeat quickens. *I forgot. How could I forget?* “They’re from before,” he says, hastily, shaking his sleeve down. “They’re not—not what you think.”


“Oh, shut it,” Bodhi says, but without much heat, or fear, in it; Solo’s trying to let him have his space in more ways than one. He looks down at the wrist holster. “I guess I probably can’t wear this.”

“Okay,” Solo replies, a little awkwardly. “Uh. EC-17’ll fit in your boot, too. Either way, you gotta have a blaster on you. Doesn’t look right to be pretending to be a smuggler without one.”

“I’m not—”

“Yeah, you are.” Solo grins. “From the parameters Draven told me—you’re borrowing my clothes.”

“Ah, hell,” Bodhi says, looking down at the shirt and jacket piled on the cargo container warily. He doesn’t see any obvious bloodstains, though. “Listen, don’t—this is classified—”

“I can, in fact, keep a secret,” Solo says, ruefully, and mimes zipping his lips. “Draven wouldn’t send you over if he didn’t know that.” He leans against the bulkhead, eyeing Bodhi up and down. “So what’re you doing instead of helping smoke Seerdon out of his hidey-hole?”

Bodhi shakes his head. “Solo, if Luke couldn’t get it out of me, I’m sure as shit not telling you.”

Solo smirks. “And I’m sure Luke tried *everything.*” Bodhi makes a rude gesture at him and leaves, Solo’s shout of “You’re welcome!” following him down and out into the hangar bay.

There’s someone sitting on the ramp of the *Cadera* when he gets back to it.

“This had better not be a setup for another squadron prank,” Bodhi warns Wedge, strolling partway up to him.

Wedge holds his hand up. “Corellian’s honor. Just came by to see if you wanted to play some sabacc with us. Relax a little before the big day.”

“And you’re in my ship because?”

“Honestly? You’ve got the most space for a game,” Wedge says. “I mean, we’d have to play on the floor and you’ve no chairs or a table—just, uh, bedrolls—”
Bodhi’s face goes hot, but he says, “Whose fault is that, exactly?”


“Yeah, okay.” Bodhi nods, going up into the Cadera to clean up. “What’re you gonna lose to me this time? Your X-wing?”

“Hey, you’ve already got plenty of ships,” Wedge protests, trailing after him, thumbing his comlink, and summoning the rest of the squadron. Bodhi throws a surprised look at him. “Yeah, word got around, you pirate. Let’s just play for credits.”

Dak shows up, too, with Kasan and Janson and Luke; Hobbie begs off, though, and Janson laughs once Wedge’s stopped trying to cajole their friend into coming. “He’s trying to get into Maddel’s good graces. She visited him in the medcenter a couple times, it might be working.”

“We all visited him a couple times,” Kasan points out.

“Jealous?” Janson nudges her, sweeping his meager winnings into a pile in front of him.

Kasan rolls her eyes. “Oh, please. If I wanted any of you, I would’ve had you already.”

“You don’t want me?” Janson puts the back of his hand up to his forehead in mock despair.

Dak glances back and forth between them, puzzled; Wedge says, “Pay them absolutely no mind, Dak, they are always like this.”

“Of course, I’d never go for Luke or Bodhi, there’s no sense in trying to separate those two,” Kasan offers, cheerfully, and Bodhi flinches.

(Baze says, “You will have to be parted, someday.”)


“Nothing, it’s nothing,” Bodhi says, quickly. *It’ll only be a short separation. Just a few days apart. Maybe a week, if hitting Sullust takes longer. It’s fine. It’ll be fine. It’s your deal, Janson, c’mon.*

Bodhi’s distracted, though, and ends up losing more than he’d bargained for throughout the rest of the game. Wedge grouses that he should’ve made a play for his “—uh, lost items,” but doesn’t complain too much about it, pausing at the top of the ramp as the other members of Rogue Squadron depart. “We’ll watch out for him on Sullust tomorrow, don’t worry,” he tells Bodhi quietly, clapping a hand on his shoulder. “I’ll make damn sure he stays in one piece.”

“Thanks, Wedge.” Bodhi manages a smile, and turns back into the hold.

“So—” Luke’s spread out their bedrolls again and is sitting cross-legged on them, looking up at Bodhi curiously. “What was that all about? I’ve never seen you lose, um, quite that badly—”

Bodhi crosses the hold in two strides and gently cups Luke’s face in his hands, gazing at the light reflected in Luke’s eyes, considering what to say. “Seerdon would’ve killed us all on Chandrila,” Bodhi murmurs, finally. “His own people. He won’t hesitate to destroy *everything* on Sullust. I know our deal’s off, but please—”

Bodhi’s lips twitch. He leans down to oblige, deliberately ignoring the murmur of Baze’s voice in his memory, and Luke pulls him off-balance onto the bedroll.

*****

In the morning, Jyn stows the last pack of weapons in the Galen and then comes back down the ramp to hug Bodhi with Cassian and Kaytoo on her heels. “Race you back home.”

“You’re laying a full-on siege,” Bodhi says. “I’ll beat you by lightyears.”

She smiles. “Good luck, Bodhi.”

“You, too.”

Cassian touches his arm and says, quietly, barely audible over the clamor of the hangar, the whine of the Falcon’s engines engaging as it launches, “Bodhi, if anything goes wrong—if the Thyferrans catch you out, or the test Yraka’Nes designed doesn’t work, or—anything, you get out and come home, understand?”

Bodhi takes a shaky breath, and steps close to kiss Cassian on the cheek; Cassian looks startled, but delighted. “Same goes for you,” Bodhi says, even though he knows neither of them will, not until their work’s finished.

Kaytoo pats Bodhi on the shoulder, and says, “I’ll watch their backs, Bodhi. Even Jyn’s.”

“I heard that.” Jyn’s eyes are amused, though, and then they’re all climbing up into the Galen’s cockpit and closing up the ramp.

As the Galen pulls away, Bodhi turns and looks over Rogue Squadron’s X-wings; Kasan waves to Hobbie, who’s standing off to one side with his arm around Maddel, looking kind of bereft, as the other Rogues settle into their cockpits.

“Sorry, Hobbie,” Bodhi mutters, sidling up to them.

Dak’s jogging over, too, waving at the Rogue Squadron pilots. “Bodhi, d’you want me to—um—”

“Not yet,” Bodhi says. He’s determined to stay calm, not frantically prepping his own ship until after the squadron departs, so he doesn’t distract Luke, who’s strapped in and nearly ready to go. Artoo’s photoreceptor is pointed in Bodhi’s direction, though, and Luke laughs at something the droid said. He turns to wave, and then the X-wings are all off, too, forming up and darting between the other ships towards the jump point.

“It’s okay. I’ll get the next one.” Hobbie looks at him. “Or, if you want, I could come with you? Wherever you’re going?” Maddel pokes him with her elbow. “Or you could go, Rodma—” but she’s ducking out from under his arm to hug Yraka’Nes as the Twi’lek comes up to them.

“Rodma, I didn’t know you were coming with us to—oh—” Yraka’Nes stops as Maddel shakes her head. “It’s secret even from you?”

Maddel grins. “Yep. I’m going to pretend I didn’t even see you off.”

“I suppose I probably could have waited a little longer to come down,” Yraka’Nes says, abashed. “But I’m glad you are here, my friend.”

Hobbie’s narrowing his eyes at Bodhi and Dak suspiciously.
“It’s your first time as a spy, Doc,” Maddel replies lightly. “Good luck out there.” She throws Bodhi a very stern glance, and he gets the message—keep her safe.

He nods, trying to keep his expression confident and not—anything else. “Okay, let’s go. See you when we get back.”

The deck officer still calls him Rogue One when they depart.

*****

Thyferra is humid; Bodhi can feel the oppressive weight of the air as soon as the ramp starts to lower, revealing the jungle world beyond. It feels like an oncoming monsoon storm that won’t break, though it doesn’t smell as much like dust and wind as Jedha’s rainy season would have. Yraka’Nes seems fine with the climate, like she must’ve grown up in the tropical zones of Ryloth, but Dak tugs at his collar and makes faces as he tries to find a way to adjust his pack so it won’t make his shirt stick to him.

Dak is even more uncomfortable with the Thyferran that greets them on the landing pad. And Bodhi has to privately admit, his heartbeat starting to pick up speed, that his xeno professor hadn’t done enough to counter some forms of anti-alien sentiment, because stars they are really big insects—

“Welcome to the headquarters of Zaltin Corp,” the Thyferran says, in slightly accented Basic, extending their first pair of limbs and bowing. “We are Seeqov Thranx, the administrator of our facility. You may call us Thranx.”

Bodhi pushes down a startling impulse to come over very formal and Imperial at them. Don’t talk too much, not like Solo—or myself. Just keep it simple. He inclines his head. “I’m Aves. These are Dr. Yraka’Nes and Dr. Dak Ralter.” Dak twitches a little at having suddenly graduated from medical school.

“What can we do for you and Talon Karrde’s hive?” Thranx asks, gesturing for Bodhi to follow them towards the facility. The architectural design is alien, of course, but it’s still unmistakably an office and warehouse building, bustling with Thyferrans and other beings like, well, a hive. “Our arrangement has been satisfactory, has it not?”

“It has,” Bodhi says, warily. “But Xucphra Corp made us—Karrde—another offer that we can’t simply ignore.”

Thranx turns their compound eyes on him. “We appreciate that Talon Karrde sent someone to deal in person.” Their skin ripples shades of green and gray, and Bodhi wishes he’d paid more attention in xeno class to what coloration changes meant; he thinks a slower rate of change means calmer, but it’s hard to say for certain. “We will go to our office and review the contract together. You will see that Xucphra Corp is not as good of a hive partner to you as Zaltin.”

Inside—where, of course, Roja’s blaster is immediately confiscated by security—Bodhi is surprised by two things. The first: that the layout of Thranx’s office is not in the slightest like the sealed chamber on Amaltanna where they’d found the dead Separatist bug general. He privately admonishes himself for expecting it to be.

The second is that Karrde’s transportation contract with Zaltin is more than fair to the Thyferrans, especially when it comes to delivery times. Karrde’s nearly as efficient as the Empire in picking hyperspace lanes, though he’s obviously padded some of the Core routes to equalize times for delivering bacta to Outer Rim merchants.
But the transports themselves are a problem; Karrde’s cargo shuttles are even older than the Galen, and a couple date all the way back to the Clone Wars. “They’re all too slow, you have to pay for faster ships,” Bodhi argues, finding himself falling back on all the fights he’d had with other cargo pilots, useless because he’d never have dared to take it higher. Speed had meant survival, but keeping his head down had also meant survival. “Sure, faster ships are smaller, but we’d be able to get smaller deliveries out more often, and there’d be less chance of getting caught by pirates. Less chance of losing all that valuable ky—”

Bodhi cuts himself off, eyes going wide, but Thranx doesn’t appear to have noticed his mistake; they’re still clicking quietly to themselves, and their colors aren’t changing any more quickly. He licks his lips and says, instead, “Bacta. We don’t want to lose all this bacta. I mean, look at the losses we incurred last quarter; these are costs we have to pass on to you. Xuc—Xucphra is willing to pay more for better ships.”

Yraka’Nes clears her throat softly behind him, and Bodhi stops again, blinking, startled to discover he’s gotten so involved in something that was only supposed to provide them cover. “And—Xucphra Corp also said that they’re developing a new strain of bacta—”

Thranx takes the bait, gray-green skin flashing dark all over, and twenty minutes later they’re on the main production floor, among the rows and rows of interconnected bacta growth tanks that look and sound basically identical to the ones used for medical treatment. Yraka’Nes and Dak have their head together over her equipment; the Twi’lek is hmm-ing over the “baseline” tests she insists on doing before Thranx tours them through the experimental wing to showcase their latest variant. Bodhi looks up, and up; there’s some security patrolling the catwalk six stories overhead. One Thyferran’s paused on what he’d assumed were its vestigial third pair of limbs and is gazing back down at him.

Dak shoots Bodhi a relieved glance as Yraka’Nes finishes her testing. “Everything looks good,” Yraka’Nes confirms aloud, and Bodhi exhales, his heart rate finally slowing down for the first time since they’d arrived—but—“Please show us the experimental wing,” Bodhi says. We’re not in the clear yet.

Thranx nods to the two Thyferrans working in the experimental wing. One is standing on a comically tiny stepstool on fully extended second limbs, making them tower over the tank they’re disinfecting. Thranx makes introductions: “This is Aves, Dr. Yraka’Nes, and Dr. Dak Ralter. They’re from Talon Karrde’s hive.” The Thyferran cleaning the tank does the spread-limbs bow very carefully so they won’t overbalance, and Bodhi nods back at them before turning to look at what Thranx is showing Yraka’Nes and Dak.

“You spoke of tradeoffs, Aves,” Thranx says. Bodhi can’t tell any difference between the bacta in here compared to the regular stuff, though Yraka’Nes is examining the display on one tank thoughtfully and trying to explain something complicated to Dak before they run their test. The other Thyferran worker backs away cautiously; from the hyperactive, nervous sort of way their gray-green colors chase up and down their skin, Bodhi thinks they must run into humanoids about as often as he’s ever encountered insectoids.

Thranx is going on. “Bacta works very quickly on an organic being, but proper healing will always take time. We are trying to find ways to slow the process so that a patient does not need so much time to recover after a bacta treatment.”

“Slower healing?” Bodhi asks, puzzled, but Yraka’Nes nods.

“You would be able to go straight back to your duties out of a bacta tank, instead of having to sleep for hours afterwards,” she explains. “Simply diluting bacta reduces its effectiveness, and you still end up exhausted.” Yraka’Nes tilts her head at him. “You’ve been in twice. Surely you remember.”
“I remember the taste,” Bodhi says, wryly, evading the memories that swirl up in his head by trying to follow the equally dizzying arrangement of colors on the Thyferran still eyeing them.

Thranx clicks a pattern that Bodhi thinks is supposed to be amusement. “Although our marketing department would appreciate more experimentation with flavor, changing it has not been a priority for thousands of years.” They gesture with a first limb towards Yraka’Nes. “Would you like to test that batch? Not for taste, of course.”

“Of course,” Yraka’Nes says, and sets to work. Bodhi watches the Thyferran cleaning the tank curiously; he’d never really thought about how the medics dealt with switching people in and out before.

“We must remind you that our experimental designs are proprietary, though,” Thranx says. “We have shared much with the galaxy, but we are still in competition with Xucphra. You aren’t corporate spies, are you?” They crane their head down to look at Bodhi.

Bodhi huffs a nervous laugh, gazing at his multiple reflections in their compound eyes. “We’ll happily delete any confidential information from our equipment—”

“No, we won’t,” Yraka’Nes says, looking up at him. Her lekku are twitching along her back, and Dak’s face is white. “Sir—Aves—the virus is here, it’s completely destroyed the experimental batch.”

“What?” Bodhi trembles and starts forward to look, even though the genetic information means nothing to him—

“What? What virus?” Thranx demands. The Thyferran at the tank looks as confused as a gigantic insect can get, and then there’s a clatter of claws behind them as the other one—the one Bodhi’s been thinking of as simply a bit twitchy around people—bolts.

“Shit. Thranx, call your security, you have to stop them!” Bodhi whirls and runs after them back to the main floor. I’m not too late, I can still stop it—but he has no idea how—

They’re up on their long second limbs, spinning one of the valves open on an interconnected tank, and they’re holding something in a claw—“Wait. Please don’t.” Bodhi shouts, skidding to a halt, holding his hands up. “You don’t have to do this!” No, no no—

From six stories overhead, the two Thyferrans Bodhi had seen patrolling earlier jump down, landing a row away; the one standing at the tank clicks frantically and says, “Stay away from us!”

“Xeshen Kra, what in the name of your hive are you doing?” Thranx demands, skittering down the row to Bodhi with Yraka’Nes and Dak a few paces behind, Yraka’Nes still stammering out scientific terminology at them to explain. “Why would you bring this virus here? You will destroy everything.”

“Seeqov Thranx—we are sorry—” Kra is wringing their second pair of limbs, compound eyes darting around the production floor at the rest of the interconnected tanks. “We had no choice! He threatened our hive.”

Bodhi gulps and asks, even though he knows the answers already, “He? Was it—a human? His—was his—um—hive name Seerdon?”

Kra clicks again, so high-pitched that Bodhi can barely hear it, and their skin swirls with mottled, ugly colors. “We have to do it. He will kill them if we don’t do it.”

“No, you don’t,” Bodhi says, trying to keep the waver out of his voice. He licks his lips. What’s in
your heart? Do Thyferrans have hearts? “Your hive would want you to do the right thing. They wouldn’t want you to infect all the bacta—”

Thranx is sidling up to the tank, clicking softly and reaching one of their first legs out to the vial Kra is holding, but they jerk back, clutching it tightly in their claw. “What do you know about hives?” Kra cries out. “You don’t even have a hive name, Aves.”

Bodhi swallows. “I’m not really Aves,” he confesses, and behind him, Dak makes a quiet, horrified noise. “I—my hive name is Rook.”

Thranx makes a sharp hissing sound, and angry colors sputter up and down their skin, but they don’t take their eyes off of Kra.

Bodhi says, “I know about losing—” He can’t believe he’s having this conversation with a scared and desperate Thyferran, but there’s nothing for it. I have to make them understand. “I know about losing my hive. I lost my whole—but I—I still—you can do the right thing. You can help so many people if you don’t do this. Please, Xeshen Kra.”

Kra clicks an incredibly fast pattern, everything running together into a rising cacophony of a whine; Bodhi claps his hands over his ears and cringes, but Thranx just gently extends their first limbs to them again. “It will be all right, Kra. We will help you protect your hive.” Kra folds in on themselves, and holds the vial out to Thranx, and the two security Thyferrans reach out and take Kra’s first limbs to lead them away.

We might’ve stopped it, but now what? Bodhi looks at the other members of his team. Yraka’Nes sits down heavily on the floor, her head in her hands, lekku twitching uncontrollably. Dak’s expression is terrified, but he’s patting her shoulder carefully. I should’ve come up with a better plan. I’m sorry I got you into this.

“You lied to us,” Thranx says, examining Kra’s vial. “You are not from Karrde’s hive.” Their colors aren’t nearly as frenetic as they had been moments ago, but they’re still moving faster than Bodhi thinks means calm.

“No,” Bodhi says, trying not to look at how sharp Thranx’s claws are. “Seeqov Thranx, I’m sorry I lied to you, but we had to know—we had to find out if it’d been infected already—if anyone had—”

“You are spies? From the Rebellion?” He thinks Thranx’s voice is as suspicious as a Thyferran’s can get.

Bodhi can almost feel the rough fabric of a hood in his mouth again, and there’s a familiar sick feeling rising in his chest. “Yes. I mean, I’m not—I’m not a spy, none of us are spies, but we are from the Rebellion—Seeqov Thranx, what are—I’m sorry, but we couldn’t trust—”

“You talked less as Aves,” Thranx says, craning their head down to gaze into his face, and Bodhi stops, and takes a breath. Their colors are slowing down, finally. “Next time come as yourself to warn us of danger.” Thranx taps a claw against their thorax. “The word you use. Warn—me.”

“I’m sorry,” Bodhi says, a third time. “I will.”

After that, Thranx sends a security team out to the Xeshen hive, and carefully passes along Seerdon’s virus to Zaltin Corp’s scientists to study, reassuring Yraka’Nes that they’ll pass along their findings.

And then they escort Bodhi and his team back out to the Cadera. It’s nearing sunset, and the hum of smaller insects waking for the evening rises from the jungle surrounding the landing pad; Bodhi wonders idly if the Thyferrans can understand their much tinier cousins.
Thranx rocks back on their third limbs and looks up at Bodhi from the bottom of the ramp. “You are Bodhi Rook.”

Bodhi nods reluctantly.

“We are sorry about the loss of your hive,” Thranx says, and Bodhi wills himself not to tremble, listening to the hum of insects getting louder. “We hope—”

“Lieutenant!” Dak shouts from the cockpit, and Bodhi realizes he’s not hearing insects, he’s hearing the engines of a ship.

His heart sinks as he recognizes the sound of those engines: they belong to a Sentinel-class shuttle.

*Seerdon’s not on Sullust.*

*He’s here.*

Chapter End Notes

Here’s [what a Thyferran looks like](#).
Seeqov Thranx
Xeshen Kra

<3
Chapter 38

Chapter Summary

That's an order.

Chapter Notes

Heed the warning and tags.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

“Picked up a distress call from Xucphra Corp,” Dak says, breathlessly, coming down onto the ramp. “Imperials are attacking their facility, they—they’re destroying the bacta—but the signal’s jammed now, we’re cut off—”

He freezes, and looks up at the sound of Seerdon’s ship rapidly approaching. The sky has darkened enough that the Sentinel’s headlights are visible as scattering misty lights through the jungle, as the distinctive hum of its engines grows louder and louder. “Seerdon’s coming here? Bodhi—Lieutenant — what are we gonna do?”

“Seerdon is not coming to discuss an arrangement.” Thranx clicks once, as loud as a thunderclap. They turn their compound eyes on Bodhi again, splintering him into distorted reflections. “He is attacking because of your war. Will you help us?”

Bodhi spares a glance back over his shoulder at Dak and Yraka’Nes. Yraka’Nes is fidgeting with the end of one of her lekku, but they both look resolute. Ready. “We’re with you, Bodhi,” Dak says, and he has a flash of Cassian and the volunteers on Yavin IV, hard-faced fighters all, not like these two medics. Not like Bodhi himself—

No. I’m in this fight.

He smacks his fist against the hull of the Cadera. “Yes. Yes, we’ll help, but how? We only have one ship—I can’t bring down a Sentinel in a straight fight—”

“Seerdon must not be allowed to destroy our bacta,” Thranx says, and Bodhi stiffens up at their voice; despite their shared language, it’s shifted, somehow, into something as alien as anything he’s ever heard. “What is the capacity of your ship?”

“About eighty tons, more or less,” Bodhi answers—and then his eyes go wide, and behind him, he hears Yraka’Nes and Dak’s shocked gasps as the realization hits them at the same moment. And despite the urgency of their situation, his willingness to do whatever the Thyferrans need done, Bodhi stammers out, “Thranx. The Rebellion—the Alliance—can’t afford thirty-two bacta tanks!”

“We will discuss billing if we survive.” Thranx lifts a first limb to their mouth and clicks into what Bodhi belatedly recognizes as a wrist comm and not just a spike on their forelimb. “Go to the loading dock to the southeast and take all you can out of Seerdon’s reach. We will hold off his attack.”
Bodhi nods, and Thranx fully extends their second limbs and lopes away into the deepening dusk. Dak’s already bringing the repulsorlifts online, the soft whine of them ratcheting up Bodhi’s nerves, and as Bodhi goes up into the Cadera’s cockpit, craning his neck to look out for Seerdon’s ship coming in, he wonders if Thranx meant we as in just themselves, or—

“Seerdon’s going to see us, if he hasn’t got us on sensors already,” Dak mutters anxiously. “Is this gonna work?”

“I never painted the starbird on,” Bodhi says, his mouth twitching in a brief, rueful smile as they launch. Dak gives him an incredulous stare, and Yraka’Nes huffs a shaky laugh.

Bodhi circles as low as he can around the building, one wingtip skirting the encroaching edge of the jungle, and sets down again next to the loading dock, where a pair of Thyferrans are maneuvering a load lifter with a bacta tank on it out to them already. He swallows and attempts to tell himself it’s just another cargo run, but that thought isn’t terribly reassuring.

“Okay, okay, let’s make this quick,” Bodhi says, unstrapping and hitting the ramp controls. “Load up as much as we can and—and—” He looks around at Yraka’Nes and Dak’s faces, thinks he reads dismay in Dak’s eyes. “Come on, you heard Thranx, we have to get the bacta out of here before Seerdon has a chance to do whatever he did over at Xucphra Corp. Besides, the comms—we’re alone down here—”

Bodhi hears himself rattling on, stops and takes a breath. *I’m only making it worse. They already trust me. Focus, dammit.* “Yraka’Nes, what—d’you need to do something with these? I’ve never transported bacta before.”

Yraka’Nes nods at him. “The tanks have to be disconnected before they can be moved. I don’t know how many people—how long do we have?”

“I don’t know,” Bodhi says. “Not long enough, there’s—but we’ll do what we can, yeah? Dak, stay here and help the Thyferrans get the tanks on board, keep me informed about what the hell those troops are doing. Yraka’Nes, let’s go.” He tries to turn anxiety into action, running down the ramp back out onto the planet’s surface, where, even though they’re docked behind the building, on the opposite side of where Seerdon’s landed, he can see the stuttering glow of laser fire reflecting up into the jungle. The Sentinel must not be carrying missiles, or anything like the walkers or tank droids on Chorax, but the trees are starting to burn like they had on Scarif.

The familiar whine of blaster fire echoes through the trees, undercut with a disturbing chattering sound that he realizes must be Thyferrans calling to each other, fighting, dying. The two workers who’ve been deputized to help load up the ship keep swiveling their heads back and forth and clicking at each other, and their colors in the light from the Cadera look almost like static on a holo message, they’re moving so fast. “I’m sorry,” Bodhi says, hurriedly, though he has no idea if these Thyferrans can even understand him. “You must want to go and fight.”

“Seeqov Thranx told us to stay and help you,” one of them says.

“The fight will come to us,” the other points out, going a bit gray, and Bodhi trembles and hopes that isn’t true, waving them on towards Dak and heading into the loading area with Yraka’Nes on his heels. Inside, Bodhi nearly gags on the reek of spilled bacta, but the space is empty, too empty, without shipments waiting to go out. A very small voice in the back of his head points out that he’d seen the schedule in Karrde’s shipping contract, and no one is scheduled for a pickup anytime soon.

*Don’t worry about it. I can do this.*
“Thranx told us what we must do,” a third Thyferran says, locking the doors between the loading dock and the main floor open. Their Basic is heavily accented, but clear enough. “I will show you which ones to take.” If there’s a system, Bodhi doesn’t recognize it as the Thyferran leads him through the main floor, because they point to tanks seemingly at random, but Yraka’Nes is nodding.

“I hope you remember which ones, because I’m not going to be able to,” Bodhi mutters plaintively to her, and says, louder, “Just the closest ones to the loading dock, please, we don’t have much time—” Something explodes outside, and the whole building shakes, bacta sloshing inside the tanks, and the Thyferran clicks unhappily.

“Show me what to do,” Bodhi says to them and Yraka’Nes, and together they walk him through the process of disconnecting a tank for transport; it’s a matter of closing the right valves in sequence. Yraka’Nes’ hands are steady, far steadier than his—she is a medic, after all—but her voice wavers as she supplements the Thyferran’s halting explanations.

As they get to work, Bodhi catches at her arm. “I’m sorry you’re in this mess.” The building shakes again, and he’s uncomfortably certain the stormtroopers are lobbing grenades.

Her lips twitch. “Anything you need, right?”

“Yeah, yeah, right,” Bodhi says. His mouth is dry, and his heart is racing, but he’s trying to focus on what has to be done. It’s a plan. It’ll work. And maybe—maybe Thranx will be okay, maybe the Thyferrans will win and I won’t have to—“Okay. Let’s get this done and get out of here.”

Bodhi’s heartbeat speeds up a little with each bacta tank they load onto the Cadera; after the fifth, he splits off from the Thyferran and Yraka’Nes to get more tanks prepped by himself. Dak checks in over comms once, to report that a second Sentinel’s flown in with reinforcements. “Probably finished up over at Xucphra,” Dak says, his voice strained. “Hurry, Bodhi, I don’t know how long we’re gonna stay off their sensors.” The building shakes more incessantly now, like a roiling earthquake, and Bodhi clenches his jaw and focuses on his task, pushing aside the memories that surge in his head like the sky of—stop. Close the valves. Check the seals. Get the load lifter.

They get six more done before it all goes to hell.

“The fighting’s moved inside,” Dak reports tersely over his comlink, as Bodhi’s sweat-slick hands fumble with the valve. How the hell did Xeshen Kra get one of these open so fast? “The Thyferrans had to retreat. I think the stormtroopers set up a—a turret.” Bodhi can hear it, the rhythmic thudding of blaster bolts into duracrete, and he stops and tries to catch his breath. E-web repeating blaster. Shit.

“Okay—” Another explosion, much closer this time, and then a Thyferran crashes backwards through the doors onto the production floor. They right themselves with a claw, and their clicking is loud and fast. No—it’s not that their clicking is loud—it’s the voices of a dozen, maybe more Thyferrans retreating back into the space. Two spring forward into the oncoming stormtroopers, their claws slashing through plasteel armor even as they’re cut down, and Bodhi cringes and ducks behind a bacta tank, his heart pounding.

He looks all the way down the row at the Cadera, just visible in the dark outside the loading dock. I’ve got Roja’s blaster, but what the hell good is that going to do? I can’t shoot anyone.

But I can’t just leave, either.

That was the plan. Stick to the plan. Keep Seerdon from destroying all the bacta.
Bodhi bites his lip and dashes towards his ship, away from the fighting, cursing his cowardice. He’s a few rows away when stormtroopers start pouring in through the loading dock, spreading out for a pincer maneuver—he skids to a halt and presses his back up against the nearest bacta tank, breathing hard.

“Lieutenant?” Dak’s scared. Of course he’s scared, it’s only his second mission and now he is going to watch everyone die—“Me and Yraka’Nes, plus one of the Thyferrans, we’re safe in your ship, but there’s stormtroopers, Bodhi, there’s troopers everywhere—”

“I know. I’m cut off,” Bodhi mutters into his comlink. He hesitates, trembling, and then he says, firmly, “Go. There’s no way for me to get to you.”

“No, no, there’s got to be—” Dak’s voice hisses out, panicked. “I can—”

“Dak. Shut up and get out of here. It’s—” Bodhi swallows, and lies through his teeth. “It’s all right. I’m hidden, I’ll be fine. Take my ship, take the bacta, and get home safe.” He breathes out shakily, and adds, for what he thinks is probably the first, and will be the last time in his life, “That’s an order.”

An eternity passes before Dak responds, and Bodhi is horrifyingly certain that it’s too late, that Seerdon’s troops have taken his ship and his team and everything they’d tried so hard to save—“I copy,” Dak answers, finally.

“Go,” Bodhi repeats, numb, and shuts off his comlink, looking past the stormtroopers forming up in the loading dock. Two are inexplicably lugging another E-web repeater after them. Dak’s turned off the Cadera’s lights, probably in hopes that the Imperials won’t pay any mind to a shuttle, but—

Shit.

They still need some cover to get away, or they’ll just be shot down out of the sky.

I need a distraction.

I’m a distraction.

Bodhi wishes, very briefly, for his friends; for Luke. For someone to talk him out of his idea. For Kaytoo to calculate the odds and find another way. But Bodhi can’t think of anything else to try.

He slips silently through the rows, listening to the clatter of claws on plasteel, the blaster rifles spitting death behind him. Then there’s only one row of tanks between him and the eight or so stormtroopers much too near the still-grounded Cadera.

Bodhi flattens himself along the closest bacta tank. Crouches and takes Roja’s blaster out of his boot holster.

Maybe there's still a chance I can get past them.

But there’s no time for that, or any other wild conjectures, because the stormtroopers are taking notice of his ship. Even though Bodhi can’t make out the words, he can hear the filtered electronic sound of their voices, and two stormtroopers are starting to power up the turret—Bodhi ducks out from behind the bacta tank and fires off a flurry of shots in the direction of the stormtroopers and runs, not waiting to see if he’d even hit anyone. He doubts it.

But they are pursuing him back through the production floor, blaster bolts flying past his head. The smell of ozone mingles with bacta, this desperate ploy blending with the memory of his last sprint on
Scarif. And over the crackling of blaster fire and shattering glass, he hears the hum of the *Cadera’s* engines—

A blue flash from between the rows—

—and Bodhi stumbles and falls, barely managing to get his hands under him, Roja’s blaster skidding just out of reach, the stun blast deadening his side, his legs.

—and a light-skinned man around Draven’s age, dressed in an Imperial officer’s uniform, steps out into the row behind a couple of stormtroopers, and Bodhi pants for breath, looking back between the rows of tanks to his ship, sees headlights turning away into the night sky.

*So close. They’re almost clear.*

The stormtroopers who’d pursued him clatter up, pointing their blaster rifles at him, but the man—who can only be Seerdon, of course—holds up a gloved hand, his gray eyes studying Bodhi’s face coldly.

*One last chance.*

(*Give me one clean shot—*)

*Baze was right.*

He can’t bring himself to think of Luke any more than that.

*Sor...
—and Bodhi screams and jolts back to consciousness, and he’s trapped, he’s trapped, kneeling in front of Seerdon and a trio of stormtroopers with his wrists bound to the railing behind him at an improbable, agonizing angle. He struggles against the binders like he’d fought to get away from the monster, all uncontrollable near-reflex, reopening every injury he’d ever suffered in the hands of the Empire, of Saw Gerrera, of the Rebellion—and he is scraped raw inside and out—

—and Seerdon—laughs.

“You’re not what I expected, Bodhi Rook,” he says, and Bodhi stops thrashing, and glares up at him, breathing raggedly as his thoughts start to scatter. Tries desperately to focus, force his mind back to the kinds of things Chirrut tried so hard to teach him. My ship. Fixing things.

(“—Some place to go when it happens again.”)

It's happening again, and there's no getting out of it this time—

His vision swims; he squeezes his eyes shut as nausea and the all-too familiar maelstrom of his memories start to overtake him. Pull up, pull up—

(“No lie is safe—”)  

A plasteel-armored fist connects with his face, and Bodhi reels to one side, his shoulder wrenching painfully.

“Oh no, you stay right here with us. No more of this going in and out.” A hand—a different hand, one covered with a leather glove—seizes his jaw, fingers gripping his cheek tightly, and Bodhi reluctantly opens his eyes. Seerdon is looming over him, turning Bodhi’s face this way and that before letting go. “Really not at all what I expected.”

Bodhi winces and tries not to pull on his restraints again, his wrists burning, but every muscle is tense as his surroundings start to come into relief. He’s still in the Zaltin Corp headquarters, only he’s not on the production floor anymore; he’s six stories above it on the security catwalk.

And below—

“No, no,” Bodhi croaks, making out the crumpled bodies of Thyferrans lying between the rows of tanks in greenish ichor and shattered glass and spilled bacta. I didn’t help them. He curls his useless hands into fists behind his back. There’s stormtroopers moving around down there, too, but Bodhi can’t tell what they’re doing, his eyesight blurry from the lingering effects of the stun blast, and the tears of rage and despair threatening to fall.

They died. They all died.

(—Tonc falling dead out of the shuttle onto the sand—)

“That was a very foolish thing to do,” Seerdon says. “Sacrificing yourself to distract me from your friends’ escape attempt.”

Bodhi jerks his head up and wrenches out, horrified, “They got away.”

Seerdon touches his face again, stroking a thumb over his cheekbone, and Bodhi cringes and tries to pull away, his binders ringing off the railing as they slide behind him. “Oh, did they? Who knows what a single brave stormtrooper at a turret might do, hmm? If they saw a stolen Imperial ship
Bodhi trembles, but he spits back, furiously, helplessly, “You’re lying. You’re lying.”

“Perhaps they have escaped and are fleeing like the rats they are back to your Rebel base.” Seerdon pats Bodhi’s face and steps back, gazing down at him. “Which. Well. You’ve been broken before, I suspect. I wonder what it will take to break you this time?”

Bodhi fights down a shudder. He doesn’t have Saw’s monster. He can’t get anything out of me.

“You’re thinking you’ll die before you give up your Rebel friends,” Seerdon says, casually. “It’s possible. You certainly will when I’m done with you.” He sweeps a hand out towards the open floor of the facility, and Bodhi’s vision, his mind, go clear enough for him to comprehend what the stormtroopers below have been doing as they walk through the rows of bacta tanks.

They’re setting charges.

We failed. Bodhi’s head sinks to his chest. “You already made the virus. You made Xeshen Kra think they had no choice.”

“I was always going to destroy the galaxy’s source of bacta, one way or another.” Seerdon smiles at Bodhi, tight-lipped and haughty. “The virus simply would have been more—entertaining. Now, however, do you remember what I told our friend Kasan Moor over Chandrila? My retaliation for the destruction you’ve caused—oh, yes, I know you were at Fest, dear boy—my retaliation will be just.”

He beckons his stormtroopers forward. “But for you? It will no longer be swift.”

One trooper reverses his blaster rifle so he can use it as a club. Bodhi pants through his clenched teeth, bracing for it, afraid, but at least—

“Tell me where the Rebel base is.”

—they’re not Saw’s monster. They’re not the monster. They’re not the—

It takes half a dozen agonizing blows before Bodhi slips back into the nightmares masquerading as memory, his screams echoing in his head.

(—shots flash out and the stormtroopers fall in burning heaps—

“—You’re a rebel now,” Kaytoo says, approvingly, but the stormtroopers are still coming, and Jyn and Cassian are trapped—)

“The charges are set, sir.” The stormtrooper hands Seerdon a remote detonator. “Whenever you’re ready.”

“Oh, I think we’ll be able to depart soon,” Seerdon says, and Bodhi falls away again as fresh pain sears through him—

(—Tonc throws the grenade out and fire obliterates the shoretroopers, but there’s no reprieve from the wave of destruction from the Death Star, not this time—)
“He’s out, sir,” a stormtrooper’s filtered voice reports.

Bodhi can feel blood seeping from his wrists backwards down to his elbows. He’s been thrashing around more, though he can’t really remember any of it through the tangled mess of his mind. It’s nothing compared to the pain in his chest that claws deeper every time he breathes, but a single thought surfaces with remarkable clarity: I ruined Solo’s fucking shirt.

“I don’t think so,” Seerdon says, and Bodhi feels his gloved hand lifting his chin. “Tell me where the Rebel base is, and you can die. I will end this for you, traitor.”

Bodhi opens his eyes. His breath comes in short, arduous gasps. I’m not—Galen sent me—

he works his dry mouth, and and manages, defiantly, “I defected.”

Seerdon slaps him, hard. “Where is it?”

Bodhi sways on his knees, confused and lost, staring balefully up; seeing Seerdon, seeing the ghost of Saw. Seerdon strikes him again, and this time Bodhi goes over completely, held up only by his protesting, straining wrists, his face hitting the metal grating of the catwalk. Blood drips from his nose, his split lip, from a cut on his forehead, through the grating and out of sight.

The catwalk.

His mouth falls open in shock, his mind clearing with sheer astonishment.

I saw this place before. In my vision of Luke.

But—

It’s not possible.

It’s not.

I’m going to die here—

There’s a hand on his shoulder pulling him back up roughly, but Bodhi’s beaten a frantic retreat into his head, desperate to make sense of it.

He’s not here, they’re hitting Sullust, they don’t know that Seerdon’s here—

But the second vision was real. It was real, and maybe—

(Chirrut says, “I am one with the Force and the Force is with me—”

Baze says, “You’re praying?”

Chirrut says, “It bothers him because he knows it is possible.”)

Bodhi doesn’t know when his friends had said those things, or to whom.

He can’t remember if it was what they had said on Scarif before the battle, or when they were trying to help him after Corellia, or in his ship while Luke meditated or slept or tried to land a single hit on Chirrut. He can’t remember how they’d looked when they’d said those things. If Chirrut had been
smiling, whether Baze had rumbled his deep, skeptical laugh.

But it doesn’t matter: Bodhi hears Chirrut’s chant over and over again in his head.

He clings to the words.

He clings to that belief.

Bodhi lifts his head to look at Seerdon, and a laugh tinged with hysteria tears out of his throat. “He’s coming,” he mumbles, and coughs weakly, tasting blood.

“What?” Seerdon’s hand is poised to hit him again, but he stops, and stares at Bodhi, faint lines appearing in his forehead.

“He’s coming.” Laughter echoes like wracking sobs in his head. He’s not entirely sure which is coming out of his mouth. Luke’s on Sullust, he doesn’t know where I am, but I believe. I believe it. “He’s coming for you. I saw it. He’s coming.”

Seerdon pales. “Who?”

“I saw it, I saw it, the Force gave me a vision, he’s going to kill you with his lightsaber—” Bodhi is vaguely aware he’s babbling, but at least he’s not giving up anything more than his wild impossible hope.

Seerdon grabs Bodhi’s left hand behind his back, has grabbed his fingers and is bending them to the point of snapping. “Who’s coming?” Seerdon snarls into Bodhi’s face, the cold fury of his voice suddenly laced with fear, his grip tightening on Bodhi’s fingers. “Is it Vader?”

(—Saw Gerrera holds his respirator to his face and inhales—)

Bodhi struggles to pull his hand free, his absurd surety abruptly dissipating, replaced with mindless reflexive panic. “No, no, no—” He doesn’t know if he’s answering Seerdon or trying to plead with him, plead with Saw—

Seerdon’s face contorts. He twists his hand savagely, and Bodhi’s fingers break, and if he could breathe he would scream—

“Let him go.”

Seerdon lurches upright, dropping Bodhi’s broken hand.

And down at the far end of the catwalk, is the utter impossibility that is Luke Skywalker.

But there’s no relief to be had at the sight of him, because Seerdon pulls his blaster from his holster and fires. Luke deflects that shot, and the next, his eyes glittering with absolute fury, and then the stormtroopers open fire in earnest—

Bodhi flinches as sparks rain down from the deflected blaster bolts ricocheting off the ceiling. One of the stormtroopers retreats, evidently forgetting that Bodhi’s still bound to the railing behind him; Bodhi contorts himself sideways, gritting his teeth as the motion stabs pain through his wrecked body, and kicks the stormtrooper hard in the back of the knee.

The trooper yelps and falls directly in the path of a deflected shot, and then Luke’s closing fast with the remaining two, moving like Chirrut, all lethal grace despite the awkwardness of his flightsuit. The second stormtrooper topples over the railing, screaming as he plummets, and the third goes down
right next to Bodhi, his blaster sliding over the edge of the catwalk.

And then it’s just Seerdon between Bodhi and salvation.

Seerdon levels his blaster directly at Bodhi’s head and demands, “Surrender, Commander Skywalker.”

Luke’s face is a mask of pure rage. “No. Let him go,” he snaps, his voice unrecognizable, out of control. Seerdon’s finger curls towards the trigger, and Bodhi forces himself still, tearing his eyes away from the smoking end of the blaster to look up at Luke, moving his lips feebly in Chirrut’s prayer—

But Luke simply holds out his hand, and Seerdon’s blaster is torn from his grasp. Luke catches it, flips it around and fires without really aiming, catching Seerdon in the shoulder, and he stumbles backwards and falls. Luke drops the blaster and stalks down the catwalk past Bodhi, towards him, lightsaber humming ominously at his side.

“Wait, Luke,” Bodhi calls after him, weakly, uncertain why he needs to call Luke back, but there’s something about Seerdon, something nudging the back of his mind, getting louder like an alarm bell, or a scream. “Luke—there’s—wait!”

Luke stands over Seerdon, raising his lightsaber to deliver a final strike, exactly as he had in Bodhi’s vision all those months ago—

—and Bodhi remembers what the stormtrooper had handed Seerdon, sometime in the middle of his torture— no —Bodhi summons all the strength he has left and shouts, “Don’t—he’s got a detonator!”

Luke barely twitches in his direction, the way he does whenever something’s going wrong in Bodhi’s head.

Bodhi fights for breath, squeezing his eyes shut against the way his vision's going gray around the edges, and forces himself to spit out his usual torrent of words to explain or we’ll all die. “The—there’s charges on the bacta tanks, he’s got the remote detonator, if you kill him—he’ll—he’ll destroy all of it along with us. Luke.” His hand throbs with pain in time with his racing heartbeat. He opens his eyes again, and Luke's glanced back at him, his expression unreadable. “Please believe me.”

Luke lowers his lightsaber and holds out his hand. “Give it to me,” he says, and from the set of his shoulders, the tremor in his voice, Bodhi thinks Luke’s regained control over his terrifying fury. “Slowly.”

“And in return?” Seerdon asks, sardonically. “Will the vaunted Jedi honor stop you from striking down an unarmed man now?”

“I swear I’ll let you live,” Luke says, closing down his lightsaber blade. And then he adds, equally dryly, “I won’t even let Kasan take a run at you before you stand trial.” Seerdon actually laughs before uncurling his fingers and handing the detonator up to him, and Bodhi slumps in relief.

Luke backs up a step and crouches next to one of the dead stormtroopers; comes up with a pair of binders and tosses them at Seerdon. “Cuff yourself to the railing.”

“Not like we did to your Lieutenant, I assume,” Seerdon says, raising an eyebrow, but he sits up, drawing his knees to his chest, and obeys, rattling the binder a bit to demonstrate he’s secured.

Luke nods curtly, satisfied, and hooks his lightsaber onto his belt as he crosses the length of the
catwalk back to Bodhi in four quick strides. His eyes are bright and scared and beautiful as he falls to his knees in front of Bodhi, reaching behind him to undo his restraints.

“Can you deactivate the detonator?” he murmurs quietly into Bodhi’s ear, and Bodhi bites back a cry as Luke accidentally brushes up against his broken hand. “Sorry, I’m so sorry. I’ve almost got it. Hold on.” The binders come loose, and Bodhi falls forward into Luke’s arms, but he can’t rest, not yet.

“The charges can still get set off manually,” he mumbles into Luke’s shoulder, feeling his thoughts slipping from his grasp. He forces himself to straighten up, the pain of it bringing Luke and the danger they’re still in, back into focus. “But yes, I can deactivate the remote, I just—you’ll have to hold it, I can’t—”

Luke makes an anguished sound as they both look down at the blood on Bodhi’s wrists and hands. “Don’t,” Bodhi pleads, not knowing what he’s asking. Luke seems to understand, though, and steadies, holding the detonator out to him. Bodhi’s good hand quakes almost uncontrollably as he twists the right parts of the remote, and it clicks, and shuts down entirely in Luke’s grip.

“Okay,” Luke says, and there are tears standing in his eyes all of a sudden. “Okay.” His pale face swims in and out of focus. “Oh, Bodhi.”

“Thanks for keeping your promise,” Bodhi says, dizzily, and passes out.

Chapter End Notes

Um... yeah. So I’ve had this resolution of Bodhi’s first vision sitting in my notes since probably January, but I had no fricking clue how long it would take me to actually get here, nor how much I was going to struggle with writing it :P The problem with foreshadowing, I guess?

Anyway. Thanks to meledea for looking at an early draft, and my husband (lol) for brainstorming possible deaths for Seerdon after this (you’ll see. ;))

And, as always, thanks; I can’t promise less pain and suffering ahead, exactly, but I appreciate those of you willing to stick it out nonetheless!! <3
Chapter 39

Chapter Summary

Well, this is a problem.

Chapter Notes

Yeah. Probably should continue to heed the tags for a while.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Bodhi is drowning.

Some part of him understands he’s not on Chorax, or Scarif, or even a planet. He’s not on Thyferra anymore. He’s not even in water. But he’s drowning nonetheless, unable to breathe on his own, flailing desperately away from the darkness, where the monster lurks, ready to take him apart again.

He tries to cry out, but he can’t.

He hadn’t pleaded for mercy on Thyferra when he’d been trapped and lost and certain he was about to die, alone and far away from anyone who cared. But he begs now, even if it’s only inside his own head, because Luke can sense it, Luke knows when something’s wrong, Luke always comes to help —

“—him out, now, he’s panicking, I can hear him, get him out right now—”

In the air and light again.


Someone cleaning the remaining bacta off his skin, getting a robe around his shaking shoulders; they tape his broken fingers gingerly and help him lie down. He curls up into a ball on his side, weighing the horrors inside his mind against the waking agony of his body, even dulled as it is with painkillers, and comes out on the side of staying conscious again. Luke keeps his promises.

A voice he could probably put with a face, but it’s too hard to think of whose, and he can’t get himself to open his eyes again to see: “I’m sorry, Commander. We didn’t know—he’s been in twice before and never—”

“I wasn’t here those other times,” Luke says flatly. “Maybe he did panic, and you had no idea, because he wouldn’t say anything, he doesn’t like to talk about it.” A hand brushes his unpleasantly damp hair off of his neck.

“I’ll give you some privacy,” the other person says, softly, after a moment. “Let me know if you—if Bodhi needs anything.”

The door swishes open and closed, and Luke murmurs, “I’m still here, I’m not going anywhere. I’ll
—I’ll keep talking if you’ll—try to come back. Please. We’re home, we’re on the Redemption. I can just keep talking—do you want me to tell you about flying again?”

Bodhi opens his eyes.

Luke is sitting on the edge of the bed next to him, of course; he’s shed his flightsuit, but his hair is a sweaty, matted mess and he looks as exhausted as Bodhi feels, eyes red-rimmed and watery. Bodhi reaches over with his good hand, and Luke takes it in his own, cradling it to his heart.


Luke squeezes his hand. “Pretty much, but you didn’t panic until they put you in the bacta tank.” He’s trying to keep his tone light, but concern is threaded through it. “You need to rest.”

“You were on Sullust—Jyn and Cassian and Kay—” Bodhi’s throat is raw.

“They’re all right.” Luke says, quickly. “They won, they’ll be home soon. The squadron’s okay, too, everyone made it back here safe.”

“Okay,” Bodhi mutters, more questions rising murkily through his mind. But he’s fading again, too tired to push through his dread at the prospect of answers.

“Now do you want me to talk about flying?” Luke offers.

“Yes, please.” Bodhi tugs on his hand a little, trying to pull Luke down to the bed.


Bodhi raises his eyebrows in surprise, and manages, faintly, “Luke Skywalker, you don’t want to go to bed with me?”

“Funny.” But Luke props his feet up on the side of the bed and unlaces his boots with his free hand, before slipping under the blanket. Bodhi bites his lip and tenses up, regretting his impulse to make Luke stay, but Luke is very, very careful as he puts his arms around him, guiding Bodhi’s head down to rest on his shoulder. “Let me know if any of this hurts. And—sorry. I probably don’t smell great.”

“You don’t smell like bacta,” Bodhi says, muzzily. “That’s good enough. What were you going to tell me about?”

Luke strokes his hair gently. “It was about podracing, if that’s all right?”

“Sure.” Bodhi’s eyes have started to slip shut once more. He blinks them open.

“Hey, it’s okay, I’m just gonna keep talking so you have something to hold onto if—if you need it. Get some sleep. I’ll be right here.” Luke smiles, reassuring as sunlight after a storm, and Bodhi burrows his face into the crook of his neck, trying to convince himself to relax, let go again.

Luke kisses the top of his head, and just holds him for a minute, still stroking his hair. “So—I started looking into the racers my father built. He used Radon-Ulzer engines for both of ‘em, the 620C for the one he used to win on Tatooine, and the 1240C when he got challenged by this other racer—”

Bodhi hangs on for a while longer, listening to Luke quietly parsing bits and pieces of his father’s history, more than a little worried about the nightmares waiting in his head. But somewhere around Luke trying to sort out what kind of armaments were legal on a podracer—none of them—he finally
drifts off.

*****

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[“—I don’t believe it—”]

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Luke’s gone when Bodhi wakes up again.

But he’s not alone; instead, Cassian’s asleep in a chair, his head fallen forward onto the side of Bodhi’s bed. Jyn’s propped an elbow up on Cassian’s back, tapping into a datapad. Bodhi imagines it can’t be terribly comfortable, but Cassian has almost certainly slept in worse positions before.

“Hi,” Jyn says, softly, looking over at him. “Do you remember where you are?” He blinks a couple of times, looking around the white-walled room, pulling his thoughts back together before answering, and worry lines her forehead. “Bodhi?”

“Medical deck. On the—uh—” He shakes his head a little, and Jyn’s frown deepens a fraction more. She opens her mouth again—“The Redemption. Sorry.”

“Okay,” Jyn says, a touch of skepticism coloring her voice. “I’d ask you what day it is, but I’m not sure I know.”

“Why are you asking me questions?” Bodhi mumbles, uncurling and groaning as his stiff, sore ribs protest the idea. He fights past it and gets most of the way to sitting up.

“Cassian said if you were still out of it, I should get you to talk. Luke thought you’d be all right, he didn’t—you know—” she waves a hand by her head to suggest the Force—“But—” Jyn shrugs a shoulder. “Are you all right?”

Bodhi holds up his taped-up left hand at her in reply, and her mouth twists. “Yeah, I figured as much. Luke filled us in a bit about—the way you looked when he found you.”

He fights down a shudder and runs his right hand through his hair; it’s come free from its tie and is falling loose around his face. “Where is he, by the way?”

“We made him go get something to eat. Kaytoo had to threaten to pick him up and carry him out before he would go.”

“Oh.”

Jyn reaches over to touch his arm. “Stop looking at me like that. I’m not going to yell at you.”

“I wasn’t—you’re not?”

“Not right now, anyway,” Jyn says, and Bodhi rolls his eyes at her tiredly. “Just keeping you company. Do you need anything? Water? More painkillers?”
She's rarely this solicitous and it's starting to make him scared—“What's wrong?” Bodhi demands, his voice cracking. “Did someone not make it back? Is—is Draven going to—” He fumbles a weak grab at her arm. “Is something else wrong with me?”

“What?” Jyn’s eyes narrow at him.

“You’re—you’re being—” Bodhi licks his lips. “Too nice.”

Cassian snorts a muffled laugh into the blanket and sits up slowly, stretching, as Jyn scowls. “There’s nothing to worry about, Bodhi.”

Bodhi looks at him askance.

“You shouldn’t worry about any of that,” Cassian amends. “Everyone came back safe.”

“We’ve got an extra, actually,” Jyn says. “Leia’s started negotiating the return of the Thyferran Dak took off with.”

“Uh—they’re not a hostage—”

“No, but it’s not exactly safe for a Rebel ship to jump back into Thyferran space and drop them off. Plus, your contact sent us, um, a bill.” Cassian’s smile is wry.

“My contact—Thranx?” Bodhi gapes at him. “They’re alive?”

“Yeah,” Jyn says. “I got the feeling I wouldn’t want to go up against them in a hand to hand fight. Hand to claw fight. And they’re an administrator.”

Bodhi starts to tremble, covering his face with his good hand, flinching as his fingers brush the bruising on his cheek. Tears of relief that Thranx survived sting his eyes; his heart aches for all that they’d lost. I brought death.

“They sent their gratitude for your help,” Cassian says, after a moment, and the bed dips as he climbs up onto it, wrapping his arms around Bodhi cautiously as he shakes and can’t stop crying. “Since you saved Zaltin Corp from destruction twice over.”

“By doing something incredibly stupid,” Jyn mutters, and that breaks through his grief. Bodhi chokes out something that sounds enough like a laugh, and pokes at her with a finger—she starts to grab for his hand and abruptly halts.

“You said you wouldn’t yell at me.” Bodhi swipes at his eyes and smiles half-heartedly at her.

“You said I was being too nice,” she retorts, though there’s no real heat to it, either. “All I did was ask if you wanted water.”

Cassian draws back to look him in the eye. “From what we’ve been able to piece together from Dak, it wasn’t that bad of an idea.” He takes Bodhi by the shoulders. “You have to keep your exits open—you had no way out except—”

“I told you before,” Bodhi says, as Cassian’s voice starts to rise and Jyn’s mouth thins into a line. “I know what happens to defectors if we’re caught. I got lucky to miss out on the—the last step.” Bodhi turns his left hand palm up in his lap, staring blankly at the tape around his fingers. “I still don’t know how the hell Luke found me at all.”

“Dak and Yraka’Nes got a message out to us,” Jyn says, and he’s relieved she’s jumping on that
instead of how close he’d come to being killed. “We were—never mind what we were doing, exactly—” Bodhi narrows his eyes at her suspiciously, certain it was something equally dangerous. “But we didn’t need the Rogues anymore, and stopping Seerdon was more pressing.” Her lips twitch. “And when Luke found out you hadn’t gotten out with them, well. But what the fuck were you thinking? Dak said you got into a firefight?”

“I wouldn’t call it that,” Bodhi mutters wearily. “I wasn’t trying to hit anyone. I was trying to distract them from going after my ship.” He pokes her in the arm. “Yelling.”

“We can talk about this later,” Cassian says, and squeezes Bodhi’s shoulders gently. “The most important thing is that you’re safe, and you’re going to get better, bacta or no bacta—”

Someone knocks on the door, and Bodhi glances up, expecting Kaytoo and Luke; his heart sinks when it’s Draven instead. Shit, oh shit. I can’t do this right now. He looks wildly at his friends, who are both frowning at their superior officer.

“I thought you said a debrief could wait.” Jyn’s gotten to her feet, putting herself between Draven and Bodhi like a small, angry shield.

“I’m not here for that,” Draven replies, and his eyes flick over her shoulder to Bodhi. “I need to speak to you. Alone.”

His warning—Bodhi blinks. But Seerdon didn’t know about Luke, he was just going to kill me—

“You okay with that, Bodhi?” Cassian asks, sliding off the bed, his brow furrowing at Draven’s impassive face.

“Yeah. Yeah, I think so.” Bodhi tries to straighten his shoulders in a futile effort to look more like the officer he’s supposed to be.

“Okay. We’ll be right outside,” Jyn says, kissing his forehead and leaving with Cassian.

Draven waits until the door’s slid shut again before sitting down in Jyn’s vacated chair. He sighs heavily. “I apologize in advance for what I have to ask of you. Your recovery is paramount, but this can no longer wait.”

Bodhi can’t help but shrink in on himself a little, uncertain what to brace for. He nods.

“Was Seerdon able to get any information out of you?” Draven asks, flatly. “Did you tell him anything?”

Bodhi’s eyes widen, and his heart starts to race. “I—I told him he was a liar—I didn’t tell him where the Alliance is. It’s what he wanted from me, but I didn’t—I swear—”

Draven crosses his arms and leans back. “Can you remember anything else?”

My vision. Bodhi squeezes his eyes shut.

“It’s important,” Draven says, levelly, and Bodhi’s eyes fly open again.

“I don’t know how to explain it, sir,” he says, and Draven’s eyes go hard and cold, and Bodhi stammers nervously, “The Force gave me a vision of Luke in that place, I—I told Seerdon he was coming—I knew Luke was coming—”

“What?” Draven stares at him. “No one ever mentioned you having Force sensitivity—”
“I don’t,” Bodhi protests. “The Temple on Jedha—they would’ve found out if I did. I just—it’s only happened twice—”

“Twice.”

“I didn’t think they were real,” Bodhi tries to explain. “I thought—I don’t know what I thought. I guess I thought I was losing my mind. Um. More than usual.” He fidgets with a fold of the blanket.

“How I ever agreed to let you be a part of—” Draven mutters, and then stops. “All right. You’ve got to talk to the Guardians about this; the Force is beyond my pay grade.” He shakes his head. “But you told Seerdon you had a vision?”

Bodhi struggles to remember, hunching up unconsciously. His hand throbs. “I think I did.”

Draven sighs again, and rubs his chin with a hand. “Well, this is a problem.”

“I don’t understand,” Bodhi says. “I didn’t break. And anyway—he’s in Thyferran custody, right? He can’t use anything he thinks he knows against the Rebellion—” He trails off. Draven’s shaking his head, taking something out of his jacket pocket; a small holoprojector.

He hands it to Bodhi. “Play it.”

It’s security footage of Zaltin Corp—the recording flicks between angles on the building; the jungle around it is smoldering but not actively ablaze, and the dead have been cleared away. “How did you get this?” Bodhi asks.

“Your contact transmitted it to us about half an hour ago, around the same time the HoloNet started broadcasting the news that the Emperor condemns Seerdon’s attack. Saying he acted on his own, the Empire would never seek to sow such chaos, and so on. The Thyferrans chose to extradite him rather than mete out their own justice. They’re well within their rights to have done so without, unfortunately, consulting us.” Draven’s voice is colorless.

In the holo, a ship—a TL-1800 light freighter, the kind that the Imperial Security Bureau use—settles on the landing pad where Bodhi himself had been, however long ago that was. Thranx and a couple of other Thyferrans walk out to meet it, claws clamped firmly on both of Seerdon’s shoulders. And strolling down the freighter’s ramp—

Bodhi’s fingers tighten on the holoprojector in horror. No. He raises his eyes to meet Draven’s gaze.

Draven asks, “Is that the woman you met on Corellia?”

Chapter End Notes

Happy end-of-SWCO! I’ve been livestreaming pretty much all weekend (including right now for the closing ceremony), super jealous of anyone who was able to go (and EXTREMELY jealous of those of you who got to meet Riz, of course!)

As always, thanks. <3 I FREAKED OUT when I saw my kudos ticked over to 1500 today—I don’t think I can explain how much it means to me that you all are still here connecting with this thing. <3

(Thranx Lives!)
Chapter 40

Chapter Summary

I don't regret it.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“It’s her, isn’t it,” Draven says, and Bodhi, stricken, can only nod. He watches her walk down the ramp to Thranx and execute an elegant version of their spread-limbs bow. Seerdon’s back is to the camera; Bodhi wonders what his expression must’ve been, coming face to face with the woman instead of Vader. There’s no sound in the holo, but Bodhi’s mind supplies the whirring hum of insects, Thranx’s clicking, the edge of the woman’s voice. He tries to breathe slowly through the lingering pain curling around his chest.

“The name she gave is almost certainly false, though we’re trying to run it down now anyway. But, more importantly, your contact said she identified herself as the Emperor’s Hand to Seerdon.” Draven’s leaned forward, resting his elbows on his knees, steepling his fingers together. “Have you ever heard that before?”

Bodhi shakes his head, watching the holo flick back across the different camera angles, some part of his mind noting the modifications to the woman’s freighter. She knows ships, too.

“It apparently did not inspire confidence in him to hear her title.” Draven’s voice is very dry. In the recording, Seerdon attempts to back down the ramp away from her, and she locks a hand around his binders to keep him from running.

“If only he’d run,” Draven says, regretfully, and Bodhi’s eyes go wide. “She’d have had to shoot him,” Draven continues, apparently ignoring Bodhi’s conflicted reaction. “We won’t know the internal politics of this for a while. The Emperor may be genuinely angry that Seerdon attacked a neutral, and fairly significant world; sending someone who can frighten a Moff is a strong indicator that’s the case.”

“What—are you going to do with me?” Bodhi asks, interrupting the general’s musings on the echelons of the Empire. “I know I’m grounded again—but for after, when I’m better—you’re not going to let me fly any more missions with Cassian and Jyn, or Rogue Squadron, are you?” He stares down at his hands in his lap, too drained to be angry or despairing about it. “She’ll figure out about Luke and come looking. You tried to warn me.”

“There’ll be other things for you to do,” Draven says. “We’ll need someone to make the run out to Hoth and back, for one.”

Bodhi straightens up a little. “That’s been decided, then?”

Something like a smile crosses Draven’s face as he nods. “Excavation of the base began at the same time as the attack on Sullust.”

“Every mission’s a distraction for something else,” Bodhi observes, quietly, passing him back the
holoprojector with his good hand, a little awkwardly.

Draven shrugs. “We’re fighting a war on more fronts than even I can keep track of sometimes.” He gets to his feet. “I don’t regret sending you to Thyferra instead of Sullust, Bodhi. It may not have accomplished our secondary objective of keeping you out of Imperial reach, and it may have exacerbated some other—issues—but whatever it was you did there, it kept Seerdon from carrying out his plans. You should feel—”

His gaze lingers on Bodhi’s taped-up hand, and his mouth draws down. “I don’t regret it,” Draven says, again, softly, and Bodhi thinks it’s an apology. He slaps at the door controls, and in the corridor, Jyn and Cassian are leaning up against each other, both clearly dead on their feet. Draven looks around at them, “Get some rest. All of you. We’ll talk again soon.”

Bodhi can hear him greet Luke further down the hallway; Luke’s footsteps speed up, and he’s launched himself into Bodhi’s room before the door can shut again, shouldering past Jyn and Cassian disentangling themselves. “What did he want?” Luke asks, scrutinizing Bodhi’s face. “Are you all right? I didn’t sense anything.”

“Then I’m fine, aren’t I?” Bodhi says, wearily, grateful for Luke’s presence, but wishing he wasn’t the cause of so much concern. He starts to flop down on his pillow and thinks better of it. “Just—really tired.”

“Oh, here,” Luke says, and helps ease him down on his side again as Cassian and Jyn come in. “Do you want me—do you want us to stay with you?” There’s less exhaustion in his eyes now, more of his familiar eagerness.

Jyn smirks, a little. “It’d be just like going on scouting runs in the Cadera again, only more cramped,” she says, waving an arm around at the tiny private room. “Luke, you should stay. We’ll come back and check on you later.”

“Thanks.” Bodhi manages half a smile.

Cassian leans down to whisper, “Don’t worry about whatever Draven said. We’ll work it out.” Bodhi squeezes his hand in acknowledgement, too enervated to even begin to think about what he wants instead of Draven’s plan, and then they’re gone again.

Luke kneels by the side of the bed, so he’s at eye level with Bodhi. “Do you—”

“Okay, Luke, why do you keep asking me questions?” Bodhi mutters, a touch of exasperation seeping into his voice. “I’m here, I’m not going to panic again, I’m just tired—I don’t even hurt all that much, whatever the medic’s got me on is wiping me out—”

The corner of Luke’s mouth twitches. “You sound more like yourself now.”

“What?”

“You weren’t talking, um, enough,” Luke says. He looks up at Bodhi through his eyelashes. “You were barely talking at all, and you usually—”

Bodhi furrows his brow, opening his mouth to protest—

“It was Cassian’s idea to ask all these questions,” Luke says, defensively, turning pink for no good reason Bodhi can figure.

“But you’re tired, I won’t make you keep talking to me if you don’t want to,” Luke adds. “I’m happy to just tell you more stuff. Whatever you want. You must have so many questions about what happened.”

“Jyn sort of tried to explain how you came and got me,” Bodhi says. “Can we start there? Did you—did you know? I thought you couldn’t tell from that far away—”

“I couldn’t.” Luke’s face falls. “I found out the same way Jyn and Cassian did, from Dak’s message that Thyferra was under attack.” He draws a shaky breath and takes Bodhi’s hand. “And then I gave command of Rogue Squadron to Wedge and headed straight offworld—”


“I did, for about five minutes,” Luke admits, abashed. “And then they came tearing up out of atmo, saying Jyn told ‘em to go with me. They were all there on Thyferra—you didn’t think I handled two entire squadrons of stormtroopers by myself, did you?”

Bodhi raises his eyebrows.

“Okay, maybe I could have, I don’t know,” Luke says, shrugging. “So they took care of Seerdon’s troops—he had a couple AT-STs in the second Sentinel, did you know? Kasan keeps apologizing for everything, like it’s her fault Seerdon decided to change game plans and go after Thyferra, or that he did this to you.” Luke runs his thumb over Bodhi’s knuckles gently. His hand is still rough, with callouses in slightly different places than Bodhi’s; probably from training with Chirrut or fighting with a lightsaber in addition to flying. “She’s been hanging around here hoping to apologize to you, too. I think she might be considering resigning her commission over this.”

“I hope not,” Bodhi murmurs, puzzled at the way Luke won’t look him in the eye. “I mean—we won, right? On both Sullust and Thyferra? Even if—even if I—I can’t—” He gulps, and forces himself to say it: “—fly for a while, Dak and Yraka’Nes, they saved the bacta—”

“Oh, yeah, they brought back enough bacta to drown a happabore.” A smile flickers across Luke’s mouth, but he looks distressed.

Bodhi says, hoping to distract Luke from worrying over Kasan, or his recovery, trying to distract himself from thinking about whether he’ll really be able to fly again, “Luke, how do you know what a happabore is?”

Luke huffs a wry laugh. “I met someone who had a pair, on—on—” He stops, and looks down at their linked hands once more.

“Where?” Bodhi asks, and yawns.

“Devaron.”

“Oh.” Bodhi closes his eyes, faintly relieved. “It’s okay, I know it’s supposed to be a secret, but I already knew about that. That’s the place you went to look for a Jedi temple.”

Luke doesn’t say anything for a second. His hand comes up and strokes the side of Bodhi’s face carefully, avoiding where he must be bruised. “Yeah. You—you never asked me about it,” he says.

“I asked Solo where you went,” Bodhi murmurs.

“You mean besides looking for a lost Jedi thing? He had some ridiculous idea about how you were doing it because of me.” He smiles a little at the thought of that conversation.


Bodhi cracks one eye open at him. “You were?”

“Sort of,” Luke says, hesitantly. “Not in—whatever way Han said. Um. Do you remember when I left?”

“I was in the medcenter, after—oh.” Bodhi nods against Luke’s hand. “Yendor. The first time you saved my life.” He frowns at the memory—it’s blurry around the edges, like an old, corrupted holo, but it doesn’t seem to pull at him quite like all his other remembrances of pain. Maybe because it was as simple as Yendor wanting to hurt me, and nothing else. Not like Saw, or the woman, or Seerdon —

“You’re sure I should talk to you about this right now?” Luke sits back on his heels, eyeing Bodhi cautiously. “’Cause I’m not.”

Bodhi ventures a shrug. “It’s not—” He holds up his left hand, not meaning anything by it except to gesture in confusion, but Luke’s eyes are sad. “It’s different. I don’t really know why, but it is.”

Maybe because it was the first time Luke helped me?

“Okay,” Luke says, skeptically. “Tell me if you need me to talk about something else. This is—” He draws a breath. “Bodhi, when I found you, when I saw what Yendor had done—I came close to doing something terrible.” He stops. His voice is quiet. A little afraid. “I don’t know what you learned about the dark side of the Force from Chirrut, or from just growing up on Jedha, it’s probably more than I ever knew—but I felt it then. If I’d killed Yendor in my anger, I would’ve—I—I think —”

Bodhi’s recoiling, eyes widening, but he doesn’t stop him.

Luke takes another breath. “I had to go,” he says. “I needed to find out more about the dark side. Chirrut and Baze, they sent me to Devaron. There was an abandoned temple there, I was hoping—” He shakes his head. “It doesn’t matter. I didn’t find anything.”

Bodhi, scared and adrift, grasps for levity. “Except someone with a pair of happabores?”

“Yeah. A murderous scavenger who tried to kill a little girl.”

“Oh.” Bodhi plucks anxiously at the hem of the blanket, uncertain what to say.


Bodhi stares at him, his heart sinking, remembering the terrible fury on Luke’s face as he’d stalked down the catwalk. “You felt the dark side because of me,” he mumbles. “Again.” I put him in danger in more ways than one. I’m a liability—

“What? No, Bodhi, that’s not it at all!” Luke jerks his head up and reaches out, brushing Bodhi’s hair back from his face tenderly. “You pulled me back. You stopped me from killing him—”

“Because we all would’ve died,” Bodhi reminds him.

“You saved me,” Luke insists. “You kept me from going over to—”
Bodhi struggles for words, bewildered. “No. Luke, don’t—don’t put that on me—I didn’t—you’re the one who saved me, you got me out, every time. Every time.”

“And I’m saying you’ve done the same for me.” Luke’s eyes are bright, and he leans in, brushing his lips very gently against Bodhi’s.

“It’s not—Luke—” Bodhi flounders amidst his thoughts, but there’s something keeping him afloat, something warm and familiar. He holds onto it desperately. “I can’t let you risk yourself for me again.”

“And how d’you think you’re going to do that?” Luke asks, frowning hard at him. “Cassian said you were supposed to be safe on Thyferra, it wasn't supposed to be an Imperial target.”

Bodhi shakes his head. “That doesn’t matter. Draven’s grounded me, anyhow—it’s for the best—I can't pick up maintenance shifts until my hand’s fixed, but I—I can't go out on a mission again with you, with anybody—”

“Stop,” Luke demands, his voice choked up. “We both know I'm going to do really stupid shit whether you're involved or not.”

“But—”

“No,” Luke says. “I'm not letting you sacrifice yourself this way either. You love flying—look at everything you’ve done since you defected! You have your own ships, staying out of the way isn’t—Bodhi—” He’s tearing up, his eyes wide and very blue.

“Seerdon’s been taken back to the Emperor,” Bodhi blurts. “They’re going to know everything he knows about us—they're going to use me to get to you. I have to stay off their radar. And the dark side—I don't know what to do about that—”


Luke's climbing up into the bed with him, curling protectively against his back, pressing his face into Bodhi's still-loose hair. “It's my fault. You're still hurting, you're not thinking straight. I shouldn't have dropped all of this on you. Draven shouldn't have said whatever he said to you. We'll—we’ll go slower. Not so much to deal with at once while you're recovering.”

Bodhi nods into his pillow. “Okay.”

“It'll be all right,” Luke says, quietly. Bodhi tries to let his thoughts fall away, tries to match his breathing to Luke’s, like he'd done when they’d thought Wedge was gone, clinging to Luke's surety, his relentless resolve.

And just as he goes over the edge into sleep, he hears Luke whisper, again, warm and familiar and safe, “It's going to be all right. I promise. I love you.”

Chapter End Notes

Happy Bodhi Rook Week! This chapter is for Day 5.
Thanks to brynnmclean for talking me through some of the rough patches today!
Chapter 41

Chapter Summary

Is that really what you need?

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Bodhi isn’t completely awake when Luke’s called away by Leia, her voice a quiet but distinct order over the comlink. He rubs his eyes blearily as the lights come on, dim enough that he suspects it's pretty early in local morning. Luke doesn’t say anything, just presses a kiss to his cheek and more painkillers into his hand before slipping out the door. Surprise filters through Bodhi’s thoughts that Luke would head off to meet with the princess looking like that, but a memory of the story of how they had escaped the Death Star resurfaces, and he supposes she’s seen—and smelled—Luke in a far more disgusting state than having simply rolled out of bed.

He lies there for a minute, unsure if he’ll actually be able to get back to sleep, and sorts through a few memories that bob up, assigning them to I was there, or Jyn told me, or I think I read that in a report.

But the most recent one—

*Dammit.*

*Why did Luke have to say it?*

*I just blew out all my engines again and he wants to fucking jump to hyperspace.*

Some part of Bodhi’s mind points out that’s not fair; Luke hadn't pushed him on anything since he'd admitted to failing the simulations. Had waited and waited for Bodhi to get up to speed.

Might not have even thought Bodhi was awake when he said it.

*But still—*

*But still what?*

*It's too much.*

*I can't make it fair or right—*

Bodhi groans, frustrated with himself, and starts to curl over into the warm part of the bed where Luke had been—and twinges inside his chest instantly warn him off, distracting him from wrestling with his stupid scared heart.

He carefully eases out of bed to get water from the dispenser on the other side of the room so he can take the painkillers. The ache isn’t as bad, standing, and his wrists seem okay, no worse off than when he’d fled Jedha—his brief dip in the bacta tank had helped those wounds start to heal. Bodhi’s left hand twinges constantly, though, and he can’t seem to remember not to use it until he can’t.
The floor is jarringly cold under his bare feet. Bodhi puzzles over where all his clothes—no, Solo’s clothes—had gotten to, the temptation to wander off down to the Cadera to shower and get dressed drifting through his mind. He tries to tell himself that wouldn’t be hiding, Luke would know where he went.

_Luke always knows_—

He fumbles sleepily with the pills in his hand and—_dammit._

Bodhi lowers himself down to the floor to look for the runaway pill. He fishes it out from under the bed and then sighs, looking up to where he’d put the water glass down on the side table so he wouldn’t spill it. His head spins at the mere idea of trying to stand again. He puts his shoulder against the side of the bed and dry swallows the painkillers, not caring that one’s been rolling around on the floor; it’s bitter going down, but it’s better than the taste of his own blood and fear. Then he pulls his knees slowly up to his chest, twisting the ends of his medcenter robe belt in the fingers of his right hand, and tries to figure out what to do next.

_What to say to Luke when he comes back_—

There’s a knock on the door; it hisses open, and Kasan frowns down at him. “What’re you doing on the floor?” She doesn’t look a whole lot better than Luke had, though she’s cleaned up more.

Bodhi blinks at her, still sort of groggy, trying to refocus his thoughts on what Luke had said about her. Kasan’s eyes go wide, her hand groping for her comlink, and he struggles back to something approximating alertness—“_Blast,_ Kasan, I just woke up, I’m not—”_ He hears a petulant note in his voice, and wonders at it.

“She’s worried. Like everybody else.”

“I dropped one of my pills, and then I didn’t think I wanted to get up again.”

“I see.” Her mouth purses. “Mind if I join you down there?”

Bodhi nods. “Can you get my water first?”

Kasan hands the glass over and drops heavily to the floor beside him. She stretches her legs out in front of her and leans forward to touch the toes of her boots while he washes down the sourness of sleep, the bitter taste of the painkillers. “How’re you feeling, really?”

“Like I got sucked into a turbine and spat back out again,” Bodhi answers, a touch wryly. He studies her face as best he can; she’s in profile, staring straight ahead, not looking at him. “Did—this is what Seerdon used to do to you? The other TIE pilots?”

“I didn’t get it this bad, he never put _me_ in—” Kasan says, and then her voice goes harsh, not like she’s angry; like she’s trying to keep from crying. “I’m _sorry,_ Bodhi. I was so sure he was going to fall back and regroup on Sullust. It’s where he had _resources_. I didn’t think he had anything else left.” She turns her head and gazes directly into his eyes. “I’m going to resign—”


“Not before he’d destroyed Xucphra Corp and damn near killed you along with dozens of Thyferrans,” Kasan says, looking away again.

Bodhi shudders, but presses on. “So what if you couldn’t predict it? Neither did Draven, or Kaytoo, or anybody else in the rest of Intelligence who does that kind of strategizing shit for a living.”

“I _should’ve known_,” Kasan insists. “He was _my_ target. I didn’t stay on him, and he killed—”
“Kasan—” Bodhi looks down at his hands. He picks at where the tape’s coming loose around his fingers, tired again, although he must’ve slept for hours already. “I—I don’t—I can’t blame you any more than I blame myself. I was there. I didn’t fight.”

Kasan laughs raggedly, sniffs, and wipes at her eyes. “Shit, listen to us. Do Wedge or Hobbie or any of the other defectors go on like this?”

“I sort of thought it was just me,” Bodhi admits, and more cloudy memories start to slither forward out of the recesses of his mind; he shoves them back before they can become monsters. He swallows, and says, “Wedge doesn’t talk about what he did. Or, um, what he didn’t do.”

“Well, if I wasn't with you on feeling guilty before, I am now,” Kasan says. “I could pretend I didn't have anything to do with Alderaan being destroyed because I was just flying TIEs in another sector, but—” She sighs.

“Don’t resign,” Bodhi says, quailing at the reminder of his greatest failure, but forcing the pang of dismay out of his voice. “This isn’t the Empire—we get second chances. They let me—even Madine, and he did a hell of a lot worse than not knowing. They need you. Luke needs you.”

“I suppose.” For a minute Kasan just sits there silently next to him, head bent and shoulders slumped. Then she brightens up. “If they decide to execute Seerdon, do you think a Thyferran will just bite his head off?”

Bodhi gapes at her.

“You know, because they’re giant—”

“No,” Bodhi says, aghast, and then he realizes: “You didn't hear that the Emperor's got him.”

“What? I've not heard a thing. How in blazes did that happen?”

Bodhi opens his mouth to explain and freezes, suddenly unsure whether Draven wants to keep the holorecording classified. *But maybe—* “You were one of Seerdon's—favorites, right? Did he ever talk about—politics, people he was trying to impress, anybody like that? People higher up than he was.”

“He hated Tarkin.” Kasan's lips twitch. “I mean, everyone did, but—what's this got to do with him going back to the Empire?”

“Someone called the Emperor’s Hand came and took him into custody,” Bodhi says, deciding he'll apologize to Draven later if Kasan isn’t supposed to know. “She—I’ve run into her before. Pretty scary. I thought we were all done for when she caught us on Corellia, and from the way he acted in the—in the holo, so did Seerdon. D’you know—”

“The Emperor’s Hand? Never heard of her, or anyone like that.”

“Oh. Okay.” His tiny spark of hope that there was *something* he could still figure out, something he could give Draven to show he’s not completely useless now, fizzles away. “Sorry.” His thoughts are straying off in a dozen directions; he tries to reel them back in, frantically, before Luke can pick up on his confused, despairing distress.

*I don't know what to do.*

Kasan’s shaking her head. “No, I’m sorry. If Luke had let me kill him—” Bodhi flinches. “Hey. If he *had*, you wouldn’t be worrying about what Seerdon’s going to tell the Emperor’s Hand.”
Bodhi looks at her, wide-eyed.

“I’m not wrong,” she says, slowly, bitterly.

“Yeah.” Bodhi shivers. He’d tried to reach for Roja’s blaster, at the last. He doubts he would’ve been able to pull the trigger; knows he would’ve died for it if he had.

*And what would Luke have done then?*

He suppresses another shudder.

“I’m sorry,” Kasan says, again. “This is kind of a mess, isn’t it.”

Bodhi curls his right hand into a fist, uselessly, and hits it against the floor, thinking of Luke’s incandescent fury. “You have *no* idea.”

After Kasan comes Yraka’Nes, who doesn’t say anything about Thyferra, not at first, while she’s maneuvering him back up to the bed. She runs a critical eye over his numerous injuries, apparently pleased at the way his wrists are healing, at the very least, but—“What do you think about trying the bacta tank again?”

“I don’t know,” Bodhi says, flinching a little as she touches his chest to check his breathing. “I’d—I’d rather not, I think. Not right now.”

“I’m not sure if you heard me tell Commander Skywalker—you’ve been in and out quite a bit since he brought you home.” Her lekku twitch restlessly along her shoulders. “But it’ll take at least four weeks for you to heal, if you don’t. Something to consider.”

“Oh.”

“Can your missions wait that long, Lieutenant?” Yraka’Nes asks. “Does General Draven need you back sooner?”

Bodhi shakes his head. “I’m grounded.”

“Until you’re completely healed?”

He shakes his head again, aggravation simmering in his mind. “I don’t know.”

Yraka’Nes frowns. “That’s not right. He shouldn’t treat you like that. You’re a—”

“Please don’t.” Bodhi holds up his hands wearily to stop her.

“You realize that I wouldn’t be alive to treat you if that weren’t true,” she says, a too-familiar expression crossing her face. “Dak and I, we owe you our lives. Zaltin Corp owes you a huge debt—”

“Thranx billed us,” Bodhi says. “I—all I did was tell you to run—if you hadn’t sent a message none of it would’ve mattered.”

Yraka’Nes persists, firmly, “That’s not how either of us see it. *Sir.*”

“For fuck’s sake—” Bodhi mutters under his breath, ducking his head, his loose hair falling past his face. “Can you please just do whatever you have to do and leave me alone?”

“Bodhi—”
“Anything I need, that's what you said, right?”

“Is that really what you need?” Yraka’Nes asks, a little sharply, but she acquiesces, and doesn't say anything else about their mission to Thyferra as she finishes examining him.

“You're welcome to stay in the medcenter a while longer, if you want,” she says, stepping back and extracting a pill bottle from her pocket. She hands it to him. “If you don't, come back immediately if anything changes, like if something hurts more all of a sudden. Keep taking the painkillers, you have to try to breathe normally.”

“That's it?” Bodhi asks.

“Well, that, and you shouldn't do any work that involves bending or twisting, or for which you need to use your hand—”

“So no maintenance shifts,” Bodhi says, shortly.

“I wouldn't think so,” she agrees. “Maybe this would be a good time to get caught up on paperwork?”

“Sure.” Bodhi gets his feet under him. “Um. If I can go?”

“Commander Skywalker had Wedge bring you some clothes, and there's a 'fresher you can use two doors down. You'll probably need help—don't be afraid to comm me, or a nurse,” Yraka’Nes says. “And if you change your mind about the bacta tank, let me know,” she adds. “We've got plenty now, thanks to you.”

“If we can pay Thranx for it,” Bodhi says.

“I'm sure they'll cut you a deal.” Yraka’Nes pats his shoulder. “I've talked to General Draven once already, along with Dak, but if it will help, I can put in another word with him?”

_It won't._ “Thanks.”

“Rest up,” she says, gently, and leaves him mercifully alone once more.

He’s standing in the medical wing’s ‘fresher five minutes later, staring, kind of horrified, at his battered reflection in the mirror.

_I thought Kasan and Luke looked bad?_

It says something that neither Cassian nor Jyn had mentioned anything about his appearance, though Bodhi’s not entirely sure _what_. Maybe that they’ve seen worse, or that they—and Draven—are just better at hiding their dismay. He’s relieved, barely, that at least they hadn’t seen him when he’d completely fallen apart.

Getting clean again should feel better than it does.

Washing his hair one-handed is more of a challenge than he’d expected, and Bodhi eventually gives up and lets the water sluice over him until it starts to get cold. And drying off and getting dressed is an exercise in and of itself; frustrated, he finally decides he can live with his hair dripping wetly down his collar and his bootlaces hanging untied. He slips down the corridor to the turbolift out of sight of any medical personnel, and hesitates over the panel, trying to think of where to go—but there’s really only one place that feels even the slightest bit right, even if he’s not going to be able to get to it unnoticed.
Bodhi hesitates again at the wide entrance to the hangar bay, surveying the handfuls of people and droids between him and his ship. Hobbie, looking a lot better, is clambering into his X-wing and chattering to a mechanic while his astromech whirs back and forth anxiously on the floor below; there’s a team of ground crew unloading a transport; and docked between the Galen and the Cadera —

— is Seerdon’s Sentinel-class shuttle.

“What the fuck?” Bodhi starts across the hangar, forgetting his intention to sneak over unobserved, but no one moves to intercept him. Why is this here? I thought they destroyed it—

The Sentinel’s ramp is down. Curiosity overtakes his confusion, and he goes up into the hold. The interior’s configured for troop transport, and it all looks remarkably undamaged, nothing in the way of scorch marks or anything to show it’s been in a battle—except for the contents of a ripped-open medkit scattered all over the floor, and the blood smeared across parts of the first row of seats.

Bodhi stares at the mess uncomprehendingly for a moment, and then realization floods him like adrenaline.

It’s my blood.

Luke got me out in Seerdon’s ship?

He has no memory of the flight home, but he’s as certain of it as he is of anything.

Is this my ship now too?

Unexpected fury ignites. Well, I don’t fucking want it.

Bodhi lashes out with a foot, kicking the medkit across the hold. Kicks at the bloodstained seats until their bolts wobble, not caring that his injuries burn anew at every blow; not caring that he’s losing his balance, losing control.

I never wanted any of this!

He gasps for breath, clutching at his chest. The faces of his tormentors—the men who’d hauled him across the desert, Saw, Seerdon—his friends, even Luke—flicker in his head like guttering candles, like the shadows of the monster in his cell.

What more do you want from me?

“Bodhi?”

He spins back towards the ramp. “Go away—” But, for a wonder, it isn’t Luke standing there, concern etched on his face; it’s Baze.

“You’re back,” Bodhi says, glancing down the ramp at where Chirrut is barring an unhappy-looking Wedge from coming up to them.

Baze eyes him closely, and rests a warm hand on his shoulder. “You’re a mess.”

Bodhi’s weak replying laugh stabs through him. He doubles over in pain, choking on it, on his bewildered anger and anguish, and Baze shouts, “Chirrut—” and catches him before he hits the floor.
Chapter End Notes

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Chapter 42

Chapter Summary

I hope you remember.

Chapter Notes

Tag warning still in effect.

Bits of mouseover text here and there. Translations are in the end notes.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“他怎麼了?”

“我不知道,” Baze says, easing Bodhi down with him to the jump seats as he wheezes and struggles to find some way to breathe that doesn’t send fresh pain lancing through his chest. He clenches and unclenches his fist, folding over on himself. Agony smolders around the edges of his mind, his scattered thoughts like bright sparks.

_I tried—_

_I can't—_

_I don't want Luke to see me like this—_

He pants, every breath igniting inside him. Grits his teeth, thinking, _fuck, fuck, what did I do—_ and Baze is rubbing his back, carefully, murmuring, “慢一點, 慢一點. It's okay.”

“You can punch Baze a few times if it will make you feel better,” Chirrut offers, and Bodhi lifts his head to discover him leaning on his staff at the top of the ramp. “He can take it.”

“And you can't?” Baze asks, dryly.

Chirrut shrugs. “My reflexes are too good. I would keep dodging out of the way.” He nods in Bodhi's direction. “Go on. This is a nice ship.”

“I'm not going to hit Baze,” Bodhi mutters, caustically. He glances up towards the cockpit of the Sentinel, hating his ridiculous masochistic impulse to go and have a look around, because it's still a ship, and he’s still a pilot, maybe—“And it's not a _nice_ ship. It belonged to the Empire.”

“You were trying to break it,” Baze observes.

Bodhi scowls at him. “Rogue Squadron can have it for target practice for all _I_ care.”

“Ah. Here. You can smash it up with my staff.” Chirrut flips his stick around in his hand and offers the end of it to Bodhi.
“Chirrut—” Baze rolls his eyes.

“What? It’s the kind of thing you do.” Chirrut says.

“My way is faster.” Baze tilts his head at Bodhi. “We could do that instead?”

“Your way—you’re asking if I want to blow this ship up?” Bodhi’s eyes widen, and just as quickly, narrow again. “Wait, wait—you’re trying to distract me, aren’t you? Both of you?”

“Distract you? From what?” Chirrut asks, too innocently.

Bodhi glares, sagging over sideways, and Baze steadies him with a firm arm around his shoulders. He smells of metallic-tinged smoke, probably from his repeater cannon; it’s not the spicy scent of cigarras or sweet incense from home, but it’s a bit comforting nonetheless.

“我們不是來 distract you. You’re hurt. 你應該休息, not stomp around like a starved reek.”

“A starved reek?” Bodhi puzzles over it, ignoring the commensurate hollow feeling in his stomach.

“You’re too skinny to be a regular one.” Baze is grinning somewhere in his beard, small and thin, not at all like the bulk of him, taking up space.

“It’s not a distraction, to let your anger out,” Chirrut says, before Bodhi can find a rejoinder. “I understand anger. I lived with him.”

“He says he understands,” Baze mutters.

Chirrut pokes Baze in the side with the end of his staff and says, to Bodhi, “You should not hold onto your anger. Letting it go is better.”

“Anger at injustice is righteous,” Baze counters. “What is more unjust than the Empire, and all of the things they have done to us?”

“Hey,” Chirrut says, pointedly. “When we met, you tried to strangle Bodhi with your bare hands, and you didn’t even know him, or what he had done. What Saw had done to him. What was just about killing a broken man?”

Bodhi jerks out of the protective circle of Baze’s arm. He feels a phantom pull on his collar, and quickly shoves away the fragile and fuzzy memory of the barrel of Baze’s repeater cannon aimed directly at his chest; the much clearer one of Saw looming over him.

But they’re still talking, their conversation a tenuous thread tying his attention to the present.

No monsters. Just men.

“So my anger was misdirected then.” Baze squeezes Bodhi’s shoulder in apology. “I found a place for it, later.”

“Yes, yes, when you thought I was dead and were very righteously angry about it. Still. You let go of it.” Chirrut smiles, inexplicably brightly, towards Bodhi. “He came back after killing everyone, held my dead body, and cried for his lost love.” Bodhi blinks, trying to remember if they’d talked about Scarif before in his presence, and comes up blank.

“你還是個混蛋,” Baze says, gruffly. “You could have said something about being alive instead of just lying there.”
“I was dead,” Chirrut insists, waving off the insult.

“Obviously not.” Baze sighs, and leans back, yawning, as if this is simply another round of an argument they’ve been having for a while and not an incredibly odd and disturbing topic of conversation.

“The Force gave me back to you,” Chirrut says, matter-of-factly, cementing Bodhi’s impression. “So why are you angry?” He perches on the edge of the seat next to Bodhi, his posture alert, head cocked to listen.

Baze grunts. “Something terrible happened again, Chirrut, he’s badly hurt—”

“I can sense that,” Chirrut says.

“—his hand is broken—”

“I’m right here.” Annoyance flares up inside Bodhi again. “You don’t have to describe me, I can speak for myself.” But speaking is an effort, and he has to stop to catch his breath. Shit. Four weeks like this?

“Habit,” Baze says. “He has a black eye, and bruises—” Bodhi makes an aggrieved face at him, but somehow, hearing Baze run down the list of his injuries doesn’t make him flinch or spur his desire to flee. He’s not sure how far he’d be able to get, anyway.

“—and his hair is still wet,” Baze finishes. “Tangled. Do you want me to do something with it?”

Bodhi’s eyebrows shoot up. He takes in Baze’s shaggy mane—the smears of soot and blood on his clothes, the scrapes on Chirrut’s hands, and then guilt pours over him like a wave. “You just got back,” he says, dismayed. “You just got back and you’re trying to help me—”

“Trying to?” Chirrut scoffs. “I think we are doing better than that. You’re not falling down now. Or shouting at nothing.”

“We’re fine,” Baze reassures Bodhi, patting his arm as Bodhi mentally steps back a bit, distressed. I wasn’t yelling. It was in my head. I think? Dammit. “Madine is a very respectful man. He understands when and how to use us.”

“He means he got to sleep a lot,” Chirrut says. “More than in our other battles. So don’t worry about us.” His eyes might be unfocused, but they settle expectantly in Bodhi’s vicinity nonetheless. “So how else can we help our favorite pilot?”

Bodhi rubs at his temple with his fingertips. “You were supposed to have fixed me already.”

“I keep telling you, but you don’t listen,” Chirrut says. “I never promised a fix—”

“But—you did, I was better,” Bodhi argues. “I was doing better. I was flying. I was—” He gulps. His mouth dries out, and he tastes—sand.

Chirrut is smiling, though there’s not much humor in the curve of his mouth. “Were you happy, Bodhi?” Baze’s dark eyes peer intently into his face.

Bodhi tastes spices, now, too, and to his surprise, he can feel Jedha’s cold desert wind stinging his eyes. But he isn’t falling apart—not yet, anyway—

His voice scrapes his raw throat, the words stuttering out fast and painful. “I don’t know. I—I had a
part in—Cassian and Jyn, they thought—but I can't be what anyone wants me to be, I’m a terrible spy, I can't fight, I'm just a fucking pilot, and I can't even do that, not after—after this.” Bodhi gestures down at himself, at his blood staining the jump seats.

Chirrut raps the end of his staff against the floor. “What about what made you happy?”

“I just told you, I don't know—”

“Being with Luke, before we left,” Baze says, running a hand over his bearded chin. “I think. You smiled, a little bit. And having things to do with Cassian and Jyn.”

“你為什麼—我要他自己說—” Chirrut says, huffily.

“我正在幫助他更快地找出來,” Baze insists. “他這麼痛苦—”

“I'm still here,” Bodhi says, glaring uselessly at them. “What does this have to do with anything? Okay, I was happy, Luke made me happy, I—but he—” Bodhi ducks his head and rakes the fingers that still work through his damp hair. “But I can’t be what he—I can’t make it fair. He saved me again, I owe him so much—he thinks I’m—I don’t know what he thinks or what he wants from me anymore—”

“You could just ask.”

It’s not Chirrut or Baze’s voice accompanying the all-too familiar footsteps coming up the ramp.

Shit. Bodhi pushes his hair back out of his face, not looking up. His lips move soundlessly, working over unvoiced syllables; he isn’t completely sure what words they’re shaping, or what other muddled, bleak fears might sneak out if he let them.

Luke takes the last couple of strides up the ramp into the Sentinel. “Hi, Baze, Master Îmwe. Welcome home.”

“Your boyfriend is having a rough day,” Chirrut says.


Baze shifts his weight to get up, and murmurs, to Bodhi, barely audible, “He has learned. He understands more than you think.” Then he says, louder, “We should go,” and Chirrut makes a disappointed sound.

“I’ll fill you in when I come for training,” Luke offers, dryly, and Chirrut laughs and allows Baze to lead him away. And then the ship is quiet, save for the usual noises of the hangar outside, and the stilted and broken sound of Bodhi’s breaths.

Luke sits down to Bodhi’s right, not touching him at all. “Tell me about this ship.”

“What?” Bodhi lifts his head. Luke is no less disheveled than when he’d left, earlier, and Bodhi feels a pang of guilt for pulling him away from meeting with Leia, from any chance to rest after all he’d done in the battle—

“You know more about Imperial ships than I do.” Luke slings his arm across the back of the seats, just out of reach, and raises his eyebrows. “So?”

“Um—” Bodhi frowns, but answers, slowly, “It’s a Sentinel-class landing craft.”

“Who makes them?”
“Cygnus Spaceworks, sort of, they were subcontracted by SFS like with the Lambdas—Luke, what —”

“Engines?”

Bodhi bites his lip. “Is this about you trying to prove that—”

“Come on, tell me about the engines,” Luke persists.

“You flew this fucking thing,” Bodhi retorts, wincing as he starts to curl both hands into fists and has to stop when his broken fingers throb in warning. “Right? You must have some idea—fine. It’s a HD7 array, hyperdrive and ions both together, it’s a Cygnus specialty to do it up like that—this is absolute bantha fodder, Luke, me knowing some stuff about ships that you don’t know isn’t the same as you saving my life for the second time!” He sucks in air, his chest heaving, his heart thumping wildly.

I can't, I can't do this—


Who loves me.

Why did he have to—

“You’re not counting the times I was on the laser cannons and kept TIE fighters off of whatever ship you happened to be flying?” Luke says, apparently still unaware of Bodhi’s inner turmoil about that, but there’s an undercurrent of tension, of worry, in his voice. “Look, I shouldn’t have told you about the whole, you know, dark side thing, it was too much to deal with, but that makes us even, doesn’t it? Or at least—Seerdon didn’t blow us all up because you stopped me. Besides, you’re forgetting something.”

Bodhi snorts. “That’s not a surprise.” He turns his head away.

“Well, I hope you remember, because it was pretty important to me,” Luke says. “You took me around the galaxy, those amazing planets—you said it was fair, then.”

He reaches out to Bodhi’s uninjured hand, and Bodhi glances back at him. “Okay? I mean, I just try to listen to what you say, I honestly don’t keep track of it like that. I saved Leia, too, and she certainly doesn’t act like she’s ever going to repay me the favor.” A faint smile drifts across his lips. “She wasn’t too thrilled with that rescue, actually. I’d like to think I’m getting better at it, though.”

“There was less garbage,” Bodhi acknowledges, slowly. He looks down at Luke’s hand on top of his on the seat—“More blood, though.”

Luke squeezes his hand, and then just holds it gently. “I’m sorry. I didn't think you'd be able to come down here yet, or I’d have cleaned all this up. The Cadera, too.”

Alarm jolts through him like a blow, and he tugs his hand away—“What happened to my ship?”

“Nothing,” Luke hastens to reassure him. “It just—some bacta got spilled—let me get it mopped up before you go back there.”

“Oh,” Bodhi says. “Great. Now I can't even go home.” He droops against the seat, fidgeting with the tape around his fingers, weary beyond measure. Maybe if I go and lie down in the spilled bacta? The thought of smelling it again, though, makes him shiver and swallow nervously.
“I'll take care of it,” Luke says. “But, um, in the meantime, I got Leia to assign us proper quarters. Away from the rest of the squadron. So you don't have to go back and bunk in the medcenter or sack out in one of your other ships, not when you're—” He takes a long breath. “Is that okay?”

Bodhi nods.

“Good.” Luke’s smile isn’t quite as luminous as usual. Bodhi supposes that's to be expected; it’s only been a—day? two?—since they’d returned, and people keep making him leave Bodhi’s side for whatever reason. “We can go there now, if you want.”

“All I've been doing is sleeping,” Bodhi says, a plaintive note creeping into his voice.

“Who said anything about sleeping?” Luke's eyes sparkle, mischievously, and Bodhi’s mouth falls open—“Kidding. I'm kidding. You're hurt.”

“So everyone keeps telling me.” But Bodhi starts to lever himself up, and Luke instantly jumps to support him.

Wedge is waiting just down off the Sentinel’s ramp. “No pranks, I promise,” he says, taking a flanking position as they cross the hangar, shielding Bodhi from most of the stares. “Just here to help, now that the Guardians aren't guarding you. They're, what, your uncles or something?”


For all that it's clear he's very worried, Wedge is the least wiped out of the three of them, going on about the difficulties he's having with his R5 unit now that its memories aren't being erased regularly. “Artoo's leading a droid revolution,” he says, in the turbolift to the crew deck. “Bad enough you let him fly your X-wing by himself—”

“He said he'd done it before,” Luke replies, unconcerned.

Wedge points at him. “See? That's the exactly kind of thing—did you know he'd flown it? What other kinds of shit are they getting up to that we don't know about?”

“Well,” Luke says, “in Artoo's case, he got the Death Star plans from Leia that Bodhi's team sent, commandeered an escape pod with Threepio, landed on Tatooine, was sold to me, escaped again—”

It's clearly not the first time Wedge has had to listen to Luke run down Artoo's adventures, like this, because he's groaning and holding his hands up in mock surrender. “And the analysts told me there's decades worth of data he's storing, too, but he claims he doesn't know anything about that.”

Wedge looks to Bodhi for help as the lift doors slide open. “You don't find it weird that droids can lie this much?”

“I'd rather they have some personality, I guess.” He shrugs. Unlike Chirrut and Baze, Wedge is obviously trying to distract him with nonsense; even droids who get regular memory wipes can end up with free will.

Luke laughs, nudging his shoulder gently. “I'd say Cassian definitely reprogrammed Kaytoo with some personality, that’s for sure.”

(He’d been bent over, panting for breath, dripping with rain and flinching every time fighters exploded overhead like thunder. Had straightened up and tried to make Kaytoo understand.

“Cassian reprogrammed you, right? Galen Erso reprogrammed me.”)
Bodhi’s usual urge to tease him flickers dimly in his head. He starts to open his mouth—

“—within reason,” Wedge adds.

“I was only going to ask if you’d install some cupholders,” Bodhi says, dryly, and Wedge makes a slightly rude gesture at him as Luke lets out a startled snicker. Bodhi reaches out and clasps Wedge’s hand, though. “Thanks.”

“You bet.” Wedge smiles and trots off, leaving Bodhi and Luke looking at each other in the empty corridor.


“It’s got a bed,” Bodhi observes, and steps inside, stumbling as he tries to kick off his boots and discovers he can’t balance himself with everything that’s broken. He crosses to the bunk and sits on the edge of it, gazing back at Luke lingering in the doorway even as the door itself hisses shut behind him. “What?”


Bodhi starts to lift his hand; lets it fall back to the bed, aggrieved. “I thought I told you not to do that.”

Luke crosses his arms. “It’s not like I have to do anything to feel it. I’m sure Wedge can tell, too; you’re barely talking again—”

“Well, fuck, Luke, I’m sorry I’m not talking enough for you,” Bodhi snaps, fury flaming up once more. “It hurts, and everyone wants to talk about what the fuck happened and the only person who’s actually apologized for getting me into this mess is Kasan, and she’s not the monster, she just, I don’t know, dated the fucking guy—”

“It hurts to talk?” Luke says, frowning and coming over to him, gesturing for him to sit up straight and gently touching his chest.

Bodhi grimaces and only just refrains from pushing him away. “Since when are you a medic?”

“Yraka’Nes told me a bunch of things I should look out for.”

“Since when are you—” Bodhi can’t think of what else to snap at him; his hands are warm, and—

“Are you doing some fucking Force thing right now?”
“Your mouth gets worse when you’re mad,” Luke says, thoughtfully. Bodhi can’t see his face; he’s standing too close, blocking the light. “You’re almost as bad as Han.”

“I was a cargo pilot,” Bodhi points out, simmering.

“I’m not doing anything with the Force,” Luke says. “But I don’t think you’ve hurt yourself any worse with all that yelling.” He withdraws his hands. “Did I do more harm than good, showing up at the Sentinel when Chirrut and Baze were already talking you through it?”

“Through what?”

“I don’t know.” Luke takes a step back. “All the things that hurt you.”

Bodhi shakes his head, firmly, even though there’s something tugging at his mind, dragging him towards the cell on Jedha—“I don’t talk about that with anyone.”

“Yeah, I got that,” Luke says. “Does anyone else even know about the first time you were tortured?”

“Don’t,” Bodhi interrupts him, frantically. His heart is pounding again, and he’s starting to sweat, his vision blurring Luke into a looming shadow. He hears the hiss of Saw’s ventilator. “Don’t—”

“I’m sorry. I’m sorry. Stay here with me.” Luke drops to his knees, holding onto Bodhi’s arms, just above his wrists. “Tell me something about your ships—”

“I can’t work on them.” Bodhi fumbles towards fury instead of his fear, but the monster is coalescing out of the darkness, and his thoughts are beginning to scatter. “I can’t—” He pants. Pulls against the restraints. “Luke—help me—”

Chapter End Notes

Huh. Well, that didn't end up going where I'd originally planned. (The actually very nice and sweet thing that WAS going to happen will still show up...later...)

As always--thanks, friends, for sticking around through all of this. I promise we'll be out of this remarkably depressing chain of chapters soon. Just needed to move a couple things around in Bodhi's head. :)

<3

(By the by--I am still doing my damnedest to stay on a once-weekly-ish schedule, but there's some things I have to accomplish this month for my research in addition to grading a pile of final papers towards the end of this week! So--if you're, like, hey, where did Josie go? I'm probably yelling about what's keeping me from writing over on my tumblr.)

Translations
他怎麼了?: What's up with him?
我不知道:I don't know
慢一點, 慢一點: Slow down, slow down
我們不是來: We didn't come to
你應該休息: You should rest
你還是個混蛋: You're an asshole (okay, there are a lot of ways to translate this, but this
is what I'm going with. It's not meant particularly lovingly here, unlike when Chirrut
called Baze a fool back in 15...)

你為什麼—我要他自己說: Why would you—I want him to say it
我正在幫助他更快地找出來: I'm helping him figure it out faster
他這麼痛苦: He hurts so much (er, more or less. Like I said somewhere in comments,
ages ago, I tend to work from what I think the Chinese should be *first* and then
translate into English--this one gave me fits in Google Translate, but I think I'm right to
use it like this anyway? Willing to take corrections on it, though.)
Chapter 43

Chapter Summary

Yeah, I think that’s about enough.

Chapter Notes

Tags. Heed them.

(It gets better.)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Had it all been a trick?

Ash and sand in his mouth.

Was he still on Jedha, still in the dark cell in the catacombs, with Saw waiting outside for him to give up?

Think about ships. That was supposed to help, right? Someplace to go when—

(—Seerdon is touching his face with his tentacles, clamping his temples in their fleshy grip, burning into his brain—

A hoarse voice overlaid with a clipped accent—“Tell me where—”)

“Bodhi. Bodhi, look at me.”

He moans only because he can’t summon a scream out past his broken ribs, and clutches at his head. It’s wrong. It’s all wrong. He’s shaking badly as a misaligned repulsor coil, but someone was supposed to fix it, they were supposed to repair the damage—

A delirious, wrecked laugh. Minor damage.

“It’s okay, Bodhi, there’s nothing wrong with the Galen that we can’t take care of—”

(Galen, who studied the geology of Jedha, the meteorology of Eadu, the most and least efficient routes between the two worlds for a cargo pilot still trying to escape one and sick of the other.

Who said “I’m sorry,” when his mother died and he stood on the platform turning his face up into Eadu’s eternal rain—

Who had reprogrammed him and set him on the path to—
Galen sent me to find Saw Gerrera.

Did he know what would happen?

He didn’t—he wouldn’t have—

Galen sent me.

It was important.

“That’s right. Galen Erso sent you with the message.” A gentle, pitying voice. “Do you remember?”

“I brought—” Bodhi draws a tremulous gasp of breath. Remember? His damp hair hangs loose around his face, but he can’t figure out how it’d gotten wet, or why his face is wet.

(It rained all the time on Eadu, and the smell of it didn’t matter, didn’t mean anything, since he was drowning in it all the time. But he hadn’t been on Jedha for the last monsoon, diverted to the Scarif run for the season, missing the electric, weightless feeling of the storm finally breaking. Homesick even though—)

—Saw is waiting for him to tell the truth, he has to tell the truth or he’ll die here, shattering into a million pieces and taking the ship down with him. “I brought—”

(—drowning in the lake on Chorax, his mother’s body weighing down his arms so he can’t swim to save her—)

Death.

“No, Bodhi, no—”

But he had.

His mother had—

(—the Temple had died, and—

The Guardians guarded nothing. Sat on the steps, old men waiting for the days and the people to pass, waiting for what would never return. Telling fortunes for people who only wanted to make one so they could get offworld, like him, escaping the despair and dust and—)

“You have to do something.” Someone sharper, brittle, though she’s unbreakable. “Can’t you use the Force to help him?”

Galen’s daughter. She came to Jedha to find her father.

Is that right?

Is—
“I promised I wouldn’t.” *That* voice sounds anguished, near tears. “It hurt him, the time on Corellia, I—I can’t do that to him again—”

There is a pause.

Bodhi twitches—*Corellia?* His heart races, like he’s cut in the auxiliary power too early.

(—*the lightsaber in the woman’s hand ignites as she stalks down the catwalk towards him—*

“—*I will end this for you, traitor—*”)

*But—*

*That’s not how it went either—*

He struggles against—nothing.

—*there was sunlight, and—*

—*Luke—*

“You and I are going to have a long conversation about *exactly* what happened on that mission,” Cassian—*Cassian*—mutters.


Bodhi huddles in on himself, utterly unable to stop shaking. The tape around the fingers of his left hand is slipping apart. He scrabbles at it, twisting the end back into place, focusing on trying to hold it together so he doesn’t have to look at his friends, or the man who thinks he loves him. His memories are all untethered, drifting like derelict ships after a battle, colliding, spinning off into empty space.

“You’re safe. We’re right here with you.” Cassian comes and sits down to one side of him, gently putting an arm around his hunched shoulders, as Luke carefully prises Bodhi’s right hand away from fiddling with the tape and holds it with both of his own.

“Are you all right?” Luke asks. “You felt—different. All scrambled up. I—I didn’t know if you were even—” He gulps, and ducks his head. Jyn’s silent, frowning hard at them from the other side of the room.

“I’m sorry,” Bodhi mumbles, incapable of sorting through the debris field of thoughts and salvaging more than that as reassurance. “I—” He sinks his head against Cassian’s shoulder and watches Jyn’s fingers turning the kyber crystal on her necklace, the way its rough facets refract the light. “It was all very—confusing.”

“Do you know where you are now?” Cassian asks, softly, and Bodhi lifts his head, looks around the empty little room for anything familiar beyond its configuration. He hadn’t had much to call his own once he’d left Jedha, either time, but there should be *something* of his lying around, and even his goggles are missing.

He trembles, feeling sick. “No. I—I can’t remember how I got here.”

Luke jerks up, and says, “I just got you assigned to proper officer’s quarters,” and Bodhi lingers over that, frowning. “We came straight from the hangar bay, I didn’t have a chance to bring any of your
things up yet.” He’s gazing anxiously from Bodhi to Cassian and back again. “Maybe—maybe this was a bad idea—but you can’t sleep in the *Cadera*.”

“I think I can sleep anywhere,” Bodhi says, in a small voice. “Here’s—okay, I guess.” His thoughts are sliding away, but not back down into the mess and misery of his memories, just mulling over the idea that he’s an officer, they’d never have made a cargo pilot an officer in the Empire, even flight instructors like Misurno weren’t ranked higher than—

Luke squeezes his hand sharply, and Bodhi opens his eyes to discover he’s started to collapse to one side. Cassian is supporting him; he’s not as solid as Baze, but he’s holding on just as tight, his hand rubbing Bodhi’s shoulder encouragingly. But Jyn heaves a sigh. “What about nightmares? This happened while you were talking to Luke—what happens when you’re asleep?”

“It’s usually all right,” Luke offers. Despite the awfulness of everything, he’s turned bright red, and Jyn barely manages to tamp down a faint, reflexive smirk. “Um. But if you want, I’m sure Yraka’Nes would have something to help?”

Bodhi breathes out, slowly, eyeing the pillow. His head feels like an overloading power regulator. “Yeah, I could go for that.”

“You’re staying?” Cassian asks Luke, settling Bodhi down on the bunk carefully. Luke nods; he’s blushing again as he tugs Bodhi’s boots off, not meeting Cassian’s gaze.

“No—go, you should all go, I’m—I think I’ll be—fine after I get some more rest.” Bodhi props himself up on an elbow, wincing.

“For being a *decent* sabacc player, you’re shit at lying.” Jyn says, not unkindly, as Cassian gets up. “We’ll be right back with your things and whatever Yraka’Nes gives us to put you out, let Luke have a turn to, oh, I don’t know, take a shower.” Luke glares and runs his hand over his hair self-consciously as he takes Cassian’s place on the bed.

“Okay,” Bodhi says. He swallows, and gazes up at his friends, searching for the right thing to say. *Thanks* doesn’t seem enough. But Cassian’s mouth twitches, a little, sadly, and he nods in understanding before departing with Jyn.

“Is it all right that I called them to help?” Luke asks, quietly. “I couldn’t talk you out of it by myself this time. You—didn’t seem to hear me at all.”

“Yeah.” Bodhi closes his eyes and presses his face into the pillow, willing his mind to go blank.

“It’s okay,” Luke says, resting a hand on his. “It’s going to be all right. I’m here to help, and so are Cassian and Jyn and everyone who—*cares* about you.” He makes a sound that might be a laugh. “Even Han’s been asking about you.”

“I don’t think he’s going to want his clothes back,” Bodhi says, muffled, distracted, but only for a moment. Tears start to soak into his pillow, and he gasps, raggedly, his chest hitching. “I’m really losing it, aren’t I?”

“No, no—” Luke twines his fingers through Bodhi’s. “It’s all right.” Bodhi tries to tug his hand free to wipe his face, but Luke doesn’t let go while he shakes and mumbles things like *lost, I lost*—until he has nothing left of words, tears, or conscious thought.

*****

The week after that, Bodhi sleeps a lot, and he is never, *ever*, alone.
There’s Luke, of course, whose arms are wrapped around him nearly every time he goes to sleep; who talks him out of his panic when he cannot remember where he is, one morning; who helps him shower.

It’s less fun than everyone gently teases them for; Bodhi’s focused on staying awake and upright enough not to drown, not on the way Luke’s touching him.

“Don’t worry about it,” Luke says, cheerfully, kneeling to lace up Bodhi’s boots as Bodhi fumbles through an apology for his lack of interest. “Plenty of time for that once you’re feeling better.” He kisses Bodhi very thoroughly, though, when they part ways.

*****

Cassian—and Jyn, though she’s really only good at nicking breakfast from the galley—make him food, though Bodhi’s heard rumblings that supplies throughout the Alliance are dwindling, and he insists that he can eat ration bars like everyone else, it’s fine—

“Eat,” Jyn snaps. She looks tired, her and Cassian both; they’re taking care of him on top of their usual duties, and the way she’d simply shoved the pile of datapads off the table onto the floor despite Cassian’s half-voiced protest suggest those aren’t proceeding particularly well. Bodhi dutifully gulps down another spoonful of posole and sneaks a look at the top datapad before Jyn glares at him and kicks it out of his sight.

*****

Draven’s first attempt to debrief him doesn’t go very well. He comes back to himself on the floor of Draven’s office, trying vainly not to cry, dizzy and humiliated.

His return to light duty is postponed indefinitely.

*****

Luke attempts to cheer him up afterwards by talking about ships; Admiral Ackbar’s been developing B-wing fighters with Slayn & Korpil, and Luke manages to convince someone to let him check out the schematics. He pulls Bodhi along into poring over the JZ-5 engines, the new weapons systems, but it doesn’t work. Bodhi stares down at his left hand and fiddles with the tape around his fingers until Luke figures out he’s stopped listening.

*****

Chirrut tries to make him resume meditating five times a day, but Bodhi keeps falling asleep instead of listening to his breath or his body or whatever the hell Chirrut says. Which would be fine, except for the time Baze falls asleep, too, and his snores jolt Bodhi right back out of his nap.

Or the time Luke has to wake him up out of a horrible, half-remembered nightmare of a mass of writhing tentacles ripping his ship apart.

*****

Bodhi’s second debriefing attempt with Draven goes slightly better than the first; he doesn’t panic again, but Draven mentions Seerdon’s execution and he has to excuse himself to be sick. Stares into space for a long time afterwards in Jyn and Cassian’s quarters, calm enough not to have Luke coming after him, wondering if the Emperor’s Hand had done it herself, but—he doesn’t go back to Draven to finish reporting.
Rogue Squadron takes turns working on fixing the *Galen* or cleaning up the *Cadera*; Bodhi tries to help, at first, defying orders and his aching ribs, but has to stop after the pain nearly makes him pass out. And then Wedge threatens to strap him down in the jump seats so he’ll stop *hovering*, and that—doesn’t quite set him off, not exactly, but afterwards he can’t remember what he’d shouted so furiously at his friend.

Or, days later, why he’d shouted at Kasan or Janson in the hold of the *Galen* or the hangar bay or—

“Yeah, I think that’s about enough,” Cassian says, as Janson gently pats Bodhi’s shoulder, accepting his broken apologies for the second time, and goes back to working on his X-wing. Cassian’s got a duffel bag in one hand, like he’s headed out on a mission, but he’s smiling, faintly, and Cassian *never* smiles before a mission. “Time to go.”

“I can’t—I’m not going anywhere—” Bodhi sputters, still sorting through his confused anger. “I’m in no shape to do *anything*—”

“Then it’s a good thing I’m not asking you to *do* anything,” Cassian says, taking his arm and shepherding him away from the X-wings and towards the Raptor.

“Cassian—”

“It’s all been cleared,” Cassian says, pushing him gently into the cockpit, but *not* in the direction of either the pilot or co-pilot’s chairs, which are occupied by Kaytoo and *Luke*, who’s grinning more brightly than Bodhi can remember seeing in a long time. “All you have to do is *sit*. Maybe take another nap.”

“Where—*what is going on? Are you—are we going rogue—?”

“Oh, good, we’re all here,” Jyn says, coming forward out of the hold and ducking under Cassian’s arm to kiss Bodhi’s cheek. “Ready to go?”

“‘We?’” Chirrut calls, from the ramp. “What is this ‘we’ business without *us*?”

“I thought you—” Jyn says, frowning, at the same time Cassian slaps his forehead and groans. “Sorry, sorry. I cleared them with Madine but I forgot to actually invite—”

“Our invitations do not have to be *engraved*,” Baze grumbles, pulling Chirrut along with him. “Just *delivered*.”

“Can someone *please* tell me what is happening?” Bodhi asks, staring wildly around at his friends as they strap into their respective seats and Luke fires up the Raptor’s engines. “I’m not cleared for any missions, I’m barely cleared to walk around the *ship*—I have to report to Draven again before the week’s out, I have to—”

Jyn shakes her head, glancing at Cassian. “Do you want to tell him, or can I?”

Kaytoo says, before either of them have a chance, “By all accounts, forty-six point four percent of your waking hours since you returned from Thyferra have been spent either crying or yelling at people—”

“What?”
“—and your friends, although no one has asked me for advice, concerned about your ongoing mental deterioration—”


“—as well as their own selfish interests—”

“Hey,” Jyn says, mildly aggrieved, and Cassian shrugs at her.

“—have proposed a change of scenery.” Kaytoo fixes Bodhi with a stare. “I think it’s a stupid idea.”

“Kay’s just mad because he doesn’t want to get sand in his gears again,” Cassian says, lightly. “You need a break. We all need a break. So we’re going to Sanctuary for supplies.”

“How is that a break?” Bodhi mutters, perplexed, as they lift off.

“Sanctuary has beaches,” Jyn says, and her smile could light the darkness.

Chapter End Notes

Well, that should about do it for getting this thing through the absolute nadir, I think. (A "fun" exercise for the reader: can you tell which of Bodhi’s memories are real? :P :P :P)

On the upswing from here, uh, for a while. Sanctuary should be fun. :D

By the way! I commissioned this GORGEOUS AMAZING THING from dis4daria!!! You should check it out and the rest of Daria's beautiful art :) (It *is* a tiny, tiny scene from this fic...curious if anyone can pinpoint it ;) )

Thanks, as always, for checking this thing out for the first time, or returning to it, or sticking around even after nearly five months. You all rock. <3
Chapter 44: Sanctuary

Chapter Summary

I can feel it.

Heed the latest tags!!

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

On Sanctuary, in their little rental house, Bodhi wakes up the day after they land to find Jyn sitting cross-legged on Luke’s side of the bed with a datapad in her hand. Sunlight reflects off the datapad’s surface so he can’t read it. “What’s that?”

Jyn shuts it off. “Nothing important.” She looks down at Bodhi expectantly.

He sighs, sits up slowly, and starts to gather his hair back out of his face. “We’re on Sanctuary, we got to the island last night, Baze was seasick on the ferry on the ride over from the spaceport. I’m fine.”

“Okay,” Jyn says, her voice conveying nothing.

“You don’t have to hang around all the time waiting for me to crack,” Bodhi says, reproachfully.

She looks at him, her expression equally unreadable. “I’m not.”

“Right.” Bodhi gives up on his hair, slides carefully out of bed, and pushes the wooden shutters the rest of the way open to look at the beach. In the daylight, the sea is a deep, emerald green, white where it crashes into the shore. An avian darts over the waves, following the rolling curves to the south and out of sight, its soaring cry carrying clearly back to him. He turns back to Jyn, listening to the quiet; there are no mechanical sounds of Kaytoo moving about, or Luke’s cheerful chatter.

“Where did everyone else go?”

“Luke got dragged off to go meditate.” Jyn yawns, stretching her arms up over her head. “Cassian’s outside spraying another anti-corrosive coating on Kaytoo because he wouldn't shut up about it after we got up.”

“And you're working,” Bodhi says. Her feet are bare, like his, and she's shed her jacket and scarf, but otherwise she seems exactly as relaxed as usual: not at all.

She hops off his bed. “I'm done now. Let's get something to eat.”

“And then?” Bodhi follows her through the house to the kitchen, where a bowl of imported fruit sits on the counter.

Jyn picks through it, looking pleased, and holds up a sihan peach at Bodhi, tossing it to him when he holds up his right hand. “Depends how you're feeling. Go back to bed, I'll send Luke in to you when he comes in.” Her eyes glint.
“Jyn,” Bodhi says, wearily.

She smiles at him and shrugs. “I don’t care, do what you want.” Jyn bites into her own peach, ignoring the juice that drips down her chin. “I’m going to lie on the beach and read trashy holonovels.”

“Oh.” The sihan peach is sweeter than Bodhi expects, the taste of it almost a shock on his tongue. “What was it Cassian said about the supplies we’re supposed to be picking up?”

“I said you shouldn't worry about any of that,” Cassian says, coming into the kitchen with Kaytoo and grinning at Jyn. “You've got a little—” He gestures at his mouth, and then at hers, and she blinks at him in feigned ignorance until he leans in to kiss her lips clean.

“Cute,” Kaytoo mutters.

“The delivery's not until the end of the week,” Cassian adds. Jyn's eyes follow him as he circles around the counter and selects a hindian pear for himself. “You should just—”

“Rest, right, okay,” Bodhi says, not bothering to keep irritation out of his voice, though he ducks his head a little in apology as Cassian looks at him, his eyebrows drawing down.

“Meditation is also good,” Chirrut says, cheerfully, as he and Baze and Luke pile into the kitchen from the outer courtyard. “There is nothing for you to fix here, so no moving meditation, but there are plenty of calming things to look at and listen to.” Baze sits down on a stool, eyeing the mess Bodhi and Jyn are making. He grunts, and pulls out a knife.

“No nightmares?” Luke murmurs hopefully into Bodhi's ear, darting his hand recklessly past Baze's knife for the neat slices of fruit that peel away from his blade. Bodhi shakes his head and starts to lick his sticky fingers like he used to, when he was young and had been given a rare treat. Luke’s gaze is drawn to his mouth like a magnet, his eyes widening, and Bodhi stares back at him, his heartbeat stuttering in his chest.

Baze rolls his eyes. “The sea is not a calming thing,” he says to Chirrut, and pops a slice of peach into his mouth. Chirrut clears his throat, and Baze pauses, and prods Bodhi with a knee. “Doesn’t mean you shouldn’t go look at it.”

“I’m not dressed,” Bodhi protests, weakly, gesturing to his sleeping clothes and bare feet.

“Don’t need to be,” Chirrut says, grinning impudently. He’s fully dressed, although neither Baze nor Luke are; Luke’s got on the thin undershirt and shorts he’d slept in, too, all wiry lean muscle underneath compared to Baze’s more expansive physique.

Luke blushes, and reaches for Bodhi’s hand, evidently not caring that his fingers are still sticky with peach juice. “Come on, I’ll show you where we were meditating this morning.”

Bodhi drops the peach pit on the counter and lets Luke lead him out through the courtyard. And, just as Luke pushes open the gate, they both hear Kaytoo say, grimly, “I’m going to keep count of how many times you all go off to have sex—”

“Kay!”

Luke can’t fully contain a laugh, but he looks at Bodhi and shakes his head. “My intentions are pure,” he says.

“Uh-huh.” Bodhi follows him down the short flight of steps to the beach, wishing he had managed
to tie his hair back as the wind picks up, tangling it further around his face. The air smells like salt, like it had on Aquilaris, standing in the podracing stadium, or like on—

He frowns. Scarif had smelled like ozone and blood, chemical smoke burning his throat, his lungs. Here—

—here there is nothing to be afraid of, no firefight going on around him or ships exploding overhead. Luke smells like salt and sunscreen, not fear and death. His friends are all alive, and safe. The battle is—

“What’re you thinking about?” Luke asks, settling himself into a ridge of dry sand a few meters from the water’s edge. He squints up at Bodhi curiously, and Bodhi gingerly drops down next to him.

“Nothing worth mentioning.” Bodhi wraps his arms around his knees and stares at the waves crashing one after the other into the shore, the long curving line of foam they leave behind. The white sand is warm under his bare feet, and he can’t help but dig his toes into it.

“Okay,” Luke says, gently. He shuffles his feet, and Bodhi glances over to see him wiggling his pale pink toes in the sand, too.

“I thought you didn’t like sand.” Bodhi’s mouth twitches, barely.

“It’s different,” Luke says. “It feels different. Doesn’t it? I wouldn’t have done this at—at home.” He points at his half-buried feet. “Would’ve burned my soles clean off if I’d ever even stepped on parts of Tatooine barefoot.”


“You’re being ridiculous—ah!” Bodhi falls back against the sand and covers his face with his right hand, laughing helplessly as Luke runs his fingers lightly over his foot. “Stop, stop—”

“I knew you had to be ticklish somewhere,” Luke says, triumphantly, leaning over Bodhi and tugging his hand away from his face. He licks Bodhi’s index finger, still stained with peach juice—“One”—and immediately pulls a face. “Ugh, sand.” But he makes a show of examining each of Bodhi’s fingers on both hands, and Bodhi stops squirming and tilts his head back out of Luke’s shadow into the sun. He only flinches a little when Luke gently kisses the tips of his broken fingers as he counts them, though he wonders—is this a distraction?

“You’re all here,” Luke reports, flopping down onto the sand on his back, holding Bodhi’s good hand to his heart.

It’s Bodhi’s turn to squint at him. “Are you sure?”

Luke shrugs. “I can check everywhere, if you’d like,” he offers, blushing slightly, and Bodhi’s mouth quirks up again.

“No—maybe later, but I meant—” Bodhi waves his left hand by his temple. Luke raises his eyebrows. “I promised, Bodhi.”

“I think I’m here, I think”—Bodhi grimaces. “You didn’t—there’s nothing wrong that made you
“No,” Luke says. “You seem okay. You didn’t have nightmares on the Raptor, or last night, and whatever you were thinking about when we walked down here, you—stopped.”

“Oh.” Bodhi closes his eyes for a moment, listening to the crashing sea and the birds, and, as if from a great distance, his own heartbeat. “What’s it feel like?”

“What does what feel like?”

“When I’m—when I’m okay.” Bodhi opens his eyes and turns his head to gaze at Luke.


“That’s not what I asked,” Bodhi says, pulling his hand free from Luke’s grasp. “I want to know. I can’t quite tell, on my own. I thought I was doing all right, on and off, and I keep—” He exhales sharply. “What if I’m not—by the end of the week—you’ll be able to tell?”

“I think so.” Luke doesn’t look at him, sitting up and drawing something in the sand off to his side before erasing it with a sweep of his hand.

“And I’m—”

“Not there yet.” Luke brushes the fine grains of sand off of his hands. “But you will be. Seerdon hurt you very, very badly, but Master Îmwe says you just need time, and—and—peace, and quiet. You’ll be back on duty before you know it.”

“What does it feel like to you when I’m not—panicking?” Bodhi persists. “When I’ll be ready again?”

Luke swallows, and says nothing, for a minute. Then he starts, slowly, “I had a T-16 skyhopper back on Tatooine. I might have told you about it already. I bought it used, had to scrounge around Anchorhead to find all the parts, but I fixed it up myself—”

“You asked,” Luke points out, a smile tugging at the corners of his mouth. “The first time I took it for a spin, I knew I couldn’t get out past the troposphere, but it didn’t matter. I was going somewhere, fast, and I was free—” Luke stops, and his eyes are bright. “I thought I could reach the stars.”

Bodhi’s lightheaded, his own eyes wide, and though his mouth has fallen open, nothing comes out. He thinks I’m—

It doesn’t hurt.

He wouldn’t tell me if he didn’t really think I’m going to be okay.

“You’ll be back to it soon enough yourself,” Luke says, hurriedly. “Flying. You’ll be able to fly the Raptor out of here at the end of the week.” He takes Bodhi’s hand once more and twines their fingers together. “Okay? Does that help?”

Bodhi licks his lips, his heart lifting at the thought of flying again, even if it is only to go home and he won’t be able to—“What happened to it?”

Luke blinks. “Oh, I burned out the instrumentation, I didn’t get around to repairing it before—well,
you know. But I could’ve gotten it back up and running again just fine if I’d had the time.”

Bodhi struggles to pull himself upright, grinning a little giddily, thinking, *I’m his busted skyhopper*—and Luke gets an arm around his shoulders to assist, continuing, “You would’ve liked it, Bodhi, it was faster than a little airspeeder like that had any right to be—” He breaks off as Bodhi touches his face with the tips of his fingers. “What?”

“Just—thanks,” Bodhi says, dizzyly, and kisses him.  

Luke sighs, like he’s been waiting, and kisses him back, fiercely. His hands curl around the back of Bodhi’s neck, fingers caressing his skin. “You’re going to be all right,” Luke murmurs, his tongue tracing syllables against Bodhi’s lips. “I can feel it.”  

They stay tangled together like that for a while, Luke kissing Bodhi’s neck, his mouth, the faint lingering sweetness of the sihan peach commingling with salt when Luke’s tongue slides across his. Bodhi grows warm as the sun rises higher in the sky, with the feel of Luke’s hands and lips on him; warm and, bafflingly, sleepy again. He says so, and Luke chuckles into the side of his neck. “That’s okay. Go to sleep if you want. You’re healing.”

“I don’t want you to think we’re not going to have sex on this trip,” Bodhi murmurs, burrowing into the sand and closing his eyes.  

“We’ve got a whole week,” Luke says, sprawling down on his stomach and draping an arm across Bodhi’s chest, mindful of his ribs. “Plenty of time for us to catch up to the others.”

Bodhi’s eyes pop open in surprise, and Luke snickers. “Go to sleep,” he repeats, and kisses Bodhi’s cheek.

*****

He jolts awake when a wave breaks over his calves. “Shit, the tide,” Bodhi yelps, scrambling backwards, wincing as he pulls too hard on his ribs, and colliding with—Kaytoo, looming over him. Luke is laughing, propping himself up on his elbows, letting the next wave soak him, shaking wet hair out of his eyes.  

“I told you about the tide chart this morning,” Kaytoo says, reprovingly. “Not you, Bodhi. But I told Luke. I thought he would remember and keep you from drowning. Cassian remembered, but he thinks now is a perfectly good time to go for a swim.” He points, and Bodhi follows his finger out to Cassian’s dark head bobbing up and down in the waves. “I’m the lifeguard.”

Bodhi clambers to his feet. “You can’t swim,” he says. “You’ll sink before you can get to him.”

“I have a flotation device,” Kaytoo says, turning his head down towards his feet. It’s a bright pink rubber torus with a rope tied around it. “We found it in the house.”

“Is that for you or for Cassian?” Luke asks, getting up and stripping his soaked undershirt off over his head.  

“It’s for *children,*” Kaytoo says. “But I guess Cassian expects me to throw it to him.” He looks at Bodhi and Luke curiously. “Are you going to swim, too? I only have one of these.”


“I *only have one*—” Kaytoo says, exasperated.
Bodhi moves his arm in the pattern of a stroke in the air, and has to stop partway through when his chest flares with pain. “I’m not going in right now, Kaytoo, it’s all right, you watch out for Cassian. Where’s Jyn?”

“Jyn went for a walk around the island,” Kaytoo says. “She should be back in about eleven minutes, if she didn’t get swept out by the tide like you could have been.”

Luke leans over and whispers, “I don’t think Kaytoo likes the ocean very much.”

“I do not.” Kay swivels his head up to watch Cassian make the turn at the north end of the beach and start to swim back. “Aside from the salt corrosion, and the potential for drowning, it brings back bad memories of Scarif.”

“You weren’t even on the beach there,” Bodhi says, perplexed.

“It brings back other people’s bad memories of Scarif,” Kaytoo amends. “Oh. Is this on the list?” He glances down at Bodhi, who gapes at him in dismay.


“The ‘list of all the things you don’t want to talk about but you have to face,’” Kaytoo explains, helpfully. “That’s how Jyn said it.”

“I never made the list,” Bodhi says, hastily, because Luke’s looking at him like—like he’s that T-16 sitting dark and quiet in a garage somewhere, never to be flown again—“I was going to, back on Thila, but you came and talked to me, instead, and I never quite—Kaytoo, why the fuck did you have to go and mention that?”

“I think of it as a list of repairs,” Kaytoo says to Luke, and Bodhi groans, dropping his head into his hand.


“Okay, I lied,” Bodhi mutters. “I’m going to walk straight into the ocean—”

“Hey.” Luke rests a hand on his shoulder. “It’s not like I didn’t know there was stuff you didn’t want to talk about. I just didn’t realize—”

“There was enough to make a list out of?”


“Yes,” Bodhi says, and glares at Kaytoo. “Come on, I’m going in the water after all. Jedi float, right?”

“I only have one flotation device and it’s for Cassian,” Kaytoo shouts after them.

Jedi float just fine, though Luke flails around a lot when he tries to stand up again and discovers he can’t touch the bottom anymore. Cassian swims past a couple more times, looking considerably more relaxed and happy than Bodhi thinks he’s ever seen his friend. And Bodhi doesn’t try to swim, not really; just kicks around the cove on his back, watching the avians swooping and diving like the squadron practicing maneuvers, occasionally making sure Luke hasn’t gone under.

Which he does, once, and comes spluttering back up to the surface almost immediately, looking delighted. “There’s fish,” Luke says, inanely, treading water next to Bodhi’s shoulder. “We should
Bodhi snorts. “We both grew up in the desert. The closest I ever got to catching fish was looking at them in the aquarium.”

“The closest I ever got was prying fish fossils out of the canyons, but how hard can it be? They’re fish.” Luke splashes him.

Twenty minutes later, Jyn wanders past where they’re dangling their feet over some rocks on the southern end of the beach, messing around with sticks and string, and laughs at them. “Really? What, did you see fishing in a holo once?”


“This is going to be embarrassing for all of us,” she says, climbing up, and nudges Bodhi over so she can sit on a dry patch of rock. “Do you even have bait?”

Luke holds up a wriggling little hermit crab hopefully, but Bodhi gives him a dismayed look, and he quickly lets it go again.

“Oh, for the love of—” Jyn rolls her eyes and pulls a ration bar out of her shirt pocket, breaking it into pieces for Luke to tie onto the string. Then she smirks at Bodhi. “You can’t even handle killin—”

“No, shut up,” Bodhi says, kicking her leg.

“What’re you gonna do if you actually catch something?”

“Let it go?” Bodhi suggests.

“Aw,” Jyn says, and squeezes his arm. Then she suddenly squeezes a lot harder—

“Ow, dammit, Jyn, don’t break my arm, too—” Bodhi pokes her in the side, and she lets go, but she’s not looking at him, she’s looking at—

—Cassian, emerging from the water some distance up the beach, shirtless, soaking wet, his shorts plastered to his legs, his chest heaving slightly from his swim. He looks over and waves. “Close your mouth, you’re going to catch flies,” Bodhi says to Jyn, lightly, and Luke tries and utterly fails to conceal his smirk.

“That’ll be more’n you do,” Jyn retorts, watching Cassian strolling down to them, Kaytoo turning and going back to the house with the pink tube over his shoulder.

“That’s all right,” Bodhi says, but Luke claps him on the shoulder and shows him the primitive fishing pole he’s assembled, complete with ration bar bait. Jyn smiles at them and jumps off the rocks again, landing more or less gracefully on the sand, and goes over to Cassian. Bodhi is slower to follow, letting Luke help him down, muttering curses at his useless left hand.

Cassian looks Bodhi over with a critical eye as they come up to him. “Swimming and rock climbing?”

“I’ll take an extra painkiller,” Bodhi says, waving off Cassian’s concern, though he’s already regretting having done the latter; his chest burns. “There weren’t any sticks down here.”

“Do you know anything about fishing?” Luke asks, and Cassian’s mouth, which had been starting to
curve down, abruptly twitches back up again.

“No,” he admits.

“Am I the only one who ever—” Jyn shakes her head at them.

“Apparently,” Cassian says, pressing a kiss to the top of her head. “Come tell us what we're doing wrong.”

Even with Jyn's all too amused instructions and corrections, they don't catch a single fish, although Sanctuary's marine life does seem to enjoy their ration bars. Jyn's pant legs get increasingly soaked no matter how high she tries to roll them up, and Bodhi wonders briefly if she'd brought anything more suited to the beach to wear.

“How are you feeling?” Cassian asks Bodhi, in a low voice, as Jyn surrenders the last bit of the ration bar to Luke's string.

“I'm okay, really,” Bodhi says. “It's nice here. Quiet. It'd be what I'd pick, if I was looking for a safe world. If I was a refugee.” He doesn't notice Cassian looking at him oddy for that. “I mean, I guess there are other safe worlds, they're probably fine, too, or we wouldn't send people there, right? Places just like this, or even nicer—nothing like the planets I scouted, we're not saying 'sorry for your loss, go live on a shitty desert planet while we sort out the war—’” Bodhi halts, looking at Jyn and Luke and Cassian all staring at him.

“I told you he was doing better,” Luke says, happily.

*****

And—

Bodhi is.

—mostly.

Cassian easily cajoles him and Luke into helping cook dinner for everyone. Chirrut had somehow managed to catch a couple of fish, though he refuses to divulge his secret, and it’s not long before they’re all crammed in around the table, except for Kaytoo, who’s gone off to patrol the island even though it’s entirely unnecessary.

“Please don’t tell me there’s a smoking hole on the other side of the island with dead fish floating in it,” Bodhi mutters to Baze, around a mouthful of rice.

“I will not tell you that,” Baze replies, serenely, pouring tea and handing cups around. It’s chav; Bodhi has no idea where Baze would’ve found it, there hadn’t been any on Yavin IV or Thila. It smells familiar and strange all at once, and Bodhi tries to remember when he would’ve drank it last. When he’d been home, before the end.

He stares at the cup Baze puts in front of him. “Where did you get this?” It looks just like what he would’ve ordered in a tapcafe, if his mother had let him, as a boy, or if he’d done all right at the speeder races and could stand to spend a little.

“In a locker on the space station,” Baze says. “Chirrut used the Force to find it.”

“What is it?” Luke asks. “Some kind of tea?”

“Chav tea,” Baze says. “We used to get it at home, now and then, but it was hard to come by, during the occupation.”

“This is from—from Jedha?”

“Tarine, of course, you can get tarine tea anywhere,” Chirrut says, needling his husband.

“Because it’s awful,” Baze says. “And 非常便宜.”

Jyn huffs a laugh. “Made it easier to get.”

“You can barely call it tea,” Baze grumbles.

Chirrut says, “Some Imperial probably smuggled this offworld. Maybe a Jedhan, but maybe not. I didn’t recognize anyone on the space station.”

“How would you have known?” Luke asks.

“Same as how I knew where to find the tea,” Chirrut says. “It smells like Jedha. Like—”

Cassian says, “Bodhi.”

—and Bodhi jerks his head up, realizing he’s been staring into his cup, half-listening to his friends, thinking of home, and to his absolute horror, there are tears starting down his face. “I’m—I’m sorry. I’m—” Bodhi swallows, and swipes at his eyes, ducking his head so he won’t have to look at anyone. “I’m fine. Just—surprised me, that’s all.”

“All right,” Cassian says, skeptically.

Baze pats his shoulder, and mutters, apologetically, “There is more. Don’t worry about saving it. We want to share.”

But Bodhi drinks the chav slowly over the rest of dinner anyway, fighting off homesickness, trying to stay focused.

After dinner, though, Bodhi begs off of both meditating with Luke and the Guardians, or going for a night swim—float, really—with Jyn, though the sight of Kaytoo trudging after her with the pink rubber tube makes him laugh. He turns back to the house, intending to simply go bed, and Cassian is standing in the doorway, silhouetted in the light. “We need to talk,” Cassian says.

“One more thing, Cassian—”

“Cassian,” Bodhi says. “I had a good day. I didn’t panic, or—or black out, or shout at anyone, I just had a moment—it was an unpleasant surprise, right, but it wasn’t a—” He grimaces. “I’m tired. Can we please do this tomorrow?”

“I let it go on for as long as I did because I thought you were handling it, I’ve always thought you could. I know Luke is helping, Chirrut will help you again too, but—” Cassian sighs.

“We were all sitting right there,” Cassian says, louder. “I know Chirrut didn’t see it, but I was on Corellia, I was—I remember what your face looked like, and I—” He rubs his hand over his eyes. “It scared the hell out of me, Bodhi, and you almost did it again—”

“I did not,” Bodhi shouts back at him. “Ask Luke. Ask him if I was going to go out again—he didn’t
jump across the table to shake me, I was *fine.*” He shakes with fury, utterly beyond control. Words pour out of his mouth before he has a chance to figure out what they mean. “You’re so fucking *protective* of me now, huh? Where in blazes were you *before?* I know you knew Saw had me, and you—” His voice cracks. “Why didn’t you find me before he put that monster in my head?”

Cassian’s mouth is open. He closes it, looking appalled. “Bodhi—”

Bodhi pants for breath, trying to reel his scattered, angry thoughts back in. “*Shit.* I—Cassian—I didn’t mean—I *don’t* blame you. I—I’ve never blamed you. I—*fuck.*”

“What monster?” Cassian asks, softly.

“Fucking *hell,*” Bodhi mutters, looking around nervously, expecting it to come slithering out of the darkness and take him down again.

But it doesn’t, and Luke doesn’t appear, either; he’s entirely on his own. He sways on his feet, though, and Cassian grabs his arm. “Sit. Talk.”

“Oh, you’re *ordering* me now?” Bodhi says, rudely, but he sits on the step next to Cassian, his shoulders hunched. Cassian is silent, rubbing his back, waiting him out. “Maybe I should make that list,” Bodhi mumbles, after a while.

“Maybe,” Cassian agrees. “Is the—monster at the top of it?”

“Yeah.” Bodhi’s shoulders slump, and he leans against Cassian. “I’m sorry.”

“For what?”

“Shouting,” Bodhi says. “Seem to be doing that a lot lately.”

“Approximately forty-six percent of the time,” Cassian says.

Bodhi shakes his head. “That was combined shouting *and* crying.”

“That’s right. I forgot. It’s all right.” Cassian goes quiet again. Down the beach, Jyn quite audibly scoffs at something Kaytoo says, and then there’s the sounds of splashing. Bodhi has no idea where Luke’s gone off to; it doesn’t seem to be in the same spot as earlier in the day.

*I told Luke about it, once.*

*It wasn’t so bad.*

“Saw said his monster would know if I was lying,” Bodhi mutters. “He said I’d lose my mind. And—and I *did.* You helped me put it back together, most of the way, but some—sometimes I get lost in it, and I’m back on Jedha, in the cell, with—with *it.* Luke—” He can’t quite remember why he needs to tell Cassian this, but he’s certain he *should.* “Luke helped me find my way back from it, on Corellia, but it hurt. He promised he wouldn’t do it again. Not like that, with the Force.” Bodhi draws a breath. “There’s—I think there’s levels to it. The worst—after Saw—was when Seerdon had me. And everything after.”

Cassian chokes out, “*Twice.*”

“What?”

“You’ve been tortured *twice.*” Cassian’s hands are shaking; he clasps them together in front of him as if he’s trying to make the trembling stop. Bodhi blinks at him; he can see, by the light of the kitchen
behind them, tears gleaming in his friend’s eyes.

“And you haven’t?” Bodhi asks.

“I’ve been beaten, yes,” Cassian answers, regaining some semblance of calm. “But I never faced a mind probe, or a really skilled Imperial interrogator—and I have training for it. You—don’t.”

“I got on-the-job training?” Bodhi offers.

Cassian stares at him for a second, plainly horrified, and then he wraps an arm around his shoulders, brushing a kiss over his temple. “That’s—” He makes a soft, unintelligible sound, and then he just rests his head against Bodhi’s. “I should’ve asked you about this a long time ago. Write down the list, and we’ll figure out how to help you get through the rest of it.”

“Coming here’s helped,” Bodhi says, sincerely.

“Good.” Cassian squeezes him close. “I’m sorry, too. I don’t want you to be in a bad place tonight because I worried about the way you looked for a second.”

Bodhi checks himself over mentally, staying out of the darker nooks and crannies of his mind, and comes up—clear. But there’s another obvious indicator still absent: “Luke’s not coming at you, so I think it’s probably—oh, wait, he is—” Cassian whips his head up, staring down towards the empty, starlit beach apprehensively, and Bodhi can’t hide his smirk, or stop the snicker which escapes out of his mouth.

“That’s not funny, using your Jedi boyfriend against me,” Cassian says, slapping him on the shoulder. “Save that shit for your squadron, huh?” He’s smiling, though, pulling Bodhi back to his feet and he thinks, for the second time that day, it’s really going to be okay.

It’s only later, after he’s helped Cassian clear everything away and played one extremely odd game of sabacc with Kaytoo—who does cheat—when Bodhi turns on the light in the room he’s sharing with Luke, that he realizes he’s worn his sleeping clothes the entire day. Has been barefoot all day. It’s been years and years since he’d done that; he doesn’t quite remember where, though it must’ve been as a boy on Jedha, probably, running through the alleys.

There’s sparkling grains of sand stuck to his feet and legs, and caught in the hair on his arms. He pats himself down; there’s more sand in his hair, and salt, too—he gives up trying to get it out and goes straight to the ‘fresher to rinse it all off. Comes back and sprawls face down on their bed, puzzled at the sensation of nothing going on in his mind despite Cassian’s earlier worrying and the thought that he’ll have to finally make the list. Nothing except the feeling of being cool and clean and—

“Hi,” Luke says, from the doorway, sounding strangled.

—naked.

Bodhi lifts his head from the pillows.

Luke is staring at him, lips parted. He clears his throat. “So you’re feeling—”

“All right,” Bodhi says. He thinks about it for a second. “But I could be convinced to feel better?”

Bodhi doesn’t think Luke uses the Force to get across the room that quickly, but he could be wrong. Luke’s on the bed and his clothes are on the floor, inside of another heartbeat, and then he’s touching Bodhi, rolling them together, his body still sun-warmed even though night’s fallen.
“Wait—I can’t—” Bodhi gasps, clenching his teeth against the warning flare in his ribs, trying to focus on the much more pleasant heat building in him elsewhere. “I can’t move a lot—”

“Oh, right, I’m sorry,” Luke says, gently pushing him down onto his back before diving in at his mouth again. Bodhi tangles his fingers in Luke’s hair and his tongue in Luke’s mouth. There’s sand everywhere, but it’s all right; the way it scrapes against his skin is a reminder that he’s here despite it all—

—a muted snort of laughter from the doorway—

Luke pulls away for half a second, panting, waves his hand, and the door slams shut.

“I’ll have Kaytoo put you down for one,” Jyn calls through it, and a horrified laugh escapes Bodhi’s throat.

Luke’s blushing with embarrassment, but he smiles down at him, tucking wet strands of hair behind his ear. “You’re really okay? I felt something a little off, earlier, but you got through it pretty fast.”

“Yeah.” Bodhi reaches up and runs his good hand over Luke’s arm. Sand cascades down in rivulets, scattering like stars where it falls on his own brown skin. “I think we’re moving the beach into bed.”

“One grain at a time,” Luke agrees, balancing on one hand and sweeping the sand off of Bodhi’s chest in a gentle stroke. Bodhi groans, faintly, and Luke lightens his touch, looking concerned—


Luke stops for a second, pulling off, his mouth obscenely red, his eyes bluer than Sanctuary’s sky. “You’re still okay?”

“Oh, my stars,” Bodhi moans, and Luke grins, but he doesn’t—“Yes, yes, I’m fine, I’m fine—” Luke bends his head back down—“It’s going to be—I’m fine—”

Luke crawls back up to him, after he’s done, looking amused. “You got through that pretty fast, too,” he says, and Bodhi smacks his arm, drowsily, mumbling something incoherent about pilots. Luke takes his hand, and kisses his fingers, holding on until Bodhi’s fallen asleep.

*****

Bodhi misses the sunrise in the morning, unable to force the tentacles out of his head, feeling like a broken regulator with cracked shielding, spilling radiation everywhere. He isn’t quite sure what he spits at Jyn, trying to make her go away, but she just crosses her arms and leans against the doorframe until he’s calmed down.

“For me, it was a cave,” Jyn says, sitting beside him on the bed as he pulls his knees up to his chest. “Where I hid on Lah’mu after my mother died.” Something like a laugh ekes its way out of her throat. “It was a hateful, dark place in my head for so long. Everything I thought I knew about my father, the people who’d left me behind or wronged me—I locked them away there. Letting the light in—that was Cassian, and you, and everyone who saw me as something different.”

She nudges him with a shoulder. “But I still wake up there sometimes. I don’t think I’ll ever be fully rid of it.”
“I don’t know if that’s actually all that helpful,” Bodhi murmurs.

“Well, I’m not all that good at this,” Jyn retorts, and Bodhi huffs a laugh. “Come on, you’re here, Luke’s not banging down the door to check on you, you’re doing fine. Get up and go—do something besides lie around with me, I’ve got things to do.”

“Like what?”

“Things,” she says, again, the briefest of smiles flickering over her lips, and Bodhi rolls his eyes and gets out of bed.

*****

Baze is swimming in the cove when he goes down to the beach; Chirrut is lying spread-eagled on the sand, grinning up at the sky, and completely—

“Oh—sorry,” Bodhi says, and backs away, covering his eyes and smothering helpless laughter. He’s a few meters away when he thinks better of it and yells, “Where’s Luke?”

“With Cassian,” Chirrut calls back. “Other side of the island.”

“Yeah, I bet,” Bodhi mutters under his breath.

The island isn’t very big; it takes about four minutes to find them. Luke’s sitting on a rock, stacking a pile of smaller stones on top of each other, looking oddly tense, while Cassian paces back and forth, his hands on his hips—

“Is this an interrogation?” Bodhi demands, out of breath from climbing up. He rubs his chest, wincing, and both Cassian and Luke look at him with concerned expressions. “I’m fine—Cassian, what—”

“We’re just getting some things cleared up,” Cassian says.

“No big deal,” Luke agrees. Bodhi clambers over the rocks to sit next to him, eyeing Cassian suspiciously.

“I’m going to go find Jyn,” Cassian says, awkwardly, jerking a thumb over his shoulder.

“Okay,” Bodhi says. “Uh, I’d stay off the beach?”

“Yeah.” Cassian waves an arm over his head as he starts down.

Bodhi leans back on his right hand and raises his eyebrows at Luke.

Luke blows out a breath. “He apologized for not telling me you were going to be on Thyferra, and then he asked me a bunch of questions about what ‘fucked-up Force thing’ I did to you on Corellia. But don’t worry about it,” Luke adds, putting an arm around him. “We also talked about Hoth, and what it’ll be like, since he grew up on Fest. How to handle the cold. But I don’t want to think about cold, it’s so warm here.” His hands are, too.

“I’ll keep you warm on Hoth,” Bodhi says, trying not to worry about it, as ordered, and then he mostly just tries not to fall off the rock, as Luke pounces on him.

*****

Kaytoo bumps into them coming out of the ‘fresher sometime in the afternoon and sighs. “Two?”


*****

Baze and Kaytoo build a bonfire on the beach, in the evening. Cassian and Jyn scuffle over how to best toast something called a marshmallow, Cassian ending up with smears of charcoal and sugar in his beard and Jyn in his lap, licking her fingers smugly. Chirrut beckons Luke away, up into the rocks, presumably to meditate.

“Happy?” Baze says, in Bodhi's ear, and he nearly drops his marshmallow into the fire.

“Baze—I thought Chirrut was the silent one—”

“I can be quiet,” Baze says, huffily.

“Evidently,” Bodhi says, and then, “I thought you'd gone to meditate with Luke.”

“Ah.” Baze smiles. “They’re not meditating.”

“They’re not?”

Baze points up into the rocks. “They're fighting.”

“In the dark?” Bodhi struggles to his feet, straining to see them.

“Chirrut is always fighting in the dark.” Baze shrugs. “It is good practice, for Luke.”

“What's going on?” Cassian asks, looking up at Bodhi. Bodhi opens his mouth to answer, but Luke flips off of a rock, landing on one knee in the sand, dropping his stick, and Chirrut comes flying down after him like a mynock into the firelight.


“No showing off,” Chirrut calls to him, spinning and striking and bending in ways Bodhi could never manage, not even when his ribs were unbroken. “小妹妹，來跟我們玩一玩.”

Baze snorts. “Now who is showing off?” Jyn's gotten to her feet, brushing sand off of her hands, eyes shining. Luke snaps his stick in half and tosses one of the pieces to her.

“Oh, this should be good,” Kaytoo says. Luke looks at Jyn, and she nods, and they charge at Chirrut on the same breath.

“When—?” Bodhi asks.

Cassian’s eyes are locked on Jyn's whirling, dodging form, mesmerized. “After he got out of the medcenter. Before Luke asked to train.”

Chirrut gracefully swerves out of Luke’s reach and ducks under Jyn’s wild swing, tapping his stick on the back of her knee. She goes down with a grunt and just lies panting in the sand for a second, before rolling out of Luke’s way and lunging up from her hands and knees to jab at Chirrut ineffectively.

“She does not come meditate,” Baze observes, under his breath. “But she is more at peace than you.”
Bodhi looks sideways at him. “I’m—*trying.*”

“You should still come meditate with us again,” Baze says. “Even if you only fall asleep, it is good to practice. And it is a nice way to connect with the people who love you, being peaceful together.”

Bodhi almost jabs himself in the hand with his marshmallow stick. “You and Chirrut? *Peaceful together?*”

“When I am napping, it is peaceful.” Baze shrugs.

“Jyn, did you just try to kick sand in my face?” Chirrut calls, and laughs, knocking Luke flat and pinning her with the end of his staff all in one smooth motion.


“Of course,” Chirrut says, sticking a hand out to pull her up—

“You always try to surprise me,” Chirrut says, lashing out with a foot and catching Luke's ankle so he sprawls on the sand next to Jyn, who's sitting up and smiling over at Cassian.

“It’ll work, someday!” Luke rolls to his feet, dusting himself off. “Are we done?”

“Go eat your marshmallow before Bodhi sets it on fire.” Chirrut crouches down next to Baze, clearly amused.

“What? Get your own,” Bodhi protests, flicking his stick away as Luke makes a grab for it. The marshmallow flies off the end and impacts on Kaytoo’s chest panel.

“*Hey,*” Kaytoo says, plaintively.

Bodhi gapes at him for a second, and then starts to laugh. “I'm sorry, I'm sorry—you were worried about *salt* —”

“It's not funny,” Kaytoo says, petulantly, extending a finger to wipe it off.

“Don’t, Kay, you'll make it worse—” Cassian's grinning, though, and Jyn is covering her mouth with her hand. “Come on back to the house and I'll get you cleaned up.”

“Sorry, Cassian,” Bodhi says, starting to get to his feet.

“No, no, you stay, it'll just be a minute.” Cassian scoops up the bag of marshmallows and lobs it at him. “Make another one. But don't listen to Jyn, you'll burn it.”

Jyn rolls her eyes at him affectionately, and pops a marshmallow in her mouth.

“I like them better burnt,” Chirrut says to Baze.

Baze grunts. “Don’t you start.”

“You should come to spar with us more often, Jyn,” Luke is saying. “We make a good team. We might even be able to defeat the venerable Master Îmwe together.”

“Venerable?” Chirrut pokes him with the end of his staff. “I am old, but not old enough to be *venerable.*”
“Disreputable,” Baze grumbles. “I don’t know why you keep saying you are old at all. I do not consider myself old. They are young.”

“You are young at heart,” Luke suggests, playfully.

“Oh, no.” Baze shakes his head. “There, we are all old now.”

Bodhi’s been experimenting with multiple marshmallows on a stick, but he glances up, startled, at Luke’s crestfallen face. Chirrut slaps Baze on the shoulder. “Now what have you done? They’re all quiet.”

“I am only saying—”

“Depressing shit,” Chirrut says. He pushes himself back up to his feet. “Well, come on, you’ve had plenty of chances to surprise me, and you’re just sitting there licking your fingers?”

Bodhi snickers as Luke’s eyes go wide, and he smears his sticky fingers on his shorts, glancing down at Jyn.

“I’m out,” she says, holding her hands up. “Go get him.” Chirrut grins, sprinting away into the darkness, practically disappearing, and Luke lets out a wild yell and chases after him.

Baze hmphs. “Well?”

Bodhi frowns, straining to see Luke running along the water’s edge. “Well what?” Then he remembers what Baze had asked when he’d first come down to the fire, and he stammers, “I—I think—”

“Close enough,” Baze says, and pats his shoulder.

*****

Sometime in the afternoon of the third day, taking a nap in his room:

“Bodhi. Bodhi. Wake up. It’s just a nightmare, it’s not real.” The hand on his shoulder—

“—Kaytoo?”

“That’s right, I’m Kaytooeso,” Kaytoo says. “Reprogrammed Imperial security droid.” He’s standing over Bodhi with the pink rubber tube slung over his arm. “You are Bodhi Rook. We are on Sanctuary, the Alliance safe world—”

“I know—all of that,” Bodhi mutters, rubbing his eyes. The nightmare, if that had been what it was, is fading fast; he has a vague memory of green eyes and a vicious frown. He shudders.

“—whose chief exports include foodstuffs and materials for your uniforms.” Kaytoo peers at him. “Did you know they make the uniforms out of seaweed?”

“That, I did not know,” Bodhi says. “What are you doing here?”

“Everyone else has had a turn to watch over you,” Kaytoo says. “I’m your friend too, I should get a turn. I can talk you out of panicking just as well as anyone else.” He sounds kind of put out. “Possibly better, since I can monitor your—”
“Physiological responses, right.” Bodhi nods at the pink tube. “What’s that for?”

Kaytoo turns his head and looks at it, as if he’d forgotten it was on his arm. “Oh. Oh.” He goes to the window. “CASSIAN, DON’T DROWN.” He looks down at Bodhi, who’s wincing and covering his ears. “I don’t think he will. I’ll stay here.”

“Okay,” Bodhi says, uncertainly.

“Do you want to—”

“Kaytoo, are you trying to be empathetic again?” Bodhi rolls over, slowly, and buries his face in the pillow. It smells like Luke. “Because it’s all right, you don’t have to do that. I can go back to sleep for a while.”

“You’re supposed to make the list,” Kaytoo says. “I was going to suggest that I could help. Since I won’t get upset if you get upset.” He leans in conspiratorially. “Luke is on the other side of the island.”

“This is a bit of a setup, isn’t it.”

Kaytoo says, “Yes,” and drops a blank datapad on his lap.

“Can I go to the ‘fresher first?”

Kaytoo considers it. “There is a sixty-seven percent chance you will try to escape out the window,” he says, doubtfully. “And a eighty-two percent chance you will injure yourself quite badly doing so, because your ribs are not fully healed. In case you had forgotten.”

“What if I swear I won’t try to go out the window?” Bodhi asks, his mouth quirking up.

“Then—yes, all right.” Kaytoo gestures him out.

When Bodhi comes back, not bothering to shower since he’ll probably end up in the ocean again, and Luke’s not there to help anyway, Kaytoo is still there, a looming dark shadow at the end of the bed. “You don’t wait around in the middle of Cassian and Jyn’s room like this, do you?” Bodhi asks, finding a shirt and pulling it on over his head. He sniffs the collar; it’s one of Luke’s. He shrugs and sits back down on the bed. “It’s a little creepy. Like the time you activated when I thought you were powered down.”

“I do not,” Kaytoo says, sounding offended. Then he pauses. “I did, once, when Cassian was away, and Jyn nearly shot me when she walked in the door.”

“That seems about right,” Bodhi says, sliding the datapad over to himself and switching it on. His mouth is dry. “I—don’t know where to start with this, Kay.”

“The beginning seems like the usual place,” Kaytoo observes, making the bed dip a bit as he sits down next to Bodhi. “Jedha? Your childhood? Cassian was six when he joined the Rebellion. He has a lot of memories that are hard to face.”

Bodhi looks up at him, wide-eyed. “Does Cassian talk about it?”

Kaytoo shakes his head. “I was present for almost every terrible thing Cassian has done or lived through. He doesn’t need to tell me about it.” He taps the corner of the datapad. “None of us were with you.”
“You were right next to me on Eadu,” Bodhi says. “In the co-pilot’s seat. When I shot those stormtroopers.”

“The first people you ever killed?”

“The only people I’ve ever killed,” Bodhi says. “Um. Directly.” He draws a shaky breath. “Everyone else—everyone else, on Jedha, on Alderaan—was because I was too late with Galen’s message.”

Kaytoo swivels his head down. “You think that? Still?”

Bodhi huffs a wry laugh. “Yes.”

“That’s ridiculous,” Kaytoo says.

“Well, thanks, Kaytoo, that’s very helpful.”

“Are you writing that down?”

“Uh—which part?” Bodhi rests his fingertips on the datapad.

“All of it?” Kaytoo suggests.

“That’s going to take a while,” Bodhi mutters, but he starts to type anyway, putting Saw’s fucking mindreading monster on the top.

“It probably has a name,” Kaytoo chides him.


“Are you going to panic now?” Kaytoo asks.

Bodhi blinks. “I—no?”

“Well, that’s something,” Kaytoo says. “What’s next?”

It’s a shorter list than Bodhi expects it to be; Kaytoo edits it down even further to the monster, being captured, Jedha, and—

“Misplaced guilt?”

“What would you call it?”

“I had—five different things—you just erased them all,” Bodhi says, exasperated.

Kaytoo gestures dismissively. “They all fit under that category. You haven’t had any problem talking about most of those things lately anyway. Galen Erso? You named a ship after him. People talk to you about things that hurt all the time now, and you’re fine.”

“I yelled at Cassian,” Bodhi points out. “And Jyn. And Baze and Chirrut and—the squadron—”

“You’re still hurt,” Kaytoo reminds him. “They know it’s part of recovering. Do you think Cassian hasn’t lashed out at me after a bad mission? Or at Jyn? And he loves her.”

His heart skips a beat. “What bad missions?”

“There were no bad missions,” Kaytoo says, hurriedly. “They were all—good. No problems.” Bodhi
makes a face at him. “I’m not supposed to tell you about what went wrong,” Kaytoo amends.

“Oh, but I’m supposed to give up all my horrible secrets?” Bodhi taps Kaytoo’s arm with the datapad.

“Yes,” Kaytoo says, taking the datapad back and standing. “You can go now.”

Bodhi starts to say, sarcastically, “Thanks,” but then he looks up at Kaytoo, his eyes widening with the abrupt realization that—“You didn’t have to come on this trip at all—”

“What? No, I did, I’m going to—help—load supplies,” Kaytoo says. “Tomorrow. When we leave.” He tilts his head. “Stop looking at me like that. If you’re going to cry, I’m going to get Cassian—”

Bodhi rubs his hand over his mouth, and shakes his head, trembling. They’re all here because of me.

“Thanks,” he says, softly, and means it.

Kaytoo closes his hand over Bodhi’s shoulder. “You’re welcome.”

*****

Luke’s lying next to him on the last morning before they have to go back to the spaceport and load up the Raptor, sunlight turning his hair and eyelashes to gold, refracting in the tiny grains of sand stuck to his cheekbones. Bodhi blinks, wondering why he’d woken up before Luke—and then he hears the light tapping on their door again. He gets out of bed, tugging half the sheet around him, and opens the door a crack to see Baze on the other side.

Baze peeks past him at Luke’s bare limbs. “That is what I thought,” he says, his eyes crinkling at the corners. “He can skip meditating with us if he is meditating with you.”

“Um,” Bodhi says, intelligently.

“You know. Listening to the body.” Baze grins.

“O—Okay, thanks,” Bodhi stammers, and closes the door in his face. Turns, and Luke is stretching and yawning, blinking sleepily at him.

“Was that—am I supposed to—”

Bodhi shakes his head, and gets back into bed, straightening the sheet over them. “Skip it.”

“You should come see the sunrise tomorrow,” Luke says, turning over and smiling at him. “There’s just the one, but it’s still pretty.”

“Two is better?” Bodhi traces his fingers lightly over Luke’s shoulder, making all the fine pale hairs on his arms stand up.


“Mood killers,” Bodhi mutters, but he points to the side table and Luke brings them to him along with some water.

“Maybe we should just stay in bed,” Luke says. “I’ll bring you breakfast.” He hops off the bed again and is out into the hallway before Bodhi can mention—
“Luke, put your damn lightsaber away,” Jyn says, loudly, from the kitchen, and Luke is back, his face flaming red. Bodhi smothers his laughter in the pillow as he scrambles around for clothes, emerging more cautiously again a couple of minutes later. Bodhi lies back, listening to Jyn teasing Luke mercilessly, looking at the square of sunlight on the ceiling, feeling a bit like he’s floating, though it’s probably just the painkillers starting to take effect.

Luke returns with a hindian pear cut neatly into slices on a plate; Baze must be out in the kitchen, too. “Jyn ate the last peach,” Luke says, handing him the plate. “There’s more tea, though, if you want.”

Bodhi shakes his head and eats the pear, slowly, as Luke slips back under the sheet and snuggles up to his side. “So.”

“Yeah?” Bodhi says, turning carefully to put the empty plate down on the side table. He rolls back over, and Luke catches at his wrist—Bodhi holds his breath, looking into Luke’s eyes, confused, but Luke just shifts his grip so he can lick Bodhi’s fingers clean.

“Don’t—don’t do that,” Bodhi mutters. “You’ll put me right out again.”


Bodhi licks his lips and says, quickly, “I mean, I don’t mind it that much, when you’re just—but I can’t control it.”

“Can I—try?” Luke holds out his hand, palm upturned, like he had on the Falcon, and Bodhi nods, and lets Luke close his thumb and middle finger in a circle around his right wrist, his thumb stroking gently over Bodhi’s scars. “Tell me when you need me to let go,” Luke says, and Bodhi nods and tries to keep breathing steadily, looking at the sand still crusted lightly on the back of Luke’s hand, the grease under his fingernails.

(—the—)

“Okay, okay, enough—” Bodhi says, his heartbeat too fast, and Luke lets go promptly, wrapping his arms around him and murmuring, “Stay here, it’s all right,” in his ear.

“Well, that’s definitely staying on the list,” Bodhi mutters, when he’s gotten his breathing back under control again.

“How often do you think you’re really going to have to deal with having your wrists bound, though?” Luke asks. “Keeping you out of Imperial custody is a high priority for me, you know.”

Bodhi splays his hands out to his sides. “Yeah, me too, but it was Yendor who fucked me up first, and there’s bounty hunters and all kinds of—” He sighs. “I’d rather not be trapped in my head while someone’s hauling me away.”

“I won’t let that happen,” Luke says, firmly.

“But—”

“No ‘buts,’” Luke says, and silences further protest with his mouth. And hands.

“I mean, I’m willing to let you keep trying,” Luke adds, a little while later, as Bodhi’s panting and trying desperately not to squirm under him for the sake of his ribs. “I could hold onto you right now?”
“Okay, yeah, do it,” Bodhi gasps, too aroused to think straight, and Luke pins his right wrist to the bed, over his head, not entirely gently. He struggles, and Luke eases off, everywhere, and he can’t hold back a whimper—“No, it’s fine, I’m—”

“Tell me when it’s too much,” Luke says, and although both his hands move back down onto his body, there’s still something keeping Bodhi’s wrist in place. Bodhi pulls against empty air, and Luke stops everything he’s doing just to watch his face, very carefully, and Bodhi moans softly and looks into Luke’s sunlit eyes. “I’ll let go whenever you tell me to,” Luke says, earnestly. His hands are resting on his thighs.

“I trust you,” Bodhi whispers, his eyes wide. He licks his lips and breathes; it’s better, not having anything actually touching his skin, he can handle it, he can, he can—

“Hey, don’t go to sleep on me,” Luke murmurs, amused, and Bodhi’s eyes fly open; Luke is still kneeling between his legs, wrapping one hand loosely around him. “Comfortable?”

Bodhi—checks. “Yes,” he says, astonished.

“Not going to panic?” Luke asks.

Bodhi tugs, experimentally, and nothing—not a single awful thing—happens inside his head. “No.”

“Great,” Luke says, cheerfully, and twists his hand, and Bodhi cries out in utter, delirious shock as he comes.

He’s still shuddering with surprise and pleasure, as Luke resettles himself against the pillows, maneuvering Bodhi into his arms. “I guess that worked out pretty well,” Luke murmurs, kissing his neck.

“Better’n waking up out of it with Cassian and Jyn staring at me,” Bodhi mumbles, and Luke chuckles. “I think—I think, if it’s just the Force, and not anything I can feel, it’s not so bad.”


“Mm. Later.” Bodhi burrows his face against Luke’s chest and lies still, watching the sun tracing shadows on the opposite wall. “Chirrut’s not going to lecture you about using the Force for that, is he?”

“Chirrut doesn’t really lecture me about anything,” Luke says. He strokes Bodhi’s hair gently. “He asks questions and makes suggestions. Unless we’re sparring. Then he mostly just laughs at me.”

“You still haven’t landed a hit on him?” Bodhi slides his right hand down between Luke’s legs.


*****

That afternoon, Luke successfully catches a fish, surprising himself, Bodhi, and, clearly, the fish.

Jyn takes a strangely long time to come down to the bonfire at night. Cassian keeps looking back to the house for her, in between checking to make sure the fish is grilled properly. Bodhi leans shoulder-to-shoulder with Luke, gazing up at the stars; Baze is making up constellations for Chirrut, drawing them in the sand with their intertwined fingers.
—is not what a lightbow is shaped like,” Chirrut says, and smooths the sand out under their hands. “You have forgotten.”

“It’s in our room,” Baze says. “I know what it looks like.”

“But you do not remember what it feels like,” Chirrut says.


“I have no idea what I’m supposed to be looking at,” Bodhi says, trying to follow the path of Luke’s finger. “But there’s a lightsaber, over there—oh, and over there—”

“He is just drawing straight lines in the sky, isn’t he,” Chirrut says.

“Yes,” Baze replies, grinning at them. “Now, a lightbow—”

“You’re wrong,” Chirrut insists.

Luke snickers into Bodhi’s ear, kissing his cheek, and sketches a triangular shape in the air above them. “T-16.”

Bodhi shakes his head. “Lambda-class shuttle.”

Cassian grins and hands Bodhi a plate. “You can eat and stargaze—” and he cuts himself off, staring over Luke’s head.

Bodhi turns to look, and Jyn is strolling down from the house, wearing a sleeveless top and a long, flowing skirt tied around her waist, swinging a clear glass bottle in her hand. Her hair is down, and Cassian scrambles to his feet, gazing at her like none of the rest of them are sitting there. She grins, and drapes her bare arms around his neck, letting the bottle drop into Luke’s waiting hands.

“Please tell me that’s not—” Bodhi says, alarmed, as Luke pries the top off and the smell of it wafts to him.

“Yeah, Solo gave it to me. Said we all needed to get really fucking drunk at least once.” Jyn raises her eyebrows at him. “But that I should save it for when you were done brooding.”

“Oh, great,” Bodhi mutters.

“So are you? Done?”

Bodhi rubs his hand over his beard, and doesn’t answer right away, looking at Jyn with her arm around Cassian’s waist; Kaytoo poking an entire arm into the fire to retrieve something that’s fallen into the flames; Baze and Chirrut, arguing over the proper way to draw a lightbow.

And Luke, his eyes bright as the stars.

He feels that strange lightness in his heart again, like he’s about to lift off.

“For now,” Bodhi says, and reaches for the bottle.
Happy 40th Anniversary to, well, Star Wars :D

Translations:
非常便宜: very cheap
小妹妹, 來跟我們玩一玩: little sister, come play with us

Plot returns, next!
Thanks for hanging in there. I hope this was worth the wait. <3

The talented brynnmclean wrote sanctuary, a rebelcaptain POV on this chapter, for my birthday in 2018 :) Enjoy!

Art by petimetrek
Chapter 45: Supplies and Safe Worlds

Chapter Summary

Just so you could fly.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Bodhi heads straight to the Cadera the morning after they’re back from Sanctuary, at an early enough hour that there’s hardly anyone in the hangar bay to notice. The hold of his shuttle is scrupulously clean; it smells faintly of grease and at least one sweaty mechanic, but there’s no cloying tinge of bacta that he can detect. The rest of his belongings—the stuff Luke and Jyn and Cassian hadn’t moved into his new quarters, anyway—are exactly where he’d left them, including Wedge’s skifter, still tucked between the ‘fresher mirror and the bulkhead. He goes up and sits in the cockpit, running his good hand over the switches, flicking the comms on and off, wondering—

“Well, well, well, if it isn’t—”

Bodhi groans. “What do you want, Solo?” He turns, and the smuggler is leaning on one arm against the back of the co-pilot’s chair, smirking at him. Bodhi’s not sure if he’d simply failed to hear Solo coming, or if he’d slipped free of reality for a moment once more. He bites his lip and hopes it’s the former.

“You look better,” Solo says. “Less like a—” Bodhi holds up a warning finger at him. Solo shrugs a shoulder, and his smirk shifts into something kinder as he repeats, “You look better.”

“I’m glad you think so?” Bodhi mutters.

“I’m glad, for Luke’s sake.” Solo swings around and drops gracelessly into the seat. “Oh, don’t give me those big sad eyes, I’m not trying to guilt you. Just relieved. You were making him—everybody—tense.”

“With all my brooding?” Bodhi asks, wryly.

Solo huffs a laugh. “Yeah.” He nods at Bodhi’s hand, his still-immobilized fingers. “How long d’you have left before the doc lets you back at it?”

“It’s not her who signs off on that,” Bodhi says.

“Who—?” Solo catches his expression. “Aw, hell, it’s Draven’s decision, isn’t it.”

“I—he said I could handle supply runs, to the new base, but that was—that was before I blacked out in his office,” Bodhi says, a little startled that he’s admitting this to Solo. He examines his fingers, ducking his head from Solo’s alarmed look, and adds, sheepishly, “I don’t know how to convince him I’m all right to fly.”

“Uh, we’re sitting in your ship right now,” Solo says. “Wait until you can, and then go—you know. Rogue.”
“Yes, perfect, that'll really demonstrate I'm stable enough to be trusted.” Bodhi fights the urge to put his head down on the console in frustration and close his eyes.


“Jyn kept what was left of the bottle,” Bodhi says.

Solo sputters. “I'm not—is that—it’s six in the damn morning. No, come and help me and Chewie with the Falcon. Nothing you need both hands for.”

Bodhi eyes him suspiciously. “Did Luke put you up to this? Watching out for me?”

“Now why would you think that? Just 'cause they all went off to plan some new top secret mission to Onderon without us doesn't mean I'm here babysitting,” Solo says, getting to his feet. He thumps his fist on the headrest of the co-pilot’s chair. “Wasn't Luke, anyway.”

“Sure,” Bodhi says, skeptically. But he stands, too, and goes down the ramp after Solo, half-listening to his endless chatter and looking around at the other ships in the hangar.

Solo follows his gaze to the additional Y-wings docked alongside Rogue Squadron's X-wings. “Shandor Squadron, got in a couple nights ago.” He waves a hand and scoffs, “Y-wings. Won’t catch me in one of those.”

“Luke says they move like a sleepy Hutt,” Bodhi observes absently, looking at the individual ships’ modifications; there’s a two-seater among them, one of the very old models going back to the Clone Wars, with a gunner’s bubble turret between the main cockpit and the astromech socket. Another’s replaced the standard model thrusters on the detachable cockpit with Aurum thrusters, like maybe the pilot had a few bad experiences with ejecting.

“Maneuverability’s shit,” Solo agrees. “Speed, though. They could probably beat out your shuttle in a race.”

Bodhi spins on his heel, intending to snap defensively at him, but—Solo’s mouth is twitching up. “You’re trying to start something?”

Solo points at himself, loosely feigning innocence. “If I was gonna start something, I’d have said the opposite to a couple of the Shandor flyboys, and detailed the engine tweaks you and Luke worked so hard on together, and oh, let’s say, a few hundred credits would’ve changed hands—”

“Oh, come on, Solo,” Bodhi says, exasperated. He holds up his left hand emphatically and raises his eyebrows.

“Look, they said some shit about you and your ships, and I felt obliged—”

“—to throw me to the Danorian wolves,” Bodhi mutters. “I can’t—”

(He’d sat in the co-pilot’s seat in the Raptor after takeoff, and tried not to yelp at Luke about the difference between flying an empty cargo shuttle and one filled to capacity as they lurched towards space. Had been reluctant to reach for the controls, though Luke had encouraged him to try, because his head might’ve been better but his hand was not—)

But Bodhi glances back at the Cadera thoughtfully, now, and feels a faint, familiar thrill run down his spine, like when he’d bet on speeder races at home, or when Luke had sped faster than his father
through the turns on Ord Ibanna. He takes a breath. “Okay, okay. End of the week. If I’m—if these
work.” Bodhi tentatively flexes his fingers a little and looks up into Solo’s grinning face. “Fifty
percent.”


“Forty-five,” Bodhi insists. “I might be going rogue for your bet, and Draven’ll kick my ass from
here to Wild Space—”

Solo puts his hands on his hips. “Forty.”

Bodhi narrows his eyes, taking in Solo’s affront; there’s something halfway to insincerity about it.
“How many other distractions are you planning to throw at me?”

“I don’t know what you’re talking about,” Solo says. “I’m just orchestrating a completely above-
board race between some of the Rebellion’s most talented space jockeys, not including myself, while
they’re between missions to save the galaxy—”

Bodhi sighs. “Okay, okay. Whoever’s gone and set me up for this, you can tell them I’m quite
distracted now, thank you very much. Forty-three?”

‘Sure, kid,” Solo says. “You’re richer ‘n I am, but okay, fine, you can have forty-three percent of the
take.”

“How am I —”

Solo claps him on the shoulder and nudges him along in the direction of the Falcon again. “You’re
debt-free.”

Bodhi thinks that over for a while, as he attempts to get the Falcon’s computer to tell him something
about why the hyperdrive isn’t functioning. He doesn’t owe the Empire anything for his years of
schooling, so Solo’s right, there. But the thought of what he owes his homeworld, his people; what
he owes his friends for everything they’ve done or tried to do for him—or Luke, no matter what he
says—those debts can never—

“I can feel you brooding,” Solo says, from underneath the console. “Knock it off, or I’ll have to take
you flying or something, and this ship’s not going anywhere until the hyperdrive’s fixed.”

“I’m not,” Bodhi lies, reflexively, but he realizes the computer’s display’s long since scrolled past the
part he was supposed to be diagnosing. “The hell is wrong with your computer, Solo? It’s like
talking to a Troig.”

“Yeah.” Solo’s voice is muffled. “Was hoping you might be able to talk the slicer droid brain around,
it’s been having fits ever since we got back from Sullust.”

Bodhi looks down at Solo’s legs sticking out between the seats, feeling his face heating. “Blast, Solo,
you’re—you’re—” His heartbeat quickens, and he can’t stop himself, his voice scraping,
crescendoing—“You’re worse at this than everybody else—I’m supposed to talk to the messed-up
droid brain because it’s like me? What kind of fucking joke—”

Solo sits up so fast he hits his head on the underside of the console. “Bodhi. Bodhi. Relax. I didn’t
mean—look, you’re reading too much into every little—Wedge said you were jumping at shadows,
but I didn’t—” He rubs his head, wincing. “I’m not trying to fuck with you. I swear. I’m barely
trying to help. That’s Luke’s job.” He flashes a crooked smile, and that, remarkably, is what eases
the frustration and pain in Bodhi’s chest. “He’ll tell you. I’m only ever in it for the money.”
Bodhi starts to open his mouth to respond, and Solo adds, hastily, propping a knee up and resting his forearm on it, “And no one’s paying me to watch after you, I honestly could use the hand here, sometimes the Falcon needs more help than me and Chewie can manage on our own.” He blows out a breath and rolls his eyes. “Not a metaphor for your situation either, don’t get any ideas about how much of a damn I give about you.”

—and Bodhi laughs, unexpectedly.

“What’s so funny?”

Bodhi shakes his head. “Just realizing I could definitely beat you at sabacc.” He settles back into the chair, trying to convince his heart to slow. It’s all right. I didn’t lose control. I didn’t—I wasn’t—

“Oh, yeah, likely story,” Solo says, getting to his feet, Bodhi’s outburst already forgotten. He jerks his chin in the direction of the control panel. “Figure out that sad excuse for a slicer droid and I’ll play you after.”

But there isn’t time after; Leia and a Lieutenant Ematt call Solo and Chewbacca away—“Damn Shrikes think I’m some kind of leader,” Solo mutters, but he changes his jacket and brushes off his pants before leaving, much to Chewbacca’s amusement.

Bodhi follows them down into the hangar, and is instantly struck by the sense that he’s stepped out into a whirlwind, the kind that picked up speed and red dust as it careened across the desert before battering apart on the stone walls of the Holy City. Both Rogue and Shandor Squadrons are readying their ships; the ground crew’s calling back and forth to each other, and the sound of engines firing up echoes in his head like thunder. Kasan and Janson are bickering about something over her astromech’s swiveling dome, and Luke is—Luke is strolling up to Bodhi as if he hasn’t a care in the galaxy, dressed for flight, Artoo rolling along on his heels.

“Going out for a full drill with both squadrons,” he says, tilting his head and studying Bodhi’s face curiously. “I was hoping to train up on the new B-wings, but Admiral Ackbar’s not turning his pet project over to Rieekan just yet.”

“Oh,” Bodhi murmurs. Artoo offers a sardonic comment about how he’s just now started to get the T-65 the way he wants, but Luke doesn’t seem to catch it. “Have—have a good flight?”


“I know what you mean,” Bodhi says, looking down at where he’s unconsciously tangled his good fingers around the straps on Luke’s flightsuit. He lets go. “I’m okay.”


Artoo swivels his photoreceptor to point at Bodhi and chirrups that Luke is happy again, and that even though it’s not right to have been left behind when someone else—Kaytoo, Bodhi figures—got to go to the safe world—

“Sorry,” Bodhi says, baffled—

—whatever happened there—and Bodhi is both dismayed and impressed by just how much salaciousness an astromech can convey in a series of whistles and beeps—you should do more of it—

“Uh—”
—you nerve burner, Artoo finishes.

“Artoo, are you coming?” Luke calls. He’s already halfway up the ladder into his X-wing.

“You know, that’s really not a very nice thing to call someone,” Bodhi says, and Artoo lets out a soft _blat_ before wheeling about and rolling away.

Bodhi hangs around until Luke and the rest of the Rogues have taken off, watching the glow of the X-wings’ engines against the darkness, feeling more than a little wistful. Deciding to fly for Solo’s silly bet had been an equally silly impulse, but standing between all of his—his—ships, it’s a spark that’s starting to catch.

“But you are supposed to be recovering,” Baze mutters, doubtfully, when he mentions it once Chirrut’s decided apparently there’s no getting Bodhi into the right state of mind for quiet meditation in his quarters. “Not pushing yourself harder and harder while you heal.”

“He’s not coming with us to Onderon,” Chirrut says, from the floor, where he’s folded himself up into a meditation pose. “Isn’t that taking it easy enough?”

Bodhi leans forward on the edge of his bunk, resting his elbows on his knees. “What’s on Onderon?”

“Jyn will explain it all to you,” Chirrut says, waving a hand.

“Chirrut doesn’t listen to everything that is said in planning meetings,” Baze explains, in an undertone. “He expects the Force to show him his path when we get there.”

“I do not expect direction from the Force.” Chirrut crosses his arms. “I listen more than you think, Baze.”

“I was not being quiet,” Baze says. He turns his gaze back on Bodhi. “We are going to meet the Onderon underground. Jyn has been trying to make contact with them ever since Sullust. They would not listen until someone let it slip that we had worked with Saw Gerrera.”

Bodhi’s heart misses a beat. “What?”

“For a short time only,” Chirrut says. He holds his hand out, palm up, like an offering, his black sleeve falling down his arm. “It was what they wanted to hear. The heroes of the Rebellion working with their once-favored son. Especially Jyn, they are very interested in Jyn.”

“She will probably get a promotion if the mission is successful,” Baze muses.

Bodhi is struggling to keep up. “You worked with Saw? When—no, no, why?”

“He hoped to free our home,” Baze says. “And destroy the Empire.” He looks carefully at Bodhi’s face. “He—”

“Tortured me.” Bodhi clenches his good hand into a fist on his thigh.

“We did not agree with his methods,” Chirrut says, delicately.

“Great,” Bodhi says, glancing around his quarters in nervous anticipation. But nothing comes for him out of the shadows; nothing tastes like sand or blood in his mouth. “Okay, okay—” He licks his lips. “Tell me about the mission.”

Baze visibly relaxes. “The underground is in charge of crashing the Imperial sensor net,” he says.
“Kaytoo projects that he can get us on the planet in eleven minutes.”

“Eleven minutes? But—the longest the sensor net would be down before backups come online is twelve,” Bodhi protests. He swallows. “Maybe—maybe I should request to go with you?”

“Jyn asked on your behalf,” Chirrut puts in. “But Draven said he did not think you would be—ready.”

“But my ship is,” Bodhi mutters, plaintively. “What if—if I can prove I’m faster than Kaytoo’s projection?”

“By racing Shandor Squadron?” Baze asks.

“Yeah,” Bodhi says, warming to the idea.

*I can—

*I think?

Chirrut *hmms* softly, and says to Baze, “我相信—”

“你一直就說—”

Chirrut elbows Baze in the side, but Baze doesn’t budge a millimeter. “我相信他可以.”

“Maybe. 不是我們的決定.” Baze shrugs. “We are going to take down Onderon’s shield. Then Luke will come, with the squadrons, to attack Jyrene Base. Destroying the ordnance center will keep the Imperials from supplying Airon sector.” He sounds a little like one of the generals, or like Leia, and Bodhi wonders why the Guardians still haven’t accepted commissions.

“Oh,” Bodhi says. “And then you’ll stay and help the underground movement, like on Gerrard V?”

“No,” Chirrut says. “There is too much to do now. We will be needed elsewhere.”

*****

Draven tells Bodhi the same, when he proposes himself as the pilot for the Onderon mission:

“You’re needed elsewhere. After you’re ready.”

“I’ll be ready by the time they are,” Bodhi tries, but Draven lifts an eyebrow, and he slumps back in the chair.

“And—don’t think I haven’t gotten wind of Solo’s little game,” Draven adds. “So if you were hoping to demonstrate your readiness to me through *that* exercise, I’ll just send you over to Alliance Support Services that much sooner.” His mouth quirks up at Bodhi’s surprised expression. “I am a spy, you know.”

“I can help them,” Bodhi says, softly, setting *that* aside for the moment. “I—it’s just dropping them off—I’d stay with the ship and monitor Imperial frequencies?”

“I thought there was a time when you were all right with transport duty,” Draven replies. “Just so you could fly, *Lieutenant.*” His tone brooks little resistance.

“Yes, sir,” Bodhi mumbles. He looks down at his hands in his lap.

“If you are ready sooner than anticipated,” Draven says, relenting a little, “There’s a run scheduled
out to Vulpter towards the end of the week.”

Bodhi blinks. “That’s—the Deep Core—what about the hyperspace security net? If I don’t have the right codes—”

“Spies, Bodhi,” Draven says, amused. “There’s a hole in the net that some of Solo’s even less reputable friends use. It’ll be in your Raptor’s navicomputer if you go.” He stops leaning against his desk and walks around behind it, tapping his console to wake it up, but he looks at Bodhi sidelong. “Vulpter’s safer for you.”

Bodhi grimaces, and tries hard to keep his voice even. “With all due respect, sir, the last time you said that I ended up like this.” He holds up his left hand and wiggles his fingers the tiniest fraction. They don’t hurt, thankfully.

Draven raises an eyebrow and says, dry as Jedha’s desert, “Well, don’t let it happen again.”

*****

“Vulpter’s where Kaytoo was built,” Bodhi says, later, feeling like Draven’s right, that he does only want to fly, that it doesn’t matter where, or with whom. They’re atop the closed portside S-foil of Luke’s X-wing, and Bodhi is lying with his head in Luke’s lap while he reviews a datapad on Shandor Squadron’s performance. Artoo, in his socket, is burbling softly to himself, or possibly the X-wing’s computer. “Before they got cut off from the galaxy last year by the security net and turned into a safe world.”

“I wonder if we’ve been supplying them all this time,” Luke says. He scrolls down a bit.

“Someone must’ve been.” Bodhi reaches up and tilts the datapad a couple degrees so he can keep reading, too. “Shandor Three’s starboard thruster keeps misfiring like that and she’s going to miss a turn and crash.”

Luke catches Bodhi’s hand and lifts it to his lips absently. “S’ok. I’ll make sure it gets taken care of. How many people live on Vulpter?”

“Four hundred million or so,” Bodhi says. “Mostly Vulptereen—oh, there was a podracer that was Vulptereen. Bolt somebody, good enough to be famous, not good enough to beat your father.”

Luke looks down at him and smiles. “Of course not,” he says, proudly. “D’you think there’s a course there?”

“I don’t know.” Bodhi thinks. “Can’t remember. If there is, maybe we could check it out together when you get back?”

“I’d like that,” Luke says, and is turning back to his datapad when the S-foil underneath them suddenly tilts—“Artoo!”

Bodhi yelps and clutches futilely at the pant leg of Luke’s flightsuit, falling away down the opening wing. Wide-eyed, Bodhi braces for collision with the curve of the engine, protecting his ribs, but Luke launches himself forward mid-slide and tumbles over and below Bodhi, holding one hand out to catch him. The S-foil locks into place with a jolt, and something grabs Bodhi by the waist, slowing his descent, and Bodhi realizes as he drops the rest of the way into Luke’s arms that he hadn’t been preparing to catch him one-handed—

“You’re getting a lot better at this Force stuff,” Bodhi pants, and Luke laughs, low in his ear, before sitting up and easing Bodhi off him carefully.
“It just happens.” Luke runs his hands up under Bodhi’s jacket and skimming along his ribs lightly. “You’re all right?”

Bodhi winces as Luke brushes over a tender spot, but it doesn’t hurt nearly as badly as he fears. “Yeah, yeah—Artoo, what the fuck—” He stares at the droid, who’s trilling that he’d forgotten they were up there—

“You better have forgotten,” Luke says to him, curtly. “You could have really hurt Bodhi—” Artoo whistles in alarm and apology, and Bodhi thinks he’s being sincere.

“I’m all right,” Bodhi says, to both of them, and Luke sighs in relief, putting his arms around him. Below, Wedge and Kasan are running over, and Luke shouts down, “We’re fine, it was an accident.”

Wedge calls back, “You believe me now?” and Bodhi laughs, and starts to climb down to them.

*****

Bodhi doesn’t race Shandor Squadron before they leave for Onderon; Kaytoo insists he shouldn’t do anything to the Cadera that might affect, well, anything about the mission. But before the week is over, Yraka’Nes agrees his hand is much improved, and gives him a number of exercises to do to make sure he’ll be all right to take the Raptor out on the supply run.

Which almost doesn’t matter anyway, because Draven casually inform him that Laren Joma’s assigned to pilot the run alongside him, and even though it’s his ship, she’s not coming off of injuries and torture and the whole host of other problems still broken and burning inside of him.

“It makes sense,” Bodhi says, over Rogue Squadron’s game of sabacc the night before they leave. He’d been anxious to rejoin them at it, thinking of all the times he’d yelled at his friends when he’d been nearly out of his head, but Janson had only teased him very lightly about the possibility of restarting the prank war, and Kasan had kissed his cheek, everything forgiven. “She outranks me, too.” He tries to focus on the fact that he’ll simply be flying again at all; it doesn’t matter that she’ll be in charge. Under the table, Luke gently squeezes his hand.

“And she’s more levelheaded, and experienced, and—” Kasan cuts herself off at Wedge’s snort. “What? She is.”

“Yeah, but you don’t have to say all that to Bodhi.” Wedge peeks at his cards and sighs. “I’m out.”

Hobbie laughs, and sweeps the credit chips into his meager little pile. “Oh, Kasan’s not saying those things to Bodhi. She’s just—saying them.”

Bodhi blinks, and looks at Kasan, whose cheeks are turning faintly pink. “Huh.” Luke is staring at her, too, his cards ignored; Bodhi can’t help but sneak a glance at them. The Force is apparently not with him tonight.

She prods him in the shin with the toe of her boot. “You’ll be in good hands with her—keep it shut, Janson—”

Janson gapes at her and protests, “I wasn’t gonna—you put it out there—”

“Joma’s, what, forty? Forty-two?” Hobbie asks, and then he grunts, as Kasan apparently kicks him a lot harder than she had Bodhi. “Not that it matters, obviously.”

“I’m happy for you?” Luke offers, and Kasan rolls her eyes and looks away, her cheeks darkening.
“It’s a crush,” Janson supplies, helpfully. “Almost as bad as the one you—”

“Yeah, okay,” Luke says, blushing just as hard as Kasan. Bodhi takes pity on him and kisses him to a round of delighted whistles; Wedge starts to try to peek at Bodhi’s cards, though, and Bodhi has to stop in order to fend him off.

Back in their quarters, Luke snuggles up to Bodhi’s side, draping one arm over his bare chest, and murmurs, “Laren Joma is the captain you saved on Chorax, right?”

Bodhi turns his head and gets a mouthful of Luke’s hair. “Um. Yes?”

“You know her at all?”

“Not really,” Bodhi admits. “But she—she was on Scarif, she came to help us with the rest of the Fleet.” He tightens his arm around Luke. “Why?”

“I want to make sure I can trust her to watch out for you,” Luke whispers, and Bodhi glances down into his bright eyes.

“It’s just a supply mission,” Bodhi murmers. “My hand’s all better; my head’s better. All week long, I only—I only shouted at Solo—”

Luke snickers softly into the side of his neck. “He probably deserved it.”

Bodhi strokes Luke’s arm, and continues, “Nothing to worry about. We’ll drop off the food, pick up some parts—nothing so dangerous as stealing kyber crystals from my homeworld for a superweapon, yeah? Or trying to get past Onderon’s sensor net in under twelve minutes. Or—it’ll be safe. Simple. I’ll be back before you can even miss me.”


*****

But Bodhi is very, very wrong.

Chapter End Notes

Transition chapter!! (WHO ELSE IS READY TO GET MOVING ON PLOT AGAIN 'SIDES ME??? XD)

Ack, sorry about the longer-than-usual break between chapters! I went on vacation after 44, ironically, and while I had a lovely time, I definitely did not get as much done with this (or the other things I was working on) as I planned :P

NOTE: I realized while looking up some things about Imperials that I messed up the name of the Star Destroyer that got mentioned as having been one Cassian and Kaytoo helped destroy. Admiral Grendreef’s ship was the Desolator, and all mentions of said ship have now been corrected. I also plan to do another massive line edits pass when I hit 200k words, so...around the time we arrive on Hoth maybe? :)

Translations:
我相信: I believe
你一直就說: You always say that
我相信他可以: I believe he can
不是我們的決定: It's not our decision

Scheduling note: I will be VERY busy next week, but fully plan to have 46 up as quickly as possible after that. Maybe the weekend? I'm REALLY excited to write it, so... ;)

As always, friends, thanks for sticking around; your comments and kudos and EVERYTHING are my fricking lifeblood as I try not to stress about the stuff I have to do! You're all great <3
The supply run is fine, at first, if a bit overwhelming. For all that Bodhi’s traveled the galaxy, the stunningly scenic moons and planets he’s been to, not to mention what he’d read from the Redemption’s databanks, he is still utterly unprepared for Vulpter. He’s heard of planets that are wholly urban, of course but everyone at the Academy had always made Coruscant out to be an incandescent beacon of civilization, and Vulpter—

“Those rings are made of trash,” Bodhi says, aghast, staring out the viewport at the thick black bands of debris Joma’s carefully navigating on their descent to Vulpter’s violently violet surface. Its atmosphere is stained with pollution like Fest’s had been, only about a hundred times worse, and here there is nothing beautiful to be said about its smoke-filled sky.

She spares him a sidelong glance. “Yes. Except for the Orbital Advertisement Ring, that’s only partially trash.”

“Orbital Advertisement Ring?” And then Bodhi sees the kilometers-high, intermittently glowing halo of metal and neon, and suddenly the comms blare to life with a jingle sung in Rodian—

The corners of Joma’s eyes crinkle, ever so slightly, as Bodhi winces and slaps at the switch. “Not a fan of Nutritious Nilluk Strips? The Hungry Hutt breakfast sandwich commercial should be coming around again by the time we land.”

“You understand Rodian?” Bodhi asks, craning forward to look up at the gigantic billboard as Joma passes under it. There’s something familiar about the shape of it, and he eventually puts it together in his mind: the podracing track is strung out along its base, like the track in the clouds of Ord Ibanna.

She shakes her head. “There’s a Basic version that plays on alternating intervals.” She hums a bar of the jingle. “You’ll hear it about four dozen more times before we leave. The sandwich advert, too. They’re not bad, if you like gorg eggs.”

“Hutt food,” Bodhi says, warily.

“Yeah,” Joma says. She glances at him again. “Commander Skywalker probably grew up with it.”

“I—I hadn’t thought of that,” Bodhi mutters, rubbing the back of his neck, mildly embarrassed. “D’you think it’ll keep?”

“If the component parts of a Hutt breakfast sandwich can make it this far into the Deep Core, it can probably survive a trip back out again.”

“Okay,” Bodhi says, brightening up. “Wait, no, when we talk about Tatooine, Luke only mentions the flying bits, what if he hates Hutt food? He loves everything Cassian makes, he always wants to try new things—”

“Don’t overthink it,” Joma advises, and Bodhi decides he will take one back.

Two hours later, after Joma expertly docks the Raptor in a fairly tight spot between a couple of battered freighters inside Charbi City Spaceport, they finally finish unloading their shipment. Bodhi puts his goggles back atop his head and nods his thanks to the pair of bored Vulptereen workers
driving the load lifters off with their cargo containers, and then has to abruptly leap out of the way of a Port Authority speeder swerving around them. And, sure enough, cutting through the din of screeching machinery and engines that had been all Bodhi could hear as they worked, the Hungry Hutt breakfast sandwich ad is singing out from multiple vidscreens around the hangar, as well as the Orbital Advertisement Ring still plainly visible overhead.

♫
Gorg egg, jerba cheese, and from Klatooine:

paddy-frog sausage patty, served entirely green. ♫

“Oh, my stars,” Bodhi mutters, gazing up at the Klatooine frog with a tall black hat in its webbed hand, dancing on its hind legs across the screen.

♫
All this on a hot, steaming mufkin, pedunkee...n.

That's keen. Pedunkeen! ♫

Joma is humming along again, though she stops when Bodhi turns a wide-eyed look of surprise towards her. “I think I may have flown this run too often,” she mutters. Overhead, the frog jumps into the middle of the mufkin, and throws its hat at the camera just as a Hutt brings the entire sandwich to its mouth.

Hungry Hutt breakfast sandwiches. Pick one up today!

“There’s no, um, subliminal messages embedded in these advertisements, are there?” Bodhi asks, wryly.

“Just the one to go buy their products,” Joma says. “Let's get something to eat, and your souvenir sandwich for Commander Skywalker, and then we'll go back and wait for the parts delivery. Hungry?”

Bodhi blinks. “Y—yeah, actually.”

“You flyboys usually are anyway,” Joma says, maternally, and shepherds him along faster towards the spaceport exit to the city, dodging around ships and the attendant host of baffled and grumpy engineers.

“It’s not like I haven’t seen holo-ads before,” Bodhi says, feeling more unworldly than usual and wanting to explain. He feels a flash of empathy for Luke’s lack of galactic experience, and a wistful sense of regret that he's not here to see all this. “In vids and things, the HoloNet, right? Just not on this sort of—”

— and then he steps out into Charbi City proper, and the ads are on every single building, an awful glittering cacophony through the smog, though not a single passerby looks up at what they’re selling. Bodhi recognizes an old logo for Arakyd Industries at the start of one of the ads, but they can't possibly be headquartered here anymore, not with the hyperspace security net isolating the planet. He says as much to Joma—has to repeat himself over the noise of traffic and the Basic iteration of the Nilluk strips ad.

“They still have droid factories here,” Joma shouts back. “Vulpereen government contracted for XR-37 tank droids in case the population starts to get desperate.”

“Smugglers probably do a good bit of business, then, too,” Bodhi yells, and then he coughs and can't stop coughing, as a gust of stinking, polluted wind sweeps down the street. Joma tugs the collar of her shirt over her mouth and nose and nods for him to do the same; the foul wind is worse than
Scarif’s burning beach. He pulls his goggles down over his stinging eyes, wheezing through the filter of his shirt, aware that his just-healed ribs are starting to ache again, but waves off Joma’s concerned look.

The Klatooine frog is doffing its hat to them from the neon sign over the door to the rundown diner Joma takes him to. Inside, ♫ —Pedunkeen! ♪ echoes around the mostly empty space, from yet another vidscreen spanning one whole wall. The Vulptereen waitress barely stops moving her hands to talk to the cook behind the counter long enough to acknowledge their order.

“So what do you think? More fun than flying with the squadron?” Joma asks, dryly, resting her elbows on the counter and watching the cook slinging hand gestures and food with equal alacrity. Bodhi looks at her, not answering, and she turns her head. “Well, it’s a temporary assignment, you’ll be back with your friends soon enough.”

“Is this a temporary assignment for you?” Bodhi glances down at the mug of caf the waitress slides over to him to hide his uncertain expression; he suspects that the likelihood of his returning to missions with Rogue Squadron is lower than that of catching an Idiot’s Array.

“It was supposed to be,” Joma says. “I tried a change of pace after the rest of my squadron got wiped out at Vrogas Vas. I had my Nonnah, my own crew. But you know how that went.” She sips her caf slowly. “So I decided to give Support Services a shot. Something to keep me flying until I stopped dreaming about drowning.”

He shivers. “And now?”

“It keeps me flying.” The corners of her eyes crinkle. “And I get to see people like the hero of Sc—”

Bodhi chokes on his caf. He manages not to spill the rest of it everywhere, coughing again; Joma reaches over and pats him on the back until he’s gotten his spasming lungs under control. The waitress plunks a glass of water down in front of him, but she doesn’t stop moving her hands in her conversation—Bodhi’s starting to think maybe it’s an argument—with the cook. He gulps it down more carefully than he had the caf, and then he points at Joma firmly. “We—we flew the Galen out together.”

“You really don’t like it when people call you that,” Joma observes. “Didn’t think you’d nearly kill yourself not to hear it, though.” Bodhi gapes at her, but then he spots the faint upward quirk of her mouth before she changes the subject again, letting him off the hook. “Galen, huh? What’re you going to name the Raptor?”

None of her guesses land close to what Bodhi’s actually planning, though she has a surprising amount of knowledge about Jedha’s landmarks. He throws out some of Talon Karrde’s terrible puns while they eat, just to see how she’ll react, and is finally rewarded with her full, brilliant smile when she cracks on the Uwana Buyer.

Bodhi decides he likes the paddy-frog sausage patty well enough, but the damn Hungry Hutt jingle sticks in his head the whole rest of the time they’re on Vulpter, not aided by the half-dozen more repetitions of it that play while they’re loading up the parts shipment onto the Raptor. Joma runs a critical eye over the hold, but defers to him more often than not, in terms of situating the crates or how he wants them strapped down.

“You used to run cargo for a living,” she says, when he points out that she’s the captain. “And it’s your ship. Tonc, is it?”

Bodhi cringes. “No.”
“He hated flying, anyway,” Joma says, reflectively. “All right, that’s the last of it, let’s get home.” She slaps at the controls for all the ramps, and Bodhi follows her forward into the cockpit.

Getting offworld again is trickier than either of them expects; the configuration of the rings of trash has shifted, and Joma clenches her jaw, shaking her head as debris rings off their hull. “They must’ve changed the trash schedule,” she mutters. “How’s she holding up?”

“I hope there’s a transport-rated shield generator in the stuff we just picked up,” Bodhi says, wryly.

“Sorry—” Joma neatly threads the needle between two nearly intersecting rings, and then they’re through to clear space. “Well, that’s over with,” she says. “Won’t have to be back for a month and a half or so, thank heavens.” The navicomputer beeps the alert, and Bodhi pulls the lever to jump to hyperspace.

“Not your favorite run,” Bodhi says.

“No, but at least the food’s good,” she says. “I’ll bring you—and Commander Skywalker, if he likes it—some when I’m out this way again.”

“You honestly believe I’m going to go back to Rogue Squadron?”

Joma looks at him. “You’re not? Is Draven keeping you on with Intelligence?”

“I think I’m doing this with you,” he says, shaking his head. “Keeps us flying, right?”

She furrows her brow. “You’re too young to talk like that, Bodhi.”

“Like what?”

The Raptor shudders, unexpectedly, and the swirling vortex of hyperspace resolves back into bright streaks, and then into stars, and, barely a hundred kilometers away—

Bodhi throws himself backward in his seat. “No, no no—”

—gliding towards them is an Imperial Star Destroyer.

“They found the hole in the security net,” Joma grits, hauling hard on the controls and making for deep space, but the Raptor is the slowest of all of Bodhi’s ships, and his heart is pounding faster than it can fly.

He stammers, “Maybe—maybe they won’t think we’re—” But the unmistakeable jolt of a tractor beam locking on quickly disillusiones him.

“Bodhi, give me some options here,” Joma demands. “You know their tech. Is there any way to break free?”

Bodhi stares at her, starting to sweat. “Op—options? Okay, okay—” He runs down everything he can remember about Phylon-07 tractor beam projectors. “I—” He swallows. “I can think of—maybe, but we’ll only have one chance at it, and—and you’ll have to be ready to run like hell, because we’re going to be really, really close before I can try it, they can destroy the torpedoes if I fire them from too far away.”

“One chance?” Joma’s brow is furrowed.

Bodhi gives her a shaky smile, bringing up firing controls, and mentally thanking whoever had thought to load up the Raptor’s full complement of torpedoes, despite his reputation. He scans the
Star Destroyer for the Phylon projector that’s pulling them in; notices the second projector on the opposite side of the docking bay, for working in tandem to pull in larger ships. Tells the computer to try to acquire it as a secondary target so he can hit both in quick succession. “That’s all Luke had, yeah?”

“I hope your boyfriend’s luck rubbed off on you,” Joma says, gripping her controls tightly.

_Luck?_ Bodhi realizes he’s distractedly humming _♪ served entirely green ♪ and stops. Exhales.

_I am one with the Force—_

The Star Destroyer looms larger and larger until it’s taken up the entire viewport, bleak and gray. Bodhi can make out the other ships in their destined docking bay—oddly, there’s an outdated I-7 Howlrunner along with the usual mix of shuttles and transports—*_stop looking and focus!*_

_I can do this._

He fires.

One of the two tractor beam projectors explodes, and the Raptor twitches free—

—but only for a moment, because the _other_ torpedo _missed_, and that Phylon projector’s locking on ...

Bodhi smacks the flat of his palm against the controls. His heart is beating so fast it almost hurts.

“Fuck, _oh, fuck._ I’m sorry. I’m sorry.”

Joma hisses between her teeth as the second tractor beam tows them into the docking bay; her face is carved stone. “Well, it was worth a try,” she says, gently, reaching over and patting Bodhi’s arm as he trembles and tries to fight off the panic—and, horribly, that _fucking jingle_—encroaching around the edges of his thoughts. “At least I might’ve gotten a distress signal out.”

Wild hope leaps in his chest. “You did—?”

_Luke is going to come for me._

_Shit._

_What if Luke comes for me_—

Bodhi gulps, and tastes something strange in the back of his throat. There’s a soft whistling sound from the hold, and he turns to see a cloud of white smoke seeping in through each of the hatches; the merest whiff of it makes his head spin.

“What is it?” Joma has unstrapped, and is scrabbling under the console for breath masks.

“Vertigon gas,” Bodhi rasps, covering his nose and mouth, already dizzy from it. But Joma goes down quickly, before she can retrieve the breath masks, sliding bonelessly to the deck.

His last, utterly ridiculous thought before he slips into unconsciousness is _Pick up one today—*

*****

Bodhi wakes up on a bunk in a brightly-lit detention cell, alone, nauseated, and with visions of the neon paddy-frog dancing behind his eyes. His comlink is gone, and so are his various ID cards, but his goggles and the now slightly squashed sandwich are lying on the end of the bunk.
He moans, and presses the heels of his hands over his eyelids; his current torment is rather like being hungover, but without having enjoyed any of its causes. And his dread of his impending interrogation—and probably torture—isn’t making his head feel any less like a bantha herd is migrating through it.

*But at least there’s no monster?*

*Small fucking comfort.*

He lies still on the bunk, swallowing against fear and the lingering taste of the gas. The Star Destroyer’s engines reverberate in his bones, and he strains to tell if it’s the Gemon-04s, or if they’ve engaged the hyperdrive. On a ship this massive, it’s nearly impossible to distinguish them apart, and they could be anywhere from still in the Deep Core to well on their way to Wild Space.

*Doesn’t matter.*

*Luke will find me. He’ll bring the squadron, maybe Shandor, too, and he’ll pull off some reckless stunt to get us out of here, just like on Thyferra—*

Bodhi frowns, reality crushing that fantasy like Vader’s fist around some officer’s neck.

He’d *seen* his rescue on Thyferra before it happened. And his vision of Luke fighting off the stormtroopers on Kessel, too. He digs through his memories, his half-remembered nightmares, avoiding entangling himself in tentacles and ice and *fear*, and—

Nothing. Not a single glimpse of Luke’s lightsaber blazing to life in the corridors of a Star Destroyer, or slicing through his detention cell door. Nothing with the kind of calming surety he thinks of the Force.  

*Well, shit.*

Bodhi sighs, and sits up carefully, sinking his head into his hands when the cell walls swirl sickeningly around him.

It’s probably for the best, anyway; if Luke *did* try to come, the Imperials would undoubtedly throw every last resource they had into trying to capture him, and the people who’d die under his blade—

*They’re just like me.*

Bodhi shivers reflexively, but the memory of shouting that at Roja burns brighter and brighter in his mind.

He’d never been good at persuading anyone of anything, before. Hadn’t been able to talk Saw’s people into believing him, or Talon Karrde into supporting the Rebellion, or Yendor out of trying to beat him to death. But he *had* talked Roja around; had managed to keep Seerdon busy long enough to be rescued.

And something Jyn had said, about the enormously high bounty on his head—what was it?  

*(Jyn says, “Too many desperate people who’d jump at the chance to buy their way out.”)*

A plan—a couple of plans—are starting to come together. They might not be very *good* plans, but it’s—something.

He reaches for his goggles and, hands shaking, puts them on and pushes them up onto his forehead,
where they belong. Takes a deep breath, and settles in to wait, wondering if Joma’s in a nearby cell,
and what she’s planning. Wonders what Cassian would do—he has a very fuzzy memory of
Cassian, and a sparking control panel, but he can’t exactly reach through solid durasteel for that.

And Jyn—

He really should’ve asked Jyn how she’d gotten out of prison all those times.

Bodhi is made to wait long enough that his doubts and fears begin to reform; it’s too bright in his cell
for shadows, but something moves along the wall, something sinuous and fleshy, and—

No. No.

I don’t have time for this.

Go away.

You’re dead.

(Saw rasps, “You’ll join us soon, local boy.”)

Terrified, Bodhi opens his mouth to scream, and the door to his cell irises open, and one of a pair of
stormtroopers gestures him out with the end of their blaster rifle. He stares blankly at them, half-
expecting one of them to be the monster, and the officer standing behind the troopers sighs and says,
“Come on, then, unless you want to be dragged out.”

Bodhi blinks, and gets to his feet, stepping out into the hallway between the cells, leaving the ghosts
behind. He licks his lips, and tries to calm his heart in anticipation of the binders he expects to be
locked around his wrists, but the officer just sighs again and gestures him to follow. He looks over
his shoulder at the stormtroopers, baffled; one pokes him in the back with the end of their blaster and
he stumbles forward.

“Where—where are you taking me?”

“Don’t pretend like you don’t remember,” the officer says. “It hasn’t been that long.”

Bodhi steadies, a little, and tries to refocus on his plan. “Do—d’you know why I defected?”

“No, and I don’t care,” the officer replies, but Bodhi wasn’t really interested in him anyway.

He glances at the stormtroopers again. “I never wanted to join up in the first place,” Bodhi says. “I
only did it because—because I had to, I was trying to help my family. My mother—she was sick,
and no job I could find paid enough to cover the medicine. The Empire—they needed pilots, and
they paid, but—I didn’t know—I didn’t know what they were making me do for them, what I was
doing to my fam—”

The blow that knocks the breath out of him is wholly unexpected. He’s pinned to the bulkhead by
his throat, the end of a blaster rifle jammed up under his chin.

“Family?” the stormtrooper snarls, and Bodhi can’t stop the pitiful little whimper that escapes his
mouth as the whine of the blaster rifle charging reaches his ears. He claws uselessly at the plasteel
glove around his neck with his bare hands. “My brothers were on the Death Star, you—you—”

“That’s enough,” the officer snaps. The stormtrooper squeezes, and Bodhi chokes and writhes, the
white helmet before his eyes going black, and—
“I said, enough.”

—he falls to his knees, clutching his aching throat, tears burning in his eyes.

*It was a bad plan, all right.*

“Let’s go.” The booted foot that nudges him in the side is none too gentle.

Bodhi pushes himself back to his feet. He stumbles after the officer, despairing, but the thought that maybe he can try his other plan on his interrogator—dangling his absurdly high bounty in front of someone greedy enough to want it for themselves, and not to split with the captain—is a tiny, bright spot of hope in his chest.

*I can do this.*

*I'll get us out, get home safe to Jyn and Cassian and everyone.*

*Get home to Luke.*

*I can do this.*

The bright spot is promptly, and irrevocably extinguished, however, when he is shoved unceremoniously into the interrogation chamber with its sole, seated occupant. Bodhi jerks backwards against the closing door, his fingers scrabbling at the edges of it rising shut in sheer, mindless panic.

His voice scrapes out of his bruised throat, like sand scouring bone, hoarse and completely unrecognizable. “No, no, please—”

“Hello, traitor,” says the Emperor’s Hand.

Chapter End Notes

*RUNS THE HELL AWAY*

Thanks to my husband for writing the Hungry Hutt jingle; I imagine it something rather like the Big Mac commercial ;) And thanks to morag for talking me through some of the sticky bits today!

<3

(Trust me. It's gonna be okay. I promise.)
“Have a seat,” the Emperor’s Hand says. The mocking smile with which she’d greeted Bodhi melts into a frown as he cringes away from her.

“I'm good, thanks,” Bodhi says, hoarsely, unable to keep a tremor out of his voice. He leans up against the wall, and has a flash of pressing back against the slippery cliff face on Eadu, the dark chasm gaping just beyond his his boots.

Except, if she’s the one questioning me, I've already gone over the edge, and it's a long, long way down—

“Relax. I'm not going to hurt you.”

Bodhi tries to swallow but can't; his mouth is too dry. “I—I can't say I believe you,” he manages. But even as the words leave his lips, he realizes the durasteel table is just a table, with no shackles on it or tools lying nearby to indicate a darker purpose, only her comlink, which is too close to her for him to grab. A furtive glance around the room reveals there aren’t any recessed panels in the walls from which any other torturous devices might emerge.

And the Emperor’s Hand is unarmed; she doesn’t even have her lightsaber.

Doesn’t make her any less dangerous.

“Believe what you want, I'm just going to ask you some questions,” the Emperor's Hand says. Her posture—she’s practically lounging, her arms draped off of the back of her chair—is too casual, totally at odds with the way he'd seen her stalk Cassian, confront Seerdon; an unsettling contrast to her fierce eyes and scowl. “Why don't we start with proper introductions? I'm Major Celina, from Imperial Intelligence. And you are?”

Bodhi laces his fingers together in front of him, almost tight enough to make his left hand throb, and takes a breath, searching for the defiance with which he’d faced Saw and Seerdon. “You know who I am.” He wants to spit it at her, but it feels like his fury is buried under tons of stone.

How long can I hold out against her?
Celina—he highly doubts that’s her real name—lifts an open palm in a little shrug. “I’d like to hear you say it, for the record.”

“I’d rather not.” Bodhi thinks of Baze’s steadying hand on his shoulder and tries to hold onto his fear just as firmly. His heart thumps wildly in his chest, though, disobeying his attempt at resolve.

“Very well, Lieutenant Rook.” Celina reaches into her jacket pocket. “Or should I call you Ensign Travos?” She flicks an Imperial ID onto the table, and then another, and then another; all identification cards he’d won off of other Imperials—some his friends, some not—in sabacc. “Ensign Ohvan? Sona Lerenga?” Celina studies that last one for a moment. “You’re much more attractive than he was.”

Bodhi’s stomach twists on her last word. Lerenga’s dead? He struggles to remember where Lerenga had been assigned, after the whole mess with his family; he’d thought it was something as innocuous as making cargo runs back home to Jedha—

Celina folds her hands on the tabletop. “Why did the Rebellion send a spy to the Deep Core?”

—and, his attention entirely refocused on her startling green eyes, Bodhi croaks, “What?”

She indicates the IDs on the table. “You were carrying these aliases. What were you doing in the Deep Core?”

Completely off-balance, Bodhi stares at her, trying to understand, but she might as well be wearing a stormtrooper’s helmet for her total lack of expression. Why isn’t she asking about Luke, or where the Rebellion’s hiding, or anything important?

Celina asks, “What planets did you visit?”

“I—I’m not a spy,” Bodhi stammers, in complete honesty, holding his hands up as if for emphasis, or to ward her off; he’s not sure which. “I don’t know what you’re talking about.”

“Then what were you doing in the Core?”

“I’m a cargo pilot—” A bewildered kind of hope stirs in his heart. Maybe Seerdon didn’t tell her—“I don’t know anything about anything, I just fly where they tell me to go.”

“Into a heavily restricted sector patrolled by the Empire,” Celina says, sardonically. “Just to pick up some supplies.”

“Yes, yes, that’s what I’m trying to tell—”

She cuts him off. “You expect me to believe that the Rebellion’s got their hero of Scarif running cargo?”

Bodhi flinches, and falls silent.

“It would be simplest if you tell me what I want to know.” Celina leans back in her chair again. “Otherwise I’ll have to hand you over to the Imperial Security Bureau. Not a pleasant bunch. They do—things—to people.”

She holds his gaze for a moment before deliberately letting her eyes flick down to where he’s been twisting his fingers together again. “Come on, Lieutenant. Give me something about what you were really doing. A contact, a name—something I can take back to my superiors, and I swear I’ll try to convince them not to make an example out of you.” Her voice has an odd, blunt-edged sort quality to
it, like she’s out of practice at being kind.

Bodhi shudders, rubbing his wrists unconsciously. “I have nothing to say to you.”

Celina nods, as if she’s been expecting it. She thumbs on her comlink and says, “All right, we’re done here.” The door behind Bodhi irises open again, and the stormtroopers step inside. “Take him back to his cell,” Celina says, and then, directly to Bodhi, more threatening than anything she’s said up till now, “You should eat something. You’ll need your strength if you’re going to survive what’s coming next.”

His eyes widen reflexively—

—but it’s not the monster. It can’t possibly be the monster. It’ll be—

Bodhi can’t convince himself it’ll be all right.

His plans are shot, and Celina’s probably watching his every move; his only hope is that Joma’s distress signal had gotten out, and that Luke will come, but even then—with her here—

I have to figure this out without him, or she’s going to take us both back to the Emperor.

On the way back to his cell, one of the stormtroopers—probably the one who’d tried to strangle him before—interrupts Bodhi’s frantic thoughts. “I bet they’re going to use an IT-O droid on you.”

Bodhi suppresses a wince.

“A traitor like you, they’ll probably outfit it with everything they’ve got now. Arc emitters, nerve probes, flesh peelers—I’ve heard they can make the pain last for hours, but you just can’t scream for that long. You’d think you’d pass out, but that IT-O’s got drugs to keep you nice and awake through the whole process.” The stormtrooper’s filtered voice is maliciously calm. “Maybe they’ll use that new Bavo Six truth drug. Makes you see things. Makes you scared of everything.”

Bodhi can’t help but laugh, though it sounds a little deranged coming out of his sore throat. “Too fucking late for that,” he mutters.

But—the droid—

It’ll be terrible, there’s no doubt about that, but maybe if he gets it alone, he can take it apart like he’d taken his poor astromech apart in the Academy. Maybe if he can get his hands on one of the arc emitters—

Then what?

I have no fucking idea.

I’ll—think of something.

“I can’t wait to watch what they do to you,” the stormtrooper says, slapping at the door release to his cell. “You’re going to pay for every single one of the people you killed.”

Bodhi stops dead. He turns and looks at the stormtrooper. “I’m already paying for Jedha,” he says, not caring that there’s no way the trooper will understand. The stormtrooper places one gloved hand on his chest, roughly pushes him into his cell, and the door hisses shut.

He paces back and forth a bit, intending to dredge up every memory he can of how to tackle an Imperial droid’s systems, but thinking about their innards only reminds him of what Celina had said,
about needing to eat something to survive the next part of his interrogation.

Wait.

He blinks, concentrating on replaying all of Celina’s questioning in his head.

*She didn’t ask me a damn thing about Luke.*

*She asked me stuff she could’ve sliced the Raptor’s logs for.*

*She called me a spy.*

*What is she playing at?*

Bodhi looks down at the Hungry Hutt sandwich still lying on his bunk. The Klatooine paddy-frog on the wrapper stares back at him, its mouth crumpled open in song.

*They should’ve given me rations.*

He’s sure of it; they should’ve confiscated everything he’d had in his jacket, not just the IDs and his comlink and chrono, and yet—

Bodhi starts to pace again; glances up into the corners of his cell for the security camera that must be somewhere up there, and calculates the angles. Then he sighs, sits on the hard, uncomfortable bunk, and unwraps the sandwich.

It looks just like the one he’d eaten on Vulpter, though the mufkin’s flattened down in the middle and the jerba cheese’s oozed out, congealing on the sides. He fights the urge to look up at the security camera again, and takes a bite.

Three bites in, his teeth encounter something that is *not* a paddy-frog sausage patty. Bodhi sucks the hard bit of plasteel into his mouth and tries very hard not to swallow it; tosses the rest of the sandwich into the waste disposal unit because Luke isn’t going to want it now, and flops down on the bunk again, curling onto his side so his face is out of sight of the camera.

He spits an earphone into his hand.

*This is some ridiculous spy shit*—

Hope burns bright in his chest again, though, and he wipes the tiny device off hastily before jamming it in, grimacing at the feel of the jerba cheese he’d missed squelching in his ear.

There’s a faint buzzing sound, and then a recorded message *in Celina’s voice* says, “The main reactor will fail at exactly 1600 hours. The electronic locks on your cell will deactivate, and the entire ship will be without power for nine minutes. Take the access tube behind the guard station down to the central companionway, then follow the corridor forward to the docking bay. If you *don’t do as I say*, I will *personally* schedule you for termination when the ship reaches base.”

Bodhi takes the earphone out and stares at it, absolutely flabbergasted, for a second before it overheats in his palm and self-destructs.

*She can’t possibly be helping me escape.*

He rolls onto his back and gazes at the ceiling, sorting through his confusion the way he sorted through his memories.
Celina hadn’t put him in cuffs, even though that was standard procedure, too.

*What is she doing?*

*Is it a trick?*

(Jyn says, “And the next, on and on until we win—”)

If it means he *might* be able to get out after all—

*I’ll take it.*

He settles his goggles more securely on his forehead and closes his eyes for a moment, thinking of what Luke would make of his stabs at escaping on his own. The way Luke’s eyes would light up at the idea of taking apart an interrogation droid, or at finding help from an *extremely* unexpected source.

*I’ll come back to you.*

****

—

[“—I’ll try—”]

—

****

The hiss of his cell door sliding open startles Bodhi awake. *Shit—did I miss it?* He *thinks* he would’ve felt the engines shut down, or heard the sound of the locks failing, but it doesn’t matter, because a totally different pair of officers—ISB, by their uniforms—is entering the cell, accompanied by the promised IT-O droid.

*Oh, fuck.*

Bodhi starts to shake, looking at the sleek black sphere, its gleaming red photoreceptor, the slender, wicked-looking mechanical arms that are extending out from its upper hemisphere. The taller officer frowns down at him, and Bodhi realizes he’s begun whispering *it’s not the monster* again, over and over under his breath.

“Last chance,” the other ISB officer says. “You know what this is. What it will do.”

Had Celina been torturing him with false hope?

Bodhi’s eyes are wide. He bites his lip to stop his chant, to keep himself from blurting out anything that might save him, because nothing he *said* ever had.

Only his friends.

“All right,” the officer says, and the IT-O whirs softly towards him; Bodhi backs into the corner of the bunk, his heart pounding, putting his hands up, ready to make a grab for the tools aligning themselves on its upper hemisphere—

gasps, instead, as the droid inserts a long needle, through his flight jacket, into his left arm. Bodhi can see the droid’s injection reservoir draining steadily. The liquid fire of the drugs sears every nerve ending in his body, and he doubles over in agony as the IT-O withdraws the needle and begins to scan him.

“That should keep you awake for this,” the ISB officer says. “Added a bit of Bavo Six and Loquasin to the cocktail—”

The lights go out.

Bodhi clenches his teeth against the burning sensation in his brain, and launches himself past the ISB officers towards the cell door, startled at how much it hurts when they try to grab him, but ignoring their shouts. The electronic lock is released, and he shoves at the cell door in a panic, ducking the officers’ groping hands, until it opens jerkily. The corridor outside is already filled with noise and fellow escaping prisoners, a couple of pirate-looking types going after the guards, shadowy in the emergency lighting—

“Joma!” Bodhi shouts. “Laren—”

“I’m right here,” Joma says, grabbing his arm with a tentacle—Bodhi cries out and shakes her off, but she takes hold of his shoulder again, looking concerned. “Are you all right?”

“I—the ISB—they drugged me, but I can do this, she—she told me how to get out of here,” Bodhi stammers, too fast, and tugs at Joma to get her to follow him, crouching down behind the guard station to get the hatch to the access tube open. “Access tube goes down—oh, blast, that’s a long fucking way down.”

Joma pats his shoulder. “Can you make it?”

Bodhi nods. He squeezes his eyes shut against a brilliant flare of light—someone’s gotten ahold of a blaster, and the laserfire is as bright as a ship exploding in the void. Opens them again to see Joma’s pale face looking back at him, her eyes dark craters on a moon hanging in space. “Let’s go, we have to go, we only have nine minutes—”

Joma gives him a puzzled glance, but lowers herself into the tube. Bodhi peeks over the guard station to check on the fight; the Death Star is floating out of his cell, its red superlaser tracking towards him—

“Stardust,” Bodhi murmurs, inanely, blinking at it, frozen. Joma yanks at his ankle, and he turns and scrambles into the tube after her. “Okay, okay, I—I should warn you, I’m seeing things, the stormtrooper told me I’d see things, things that I’m terrified of,” he babbles, trying not to step on her hands as they climb quickly down. “Things that live in my fucking nightmares, Luke tells me when I have them, I don’t always remember—I don’t know why I don’t remember, but maybe that’s for the best, the ones I remember are—”

“Bodhi,” Joma calls up. “Can you be quiet? You’re echoing.”

“S—sorry,” Bodhi stammers. “I—they put something else besides the Bavo Six in me, I know I talk—too much, Luke said that’s how he knows I’m okay again, maybe it’s like flying, I can take off—oh my stars, Joma, help, I can’t stop—”
“Breathe, it’s okay—”

“I’m sorry, I’m sorry, I can’t stop it—she’s going to catch me and ask me questions—”

A tentacle snakes up out of the darkness and wraps around his leg, and Bodhi pants and clings to the ladder. “No, no—”

“It’s just me,” Joma says, patting his leg. “You can’t stop talking? Okay. What’s the thing the Guardians say? I heard Malbus saying it to his partner. Over and over.”

Bodhi says, “Baze says it backwards. I don’t know why he does it that way, probably just to bother Chirrut, but nothing really bothers Chirrut except Baze—”

“Bodhi.” Joma’s voice is much farther down the tube now.

He winces apologetically, and starts to pray.

At the bottom of the access tube, out of breath but still forced to mumble the Guardians’ prayer, Bodhi says against the wall and waits for Joma to give the all-clear for them to sneak down the central companionway. His head aches; he glances overhead at the way they’d come, and twitches backwards as tentacles spiral down out of nothing to snatch him up—

“Let’s go,” Joma whispers, and Bodhi darts after her, twisting away from the tentacles crawling out of the slowly melting walls. The corridor ends in the Galen’s hold, and Jyn and Cassian are waiting for him, beckoning them—

—into a firefight in the darkened docking bay.

“Shit,” Bodhi mutters, breaking his nearly uncontrollable repetition. By the sporadic light of blaster fire he can make out some of the field of combat; he winces each time the occasional bolt hits the Raptor, but it’s armored, he finds himself telling Joma it’s armored—

“I know.” She flashes a tight smile at him. “You didn’t happen to nick a blaster off the guards, did you?”

“No,” Bodhi says. “I don’t—I don’t use blasters, I thought you knew that, I thought everyone knew that about me now—”

“Tell me about that when we’ve made it onto the ship,” Joma says.

Bodhi’s watching the battle—“Now, we have to go now—” He sprints for the Raptor, ducking low among the cargo containers, the sunlight of Scarif dazzling his eyes as he looks back to make sure Tonc’s following him—

—crashes into the Raptor’s hold, crying out as he hits the corner of a crate. Slaps at the ramp controls before running for the cockpit, Joma limping after him—

“ Took you long enough,” Celina says, from the pilot’s chair. She’s pointing a blaster at him with one hand and firing up the engines with the other.

“Joma,” Bodhi says, breathlessly, rubbing his arm where he’d slammed into the crate. “Is there a red-haired woman sitting in my seat?”

“Yeah,” Joma replies. She’s slowly raising her hands in the air. “Who are you?”

“Your rescue,” Celina says, dryly, as the Raptor lifts off. She tosses a set of binders at Bodhi before
pointing the Raptor out of the docking bay and into space. “If you would secure the captain in the
hold?”

“I knew—I knew you couldn’t really be helping us escape,” Bodhi snaps, dismayed. “What do you
want?”

“Right now, I want you to secure the captain in the hold,” Celina replies. “Before she takes another
unfortunate blaster injury.” She waggles her blaster at him, and Bodhi groans as he looks at Joma’s
pained face, the scorch mark across her thigh.

“I’m so sorry,” he mutters, reaching back to support her. “I didn’t want anyone to get hurt—”

Joma makes her way back into the hold, leaning heavily on Bodhi’s shoulder. “You got us out of
that mess,” she says, quietly, sitting down on the deck. She raises her eyebrows at him as he closes
one end of the binders around her wrist and the other to a handhold along the side of a cargo
container. “Get us out of this one?”

“Hurry up,” Celina calls, impatiently.

Bodhi shakes his head, pulling a medkit down and putting it in Joma’s lap. “She’s fucking terrifying
—I don’t know that I can—”


Bodhi blinks. It’s still Joma; she tears a bacta patch open with her teeth and starts to peel the fabric of
her pants back from her blaster wound. He swallows hard. Nods. “I’ll find a way.”

He steels himself, turning the Guardians’ prayer over on his tongue, touching the bulkheads to
determine if they’re really melting. Then he goes up into the cockpit again and sits down in the co-
pilot’s seat, words spilling out unbidden. “You couldn’t have left me a chrono? I fell asleep waiting
for 1600 hours—how was I supposed to know when nine minutes was up?”

“Sorry,” Celina says, not sounding sorry at all. Her blaster’s disappeared. “You should probably
strap in for the jump to hyperspace.”

Bodhi starts to, but when he glances down, the tentacles are already crawling over his chest, holding
him in place, and he can’t breathe—

“Oh, no, you’re not pulling that little stunt on me again,” she snaps. “If you start to, just think about
what the ISB really wants to do to you.”

“About that,” Bodhi says, jolting back to full awareness. “The IT-O? Was that really necessary? You
must’ve known Seerdon couldn’t get me to—aaargh.”

Don’t bring him up. Don’t bring up all the things I didn’t tell him.

Bodhi puts his head in his hands. “I didn’t. I didn’t break. I won’t.”

Celina pulls back the lever to take them to hyperspace, and then she turns to look at him. “I didn’t
intend for anyone to torture you again.” She tilts her head. “How bad is it?”

Bodhi bites his lip and tastes blood, but it’s not enough of a dam against the torrent of words rushing
out of his mouth. “They said I’d see things, I’d be afraid of everything—it’s—it’s the same shit I’ve
been seeing for the last couple of years, so I’m almost—almost used to it, the monster lives in my
head, that’s the only place it lives anymore, I know it died on Jedha—”
“Bavo Six,” Celina mutters. She makes a face. “That'll take a while to wear off.”

“— but I’ve been afraid of it, everything, for so long that I can’t be afraid of anything else, I was already afraid of you, I’m afraid of what you’re going to make me tell you about my boyfr—mmph —” Bodhi jams his hand up to his mouth.

“And Loquasin,” Celina observes, her lips quirking up.

“It’s not funny,” Bodhi mumbles, petulantly, into his hand. “It’s—stars, Luke thinks I talk a lot, but this is fucking ridiculous.”

“Ah,” Celina says. Her eyes are amused as Bodhi visibly struggles to keep his mouth shut and fails.

“Are you going to make me talk?”

Celina kicks back sideways in the pilot's chair, propping her boots up on the armrest, watching him. “You've got that covered all by yourself. What do you want to tell me?”

“Nothing,” Bodhi insists. He sucks in air, desperately, before the next rush of words overwhelms him. “I really am just a cargo pilot, we really were just picking up supplies, that's—that's all I was ever good at, before, that's all I'm good for now—it's just—I couldn't stand not being able to fly, so they put me back on supply runs.”

“I know,” Celina says. “I checked your logs. Vulpter is—”

“Awful,” Bodhi says. He’s off again, helplessly rambling about the pollution, the horrible rings of trash, the Amaran speeder driver who’d cursed at him, trying to figure out what language they’d spoken.

And then he sings the Hungry Hutt breakfast sandwich jingle at her.

At first it’s because he simply can’t stop himself, but then it becomes a way to keep from having to talk about anything else while the drug compels him to.

For twenty minutes.

“♫—That's keen. Pedunkeen! ♪”

Bodhi’s lost the melody entirely.

“If we make it out of this alive,” Joma shouts from the hold, her usual calm in tatters, “I am never going to fly with you again.”

Celina has her blaster back in her hand, turning it this way and that, as if she’d been contemplating using it. “I don’t think anyone’s beaten Loquasin quite like that before,” she says.

Bodhi puts his head back against the headrest, wheezing slightly. His mouth is parched; he’d rasped his way through the last half of it while his thoughts whirled by just as fast. “I don’t recommend it.”

“No kidding,” Celina says. “Still seeing things?”

He’d hallucinated the monster a few more times, once sprawling out across the viewport like it was trying to crush the ship in its massive tentacles, but otherwise, just as if it was crawling around inside with them. Bodhi shakes his head.

Her eyes glitter. “Okay. Let’s—”
“Hold on,” Bodhi says, weakly, lifting a finger at her. “You could’ve questioned me. *Really* questioned me.”

Celina shrugs. “I still can.”

“You’re not going to,” Bodhi says. It’d been a startling realization, about five minutes into singing, that she was *letting* him keep going without interjecting questions he’d be forced to answer. Then he’d gone back over the strange and *wrong* things she’d said to him in interrogation, trying to sort it all out, and come to the conclusion that—*“You want me to help you with something—something you don’t want ISB to know about.”*

“I was getting to that,” Celina says, dryly.

“Okay,” Bodhi says. He breathes in and out, slowly. *I’ve got another chance. Maybe the Force is with me.* “What do you need a cargo pilot for?”

Her smile is, unsurprisingly, kind of terrifying. “I don’t need a cargo pilot, Bodhi Rook. I need a *defector.*”

Chapter End Notes

I really do have a plan, you know. It's not just the *Trauma Conga Line*!

That being said...here are some entirely canonical references. :P

IT-O
Bavo Six
Loquasin

Thanks, as always, for your comments and kudos and support <3
Chapter 48

Chapter Summary

Pay attention.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Bodhi coughs, fumbling around for the water canteen he knows must be somewhere by his seat without taking his eyes off of Celina. His throat is as raw as if he’d been wandering the desert for days. “Where are you taking us?”


“I learned about him,” Bodhi whispers, rubbing his throat. “At the Academy.” He almost says more, about how he’d just barely passed his Republic military history course after a stressful week of cramming for the final exam. But she’s not a bored co-pilot with whom he can swap stories; she’s the Emperor’s fucking Hand, and she holds his life—and Joma’s—in it.

“Right.” Celina reaches into her pack and Bodhi tenses, but she only comes up with a canteen, which she tosses across to him. “The ISB’s sending a team of agents to arrest him for treason. I want to pick him up first.”

Bodhi blinks at her, trying to parse it. “He’s—defecting?”

Celina smirks. “Not if I can help it.” She nods at the canteen in his hands. “It’s clean. After your little performance, I’ve zero interest in drugging you again.”

“It’d be a pretty big deal if Admiral Dorat is defecting,” Bodhi says, watching her over the rim of the canteen as he takes a cautious sip. It’s just water; cool and slightly metallic, like he remembers from every Imperial facility he’d ever been to.

“Sure would,” Celina agrees. Her expression is noncommittal.

(Cassian says, “We're gonna go very small and very carefully up the rise and see what's what.”)

Bodhi swallows past the sudden lump in his aching throat, and focuses on her face, searching for the grief and guilt that had shadowed Cassian’s eyes for so long. For any kind of sign that she’s like Cassian in that regard at all, but there’s nothing but her calm determination.

He wonders if he’ll have to wrestle a sniper-configured blaster rifle out of her hands.

He’s pretty sure he’ll fail.

“Something on your mind?” She returns his wide-eyed stare with a raised eyebrow.

Bodhi licks his lips and rasps, “I’m not going to help you assassinate him.”
“I’m well aware you’re not a killer,” Celina says, and Bodhi shivers at the look in her eyes, though he can’t determine if it’s contempt, or pity. “I don’t intend to assassinate the Admiral. He doesn’t want to serve the Emperor any more? Fine. I’d have let him write his memoirs in peace, so long as he didn’t go running to your Rebellion. But the ISB is handling the prospect of his defection badly, and I don’t want to be stuck cleaning up another public relations mess.”

“Another?” Bodhi frowns.

Celina nods at him. “Your run-in with Moff Seerdon.”

“Right,” Bodhi mutters, softly. A tremor goes through him, and for a heartbeat, he’s back on Thyferra, cringing under the man’s upraised hand—

“Rook.” Celina’s leaned across to him, snapping her fingers in front of his face. “I thought you stopped seeing things.”

“I—” Bodhi rubs his hands over his eyes. “I guess it’s not—not all out of my system yet.”

“Well, so long as you don’t burst into song again,” Celina says. “Still hypersensitive to pain?” Bodhi, unnerved, flinches away from her.

“I’m just asking. That’s the primary purpose of the drugs.” She crosses her arms. “I told you I wasn’t going to hurt you.”

“And yet somehow, if you’re involved, I still end up hurt,” Bodhi mutters, wryly.

She narrows her eyes at him. “I’m not Kohl Seerdon. I don’t use pain to get what I want.” Her mouth is a hard line.

Bodhi hunches his shoulders against the frightening images and sensations threatening to intrude, at that. He doesn’t relish the idea of trying to determine which are from his messed-up memory and which are drug-induced hallucination, while Bavo Six is still working its way through his head.

*Just chalk it all up to the drugs for now and sort it out later.*

*Pay attention.*

*I have to find a way out.*

“And—you want Admiral Dorat,” he says, slowly.

Celina nods.

“Is this an—” Bodhi hesitates. *Maybe she doesn’t know I know what she is*—“Imperial Intelligence versus ISB thing? Interdepartmental infighting?” He has a vague notion that he might be able to come up with a way to play them off each other, but it had been Security Bureau officers who’d started to torture him on the Star Destroyer; he doesn’t think he’ll get away from them a second time.

“Something like that,” Celina agrees. She taps her temple and points at him. “Are you with me enough to listen now?”

“Yeah.” Bodhi tosses her canteen back.

She catches it one-handed—Bodhi groans, inwardly, realizing that if Jyn or Cassian was here, they would’ve tried to slip something in her water before giving it back. “Ever since he retired, Dorat’s been living with his daughter near a town called Graleca. It’s not much of a town, but it’s got its own
spaceport. We’ll dock your ship there and catch a ride to their villa. Preela Dorat’s been keeping
people from visiting her father—well-wishers, reporters for the various NewsNets, envoys from the
Emperor, nearly everyone. Says it’s so her father can concentrate on his writing, but my sources
suggest—otherwise. That’s where you come in.”

“You think she’ll be more welcoming of a Rebel,” Bodhi says.

Celina smiles. “She fancies herself a bit of a socialite; the one audience she’s granted with her father
was with the sector governor. So—yes, I expect she’ll be more welcoming of a Rebel, but only if
they’re, well, like you.”

“I don’t see how,” Bodhi mutters, though there’s a familiar sort of discomfort stirring in his chest. “I
keep telling you I’m—”

“Just a cargo pilot, yes, I know,” Celina says. “Just an incredibly famous cargo pilot.” She tilts her
head appraisingly at him. “I haven’t investigated Preela’s taste in partners, but I’m certain you’ll fit
the bill there as well.”

“Uh—” Bodhi is wide-eyed in surprise.

“Yeah, just give her those big nerf eyes and I can’t imagine she’ll turn you away,” Celina says,
sounding more than a little amused.

“Nerf—” Bodhi sputters, alarmed. “I am not—I am not playing the—what the hell did Jyn call it—”

Celina’s mouth twitches. “Relax, Rook. All you have to do is talk us through to see her father.”

He stares at her in disbelief. “You want me to talk us through?”

“What’s your problem?” Celina frowns.

“You—you really think—” Bodhi struggles to stifle a laugh; it’s tinged with a bit of hysteria and
fear.

“Yeah,” Celina snaps. “And before you get too far into your head about whether or not you can fail,
keep in mind Captain Joma back there’s got one blaster wound, and I can easily make it—”

Bodhi holds up a hand to forestall her threats. “Okay, okay, I get it.” He pauses, and though every
rational part of his brain is telling him not “—What happens—after?”

Celina’s turned back to the controls. “Admiral Dorat gets to enjoy his retirement in a secured
apartment on Coruscant. Preela—well, that depends on how far she’s gone over to your side.”

Bodhi’s almost holding his breath, but he ventures, “What happens to me and Joma?”

“Your captain is a prisoner of war. Since Kessel is no longer under Imperial control, the camp on
Kalist IV will do.” Celina pulls the lever for the hyperdrive, and as the Raptor drops back into
normal space, stars blurring back into existence, she throws him a sideways glance. “I have other
uses for you. Stay useful, and perhaps the Emperor will be kind, in the end.”

Bodhi trembles, thinking of how Galen had made himself indispensable to the Empire for the sake of
an opportunity to stop the Death Star, but—

(Galen asks, “Can you say you played no part in this?”)

I will never be a collaborator again.
I'm going to get Admiral Dorat and Preela out.

If I can find a way to warn him that Celina isn't who she says, maybe he'll help me?

He wishes he'd done better in his Republic military history class.

*****

Jerrilek is the sort of world Jyn would like; its vast oceans are shades of sapphire and turquoise, with an island chain slung around its equator like a belt. The town of Graleca is on one of the two larger continents, but it, too, has pale gold-and-white beaches highlighting its coastline.

Bodhi thinks wistfully of the sandy cove where he'd slept in Luke’s arms, heedless of the tide. Sanctuary feels very, very far away.

Celina waits on the ramp while he checks on Joma, before they depart for the Dorat villa, her eyes watchful. She's exchanged her Imperial uniform jacket for one of Joma's, and somehow, despite possessing what still strikes him as a terrifying amount of presence, she’s become somewhat—nondescript.

He doesn't know where her lightsaber is, but it's probably in her pack.

“I heard everything,” Joma says, very quietly, as Bodhi can't help but fuss over her, leaving plenty of water and ration bars close to her free hand. Her blaster wound looks better, but there are faint lines of pain and exhaustion around her eyes. “If you can get the Admiral back here, I'll try to think of something to help us get out of this. Please be careful.”

“T'll come back as soon as I can,” Bodhi says, straining to put something like certainty in his voice. “I —”

“Let's go,” Celina says, impatiently. “There's a Customs corvette docked in the next berth over. ISB might already be here.”

Joma squeezes Bodhi's hand lightly as he gets up from his crouch at her side. “May the Force be with you.”

He takes a shaky breath and squeezes back.

Celina rents a RGC-18 landspeeder—Bodhi had half-expected her to steal a speeder, though he’s hard-pressed as to why he’d thought that; she’s not a smuggler, after all. She waves him to the passenger side while she uploads a map of the city to its navicomputer; Bodhi contemplates making a run for it, but her blaster is concealed in a spring-loaded wrist holster, and he’d be dead before he even got out the door.

In his memory, Jyn opens her mouth to say—

Yeah. I know.

I'm trying.

Once they're off to the Dorat villa, Celina says, as casually as if they're simply out for a drive, “So, you and Luke Skywalker, huh?”

Bodhi's mouth falls open.
She flashes him a sardonic grin. “Did you think I was never going to ask? You two are the talk of NewsNets from here to Wild Space.”

“I wasn’t expecting you to ask quite like that,” Bodhi says, appalled. “Like it's gossip instead of—of—”

“Priceless information you thought I was going to torture you for?” She shrugs dismissively. “Let's start with the basics. How did you meet?”

“Are you kidding?” His voice cracks; he grimaces and rubs at his raw throat again.

“Deadly serious,” Celina says, though Bodhi recognizes another glimmer of amusement in her eyes. “Oh, come on, Rook. What harm is telling me the story of how you met your boyfriend going to do? I already know you were both on Yavin IV at the same time.”

Bodhi snaps his mouth shut and glares balefully at her.

She can't quite conceal another smirk. “Okay, what about—your first date?” Bodhi scoffs and turns his head away, looking at the sunlight shimmering between the trees and on the waves. He thinks his head must finally be cleared of the IT-O's drugs, because nothing stalks out of his memory or the jungle.

“I know, I know, it's hard to date during a war, but surely—”

Bodhi looks back at her, and on an impulse he can't explain, says, “Kessel.”

A startled laugh escapes her lips. “Really?”

“What's more romantic than a trip to the ugliest planet in the galaxy to rescue a couple hundred of our friends from the spice mines?” Bodhi offers, sarcastically.

“Huh,” Celina says. “The Empire has security holo footage of your first date.”

“The way your Empire is going, I bet a lot of people can say that,” Bodhi mutters.

“Funny.” She falls silent for a couple of minutes.

Bodhi wonders if he should attempt to jump out and run into the jungle, but she’s started to accelerate faster down the empty road, almost as if she’s picking up on his thoughts.

_Oh, shit._

_Is she?_

Bodhi’s heart thumps faster in panic.

She’d sensed his fear on Corellia; not that it’d ever been particularly hard for anyone to figure out that he was afraid, but she’d _known_, more than Cassian or Chirrut, that something else was wrong.

And on the Raptor, escaping the Star Destroyer, she’d deliberately jolted him out of it again, when he’d thought the tentacles had him.

_What else has she gotten from my mind?_

Horror seeps cold all through him, but he tries to fight it off, telling himself he would’ve felt her inside his head the way Luke had been, though Luke was _sunlight and hope and love_, and she—
“What’s he like?” Celina asks, abruptly.

“What?” Bodhi jerks.

“Luke Skywalker. What’s he like?”

Bodhi stares at her blankly, starting to sweat. Unable to breathe, unable to figure out how to ask if she’s been reading his thoughts; if all his ideas of escaping are for naught, because she already knows—

“Rook?” Celina throws a quick glance at him, her brow furrowing. “Don’t lose it. I’m not doing anything to you. No cuffs, right? I remembered—Rook? Talk to me.”

“I can’t—” He puts his head in his hands, desperate to get his frantic pulse, his ragged breaths under control. *Fuck. Oh, fuck. Not right now. Not in front of her.*

Celina stops the speeder in the middle of the road and turns to look at him. “Hey. Breathe. What’s wrong?”

“You—you’re in my head—” he manages, lifting his eyes to her. “You’ve been—this whole time—”

“No,” Celina snaps, plainly offended. “I have not.”

Bodhi shrinks against the speeder’s doorframe and points at her. “You know when I’m losing it—”

Celina holds up her hands placatingly. “Relax. I’m not poking around in your head. When you’re—it’s like listening to a gasan string drum. When one of the strings breaks, you know it.”

Bodhi shakes his head. “I—I don’t—”

She sighs and makes a face. “Or like when your thrusters cut out for no reason. I know—I know you have no reason to believe me, but that’s all I pick up from you, I swear. Now can we get back to—I’m trying to keep Admiral Dorat safe—”

“You knew I was thinking about Luke,” Bodhi accuses her uncertainly.

“I asked you about him,” Celina says, exasperated. “If I could read your mind, I wouldn’t be asking what he’s like, would I?”

He blinks, settling down a little. “That’s—that’s fair, I guess.”

“Yeah.” Celina nudges the speeder forward again. “Better?”

*She can’t read my mind, or she won’t?*

Bodhi breathes in and out, slowly recovering more of his wits. “You tell me.”

Celina huffs a wry laugh, shaking her head, but she doesn’t answer, and she doesn’t ask anything else, letting Bodhi calm down—and *worry*, in equal measure—until they get up to the Dorat estate.

A D3S droid stops them at the gate. “The Dorats are not receiving visitors at this time,” it says, tonelessly.

“We have an important message for the Admiral,” Celina says.
“The Dorats are not receiving visitors at this time.”

Bodhi looks at her. “Can you do the—” He waves his hand in an imitation of Luke’s persuasion trick.

“Doesn’t work on droids,” Celina answers. “How are you at climbing fences?”

The white walls of the Dorat villa seem to pop out of the jungle as they walk up to it, a few minutes later. Bodhi brushes dirt off of his pants and pulls a couple of twigs out of his hair; somehow, Celina had escaped climbing over the fence and through the foliage entirely unscathed. There’s another D3S droid steadily removing encroaching vines from the house’s upper story, but otherwise the place seems quiet.

Bodhi looks around for anything to indicate that ISB’s already been and gone, but spots nothing, though of course he’s never been particularly good at that, either. “Maybe it was just a Customs ship back at the spaceport,” he suggests.

“Maybe.” Celina rings the doorchime.

“Wait, I’m not ready—” Bodhi protests. Celina fixes him with a hard look, ringing the chime again, and he gulps and straightens his shoulders just as the door opens.

“You should leave,” the woman behind it says, pointing an ornate-looking blaster at him.

Bodhi puts his hands up quickly. “Preela—Preela Dorat?”

“You should leave now,” she says.

“I— we—brought a message—” Bodhi does his best to ignore the blaster aimed at him; she’s around his age, and she looks rather like she could’ve been from Jedha, too, except for the stunning amount of wealth draped around her neck. “For—for your father—”

She narrows her eyes at him. “You look familiar.”

“Yes—I’m—” Bodhi hesitates. If they really want to defect—

If not, Celina’s already got dibs on me, anyway.

He throws caution to the wind and lowers a hand to tap his chest with a finger. “I’m Bodhi Rook.”

“Oh,” she says, recognition and curiosity dawning together. “Yes, of course.” Bodhi’s heart leaps in relief. She lowers her blaster and holds out an ornamented hand to him, palm down. “Preela Dorat.”

Bodhi throws Celina a mildly aghast look as he kisses Preela’s hand awkwardly, but she doesn’t crack even the faintest hint of a smile, and only introduces herself as “Celina Lorn.”

“Come in, please,” Preela says, pushing the door wide open and ushering them inside, where Bodhi tries very hard not to gawk. There’s expensive art—not holos, real paintings and sculptures—on display in the hallway, and in the palatial living room, its windowed doors open to the bay, a vidscreen the size of his quarters is showing—

Celina smothers a snort, and Bodhi strives hard to control his expression—

—a dancing paddy-frog.

Preela points a remote at the vidscreen and turns it off, though, before it can start to sing. “You took a
great risk coming here yourself, Lieutenant,” she says, sitting down on the couch and waving Bodhi and Celina to seats. “We are still endeavoring to appear loyal to the Emperor.”

“It’s important,” Bodhi says, nervously; Celina doesn’t sit, so he doesn’t, either. “I—we—need to speak with your father immediately. He’s in danger.”

Preela gasps, and presses a hand to her heart. “Oh, dear.” She bites her lip, looking very worried.

“Can we please talk to him?” Bodhi asks.

“He’s not here,” Preela says, fidgeting with her rings, her dark eyes wide. “An argumentation of historians came by, shortly before you arrived—they wanted to interview Father about his service in the Old Republic. The four of them just left, aboard Father’s seaskimmer.”

Bodhi’s eyes widen. “Historians?” I’m too late. Again.

Celina curses under her breath, and takes a pair of quadnocs out of her pack, going to the door and looking out across the bay. “They’re not historians,” she says, though Bodhi’s already figured that out. “They’re ISB, and they’re taking him to the spaceport.” She hands Bodhi the quadnocs.

“What?” Preela cries out, getting to her feet.

“We’re not going to beat them back to the spaceport,” Bodhi says, despairingly, wincing as the sunlight refracts through the quadnocs into his eyes for a moment as he searches for the Admiral’s seaskimmer.

“I have my own seaskimmer,” Preela offers, putting a hand on his arm. “Father had it upgraded to the newest Squall Mark IV just last month.”

“We need to borrow it,” Bodhi says, lowering the quadnocs. “Please?”

“Of course,” Preela says, squeezing his arm; Bodhi is glad that the drugs seem to have finally worn off, or else her tight grip would hurt. “But—I’m coming with you—I have to make sure my father’s all right—”

“It’s dangerous,” Celina mutters, gruffly.

“He’s my father,” Preela insists, and Bodhi glimpses Jyn’s eyes—Galen’s eyes—staring back at him. “I—I’ve got my blaster. I can help—”

Bodhi looks at Celina, trying to wordlessly remind her that he doesn’t have one—

“Okay,” Celina says, nodding. “Where’s your skimmer docked?”

Five minutes later, they’re tearing across the bay in pursuit, knifing through the waves like an Ithorian razorshark.

Preela pilots the seaskimmer expertly; she’s left off most of her jewelry, but the longer Bodhi watches her, the more he thinks she wouldn’t have fit in on Jedha. She’s too confident, even though she’s biting her lower lip again and staring after her father.

Bodhi looks through the quadnocs again, at where the Admiral’s sitting on the deck of his stolen skimmer, his hands bound. Hope surges in his heart as he identifies the expression on the man’s lined face as one of serious aggravation.

If we can stop the ISB agents, it’ll be me, Preela, and her father against Celina.
I’ll tell them the truth about who she is, and even if she’s got the Force, maybe—

“Can’t we go any faster?” Celina yells into the wind.

Preela nods, and pulls back gradually on a lever, lowering the jet engines that had been positioned above the body of the seaskimmer down into the water, and propelling the hull of the vessel into the air.

Then she cries out as a blaster bolt zips past, throwing a hand up to her cheek. Bodhi holds his breath anxiously as she jerks away from the controls, but when she takes her hand away, she’s unhurt, just shaken.

“Get back,” Celina orders her, drawing her own blaster, and motions for Bodhi to take the helm.

“Celina—” Bodhi doesn’t know what he’d ask of her—

“Pilot,” she snaps, moving to stand next to him and bracing her arms on the windshield to shoot back.

Bodhi settles his hands on the controls, flinching at every bolt that scorches the air between them as they start to catch up to the other skimmer—the ISB agents have figured out how to match their engine configuration, too, and are lowering the engines into the water to speed away—

Celina fires three shots, and the other seaskimmer’s starboard engine bursts into flame—

Bodhi clenches his teeth and closes the gap, fast, coming up alongside them. Celina shoots one of the ISB agents in the knees—he drops with a howl to the deck next to Admiral Dorat, who kicks the legs out from under the second man before he can fire.

And then the skimmer’s engine explodes, and the whole vessel lists abruptly to starboard, dumping the last agent on his ass, his blaster skittering down the deck and into the water.

“Easy enough,” Celina says, a faint smirk crossing her lips. “Get us closer.”

Bodhi obliges, getting Preela’s seaskimmer close enough that they can lower the ramp down. His heartbeat is too fast in his chest again—think of something—

“Both of you, stay here,” Celina orders. She hops down to the other seaskimmer and checks the ISB agents over, tossing their blasters overboard before releasing Dorat from his binders.

“Thank you,” he says, kissing her hand with far more grace than Bodhi had managed with his daughter, and then he runs up the ramp onto the seaskimmer.

“Father,” Preela says, breathlessly, throwing her arms around the Admiral. Bodhi winces, imagining a different, final embrace on Eadu, but here there are waves instead of flames, and Dorat is alive.

“I’m all right,” Dorat reassures her, prying her arms off of his neck. “Preela, please watch the prisoners for a moment while I talk to Lieutenant Rook?” She nods, and steps down onto the ramp to the disabled seaskimmer, balancing easily even as the two vessels rock in the waves. “Well, you couldn’t have timed that any better,” he says, looking back and forth between Bodhi and Celina, who’s come back up to them. “You both have my sincerest gratitude.”

Bodhi swallows.

I have to try.
“Sir, I— I would—we want to take you someplace safe. If—if you’re defecting to me—to us—”

Dorat’s eyes narrow, just a fraction, and Bodhi thinks he might’ve gotten some part of what he’s hinting at. “Yes—I wasn’t sure the Rebellion had gotten any of my messages. I think I’m more than ready to join—”

“Oh, dear, Father, I’m afraid I can’t let you do that,” Preela says, and Bodhi’s eyes widen—she’s stepped back onto her skimmer, pointing her ornate blaster at them. “The Emperor would be displeased.”

Bodhi’s heart plummets.

No, no no no—

“But it’s not three against one anymore.

It’s a bad plan.

Fuck it. I never have good plans.

“Celina’s not a Rebel,” Bodhi says, quickly. “She’s one of you.”

“Rook, what the hell—” Celina snaps, but she raises her hands as Preela switches her attention to her, covering her with the blaster, too. Bodhi edges towards the Admiral, his eyes darting around the seaskimmer furtively.

“You’re an Imperial?” Preela sounds incredulous.

“She was going to take me in for the bounty,” Bodhi adds. Keep them distracted— “Me, and your father—”

“Rook,” Celina growls, casting a sidelong glance in his direction.

Bodhi pushes just a tiny bit harder, though he’s afraid of the storm building in her eyes. “You’ll have to split it now.”

Preela jabs Celina in the sternum with her blaster. “Who do you think you are? He’s my father—I get to claim—”

Celina rolls her eyes, and says, “Hapspir.”

Though Bodhi doesn’t understand the word, he hears Dorat let out a startled, understanding breath. He nudges the Admiral in the side, and when he looks down, motions for him to hold onto something.

“Barrini,” Preela counters, snidely.
“Preela,” Dorat says, completely astonished, but he’s clutching at the rail along the inside of the seaskimmer. Bodhi has no idea what the hell is going on, but he sidles a little closer to the controls—


Bodhi grabs the controls and shoves everything forward.

Including the lever to change the position of the engines.

The seaskimmer’s hull plunges back into the water at speed, parallel waves fountaining up. Preela’s furious scream and Celina’s string of curses tumble down through the air, both cut off abruptly by twin splashes behind the skimmer as Bodhi races away, giddy with disbelief that it worked.

“Nice job, Lieutenant!” Dorat shouts in his ear, clapping him on the shoulder. “Now, if you please, I’d like to take my daughter’s seaskimmer for one last joyride?” Bodhi reluctantly lets go of the controls, wiping salt spray out of his face, and turns to look back at the Imperial women splashing in the sea.

Celina’s pulled herself partway out of the water, onto the port engine of the disabled and listing skimmer, and is watching them speed away, her hands empty of either blaster or lightsaber. She sketches an ironic little salute in his direction.

Bodhi dares to take a breath, but he still keeps his eye on her as Dorat navigates them across the rest of the bay. “Sir, I’ve got a ship,” he says. “It’s probably not what you were—none of this was what I was expecting, but—”

“Lieutenant.” Dorat turns a thin smile towards him. “As long as it’s spaceworthy, I do not care.” He cuts the engines at the spaceport’s small boat dock, and climbs out. “You haven’t a blaster on you, is that correct?”

“No, sir, I don’t,” Bodhi says, puzzled, getting out after him.

“Pity,” Dorat says. “I’d have liked to deny my treacherous offspring some part of her inheritance, but I suppose this was a gift. All right, where’s this ship of yours?”

At the Raptor, Bodhi slaps at the ramp controls, anxious to free Joma, and—

—at the fourth time today—

“Fuck, Joma, it’s only me—how the hell did you get loose?” He stares at her over the muzzle of her blaster.

“Dislocated my thumb,” she says, grabbing him into a one-armed hug. “I was getting ready to come after you—” She registers the man standing behind him on the ramp. “Blast, you actually got him—sir—”

Bodhi makes the introductions hastily. “Admiral Dorat, Captain Joma—”

“A pleasure,” Dorat says. “Shall we get out of here?”

“Yes, please,” Bodhi says, and scrambles for the cockpit, eager to get into clear space again, get home. He realizes he’s taken the pilot’s seat and starts to get up—

Joma waves her taped-up hand at him, dropping into the co-pilot’s chair as Dorat takes a seat behind
him and straps in. “I think you’ve got this covered, Bodhi.”

“Okay, okay—” Bodhi fires up the engines, nervously eyeing the Customs corvette, but it doesn’t so much as twitch. He keeps checking the Raptor’s sensors all the way until they’ve cleared Jerrilek’s atmosphere, half-listening to Dorat talking to Joma about their escape, finally, finally allowing himself to breathe a sigh of relief as the stars turn to streaks and they’re safely back in hyperspace.

Dorat leans forward and taps him on the shoulder. “My dear boy, do you know who that woman was? The code she gave—she can only have been—”

Bodhi looks over his shoulder at Dorat. “She’s—she’s the Emperor’s Hand.” He laughs, deliriously, waving off their concerned looks as he starts to shake like he’s falling to pieces.

Oh, my fucking stars. I did it.

Luke, I’m coming home!

Chapter End Notes

Bye for now, Mara!

So...the plot for the last couple chapters has been entirely lifted from the Mission to Graleca, though of course with Mara Jade in the picture, things went a little differently. :) Maybe I should screencap what the seaskimmers look like from the relevant Adventure Journal...

Hapspir, Barrini, Corbolan, Triaxis.

Thanks to meledea and moragmacpherson for the help on this one, and happy birthday, again, brynnmcleann :)

Hoth is IN SIGHT. Hang in there, dear readers! <3
Chapter 49

Chapter Summary

What are your orders?

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Back safely on the Redemption—

Bodhi has seen Draven turn various shades of infuriated before; has seen him rendered speechless by Solo, even. But he’s never seen Draven look quite so much like he’s taken a full-powered stun blast to the face as the moment Admiral Dorat stands, calmly holds out his hand, and says, smiling, “It’s good to see you again, Davits.”

The subsequent debriefing is long, uncomfortable, and very different than any Bodhi’s ever been through before.

Long, because Draven stops him partway through his explanation of trying to destroy the tractor beam projectors to comm General Rieekan, whose expression is similarly nonplussed when he boards the Raptor and sees the Admiral sitting in the cockpit. Uncomfortable, because they’re doing the debriefing inside Bodhi’s ship for security purposes, though Bodhi’s pretty sure that once more people catch on that the two generals are onboard, that reasoning is shot to hell anyway.

And different:

Because Draven is toggling back and forth between showing appropriate deference to Admiral Dorat —whose messages he had received, but hadn’t told High Command about yet—and struggling not to shout at Bodhi for having gotten caught by the Emperor’s Hand. The strain of it is evident from the vein twitching in his forehead; his hands, which are clenched so tightly in fists Bodhi’s almost surprised there’s not blood dripping from between his fingers; and in the way Rieekan keeps snapping Draven’s name, sounding alternately concerned and furious.

Because all of the senior officers look at him with mixed horror and—something else Bodhi’s not sure he can name—when he describes the IT-O droid and names off the drugs with which it had injected him. He leaves out the hallucinations of the monster; no sense going into that when he’s already stressed and well past the point of exhaustion, and he’d already panicked in front of Celina once, anyway. But he does explain, face heating with embarrassment, how he’d managed to beat the other truth serum, Joma utterly failing to keep her own face straight.

Because Admiral Dorat makes Bodhi out to be far more clever than he’d felt at the time, as if they hadn’t all discovered Preela’s treachery in the same heartbeat. As if Bodhi hadn’t just gone for the last possible thing he could think of, and gotten away with it through—well. Luke and Chirrut and maybe even Baze might say, later, that the Force had been with him, but he’d felt nothing more certain than his own impending death.

Because afterwards, on Draven’s steely-eyed insistence, Bodhi manages, for once, to get to the medcenter on his own, instead of waking up there post-mission half-drowned or half-dead.
Yraka’Nes takes blood samples and checks his bruised throat and his growing list of old injuries—and then kicks him out, along with Joma, to go rest.

In his quarters, Bodhi looks around at the unmade bunk and his sleeping clothes in a heap on the floor and Luke’s yellow flight jacket slung over the back of a chair—

—and the normalcy of it, of coming home after a mission that had gone so very, very awry, but which everyone still counts as a success, hits him like a charging reek, and he stumbles across the room to their bunk before his legs give way entirely.

*Shit.*

*I’m*—

Bodhi touches his arm gingerly, where the IT-O had injected him, even though it doesn’t hurt, and closes his eyes against the mental image of its implacable red photoreceptor.

*Couldn’t make me more scared than I already was.*

*More than I am.*

*It’s okay.*

He’s not languishing in the Star Destroyer’s detention cell waiting to be executed, or still a hapless pawn in Celina’s plans. Bodhi almost wishes he’d remembered to put Celina on his list just so he could tell Kaytoo to take her off of it; he’d spent the entire time on Jerrilek alternately afraid she’d kill him or Joma, or that she’d ask him about secrets he’d have died to protect, and all she’d done, in the end, was watch him escape.

Again.

With the defector she’d intended to bring in.

Again.

“Oh, fuck,” Bodhi mutters, shaking. “Oh, fuck.” He’s praying, abruptly, fervently, that the Emperor doesn’t do anything to her for not hurting him. For aiding his escape from the Star Destroyer in the first place.

*I should’ve*—

*I should’ve what? She’s the Emperor’s Hand.*

*I don’t want her to die because of me!*

But he’d seen how Preela, her father, and the ISB agents had all gaped at her when she said the code words, and she’d frightened Seerdon, badly, when she’d picked him up from Thyferra. And Admiral Dorat had looked a little shaken, himself, divulging the scant information *he* knew about the activities of the Hand.

*She’ll be fine.*

*Why am I worrying about her? She would’ve used me to get to Luke, and the Rebellion.*

Bodhi can’t shake the nagging anxiety, though, not even as he’s starting to fall asleep a short while later, wondering what she must think of him now, as either traitor or truly terrible spy. If she *will* kill
him the next time—

_The next time?_

He forces that thought away with a shudder. _I know things about her now, too._

_I stopped her from getting Dorat._

_She can’t have Luke, either._

*****

Luke is obviously trying to be quiet, as he slips into their quarters in the dark, but he trips over something—Bodhi’s discarded boots, most likely—and Bodhi stirs, sleepily. “You can turn on the light,” he mumbles, and then he squints at Luke, who’s beaming at him as the overhead lights flicker to life a second later. “You’re back,” Bodhi adds, inanely, registering that Luke’s still wearing his flightsuit, but his boots are dangling from his hand, and then his eyes go wide as Luke vaults into bed.

“So are you,” Luke says, kneeling over him and cradling Bodhi’s face in his hands, kisses punctuating his words. “Draven, and Rieekan, they told us—me, Jyn, Cassian, Master Îmwe—what you did. What happened to you. You went through all _that_ and you still beat us back home, safe and _—sound?_”

Bodhi manages to kiss him back one time in three, amused. “Is that a question?”

“You’re really all right?”

“Can’t you tell?” Bodhi sniffs—Luke doesn’t smell quite like grease and sweat and metal, he smells like smoke. Not like laser fire, but somehow more familiar; sweet, even.

“You were asleep,” Luke says, sitting back on his heels and smiling at him a little quizzically. “It’s harder to get a sense of you when you’re asleep. But you seem fine now, I think.”


“Oh,” Luke says, sounding a little embarrassed. “I forgot, I got used to—it’s Qatameric incense. Janson snuck it into the X-wing’s life support system, and Artoo didn’t catch on until it’d circulated through the whole cockpit, and then there was no getting it out—I’ll go shower and come back.” He starts to shove off the bed, but Bodhi sits up with him, refusing to let go of his flightsuit.

“Isn’t that the stuff the Brotherhood of the—that Lorradian religion uses? I don’t remember what they called themselves, but they used to make pilgrimages to Jedha,” Bodhi says. “I saw them all the time growing up. You see red robes and smoke, you get out of the way, ’cause there’s loads of ’em coming down the street.”

“I know,” Luke admits. “Master Îmwe said it reminded him a little of home, so—I—um—” He ducks his head. “I bought some. In case you wanted—but Janson must’ve seen me get it in the market and thought it’d be funny to start all that shit up again.”

“You went shopping? No wonder I made it back before you did,” Bodhi says, attempting vainly to smooth out a crease in Luke’s flightsuit under his palm. He hesitates. “I was going to bring you back something, too, but it ended up—it’s complicated—anyway, I don’t have it anymore.”
“What was it?” Luke pulls the top half of his flightsuit off, the sleeves pooling around his waist on the bed. He scrubs a hand through his mussed hair and smiles curiously at Bodhi.

Bodhi stifles a rising and sadly, entirely explicable, urge to hum. “Hutt food?”

Luke furrows his brow.

“Joma said you might like it,” Bodhi says, hastily, casting a mental apology in her direction for throwing her under the speeder bus. “Since you probably grew up with it, yeah? It’s not—it’s not a ship, but I couldn’t have fit the seaskimmer in the Raptor’s hold with all the supplies—and I’m going to—” He cuts himself off as Luke grins at him. “What?”

“Okay, I believe you,” Luke says, leaning in to kiss him again, but he stops, suddenly, catching at the collar of Bodhi’s shirt. “Oh, Bodhi—your neck—”

“Yeah?” Bodhi blinks as Luke touches his fingers to his bruised throat very lightly. “Wh—oh. Um. There was this stormtrooper on the Star Destroyer, right, and he—he kind of took exception to what I was trying to say.”

Luke jerks his head up. “Draven didn’t mention that.”

“I didn’t think getting beat up by a stormtrooper rated a mention,” Bodhi mutters, ruefully.

“Bodhi.” Luke settles his hand on Bodhi’s neck, gently stroking his thumb along his collarbone.

“I’m fine,” Bodhi insists, leaning into it, and reciprocating with his hand on Luke’s arm. “I think—I think Celina ordered them to keep off me.”

“Does it hurt?”

Bodhi looks into Luke’s eyes. “A little.” And then he tilts his head back as Luke cautiously kisses his throat, precisely where the stormtrooper had grabbed him.


“You’re ridiculous, you know that?” Bodhi says, but he brushes Luke’s hair out of the way and presses a kiss to his temple.

Luke mouthes the side of Bodhi’s neck, away from the bruises. “I’m just making sure you’re all right.”

“Yeah, okay,” Bodhi breathes. “And—and you? Everything went fine, on Onderon? Must’ve, if you had time to visit the market.” He nudges Luke back so he can see his face.

“The mission was a success,” Luke replies, his eyes shining. He swings his legs up and shimmies to get his flightsuit the rest of the way off. “I have a new mission objective now.”

Bodhi huffs a laugh. “What are your orders, sir?”

“You know, pretty soon you’re probably going to outrank me,” Luke says, reflectively. He pauses. “Actually—I do have one order.”


“Don’t get mixed up with dangerous Imperial women again,” Luke says, firmly.

Luke takes a long breath, and rests his forehead against Bodhi’s. “Yeah. Well. Watch out, okay? Please?”

“I don’t think she’ll be able to find me on Hoth,” Bodhi offers. “That’s where I’m headed, once they reassign someone to co-pilot the run with me.”


“You hated Hoth when we found it.”

Luke shrugs, and curls a hand around the back of Bodhi’s neck. “It’ll give me a chance to pick out the warmest quarters for us?”

“You’ve got more important things to do than shuttle supplies back and forth,” Bodhi says, softly, and then yelps as Luke makes an exasperated noise and pushes him over onto his back.

“Don’t,” Luke says, draping his leg over Bodhi’s waist and waving a finger in his face, though the effect is somewhat spoiled by another yawn and his half-lidded eyes. “What you do is important. The things you’ve done are important. You are important to the Rebellion—”

Bodhi catches his pointing finger. “Okay, enough—”

“—you were important to the Emperor’s Hand, or she wouldn’t have—”

Bodhi rolls his eyes and brings Luke’s hand to his mouth.

Luke squirms delightfully, if a bit lethargically, in Bodhi’s grasp, but he manages to add, “—you’re important to Jyn and Cassian and even Kaytoo, he didn’t let the Cadera get a scratch on her—ah, okay okay—”

“And you tell people I talk too much,” Bodhi says, letting Luke’s now rather damp and slightly nibbled fingers slide out of his mouth.

“I do not,” Luke protests, weakly. “Although I heard you don’t just talk, you sing—”

Bodhi groans in embarrassment, and shuts him up with a kiss. Luke kisses back, drowsily, snuggling closer, his eyelids slipping shut contentedly a minute or two later.


“There was another thing in the market Chirrut said was from Jedha,” Luke murmurs, his breath tickling Bodhi's ear. “He said he could smell it, like the incense. But, um, Baze said he was fucking with me to see what he could convince me to buy.” His voice is slurring, drifting inexorably into the orbit of sleep.
Bodhi snorts. “Didn’t your Jedi senses tell you he was messing with you?”

“I didn’t think Master Îmwe would lie to me.”

“He’s not a Jedi,” Bodhi reminds him, unnecessarily.

“Mm. It’s in my pack, if you want.”

“Thanks,” Bodhi whispers, and Luke shifts and sighs against him. He lies awake for a little while longer, threading his fingers through Luke’s unruly hair, thinking about gifts, and home, and flying together. And remembering, as he falls back asleep again himself, his plan for the Raptor—

Chapter End Notes

Bit of fluff ’cause I think we all could use some...

<3
“So this is where you’ve been hiding,” Jyn says, surprising Bodhi in the cockpit of the Raptor the next day.

He turns in his chair, and has to smother a reflexive grin; Jyn is almost too short to be able to drape her arms over the jump seat from behind. “Hiding?”

“Didn’t see you or Luke at breakfast,” Jyn says. “And I tried to comm you, but you weren’t answering—I thought you and Luke might’ve been busy, but that was hours ago.” Her lips quirk up.

Bodhi gestures at the Raptor’s console with one hand and fumbles in his pockets for his comlink with the other. “Sorry, I must not have heard you—no, I’m not hiding, I’m working—I’ve been trying to figure why the computer didn’t target the second tractor beam projector correctly.”

“You’re working.”

“Yes,” Bodhi says. “What of it? I’ve got to get this ship ready to go out to Hoth, and I want—” He barely manages to stop himself from revealing his other reason for working on it, as she steps around the chair so she can smack at his arm. Then he does grin, pointing at the new rank badge affixed to her vest. “Lieutenant, huh?”

“Don’t get any funny ideas,” Jyn says, poking him lightly again, but her eyes brighten. “You’re Fleet, I’m Intelligence, we do it differently. I still outrank you, although if you keep pulling off these impossible rescues—” She breaks off, shaking her head. “You look all right. Better than I’d expected, after everything that woman put you through.”

“Thanks,” Bodhi says, wryly. He gets up from his seat, wondering what else he should check, or whether Luke’s available to help out. “Were you expecting something—else? It wasn’t—she never even laid a hand on me, and the drugs wore off quick enough.”

He looks down at Jyn’s intent gaze, and is abruptly reminded of the way that Galen used to peer at him through the rain when he’d been late, or sick, or—“I’m—I’m not falling apart, Jyn. It’s not like with Seerdon. All the shit in my head from the ISB, it’s different. It’s done. I can handle it.”

Jyn's mouth twists, skeptically, but she nods. “Tell Cassian that.”

“Okay, uh—” Bodhi looks past her down into the hold, but he doesn’t see Cassian lurking in the shadows anywhere.

“He’s with Chirrut and Baze,” Jyn says, jerking a thumb over her shoulder in the general direction of the rest of the ship. “Trying to learn how to meditate.”
Bodhi frowns. “Why?”

“Draven ordered him to,” Jyn says, her face too placid for what she says next. “After Cassian almost put him through a bulkhead when he told us what happened to you.”

Bodhi’s mouth falls open in horror. “You're joking.”

“Well. I might be exaggerating a bit.” She holds up her thumb and forefinger a centimeter apart. “Take it from his perspective. We almost lost you—” Bodhi grimaces and starts to head down into the hold, Jyn trailing behind him. “No, listen—we almost lost you to that sadistic fuck Seerdon, and then we come back from Onderon and Draven tells us you went up against the Emperor's Hand? You were supposed to be safe, Bodhi, not tangling with people who want you dead again.” Jyn registers that he’s going to protest and adds, “Even if they weren’t actively trying to kill you at the time.”

“You missed your chance to stash me out of the way on Sanctuary,” Bodhi says, stopping on the ramp. He folds his arms and wills his trembling fingers still.

“I know that,” Jyn retorts. “Don’t think that idea didn’t cross a few people’s minds.”

“Luke wouldn’t have left me behind,” he says, not meaning to accuse her, but there’s an edge to his voice, filed sharp.

“I know that, too,” Jyn says, no more gently than before. “But now no one’s going to question you again about staying in the fight, not after what you’ve done.” She sounds—proud.

“Jyn,” Bodhi mutters, suddenly uncomfortable.

“What? Oh, for—Bodhi, don’t go over all shy, it's me, and I’m never going to gaze at you like you hung all the moons and stars.” A smile flickers over her mouth. “But you have to admit, stealing an Admiral out from under their noses is a pretty big deal.”

Bodhi groans. “It wasn’t planned, Jyn, it just—it was—”

“Exactly the sort of missions Draven thinks you might be good at, once we’ve moved to Hoth,” Jyn says. “You’ve retrieved two defectors now, and there’s lots more out there you could bring in.”

Bodhi rubs his hand over his beard, taken aback. He looks around the noisy hangar bay at the X-wings, thinking about Wedge and Hobbie and Kasan. Thinking about Madine, and Admiral Dorat. About the stormtroopers he’d known and killed on Eadu.

The stormtroopers he’d tried to let live on Fest.

I have to try.

He nods, slowly. “If the Emperor’s Hand doesn’t beat me to them first.”

Jyn appraises him. “You’d really do it?”

“Yeah,” Bodhi says, warming to the idea. “Yeah, I could do that. I mean—if Draven’s fine with sending me out on proper missions again, I’d—I’d still fly you and Cassian and Kaytoo anywhere you want to go, but if I could give people another chance to make things right—people like me—”

Jyn smiles at him again, looping her arm through his, shepherding him away from the Raptor. He likes seeing her smile; he can’t remember ever seeing her father’s. “No one is like you, Bodhi,
haven’t you figured that out yet?”

He bumps her shoulder with his, a touch bemused. “Like all the moons and stars, huh?”

“Yeah. The way Luke does.” Her smile widens. “Hey, even though he’s not got much money, he bought you odds and ends, only because Chirrut said they came from Jedha—”

“I still don’t understand how there was time to shop,” Bodhi interrupts, thinking of Luke’s face turning pink when he’d found the egg slicer—not from Jedha at all, they’d simply used knives like normal people—in Luke’s pack earlier in the morning. “I thought you were bringing down a planetary shield? Destroying an ordnance center?”

“Oh, we had time,” Jyn says. She nods at the mechanics they pass on the way out of the hangar bay; one of them pats Bodhi on the back. “Cassian bought a coat. And then he brought me a couple to try on, too, because apparently Hoth is going to be quite a lot colder than Fest.” She tilts her head up at him, her eyes bright. “You had to recommend the ice planet.”

Bodhi protests, “I didn’t—I wrote in the report that it’s too cold for anybody except droids—it was Luke who said we could make it work, even though he hates the cold and his hands almost froze off.”

“Uh-huh.” Jyn adjusts her scarf, as if the mere mention of the place is making her feel cold. “It’s too bad we couldn’t have moved in on Sanctuary.”

“Would’ve been nice,” Bodhi agrees. He hesitates, licking his lips. “I never—Jyn, I never thanked you—you and Cassian, for taking me out there. It—it really—I didn’t know how much I needed—I couldn’t have survived this if you hadn’t given me a chance to clear my head.”

“Can’t take all the credit,” Jyn says, but she stops walking, and cranes up to kiss his cheek. “I’m glad you’re here with us.” Her mouth curves slyly. “You would’ve starved to death on Sanctuary if we’d left you. You can’t catch a single fish?”

“I would’ve asked Chirrut his trick,” Bodhi says. He blinks and looks around the empty corridor. “Where are we going?”

“To rescue Cassian from the Guardians,” Jyn replies. “Where were you headed?”

He lifts his hands helplessly. “I don’t know—I was going to check the Cadera over—”

Jyn’s comlink chirps before she can tease him about that, too. “Yes?”

“Did you find him?” Cassian asks.

“He’s with me,” Jyn replies. “What’s going on?”

“I need you both up here in Draven’s office,” Cassian says, and there’s a tension in his voice Bodhi hasn’t heard since—Fest, probably. “Now, please.”

She looks up at Bodhi, and the set of her jaw tells him she’s closed-off, professional again, though the light in her eyes remains undimmed. “On our way.”

*****

It’s not just Draven, Cassian, and Kaytoo in the office, the air unusually tense; Leia is there, too, behind Draven’s desk, looking pale and grave, though she smiles up at Bodhi as Cassian hugs him
tightly. The concern in Cassian’s face melts away as he lets go, but Bodhi notices he keeps more than a polite distance away from Draven.

Kaytoo looks Bodhi over, his eyes flickering. “Bodhi, I took good care of your ship. Better care than you took of yourself.”

“Thank you,” Bodhi says, choosing to ignore the admonishment. He rests his hand on the droid’s arm for a second; Kaytoo closes his own hand over it carefully.

“I’ll get right to the point,” Leia says, once Jyn’s seated herself in her usual chair. “The Empire executed Earnst Kamiel on Haldeen this morning.”

Jyn’s face is studiously blank. “Oh. I see.”

“I don’t know who that is,” Bodhi says, though his heart sinks at the grim expressions on Cassian and Draven’s faces. “Should I?”

“He was the head of the Justice Action Network,” Leia says. “They were an organization violently opposed to my father’s policies on Alderaan prior to the formation of the Rebellion. We’d been hoping to formally bring them into the Alliance, even though I and Mon Mothma, among others, disagreed with their tactics.” She glances briefly up at Jyn. “With Earnst dead, we might have a chance to win them over.”

“As I was starting to say before Jyn and Bodhi arrived, I—respectfully—disagree.” Cassian leans against the wall, his arms crossed. “The pattern of their actions is clear. They will retaliate.”

Kaytoo offers, “There is a thirty-seven point nine percent chance that an attack will occur before the week is over.”

“Then it is even more important that you meet with them as soon as possible,” Leia insists. “Stop them from making the situation on their worlds all the worse.” Jyn’s lips are compressed into a thin line, and Bodhi wonders if she’s thinking about the way she’d first been brought into this fight, the man—not himself—she’d been sent to find.

Draven hands Jyn a datapad. “We think one of JAN’s leaders is on Mrlsst. A Rodian going by the name of Kelsek.”

“You’re not coming with us?” Jyn asks, accepting the datapad from him, but looking back at Leia.

“They have never wanted to met with me,” Leia replies. Her voice is flat. “I am an unpleasant reminder of Alderaan. Of my father.”

“Excuse me,” Bodhi says, feeling lightheaded and sick at that, but even worse about—“He was executed this morning?”

Draven nods, his forehead furrowing in curiosity.

“Was it—” He closes his eyes for a second to make the room stop spinning. “Was the timing—did you ask me here—” Bodhi swallows. “Was it because I got away with Admiral Dorat?”

“No,” Draven answers, and Bodhi breathes a little easier. “There was a two-month stay of execution because so many systems were hoping—” He cuts himself off. “You don’t need to hear that part.”

“Earnst got a lot of people killed,” Leia clarifies, gently. “Convincing JAN that there are better ways—”
Jyn shakes her head. “Saw would never have come around.”

“Then let us hope that Kelsek is not like Saw Gerrera,” Leia says, and Bodhi shivers in complete agreement.

But Draven says, “Bodhi, you’re still headed to Hoth on the supply run. On Mrlsst, you’re drop-off and extraction only. Joma’s off active duty, so we’re pulling in someone else to co-pilot with you; he’ll be here tomorrow. Can your Raptor be ready to go again by then?”

Bodhi bites his lip, mentally running down the things he’d hoped to get to. “I think so.” He puts his hand in his jacket pocket and runs his thumb over his comlink, already planning to comm Luke for assistance as soon as the meeting’s over.

“Oh, yes, of course.” Cassian presses a swift kiss to Bodhi’s cheek. “Too bad. I was hoping to borrow your new egg slicer.” He flashes a tight little smile at Bodhi’s startled expression and walks off with Jyn and Kaytoo.
Luke is, of course, only too happy to help with the Raptor for the rest of the day, eagerly climbing all over to check its ablative armor even though the computer’s running its own perfectly good diagnostic. He lends Artoo to the effort, though the astromech does not stop warbling complaints about Incom having put more thought into—

“—This is my plodding-bantha-ass shuttle, thank you very much,” Bodhi says, mock-offended—

—than the much more important T-65 X-wing—

“Yes, yes, it’s special to me, too,” Luke agrees, throwing a grin at Bodhi over Artoo’s dome between them in the cockpit. “Artoo, what other ships have you flown in, that you think ours is so great?”

Artoo suddenly goes quiet.


Artoo whistles, a touch sarcastically, that he doesn’t remember any other ships is this a ship what’s it called?

“Yes, you know this is a ship, it’s the Y-4 Raptor-class transport that Bodhi stole from Fest,” Luke says, indulgently. “I don’t know what it’s called, though.” He looks up from the computer display at Bodhi and raises his eyebrows.

“Um,” Bodhi says, caught off-guard. His face heats. “I didn’t want to tell you until it was ready.”

“You’ve flown it a couple of times,” Luke notes. “How ready did you want it to be?”

“I wanted to rebuild the engines and get an overdrive on it,” Bodhi says, hesitantly. “I know it’s not as nice as your X-wing, it’s a bit—”

*Plodding*— Artoo supplies.

“Yes, thank you, Artoo—but it’s quick enough, if you don’t get caught by a tractor beam, and it’s *useful*, and—*dammit*, I was going to do this a lot better, but—” Bodhi rakes his hand through his hair and tries to start again, looking into Luke’s puzzled eyes. “Okay, okay, you know I named the *Cadera* for what Chirrut and Baze and I lost. The place we—met.”


“I wanted *reminders.*” Bodhi puts every bit of conviction he can into his voice. “Remembrances. I want the people who fly my ships—me, you, the whole Rebellion—to remember why we’re here. Fighting.”

*Bodhi.*” Luke’s face is sad as he reaches over and takes Bodhi’s hand.

Bodhi feels like he’s holding his breath. “It’s for you,” he says. “I wanted it to be for *you*—” He licks his lips. “I’m calling it the *Beru*.”

Artoo makes a soft moaning sound.

Luke opens and closes his mouth, looking stunned. His fingers are tight around Bodhi’s hand.

“I’ve been trying to decide, if I ever get a fourth ship— *not* Seerdon’s Sentinel, thank you for getting rid of it,” Bodhi runs on, anxiously. “If—if there’s someone Cassian would want, or if I should ask
Princess Leia what would be appropriate, for remembering Alderaan.”


“You said her name in the nightmare you were having on Arbra,” Bodhi says, twisting his fingers together in his lap. “Nearly screamed it, really, I thought she must’ve meant a lot to you—Luke, is this—is this okay?”

“Stars.” Luke reaches over and touches Bodhi’s face with a shaking hand. “It’s more than okay. Did you research Aunt Beru, like you did with my father?”

“I tried,” Bodhi says, softly. “I’m sorry, I couldn’t find much, Tatooine is—”

“A backwards little dust ball with shitty record-keeping,” Luke says, trying to laugh even as a tear starts down his face. He leans across Artoo’s dome to kiss Bodhi—

Artoo trills, sounding apologetic, your aunt was not a plodding bantha, before disengaging from the Raptor’s console and rolling away discreetly.

Luke does laugh, then, getting up and squeezing himself between Bodhi and the Raptor’s console so he can put his arms around Bodhi’s neck. “Thank you for remembering her,” he murmurs, his eyes shining. Then he pulls away abruptly, and gazes sternly at Bodhi, though his lips are twitching. “You didn’t owe me anything for the egg slicer.”


Chapter End Notes

Does this still count as fluff? I’m not sure. Shout-outs to morag and astoria for, well, you know. That. ;)

Anyway. The first visit to Echo Base--still under construction--next. :)

Thanks, as always, for the comments and kudos and support!
Chapter 51

Chapter Summary

You'll get used to it.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Bodhi’s co-pilot for the run is Grizz Frix, who is a man even more taciturn than Baze, at least at first. After they’ve headed out—Luke waving almost shyly from the hangar as they depart, Artoo at his side—Grizz answers a few questions from Jyn and Cassian about his homeworld of Devaron. Bodhi almost asks whether he’d been to the Jedi temple, but remembers just in time that’s really supposed to be a secret. But it’s clear Grizz isn’t comfortable with them, even though Cassian’s not doing his spy thing, Kaytoo doesn’t say anything too off-putting, and the questions hardly scratch the surface of anything meaningful.

Eventually, Jyn goes back to needling Bodhi about Hoth, which does little to defuse his growing discomfort about his aloof co-pilot, or his anxiety about leaving them on Mrslsst.

“It’s only a couple of days,” Cassian says, when Bodhi sees them off, Grizz keeping the Beru’s engines running. The spaceport is as crowded as Jedha’s market ever was, but there’s no sense of a populace on edge; the bright-winged little Mrlssi don’t avert their faces from each other or scurry into the shadows of the greenstalks. “And if Kelsek doesn’t want to meet with us, we’ll just return here to the city and wait for you.”

Jyn smiles. “Or we’ll go find that mythical Artists’ Commune,” she says. “Full of misfits and dropouts, our kind of people.”

“Speak for yourself,” Cassian teases her, his mouth curving up under his mustache. “Although we could use some new art on the walls.”

“There is no art on the walls of your quarters,” Kaytoo observes.

“Yes, Kay, that’s the—” Cassian shakes his head as he steps around Kaytoo to hug Bodhi. “Never mind. You have a safe flight, all right? Don’t worry about us.”

Bodhi lifts an open hand in a shrug. “I’ll come back as soon as we’re done—no sense hanging around there longer than we have to.”

“Stay warm,” Jyn says, squeezing his arm, and then they’re gone, blending quickly into the spaceport traffic, despite their greater heights and lack of feathers. Bodhi looks wistfully around at the lovely tropical city for a moment before going back into his ship.

“Sorry about Hoth,” Bodhi says to Grizz, as the Beru clears the atmosphere, and then jumps into hyperspace. “I tried to make it clear just how fucking cold it was gonna be to Draven; guess nothing else would do.”

“Right,” Grizz mutters, and then he goes silent again, dutifully handling his side of the controls. But
he sneaks a glance in Bodhi’s direction, something in his eyes that Bodhi can’t make sense of.

“Yes?” Bodhi asks, after the fifth time he does it.

“Nothing,” Grizz mutters, scratching his ear and looking away.

Bodhi doesn’t get it, but he ignores it in favor of work, for a while. If Grizz doesn’t want to talk, that’s okay; he’ll practice staying quiet. He adds parts to the list of upgrades he wants for the *Beru*, though it’s a bit of a wish list. Outfitting another one of his shuttles has got to be low on the priority list for the Rebellion. But after another hour and a half spent fiddling with the still recalcitrant targeting computer to distract himself from the weight of Grizz’s eyes on him, he gives up, pushing back from the console to study his co-pilot, trying to guess what’s going on.

It’s not the usual sort of look he gets from people who think they know him, all wide-eyed and curious; there’s a narrowness to it that puts him uncomfortably in mind of Yendor. He clenches his fists in his jacket pockets, and breathes, attempting to calm his suddenly racing heart.

*Cassian wouldn’t have let me get back on a ship with anyone like Yendor by myself.*

Still.

*Best get it over with.*

“Is something wrong?” Bodhi asks. “I’d—I’d rather we have it out now—”

“Have what out?” Grizz raises his eyebrows.

“Whatever’s on your mind that’s got you staring at me like that.” Bodhi gestures at him.

“Sorry, sir.” He turns back to the controls.

“You don’t have to call me that,” Bodhi says. “Bodhi’s fine.”

“Yes, sir,” Grizz mutters. “Nothing’s on my mind, sir.”

“Okay.” Bodhi fidgets silently for another ten minutes, baffled. *I’m going about this wrong. He’s a pilot. Talk flying.* “Um, you flew support on Gerrard V, yeah? For Luke, and—and Kasan, when she defected?”

That’s not the right question to ask, either; Grizz heaves an obviously irritated sigh. “Didn’t we drop off your Intel buddies?”

“Sorry,” Bodhi says. “Just asking, thought we could get to know each other a bit.”

Grizz looks at him again. “*You* want to get to know *me*.”

“Yeah.” Bodhi tries his best not to quail. He’s faced the Emperor’s Hand, after all; he can manage an unfriendly co-pilot. And there’s nothing of the hatred that had burned in Yendor’s eyes, for which Bodhi is grateful. He doesn’t think he’d do very well in a fight in the close quarters of the *Beru*. Or anywhere else, for that matter. But there is a somewhat familiar resentment in Grizz’s stare. “We’re going to be flying together for a while. Seems only right.”

“Does it.”

“Yeah,” Bodhi says, emphatically, starting to get annoyed. “Look, if you’ve got a problem with me—like I said, come on, let’s have it out, if it’s gonna be a real issue for you, I’ll put in for you to get
transferred to fly with someone else.”

Grizz glowers at him. “You know, when I got the call that I was being reassigned, I thought I was getting another shot at Rogue Squadron. Since yes, sir, I was with them at Gerrard V.”

“Oh.” Bodhi’s shoulders slump, as he remembers his own disappointment over the test scores that had kept him from flying TIE fighters. “And instead you got transport duty.”

“With you,” Grizz agrees. “With your own ship, and your spy friends and their classified mission.”

Bodhi frowns, feeling a bit like the speeder race has passed him by, leaving nothing but dust and engine fumes, making him dizzy. “I don’t understand—”

“You should’ve been where I was,” Grizz says, lowly. “Should be where I am. I know you got hurt, as bad as me or worse, and I was stuck on the Independence for treatment, not running around the damn galaxy with the squadron like nothing happened.” His voice is rapidly crescendoing. “And after that, I was flying fertilizer barges, not some fancy ship my boyfriend gave me. Not going on special missions—”

Bodhi, surprised, holds up his hands to stop him. “Wait, you’ve got it backwards,” he says. “I didn’t go on anything like the mission to liberate Gerrard V—Draven’s been trying to keep me away from places that’re really important to the war. And this ship—I stole this one from Fest, the ship Luke gave me is—” His eyes widen as he slowly realizes he’s misjudged the mark once more—Grizz’s mouth is twisting as if he’d eaten a gruffle fruit.

“You have two ships?”

Bodhi hesitates, weighing the truth and the open hostility in Grizz’s dark eyes, and—gambles. “No?”

Grizz laughs. “Right. I forgot about the one you came back from Scarif with. Yeah.” He shakes his head, and says, bitterly, “Well, I could’ve had all of this, too, if the last of the Jedi was putting his lightsaber to me every night.”

Bodhi’s jaw drops. “Excuse me?”

Grizz jerks back, like he’d just heard his own words echoing nastily in his ears for the first time. “Shit. Shit. Sir, I—that was completely out of line. I shouldn’t have said that—”

“No,” Bodhi retorts, infuriated. “What in blazes—do you have any idea the kind of shit I’ve been through? You got hurt? I’ve been—I’ve been—”

He stalls out for a second, gritting his teeth against what’s creeping out of the darkness in his memories. But the words are a raging torrent, and he’s going over the edge with them into blazing anger, not fear. “I’ve been fighting this war any which way I can, in between getting beat up, tortured, losing my fucking mind, and that was just the first day—you think I’ve had everything fall into my lap because Luke Skywalker took an interest in me?”

Grizz presses forward again, cautiously, but equally—well, maybe not equally—pissed, his own voice crackling. “So—so maybe it’s not because of—him, but you can’t deny—” Bodhi glares at him, and he breaks off and lowers his head, his ragged breaths the only sound for a moment. “Sir. I’m sorry. I’ll request my reassignment when we get back.”

“I don’t know why you agreed to fly with me in the first fucking place,” Bodhi snaps, reaching forward to pull the lever to drop them out of hyperspace.
And then they’re at Hoth, where it’s far too cold for Bodhi to spare much heat for anger. In the hangar, Grizz hangs back at first, but Bodhi says curtly, “Come on, let’s get this done,” and they go down into the base together.

Bodhi is reluctantly impressed by the progress the engineering corps has made on what they’re calling Echo Base, but—“Can’t echoes trigger avalanches?” he asks Kem Monnon, when the major finally comes out from somewhere in the dark cavern to greet them. “Odd name for a base built under a mountain.”

Kem laughs, letting go of Bodhi’s hand; Bodhi surreptitiously rubs his fingers through his gloves as the major turns to shake Grizz’s hand, and barely manages to suppress a smirk as Grizz winces at his grip, too. “That’s a myth, Lieutenant.”

“Suppose you’d be the one to know,” Bodhi says. “Tested it?”

“Yeah,” Kem says, shaking his head no, ruefully. “But we’ll have teams patrolling the area for possible avalanche zones, though, once we’ve got the base fully staffed and functioning. Set off controlled slides, that sort of thing.”

“Okay,” Bodhi says, dubiously.

“You been out in it yet?” Kem jerks a thumb over his shoulder at the swirling snow. “Oh, what am I asking, you found the place, of course you have. Well, if you get it in your head you want to build a snowman, don’t go out without a locator beacon, those storms get bad fucking fast.”

Bodhi nods. “Got it.”

“Not that the beacon’ll do you a whole lot of good,” Kem adds, cheerfully. “Range on ‘em is shit.”

“Okay,” Bodhi says, again, privately deciding not to go out at all if he can help it. “Listen, after it’s finished, is there any chance the hangar’s gonna be any warmer than this? I can’t imagine we’re going to get a lot of work done if we have to get all this gear on.” He holds up his gloved hands.

Kem points overhead at the cavern’s ceiling; it actually hasn’t been expanded by the engineers, there’s still meter-long stalactites hanging down. Dripping, even, very slowly. “Not if High Command wants to be able to fit the GR-75 transports in here. You’ll get used to it again. Grew up on Jedha, right? It got this cold, didn’t it?”

Bodhi raises his eyebrows. “Blast, no,” he replies, reflexively, and then, “—maybe? It’s—” He grimaces. “Hard to remember.”

“Well, you’ll get used to it,” Kem says. He looks at Grizz, who’s doing his best to conceal how hard he’s shivering, even inside his thick coat, and takes pity on them. “C’mon, it’s warmer further in, I’ll show you how far we’ve gotten.”

Kem takes them through the medical center, pointing out all kinds of engineering tricks Bodhi doesn’t understand; Bodhi notices the bacta tanks are two of the ones he’d retrieved from Thyferra, and resists an unkind urge to snipe at Grizz about what he’d had to face there. His left hand throbs, a little.

The command center is at the end of a winding corridor, presumably in the very heart of the mountain, where a familiar face beams at him from behind a console.

“Toryn?” Bodhi says, astonished, his lingering irritation forgotten at the sight of her.
“Bodhi Rook, I hear this is all your fault,” Toryn Farr says, grinning as she climbs over a tangle of
cables to hug him. “Couldn’t have picked some planet where the only ice would’ve been in my
drink?”

“I tried,” Bodhi protests, and then he rubs his hand over his face, appalled. “Stars, everyone is
going to blame me—”

“Just the first time they see you,” Kem says, patting him on the back. At least Bodhi thinks he is; it’s
hard to feel anything through his coat’s quilted padding.

Toryn smiles at Grizz. “I’m Toryn Farr, I do communications.”

“Grizz Frix.” Grizz’s tone is, ironically, a bit less cool with her than it had been with Bodhi, at the
start. “I’m co-piloting with Lieutenant Rook on the run.”

“Ah,” Toryn says. “Well, that’s got to be something, huh? Not a lot of people even know this place
exists, it’s so classified I can’t even tell you which hyperspace route to take to get here.” A flash of
alarm crosses Grizz’s face at that, though it’s beyond Bodhi’s comprehension as to why.

Kem rolls his eyes. “Toryn, that’s only ‘cause you’re terrible at astrogation.”

“Like you’re any better,” she retorts, turning back to Bodhi. “You’re here overnight, right? Let’s
catch up over—” Toryn looks around for a chrono. “Dinner?” She raises her eyebrows hopefully at
him. “You must’ve brought us something besides ration bars—”

Bodhi shakes his head. “No such luck, sorry.” Both Kem and Toryn’s faces fall at that, so he adds,
quickly, “I’ll make sure to bring something good next time.”

“You’d better, or we’ll assign you quarters by the tauntaun pens,” Kem says, jokingly, but Toryn
slaps at his arm.

“I wouldn’t do that to you,” she reassures Bodhi.

He blinks at her, puzzled, but Grizz beats him to the question. “What’s a tauntaun?”

Kem grins. “Wanna meet ‘em? We’ve got one temporary pen set up to start getting them acclimated
to people.”

“Yes, I guess,” Bodhi says.

“Come back after you’re all done and we’ll split a ration bar,” Toryn says, clambering over
equipment and back to her work, waving at them as she ducks down below the console.

“How much is left to build?” Bodhi asks, as Kem shepherds them out carefully through the narrow
corridors. “I haven’t been keeping up on the timeline.”

Kem shrugs. “More quarters, mainly. And the north hangar. Then it’s just a matter of getting the
defenses in place; we’re getting a v-150 ion cannon. Plus your standard DSS-02 shield generator.”

He puts a gloved hand over his nose just as the smell hits Bodhi—he quickly does the same, as they
round the corner towards the source of the stench: five large white furry creatures lying down in their
pen.

“Tauntauns,” Kem says, muffled, gesturing to them. One gets to its feet, comes over to Kem and
lowers its horned head to butt against him, bellowing mournfully. “Yeah, sorry girl, I didn’t bring
you anything to eat.”
Grizz coughs. “What's your plan for these?”

“They make terrible eating, we figured that out right away,” Kem replies, making a face. “We've got some people training them up to be ridden. Since your report said that engines don't work in the coldest temperatures, someone decided we'd needed another way to get around outside, and these run pretty fast.”

“I'm a pilot, not a—a jockey,” Bodhi says, keeping a respectful distance, though a second tauntaun wanders over and whuffs his hair gently. “I—I was working on an engine redesign to help with that—damn. I think that datapad’s on the Cadera.”

“Bring that next time too,” Kem says, unworried. “We'll get it sorted.” He nods at the tauntaun now nibbling at the edge of Bodhi’s hood. “Might want to wear clothes that weren't made out of seaweed around these girls.”

Bodhi tugs his coat out of reach and frowns as his glove comes away slimy with tauntaun saliva. “Uh, right.”

Kem tours them around the rest of the base complex after that; there really aren’t very many quarters completed yet, and he apologizes for having to temporarily assign them to share—

“I can sleep in the Beru,” Grizz says, not looking at Bodhi. “It’s fine, sir.”

“Running the heater all night’s a drain on power,” Bodhi says, also not looking at him.

Kem glances between them, and shrugs. “Whatever you decide. Ready to head back, get started unloading your ship?”

“Yeah,” Bodhi says. “Thanks, Kem—I know you’ve got a busy schedule—”

He grins, and claps Bodhi on the shoulder. “It’s not every day someone like you drops by.”

Bodhi winces, both for the force of the blow and the unpleasant expression he suspects must be on Grizz’s face. “I’m just—I’m just a cargo pilot.” Kem grins at him quizzically, but doesn’t press it further.

Between Bodhi and Grizz—who stays as far away from Bodhi as humanly possible despite the tight space—plus the small crew Kem can spare to help, unloading the Beru still takes hours and hours. It’d been local evening when they landed, and it’s well into the night by the time they’re done, the bay doors closing about an hour before that.

Bodhi comms Toryn to apologize for missing dinner, and she comes by to throw ration bars at his head on her way to bed.

“Breakfast, before you leave,” she insists, smiling at him and Grizz both.

“Keep one of these then,” Bodhi says, tossing a bar back to her. She waves it at him and jogs off again.

Bodhi glances at Grizz. There’s no spark of resentment burning behind his eyes now; the man looks drawn and cold and exhausted, struggling to even get his ration bar open with numb hands, and Bodhi thinks, he’s just a cargo pilot, too. He’s just like—

He makes a decision. “You’re not sleeping in my ship,” Bodhi says. “Let’s go. I’ve bunked with plenty of people who didn’t like me before.”
Grizz stirs. “What?”

“You heard me.” Bodhi starts to walk away, tearing his ration bar wrapper with some force. *This might be a stupid idea. If he really—*

*He’s not Yendor. He’s—*

*Jealous?*

“Thanks, Lieutenant.” Grizz jogs after him to catch up. “You didn’t have to—”

“You’ll fucking freeze to death out here,” Bodhi says, as they cross through the half-completed lounge—it’s got an old vidscreen partially set up on one wall, trailing wires everywhere. “Besides, if you’ve got anything else you want to say to me, might as well get it off your chest all in one go tonight. Have tomorrow be a nice quiet flight back to Mrlsst.”

Grizz stares at him. “You’re serious.”

Bodhi nods, and then he looks around, lost. “Where in blazes did Kem assign us?”

“I wasn’t paying attention to that. Thought I was bunking down in the ship.” Grizz frowns.

“Dammit,” Bodhi says, grumpily. “Okay, maybe it’s back this way.” They circle back through to the command center—Toryn had finished setting up a couple more consoles, and their operational glow renders the room in murky teal, like they’re underwater instead of under a mountain. “Fuck it, I’ll comm Kem and ask.” He stops and leans against a console, hiding his clenched fists behind his back, tense. “So is there anything—”

“There is,” Grizz says, and Bodhi thinks he sees an ember of frustration coming to life again in his eyes. Grizz scratches his ear. “This. Today. How you just strolled in here and Major Monnon fell all over himself to give you—not us, you—a tour. How Toryn—how do you even know her, by the way—lit up when she saw you.”

He nudges a coil of cables on the floor near where she’d been working. “You might have had a shitty time of it, before, but you’ve got—you’ve got *friends*, in all the right places. You had *help*.” His voice is climbing. “*Everyone’s* got your back, and I didn’t have anyone—” Grizz stops, and turns his back on Bodhi entirely.

Bodhi unclenches his fists slowly, one by one, and rubs his wrists.

*He’s not wrong.*

*I had Cassian to get me out of it, first. Cassian, who fought for me. Fights for me.*

*Him and Jyn both.*

*And Kaytoo, who believed me.*

*And Chirrut and Baze, who will never give up on a boy from Jedha.*

*And Wedge and the squadron, who made a place for me.*

*And I have Luke, who—*

*Yeah.*
“Luke and I rescued Toryn Farr from Kessel,” Bodhi says, thumping a hand against the console. “I didn’t know Major Monnon before today. I—I didn’t think anything of getting a tour until he said what he did. I’m not—”

He looks down at his hands; his scarred wrists. “I’m sure no one meant to leave you behind. Alone.”

“Yeah, but they did,” Grizz says, flatly. “Then after I got out of the bacta tank, finally, it was—oh, you’re obviously still having difficulties, so no more Rogue Squadron for you, sorry.” His shoulders are hunched. “And if you went through the amount of shit you said you did, how could they let you just—”

“Because you were right,” Bodhi says.

Grizz huffs a sodden-sounding laugh. “About—”

“No,” Bodhi says, hastily. “You’re right, that my friends never left me. All they’ve wanted, after—everything—is to keep me safe. Sane.” He swallows. “I—I don’t make it easy for them.”

“I bet,” Grizz mutters, turning around and looking at him. “Heard about the Kessel thing, but I thought it was all Luke’s doing.”

Bodhi rubs the back of his neck. “Nope.”

Grizz draws a breath. “So—now what? I said my piece—you’re not still pissed about before?”

“Oh, I’m pretty fucking mad about that,” Bodhi says, but lightly. “Do other people think that sleeping with Luke is why I—I don’t know, made lieutenant? Got my own ships?”

Grizz toes the pile of cables again. “Just me, as far as I know. I tried convincing some people on the Independence, but they all—” He looks up, and his smile is crooked. “They all thought you were some kind of hero.”

Bodhi groans, rubbing his eyes. “Okay, okay, that one’s next up, but we can sort that misconception out tomorrow.” He digs for his comlink in his pockets to call Kem, but pauses, thinking. “Look, you don’t know me. You don’t like me, that’s okay too. But maybe—maybe I can help, somehow? I—I can’t fly an X-wing, I’ll can’t help you get back into one, but if there’s something else I can do—”

“I said what I said to you and you want to be friends?” Grizz blinks at him.

“I wouldn’t go that far,” Bodhi says, dryly. “I’m offering—I don’t know what I’m offering, exactly, my own head is still messed up something awful, but maybe—maybe I can show you the stuff Chirrut tried to teach me.”

Grizz breathes out. His fingers clutch the edge of the console he’s standing next to. “Yes. Sir. I—”

Bodhi shakes his head. “Call me Bodhi.”

“Bodhi,” Grizz repeats, incredulously, and Bodhi musters up a half-smile in response.

Okay. Okay.

He’s not like Yendor at all.

It’s going to be fine.
Welcome back to Hoth. :D But, uh, don't get your hopes up juuuuust yet, there's a little more left to go before everyone moves in. (And lord, do I mean everyone.) Believe me, I would love to be right smack up against ESB right now too, but there are some things that have to happen first...

Grizz!

Thanks, dear readers, as always. <3
Chapter 52

Chapter Summary

You'll think of something.

Chapter Notes

There are descriptions of food that some might find unsettling in the middle section of this chapter.

There is also some smut at the end!

The two are UNRELATED. :P

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

It turns out that Bodhi had better luck talking Grizz around than his friends had with the Justice Action Network leader, who’d listened to their pitch and then given them a thirty-count to get out of his sight. Bodhi spends the flight home from Mrlsst alternating between dismay that they’d failed, worry about what JAN might do next, and a kind of hysterical near-death wish that he’d been there to see Kaytoo pick Jyn up to carry her away.

Once they’re home again, Bodhi expects Leia to come up with a new plan to approach JAN, something that’ll involve being assigned to keep flying his friends across the galaxy and back. But a few days pass with no such word from either Jyn or Cassian, not even their usual quiet speculation over mealtimes. Luke is chatty enough for all of them, though, ultimately drawing Bodhi into eager discussions of the B-wings Admiral Ackbar is finally going to let Rogue Squadron test out.

During the week, it’s easy enough—nice, even—to settle once more into something like a routine. Bodhi picks up maintenance shifts, and meditates with Chirrut and Baze—and Cassian, and Grizz, and a couple of other people whom the generals apparently think could use a little calming down. Luke hangs around for that sometimes too, though he’s clearly more interested in trying to convince Chirrut to spar than sit still, even if it is next to Bodhi.

And Grizz—

Grizz handles maintenance and working on the Beru with Bodhi just fine, and of all the people he meets, he gets along with Kaytoo distressingly well. But Grizz never works on any of the X-wings, and he declines every invitation to Rogue Squadron’s sabacc games, politely but firmly.

“Don’t worry about it,” Jyn mutters, when he mentions it on his break, visiting her in the Intelligence offices. “Just ‘cause he’s come around with you doesn’t mean he’s ready to buddy up to the rest of the squadron. I mean, they can be pretty intense.”

Bodhi frowns. “Intense? They’re ridiculous. Silly, even—Janson stuck two of the Beru’s ramps closed with forty sealant patches—oh. I guess I can see how that might be a little intense.”
Jyn smiles. “Want me to help you get Janson back?”

“I’ll think of something tonight,” Bodhi promises. He grins at her. “Sure you don’t want to come along tomorrow? It’s not Hoth, might be beaches there.”

She pats his arm. “Thanks, but no thanks—we’re hoping to hear from Karrde, see if he’s got any insight into whether the Empire’s moving on JAN.”

“Nothing on what Kelsek’s going to do?”

Jyn shakes her head. “You know it’s not just Kelsek, right? He happened to be the one leader we knew we could find.”

“D’you think Karrde knows where the others are?” Bodhi bites his lip.

“Maybe.” She squeezes his arm. “Don’t worry about that, either. You’ve got your own job to do.”

“It’s just a supply run,” Bodhi says, shrugging. “I better get back to work, but I’ll come by for dinner?”

“Yeah,” Jyn says. “We’re, ah, running a bit short on ingredients, so nothing fancy, sorry.”

“Ration bars?” Bodhi asks, crestfallen.

“Hey, you’re the one picking up supplies,” Jyn points out.

“I don’t put in the requisitions,” Bodhi counters.


“Jyn,” Bodhi says, getting to his feet and looking around nervously for Draven.

She laughs, and waves him out the door.

*****

Chirrut and Baze turn up for dinner, too, bearing tea—not chav, this time, or tarine; something light and floral, nothing Bodhi had ever had at home. But they also have food, not just ration bars, a big pot of something that smells warm and familiar.

“稀飯,” Baze says. He shrugs, somewhat apologetically. “It is what we had left to make.” He turns to Bodhi. “You are picking up more supplies tomorrow?”

“I don’t know if there’s going to be anything but ration bars,” Bodhi says. “But I could—if there’s a, um—” A bar of the Hungry Hutt jingle pops into his mind; he shakes his head, as if to jar it loose. “Biscuit Baron, or a Flangth-2-Go, I could pick up something a little less—bland?”

Luke is blowing on a spoonful of his rice porridge to cool it; he stops, and looks at Bodhi. “What was the thing you were going to bring me before, from Vulpter? No, wait, you said it was Hutt food.”

Bodhi hums ♪ paddy frog sausage patty ♫ before he can stop himself. “D’you—like Hutt food?”

Cassian makes a face, but mutters, “Beats ration bars, I’m sure.”

“There’s some stuff I really liked, when I could get it,” Luke says. “Hold on, I want to guess what it
was. Was it—fungus dippers?"

“No—what’s that?”

“Just what it sounds like,” Luke says, and Bodhi grimaces. “Braised fork tarts? I used to love those, but you have to watch out for the thorns.”

“Uh, not those, either,” Bodhi says, making a mental note of them. Cassian nudges Jyn and whispers something; her mouth quirks up, too.

“Sand gizzars? No, probably not, I bet you really can’t get them anywhere but Tatooine.” Luke pours Chirrut another cup of tea and puts it down at Chirrut’s right hand. “Keebadas binggona? You need gloves for that—”

“It was a sandwich,” Bodhi says, hastily, and Jyn smothers a laugh at what must be a remarkably disconcerted expression on his face. “Just a sandwich, nothing—nothing you need gloves for.”

But Luke's full-on reminiscing now, his rice porridge cooling and forgotten in front of him. “Slimps’ eyes, me and Biggs used to dare each other to see how many we could eat—”

“A sandwich,” Bodhi tries again, futilely. “With, um, with a poached gorg egg? Some parts of it are green. There’s a whole song. And dance. Jerba cheese?”

“I cannot eat cheese,” Chirrut says, to Baze.

“I know,” Baze grunts, in reply.

“There’s a dance?” Jyn asks.

—and scurrier tips, those go great with a cold Yatooni Boska—"

Against Bodhi's growing sense that he has considerably better culinary judgement than his thorn- and eyeball-eating boyfriend, he asks, “Is that a Tatooine kind of—of beer?”

Luke’s eyes shine, as if it’s a particularly fond memory. “Sort of? It’s made from fermented dewback sweat.”

Cassian chokes on a mouthful of his tea; Jyn pounds him helpfully on the back, her eyes dancing, as Baze bursts into laughter and a wide grin spreads across Chirrut’s face. And Bodhi stares at Luke, horrified.


“I have kissed a man who drinks fermented dewback sweat?”


“How do you even collect enough—you know what?” Bodhi puts up a hand to forestall him. “I don't wanna know.”

“Bodhi, please don’t bring us back any of those things,” Jyn says, emphatically. “Just some flangth would be perfectly acceptable.”

Luke grimaces. ‘Ew, flangth.”

Bodhi gapes at him. “Flangth is where you draw the line?”

Cassian says, “If you do pick up anything from a Biscuit Baron, make sure you order a lot of extra blue sauce on the side, okay? Just in case.”

Bodhi turns. “Uh—in case of—what?”

“In case our breakfast mutates into a giant amorphous bantha biscuit.” Cassian is as straight-faced as Bodhi’s ever seen him.

“A giant—” Bodhi says, his eyes widening. He glances at Luke, who’s gaping a little at Cassian, too, and then at Jyn, who nods, very seriously.

“A giant amorphous bantha breakfast biscuit,” Cassian repeats.

Jyn adds, “According to our intel, the Empire once considered giant amorphous bantha breakfast biscuits for use in biological warfare.”

“What?” Bodhi looks at Baze and Chirrut, who wear matching expressions of—curiosity?

Cassian explains, “Recycled air on a ship reacts with bantha genetic material and the preservatives to make a—a creature.” He’s still very solemn, but there’s the barest glint in his eye—“You may intend to eat it, but it will eat you.”

For all that she’s been a covert agent for years now, and a stealthy, stoic underground type for even longer before that, Jyn can’t quite cover her giggle in time, giving up the game. Luke sags in his chair, shaking his head, as Bodhi starts to snicker at them. “Wait, what’s the blue sauce for?”

“You kill it with the blue sauce,” Cassian says. “You—” He makes a gesture as if he’s pouring sauce over his bowl, and breaks into a grin. “But you need a stepladder.”

“Can you still eat it?” Baze asks, thoughtfully, and Bodhi laughs so hard he can’t breathe.

*****

With all their talk of food, it is no great surprise that the prank Jyn and Bodhi decide on, an hour later, involves it, too.

It does not, however, involve smuggling a bantha biscuit into Rogue Squadron’s quarters to see if it will mutate.

*****

Bodhi is awoken by his comlink chirping, the next morning; he extricates himself from under Luke’s arm to answer it. “Ye—”

Janson shouts, “Bodhi, you backrocket slime devil—”

“Hey, Wes,” Bodhi says, as cheerfully as he can manage. Luke lifts his head groggily; Bodhi leans back over to kiss his cheek, muttering, “It’s Wes.”

“Tell him I had nothing to do with it,” Luke says, and then, louder, for the benefit of the comlink in Bodhi’s hand, “Wes, I had nothing to do with it.”

Janson subsides. “Oh, uh, Commander, sorry to wake you,” he says, tinnily.

“You thought sealant patches were sticky?” Bodhi says, smugly, into his comlink. He twitches as Luke pokes him reprovingly in the ribs.

Janson splutters, mostly incoherently, though Bodhi thinks he can make out a few more choice Taanab expletives, and signs off.

“You don’t think he’s going to come over and try to use our ‘fresher, do you?” Bodhi asks, dropping his comlink on the table next to Luke’s lightsaber and stretching.

“He’d have to walk pretty far,” Luke says, eyeing Bodhi curiously. “So, my guess is, probably not.” Luke reaches over, curling his hands around Bodhi’s hips, gently. “You don’t have to leave yet, do you?”

“No,” Bodhi answers, warming at Luke’s touch and letting himself be pulled inexorably back into bed. He turns over onto his side, so they’re facing each other. “We’re not scheduled to depart until —” Luke leans in to kiss him, and Bodhi mumbles into his mouth, “0800 hours—”

“Yeah? Good,” Luke says. He snuggles closer, burrowing his face into the crook of Bodhi’s neck and lazily thrusting against Bodhi’s thigh.

“Uh, clothes,” Bodhi points out, kissing the top of Luke’s ear. “Unless you can use the Force to magic them off?”

Luke hmms. “Can’t concentrate like this,” he says, and sits up, stripping out of his undershirt and shorts, before holding out his right hand curiously. His eyes are bright. Curious.

“Seriously?” Bodhi asks, sitting up, too, pulling his shirt off over his head and wiggling to get out of his shorts, and then he senses— “Are you doing something—Luke—”

Invisible hands stroke him everywhere, lighting up all his nerve endings, and he makes a soft, desperate sound. It feels—comforting, almost, like sinking into the warm sand of Sanctuary’s beach, only hotter. Sweeter. Bodhi tilts his head back against the bulkhead, lips parting involuntarily, and Luke smiles at him, a little nervously.

“If it’s too much—”

Bodhi clutches at Luke’s left hand where he’s fisted it in the blankets, as the sensation of Luke’s omnipresent touch, his talented invisible fingers, threatens to drown him, but there is nothing to swim against, nothing to fight. “I’m okay—oh, stars, please tell me this is not something Chirrut taught you —”

“No.” Luke laughs, and moves his hand in the air a little, and Bodhi closes his eyes, falling away. He pants as Luke’s invisible grasp on his body tightens, feeling his heartbeat racing like the rise of a cresting wave. And then Luke is settling into his lap, kissing him, holding onto them both with his actual hand, gentler than the Force, and Bodhi arches up into it, crying out and shuddering in the curve of Luke’s body, waves breaking one after the other on the shore.


Luke draws patterns on Bodhi’s back, absently; he thinks they might be for squadron maneuvers, or new formations. “I wanted to touch you,” he says. “I like—watching you, but—it’s nicer to feel it myself. With my own hands.” He flattens his palm against Bodhi’s shoulder blade and strokes his
fingers up across the back of Bodhi’s neck.

“Mm,” Bodhi murmurs, and then he flinches, just a fraction, as Luke’s fingertips hesitate over the scar at the base of his neck—“No, it’s okay,” he says, quickly, as Luke shifts beneath him. “You just surprised me.”

“Is it from—”

“Yeah,” Bodhi says, and pushes his hair off of his neck so Luke can see. “Don’t actually remember if it was the monster that did it, or if it was because I was trying to get away, like my wrists, but it’s okay. I’m not going to panic.”

“I know,” Luke says, warmly, and then, “What time did you say you’re scheduled to depart?”

Bodhi raises his head to check the chrono—“Oh, fuck me—”

Luke snorts, his eyes sparkling, and he opens his mouth to point out—

“Not funny, Grizz already thinks this is why—” Bodhi rolls out of Luke’s arms and dives into their ‘fresher, calling over his shoulder, “Luke, can you use the Force to find my brush—never mind, I put it right here—”

“Are you packed?” Luke sticks his head into the ‘fresher while Bodhi’s towelling off, thirty seconds later.

“Yeah, yeah, I think I’m all good to go, except for—well—” Bodhi gestures down at himself.

Luke grins and hands him a clean shirt and pants. Bodhi scrambles into his clothes, holding onto Luke for balance. “I hope the B-wings are everything Ackbar says they are—have fun testing them —”

“I’ll see if I can steal you a two-seater so we can both fly,” Luke says, urging him towards the door.

“I don’t have another name picked out,” Bodhi protests, shoving his boots on and scooping up his pack as the door slides open.


The door hisses shut, and Bodhi is all the way down the corridor and in the turbolift before he realizes—

*Shit!*

_He said it again!_

Chapter End Notes

This, uh, would be the romantic comedy portion of the thing, I guess? :D

Translation:
稀飯: rice porridge, or congee

Hutt food:
Yes, the Galactic Phrase Book and Travel Guide notes that all of these foods are delicacies, but let's assume Luke got to have them, like, once, and remembered them fondly.

The fast food franchises of the GFFA are: Biscuit Baron and Flangth-2-Go (Note: NO ONE KNOWS WHAT FLANGTH IS.)

And, the crowning glory of GFFA food: THE GIANT AMORPHOUS BANTHA BREAKFAST BISCUIT. Cassian and Jyn think it's an urban legend, but IT IS REAL.

Thanks to morag for the conversation weeks? months? ago about this, uh, stuff. :D (And for that other thing. You know the one.)

And thanks--we are DAYS AWAY from Hoth, here, dear readers. But still............not.....yet. Hang in there!!! <3
(It's late, for me--I'll respond to comments from the last chapter tomorrow!! <3 <3 <3)
Chapter 53

Chapter Summary

That’s all I’ve been trying to do.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

If Grizz notices Bodhi’s preoccupation during the preflight sequence, he’s polite enough not to say anything, and eventually Bodhi sets his anxiety over Luke aside to focus on his ship, and their supply run out to the safe world of Maldra IV.

They’ve worked hard on the Beru, despite Bodhi’s instincts proving right about the availability of parts for his third ship. The targeting computer is finally properly calibrated for multiple sequential targets, or so Bodhi thinks. And the deflector shields, which Joma had accidentally overloaded as they’d left Vulpter, are back in peak condition, or as close to it as using substandard generators gets.

“Wish you were going with the squadron to pick up the B-wings?” Grizz asks, when they’re weaving between ships on their way out.

“Not really,” Bodhi says. “I’m sure they’re what the Rebellion needs, but that kind of flying—those ships, they’re not for me.”

“Luke never let you try out his X-wing?”

Bodhi casts a curious glance at Grizz. “That supposed to be another crack about my sex life?”

Grizz hesitates, then huffs a little laugh as Bodhi ventures half a smile at him. “You really never flew anything but cargo shuttles?”

“Yeah,” Bodhi says. “Mostly Zeta-class shuttles when I was in the Empire, like the one I took from Eadu.” He pulls back on the lever to jump to hyperspace, and turns to Grizz. “If you had your pick, that’s what you’d want? An X-wing?”

Grizz nods reflexively, then scratches at his ear. “Probably. Or something else small and fast. Not like—uh—no offense—”

“All my ships are fast,” Bodhi says, proudly. “Okay, maybe not as fast as the Falcon, but they’ll outpace anything SFS or Incom built in their line. Um, or they will, now.”

Grizz snorts, but he says, almost reverently, “Nothing’s faster than the Falcon.”

Bodhi raises his eyebrows. “When Solo and Chewbacca get back, I could ask them to give you a tour, if you want.” The flabbergasted look on Grizz’s face—“He’s friends with Luke,” Bodhi mutters defensively.

“Uh-huh,” Grizz says. An awkward silence falls between them for a few minutes, and then Grizz asks, “You ever want to fly a TIE fighter?”
Bodhi can’t manage to stop himself from cringing.

“It’s just a question,” Grizz says, looking at him sidelong.

“I wasn’t good enough,” Bodhi says, flatly.

“Oh, that’s a load of bantha fodder.” Grizz rolls his eyes.

Bodhi makes a face. “Like you would know how well I can fly—all we’ve been on is straight runs in and out—”


“He’s not like that,” Bodhi retorts. “And—and that’s your sound reasoning for why I’d be good enough to fly a TIE fighter?”

“I didn’t ask if you were good enough to fly one,” Grizz points out. “I asked you if you wanted to. Every pilot I ever met talked about giving it a shot, even if most of ‘em would crash and burn inside of a couple minutes. I’d jump in one of those eyeballs, just to say I did.”

“Okay, yes, fine, I wanted to,” Bodhi says. “Everybody in my class did, even though TIEs are death traps and TIE pilots are—something else, but I wasn’t cut out for—for it then, and I’m not cut out for it now.”

Grizz peers at him. “‘It’ being—?”

“Flying a weapon,” Bodhi says, tersely.

Grizz wordlessly gestures at the firing controls in front of him.

“That’s your job,” Bodhi says, and then, almost out of reflex, the words come tumbling out over each other. “I—I can’t. I tried. I fucked up my test scores because I couldn’t, and I failed every simulation after Yavin, and—look, I killed some people on Eadu, some stormtroopers, and I think I knew them, right? Like I might’ve gone and had drinks with them after a shift change, or something—I can’t do it. I won’t—I won’t ask you not to, if we have to defend ourselves, but I—” He sighs. “I need you to understand that, okay?”

Grizz purses his lips. “You ever shot a blaster before?”

Bodhi laughs, weakly, and tries to pretend his hands aren’t shaking. “Yeah. When I was on Thyferra, for all the good that did me.”

“Huh,” Grizz says. “I gotta admit, Bodhi, I really don’t get you.”

“What part?”

Grizz shrugs. “I thought you got lucky with—with your ships, and the way people treat you, ‘cause you got—lucky, and then I thought I was wrong, it was for what you must’ve done in battle, but now—” He shakes his head.

“I don’t know what to tell you.” Bodhi lifts his hands helplessly. “I—look, think what you want, I’m just trying to make things right. That’s all I’ve been trying to do.”

“Right,” Grizz says, slowly. “Okay.” He goes quiet, and Bodhi wonders if he’d screwed up, somehow, by telling the truth again. Even after logging dozens of hours working with him, Grizz is still hard to read, as closed-off as an airlock against the vacuum of space.
“I’ll tell you, though,” Bodhi ventures, after some time passes in silence. “Those B-wings? Luke’s excited about them, but I’m not sure they’re much better than the T-65s.”

“Oh yeah?”

Bodhi shakes his head. “I mean, the ionization reactor, that’s pretty interesting, nice not to have to refuel as often, but it’s not as fast, and it’s got a way bigger hull.”

“Bigger target,” Grizz muses.

Bodhi points at him. “Exactly—I don’t care how far you can rotate the cockpit if your ass end is hanging out in space—”

“But you need more hull for the greater weapons capacity,” Grizz argues. “How many torpedoes compared to an X-wing?”

“Twice as many,” Bodhi says.

“You might not want it, but I’ll take twice the firepower,” Grizz says, flashing a sudden grin, and they fall to amiable bickering over ships, though neither of them likes Y-wings all that much, and there’s more compromise to be had regarding capital ships and freighters. Bodhi accidentally lets slip that he had flown the Falcon, and Grizz swallows his obvious envy to hound him for every detail.

The navicomputer beeps the alert, and they drop out of hyperspace, streaks of light resolving back into individual stars. And the safe world of Maldra IV is—

—is—

“Fuck.” Bodhi’s heart is in his throat at the sight of the Star Destroyer hanging over the planet’s surface like a memory, the TIE fighters swarming beneath its angular evil shadow. He slaps at the controls for the shields, trying to decide what to do in the seconds before the Imperials detect them in-system—but the TIEs are returning to the Star Destroyer, not attacking—

“What—are they leaving?”

“No, no, they must’ve—they’re getting ready to hit the base,” Bodhi says, horrified, staring at the smoke rising from the southern continent. He takes a precious split-second to tell the computer to scan the base, flying the Beru out of range of the Star Destroyer’s tractor beams.

“Bodhi—”

“Yeah, yeah—” Bodhi gulps anxiously, as a half a dozen TIEs break off course and start to fly at them, spitting emerald laserfire. “Maybe there’s still a chance, maybe we can get down there and evacuate—” He spirals out of the line of fire, throwing a glance at Grizz—and then he pauses, and looks more closely at Grizz’s stricken expression. “Hey—hey, if you can keep those TIEs off us, Grizz, I need you to—”

Grizz flinches, and comes back to life, eyes blazing. “Are you crazy? That’s a Star Destroyer—they’ve already—there’s no way—”

“I have to try,” Bodhi insists, clenching his teeth and plunging past the incoming TIEs ringing shots off the Beru’s armored hull towards Maldra IV’s lightly cloud-mottled surface. His heart pounds in his ears. “Come on, Grizz, if there’s anyone down there—we can’t just leave them—” He toggles the comms, quashing the memory of Tonc’s urgent voice in his mind. “Shuttle Beru to anyone who can hear me—we’re going to try to get you out—”
“But their shield is gone, there’s troops on the ground, Bodhi, this is impossible—” Grizz babbles, even as he grabs the firing controls, spraying red laser blasts at the TIEs coming at them from all sides. “Dammit, no one warned me you were—”

“I’m not going to leave them!” Bodhi banks out of the path of a pair of bombers diverting from their own descent to chase him—the Beru shakes, but the shields hold. I won’t. I can do this—

“They’re not using missiles against us?” Grizz takes out one bomber—the other Imperial apparently thinks better of coming at them again and resumes its course for the planet.

Bodhi shakes his head, and pushes auxiliary power to the engines, desperate to eke out more speed. “Gonna need them to take out the base.” He scans quickly for more bombers and finds another pair a few degrees to starboard, hundreds of kilometers closer to the surface. “There—”

But Grizz doesn’t shoot at them; he’s frowning hard at the Beru’s computer display. “We’re getting a transmission!”

Bodhi chances a frantic look at the comms; they’re not lighting up. “Is that a—a data transmission? Why aren’t they responding to comms?”

“Watch out!” Grizz yelps, and Bodhi swerves to starboard as a handful more TIE fighters converge on their position. “Bodhi, there’s no way—even if we get down to the surface, there’s too many—”

“Full complement on a Star Destroyer is forty—forty-eight TIEs,” Bodhi stammers, cursing that part of his memory as he dives for the too-scant cloud cover. “Twelve bombers, and you’ve already—we’re down to eleven, we can do this—dammit, what are they sending us?”

“I don’t know, I don’t know.” Grizz cries, firing back wildly at their pursuers. “Oh, blast, they’ve started bombing runs—Bodhi, we’re too—”

“No,” Bodhi snaps, willing Grizz wrong. “We can still—we’re a thousand kilometers out, I can do this—”

Emerald light lances the sky, and for a terrible heart-stopping moment Bodhi thinks it’s the Death Star, arrived over Maldra IV to finish them off for good. But it’s only—only—turbolaser fire, searing the horizon in three successive blasts, the explosions so loud Bodhi can hear them inside the ship as it shakes from the shockwave.

And then there is only smoke and ash and silence, and Bodhi grips the controls so hard his fingers hurt.

“Fuck,” Grizz whispers, and blasts an incoming TIE bomber cleanly out of the sky. “Fuck.”

“The transmission cut off,” Bodhi says, looking at the computer display. He doesn’t recognize the sound of his own voice; it sounds far too calm to be his. His eyes blur, but yes, they’d received—whatever the people on Maldra IV had deemed more important to send than a call for help.

“Did we get it?” Grizz asks, his voice trembling.

“I think—” Bodhi says, hoarsely. “Oh, stars, I hope—” He jerks his head up as the Beru shakes again. “We have to scan for survivors.”

“No! We have to go,” Grizz yells at him. “Please, sir, there’s nothing—the base is gone, there’s nothing left, please—”
Bodhi smacks the computer display, his hands shaking. “No, no no no, there’s got to be—I got them out, I can get them out—”

“Bodhi!” Grizz screams in his face, panicked. “We have to leave!” Bodhi jolts back into his chair. A TIE fighter explodes overhead, raining dust and molten durasteel onto the viewport. The debris cloud on the horizon shadows the sun—the sky of falling stone—

No.

I’m the pilot.

I have to bring back the message.

“Okay, okay,” Bodhi says, forcing his grief and his memories aside, and starts punching in coordinates for the jump. “Think you can keep the rest of those Imperial fuckers off us?”

“Yes, sir,” Grizz snaps out, and Bodhi pulls the _Beru_ around, hard, tearing up through atmosphere for deep space. He keeps them well clear of the Star Destroyer, mindful of both tractor beams and the turbolasers slowly coming to bear on them—tries not to wince as Grizz blows TIE fighter after TIE fighter to pieces—

The navicomputer beeps, and Bodhi grabs for the lever, yanks it home, and Grizz shouts in relief as the stars turn to streaks. “Bodhi, _Bodhi_—” He punches Bodhi on the shoulder, hard, and then lurches out of his seat and down into the hold to be sick.

Bodhi covers his face with his quaking hands and tries to hold himself together as the memory of the last flight off Jedha crashes over him with the weight of thousands of tons of unyielding rock. But he shakes, and shakes, and can’t get himself under control again.

It was supposed to be safe.

For them—for us—

I failed. I failed. I—

Something makes an unfamiliar sound behind him, in the hold, and Bodhi jolts out of his jumbled, anguished thoughts. “Grizz?” He looks over his shoulder, but his co-pilot doesn’t emerge forward again. Bodhi unstraps, and goes back to discover Grizz huddled next to an empty cargo container, his expression hollowed-out.

“Grizz?” Bodhi says, softly. _Oh, shit. He really is like me._ “Hey—”

“I get why I don’t belong with Rogue Squadron now,” Grizz says, lowering his head into the circle of his arms.

“What? No, no, you were great, you—you—” Bodhi drops to his knees next to him, his own misery forgotten. “You’re a better shot than I’ll ever be.”

Grizz lifts his face to look Bodhi in the eye. “I would’ve run.”

“No,” Bodhi says, eager to bolster the man’s sinking heart; anything to take his mind off of the looming shadow of his own despair. “No, you—”

“We were alone. I would’ve seen that Star Destroyer and fucking cut and run, and you—you can’t even _fight_ and you were going to try to _save them_?” Grizz lashes out and grabs Bodhi’s arm.
“I had to try,” Bodhi says, weakly, looking at Grizz’s hand gripping the sleeve of his jacket. “It’s stupid, I know, but—”

“You didn’t even think about it, you just—you just—and even when there was no possible way—you are a damn hero,” Grizz says, to Bodhi’s absolute horror.

Bodhi shakes Grizz’s hand off his arm. “Don’t. They died.”

Grizz opens his mouth as if to say something else, but nothing comes out, and he sinks back into himself, miserably.

After a moment, Bodhi sighs, and pushes himself around to sit next to Grizz, their shoulders touching. He leans his head back against the cargo container. “So—the hyperdrive on a B-wing—”

*****

The transmission the Rebels on Maldra IV sent is a holorecord.

Draven plays ten seconds of it in his office, stops it, and looks sternly at Bodhi, who’d gone straight to his office as soon as they’d docked, Grizz on his heels, looking more like himself again. “Go get Cassian and Jyn.”

“Sir, I could just comm them—”

“Now, Bodhi,” Draven orders, and Bodhi bolts out the door.

When Bodhi finds them talking to Leia, and haltingly explains what had happened—Leia’s face goes white, and Jyn presses her lips together in the thinnest line possible. “Draven—Draven sent me to get you—I think he doesn’t want me to see it, but—but I was there, I know they’re all dead, I—”

Cassian grabs him by the shoulders. “Bodhi—”

“It was supposed to be a safe world,” Bodhi mumbles, starting to lose control all over again as Leia gazes at him, her lovely dark eyes terribly sad. “It—oh, stars.” He sags in Cassian’s grasp, abruptly exhausted, the adrenaline of finding out what they’d brought draining away. He wishes Luke hadn’t gone to pick up the B-wings.

“Let’s go back to Draven,” Leia says. “If you want to see the holo, I’ll ask him to show it to you.”

“I don’t think that is such a good idea.” Cassian throws a worried look at her.

Leia raises her eyebrows at him. “Bodhi can be the judge of that.”

Bodhi doesn’t think it’s such a good idea, either, after Draven reluctantly starts to play the holorecording again, and it becomes very clear that it’s five hours of footage of the bombardment, as if someone had pointed a holocamera at the battle and then run off to join the fight. But he manages to watch the entire thing, even though Draven pauses it again, when the children are shepherded into the base for safety; Jyn makes a small, choked-off sound, and Grizz breaks down, a helpless sob wrenching out of his throat—

“You don’t need to see this,” Draven says, to Grizz, more gently than Bodhi would have expected, and sends him away.

And after it’s done, all five hours of it, Leia says, “Half an hour later and you would’ve flown over nothing, and we’d not have a clue what had happened.”
Bodhi stares at her. Stares at Draven, who’s rewound the recording and is studying the image of
stormtroopers smashing into the base, shortly before the Star Destroyer had finally blown it to
oblivion. “I—I failed, Your Highness,” Bodhi says, and Jyn reaches over to touch his hand, her
brow furrowing. “I didn’t—we lost a safe world—all the people we just saw in this holo—”

“It is a terrible loss,” Leia agrees, softly. “The cruelty of the Empire will not go unanswered. But you
didn’t—”

There’s a chime at the door, and the Bothan aide Bodhi remembers from Thila Base pokes her head
in. Her fur is ruffled up in distress, and she’s clutching a datapad tightly to her chest. “Sorry to
disturb you, sir, Princess Leia, but we’ve just picked up something off the NewsNets that you should
see.”

“Not right now,” Draven says.

“It’s about—” She narrows her eyes at Bodhi, and then at Jyn and Cassian, and says, “It’s about one
of our safe worlds, sir.”

“Maldra IV?” Leia asks, and the aide nods, her eyes widening again. “I think we’d better have it,”
Leia says, holding out her hand for the datapad, not looking to Draven for confirmation. The aide
gives it to her.

“I’ll call you back if we need you,” Draven says, dismissively. “Thank you.”

Leia waits until the door’s slid shut behind her again, and then she says, flatly, “Well, the Empire is
claiming Captain Briera was investigating rumors of pirates on Maldra IV, discovered a Rebel
training base, and was promptly attacked. Imperial estimates suggest that there was enough firepower
on Maldra IV to threaten the entire Shadola region.”

“It was a safe world,” Jyn snaps, indignantly. “Leia—this cannot—we have to counter with the
truth.”

“Let me finish,” Leia says, and Jyn crosses her arms and turns her face away. “They assert that the
Rebels retreated to the munitions plant—”

“What?” Bodhi says, distressed. “There was no—”

She flicks her gaze up to him for a second, and he closes his mouth.

“—and detonated the ordnance there rather than be taken alive, killing themselves and several squads
of Imperial stormtroopers.”

Bodhi trembles, and asks, “Did Briera—”

“Kill his own people?” Cassian nods, looking grim.

Leia taps the datapad against her palm. “It’s possible.” She nods at the holo. “The stormtroopers did
not leave the base again before the holo ended, after all.”

“Kelsek is going to use this as a pretext to attack civilians,” Jyn says, and Leia nods at her, and they
launch into a discussion of what to do about the holorecording, JAN, and a bunch of other resistance
cells Bodhi had known nothing about. It’s almost as if he isn’t there, except that Cassian keeps
looking at him, keeps touching his arm, his hand, checking on him.

“I’m okay,” Bodhi murmurs, pulling himself up straight in his chair. “I—I wish I hadn’t been too
late.”

“We would have lost you, too,” Cassian says, softly. “If you had gotten there any sooner, they would have killed you, or captured you again. As it was—” He grimaces, and Bodhi shudders, a little. “I’m glad you had Grizz with you.”

“Me, too,” Bodhi agrees, firmly. He looks back to Jyn and Leia again, and catches Draven watching them both, his face unreadable.

Nothing is settled, after another hour of discussion, and eventually Draven insists on putting a halt to it; Jyn’s started to glare at Leia and raise her voice, and what’s left of Bodhi’s control is wearing very thin as he tries to follow the winding paths of their plans. Plans he’s pretty sure he won’t be a part of, not if Draven has anything to say about it.

“We’ll reconvene tomorrow,” Draven says. “After you’ve all had a chance to consider the options.”

“You can’t—” Leia says, lifting her chin defiantly, but Draven rubs a weary hand over his mouth, looking at her, and she sighs and leaves ahead of Jyn and Cassian without a further word.

“I’ll catch up,” Bodhi says, when his friends look back at him. “I—I’m fine. I’ll be right out.” Cassian nods, resting his hand on the small of Jyn’s back as they step out.

“I’m not grounding you for this,” Draven says, turning off the holo and looking at Bodhi curiously. “You didn’t do anything less safe than usual. Go with your friends.”

“You’re not?” Bodhi blinks at him.

“To be perfectly honest, Bodhi, I’ve given up on finding ways to keep you safe,” Draven says, folding his arms. “Trouble comes to you like mynocks to a power supply. You’re just lucky you didn’t get killed today, or worse.” He raises his eyebrows at him. “That was what you wanted to ask, right? If I was going to keep you from flying again.”

Bodhi leans against the back of one of the chairs; trying to dig his fingers into its metal frame, not entirely reassured. “Yeah, but also—how I don’t—I don’t know how you and Leia and—Cassian—can be so calm about this—all of those people were killed, and you were talking about propaganda, and what JAN is going to do—”

“Princess Leia is not, typically, what I would call calm,” Draven says, dryly.

“Calmer than I am.”

Draven shrugs acknowledgement of that. “There is a lot to do,” he says. “You’re going back to Hoth in a few days, we’re all going to Hoth, and there’s just—” He sighs. “We all mourn, Bodhi. I promise you that.” He holds Bodhi’s gaze. “Was there anything else?”

Bodhi nods. “And—and I wanted to know if you thought Grizz was all right. You sent him off.”

There are tired lines deepening at the corners of Draven’s eyes. “He’ll be fine. You’re doing a good job with him.” He slides open a drawer in his desk and takes something out. “Which reminds me. I was going to give you this soon enough anyway, and after this latest, rather improbable mission—” Draven tosses something at Bodhi.

He catches it, startled, and—“Sir—”

“You did not fail today. I know you think—all right, I don’t know whatever the hell goes on inside
that head of yours, but you did more than anyone could have expected of you, under the circumstances,” Draven says. “You’ve got your ships; you’ve nearly got yourself a crew, if you count all the people I know have helped you out.” He nods at the badge in Bodhi’s hand. “Go ahead and grieve, but there is much, much more the Rebellion needs you to do, Captain.”

Chapter End Notes

And that’s the last of the section I’ve been thinking of as "Supplies-and-Safe-Worlds" ever since we went to Sanctuary, nine chapters ago. :) Here’s the Battle of Maldra IV.

I, uh, hope that worked okay. I will admit the reason I banged out these last two chapters fairly quickly is because I had set myself the goal of getting to Hoth on July 13th! While I intend to keep my promise and stop moving this particular goal post (there was a point where I was like "Hoth by Celebration!" SERIOUSLY? HAHA NO) and am honestly quite happy to spend my birthday writing, I do also want to accomplish a few other things tomorrow...

(...like watching Rogue One again, and maybe playing some fricking Skyrim for the first time in six months, and going to a nice dinner! But also I will try very very very hard to get Hoth going as well!)

Thanks, as always. <3
Chapter Summary

I've missed flying.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Bodhi stares at Draven, unexpected anger surging in his chest. He tries, desperately, to get his fury under control, but—they died, they all keep dying—“You’re making me a—a—” Bodhi clenches his fist around the rank badge so hard he can feel its raised pips imprinting on his bones. It’s burning a hole in his heart.

He hurls it back at Draven, who barely dodges out of the way, his mouth falling open in total shock.

“Captain,” Draven barks, but Bodhi charges ahead, heedless of the warning flash in Draven’s eyes.

“You can’t do this,” he shouts. “You can’t just—I fucked up, and you want to give me a blasted promotion? Hundreds of people died because I didn’t get there fast enough—might as well add them to my count, what’s another few hundred to the eleven million people on Jedha—”

“Bodhi—”

“—and oh, oh, what was it, two billion on Alderaan?” Bodhi’s panting, spots swimming in his vision; he has the sense that he should probably try to stop, but he can’t, and Luke isn’t here to slow him down—“I remember, you know—I remember you wouldn’t let me know anything having to do with Alderaan because you blamed me—you blamed Galen, too, but he’s dead and I’m here, and you were right, you’ve always been—I don’t deserve—”

“Bodhi,” Draven roars. “Shut up.”

Bodhi shuts up, shaking. He rubs a hand over his mouth, swiping with his fingertips at the tears that have begun to stream unbidden from his eyes. Stars. That was—

“You’ve had a difficult day,” Draven says, controlling his voice with an effort. “I can’t imagine what it must have been like for you out there. But don’t—presume to tell me—I do not blame—”

“I’m sorry, sir—” Bodhi straightens, horrified at himself and sick to his stomach.

“I am making you a captain because I think you can handle more responsibility,” Draven says, low. “You had a bit of a setback, but I told you before—”

Bodhi gives up trying to scrub at his face with his sleeve. “Does this look like I’m capable of handling it?”

Draven crosses his arms. “Shouting at me is a bit different than what you used to do, wouldn’t you say?”
“And crying, being insubordinate, and throwing things?” Bodhi says. “Oh, yes, that’s much better, sir, that’s—”

“Damnit, Bodhi,” Draven says. “You think your friends are any different? Ever since you all came back from Scarif, it hasn’t been just Jyn mouthing off—”

“I heard Cassian hit you,” Bodhi mutters, snidely.

“Would you kindly—” Draven rubs his eyes, wearily, and Bodhi clamps his mouth shut again. “Yes, a lot of good people died today. We lose people every day, Bodhi, that’s why we’re fighting this bloody fucking war, losing all of your people is why you’re fighting, isn’t it? It was not your fault.”

He bends down to retrieve Bodhi’s rank badge from where it had landed. “If anything—none of us had a damn clue Briera would be there.” Draven looks very, very tired, at that, holding the badge out to Bodhi. “Go get some rest.”

“Sir—” Bodhi struggles to get himself back under control, wanting to apologize.

“Take it and get out,” Draven snaps. “Before I change my mind about allowing you to keep flying.”

Bodhi gets out.

In the corridor, Jyn raises her eyebrows at him and says, “Draven still in one piece in there?”

“Yeah.” Bodhi looks at the badge in his hand again, feeling stunned and hollow. “Did you know—”

“No,” Jyn says. “That was all—him. Not us, but I’m glad, anyway.” She takes it out of his hand and stretches up to pin it on his jacket, and despite his weariness and grief, the last of his strange simmering rage, Bodhi finds it in himself to smile at her.

“Come on,” Cassian says. “Stay with us tonight.”

Bodhi shakes his head. “I’ll be all right.”

“You’re sure,” Jyn says.

“Yeah. You don’t need to—no one tried to get in my head, no one even had a chance to lay a finger on me. It’s just—I can handle it.” He leans over to kiss the top of her head, and tries to manage a smile for Cassian, too. “Thanks.”

But Bodhi can’t sleep, missing Luke’s comforting warmth at his side, replaying his frantic, futile flight and the worst bits of the holorecording in his head. What he’d screamed at Draven. And after another sleepless hour spent soaking tears into his pillow, he folds.

Kaytoo answers their door, and Bodhi nearly turns and runs to Yraka’Nes for sedatives, instead, feeling kind of small under Kaytoo’s steady gaze. But Kaytoo merely hands him a pillow and pushes him towards the bunk; Cassian mumbles something reassuring and goes back to sleep.

Jyn gets off the bed, though, making up a nest for herself on the floor. She watches Bodhi through half-lidded but alert and piercing eyes as he curls up against Cassian, and reaches for his hand, her fingers small inside his grasp. It’s almost as if she wants the reassurance as much as he does, and he wonders if she’d done this with her father when she had trouble sleeping, or had nightmares, back before Galen had left and her mother had died.

Bodhi holds on to her hand until he falls asleep, but without Luke, whatever nightmares Bodhi has
come and go unnoticed.

*****

The last week and a half or so that Bodhi lives on the Redemption is a somber blur; the loss of Maldra IV overshadows everything and everyone.

Bodhi and Grizz can’t run supplies out to Hoth when they’d lost the supplies to be run. And further trips to any of their safe worlds are on hold, until Draven can sort out the truth behind Briera’s claim that he’d been looking for pirates when he’s stumbled on Maldra IV. He wonders about Celina, if she’d given Vulpter to the Empire, from the Beru’s logs when she’d had him, but no one mentions any Imperial attacks in the Deep Core, and he breathes a little easier.

A couple of days after his disastrous run to Maldra IV, Bodhi gets a visit from a Lieutenant Deeve from Support Services; he’s a tracker from Arporatal-Lanin, the scout who’d found several of the Rebellion’s safe worlds, though he’s reluctant to name which ones.

“I’ve been to Sanctuary, you know,” Bodhi says. “Vulpter, too.”

“I’m aware,” Deeve says, carefully. “But there’s currently no call for you to go to the other remaining safe worlds; none of the others have the kind of resources that the Rebellion requires. Thus, you don’t need to know where they are.” He shifts from foot to foot restlessly. “And anyway, Captain—” Bodhi’s stopped wincing at the title, after Kaytoo had pointed out that any civilian with their own ship was entitled to it, and even certain smugglers—“I’m not here about our existing safe worlds, but establishing new ones.” Deeve holds out a datapad with a familiar report on it.

“That’s got all my scans and recommendations,” Bodhi says, uncertainly. “I don’t know what you need me to do.”

“Knowing what you know now from visiting Sanctuary, and Vulpter, and Maldra IV—which of the worlds you found do you think are safe?” Deeve asks.

“None of them,” Bodhi mutters, but he takes the datapad, shaking his head apologetically at Deeve as his eyes narrow at that comment. Bodhi’s face heats up as he scans the list and sees Aquilaris and Ord Ibanna; he crosses those off immediately, in case there are other podracing enthusiasts who might go looking. Shuldene has too many tourists, but Golrath or Togominda might do, though both worlds had been exceptionally harsh. And Bodhi crosses Arbra off, decisively, remembering Luke’s uncharacteristic fear, the despair of his nightmare cries.

“Why not Arbra?” Deeve asks, when Bodhi hands the list back.

“Luke said no,” Bodhi answers. He points at the datapad. “You must’ve read the notes.”

“No offense to Commander Skywalker, but one rough night is hardly enough evidence not to settle there,” Deeve says.

Bodhi shakes his head. “I believed him then. I still believe him.”

Deeve strokes his chin horns thoughtfully. “It’s too bad Îmwe wasn’t there to verify it.”

“Yeah,” Bodhi says, imagining Kaytoo’s exasperation if he’d had been a seventh wheel. “Too bad.”

*****

Leia and Jyn coordinate with Mon Mothma to put out a statement condemning the attack and the lies
of the Empire. Admiral Dorat, whom Bodhi hadn’t seen since their return from Jerrilek, lends his voice and name to it as well, calling Briera out for his dishonorable attack on an innocent refugee population and the blatant falsehoods he’d attempted to perpetrate afterwards. Bodhi is a little afraid they’ll want him—or Grizz—to add something, but Leia thinks it’d be too much, though she doesn’t clarify for whom it’ll be too much.

He worries about Grizz, though.

Grizz helps Bodhi clean the carbon scoring on the Beru’s hull and make repairs, and he’s apparently spending his off-hours learning everything he can about the Guardians of the Whills. Which doesn’t entirely explain why Grizz is even more reticent than usual, because as far as Bodhi understands, there’s never been a vow of silence involved with their faith.

He tries to draw Grizz out the way Luke had helped him, over and over again, by talking about ships, his occasionally misspent youth betting on speeder races. But Grizz just—listens, quietly, and Bodhi wonders if Chirrut and Baze are really helping him at all.

“Grizz is coping,” Baze observes, one evening over tea. He’s developed a disturbing habit of dunking ration bars in tarine tea—apparently the only way to make both palatable to him. “His own way. 他不像你羅嗦.”

“Okay,” Bodhi says, doubtfully.

Chirrut elbows him gently. “It will be all right. He is learning the war is not what he thought it was. That battles are hard-won, not the exciting tales he has heard about X-wing pilots. Nothing to be jealous of.” He pauses. “Shit you already know.”

“Right,” Bodhi says, looking into his teacup. “Just, um, keep me updated, on—on how he’s doing?”

Chirrut grins in his direction. “Of course, Captain.”

Baze pours more of his reviled tarine tea into Bodhi’s cup to replace the mouthful Bodhi spits out in surprise.

*****

And then Luke comes home with the squadron, without the promised B-wings.

“We ran into some problems,” Luke says, casually, as Artoo does the Binary equivalent of rolling his eyes, simultaneously pointing out the damage to the X-wing to Bodhi. “I’m so sorry. Admiral Ackbar passed along what happened, and we got the NewsNet statement from Leia, too. Are you—”


“Okay,” Luke says, and kisses his cheek. “Wait, something’s different about you—” He holds Bodhi away from him, giving him a thorough once-over, and then he turns his head and shouts, joyfully, “Wedge! Bodhi made Captain!”

“What?” Wedge yells, from where he’s supervising the extraction of his R5 unit from its socket.

“Luke, wait—” Bodhi starts, but there’s no stopping him. Luke grabs his hand and drags him over to Wedge who nearly falls off the ladder to salute him, mock-gravely, and then Hobbie and Janson have to get some of their own jibes in, and before Bodhi realizes it, he’s laughing for the first time in a long while—
Then he frowns, looking at the damage to all the X-wings, not just Luke’s. “The B-wings—?”

Zev says, “Well, sir, the Imperials finally got wind of Ackbar’s secret project and sent around a few gunboats—”

“—but then a Habassan corvette hopped in out of nowhere, so we evacuated the facility with all the fighters,” Kasan puts in.

“—and then we got a distress call from the Maria, so Luke had to convince the Habassans to take us there so we could help,” Hobbie says. “We ended up leaving the B-wings with the Maria, they’re stretched a bit thin for fighters.”

“Oh,” Bodhi says. Then he looks at Zev. “Did you just call me sir?”

“Yes.” Zev pats him on the shoulder. “Grizz doing okay?”

“Yeah—yeah, I think he’s all right,” Bodhi says. “I think he wants to get out and fly again—I know I do.”

“Ackbar said we’re shipping out to Hoth next,” Hobbie offers.

“Without him,” Kasan gripes. “Lucky fishhead doesn’t have to freeze his flippers off,”

“He would literally die,” Janson says, offended on the admiral’s behalf, and their subsequent arguing—born out of prolonged, constant contact in too-close quarters—is Luke and Bodhi’s cue to slip away.

But not far; Bodhi’s been working on the Cadera, and Luke’s excited to see what he’s done with the power converters. Though he’s also just—excited to be home, wriggling out of the upper half of his flightsuit and nudging Bodhi up against the jump seat. “I’m glad Draven went and made you a captain,” Luke says. He rubs his thumb over the pips on Bodhi’s insignia, looking pleased, and then he puts his hands on the sides of Bodhi’s face and kisses him.

“Just of my own ships,” Bodhi demurs, warming to his touch. “Which—um—Grizz and Joma are flying the Beru to Hoth, and Cassian and Kaytoo are taking the Galen, so—will you—will you fly the Cadera out with me? I’ve missed—flying with you.”

“Are you kidding?” Luke stops messing about and holds Bodhi by the shoulders, the way Cassian does when he’s going to shake him. “I’ve been wanting to fly with you again for months. Of course I’ll go with you—I’ll have Artoo take my X-wing, I don’t think it’ll fit in the Cadera.”


“You’re going to be a great captain,” Luke murmurs, pressing kisses along his jawline. “D’you want—”

“I’m averting my eyes,” Wedge calls, mockingly, from the ramp. “But I’m coming in anyway.”

Luke groans against Bodhi’s lips, but he doesn’t pull away more than necessary to talk to their friend. “Yeah, what is it, Wedge?”

“Leia wants to talk to you about the Habassans,” Wedge says, as he smirks at Bodhi. “Your comlink’s off.”
“Oh, all right.” Luke huffs out a sigh, reluctantly letting go of Bodhi.

“I’ll see you later—we have to pack,” Bodhi says. Luke nods, and sneaks one more kiss before he leaves. And, for the first time since he’d returned from Maldra IV, at the sight of Luke bounding down the ramp, unhurt and unworried, happy, Bodhi’s heart lightens.

*****

The Redemption is a whirlwind of activity as much of its population prepares to depart for Hoth. Yraka’Nes isn’t coming with them, but she gladly supervises transferring more medical equipment to Bodhi’s ships.

“Thank you,” Bodhi says, sincerely, catching her when she’s about to leave for her regular duties. “For— for everything. If you ever need a cargo pilot—I’ll fly right back and help you out.”

“And my offer still stands, don’t forget,” Yraka’Nes replies. She smiles at him. “Oh, and watch out for Dak, would you?” Bodhi turns, and spots Dak with a duffel swinging from his hand, gaping around at the commotion on his way to the Beru. “He’ll be officially transferred to Rogue Squadron on Hoth,” Yraka’Nes says. “Shame to lose him from the medical team, but he’ll be a good pilot.”


“Be careful out there,” Yraka’Nes says, hugging him.

But that’s really the only goodbye; everyone else Bodhi’s come to know is shipping out, too. Rogue Squadron is suited up for their X-wings, though Kasan hangs around the Beru “helping” a slightly oblivious-seeming Joma. Her fumbling attempts at flirting appear to be endearing Kasan to Grizz, anyway, and Bodhi’s glad of it; if the squadron making asses out of themselves is what it takes to bring Grizz around on them, then he has a few more ideas in mind for that.

Maddel, Calfor, and Roja—and some more ground troops and spies Bodhi doesn’t know—pack the Galen’s hold again, along with a sizeable armory, including some weapons in Jyn’s arsenal which Draven scrutinizes for too long and then ultimately pretends he didn’t see. No one dares to poke around in any of the cargo containers that Baze has Kaytoo load onto the ship.

And Leia, aided in very small part by Threepio, packs a truly staggering amount of crates onto the Cadera—

“What is all this?” Luke asks, baffled, helping Bodhi stack and strap them in place. They’re not heavy enough to be weapons, and he hadn’t thought of Leia as a particularly well-armored diplomat, anyway.

“What is all what?” Leia says, defensively.

Threepio explains, helpfully, “They are Mistress Leia’s belongings, Master Luke.”

“I didn’t see an inventory for your belongings,” Luke says, making as if he’s going to pry open one of the crates—


“All of it?” The words are out of Bodhi’s mouth before he can stop himself. Threepio turns a disapproving look on him.

Leia says, “You think that’s something, you should see what Captain Andor’s got stowed on the
“Oh?” Bodhi says, curious. He pulls up the inventory on his datapad, and snorts as he scrolls through an itemized list of coats, mostly, and some more blasters. “Huh. Is Cassian planning to outfit the entire Intelligence department?”

“Captain Andor is a very practical man,” Threepio says, peering over his shoulder. “Hoth is quite the unforgiving planet, or so I’ve heard.”

“Didn’t realize there were so many different ways to wear white,” Luke says to Leia.

She makes a face at him, but says, “Ready to go, Bodhi?”

“Yeah, one sec,” Bodhi says, shutting down his datapad and looking out at the rest of his ships. “I’ll be right back.” He jogs down the ramp and over to the Beru— “Everything set? You’ve got the coordinates for the jumps?”

“Grizz and I are fine, Bodhi, don’t worry,” Joma says. “Kasan’s even offered to escort us.” She smiles at Kasan, who goes pink. “We’ll meet you on Hoth.”

The roar of the X-wings’ engines is nearly deafening as he checks in with Cassian, but Cassian is just audible enough. “We’ve got everyone on board. It’s a bit—”

“Cramped, I know, but Rieekan said there weren’t any transports to spare our way at the moment—” Bodhi shrugs in apology.

Cassian squeezes his arm. “It’s no problem. Bodhi, I haven’t had a chance to say—you have done so many things no one thought were possible. So many good things for the Rebellion. You should be proud to be a captain.” He hesitates. “Galen would have been proud of you.”

Bodhi trembles, wondering at Cassian willingly bringing up Jyn’s father to him. “Thanks, Cassian.”

Cassian kisses his cheek. “Once we’re settled on Hoth, we should talk about what you want to do next.”

“Let’s get there first, okay?” Bodhi says, anxiously.

Cassian smiles and claps him on the shoulder. “Okay.”

“Let’s go,” Kaytoo calls down impatiently from the cockpit, and Cassian nods to Bodhi and turns to go up into the Galen with Jyn and the rest of their original Rogue One team.

Bodhi looks around the hangar of the Redemption one last time, and then he walks back to his ship, feeling a little silly as he settles into his seat next to Luke, the preflight sequence already completed. “I could’ve done the check-in over comms.”

“Face-to-face means you know that they’re listening to you,” Luke says, helpfully. “Well. I assume they’re listening to me, but I think Hobbie’s gotten good at maintaining eye contact even if his mind’s elsewhere.”

“You should see what my meetings are like,” Leia puts in, dryly.

Threepio starts, “I can recount the latest for you, I keep detailed records of all—”

“No, that’s quite all right, Threepio.” Luke shudders, throwing a glance at Leia over his shoulder; she shrugs, a tiny rueful smile playing over her lips. “Well, shall we get out of here?” Bodhi nods,
resting his hands on the controls.

Ahead of them, Rogue Squadron’s X-wings are gliding out of the hangar bay and forming up. “You probably could’ve let Dak fly yours,” Leia says, peering out the viewport at them. “Instead of Artoo.”

“Yeah, not yet,” Luke says. “I trust Dak—he was Bodhi’s co-pilot before, but Artoo can be a little —”

The Cadera’s comm crackles to life, and the deck officer says, “Rogue One, you’re cleared for departure. And—Captain—may the Force be with you.”

Luke’s grinning at him—“Copy that,” Bodhi says, and lifts off.

*****

Leia promptly hustles away the second they land on Hoth, claiming she’s got an important meeting. Luke frowns at her, but doesn’t say anything; as busy as he is, Leia’s likely three times as bad, even if Bodhi has no idea who she could’ve scheduled a meeting with on Hoth when they’ve all only just arrived. Threepio follows, more slowly, though he stops and waits for Artoo to be extracted from his socket so they can trundle after her together.

“Never thought I’d see this place again,” Luke says, looking out the viewport as Bodhi starts shutting things down. He shivers. “Is it ever going to stop snowing?”

“Probably not,” Bodhi says, watching Kem Monnon greeting his friends as they disembark; Cassian hides his wince at Kem’s grip well, but Chirrut apparently takes it as a bit of a challenge—

Luke follows his gaze to where Chirrut’s steadfastly shaking Kem’s hand and probably talking his ear off, judging from Baze’s resigned expression. “I wonder, sometimes, what Obi-Wan would’ve thought about them.”

“You’ve asked if they ever met any Jedi, right?” Bodhi says, turning his attention back to his ship.

“Yeah, of course,” Luke answers. “But you know how they are—couldn’t get a straight answer out of Master Îmwe, and Baze just wouldn’t talk about it at all.” He sighs, and looks down at the console —“What are you doing?”

“Testing the hyperdrive regulator as a way to keep the engines warm,” Bodhi says. He glances up into Luke’s eyes. “It was an idea I had after—after we were here the first time, but I didn’t have a chance to experiment much in the right conditions—”

“Plenty of time to test that later,” Luke says, cheerfully. “Let’s go, I want to see our quarters, and— we can—um—”

“Experiment with keeping each other warm?” Bodhi suggests, lightly, and Luke nods, his eyes bright.

There are more than a few people waiting by the south entrance when Bodhi and Luke disembark from the Cadera, most of them in their heavy coats, though some are foregoing hoods and their faces are reddening with the cold. Baze’s grinning, hidden inside his furry hood, the ends of his hair wraps sticking out. And Chirrut and—Janson, shit—look suspiciously sanguine.

Luke shakes his head, scanning the group of their friends; Leia is not in a meeting at all; she’s waiting at the front, flanked by Jyn and Wedge. “I don’t know, but—”

“Commander Skywalker, Captain Rook,” Leia says, her face breaking into a brilliant grin as she raises her arm—Bodhi has no qualms about ducking behind Luke, even as Jyn laughs at him. “As this is entirely your fault, allow me to be the first to formally welcome you to Echo Base—”

—and, for all of Luke’s Jedi training, he is completely unprepared to dodge the snowball.

Chapter End Notes

Well, *that* took longer than I expected, sorry about the wait! It’s been a strange and stressful last few days, and getting the mood of this bit right while *I* was in a mood was....interesting.

At least we are officially on Hoth now!! I am gonna be pretty busy this week, but I promise I’ll make serious headway on the next chapter as soon as I can. I am SO excited to write all the Hoth stuff, you have nooooooooo idea...

Thanks for the kind birthday wishes on the last chapter, and thanks, as always, for sticking around. <3

Translation:
他不像你罗嗦: He’s not talkative like you (uh, more or less. Corrections welcome.)
Chapter 55

Chapter Summary

I was following the advice of a superior officer.

Chapter Notes

This chapter has little to no redeeming value. Please note latest tags.

XD

Luke’s teeth are chattering when their friends more-or-less graciously accept his surrender, allowing him and Bodhi to regroup and retreat to their assigned quarters, though someone can’t resist one last poorly-aimed snowball which flies past them and disintegrates on the corridor wall. Snow is melting in Bodhi’s hair and trickling down the back of his neck, but he doesn’t really care, because Luke is laughing, bright-eyed and beautiful, about how he would’ve been able to fend off his whole squadron if it hadn’t been for Chirrut.

“Or if they hadn’t split us up,” Luke adds, grabbing Bodhi’s snow-crusted glove in his own, a little awkwardly.

“Couldn’t be much help once Jyn jumped on my back,” Bodhi says, ruefully.

He nods back at the personnel carting crates through the halls; he doesn’t recognize most of them when they smile at him and Luke, but Echo Base is filling up with people from all over the Rebellion. Bodhi tries not to wonder—or worry—too much about what they might’ve gotten wrong about him, and focuses on Luke’s cheerful insistence that he would’ve lasted longer if he hadn’t tripped and fallen on his face in the drifts. Luke’s cheeks and lips are pink, warming up from the cold, and his eyes are shining and happy, and—it’s all right to let go of his concerns about Grizz, the vague hovering sense of tension about what he should be doing next, and just—hold hands with his boyfriend, touring him around their new home, laughing when the tauntauns lick Luke’s face.

Once they’re alone in their sparse little room, Luke shrugs out of his damp coat and says, “It’s freezing in here, can’t we turn the heat up any?”

“Don’t think so,” Bodhi says, apologetically, and then he frowns, baffled, as Luke starts to strip off his clothes, including his undershirt—“What are you doing?”


Bodhi gestures at Luke’s semi-nudity and his own layers of clothing. “You just said you were cold?”

“Cassian said that it was important to try to keep from sweating in your clothes, because it’ll freeze,” Luke says, looking up at Bodhi through his eyelashes, innocently.
“Did he.” Bodhi sheds his coat and kicks off his boots—freezes in place, gaping a little, as Luke steps out of his shorts and hops across the cold floor to fall onto the bunk.

“Yep,” Luke says, lounging backwards on his elbows and watching Bodhi slowly resume undressing. “He said if ice crystals form and get trapped between your layers of clothes then you’re not insulated anymore.”

Bodhi pulls his shirt off over his head. “No one ever taught me that on Jedha,” he says, skeptically.


“Not really,” Bodhi says, dropping his wet goggles on top of the pile of their clothes before crossing the room and climbing on top of Luke. “You’re sure he wasn’t messing with you?”

“Who, Cassian?” Luke rests his hands on Bodhi’s thighs; all the fine pale hairs on Luke’s arms are standing on end and his skin is pebbling from the chill. “He’s pretty serious about surviving the cold.”

“It wasn’t this cold on Fest, I was there, remember?” Bodhi repositions himself atop Luke, stretching out to cover as much of him as he can, and Luke hums a soft, pleased sound, draping his arms around Bodhi’s shoulders. “Warmer?”


“Also a blanket,” Bodhi says, but he obliges, canting his hips forward and making a long slow drag of it. Luke whines and rakes his hands down Bodhi’s back; his lips part, and Bodhi ducks his head to kiss him—

“Ah!” Luke wriggles, and Bodhi lifts his head in surprise. “Your hair’s dripping on me.”

“Sorry—” Bodhi rolls onto his side, and then he tugs the end of his ponytail over his shoulder, deliberately wrings it out onto Luke’s bare chest, just for the pleasure of watching him squirm—

“Oh, is that how it’s going to be?” Luke sits up, his eyes sparkling with the challenge. “I’m sure there’s snow still stuck to my gloves—” He slides partly off the bunk, and Bodhi hooks a foot around him, forgetting Luke’s found out he’s ticklish there—bursts out laughing and flails, as Luke attacks, relentlessly. “Surrender, Captain,” Luke orders.

“Can I ask for terms?”

Luke pauses for a moment, considering. Bodhi toes him in the side with his free foot, and Luke flinches, but he doesn’t let go, instead resettling himself on the bed and pulling Bodhi’s leg up over his knee—“If you like,” Luke says, curiously. He’s shivering, just at the edge of noticing, but Bodhi is still his singular focus, even if he’s only resting his hands on Bodhi’s legs, splayed apart as they are over his lap. His hands aren’t like those of a farmboy anymore, used to hard labor in the sand; they’re gentle as the light touch of a pilot on the controls.

“Well? Shall I resume hostilities?” Luke demands, playfully, his eager gaze flicking over their closeness, the lines of Bodhi’s body, though he doesn’t make another move. “Or—”

Bodhi licks his lips and says, a little hoarsely, “No need. I surrender, Commander Skywalker.”

Luke draws a swift breath, his eyes darkening as he senses Bodhi’s deepening arousal. “Terms?”

Bodhi hesitates. His mouth is unexpectedly dry. “Will you—use the Force again?”
Luke skims his hands up the insides of Bodhi’s thighs, looking delighted. “Yeah, of course.”

“It’s good practice, isn’t it?” Bodhi suggests, slyly, as Luke crawls up to kiss him, and then he groans into Luke’s mouth as he feels invisible hands start to caress him. Luke runs his real hands over Bodhi’s arms, not quite pinning him down, but Bodhi tenses, and Luke adjusts slightly.

“Okay?”

“Yeah, yeah, I’m—” Bodhi twists his hips to rut against both the immaterial, enveloping embrace and the warmth of Luke’s thighs. Luke drops his face onto Bodhi’s shoulder, his whole body gone taut with concentration, and Bodhi claws at him as the Force insinuates around him, inside him—“Luke, oh, please —”


Luke moans, breathy and hot, into his ear, and thrusts against him, the presence of Force slipping away as he comes, between Bodhi’s legs. Bodhi protests the loss of the Force, plaintively, but Luke regains control almost immediately, eyes as bright as the center of the galaxy, and pushes, startling Bodhi into coming; he writhes in Luke’s implacable, invisible grasp, helpless inarticulate pleas tearing out of his throat.

He comes back to himself when Luke nestles his head against his chest and tugs the blanket up over them. It’s scratchy and it sticks to their sweat-slick arms and legs, but Bodhi’s gone boneless with pleasure, and the heat of Luke against his body makes it hard to protest much of anything, even the chilly air still making the hair on his exposed arm stand on end.

“I’m warm enough now,” Luke murmurs, a few minutes later, looking into Bodhi’s eyes inquisitively. “You?”

“Mm,” Bodhi acknowledges, running his fingers down Luke’s shoulder blade. “You know it’s not actually below freezing in here?”

Luke laughs and nods against his chest. “Yeah, but so do you, and you still stripped down—”

“I was following the advice of a superior officer,” Bodhi says, sagely.

“Oh,” Luke says. “Cassian, uh, ever give you any other advice we should be following?”

Bodhi shakes his head. “I meant you, Commander.”

Luke jabs a finger into his sternum, not hard. “You can’t call me that in front of the squadron again if you’re going to do it in bed, this is all I’ll be able to think about—”

“Right,” Bodhi says, delighted. “That would be a bit awkward for you, wouldn’t it? What would Artoo say if he knew you were imagining handling me instead of—”


“Threepio would be scandalized,” Bodhi says.

“The squadron would never take my orders seriously again,” Luke says, stroking the line of Bodhi’s beard with his thumb, making him shiver.
“What makes you think they take your orders seriously now?” Bodhi asks, jokingly, and then he fends off a pillow to the face.

“That’s where you’re wrong.” Luke bats at him with the pillow again, grinning. “I think you’ll find my orders are plenty reasonable, and more than worth your while—”

He raises his eyebrows—

“—and since you’re new to command, Captain, you should learn that my approach to leadership—” Luke rolls Bodhi onto his back, reaching down between them, and Bodhi hisses, mildly surprised that he’s gotten interested again so quickly—“is about listening to the people under me—”

Bodhi snorts, but Luke is slick, somehow, and **hot**, and questioning with his eyes and deft hands. His heart thumps wildly in his chest, his mouth falling open.

*Okay—I want—*

Bodhi licks his lips, and snaps out, crisply, “Yes, sir,” and spreads his legs.

“—and not just about making them take it,” Luke murmurs, affectionately, pushing into him.

Bodhi stutters out a laugh, and clutches at Luke's sweat-slippery back, breathing hard; it's been a **long** time, but Luke is—**Luke**, watching Bodhi’s face, touching his mouth with a slightly trembling hand, going careful and slow, slower than snow melting on Hoth’s poles or a shadow creeping its way across Tatooine’s desert. He can't help a little whimpering moan; Luke halts, or tries to, his hips jerking forward almost of their own accord, and Bodhi scrapes together some of his wits to gasp out, “I’m fine, I’m fine, you can **move**—”

“I don't want to overwhelm you,” Luke says, worriedly.


Luke exhales, resting his forehead against Bodhi’s. “I—I know.”

“Come on, then,” Bodhi says, impatiently, and Luke huffs a laugh and rocks up into him, setting an eager but steady rhythm, ducking his head to kiss Bodhi’s throat, balancing on one hand so he can stroke Bodhi’s length between them. “Don’t know why you—ah—stars—didn’t want to do this sooner—” Bodhi mutters, scrabbling at the sheets, desperate to hang on.

“You were never relaxed enough before,” Luke says, pausing to shrug at him.

“Wow,” Bodhi says, taken aback.

“Well, you weren’t,” Luke says, apologetically. “You’re very tense, you know that?”

“I was plenty relaxed on Sanctuary.” Bodhi points out, shuddering, squeezing his eyes shut as Luke finally hits his target and starts to thrust in earnest. “If you’d just—blast, Luke, please—I—ah—” He throws his head back and gulps for air.

“Your ribs were still broken then,” Luke replies, as if they’re having a perfectly regular conversation, as if he isn’t doing his damnedest to get Bodhi through to a second orgasm. Bodhi thrashes his head on the pillow, defenseless against Luke’s persistence, his hands bunching in the sheets as Luke pants, faster, and the pulsing movement of his hips grows erratic—“And I never, ever, wanted to hurt you
—” Luke gasps, and drags Bodhi over the edge with him once more.


“’m cold,” Luke mumbles, sleepily, and Bodhi stops. Licks his dry lips.

“I’ll always keep you warm,” he murmurs, and pulls the blanket up around them again.

Chapter End Notes

*turns bright red and runs away*

<3
Chapter 56

Chapter Summary

Guess I’m stuck here for a while.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Bodhi’s standing in the darkest possible corner of the command center with Jyn and Kaytoo the next morning, contemplating his eternal cowardice. He’d merely kissed Luke goodbye before running off to their meeting, and now—now he can’t stop shivering, as if he’d left all the warmth behind in their bed.

“It’s not that cold in here,” Jyn says, as he shivers again, groans, and pulls his hood up over his head, as if that’ll help with either the cold or his heart. She holds out a thermos to him. “Here, you want some of my caf?”

“I want this meeting to get started.” Bodhi waves her caf away, unaccountably grumpy. “Kaytoo, how’re you holding up?”

Kaytoo looks down at him. “My processor is running at peak efficiency,” he says, smugly.

“Yeah, but you’d have some problems if you went out in the snow,” Jyn says.

“I have no intention of doing that,” Kaytoo replies.

Jyn raises her eyebrows, but Cassian and Draven are wending their way between consoles towards them, and she sips her caf instead of retorting. Bodhi hugs himself for warmth; Jyn steps sideways and bumps him with her hip, as if that additional contact will do much of anything. “Get a different jacket from Cassian if you’re so cold.”

“I’m not,” Bodhi insists, irritably. “I’m getting used to it.”

“Good morning,” Cassian says, touching Bodhi’s arm. He’s bundled up in the jacket Bodhi vaguely remembers from their first meeting, but he doesn’t have gloves on, and he’s not half as tense as he was then.

Draven doesn’t bother with pleasantries; he looks ill at ease, his skin paler than normal, like he’s trying to blend into the ice-white walls of the base. “Bodhi. Do you recall an Admiral Harkov?”

Bodhi digs around in his memory, more foggily than usual; maybe he should have some of Jyn’s caf. “There’s a lot of Admirals in the Empire,” he says, uncertainly. “What ships does he command?”


“I think—I never ran into him,” Bodhi mutters, furrowing his brow. “The name—it’s not like Admiral Dorat, he wasn’t in my studies.”
“I thought as much,” Draven says. “As far as we can tell, he’s not exactly a rising star among the Imperial admiralty.” He smothers another cough with his sleeve and nods at Cassian to take over.

“Harkov contacted us through backchannels,” Cassian says. “He is offering to sell us weapons. Equipment.”

Jyn’s shaking her head. “It could be another setup like with Overlord Ghorin a couple years back. Playing both sides.”

“I thought of that, too,” Cassian says.

“But didn’t—” Bodhi hesitates, and they both look at him, as if surprised he’s jumping in. His head feels strange, like the pressure of the monster on his mind, but at least it doesn’t seem to be pulling him under. He gulps. “Didn’t Vader kill Ghorin for running that game?”

Cassian folds his arms and looks somber. “Yes.”


“I require more information,” Kaytoo chastises her, and looks at Draven.

“You’ll have it,” Draven says, sounding funny, like his voice is strained. “The meet’s on Churba in two days—”

Jyn huffs a sardonic laugh. “Then get Bel Iblis’ people to do it, they’re closer.”

Cassian frowns at her. “Jyn, you know perfectly well he doesn’t want to have anything to do with us.”

“Get a team together,” Draven says. “Don’t reach out to Bel Iblis—”

“Yeah, okay,” Jyn says, dismissively.

“You want me on this?” Bodhi asks. He rubs a hand over his face, thinking that he really should find his own cup of caf if he’s going to work any more this morning.

“It’d be good to have you to get us in and out,” Cassian answers. “And to check over the equipment to be certain that Harkov is not trying something.”

Draven sneezes, and as he pulls out a handkerchief, adds, “If Harkov is genuinely planning to defect, you are a reminder that—” he sneezes again, and looks positively thunderous about it.

“Sir, maybe—” Cassian starts, but Kaytoo interrupts, “General Draven, you have coughed or sneezed eleven times since entering the command center. All the personnel between us and the door are probably infected—”

“Kay,” Cassian says, hurriedly, as both Jyn and Bodhi take a step back from Draven.

Draven’s mouth works, briefly, and then he sighs. “Fine. I leave it in your hands. You know what to do.” He turns and retraces his path back out; Bodhi notices Toryn recoiling as he coughs again.

“Is he—actually going to the medcenter instead of his desk?” Jyn asks, shocked.

“He is running a fever of thirty-seven point six degrees,” Kaytoo observes. “Cassian, did you touch anything he touched?”
“I’m going to wash my hands right now,” Cassian says, dryly, backing away. “Jyn, Bodhi, start putting together that team, let’s have a look at the hyperspace lanes—”

Jyn smiles, and makes a shooing motion at him. “Got it under control.”

“I’ll be right back,” Cassian says, jogging off.

Kaytoo tilts his head. “I hope Cassian does not get sick.”

“Oh, that’s nice, what about the rest of us?” Jyn says.

“If he gets sick, he will make you sick.” Kaytoo taps his fingers on the nearest console. “And that would be very annoying, having to take care of all of you fragile humans—”

“Aw, thanks.” Jyn smirks.

Bodhi’s begun to sweat at the thought of going on another covert mission, but he pushes through his nervousness to ask, “Couldn’t Draven, or Leia, or—or somebody, get in contact with Admiral Dorat and ask if Harkov’s the type to defect? What he remembers about him?”

Jyn nods, thoughtfully. “Good idea. You could do it, he knows you. I think he was transferring over to Home One? Maybe the Liberty?”

“Home One,” Kaytoo says over his shoulder.

Bodhi starts towards Toryn and her comms station, but pauses, transfixed by the starmap Kaytoo’s bringing up of the Mid Rim; his gaze goes unerringly to the Terrabe sector, scanning for home. He swallows. “Where’s Bel Iblis?”

“Somewhere in the Churba sector, we don’t really know for sure,” Jyn says, shrugging. “Still don’t get what his deal is, or why no one seems to be able to bring him back into the Alliance.”

Bodhi swallows again, feeling slightly nauseated. His chest aches. “Is he—is he anything like—Saw?”

Jyn jerks her head up to stare at him. “I don’t know. I don’t think so. He was a senator, after all.” Her eyes narrow. “Are you okay?”

“Oh, come on,” Bodhi says, annoyed. “I’m fine, I can talk about Saw without panicking now, thank you—”

“No, not that. You don’t look so good.” Jyn presses her lips together in a line for a moment, studying him. “Kay?”

Kaytoo’s turned, and the lights of his eyes flicker dizzyingly. “Your temperature is up to thirty-eight degrees.”

“I’m just tired,” Bodhi protests. “Tired, and cold, and—”

“Nope,” Jyn pulls her scarf up over her mouth and nose. “Get out of here. I don’t want you breathing on me.”

“Nice, Jyn,” Bodhi says.

“I’m serious. Go to the medcenter, or I’ll order Kaytoo to carry you there.”
“You can’t order me to do things,” Kaytoo says, petulantly.

Jyn lifts a hand in an apologetic shrug. “Fine. I’ll ask Kaytoo to carry you.”

“Okay, okay, I’m going.” Bodhi capitulates, but as he backs away, stumbling over an empty crate, he stammers, seeking certainty, “Please don’t—please don’t leave me out of the loop—I do want to go with you—”

“Only if you’re not falling down,” Jyn calls after him, watching him all the way to the door.

It turns out that besides Bodhi and Draven, half the human population of Echo Base has come down with some sort of flu. “Nothing fatal,” Too-Onebee reassures him. “Standard viral infection. Have you had much contact with the members of Rogue Squadron?”

Bodhi’s eyes go wide, and he feels his face warming. “Just one, really,” he manages, twining the end of the medcenter robe’s belt around the fingers of his left hand. “Commander Skywalker. He’s my—um—”

“Oh, yes, of course,” Too-Onebee says, unconcerned with things like fragile human relationships. “They are, unfortunately, the most likely vector for this illness, from their recent mission for Admiral Ackbar. Zev Senesca left just prior to your arrival.”

“Is Luke sick?” Bodhi demands, gripping the edge of the bed on which he’s sitting. “Has he—he seemed fine this morning?”

“Luke Skywalker has not visited the medcenter today,” Too-Onebee states, and Bodhi relaxes a fraction. “Would you like an antiviral medication? It will shorten the duration of your illness by one or two days, but it will not be an immediate cure.” Too-Onebee beckons FX-7 over, and the assistant droid raises an injector arm—

Bodhi does not quite fall off the bed in his attempt to get away from him, clumsily putting his hands up to ward FX-7 off. “I think I’m—I’ll just—”

“No?” Too-Onebee asks.

“No,” Bodhi confirms, shivering, and FX-7 lowers his arm and rolls backwards.

“Your records indicate you no longer tolerate immersion in bacta, either. Is there any medical treatment you allow?” Too-Onebee asks, sardonically.

“Yeah,” Bodhi says. He rubs his temples; a headache is setting in, and the thinness of his robe isn’t helping with the chills that keep stuttering through him like blaster fire. “You can give me some pills, but—no injections. Please.”

“We do not have a stock of antivirals in pill form,” Too-Onebee says.

“What, seriously? With all the supplies we brought from the Redemption?” Bodhi looks around the medcenter, baffled.

“My apologies, Captain,” Too-Onebee says, flatly. “As far as a recommended course of treatment without medication, adequate rest and hydration should help you recover in a week.”

Bodhi clenches his hands into fists and stares at Too-Onebee’s implacable face. “But—Cassian and Jyn, they need me in two days—”
“Even with antiviral medication, you would not be fully recovered in two days,” Too-Onebee says.

“Dammit,” Bodhi mutters. “Okay, can I at least work—”

“Working on your ships in the cold is not advisable,” Too-Onebee says. He studies Bodhi’s face for a moment. “Again. Rest.”

“Fine,” Bodhi says. “May I please go now?”

“Should I have someone escort you to your quarters?”

“I think I can get there on my own, thanks,” Bodhi says, wryly. “I’ll let you know if I pass out in the hall.”

“Do that,” Too-Onebee says, and moves on to the next patient.

Bodhi does not pass out in the hall, though it’s a near thing; he’s more exhausted than he’d realized.

Luke isn’t in their quarters when he finally gets there. Bodhi considers comming him for a minute before deciding he knows exactly how Luke will react. And while it’d be nice to be taken care of, there’s approximately a million more important things for Luke to do than play medic.

Again.

Still, the bunk is cold without Luke, at first, and then it’s too hot, he’s—

—sweating through his flightsuit, struggling to breathe in the acrid smoke and ozone-laden air of Scarif, running too slowly in the sand, and burning up with his ship—

—you’re dreaming, it’s okay, I’m right here—

Bodhi jerks awake, confused about how long he’s been asleep; Luke is crouched by the side of the bed, stroking his sweaty hair, and Bodhi rasps, his throat as sore as it’s ever been, “You shouldn’t be here—you’ll get sick.”

“I don’t think so.” Luke smiles at him. “If I was going to catch it, I would’ve, already. I’m sorry you caught it from the squadron, though Janson’s claiming this is retaliation for what you did to him.”

“It’s not a very good prank,” Bodhi croaks. “Luke—it’s okay, I’m—you don’t—I’m going to go back to sleep.”


“Guess so.” Bodhi coughs, and closes his eyes again. “Guess I’m stuck here for a while.”

“Got any instructions for Grizz?”

Bodhi’s eyes fly open. “Shit. Was I supposed to—shit. Can’t think of anything.”

“Okay,” Luke says, still petting his hair. “Don’t worry. I don’t think you’ve slowed down one bit since we got back from Sanctuary, it’s no wonder you got sick.”

“Who else is out?” Bodhi asks, wearily.

“Poor Dak, I’m afraid,” Luke says. “He was hoping to get some time in the simulations, but he’s laid up same as you and Zev and Kasan. Master Îmwe and Baze, too, though they insisted on telling me
how to make something to help you feel better. From Jedha.”

“Oh, no,” Bodhi mumbles, half-dreading it. “My mother used to make the worst things for me when I was sick—”

“I don't know, this doesn't seem that bad,” Luke says, reaching behind him and producing a thermos. “The color's kind of odd, but it smells all right. Spiced milk?”

Bodhi unscrews the top of the thermos and laughs. “It's not supposed to be green, but I suppose that's what happens when you make it with blue milk.”

“Baze said he didn't know how sweet you liked it, so I'm to steal some honey from the mess if it's not sweet enough.” Luke grins at him. “Well?”

Bodhi pushes himself upright and takes a cautious swig. It tastes like—

—like—

(—his mother guiding his hand on the knife to cut vegetables, letting him stir the pot with a wooden spoon that he just had to lick, because how else would he know if it was spicy enough—

—worrying about her cough because it's not getting any better, and it doesn't matter how much honey he adds, it'll always be soured by the fact that he's leaving—

—ash and sand—)

“Please don't cry,” Luke says, anxiously, climbing into bed to put his arms around Bodhi. “I'm sorry. I'm sorry.”

“No, no, it's fine”— Bodhi puts the thermos down on the floor and wipes his eyes. “I just wasn't expecting—my mother, she liked it sweeter than this, and with cinnamon, I think, but it's right, it's exactly right.” He ducks his head and leans into Luke, sniffing a little. “Thank you.”

“Thank Chirrut and Baze, they thought of it for you.” Luke kisses the top of his head. “I have to finish meeting with Leia, but I’ll come back soon, and if you’re awake, we can compare the weird stuff Aunt Beru used to try to get me to drink—”

Bodhi grabs at him, trembling, ignoring the fact that if Luke thinks something’s weird, it’ll be very, very strange—“You were meeting with Leia? Did—did you sense—did something in my head interrupt—”

Luke puts a hand on his chest and gently pushes him down. “Relax. Jyn asked me to check on you. I didn’t feel anything—your dream mustn’t have been all that bad, you weren’t screaming.”

“I wasn’t?”

“You're sick, that’s all,” Luke says, fondly, getting up and bringing another blanket over. “You and a couple dozen other people, but you’ll all get better soon.” He straightens out the blanket over Bodhi. “You’re—the T-16 might be a touch sluggish, but it’s in the air.”

“Going nowhere fast.” Bodhi curls up on his side under Luke’s hand.

“That’s all right,” Luke says. “I think the metaphor’s gonna fall apart on me, but you’re not.” He presses his lips to Bodhi’s forehead. “I’ll be back in a while.”

“Thanks—thanks for checking on me,” Bodhi murmurs, as Luke turns off the lights and steps out of
their quarters; he’s only a silhouette in the bright white corridor, but Bodhi’s certain he’s smiling.


He pulls the blankets up to his neck and closes his eyes.

*Everything’s going to be fine.*

Chapter End Notes

What, you thought I was just gonna leap into ESB? :P ;)

Thanks, as always. <3
Chapter 57

Chapter Summary

I'd say I showed up just in time.

Chapter Notes

Heed the tags.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

And, strangely, despite Bodhi’s really quite irritating illness, everything—for the most part—is fine.

Jyn and Cassian and Kaytoo successfully leave and come back from meeting Harkov with weapons, starship parts, and a strong sense that the Admiral is just in it for the credits, as mercenary as any smuggler.

“As Jyn put it, ‘You want a fee to defect? I’ll give you a fee—’” Kaytoo recounts, with relish. Baze knocks over his tea and practically roars with proud laughter, as Chirrut grins and Bodhi can’t help but picture Cassian futilely trying to hold Jyn back.

They don’t bring home any food, though.

Bodhi worries about the food shortage for a few days after his friends return. The Guardians’ precious stores of spices at least make the mess cooks’ bland attempts to stretch rations into something Bodhi doesn’t have to struggle to get down while he’s unwell; he still has no idea where they’d found the bright and familiar seeds and scents of his youth. He’d never thought Jedha much for exporting anything other than prayer.

Although Cassian and Jyn, and of course Bodhi and the Guardians have all experienced periods of privation before, Bodhi is certain Luke hasn’t. Luke doesn't have the same half-feral look about his eyes the way Jyn gets, or sigh, barely audibly, like Baze, when their portions inevitably shrink. He doesn’t complain about it, and quietly eats his energy pudding, but Bodhi overhears him begging off sparring with Chirrut, later. And when they’re curled up around each other in bed, Luke reminisces sleepily and at great length about some place called Tasty Dried Critters, until Bodhi has to kiss him senseless just to make him stop, despite his lingering concerns about contagion.

Thankfully, shortly thereafter, the Habassans come around from their isolationist stance when Shandor Squadron rescues one of their convoys, and they make the Alliance a sizeable offer of supplies, including food. But since Bodhi isn't being allowed to handle more than light duty until Two-Onebee signs off on his improved health, Grizz and Joma are assigned with the Beru to pick up the Habassans’ delivery. Grizz makes unreadable faces in Bodhi’s direction when Luke trots cheerfully down to the south hangar in his orange flightsuit and reveals he and Kasan are flying their escort. Bodhi’s not sure if Grizz's convoluted expressions are about him, Luke, or the prospect of having to listen to more of Kasan’s terrible flirting over comms.
But Grizz claps Bodhi on the shoulder, nearly friendly. “We’ll take good care of your ship.”

“I know,” Bodhi says, and means it. While Grizz has gradually warmed up to the Rogues by degrees, he’s thrown himself into working on Bodhi’s ships as if on fire. No one’s been able to solve the problem of keeping ships flying in the extremes of Hoth’s climate—particularly at night—but Grizz’s been dropping off datapads left and right with new ideas, like this is his approach to moving meditation.

Grizz almost—almost—smiles, nods, and goes up into the Beru, as Luke hugs Bodhi tightly, whispering, “It’s just a couple of days—”

“I’ll disinfect our quarters while you’re gone,” Bodhi says, kissing Luke on the cheek.

“I keep telling you it doesn’t matter, I’m still not sick.” Luke throws all caution and sense of propriety to the whipping, frigid wind, and kisses Bodhi firmly on the mouth. His lips are warm, and soft, and Bodhi can’t help but grin, though he’s conscious of Kasan giggling at them.

“I want you completely better by the time we return,” Luke says, as they pull apart, very close to the tone he uses giving orders to the squadron. He realizes it and laughs at himself at the same moment Bodhi straightens up and snaps out, “Yes, Commander Skywalker—” Luke bites his lip, his face going scarlet, and Bodhi has to smother his own snort of laughter, leaning in and kissing Luke again in teasing apology.

Joma calls down from the ramp, “Let’s go—uh—sorry, sir.”

Luke salutes her, not ironically. “Get better,” he says to Bodhi, affectionately, and then he and Kasan are running off to their respective X-wings, leaving Bodhi feeling like there’s something else he’s supposed to say—

Oh. Right.

He cups his hands around his mouth and shouts, hoarsely, over the wind, “May the Force be with you!” Luke looks back, and waves.

Bodhi watches until all three ships are tiny specks in the sky before turning and heading back to their quarters. He slides under the blankets, hoping to preserve the warmth of Luke’s sunlit smile. And even though he'd intended to read the latest intelligence Cassian's sent over on Harkov's fleet, he drifts off to sleep with the datapad falling face down on his chest, unworried.

He doesn't dream.

*****

After Grizz, Joma, Kasan, and Luke come home safely, with enough food for, well, an army, more and more people begin to arrive at Echo Base, via the GR-75 transports Kem Monnon had said were the reason for the high-ceilinged hangars. There are SpecForces personnel who are excited to see Roja again, with much backslapping and off-color teasing; some of Cassian's nondescript-looking colleagues, the sort who've done terrible things for the Rebellion and are varying degrees of visibly haunted by it; and a lot of pilots and the ground crews to go with them.

Shandor Squadron isn't among them, which isn't too disappointing; Bodhi still hopes to race them, just not on Hoth, where Rieekan’s proposing they start modifying airspeeders for planetary patrols. Airspeeders aren't nearly as much fun as proving the merits of his ship, in space.

Before he’s even completely better, Bodhi makes an effort to be welcoming towards the new
arrivals, self-deprecatingly, jokingly, acknowledging it's his fault for everyone freezing their asses off. Roja’s friends like him well enough, though they don’t appreciate that he cleans them out at sabacc the one time he’s invited to play. New recruits gawk at him and Luke in the corridors, but they gawk at Chirrut and Baze too; there’s apparently some minor celebrity to be had in being from Jedha, or part of the Rogue One team. Chirrut eats it up, of course, encouraging them to come to meditation, or to—

“Watch the last of the Jedi train with the last of the Jedhans,” Chirrut says, brandishing his stick towards a pair of eager and kind of giggly communications staffers. He grins in Bodhi’s direction. “We should sell tickets.”

“No,” Baze grumbles, and chivvies Chirrut along to their quarters.

Corona Squadron arrives one night off-schedule, shortly before the blast doors are to be closed, and there’s some scrambling in the command center as Rieekan gets on the comms to confirm their approach. Bodhi is hunched up inside his coat, in the dark corner reserved for Intelligence, going through a file on the unexpected death of Admiral Mordon aboard the Vengeance, and doesn’t pay any mind to the chatter, except to note that the squadron is probably tired and irritable, and the cold isn’t going to help.

“It’s late, and I was gonna do one more thing on the Cadera before I turn in,” Bodhi says, tossing the datapad onto the nearest console and stretching his stiff limbs. “And I’m not seeing anything off about this, Jyn, I’m sorry. Maybe sometimes high-ranking Imperial officers do just die of natural causes.”

Jyn snorts. “Listen to yourself. You don’t believe it either.”

Bodhi splays his hands out. “His plants, Jyn. No one could’ve gotten past his poisonous mist plants.”

Her mouth tightens. “Vader?”

“I guess.” Bodhi suppresses a shiver that has nothing to do with the cold. “But he wasn’t doing anything that would’ve brought him to Vader’s attention.”

“Or your Major Celina.” Jyn sighs. “I hate trying to stay current on the Empire’s leadership. I’ll have someone pull the file on Coross and catch up with you later.”

“Okay,” Bodhi says. He reaches out and touches her arm. “Sorry I couldn’t be of more help.”

Jyn looks up at him, a faint smile curving her lips. “Oh, you’re fine. Sort of twisted to expect you’d find out someone assassinated him, isn’t it?”

Bodhi winces. “It’s not—not wrong, I was just a cargo pilot and I had to watch my back all the time, everything I said—not that anyone wanted me dead, until—well, you know, but there were pilots who would’ve gladly taken any mistake and used it to climb up the ladder, short as it was for us.”

“Everything you said?” Jyn raises her eyebrows, a tinge of dark humor in her voice.

“Yeah,” Bodhi says, ruefully.

She huffs a laugh, and briefly rests her bare hand on his. “All right, thanks, Bodhi. Have fun working on your ship.”

Bodhi smiles at her and heads out.
He’s still thinking about Mordon’s poisonous plants—rumor had it they were semi-intelligent, and could recognize friend from foe—when he rounds the corner into the south hangar and stops dead in his tracks, completely horrified.

_It can’t be._

_Leia said—_

_Leia promised—_

But it is unmistakably Yendor, standing next to an X-wing, talking with a couple other Corona Squadron pilots.

Bodhi’s mouth is dry. He tries to swallow his fear, looking around for his squadron, his friends—they’re off running simulations, or something, and he’s—alone.

_Like—_

_No._

_It’s different now._

_I’m a captain. He wouldn’t dare—_

Bodhi draws a single, frost-bitten breath of something akin to confidence.

_Just going to work on the Cadera. I can comm Luke if—_

—he might not have to comm Luke, his heart is beating so fast—

_Just going to work on my ship._

Bodhi takes another icy, bracing breath and walks into the hangar. He veers away from the little cluster of Corona Squadron, hoping they don’t spot him, hoping Luke doesn’t show up and make a scene—

_“Captain Rook?”_

He’s two steps up the Cadera’s ramp, and he could retreat all the way inside, pretend like he hadn’t heard, but—it’s not Yendor’s voice.

Bodhi turns—

—and, horribly, he must’ve gone completely mad with fear, because the man smiling at him, with Yendor shuffling his feet uneasily a couple paces back, is the Imperial lieutenant from the Blue Convor on Kerev Doi.

_“I thought it must be you,”_ the lieutenant says, holding out his bare hand. _“I’m—”_

Bodhi put his own gloved hands up, warding him off, looking frantically between him and Yendor.

_Fuck. Fuck. Is this real?_

_“You—this can’t be happening—”_

The lieutenant lowers his hand back to his side. _“I’m sorry, sir, I thought—”_ His brow furrows,
abruptly. “Have—do I know you?”

Bodhi licks his lips, utterly bewildered, grabbing at the support struts of the Cadera to convince himself it’s really there, that he hasn’t imagined the entirety of the last two years—that he’s not about to be arrested by an Imperial lieutenant—“Who—what the hell—” His heartbeat thuds loudly in his ears; he’s nearly panting with terror.

Where’s Luke? I’m fucking losing it and he’s not here!

Yendor’s face clouds over. “Come on, Thane, I told you this was a bad idea.”

“No, wait, I’ve met him.” The lieutenant points at Bodhi, glancing over his shoulder at Yendor before turning his baffled gaze back on Bodhi’s face. “Or—I’ve seen you before, and not just in your wanted holo—”

“Who are you?” Bodhi demands, his voice cracking.

“My name’s Thane Kyrell,” the lieutenant says, tentatively putting his ungloved hand out once more. “Sir—I’m sorry to intrude, but—we’ve met, I’m sure of it.”

“What—what are you doing here?” Bodhi tries to steady himself, staring at the calluses on Thane’s hand; the lieutenant really is standing right in front of him, but there’s got to be a reason—

Yendor’s gone taut with anger. “Corona Squadron’s got just as high clearance as your Rogues, sir.”

Bodhi flinches. “No, no—I—blast”—He runs a trembling hand through his hair, trying to compose himself. His eyes rake over Thane’s flightsuit, the helmet under his arm, emblazoned with Corona Squadron’s crest, and he swallows again, feeling very foolish. “I’m—I didn’t mean—you defected, you’re not an Imperial anymore?”

Yeah,” Thane says, giving up on trying to shake Bodhi’s hand and awkwardly patting his helmet. “Been flying with X-wings with Corona Squadron, Yendor here’s my wingman—” He follows his own pointing thumb in Yendor’s direction and registers the stony look on the Twi’lek’s face. “Wait a minute, do you two know each—”

“Hey, Bodhi,” comes a lazy voice, from behind the closest X-wing. Bodhi jerks his head up to see Solo ducking under it and sauntering towards him—“These guys bothering you?”

Thane’s mouth falls open, and he stammers, “Han—Han Solo?”

Despite the discomfiting sensation that he’s being tossed about in a whirlwind, about to smash to pieces, Bodhi resists the urge to sink his head into his hands.

“Yeah, that’s me.” Solo eyeballs Thane before turning the full force of his stare—such as it is—on Yendor. “Now you, you’re the guy who tried to murder my friend here.”

“Oh, fuck,” Bodhi mutters, digging in his pockets for his comlink as Solo’s presence jolts his wits firmly into place. This could get unpleasant—

Thane says, “What?”

“If I’d known a creeping little kreetle like you was gonna be down here, I wouldn’t have left Chewie back on the Falcon in the other hangar,” Solo is saying, stepping to Yendor and jabbing a finger in his face. “Between him and me, we’d make sure you paid for what you did—”
“That was a long time ago,” Yendor snaps, throwing a glance at Bodhi. “It was a mistake—”

“You’re damn right it was,” Solo snarls.

“But Captain Rook's a hero,” Thane says, puzzled, to Yendor.

“Wait, wait,” Bodhi interrupts, and Solo lifts his eyes to him. “It’s all right, I’m—I’m fine, I was sorting it out—”

Yendor backs away from Solo’s finger and looks directly at Bodhi for the first time. “I didn’t come over to start shit, I swear. Don’t—I was trying to get Thane to leave you alone, I wasn’t—I didn’t want you to see me—”

Solo puts his hands on his hips. “Why, so you could sneak up on him later?”

“No,” Yendor protests. “I’m not like that anymore—I wouldn’t come after you again, sir, it was—”

Thane is turning his head back and forth between Solo’s detente with Yendor and Bodhi’s stunned expression. “What are you—”

“Solo—” Bodhi tries. His racing heart isn’t calming down, but someone has to.

“Before your time, kid,” Solo snaps at Thane.

“Solo. Han—”

Solo whips around to Bodhi. “Yeah?”

Bodhi holds his hands out again to get them all to stop. “It’s—it’s okay. Just—listen, I’m sorry, I was rude, I didn’t expect to see either of you ever again, and it—” He taps a finger on his temple.

“Thought I was having an episode. Panicking. Seeing—seeing things.” Solo’s face goes tight, and Yendor’s lekku twitch at that, but Bodhi can’t bring himself to care much about what the Twi’lek who’d tried to kill him thinks.

He exhales, shakily, his breath misting in the cold hangar air, and holds out his hand to Thane. “I was on Kerev Doi to meet with a contact, at the Blue Convor.”

Thane blinks at him, shaking his hand. “That’s—that’s where I decided to defect,” he stammers. “I was posted there, but they were enslaving the locals, and I couldn’t take it any longer.” He lowers his gaze. “I wish I’d known who you were. I might’ve joined you on the spot.” Then he jerks around to stare at his wingman. “What did you do?”

Yendor runs a hand over the end of one of his lekku. “I didn’t much like defectors,” he says, lowly.

“You put Bodhi in the medcenter for a solid fucking week,” Solo says.

Thane frowns hard at Yendor. “I’m a defector.”

“I’m well aware of that,” Yendor mutters.

“He could have died,” Solo adds, simmering.

Bodhi cringes, and opts not to mention that their encounter had also nearly sent Luke over to the dark side. “It’s—look, I’ve been through worse, right. Went through worse, before I even joined up officially. It’s—”
“Not okay,” Solo snaps at him. He sweeps a hand back towards Yendor. “Has he even apologized to you?”

“I was going to reach out privately,” Yendor says, crossing his arms and glaring up at nothing. “Once we got here. So something like this wouldn’t happen. I can go the whole rest of my life without having Luke Skywalker point his lightsaber at me again, thanks.”

Shit—Luke—

Bodhi grabs his comlink out, calls Luke, and says into it, hurriedly, without waiting for Luke to answer, “I’m all right, I’m fine. I’ll explain everything when I see you, don’t come down here, everything’s okay.” He looks up at Thane’s perplexed face; Solo’s rolling his eyes and almost smirking. And Yendor—

Yendor blows out a breath of fog. “I’m sorry for what we did. What we put you through. I was wrong, and it was wrong, and I’m sorry.”

Solo tilts his head, considering. “I don’t know if that’s gonna be good enough, Yendor, you got any Rylothian penance rituals you could do? Nice and public?”

Bodhi rubs a hand over his mouth. “Solo, knock it off.”

“I’m just saying, he can’t have helped with all—that.” Solo twirls a finger in the air by his temple. “I don’t need anyone to be publicly humiliated on my behalf,” Bodhi says, tersely. Solo hmms, and Bodhi narrows his eyes at him—“Or privately. And don’t go riling up the squadron, either.”

“So—that’s it?” Thane asks.

“Would you rather we began a blood feud?” Bodhi says, very dry, and Yendor, startled, or relieved, or both, barks a laugh. “We stay out of each other’s way, that’s enough for me.”

“Agreed,” Yendor says, warily. Bodhi nods, and he lets out a tiny sigh. “Come on, Thane, I think you’ve done enough damage for the both of us.”

“I’m really sorry,” Thane says, looking up at Bodhi, contrition written in every line of his body. “Um. It was nice—”

Solo snorts. “Don’t say it, pal.”

Thane nods, jerkily, and runs after Yendor, who slows down just enough to let him catch up.

Solo turns to Bodhi as he first sags, then sits down abruptly on the ramp of the _Cadera_. “Are you brooding again?”

“You know you can call me Han, yeah?” He drops gracelessly next to Bodhi and bumps him with a shoulder. “You okay?”

Bodhi stares after Yendor and Thane’s retreating backs. “Yeah. Yeah. _Stars_, I thought I was—I don’t know what I thought, it didn’t make sense. Still can’t quite get my head around it.” He sighs, and bumps Han back. “Welcome to Hoth, by the way.”

Han’s smile is crooked. ‘Td say I showed up just in time, but maybe not. You were handling it?”
“Not well,” Bodhi admits. “Thanks. Thanks, Han.”

Han chuckles, and pats Bodhi on the back as he scrambles back to his feet. “In that case, you owe me. Where’s Luke? I wanna see his face when you tell him I stepped in and saved your ass.” He sticks his hand out to pull Bodhi up. “What were you two thinking when you picked this place? It's fucking freezing.”

*****

Luke’s face does not quite take on a furious cast when he learns that Yendor is on Echo Base, but it's obviously a near thing; his eyes spark and his shoulders tense as Bodhi haltingly recounts the incident, Han providing entirely unhelpful commentary.


“I felt it,” Luke murmurs. “I felt your fear, and I was going to come to you, but then you got it under control.”

“Han showed up,” Bodhi says.

Luke is tugging at his layers of clothing—“I don't think it was Han that pulled you out, and it sure wasn't me. You did it. You’ve been doing it all on your own.”

Bodhi kisses him. “Only ’cause I've had you to help show me the way.”

Luke smiles against his lips. “Bodhi—”

“And Chirrut and Baze,” Bodhi muses, and Luke snorts and shoves him towards the bunk. “Cassian, and Jyn, and even Kaytoo—” Luke’s hands are busying themselves with his pants—

“And the squadron—” Bodhi yelps. “Your hands are cold—”

Luke nips at his neck. “What did I say about talking about the squadron in bed?”

“Yes, sir,” Bodhi breathes, and surrenders, willingly.

*****

Even though Bodhi makes it absolutely clear to his friends that no one is to mess with Yendor—he doesn't need any further problems on that front—Yendor still mysteriously winds up assigned to mucking out the tauntaun pens.

Chapter End Notes

Almost there now.

Thanks, dear readers for trusting me to get us there. Your support means a great deal!!!

<3
Chapter 58

Chapter Summary

You're imagining things.

Chapter Notes

Yeah, there's some smut in the middle of this. :)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Bodhi leans against the wall of the rack room, breathing through his mouth, while he waits for Luke to finish brushing the fur of the tauntaun he’s been trying to bond with all afternoon. The beast shifts back and forth on her clawed feet, occasionally puffing from her larger pair of nostrils as Luke murmurs calmly to her and works the tangles out. She lowers her head when Luke’s done, and butts him in the shoulder; he staggers into the wall, and laughs.

“She does like me.” Luke grins over at Bodhi.

“As long as you don’t have Artoo along,” Bodhi observes. “And—watch those horns—”

“Aw, she’d never go after me with those, would you, girl?” Luke pats her long neck. “Really, it’s the spit you have to pay attention to. Hobbie got it smack in the face, he won’t be riding out on patrol any time soon.”

Bodhi pushes off the wall as Luke leads the tauntaun back into her pen and closes the door behind her. “Not until we get these damn speeders sorted, he won’t,” he agrees.

“I can’t convince you to give riding another try?” Luke slips his gloved hand into Bodhi’s as they leave the tauntaun pen. “You and me out on the snowy plains, setting up perimeter sensors—”

“Falling off my tauntaun,” Bodhi counters. “Losing fingers to frostbite—”

“Cuddling for warmth—”

Bodhi smiles at him. “Haven’t we been doing that enough already?”


“I think we're nearly there—Grizz wants to mess about with installing radiator fins, we gotta get the heat exchange down.” Bodhi frowns thoughtfully. “Never thought we'd be fighting to lose heat, but the power converters keep locking up.”

“Should I come help you?” Luke lets go so he can drop behind Bodhi, allowing a couple techs to squeeze past them in the tight hallway.

“If you want,” Bodhi says. “If Han doesn't wrangle you into helping him with the Falcon first.”

Bodhi has to take his glove off to answer it. “Yes?”

“We’re borrowing the Galen,” Jyn says.

“What, right now?” Bodhi blinks at Luke, who shrugs, just as surprised. “Where are you going?”

“Classified,” Jyn replies, and that makes Bodhi lengthen his strides, though Luke keeps pace with him easily. “Anything we need to know about the ship?”

“No, but—Jyn, wait—”

She snorts. “Now you know how it feels when you take off—”

“Jyn—”

“All right, get down here, we’re leaving in five,” Jyn says, amused.

Bodhi’s out of breath as he and Luke run through the south hangar to the Galen. “Okay,” Bodhi pants. “Where—where are you—”

“Really can’t tell you,” Jyn says, apologetically. She and Cassian are still dressed in their cold-weather gear; no clues to be had there. “Won’t take long, we’ll be back in a few days.”

Bodhi bends over, putting his hands on his thighs, wheezing. Luke doesn’t seem bothered by their sprint through the base’s icy tunnels at all, though, probably thanks to all his training with Chirrut. “A few days, huh?”

Cassian pats him on the back. “Everything all right?”

“Haven’t tried to run in the cold in a long time,” Bodhi pants. He sneak’s a look up at them and plays a guilt card—“And I’m still getting over that flu—”

“Jyn,” Cassian reproaches her.

“What?” Jyn says. “Five minutes was plenty of time to come down and see us off.” She smiles at Bodhi as he straightens up and coughs.

Luke peers up into the Galen’s hold, apparently unconcerned about the state of Bodhi’s lungs so long as his mind is intact. “Need a hand with the preflight check, Kaytoo?” he calls.

“NO, THANK YOU,” Kaytoo replies, louder than he needs to be; Maddel—huh, Bodhi thinks, recognizing Calfor strapped in beside her—wincs and puts her hands over her ears.

“Chirrut and Baze not going with you?” Bodhi asks.

Cassian shakes his head. He seems—stressed. Urgent. “Don’t worry. We’ll take good care of your ship.”

Bodhi reaches out and touches his arm, frowning. “I don’t worry about the ship.”

“We’ll tell you all about it when we come back,” Jyn says, nudging him with her elbow.

“I hope you’re going someplace warm,” Luke offers; Cassian throws him a sharp look that morphs
into faint amusement as he, and Bodhi, realize Luke is utterly guileless, not attempting to pry at all.

Bodhi ducks his head a bit as Jyn stands on her tiptoes to kiss his cheek; she whispers, “Draven and Leia know where we’re going, if something goes wrong.”

“I’ll get you out if Kaytoo can’t,” Bodhi promises, recklessly.

“I have excellent piloting protocols now,” Kaytoo protests, climbing down the ladder to join them on the ramp. “Time to go, Cassian.”

“Don’t worry,” Cassian repeats. “We’ll be careful.” He smiles, though there’s an odd, familiar intensity to his eyes, and a line of worry creasing his brow.

“I will get them out,” Kaytoo says, touching Bodhi’s shoulder. His fingers open and close very carefully like he always does, as if he’s trying not to crush something small and delicate. “I won’t leave without any of them.” He leans down, as if he’s going to tell Bodhi a secret—“Especially not Jyn. Cassian told me I shouldn’t joke about that any more.”

Bodhi tries, and fails, to suppress a grin, as Jyn rolls her eyes. “Thanks, Kaytoo.”

“May the Force be with you,” Luke puts in, brightly.

Kaytoo tilts his head. “I am a droid. I am not subject to—”

“You can argue metaphysics when we return,” Cassian says, his smile more genuine this time. “Stay warm, Bodhi. Luke.” He puts his arm around Jyn’s shoulders as they go up the ramp; she looks back and waves, once, before Kaytoo closes them in.

As soon as the Galen is out of the hangar, Luke says, “Did I hear Jyn right? Leia’s back?” He’s pulling out his comlink and frowning. “I wonder why she didn’t comm me.”

Bodhi shrugs, puzzling over Cassian’s closed-off expression and Jyn’s reluctance to disclose any details. “Think she gave them the mission? If she just got in, and now they’re leaving—”

“Are you worried?” Luke asks. “Cassian was, but he was trying not to let on.”

“I know,” Bodhi says. “D’you think you could get anything out of Leia?”


Bodhi rubs a hand over his mouth. “You’re not supposed to be doing anything right now, are you?”

Luke shakes his head. “Dak’s scheduled some time in the simulations later if you wanna come watch, but nothing this instant. Why?”

“Can you grab Artoo and meet me in the briefing room?”


“I’m gonna figure this out,” Bodhi says. He points at Luke as he starts to walk away. “I bet you—I bet you my energy pudding that I can figure it out.”

A short while later—

“Pretty sure you can come up with something a lot more interesting to bet,” Luke says, coming to stand next to him at the holoprojector with Artoo sidling up behind. “Bodhi, what’s this about?”
Bodhi cues up a map of the galaxy. “Artoo, can you cross-reference all the NewsNet articles from the past couple days with the kinds of declassified missions Cassian, Jyn, and Kaytoo go on? The ones Rodma Maddel and Yosh Calfor get assigned to.” He throws a glance over his shoulder at Luke. “I want to know where they went. Just in case.”

Artoo burbles affirmatively, and plugs into the projector’s socket.

“And—check that list against the systems that are about a day’s flight from here?”

Luke tucks himself against Bodhi’s side. “You haven’t gone on every mission with them before,” he says, twining their fingers together. “Why are you so concerned about this one?”

“Because Cassian was worried,” Bodhi says, watching the galaxy map swirl as Artoo works.

“Yeah, for a spy, he’s not—great at hiding how he feels,” Luke says. “Course, that could just be because I’ve been around him long enough to pick that up, now. They’re not going to Fest again?”

Artoo chirps a negative, and lights up a few systems, projecting NewsNet stories alongside them.

“Mining, really?” Bodhi looks down at Artoo. “I don’t think Cassian’s interested in establishing a company store.”

Smugglers are, Artoo points out. They talk to that smuggler.

“Yeah, but they would’ve told me if they were meeting him,” Bodhi says. “What else?”

Luke gestures at the Stend system excitedly. “This. I bet it’s this. The Khuiumin Survivors? They’re pirates. Dangerous, but they hate the Empire—they’re all that’s left of the Eyttyrmin Batiiv—”

Bodhi raises his eyebrows. “You’ve been reading about pirates?”

Luke grins. “I’m friends with Han Solo, aren’t I? Cassian would want to meet them in force—or—what if Jyn ran with them, when she was, you know. On the run.” He makes a vague gesture in Bodhi’s direction. “And if they hate the Empire—”

Bodhi grimaces. “Then I couldn’t go with them.” He sighs, looking up at the holo again. “But the NewsNet story says they disappeared.”

“Maybe they’re tracking them down?”

“Yeah, maybe,” Bodhi says. “I don’t know. Maybe—they’re dealing with—” His gaze lands on Albrae-Don and the NewsNet piece projected alongside it, something about an underwater pipeline explosion—“Oh, fuck.”

“What?” Luke follows his gaze. “Artoo, that one, give us all the information you can find—”

“Four thousand monorail passengers trapped,” Bodhi says, horrified. “Is that—that can’t be where they’re—”

Luke squeezes his hand. “How many atmospheres can your ship withstand?”

Bodhi stares at Albrae-Don, his heart racing, as Artoo dutifully zooms in; first on its watery sphere, then further into the transportation system built into the seafloor. “Well, it’s a starship, so I’d say anywhere between zero and one—oh, no, there’s no way they’re going there—but there’s gotta be—” Sick anxiety coils in his stomach, and he turns and looks into Luke’s concerned blue eyes. “Something we can do to help?”
Artoo points out that there’s rescue teams working around the clock already you couldn’t get there in time not even if you stole the Millennium Falcon not your fault.

Bodhi glances down at him. “I know, Artoo, but why—why’d you put this one up, then? It’s not even the kind of thing—”

Artoo warbles another long string of Binary. There were explosions Kaytoo tells me when there are a lot of explosions Jyn and Cassian are usually involved.

“Yes, but that’s—this is backwards,” Luke says, frowning as he reads the translation off of the holoprojector’s console. “And if we were mounting a rescue effort, it wouldn’t be just the five of them.” He shakes his head. “I still think they’re going after the Khuiumin Survivors.”

Bodhi looks back up at Albrae-Don. “Okay,” he says, absently.

“Does that mean I get your energy pudding?” Luke asks, squeezing his hand again to reassure him.

“Yeah,” Bodhi murmurs. “Just—there was something about the look on Cassian’s face—I can’t remember, but it seemed so familiar.”

“Hey,” Luke says, deftly wedging himself between Bodhi and the holoprojector. “It’s gonna be all right.”

“Yeah.” Bodhi’s hands grip the edge of the console on either side of Luke’s body. “Sorry—I know it’s been a while since I went on a mission with them, they’ve been fine all along, but you’re not even with them—” He takes a deep breath as Luke puts his arms around his waist. “Blast, I’m spiralling. This was a bad idea.”

Luke rubs a hand up and down his back. “You’ve got an idea where they went, that helps, right? We can look at the files on the Eyttyrmin Batiiv together if you want.”

Artoo chirrups and rocks sideways to nudge Bodhi’s hand with his dome; he pulls up out of his anxious thoughts, his heartbeat starting to settle as Luke continues to hold him. Eager to move on, he shakes his head and says, “You’re training Dak?”

“Come watch.” Luke shifts topics with him smoothly, keying off the projector behind him without looking. “He’s doing well. It’s too bad I couldn’t snag a B-wing for him, he’s handier at it in the simulator than the rest of us, maybe ’cause he doesn’t have years of X-wings under his belt.”

Bodhi looks at him askance as they leave the briefing room, Artoo trundling away cautiously over the icy floor of the corridor back to whatever he’d been doing before Luke went and got him. “Are you admitting you can’t fly a B-wing?”


“Thanks for calming me down,” Bodhi says, and kisses him, soundly.

Luke makes a pleased noise that turns into a disappointed whine as Bodhi pulls away. He rubs his cold nose into Bodhi’s palm. “If there’s more where that came from, Dak can wait—”

Bodhi raises his eyebrows, and strokes his thumb over Luke’s lips. “That’s not very responsible of you, Commander,” he says, and is rewarded with a heartfelt little moan and a challenging sparkle in Luke’s eyes.
Luke straightens his shoulders and takes Bodhi’s hand firmly in his own—“Oh, I’ll show you responsible—” and marches them down to the simulation room.

“Bodhi!” Dak drops his helmet in surprise. “What are—uh, hi, Commander Skywalker—”

“Hi,” Luke says, amicably, and sets to work configuring the simulator for his training exercise. “You two catch up, I’ll just be a moment.”

“You’ve been—all right, sir?” Dak asks. “I—I tried to keep up on your—after we all came back from Thyferra, Yraka’Nes kept me in the loop, but I was so busy—”

Bodhi licks his lips, his breathing gone a little shaky; his gaze flicks down to where Luke’s tugging a component into place; Luke doesn’t look up, apparently unconcerned. “I’m better now,” he says. “Thanks to her, and you, for sending the message.”

Dak shakes his head, his eyes wide. “I never thanked you for making sure we got out, Bodhi—I should’ve come by, but I—” He swallows. “I didn’t know what to say, you know?”

“It’s okay,” Bodhi says, and means it. “I—it’s probably better you didn’t, I was kind of a mess.” He claps Dak on the shoulder. “But—um—I hear you’re gearing up to fly with Luke’s squadron?”

“Yeah.” Dak brightens. “Whenever the air—sorry, snow speeders are ready to go, right, sir?” He looks over at Luke straightening up and dusting off his hands.

Luke gestures to the simulator and grins. “Yep. Show us what you’ve got—take it out to the plains and back, nice and easy.” Bodhi leans against the wall and watches for a few minutes as Dak flies the airspeeder sim through the forests of—“Dantooine,” Luke supplies, crossing his arms and leaning against Bodhi’s side. “Those are blba trees.”

Bodhi looks at him. The lights from the simulation tape play on the curves of his face, casting his eyes in shadow. He’s intent on Dak’s flight, not seeming to pay any attention to Bodhi, but he adds, softly, “Master Îmwe said that thousands of years ago, there was a Jedi Enclave on Dantooine. I’d like to see it, someday.”

“I’ll take you there,” Bodhi murmurs, and Luke turns his head, just for a moment, and smiles.

Dak loops back around to the base and sets down—“Some stuff’s changed since I flew this last,” he says, climbing out of the simulator and grinning at them. “Base looks different.”

Luke says, “Lieutenant Kyrell provided some updates on how it’s coming down, so Rieekan had it reprogrammed.”

“Oh, Thane?” Dak nods. “Yeah, he said he was really impressed by the Rebellion from what he saw there. Thought we were a real fighting force, not just some ragtag bunch of smugglers and thieves.”

Bodhi snorts. “He’s met Han, now.”

“Nice job, by the way,” Luke says, checking over Dak’s time and engine output readings from the simulation and handing Dak the datapad.

“How come you didn’t have any Imperials out there?” Dak asks. “I thought all the other simulations—the one you trained on just throws wave after wave of ‘em at you—”

Luke shrugs, casually. “Sometimes it’s just good to see how you fly.” He smiles. “Bodhi, didn’t you say Grizz is working on the snowspeeders right now?”
“Yeah—yeah,” Bodhi says, looking at Luke curiously. “He could probably use some help getting the de-icing nozzles properly installed?”

Dak is oblivious to whatever Luke’s got in mind. “Okay,” he says, cheerfully. “Thanks, Commander—see you around, Bodhi?”

“You bet,” Bodhi says.

The door slides shut behind him, and Luke says, “Your turn.”

Bodhi blinks at him. “What?”

Luke gestures to the simulator. “When’s the last time you flew an airspeeder?”

“Oh—”

Luke pushes off the wall. “Back home on Jedha? When you were a kid?” He reaches in to reset the simulation and beckons Bodhi over.

“What are you doing?”

“Get in, get in,” Luke says. “What kind of responsible commander would I be if I didn’t occasionally review my squadmate’s performance?”

Bodhi frowns, puzzled, but he dutifully climbs into the simulator and—Luke gets in with him.

“Bit cramped, isn’t it?” he says, his mouth going dry as Luke drops to his knees, adjusting his position around the controls.

Luke ignores that. “Go on.” He runs a warm hand up Bodhi’s inner thigh; Bodhi sucks in a sharp breath as Luke starts to unfasten his pants with his other hand. “Show me how well you can fly—”

He wraps his fingers around Bodhi like he would the controls.


“Trust me,” Luke says, earnestly, and Bodhi grips the controls, more tightly than Luke’s touching him, and lifts off, soaring over Dantooine’s simulated landscape. It’s not real, but his heart still races and leaps the way it would if he was actually flying, though maybe it’s just because Luke is making him dizzy—

Bodhi puts the airspeeder into one of the blba trees in shock when Luke dips his head and takes him into his mouth.

“I killed us,” he gasps, taking his hands off the controls and leaning his head back—

Luke pulls off, trying to look stern but utterly failing. “Well, run the simulation again, then.”


It takes three more tries, but Bodhi finally manages to complete the loop without crashing when Luke does that thing with his tongue or swallows him all the way down. Luke only lets him come once he’s set the airspeeder down at the base again, though; he cries out, bucking into Luke’s mouth helplessly, and tries not to pull Luke’s hair too hard.

“There, see how much you improved under my guidance?” Luke smirks up at him from between his legs once Bodhi’s come back to himself, fingers still tangled in Luke’s hair.
Bodhi pins Luke’s shoulders between his knees, still panting, sweating as hard as if he’d really been flying. “I crashed three times!”

“That’s why we did it in the simulation first,” Luke says, amused.

Bodhi waves a finger in his face and says, “Next time—you’re flying, and I’m screwing with you—”

“Please.” Luke beams at him. Then a little furrow appears on his forehead— “What were we going to do, before Jyn called?”

Bodhi thinks for a moment. “Work on the snowspeeders?”

Luke laughs. “That was it.”

“You sent Dak to do that,” Bodhi says.

“Oh, right,” Luke says. He pushes himself up from the floor of the simulator and straddles Bodhi’s lap. “Want to go again?”

Bodhi rubs his mouth. “Yeah, but not—not here.” He tilts his head back so he can gaze into Luke’s darkening eyes. “I want—you, in my ship—” Luke’s lips part, and Bodhi adds, tentatively, thoughtfully, “—bent over the console—”

Luke whimpers and touches Bodhi’s face, very lightly, with his fingers. Then he vaults out of the simulator and says, “Well, come on, then!” Bodhi snickers at how hard Luke tries to make it look like he’s not running down to the hangar again; he’s got his jacket open as if he’s not freezing cold—

“Wait, wait, your hair’s a wreck.” Bodhi catches at Luke’s hand and reaches over to smooth his fluffed-up hair down, so it won’t be ridiculously obvious to everyone in the hangar what they’ve been doing.

“Whose fault is that?” Luke says, blithely, and then they come around the corner into the south hangar. Bodhi looks down the rows of ships towards the Cadera, but—

—it’s not there.

“Where is my ship?” Bodhi yells, breaking into a sprint towards where he’d landed it, where he’d left it perfectly fine yesterday—

—where a model of the Cadera, carved precisely to one-quarter scale in solid ice, sits in its place.

“What the everloving fuck—”

Luke skitters to a stop at his side and cannot suppress a snort of laughter.

“Did—” Bodhi rounds on him.

Luke puts his hands up. “I didn’t.”

“’Cause you better not have been distracting me while—”

“I’m on your side!” Luke protests, though his eyes dance.

“Janson,” Bodhi grits through his teeth, and pulls out his comlink. He looks at Luke. “You really—”

put out as he zips up his coat again. “We were going to—”

“Yeah,” Bodhi says. “They’re not—meeting with anyone right now, right?”

“Nope.” Luke takes a step back as Bodhi clears his throat and comms Janson.

“We here—”

“What in the names of all the stars did you do with my ship?” Bodhi shouts. There’s a squeal of feedback from somewhere close by—he looks wildly around for it and spots Janson, Hobbie, and Wedge in a cluster under their X-wings, grinning at him. He thumbs off his comm and starts towards them—

“We put it on one of the transports, relax,” Janson says, though he starts to back away.

“‘We?’” Hobbie shoots out an arm and holds Janson fast, as Bodhi gets closer.

“It’s fine, it’s—still exactly how you left it, though Wedge went looking for his pants and his special sabacc card—” Janson babbles.

“Just tossing us all under the speeder bus, I see,” Wedge says. “Hi, Bodhi. Something wrong with your ship?”

“You—you—” Bodhi sputters. “You replaced it with an ice cube?”

“Consider it payback for making us live on one,” Janson says, wrestling free from Hobbie’s grasp. “And, you know, the thing you did to my ‘fresher. Uh, hi, Luke. Are you gonna kill us now?”

Luke grimaces at them. “Thinking about it,” he says, though only he and Bodhi know why, or why Luke’s face is flushed pink. “When’d you learn to carve ice sculptures?”

“That’s—that’s—beyond the—” Bodhi shakes his head, breathing fast. “Which transport?”

“The one outside,” Wedge says, pointing at the sealed blast doors. “It’s fine, just have someone tow it back in tomorrow.” He flashes a grin at Bodhi. “Your face, we should’ve rigged a holorecorder—”

Bodhi punches him on the shoulder. “‘We,’ huh?”

“Would you believe we’re trying to cheer you up since your spy buddies took off without you?” Hobbie offers.

“Oh, blow it out your airlock.” Bodhi glares at him.

“It’s funny,” Janson wheedles. “‘Sides, you’ve got a whole other ship here still—” He points across at the Beru.

“Yeah, but the—” Bodhi casts a quick glance at Luke, who’s smiling back at him, bright and largely unperturbed, as if to say, we do have our own quarters, after all. He makes a face, but sighs and lets it go, though he wonders how heavy the ice Cadera is, and whether he can get it moved in front of their quarters without anyone noticing. “Yeah, yeah, it’s pretty funny, I guess.”

“C’mon, we’ve been waiting for you to show up for hours, let’s go eat,” Wedge says, looking a bit relieved. “We’ll straighten it all out tomorrow.”

*****
After dinner—during which Artoo rolls up and chirrups at Bodhi that the monorail passengers were rescued everyone lived hooray—and a game of sabacc, which Grizz actually shows up to for once, Bodhi and Luke slip off to their quarters, hand in hand. Luke doesn’t strip completely down, though, happy enough to snuggle against Bodhi in his undershirt and shorts.

Bodhi turns onto his side so they’re facing each other. He drapes his arm over Luke’s shoulders, yawning—“Oh, shit, were you supposed to go meditate, or—or—”

“Chirrut’s been letting me slide,” Luke says, shrugging under Bodhi’s hand. “I think he doesn’t like the cold much either, says it’s hard to concentrate.”

“Huh,” Bodhi murmurs.

“I like concentrating on you.” Luke presses his lips to Bodhi’s throat; but he doesn’t squirm any closer or try to grind against him. “I like seeing you work, and fly, and—get mad at Janson—”

“Work?” Bodhi strokes his back languidly.

“The way you were trying to figure out where Jyn and Cassian and Kaytoo went,” Luke murmurs, his lips vibrating against Bodhi’s skin. “I wouldn’t have thought to look at the NewsNet.”

“It’s full of gossip,” Bodhi demurs.


“Even if we didn’t get around to what I was going to do to you?” Bodhi kisses his forehead.

Luke huffs a laugh into the space between them, drowsily. “Get your ship back and we’ll talk.”

“Tomorrow, then,” Bodhi murmurs.

“Yeah,” Luke agrees, sleepily, though he does squirm a little, then, warm and content in Bodhi’s arms.

*****

But there isn’t time the next day, for sex or anything else except a quick kiss in parting. Rieekan sends Luke and Han out on tauntauns to go set up the perimeter sensors, and Grizz and Dak want Bodhi to help them on the damned snowspeeders, which still won’t work even after Grizz kicks one, hard, in the time-honored tradition of mechanics everywhere.

“Sorry to waste your time on this, Bodhi,” Dak says, sadly, around midday, tossing his gloves out before he climbs out of the speeder’s cockpit.

“It’s okay.” Bodhi watches Grizz storm up and down the hangar, past the ice Cadera, muttering to himself. “Why don’t we all take a break and come back in an hour?”

“I’ve got some sims I could run again.” Dak jerks a thumb over his shoulder in the direction of the simulation room.

Bodhi’s face heats. “That—that’s a good idea.”

“We’ll come up with something,” Dak says, earnestly.

“I hope so,” Bodhi says. His lips quirk up. “Otherwise we’d better mock up some tauntaun riding
“I was so sure we had it this time,” Grizz mutters, returning to their test speeder and aiming another kick at its starboard wing.

“Diagnostic says otherwise,” Bodhi says, looking down at the readout on the datapad. “Listen, you’ve been working on this for—”

“I’m gonna get it right,” Grizz insists. “Just give me a hand with these fucking converters—”

“Take a break,” Bodhi says. He raises his eyebrows as Grizz starts to protest again. “I’ll make it an order?”

Grizz sighs. “All right, all right. You want anything?”

Bodhi shakes his head, pointing at his thermos of caf.

“Kay. I’ll be right back. Don’t fix it without me.”

“Wouldn’t dream of it.” Bodhi grins at him.

Once Grizz’s gone, too, Bodhi strolls over to the ice Cadera and studies it carefully; at five meters long he’s pretty sure there’s no way he can move it by himself, but maybe if he gets a load lifter he can get it into the Rogues’ barracks—

He looks at the nearest load lifter and considers the width of the corridors.

Yeah.

That’s never gonna happen.

Still—

Bodhi whistles ♪ That’s keen. Pedunkeen!♫ and goes in search of Kem Monnon, thinking the engineering corps might have some ideas.

He hears Han and Leia arguing before he sees them; ducks back around the corner so Han won’t try to drag him into it, or use him as an escape route.

Leia snaps, “You’re imagining things.”

Han sounds affronted. “Am I? Then why are you following me? Afraid I was going to leave without giving you a goodbye kiss?”

“I’d just as soon kiss a Wookiee,” Leia spits, furiously.

“I can arrange that,” Han snarls. “You could use a good kiss!”

Bodhi peeks around the corner just in time to see Han disappear around the far end of the corridor, Leia staring after him. He hesitates, considering his options, and Leia turns—

“Captain Rook,” she says, icily.

“Your Highness,” Bodhi says. “Uh—”

“ Heard all of it?” Leia folds her arms.
“Just the part about kissing Chewbacca,” Bodhi says, wryly.

Leia straightens her shoulders and says, “Han said you were working on the snowspeeders instead of helping him?”

“Yeah.”

“Keep up the good work, then.” She smiles, thinly, as she goes past.

“Right,” Bodhi says, and grins to himself.

Kem is very entertained by the idea of dumping the ice Cadera in the squadron barracks, as Bodhi thought he would be, but can’t see a way clear to making it happen unless the sculpture is in pieces, which pretty much defeats the purpose. Bodhi wanders back through the base towards the south hangar again, pondering other possible uses for the thing, and his comlink chirps just as he gets back to Grizz and Dak standing over the snowspeeder.

“Yes?”

“Hey, broody boy.”

Bodhi rolls his eyes, and Dak flashes a smile at him. “What d’you want, Han? I’m busy—”

Han cuts him off. “Is Luke with you?”

“No,” Bodhi says, nodding approval at the revised schematics on Dak’s datapad. “He went out with you.”

“Have you seen him?”

Bodhi stills at the urgency in Han’s voice. He feels a cold fist clench around his chest. “No.”

“Shit. Are the speeders ready?”

“Not yet—we’re still having some trouble adapting them to the cold—”

“Then I’ll have to go out on the tauntaun,” Han says, grimly, and clicks off.

Bodhi, shaking, looks up at Grizz, and Dak, who stare back at him, their expressions mirroring the fear sinking icicles into his heart. “Han. Han—?”

Chapter End Notes

Yep.

Here we go.

<3

edited to add: Thanks to meledea & morag for the advice on this one!!!
Chapter 59

Chapter Summary

There's nothing more we can do tonight.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“Luke hates the cold,” Bodhi mumbles, inanely. “He wouldn’t—I have to—” He stares out past Dak and Grizz, straining to see the GR-75 transport through the snow and night falling. He clenches the comlink in his fist, looking back down at the snowspeeder. “It’ll take too long to get the Cadera from the transport.”

“You can’t take the speeder to go find him,” Grizz says, alarmed. “It’ll lock up and you’ll die out there—” He clamps his mouth shut as Dak jerks his head around to glare at him.

Bodhi bites his lip, shoving aside the memory of how he’d held Luke’s shivering body in his arms, the first time they’d come to this fucking planet—“Okay. Okay. If—if Han can't—if he can't bring Luke in on his tauntaun—”

The very thought makes him shudder, but he pushes on, looking at Dak’s scared expression. Sound like a flight instructor. “We’ve got to have these blasted speeders ready to go as soon as possible.”

“You got it, sir,” Dak says, swinging around back to their experimental speeder with renewed haste.

Grizz grabs Bodhi by the arm. Shakes him, a little. “Go find out what's happening. We'll be all right here.”

Bodhi rubs his hand over his face. “You—you’re sure—”

“Go,” Grizz insists, and Bodhi nods, jerkily, and takes off at a sprint for the north hangar until he realizes he doesn’t have the faintest idea who even knows what’s happening except for Han, and he’s already gone into the blizzard.

Luke promised he’d always come back.

He can’t be lost, he can navigate—he found me across an entire city with the Force—

Bodhi stumbles to a halt around the corner from the command center, his breath hitching in his throat. He smacks his fist against the wall, and dashes back for Chirrut and Baze’s quarters, breathlessly apologizing as he pushes past some techs coming off shift.

Baze answers his frantic pounding on the door. “Bodhi? We didn’t expect to see you tonight—”

Behind him, Chirrut sits at their table, doing something with his lightbow.

“I know, I’m sorry to interrupt, I—can Chirrut, or you—I don’t know, you haven’t said if you can, but can Chirrut sense if Luke—” Bodhi squeezes his eyes shut for a second before opening them and gazing straight into Baze’s face, trying to steel himself for the worst. “If he’s—if Luke is—”
Baze throws a glance over his shoulder at Chirrut, but he says to Bodhi, “進來吧.”

Bodhi’s heart misses a beat. “No, no, I have to get back down—please, just tell me—”

“Tell you what?” Chirrut turns his head in Bodhi’s direction. “What’s wrong?”

“Luke’s missing, he’s disappeared out there somewhere, can you—can you find him? The way—how you knew to get to the master switch, or—or how you knew where to shoot, on Eadu—” Bodhi tries to slow his words down, but his fear gives them speed. “If you can help—”

“I can’t,” Chirrut says. “It is not the will of the Force that I go and find him.”

Bodhi looks to Baze for backup. “Please. Please. There’s got to be something you can do.”

Baze shakes his head. “We can pray,” he says.

“That’s not—” Bodhi exhales, his fingers tightening on the door frame. “Okay. Thank you. I—if you think of—I’m going to the north hangar to wait for Han.”

Chirrut gets to his feet. “We’ll come with you.”

“What?” Bodhi says.

“Baze, 我的外套在哪裡?” Chirrut asks.

“I don’t—”

“This is what we can do,” Chirrut says, putting his arms into the heavy coat Baze holds out for him. “We will come to the hangar with you.”

“It’s—okay, you don’t have to,” Bodhi says, puzzled. “I’m not—I’m not panicking—” His cracking voice puts the lie to that, though, and Baze raises a skeptical eyebrow as he shrugs his own coat on.

“In case you do,” Chirrut says, clapping Bodhi on the shoulder and starting down the narrow corridor ahead of them, tapping his staff arrhythmically on the walls.

Bodhi tries but fails to stop himself from peppering them with agitated questions about why Chirrut can’t find Luke, or what Baze thinks praying will do if Han’s tauntaun can’t survive the frigid temperatures any better than a human can. All he gets from Chirrut is the usual; Baze grunts agreement, and Bodhi nearly shouts at them that the Force can’t possibly will Luke to die, not when he’s the last of the fucking Jedi, but—they’re attempting to help him stay calm, because actually panicking won’t help anything, least of all Luke, wherever he is. Baze settles a hand on Bodhi’s shoulder as they come into the north hangar, and Bodhi finds himself stabilizing under its reassuring warmth.

The north hangar is oddly quiet; no mechanics are at any of the ships, and Bodhi wonders if Dak and Grizz have commandeered them for the snowspeeders. He’s grateful, if they have. Chewbacca waves a furry arm at Bodhi, beckoning them over to him and Major Derlin over by someone’s X-wing, where they’re waiting with—

—Leia, standing under the S-foil, looking pale and tense, though she finds it in herself to smile, faintly, when Bodhi and the Guardians make their way across the hangar to her.

“Bodhi.” Leia sounds relieved. “I thought you’d run off to find Luke and gotten yourself lost as well, and I didn’t know how I’d begin to explain that to—” She breaks off and inclines her head politely to
Chirrut and Baze. “Master Îmwe. Has the Force given you some knowledge of Han and Luke’s whereabouts?”

“I don’t know any more than you do.” Chirrut leans on the end of his staff, turning his face in the direction of the open blast doors, where Artoo and Threepio are looking out into the snow. “Even less, maybe.”

Leia straightens gracefully and clasps her hands behind her back, like she’s briefing them. “Luke went to check on a meteorite strike after he was done installing the perimeter sensors. That’s the last report we have, but that was hours ago.”

Bodhi blinks at her and asks, stupidly, “He went to go look at a meteorite?”

“Nothing from the outposts?” Baze asks, thankfully ignoring Bodhi’s question.

Leia shakes her head. “Toryn Farr called around. He hasn’t shown up or reported in to any of them. And now Han thinks he can pull off another damned rescue.” Her voice wavers, barely; her dark eyes are solemn.

“Sir—” A lieutenant jogs up to Major Derlin. “All the patrols are in. Still no—” Major Derlin holds up a warning hand, and the lieutenant lowers his voice, throwing a glance in Leia’s direction, but he’s entirely too audible. “Still no contact from Skywalker or Solo.”

Bodhi grimaces and lowers his head, willing himself not to imagine Luke riding his tauntaun into the blizzard, getting farther and farther away from safety, and home, and—

“Mistress Leia, Captain Rook,” Threepio says, and Bodhi looks up again, anxiously, but of course there’s no expression to be read on Threepio’s face. “Artoo says he’s been quite unable to pick up any signals, although he does admit that his own range is far too weak to abandon all hope.”

Major Derlin says, “Your Highness, there’s nothing more we can do tonight. The shield doors must be closed.”

Bodhi starts, frantic, “No—wait—” but Leia nods acknowledgement, and Derlin only grimaces at him apologetically before ordering the lieutenant to shut the doors. Chewbacca lets out a soft, mournful howl, and Artoo says—

“No,” Bodhi snaps at him, just as Threepio translates, “Artoo says the chances of survival are seven hundred and twenty-five—”

“That is not helpful,” Baze growls, eyeing him.

“—to one,” Threepio finishes.

“Artoo,” Bodhi says, desperately, watching the heavy blast doors slam shut. They meet with a resounding clang, and Chewbacca throws his head back and howls, the sound echoing eerily off of the walls and in Bodhi’s head.

Threepio’s glowing eyes track between Bodhi, Leia, and the Guardians, and he offers, “Actually, Artoo has been known to make mistakes—” He backs away from the menacing reach of Chirrut’s staff, though that only puts him closer to Chewbacca’s long arms. “From time to time.”

Bodhi rounds on Leia. “How can you just give up on them like—”

Leia’s eyes flash. “I’m not, they’re my—friends too, but the base must be protected for the night, or
“we’ll all freeze to death.”

“Leia,” Bodhi rasps, anguished.

“I’m sorry,” she says, immediately. “But we have to prepare for the likelihood—”

“Please.” Bodhi cringes and raises his hands to fend her off.

Artoo makes a mournful little warble, and Threepio says, “Don’t worry about Master Luke. I’m sure he’ll be all right. He’s quite clever, you know, for a human being.”

“Thanks, Threepio.” Bodhi’s surprised at his uncharacteristic attempt to reassure them. He fidgets for a moment, watching Leia walk away and start to pace the length of the hangar, another crack in her royal facade. “I can’t—I don’t know what to do, now,” he says, miserably, to Chirrut and Baze.

Baze looks at him. “You haven’t eaten.”

“Don’t think I could,” Bodhi says, weakly. “Maybe—maybe I should get back to the snowspeeders.”

Baze jerks his head back in the direction of their quarters. “Get the princess. Let’s go.” His gruff tone brooks no argument.

“You too, Chewbacca,” Chirrut says.

Chewbacca shakes his shaggy head and says something about owing Han—

“That doesn’t mean you should starve yourself,” Chirrut replies, but Chewbacca can’t be tempted away from his vigil.

Leia’s respect for Chirrut and Baze wins out over her own attempts to demur. Once they’re back in the Guardians’ quarters, she takes her comlink out of her vest pocket, sets it on the table, and asks, “May I help with anything?”

“No need, it’s nothing fancy,” Chirrut says, tilting back in his chair and poking Bodhi in the side with the end of his staff. “Food like we would get at the night market.”

Bodhi’s perched on the edge of their bunk, like usual, twisting his fingers together, worrying about Luke alone in the snow, but he gets up, dutifully, at Chirrut’s prodding. “What?”

Baze turns from their little stove. “Bodhi 可能沒有去過,” he says, handing Bodhi a bowl of noodles and nodding for him to pass it to Leia, who smiles up at Baze, the tightness around her mouth easing. “The curfew, remember?”

“I remember going there,” Bodhi says. “I was little, but—I remember. I think.” He narrows his eyes at Chirrut, uselessly. “This is probably not going to make me feel any better, you know.”

“Would you rather worry about Luke or talk about home?” Chirrut says.

“You don’t have to.” Leia glances up from her noodles sharply.

Bodhi says, “I promised I would.”

“It doesn’t have to be tonight,” Leia says. “Not with Luke and Han missing.”

“What did you promise?” Baze asks.
“That I’d tell Princess Leia about Jedha.” Bodhi’s hands shake as he pours tea for Baze and Chirrut; he swipes at the spilled drops with his sleeve. “I’ll take the distraction.”

Baze grunts assent. “It never felt this cold at home.”

“I wouldn’t turn on the heater if I were you,” Leia warns.

“Oh? Why?” Chirrut smiles in her direction. “Not that we need to, Baze is like a furnace.”

Leia nods up at the carved ice ceiling of their quarters. “Artoo turned on my thermal unit and flooded my room. Half my wardrobe’s soaked.”

Bodhi snorts before he can stop himself. “That’s why you’ve been wearing the same—” Leia raises her eyebrows at him, and he says, hastily, kicking himself for talking to her the way he’d talk to Han, “The night market was great, my—my mother bought me jalebi when I behaved myself.” He looks up at Baze. “D’you know what I’m talking about?”

“The sticky thing,” Baze says, deeply skeptical, and Chirrut smiles.

“Yeah,” Bodhi says. “Going to the market was the only time I was hot on Jedha, it got so crowded—humans, aliens, loads of pilgrims buying things after they went and saw the temples. All the heat from everyone cooking in their stalls.” Bodhi picks at his noodles. “Guess it changed after the occupation started, I don’t remember going much after I got older.”

“It became a black market,” Baze says. “Imperial regulations about crowds.”

“Oh.”

“Did it ever snow?” Leia asks, into his awkward silence.

Bodhi shakes his head, but Baze says, “Yes.”

“What?” Chirrut protests. “You’re making that up.”

“Once or twice,” Baze clarifies.

Chirrut says, “Where did it snow? In your mind?”

“What about on Alderaan?” Bodhi asks Leia, as the Guardians fall to bickering.

“In winter,” Leia replies. “But there was always snow on the mountains around the royal palace.”

Bodhi wraps his fingers around his teacup. “I wish I could’ve seen your palace.”

“And I, your kyber temple.” Leia’s soft, but clear voice draws Baze and Chirrut’s attention back. Bodhi tries to hide a wince at that, but Baze’s gaze locks onto him.

“We have many stories about our Temple days,” Chirrut offers, breezily.

“Not fit for royal ears,” Baze mutters, still eyeing Bodhi with concern.

Leia actually laughs. “I’m certain I can handle hearing about the youthful antics of a couple of monks.”

“Are you sure?” Chirrut says, just as a comlink chirps, making Bodhi jump. They all stare at the Leia’s comlink on the table, but the sound isn’t coming from there; Bodhi pulls his comlink from his
pocket, his thumb poised above the switch. He gulps, but there’s nothing for it but to answer. “Yes?”

“Sir, we think we’ve got it,” Grizz says, and Bodhi’s up out of his chair so fast he knocks it over.
“It’s—it’s too late to look for them now, but Wedge says we can go the second the blast doors
open.”

“I’m coming,” Bodhi says, his heart leaping wildly as he leans down to right his chair. “Don’t—
don’t go anywhere—” He thumbs the comlink off and looks at Leia. “Gives us a chance, right?”

“Yes,” she agrees, not as firmly as Bodhi would like.

Bodhi turns to Chirrut and Baze. “Can I—is there enough food for me to bring some down for
them?”

Baze waves at the pot on their little stove. “Take it.”

“I’ll help you.” Leia gets to her feet. “You two can tell me about your misadventures some other
time.” She smiles, sincerely, at Baze before they depart. “Thank you for dinner.”

“Our pleasure,” Baze says, and Chirrut bows his head to her, courteously.

Despite his fears and the familiar half-numb grief threading through his thoughts, Bodhi’s lips twitch
as he and Leia hurry through the corridor; she glances at him, curiously, as if sensing his amusement.

“What?”

“Never thought I’d sit down to dinner with a princess,” Bodhi admits.

Leia huffs a sardonic laugh. “Was it everything you thought it would be?”

“Always imagined it’d be fancy. Very formal. Spoons I didn’t know I was supposed to use, or more
—flowers, or something.” Bodhi musters up a smile.

“They’re a little hard to come by on Hoth.” She peers at him. “You’re really all right? I don’t expect
that this is easy for you.”

Bodhi shakes his head. “I’m keeping it together.” He concentrates on adjusting his grip on the pot
handles. “Just can’t—Luke always comes for me, and I’m—I’m stuck in here waiting. I’d have gone
out in the Cadera, but the squadron—”

“You can’t fly a ship made out of ice,” Leia says.

“You know everything that goes on around here, even when you’ve been gone for weeks?”

Leia smiles. “Yes.”

“O—Okay,” Bodhi says, as they come into the south hangar, and then he gapes, wide-eyed, at Dak
and Grizz talking excitedly to Janson, who leans sideways out of the cockpit of their experimental
speeder. Kasan and Joma are kneeling behind a second speeder, sparks from their tools shooting
everywhere; Hobbie’s directing ground crew to tow over a third.

“Hey,” Wedge says, stripping off his gloves and smiling at Leia. “Any news?”

Bodhi hands their dinner off to Zev. “Careful, it’s hot—”

“Nothing new to report,” Leia says. “You’ve got the snowspeeders working?”
Wedge slings an arm around Bodhi’s shoulder and directs him over to the speeder, Leia following closely behind them. “Yeah, come check this out, Bodhi. Grizz was right about the radiating fins, but we needed to make them wider.”

“Told you I’d get it—Princess Leia, holy shit—” Grizz slaps a hand over his mouth and darts accusatory glances at Bodhi, as if to say you didn’t tell me you knew her too. Bodhi shrugs, not entirely apologetically.

“Hello, Grizz,” Leia says. She turns her head. “Dak.”

“You Highness,” Dak says, cheerfully. “Is that soup?”

“Yeah. You should both go eat.” Bodhi crouches behind the speeder, examining the additional paneling.

“We’ll get these installed on as many snowspeeders as we can tonight,” Wedge informs him, and then, in a quieter voice, “You okay to fly first thing in the morning?”

Bodhi looks at him. “Yeah. Yeah, I’ll get the Cadera towed back out—”

“We may have stacked a couple load lifters’ worth of scrap in front of it,” Wedge confesses, and Bodhi’s heart plummets, as he wonders if Chewbacca will let him pilot the Falcon out again instead. “Look, there’ll be four speeders ready to go. I asked Grizz to fly with us, but he said he wasn’t ready to join the squadron. So—Rogue One? Ready to fly another rescue mission?” He thumps his hand on the engine of the speeder and holds out his palm in offer.

Bodhi makes a choked noise and grabs Wedge around the back of his neck, pressing his forehead to Wedge’s. “Yes. Stars, Wedge—”

Wedge wraps an arm around Bodhi as he shakes and dashes futilely at the tears starting down his face. “It’s gonna be all right. We’ll find him.”

“Wedge, you better not be making time with the Commander’s boyfriend back there,” Hobbie calls. Bodhi hiccups a laugh and wipes his face on his sleeve. “Go eat. I’ll help Kasan and Joma.”

But he doesn’t have to; Leia’s with them already, barely asking any questions before taking off her gloves and getting into the speeder’s workings, and Hobbie, Janson, and Zev are tackling the third.

“The squadron came down here to help about fifteen minutes after you left,” Dak says, coming back over and leaning up against the side of the snowspeeder. He blows on his soup reflexively, even though it’s completely unnecessary in the cold of the hangar. “I’m sorry we couldn’t get it done any faster, Bodhi.”

Bodhi shakes his head and looks up at Grizz, who still seems a little stunned from meeting Leia. “Thank you. Both of you. I should’ve been back sooner, but—”

“S’ok.” Grizz shrugs. “Figured you were trying to dig your way out through the mountain.” Dak bursts out laughing, and a startled snicker escapes Bodhi’s mouth, too.

*****

The night drags on.

Dak and Grizz drift off to their separate barracks after a while, though Dak promises to return
promptly before sunrise for final diagnostics. Wedge assumes temporary command of the rest of the squadron and sends them to bed, though he stays and sits on the nose of the nearest speeder with Bodhi, and talks about Dak’s performance on the simulations.

Leia paces, long erratic orbits in the hangar floor, and Bodhi’s confused about why she doesn’t simply go back to her quarters until he remembers they’re flooded. “I can slice you into Jyn and Cassian’s quarters, if you’d like to get some rest,” he says, sliding off the speeder and deliberately stepping into her path as she circles the ice Cadera for the seventh time.

She shakes her head. “I don’t think I can sleep, knowing they’re out there. Can you?”

“No,” Bodhi murmurs. “I keep thinking I should’ve gone with him. So he wouldn’t—wouldn’t be alone.” He looks down at his interlaced fingers.

_I promised I’d keep him warm._

He struggles to keep his thoughts from sinking into the depths; nothing’s crawling out of the darkness, not with Wedge keeping him distracted, but in his exhausted state it’s probably only a matter of time.

“Han is very lucky,” Leia says, touching Bodhi’s arm. “Both of them are.”

“Chirrut would say there’s no such thing as luck, only the Force,” Bodhi mumbles.

“Do you believe that?” Leia asks.

Bodhi grimaces. “I guess so? I grew up practically in the shadow of their temple. I—I pray, sometimes, the prayer they both use now.” He looks down into her dark eyes. “I believe in my friends, I think, more than anything else, ‘cause they saved me.” Bodhi lifts his hand in a helpless shrug, thinking of the strange visions he’d had and wondering why they’d stopped. “Luke saved me. If that’s the Force, then—okay.”

Leia scrutinizes his face carefully. “Okay.”

“But I’m not out there,” Bodhi says, wearily. “My friends are gone, and only Han is—” He bows his head, unable to keep looking at her.

“I know. But like I said, he’s very lucky.” She sighs, and after a moment, she steps around him as if to resume her pacing.

He hesitates for a second. “Leia?” She turns. “About my friends—”

“Classified, I’m afraid.”

“But you’d tell me if they weren’t all right,” Bodhi says.

Leia nods, slowly. “You’d want to go get them.”

“If I knew where they were.” Bodhi makes a noncommittal gesture.

“Of course.” The corner of her mouth twitches.

“Like if they were going to the Stend system to meet with some pirates,” Bodhi says, hopefully.

“If they were,” Leia agrees. She smiles. “Or if they’d gone to a mining colony on the Outer Rim, or to rescue the monorail passengers on Albrae-Don?”
“How—” Bodhi blinks at her.

“The briefing room console logs.” Leia crosses her arms. “Draven and I know where they are, and we know you’ll always offer to back them up if they need it. But they don’t.”

“Okay,” Bodhi says. “Do you think—”

She tilts her chin up. “Are you trying to keep me from wearing a track in the floor by talking to me?”

“I would never presume to try to keep you from anything,” Bodhi says, honestly. “I was just going to ask if you thought we should see if Chewbacca’s all right. There’s some soup left, but it’s probably gotten cold.”

She sighs, barely audibly, but acquiesces. “Let’s go. He’ll probably eat it anyway.”

“You two okay?” Wedge asks, as they come back to him.

“Yeah,” Bodhi says. “Gonna see how Chewbacca’s holding up.”

“Kay,” Wedge says. “I’m going to turn in, but I’ll be back before dawn.” He claps Bodhi on the shoulder. “Try and get some rest?”

Bodhi nods, though it seems impossible.

Leia doesn’t say a thing as they walk through the winding corridors again. Bodhi resists his usual inclination to chatter nervously away; asking about Han is just as ill-advised as thinking too much about Luke. But she says, after they discover Chewbacca’s actually gone to sleep in the Falcon, somehow, and leave the pot of noodle soup for him at the foot of the ramp, “I was given to understand you’re quite talkative, normally.”

“I thought I was being polite,” Bodhi says, his face heating.

She shakes her head. “Tell me some more about Jedha. If you want.”

Bodhi stops and tries to scrape the accumulated snow off the soles of his boots. “What would you like to know?”

“Anything.”

He gives up and starts walking again, slowing a little to let her keep pace. “Anything?”

Leia hmm. “What would you show Luke, if you could? Besides the night market. Or the temple.”

Bodhi doesn’t look at her. “He’d want to go to the Catacombs of Cadera.”

“But you wouldn’t?”

Bodhi shakes his head. “No one went there. Too many ghosts.”

“Oh,” Leia says, and it sounds like she understands. “Where would you take him?”

He thinks about it, holding his breath as they pass the tauntaun pens, and then he says, “A mesa top, away from the city. So we could—” Bodhi swallows. “So we could see the stars,” he finishes, hoarsely.

Leia is very quiet beside him.
“Did I—” Bodhi glances down, and his heart skips a beat; she looks the way he imagines she must have, when she’d stood on the bridge of the Death Star, powerless to stop Tarkin. “Did I say something wrong?”

“No.” Leia shakes herself. “That’s lovely.” A mask of serenity descends into place over her features again. “A mesa? Did you climb much, as a boy?”

“Yeah. Jumped off of things, too, pretending I could fly,” Bodhi says, still watching her curiously.

“I’m sure your mother appreciated that,” Leia says, dryly.

“I tried not to worry her too much,” Bodhi says. “Mostly our neighbor’s roof.”

Leia raises her eyebrows.

“It was only a story up,” Bodhi admits. “Maybe three meters?” He hesitates. “I take it there was no jumping off the palace roof for you.”

Leia huffs a laugh. “Oh, no. But I’m sure I worried my mother to no end regardless.”

“You?”

“I ran away for a week when I was nine,” she says, matter-of-factly, and Bodhi can’t stop himself from sputtering an incredulous laugh of his own. “I did. The guards searched for me for days, but I knew how to hide—that’s a thing about palaces, no end of hiding spots for practicing.”

“I knew the best places to hide in the alleys,” Bodhi says. “Bit different, I guess. Why’d you run away?”

“Why does anyone want to run away?”

Bodhi trembles and doesn’t reply.

“It must sound the height of childishness,” Leia murmurs, looking up at him, sadly. “I had everything, and you had—”

Bodhi shakes his head. “It doesn’t sound childish. I get it. I—I think. The responsibility you had—at nine—”

“Has Luke ever told you about what he did when he was eight?” Leia asks.

“No,” Bodhi says, accepting her redirection. “Something terribly risky, I assume?”

“I’ll say. He stood up to some thugs Jabba the Hutt sent around to collect water from the moisture farmers in his district.”

Bodhi rubs the back of his neck. “That sounds exactly like something he’d do.”

“That’s Luke for you,” Leia says, softly. They wander on for a little while longer, doubling back when they get to the south hangar. She doesn’t press Bodhi on anything else about his childhood, or comment on her own, so he falls back on what he’d talk about with Luke, if he were here, the subject he knows best: his ships.

He’s not sure if Leia understands half the details, or if she’s even really listening. But her shoulders relax, right up until the point where he ventures, “If—if I ever did get a fourth ship—not that I want another one, I only want my Cadera, but if I did—is there someone I could name it for? For you?
For all of you?”

Leia halts in her tracks. “Bodhi.”

“I don’t mean to presume,” Bodhi says, quickly. “I know you must have set up memorials, and libraries, and—all of that sort of thing, but I thought”— He shrugs, helplessly. “I thought I’d offer.”

“You’re very kind.” She covers a yawn with her hand. “I’ll think about it.”

“Still think you won’t be able to sleep?” Bodhi asks. They’re not far from his quarters; he contemplates offering her the room, and his eyes go wide at the thought of the state of it—

“What is it?”

“I—um, I can slice the lock to Jyn and Cassian’s quarters, if you’d like somewhere to lie down for a minute.”

“You said that before,” Leia says, lightly. “Should I be concerned about our security?”

“No—no,” Bodhi insists. “It’s, uh—” He folds. “We’re close to my room.”

“I don’t want to put you out.” Leia yawns again, though, and her eyelids are drooping.

“I won’t be able to sleep,” Bodhi says, firmly, and dares to usher her to his quarters, palming the door release. “Pardon the—mess.”

Leia smirks at him. “It’s only clothes and tools, nothing I haven’t seen before.” She leans up and kisses his cheek. “Thank you.”

“I should be thanking you, Your Highness,” Bodhi murmurs.

“For what?”

He shrugs. “Keeping me—distracted. Focused. Whichever.”

She gazes at him for a long moment. “Do you believe they’ll be all right?”

Bodhi looks at Luke’s yellow jacket crumpled up on the bunk, his boots kicked haphazardly underneath, and thinks of his warm, bright smile. “I—I can’t believe anything else.”

Leia nods. “Me neither.” And hearing it from her, it’s almost—almost enough.

Chapter End Notes

WELP. We're really in it now!!!

Thanks, as always, for all your amazing lovely comments. This section is a *lot,* and it means so much to know you're still here reading it. <3

Translations:
進來吧: Come in
我的夾克在哪裡?: Where's my coat?
可能沒有去過: May not have been there.
And I thought they smelled bad...on the outside!
Chapter 60

Chapter Summary

I'm right here.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Bodhi wanders the base like a ghost out of the old stories, haunted and haunting.

He suspects that Chirrut and Baze would take him in if he asked, would tease each other and share increasingly ridiculous stories until he laughed or fell asleep. But Bodhi can’t bring himself to impose on them, and somewhere in the back of his mind, he’s also a little afraid they’ll want to talk to him about happiness again. And thinking about that, while Luke is out there—

His breath hisses out from between his clenched teeth.

No.


Luke walked away from crashing his speeder.

Luke fell in a pit and climbed his way out again.

It's one night in the cold.

He'll come back and complain, but he'll tell me about the meteorite he found, or the constellations he made up when the sky cleared. Or the new trick he discovered he could do with the Force. How much he annoyed Han when they were trying to keep each other awake.

He’ll be all right.

Bodhi stops walking and leans against the wall, thudding the heel of his boot against the ice ineffectually, out of sync with his racing heart.

Am I all right?

He closes his hands in fists in his pockets and pins his thoughts down before they can slip into panic. Wonders what Luke had thought, when he’d tore out of Sullust’s sky to come for him on Thyferra. If Luke had even had a plan, or if he’d simply trusted the Force to guide him.

Huh.

Bodhi squeezes his eyes shut, trying to get himself to meditate, but once again, nothing surfaces like his vision of Luke’s impossible rescue. Nothing calm, or certain, or even hopeful; he simply drifts into thinking about standard search patterns, the weak range of a T-47’s sensors, how often to try to raise Han or Luke on the comms, something like a plan, even if it isn’t a good one—

“Uh, sir?”
Bodhi opens his eyes and discovers Roja standing in front of him, the flaps of his hat pulled down tight over his ears. “I’m all right,” he says, automatically.

“You sure?” Roja looks him up and down. “Need help getting back to your room?”

“I’m not drunk,” Bodhi says.

Roja huffs a wry laugh. “Blast, I sure as hell would be, if I was you.”

“Roja—” Bodhi blinks. “What are you wandering around for?”

“Ah-ah.” Roja waves a gloved finger at him. “You’re not currently in my chain of command.” He smirks. “But, uh, you remember Toryn Farr? Comms officer, you got her out on Kessel same time as me and the rest.”

“Yes,” Bodhi says, warily.

“She’s got a sister.” Roja grins broadly. “Pilot, like your boys. A redhead.”

“Toryn know you’re sneaking around in the middle of the night to meet her sister?” Bodhi asks, amused despite himself.

Roja clears his throat. “Uh, she knows now.”

Bodhi snorts. “Toryn kicked you out?”

“Yes,” Roja says. “Hey, enough about me, you look like you’ve been going a couple rounds with—” He trails off.

“Can’t sleep,” Bodhi says, shrugging.

“Anything I can do?”

Bodhi yawns and shakes his head. “Not unless you can figure out how to expand the range of a T-47’s sensor array in under—” he checks his chrono—“Three hours.”

“Oh.” Roja pulls his hat off and runs a hand over his hair. “Wait, you’re not gonna fly out with the Rogues, are you? Looking for Luke?”

“Yeah. Course I am.” Bodhi licks his lips and tries to smile. Roja frowns and studies his face, but Bodhi shakes his head again before he can ask anything else. “It’s fine. I’ll be fine. Flew the run between Eadu and Jedha and back without sleeping, a couple times, before—look, I have—I have to find him.”

Roja’s scrutiny hasn’t let up. “Your eyes—you’re not on stims? How d’you think you’re gonna be able to—”

“Leave off,” Bodhi snaps, irritation flaring. “I told you. You want to help, find me someone who can reconfigure a sensor array. Otherwise—” He waves Roja away.

“Okay, okay,” Roja mutters, and turns to go, putting his hat back on and tugging the ear flaps back into place. He looks back at Bodhi for a second. “I hope you find him quick.”

Bodhi ducks his head, apologetically, and nods. “Thanks.” He watches Roja walk off in the direction of his company’s barracks, marveling at how casually Roja can just go on about his night, like the center hasn’t fallen out of the galaxy.
I’m going to find him.
I have to.

*****

At dawn, Bodhi tries to keep himself still, his hands shoved into the pockets of his coat while Wedge goes over their search and rescue strategy; he hears the slight emphasis on rescue and jerks his head up to stare at Wedge’s scrupulously neutral face.

Wedge, Zev, and Kasan are in cold weather flightsuits, but Bodhi doesn’t have one, and he hadn’t dared to go back to his quarters to look for Luke’s with Leia sleeping there. But the blast doors retract slowly enough that she gets down to the hangar, along with Threepio and Artoo, before Bodhi pulls his speeder’s canopy closed. Her eyes don’t look like she’s been crying—and even if she had been, she would’ve composed herself before walking in—but she looks tired and as pale as her white jumpsuit.

“We’ll find them, Your Highness,” Wedge calls.

“I know,” Leia says, firmly. “May the Force be with you.” She steps back from the speeders to stand with Dak, and Grizz, the latter looking overawed again at her presence.

Artoo rolls over to the side of Bodhi’s speeder and chirrups, _Luke wouldn’t want you to put yourself in danger for him don’t do anything stupid like stay out past nightfall or I’m telling Kaytoo—_

“Okay, okay,” Bodhi says, reaching out to pat Artoo’s dome, though his heart is in his throat at the thought of coming back _without_ Luke. “I’ll be careful.”

Artoo swivels the top of his dome under Bodhi’s hand in acknowledgement and trundles back over to his counterpart. Bodhi tugs his canopy into place and finishes the rest of his preflight sequence, forcing himself to rest his hands lightly on the controls instead of tensing up.

“Bodhi.” It’s Wedge, on a private line. “Ready?”

“Let’s go,” Bodhi mutters, plaintively.

“Right,” Wedge says, and leads the way.

Once they’re clear of Echo Base and past the first outpost, Wedge takes them up over the mountains of the Clabburn Range. “Okay, let’s bring them home,” Wedge says, and out of the corner of his eye Bodhi spots Kasan and Zev splitting off.

“Copy that, Rogue Leader,” Zev calls.

“We’ll find them,” Kasan says, her certainty reassuring to Bodhi’s ears.

And then Bodhi’s alone, suddenly feeling very small and insignificant in a tiny speeder against the blank white landscape. He takes one hand off the controls and toggles the scanners, praying under his breath so he’ll _focus_ as the plains blur past beneath him.

Bodhi tries to imagine himself looking down and seeing Han and Luke waving up, cold but cheerful, as he circles past. How he and Han would bundle Luke into the back of his speeder and they’d fly home together, Luke reaching back to hold his hand. He’s not sure how they’re going to get the tauntauns out, probably someone will have to lead them back to base on foot, but—
Zev’s voice on the open line. “Echo Base, I’ve got something. Not much, but it could be a lifeform.”

A lifeform?

But—Han—the tauntauns—

Bodhi holds his breath, his hands numb on the controls. The snow field stretches out before him, a glossy crust like the sea on Shuldene, freezing solid around his heart.

Luke—

“Echo Base, this is Rogue Two. I’ve found them. Repeat, I’ve found them,” Zev says, a smile in his voice, and Bodhi lets out an inarticulate shout of relief and slumps back in his seat, shaking. “They’re alive. Solo says Luke needs a hot bath and a dunking in bacta, but he’s okay, Bodhi, they both are.”

Wedge orders, “Bodhi, Kasan, head back to base, I’m closer to their coordinates.”

“Thanks—thanks,” Bodhi says, his own voice unsteady, and turns his speeder around. Halfway back, he thinks he recognizes the spot where he’d set the Cadera down on their first trip to Hoth, but it’s hard to tell with the sunshine and tears in his eyes.

*****

Luke doesn’t look okay when they bring him in. He’s unconscious, blood congealed and frozen on his too-pale face; he stirs, slightly, when Bodhi holds his hand before the medical team whisks him off. But he doesn’t wake then, or when Too-Onebee straps a breathing apparatus to his face, or when the bacta sluices down over his battered body and fills the tank.

“Best I can figure is he got into it with one of those wampas,” Han says to Leia, behind Bodhi. “Ow, dammit, stop poking me, I don’t need fluids, just gimme a couple ration bars.”

“Let them finish examining you,” Leia says, irritably, and Bodhi glances over his shoulder at Han shoving FX-7 away from the bed and jerking down his sleeve.

Chewbacca rumbles agreement with her and points out that his temperature on the monitor is lower than human average.

“Hey, I’m not frozen stiff.” Han hops off the bed and smirks at Bodhi. “C’mon, Bodhi, he’ll keep in there a while, let’s get something to eat.”

“I’m not hungry,” Bodhi says, turning back to look at Luke floating in the tank, arms slack at his sides. His heart stutters at the memory of his last, awful, submersion in bacta, how he’d flailed and fought to breathe on his own. He presses his palms to the warm transparisteel of the tank and gazes at Luke’s face to ground himself. A slightly hysterical laugh bubbles out of his chest, startling him.

“Bodhi?” Leia’s at his side, touching his shoulder.

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“There was an aquarium,” Bodhi says. His helpless giggling sounds wrecked coming out of his throat; he struggles to get back under control. “Don’t know why anyone thought it was a good idea, they can’t possibly have turned a profit with the cost of water, but I—there was an aquarium in the Holy City, and I used to—” He lifts his hands and flattens them on the transparisteel again. “Just like this.” His breath catches in his throat like a sob.

He turns, and Han is standing next to Leia, without a trace of his usual sardonic humor in his eyes. “Thank you.”
“Don’t mention it,” Han says. “You’re okay?” He taps his temple and points at Bodhi. “You look like shit.”

“Han,” Leia chastises him.

“You didn’t sleep at all,” Han surmises. “Blast, you must really—” He glances at Leia, who has dark circles under her eyes, too, and stops, a complicated expression crossing his face. “Yeah. Okay. You’re gonna stay here?”

Bodhi nods.

“I’ve got to get back to work,” Leia says, softly. She looks past Bodhi at Luke, her lips compressing. “I’ll come back in a while.”

“Work?” Han pats Bodhi on the back and then follows her out with Chewbacca on his heels.

“Whaddya mean, you’ve got to—”

The door hisses shut behind them, and Bodhi rests his forehead against the tank, grateful that they’ve taken their bickering away.

“I’m here,” he whispers. “I hope you’re warm enough now.”

*****

Luke is submerged for hours, the bruises on his chest slowly, visibly fading.

The squadron stops by, though Kasan and Hobbie don’t linger long, Hobbie visibly unnerved by the gurgling of the tank before he slips out the door.

Zev actually hugs Bodhi, when he awkwardly stammers his gratitude. “Probably for the best you didn’t find them,” he says. “It wasn’t a pretty sight. Or smell.” Bodhi cringes at that; there’d been no sign of Luke’s tauntaun anywhere, but Han had explained, surprisingly delicately, what he’d done once his had dropped dead in order to keep Luke warm.

Wedge produces a ration bar, summons every inch of his height, and attempts to loom at Bodhi until he eats it.

“You’re not very intimidating,” Bodhi says, around the first mouthful, still looking past him at Luke sort of drifting aimlessly around in the bacta.

“Yeah, well, you’ve got a couple uncles who are, plus a security droid, a convict—”

Bodhi bristles. “Jyn’s not a convict.”

“Ex-convict, then, plus a spy, all of whom would take me to pieces if I didn’t check on you.” Wedge smiles. “Not to mention him.” He jerks his head in the direction of Luke’s floating form. “He’s gonna be upset that you haven’t slept.”

“I’ll sleep when he’s out.” Bodhi swallows the last of the ration bar and glowers half-heartedly at Wedge.

“Okay,” Wedge says, dubiously. “Listen—I know it wasn’t under ideal circumstances, but it was nice to have you with us again.”

“It took Zev twenty minutes to find them,” Bodhi points out.
“Still. You’re always welcome to fly with us, you know that, right? Luke could use a co-pilot in the speeder when he’s back at it.”

Bodhi brushes the back of his hand over his mouth and beard. “Thanks, Wedge, but I’m good with—with my shuttles.”

Wedge smiles. “Even the ice one?”

Bodhi makes a rude gesture at him, tiredly, and Wedge laughs. “I’m serious, though. You’ve gotta get some rest, or Cassian’s gonna bring the mountain down on my head.”

“I will,” Bodhi promises.

*****

Grizz and Joma show up after Luke’s out of the tank and Bodhi’s almost asleep at his bedside, head pillowed on his arms.

“Shit, sorry Bodhi,” Grizz mutters, as Bodhi lifts his head and stares blearily at them. “Uh, we got assigned a supply run.”

“Oh,” Bodhi says, blankly. “Where?”

“Sanctuary,” Joma says, straightening out a fold of Luke’s blanket over his shoulder gently.

“That’s great.” Bodhi yawns and puts his head back down, looking at them over his sleeve. “Warm.”

“We’re taking the Beru,” Joma says.

“Yeah, I figured.” Bodhi blinks at Grizz. “You turned down flying with the Rogues?”

Grizz shrugs. “I just got used to flying your shuttle. There’ll be another time. ‘Sides, somebody’s got to keep all these captains in line.” He tilts his head in Joma’s direction; she’s grumbling affectionately at him.

“Okay,” Bodhi says. “Have a good trip, try not to get sand in everything.”

Joma snorts. “We’ll do our best.” She smiles, briefly, and ushers Grizz out.

Too-Onebee says, “Really, Captain Rook, that had better be the last of the visitors today—”

“Sorry,” Bodhi says. “I think that’s most everybody, unless Rieekan decides to stop by.”

“General Rieekan is very busy,” Too-Onebee observes.

“So that’s it, then,” Bodhi says, raising his chin, daring the droid to kick him out. “Just me.”

“Yes,” Too-Onebee says, after a moment, and then turns and whirs away, leaving Bodhi alone with Luke at last.

Bodhi reaches out and brushes his fingers across Luke’s uninjured cheek. “Just me,” he says again, very quietly. “I’m right here. You’re safe. I—I flew one of the snowspeeders to come find you, but I guess the Force wasn’t with me, it was with Zev, and you and Han—” He smooths Luke’s hair back from his forehead. “But I knew you’d be all right. I never stopped believing that.” He kisses Luke’s forehead, lightly, and then settles back into his chair, lowering his head into the circle of his arms again. “I’m right here. I’m not going anywhere.”
He’s asleep within minutes.

*****

—

[“—I’m ready—”]

—

*****

“Bodhi?”

He snaps awake as if Luke had shouted his name, though it had been no more than a faint whisper. Luke’s turned over onto his side and is gazing at him drowsily, the wounds on his face still red and painful-looking.

Bodhi swallows, his heart leaping in relief. “Hi.”

“How did I get here?” Luke asks, hoarsely. “I was—lost, my tauntaun was killed—”

“Han went after you,” Bodhi says, taking Luke’s hand in his own. “Um. He kept you alive until we were able to take the snowspeeders out this morning.”

Luke’s eyes light up, faintly. “Good thing I had you in the simulator, huh.”

Bodhi’s face heats. “Yeah, but I didn’t—Zev—Zev found you.” He looks down at their hands, and on an impulse, lifts Luke’s hand up so he can kiss his fingertips.


Bodhi gets a cup for him and then comes back to sit on the side of Luke’s bed, his hands plucking anxiously at the folds of the blanket while Luke drinks. His heart pounds in his chest, unaccountably; Luke is here, Luke is safe, so what—

What if he’d—

What if—

It doesn’t bear thinking about.

But his heart stutters and skips—

“Sorry to keep you waiting,” Luke says, setting the cup aside and giving Bodhi his left hand. “I think the rest of me’s all here, but maybe you should make sure?”

Bodhi hesitates. Glances down towards Luke’s feet; he’s wiggling his toes under the blanket, slowly.
“Looks like.” He swallows again, and murmurs, “Were you too far from me to find your way?”

Luke nods, looking downcast. “I tried. You know I’d never stop trying. It was just too far, and I was—” He shakes his head. “I must’ve been delirious, Bodhi, but I swear I was trying to come back.”

Bodhi holds Luke’s hand to his heart. “I know.” He’s a bit dizzy, though it can’t be from lack of sleep, a glance at the chrono informs him he’d gotten a good five hours. “I know you’ll always—” Bodhi stops himself. Breaths out, gradually, to steady himself. “Just like I’ll always look for you, because I—”

“Master Luke, sir, it's so good to see you fully functional again,” Threepio says, as he and Artoo come into the medcenter.

Bodhi freezes, the words arrested on his tongue.

“Thanks, Threepio,” Luke says, as Artoo chirps brightly—

“How you feeling, kid?” Han, Chewbacca, and Leia pop back in; Chewbacca ruffles up Luke’s hair affectionately. Bodhi scoots aside on the bed, staring at Artoo and trying to calm down, as Han leans over Luke and kisses him on the forehead. “You don’t look so bad to me—in fact, you look strong enough to pull the ears off a gundark.”

Luke huffs a tiny laugh. “Thanks to you.”

Han throws a quick glance at Bodhi and holds up two fingers in Luke’s face. “That’s two you owe me, junior.” Then he turns around to Leia, and Bodhi groans inwardly, as he says, “Well, Your Worship, looks like you managed to keep me around for a little while longer.”

Leia’s eyes flash. “I had nothing to do with it. General Rieekan thinks it’s dangerous for any more ships to leave the system until we’ve activated the energy shield.”

Han smirks. “That’s a good story. I think you just can’t bear to let a gorgeous guy like me out of your sight.”

Luke rolls his eyes and squeezes Bodhi’s hand. Bodhi squeezes back, as if to say, can you fucking believe— Luke shakes his head, his mouth quirking up.

“I don’t know where you get your delusions, laser brain,” Leia says, flatly, and Chewbacca barks a laugh.

Han glances up at him. “Laugh it up, fuzzball.” He pushes off of Luke’s bed and steps to Leia; Bodhi’s eyebrows shoot up. “But you didn’t see us alone in the south passage.” Han slings his arm around Leia’s shoulders. “She expressed her true feelings for me.”


Han spins on his heel. “Who’s scruffy looking?” Leia’s eyes are deadly as Han leans back in over Luke’s shoulder. “Must’ve hit pretty close to the mark to get her all riled up like that, huh, kid?” He winks at Bodhi.

But Leia just nods, slowly, and strolls over to them. “Well, I guess you don’t know everything about
women yet.” She locks eyes with Bodhi, the corner of her mouth twitching as a warning, and then she’s reaching for him, and her lips are warm, and soft, on his—

“Hey,” Luke protests, as Leia pulls away, glaring up at Han and then stalking out.

Han stares at Bodhi, his mouth opening and closing like a landed fish.

“What?” Bodhi says, and then he can’t resist. “She could use a good kiss.”

Han splutters, “You—you—”

An announcement over the base’s loudspeaker startles them all. “Headquarters personnel, please report to command center.”

Han throws a death glare at Bodhi as he pats Luke on the shoulder. “See you around, kid.”

“What the hell was that?” Luke demands, flabbergasted, to Bodhi as he slides off the bed, too, but he’s easily mollified with a kiss of his own, as gentle as Bodhi can manage.

“It didn’t mean anything,” Bodhi says, amused by the slight tinge of jealousy in Luke’s voice. “I’m gonna check this out, too, I’ll be right back.”

“I’ll come with you—” Luke tosses the blankets aside and swings his legs over the side of the bed.

“No, you won’t,” Too-Onebee says, whirring back over, and Luke grumbles but gets back into bed, gazing wistfully after Bodhi as the medical droid begins to examine him.

In the command center, Draven and Rieekan are convened with Leia, Han, Chewbacca, and Threepio over Toryn’s communications console; Draven beckons Bodhi over as Threepio says, “Sir, I am fluent in six million forms of communication. This signal is not used by the Alliance; it could be an Imperial code.”

“Bodhi?” Draven says.

“I don’t know,” Bodhi admits, as Rieekan nods for Toryn to replay the transmission.

“It isn’t friendly, whatever it is,” Han says. “Come on, Chewie, let’s check it out.” He and Chewbacca head out of the command center; Bodhi notices Leia watching them go, and when she glances back at him, quickly looks down at Toryn’s console, pretending to study the transmission readout.

“Luke all right?” Draven asks, quietly.

Bodhi jerks his head up. “Yeah. Yes, sir. He’s resting.”

Draven narrows his eyes at Bodhi. “Did you rest?”

“A little,” Bodhi says. He pauses. “Have you heard anything from Jyn and Cassian?”

Draven shakes his head. “It’s only been two days. They’ll be fine.”

“Okay,” Bodhi mutters, catching Leia’s reassuring nod. He hangs around nervously for the next fifteen minutes, unsure if he should go back to Luke in the medcenter or not; neither Draven nor Rieekan had dismissed him, and if it is an Imperial signal—

The comm crackles. “Afraid there’s not much left,” Han says.
“What was it?” Leia asks.

“Droid of some kind. I didn’t hit it that hard, it must’ve had a self-destruct.”

Leia frowns. “An Imperial probe droid.” She looks up at Bodhi for confirmation at the same moment Draven and Rieekan do.

“Viper probe droids would do that,” Bodhi offers, hesitantly. His mouth is dry.

*They’ve found us.*

“It’s a good bet the Empire knows we’re here,” Han says, echoing Bodhi’s thoughts. “We’re coming in.”

Rieekan nods; his face is drawn. “We’d better start the evacuation.”

Chapter End Notes

...well, it's been an interesting week. Hope you all are doing okay! I've been *trying* use writing this as a bit of escapism, myself, but at the same time it's hard to hide out in the GFFA. I'm hoping to get 61 done by the time the eight-month mark of this fic rolls around (the 19th), but it's gonna be quite complicated, and I want to get it right. :) So...hang in there.

And, as always, thanks. <3 Reading--and rereading--your comments over the weekend helped me out a lot.

(OMG. 200k words. TIME FOR THE MASSIVE LINE EDIT PASS. Again, as at 100k, content shouldn't change, just fixing formatting and consistent, uh, naming of Too-Onebee, haha, plus the occasional tidying up of lines here and there.)

BY THE WAY!!!!! If you haven't read brynnmclean's lovely rebelcaptain fics, you should totally do that. There's a piece they wrote for my birthday in *I waited for the crash to come* that is ADORABLE and you should alllllll go read their stuff. <3 <3 <3
Chapter 61

Chapter Summary

I'm sorry.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Bodhi's eyes widen. “But we just—we’ve been here a month, it was—” He scrapes his teeth over his lower lip. “It was supposed to be safe, we scouted it, we recommended it—”

“Captain,” Leia interrupts, grabbing Bodhi’s arm and drawing him aside. She throws a quick glance at Rieekan, who nods and begins to coordinate the evacuation effort, calling out on Toryn’s comms console. But Draven, thin-lipped and eyes flinty, moves to shield Bodhi from the rest of the command center instead of barking instructions at the Intelligence staff—

“Oh, oh, dammit, I’m not—” Bodhi gulps and grips the edge of the nearest console, mortified. “I’m not losing it. It just—slipped out. I'm fine, sir—” He pulls himself up straight. “What d’you want me to do?”

Draven exchanges looks with Leia, who nods and heads off to her own duties. “Go make certain Jyn and Cassian’s console is wiped of all sensitive information,” Draven says. “And get whatever supplies Jyn's hoarding out of there and onto a transport. Wipe everything you can from your quarters, I don't want a single shred of evidence that you and Luke were living there left behind for the Empire to pick over.”

“You can't commandeering one of my pilots.” Rieekan glances up at them sternly. “We're going to need every available ship, Davits—”

“And then pick one of your bloody ships and load up as many people as you can,” Draven adds, terse. He gives Rieekan a hard look.

“I’ve only got the one left, sir.” Bodhi twists his fingers together behind his back, calculating space, and time, and—the Cadera still stuck on that transport—

Draven nods. “Get going, Captain. We’re out of here within the day.”

Bodhi slices himself into Jyn and Cassian’s quarters and pauses uncertainly as the door slides open. It’s scrupulously neat and clean, not at all like when he’d had dinner with them last, parts of blasters and datapads strewn about. The spartan sight makes the hairs on his arms stand on end; it’s as if they hadn’t wanted to leave him a mess to deal with if they didn’t make it back.

But Draven would’ve said something if they were in trouble, right?

No time to worry about it now, with the Empire breathing down their necks at any moment. Bodhi instructs the console to begin erasing files, and looks around, deciding what his friends would want him to grab. Jyn had never had much in the way of belongings; she’d come to the Rebellion straight from prison with nothing except the clothes on her back and her mother’s kyber crystal around her neck. But there are a couple of cases of weapons under their bunk, probably the supplies Draven had
—their medals. Not quite jammed in a drawer like Cassian had claimed, but carefully wrapped in their ribbons and stowed in a compartment with a miniature holoprojector. Bodhi turns it on, and is unsurprised to see a Galen and a dark-haired woman smiling at each other over glasses of Daruvvian champagne, the glittering lights of Coruscant out the window behind them. He wonders how long it had taken Jyn to find a holo of their wedding.

His comlink chirps as he’s packing up the holoprojector and their medals. “Yeah?”

“Hey, Too-Onebee’s letting me out of the medcenter,” Luke says. “I’m headed up to the snowspeeder to patrol, Leia said we’ve probably got Imperials incoming any minute.” He sounds casual. Confident.

“You’re all right to fly?” Bodhi attempts to emulate Luke’s tone. He hooks his comlink to his jacket and shoulders a duffel bag, struggling to get a decent grip on both weapons cases at once.

“Yeah, I’m cleared. What’re you doing?’

“Packing up Cassian and Jyn’s stuff and getting ready to get out of here,” Bodhi says, confirming with a glance that the console’s done erasing itself. “I’ll grab our things, too, I’m gonna take the Cadera, evacuate another twenty people or so.” His heart is pounding, but that’s okay; there’s still time, it’s not like Jedha’s collapsing stone sky, or the killing light speeding over the water on Scarif.

“Okay,” Luke says, and his voice is warm in Bodhi’s ears as he steps out into the cold corridor.

“Wait for me to come back and I’ll fly your escort. Dak doesn’t have an assigned X-wing yet, he can co-pilot the Cadera with you after, but I’m borrowing him for the moment. Might need a gunner if the Empire does show up.”

“You’re really okay to go on patrol when you just got out of a bacta tank?” Bodhi asks, turning sideways and pressing himself along the corridor wall to let a bunch of ground troops pass.

“That was—” Luke pauses. “Twelve hours ago? Nothing hurts, Too-Onebee did a good job patching me up. I’ll be fine. Unless—you want to come make sure for yourself?” One of the troops going past, Roja’s squadmate Beak, judging by the nose, snorts and gives Bodhi a thumbs up.

His face heats. “Yeah—yeah.”

“I’m headed up to the north hangar, then,” Luke says. “Where you and the squadron left the snowspeeders when you came in.”

“Okay,” Bodhi says. He thumbs his comlink off, turns on his heel, and follows Beak and the troops in that direction. Jyn and Cassian’s things slow him down, awkward as they are to carry; his fingers are going numb on the weapons cases when he catches up to Luke walking away from Chewbacca and the Falcon.

“Hey,” Bodhi calls out, breathlessly, and Luke jogs back to him as he drops the duffel. “You’re flying the speeder I was in?”

“Yeah,” Luke says. His orange flightsuit’s all rumpled, as is his hair, but he looks immeasurably better than when Bodhi had left him, barely a couple hours ago, his eyes bright and cheerful.

“Anything I should know?”

“Handles better without you in the way,” Bodhi says, dryly, and Luke grins at him. “I was only out for a little while, you should be fully fueled and ready to go.” He can’t help the twitch of his mouth.
“Sir.”

“Oh, don’t.” Luke darts in and kisses the half-smirk off his lips. “Thanks. I promise I’m all right, we’ll be—”

The klaxon of every siren in the base going off at once cuts across his words. Across the hangar, Kasan freezes where she’s chatting with the squadron by their speeders, and Janson’s face goes tight.

“They’re here,” Bodhi whispers, unnecessarily. He has a horrifying memory of seeing the Death Star rising over Scarif’s horizon, but—he draws a breath. It’s cold, ozone-scented, instead of stinking of smoke and death.

No. I got them out.

“I have to go. I’ll meet you down at the other hangar as soon as we can come back,” Luke says, and kisses Bodhi again, lightly, so his little flare of panic must not have been all that bad. And then Luke heads over to meet the squadron, practically bouncing with every step.

“Hey,” Han says, and Bodhi turns around to find him. “You got a sec? I could use another hand getting us out of here—” He jerks a thumb over his shoulder at the Falcon.

Bodhi blinks at him. “What? No, I—” He looks down at the equipment he’s still holding. “I’ve got to get down to my ship, didn’t you hear the alarm go off?”

Han shrugs. “The energy shield’ll hold for a bit, we’ve got some time. Oh, hey, there’s that friend of yours—” Bodhi turns, and Yendor and Thane are sprinting into the hangar along with the rest of Corona Squadron and some other pilots Bodhi doesn’t know well. Leia’s among them, her white jumpsuit standing out against all that orange. “Gonna miss your briefing with the princess?” Han says, his voice wry.

Bodhi shoots him a glance. “You know it didn’t—she didn’t mean anything by it—”

“Yeah.” Han waves a hand. “Still. She likes you. Watch out for her while I’m gone, okay? You owe me.” He starts to walk back to the Falcon.

“Where are you going?” Bodhi furrows his brow.

“Gotta pay some debts,” Han says, turning back and throwing his hands up. “You know how it is. I’ll see you around.”

“Oh—Okay,” Bodhi stammers, suddenly adrift. He looks over his shoulder again at the pilots’ briefing breaking up. Luke and Dak are climbing into their speeder, chattering away, but Luke catches his eye and waves, reassuringly, before pulling the canopy closed. Bodhi picks up Jyn and Cassian’s stuff and hurries back out of the hangar, reconsidering his path to clear out their own quarters and then get across the base to the Cadera—

—rounds the corner straight into Baze and Chirrut, who are both dressed for the frigid weather. Bodhi drops one of the weapons cases in surprise. Baze fairly bristles with weaponry, and Chirrut’s got his lightbow—

“You’re going to fight?”

“Coordinating perimeter defense,” Baze grunts.
“What?” Bodhi yelps. “Since when—you’re not—officers—”

Baze shrugs. “We manage.”

“Our things are packed on the Cadera,” Chirrut says, tapping the weapons case on the ground with the end of his staff. “Since you wouldn’t dare leave us behind.”

“The—my—did someone tow it out?” Bodhi asks, eagerly. Saves me time—

“No, it’s still on the transport, but they know you’re coming to get it,” Baze says. “But we all have to hurry now.” He moves to one side of the corridor to let Leia get past; she nods at him courteously before rushing on.

“Okay, I’m hurrying,” Bodhi says, scooping up the case again. “Please be—may the Force be with you.” Chirrut smiles in his direction as they part ways.

The base has started to shake intermittently as Bodhi finally gets back to their quarters. The lights flickering and piles of snow avalanching off the walls puts him too much in mind of his little cell on Jedha, when the—

But Bodhi pushes those memories down, firmly, clenching his jaw, and sets their console to erasing itself. He ruthlessly halves Jyn and Cassian’s wardrobe, ditching their clothes onto the bunk, though he makes certain not to lose their medals or Jyn’s holoprojector, and crams his Imperial flightsuit and Luke’s yellow jacket into the duffel.

Over the loudspeaker, someone that sounds like Toryn Farr is periodically announcing when transports have made it safely offworld; Bodhi can’t cheer or spare a thought for them as he checks the computer’s progress, more nervous about what’s happening on the surface with his friends than he is the people headed for safety in space. He sweeps his scattered tools off the table into another crate; checks around just to be completely certain Luke hasn’t left his lightsaber behind, or anything else that screams a Jedi was here to an Imperial scout team.

Bodhi’s almost out the door again when he spots his goggles hanging by their strap from the corner of the table. He struggles to reposition his grip on things—the equipment’s getting heavier by the minute—grabs his goggles and crams them atop his head, though they provide little comfort.

In the hall again, he’s buffeted along by more people stumbling for the transports in the south hangar. Bodhi’s thankful that they’re well trained and don’t cry out much when the ground shakes underfoot, grimly pushing on through the cramped hallway. He doesn’t think he could handle it if the base had been filled with screams, the way the holo of Maldra IV had been, at the end.

Chunks of ice crash from the ceiling; Bodhi loses his grip on one of the fucking weapons cases again, but he manages to protect his head before another fist-sized piece comes down, panting for breath through his growing fear and the strain of hauling all their shit to his ship. He wishes he’d rigged his comlink for Rogue Squadron’s frequencies, but the Cadera’s set for it.

If he can just get to his fucking ship before the whole mountain collapses around their ears—

The south hangar is, impossibly, even colder than the north hangar had been. Most of the transports are gone as he flounders out through the snow towards the open hold of the transport the squadron had put the Cadera on. High on the mountainside, the ion cannon pulses more blue bursts into the sky; he can’t see the Star Destroyers up there, can’t guess how many are lying in wait.

His breath comes in short, frozen gasps.
I can outrun them.

Just have to get to my ship!

The ground trembles again, and in the distance, Bodhi makes out the looming shapes of AT-ATs, the flashes of light and death, followed by occasional puffs of smoke.


He’s the best pilot I’ve ever known.

He’ll be all right.

Hands pull him up into the transport when he stumbles and falls on the ramp, his fingers too frozen to let go of the equipment to catch himself. “Captain Rook?”

“My ship,” Bodhi says, through numb lips, struggling to his feet and gazing farther into the hold at the Cadera sitting there, utterly dark. The scrap metal Wedge had said was stacked in front of it has been hauled off and is scattered in the snow to one side of the transport, out of the way. “Can—is there anyone left that can get it out?”

“Tugs are gone, sir, sorry, but—”

Bodhi starts back towards his ship anyway, lugging their belongings after him. The Twi’lek who’d helped him hurries alongside, saying, “I’m Sala’Netu. You were rated for transports, though, right? Sir? You can—you can fly this—” He jerks his chin skyward in the direction of the command pod atop the transport.

“Yeah,” Bodhi says, and Sala’Netu nods in relieved acknowledgement. “Bigger than I’m used to, but—but what happened to the assigned captain?” He slaps at the ramp controls on the Cadera—drops everything on the floor and hurries up into the cockpit to switch on the comms.

“Walkers took him out of the sky,” Sala’Netu says. “Ten minutes ago. You want me to strap your equipment in?”

“Please.” Bodhi cranes forward to listen, switching to the right frequency in time to hear Zev say, “I’m coming around.”

Luke says, “Watch that crossfire—“ and Bodhi’s heart leaps at the sound of his voice. He sucks in breath after breath. It’s worse than it’d been on Scarif, somehow, not knowing what’s happening, knowing there’s little he can do to help but pray.

“Set for position three,” Zev says. “Steady.”


“Bodhi?” Wedge says. “Bodhi, it’s okay, I see him, we’re coming around to give him some cover —”

“Wait, why are you covering—Dak’s his gunner, why—” Bodhi stammers.

“Dak’s dead,” Wedge says, flatly. “And—and we just lost Zev—oh, shit, Luke what the hell are you doing—hang on, Bodhi—”
“Wedge, *Wedge Antilles* don’t you fucking *dare*—” Bodhi shouts, horrified. But he can’t jam up the comms frequencies with his desperation to know what’s happening to Luke; the squadron needs to coordinate to help him, and Bodhi’s useless to them in here.

He rubs a hand over his mouth, feeling unexpected wetness running down his face into his beard, and glances out the viewport again. There’s more people streaming out of the base towards the transport, ground staff and medical personnel, including Too-Onebee and FX-7, moving as fast as they can through the snow carrying equipment. More people who need to get offworld, and he’s just sitting in the *Cadera* crying for Dak and Zev, scared for Luke—

Bodhi clenches his fists helplessly, staring at the comms for a second longer before he propels himself to his feet.

*Escape now; grieve later.*

*He’ll be all right.*

And, somewhere in the back of his mind:

*All is as the Force wills it.*

Bodhi sprints down the *Cadera’s* ramp and scrambles for the ladder to the command pod to prep the ship for departure. But there’s already a couple of new recruits, no older than Dak—

—than Dak had been, fumbling through the preflight sequence, and they look terrified, hands shaking and uncertain on the switches. Bodhi gulps a bracing breath, and then he straightens his shoulders, moving forward to check over their progress, thinking about the ship: *GR-75 medium transport, Gallofree Drive Yards, nine engines—*

The two kids gaze up at him, hesitating. “Captain?”

Bodhi nods. He licks his lips. “Don’t let me interrupt you, you’re almost done, we’re—we’re almost ready to go. Just—let me have the comms, please?”

One of them moves away, gesturing to the console, and Bodhi drops into the pilot’s chair, toggling for the right frequencies again.

“Wedge?”

“Oh, he’s okay,” Wedge says, immediately, and Bodhi smothered the urge to sob in relief as the kids watch him curiously. “Gonna have to walk back, but he’s unhurt.” There’s a tinge of fond exasperation in his voice, though it’s overlaid with stress and grief. “We’re coming back to escort the last transport, there’s a ton of wounded trying to get back to base, too, if you want to wait before you take off with the *Cadera—*”

“I’m flying the last transport,” Bodhi says. “Couldn’t get the *Cadera* out, and—and the transport captain didn’t make it, either, I don’t know his name, Sala’Netu said he was out flying a speeder, Wedge, I don’t know—”

“Oh, okay,” Wedge says. “We’ll be right there.”

The ground shakes, and even inside the transport’s command pod Bodhi can hear the rumble of a tremendous explosion somewhere near by. The kids look up at Bodhi, wide-eyed.

“Power generators,” Bodhi mumbles, in explanation.
There’s a call coming in on another frequency; he switches to it, and Han says, “Transport, this is Solo. Better take off, I can’t get to you. I’ll get Leia out on the *Falcon.*”

Bodhi slaps at the comms, deliriously relieved that they’re both all right, even though he can’t figure why Han has Leia other than—well, reasons—“I copy. We’ll see you at the rendezvous.” He looks out onto the snow—the snowspeeders are coming back fast over the landscape, laying down cover fire for the ground troops running as fast as they can—

*Baze and Chirrut.*

Bodhi jumps out of his chair, his heart hammering in his chest, and heads for the ladder, throwing over his shoulder to the two kids, “You’re doing a great job—I’ll be right back.” His eyes glance off the transport’s nameplate on the bulkhead. And as he climbs down, holding onto the name like a beacon in his mind, a slightly hysterical thought crosses his mind: *at least I didn’t have to come up with that one.*

Sala’Netu is assisting people through the hold and to the other decks. Bodhi vaguely remembers that there’s actually a section intended for passengers on a GR-75, but it’s not going to be enough; standard capacity is ninety, and there are at least twice that making their way to the transport, from the battle and from the base, bloodied and broken, but *alive.* The hold—people who are able are tossing equipment out onto the snow to make space, but it’ll be tight, maybe even as cramped as the *Galen* had been on their trip to Scarif.

Another ominous rumble hits, and Bodhi jerks around to see smoke and ice spilling into the hangar from an explosion *inside* the base.

*Where are they?*

Up the slope, the remaining snowspeeders land and their orange-suited pilots jump out, running for their X-wings. Bodhi can’t make out any of them individually, but they’ve got to be what’s left of the Rogues, ready to provide his escort offworld.

“Bodhi!” Toryn yells, and he drops his gaze down to the hangar bay again to see her supporting a badly-burned woman as they cross the snow to the transport. He dashes down to her, breathlessly apologizing as he pushes past Too-Onebee and FX-7 moving other wounded personnel onto the ship; there’s *so many* of them, more than had died around him on Scarif.

“Your sister?” Bodhi pants at Toryn, taking the woman’s other arm over his shoulder, suppressing a wince as she turns her ravaged face to him. “What’s your name?”

“Samoc,” the woman hisses. Much of her red hair is burned away, as are her eyebrows; she’s struggling to hold back tears so they won’t fall and sting her injured face worse. “Imperial walker got me. Got my—”

“Don’t talk,” Toryn says, as they get up the ramp. Her voice hitches. “I’ll get a medkit—”

Bodhi eases Samoc to the floor of the hold and scans the remaining dozen or so stragglers, looking for the Guardians—spots them in a similar trio with Roja, only it’s *Baze* being supported between him and Chirrut, limping badly.

There’s more explosions inside the base, Imperial troops trying to blast through to the hangar, and Bodhi screams, “**COME ON!**”

Roja looks up and says something urgently to Baze. They’re crossing the last fifty meters to him, Chirrut somehow keeping himself upright even as they thrash through the snow—
Blaster fire from the hangar sears the air; Bodhi cringes as bolts hit the transport’s hull above his head and sparks and screams rain around his ears. But—but Baze and Roja have fallen.

Terror stabbing at his heart, Bodhi shouts, “Help me!” at the closest person still standing—it’s Sala’Netu, again—and makes one last run down onto the surface of Hoth.

“Baze—” Chirrut is desperately hauling at his husband’s shoulders, Sala’Netu at his side.

“I’m all right,” Baze grunts, pushing himself up; snow frosts his hair and beard, making him appear decades older. “I was not hit.”

Bodhi stops breathing, and looks down at Roja’s prone body in the snow, the smoking blaster wound in his back. “No—no no no—” Bodhi drops to his knees. “Roja, come on, you’re—” He swallows back hot, choking tears and gently turns Roja’s face up, barely cognizant that there’s a firefight going on over his head. But Roja’s face is slack and still, his eyes wide in his last look of surprise.

“Bodhi, we have to go,” Chirrut says, pulling him up. “You’re the pilot—” and Bodhi jolts himself out of staring, horrified, at Roja’s body, and staggers back to the transport, with Baze leaning heavily on him and Chirrut loosing shot after devastating shot from the lightbow to cover their retreat.

Inside, he doesn’t dare to wait for the ramp to seal shut or to even check why Baze is limping. He climbs past Sala’Netu and Toryn organizing able-bodied people to get out of the hold and onto safer decks, his legs trembling with every rung.

_Dak. Zev. Roja._

_How many others?

“Oh, thank the—you’re back.” One of the kids is in the pilot’s chair, though he practically leaps out of it when Bodhi comes into the command pod. “Should—should we stay?”

Bodhi drops into the vacated seat and settles his hands on the controls; they’re steady, even though the rest of him is shaking apart. _I couldn’t save Roja, but he might’ve saved Baze. If I can get us out again—_ “Yeah—yeah.” He nods in the direction of the closest two other seats. “We can manage with a skeleton crew of three, no gunner, but I need you to help me fly—”

_My co-pilots are gone, or dead, or—_

A movement out of the viewport catches his eye, and Bodhi looks up in time to see the _Millennium Falcon_ soar into the clear blue sky.

“Bodhi, are you there?” Wedge says, from the comms. “Listen, there’s a couple walkers closing on our position, and I don’t know how many more troopers in the base—we gotta go, Luke will be right behind us—”

“Okay,” Bodhi manages, hoarsely. “Rogue One—” He stops himself; there’s no one left in Echo Base to inform of their departure.

A few stray bolts from Imperial troops on the ground streak past as Bodhi takes the transport up through the atmosphere. But safety is as distant as memory: aside from the splintering debris of at least two other GR-75 transports littering local space, there are five Star Destroyers in his path, _and_ a Super Star Destroyer.

The thought that Darth Vader is in the same orbit as Bodhi, and had possibly even been on the _same_
fucking planet makes Bodhi shiver violently. It’s hard to breathe, suddenly, and the fear he’s been desperately trying to suppress crawls forward—

No.

They’re counting on me.

All the hundreds of people on the transport; his new crew—

“Tell me your names,” Bodhi rasps, punching the rendezvous coordinates into the navicomputer as four X-wings shoot past, spitting laserfire at incoming TIE fighters. The transport rocks, and Bodhi shudders and tries not to think of the injured people below being jostled around even more.

“Bindu,” the kid to his left says, just as the other one says, “Seito.” Both of them look a little like they could’ve been from Jedha, too, or from whatever planets Tonc and Roja had called home.

“Okay. Okay.” Bodhi pushes the transport’s engines hard; he can almost hear them whining, though it might be the ringing in his ears from the explosions in the base or the alarms he can’t figure out how to shut off. “We’re gonna do this, I promise, we’re gonna get out of here, just need a vector to the jump point, the Rogues are on it, they’ll help us get clear—” Two Star Destroyers are closing on him, though, like the blast doors inexorably slamming shut.

A choked gasp from behind him makes him turn. Toryn’s climbed up the ladder, her face white as she gazes out the viewport at the gauntlet they still have to run. “I’m—I’m going to—call in the Fleet—”

“It’s too late,” Bodhi says, watching the hail of green laserfire tracking towards them and pushing the transport into a distressingly faltering evasive maneuver. “But—I can do this—”

He stares out the viewport as another ship jumps in from hyperspace, a deadly streak of durasteel. Not Imperial, a quick little G-1A fighter; Byblos Drive Yards make, modified to hell and back, faster than it has any right to be. It fires on the command pod—torpedoes, not laserfire—and then the deflector shield generators are—gone, and the transport shudders again and again—

“Wedge,” Bodhi says into the comm, surprising himself with the evenness of his voice, though his heart is pounding faster than he could ever fly or run. “We’ve got a problem.”

Shit.

Shit.

Bodhi checks the navicomputer.

We’re not going to make it.

He gets to his feet and holds onto the edge of the console, thinking of the escape pods a few decks below him; staggers as the ship shakes under him, but he doesn’t fall. “Wedge, do you copy?”

“Bodhi, I see it, we’re coming, Bodhi—”

Toryn’s at his side, pulling desperately at his arm, her mouth moving, but he doesn’t hear her. The G-1A is coming around again for another pass at the command pod, and the closest Star Destroyer’s turbolasers are barraging the hull.

“Give me auxiliary power to the shields, we have to get those shields back up now,” Bodhi orders,
watching his death flying towards him. “If we can’t—” He looks at Toryn; her eyes are huge in her pale face.

No Tonc to throw the grenade back, this time.

“Get everyone to the escape pods,” Bodhi snaps, instead. He ignores the alarms going off, Wedge shouting at the remains of Rogue Squadron, Kasan calling his name in desperation. Looks out into the void, past the corona of flames wreathing the transport’s hull like something out of myth.

At least I’m flying.

Wouldn’t want it any other way.

(Saw cries out, “Lies—”)

—but Bodhi grimly shakes the memory free; he doesn’t want to die thinking of that.

—streaks of emerald laser fire burning towards the viewport—

Cassian—Jyn—Kay—

I’m sorry.

Bodhi tries not to think about Chirrut and Baze, somewhere on the decks below. About how the last of the Jedhans are going to die here, scattered to stars so far from home—

He glances over his shoulder. Toryn shoves Bindu and Seito down the ladder, turns back and grabs at Bodhi’s arm again, but the Star Destroyers are going to pick off any escape pods; he might be able to give them a chance to get down to the surface—

Wedge is screaming orders at the squadron, on the cliff’s edge of incoherence.

Bodhi grits his teeth and fights for control of the transport’s dying systems, watching warnings light up the console like Corellia at night. He can’t get the ship cleanly between the Star Destroyers and Hoth, but if he can put it into a spiral, maybe the trajectories of the escape pods will make them harder to target.

And then some of the people he’d tried so hard to save might make it to the surface.

And then—who knows?

He knows he doesn’t want to go back down there. Not without Luke by his side.

And Luke has to get away.

The last of the Jedi must survive.

Bodhi trembles as the transport’s engines cut out and it starts, slowly, ponderously, to spin.

He can’t bring himself to attempt to reach Luke on the comms. It’s enough that Rogue Squadron is here with him, at the end. His namesake.

But—

I am so sorry I didn't tell you—

He takes a breath, shaking, and begins to pray, silently, as the ship jolts, shudders, and he watches it start to come apart in front of him, deck after deck peeling back to space, the bodies of fellow Rebels drifting out into the vacuum.

I'm one with the Force—

(Luke smiles, and says, “I thought I could reach the stars—”)

—and the Force is with me.

Bodhi licks his lips and says, “Wedge, tell Luke I lo—”

The stars flare bright—

Chapter End Notes

I don't want to give away exactly where I'm headed next, but...trust me. It's going to be all right.

HOWEVER, if you will, imagine Luke going to Dagobah, training with Yoda, believing that the love of his life is DEAD, and then getting that vision of Han & Leia in trouble…!

(I might write Luke's POV on that, someday. There's a lot of crying involved, though.)

Back when I started writing this thing, one of my reasons for doing so was to sort of protest the argument that *of course* the Rogue One team had to die in the movie because we never saw them in the Original Trilogy. I've had this particular approach to the Battle of Hoth pretty much ever since (including the last five hundred words sitting in my notes for MONTHS,) though obviously I've made some changes to my initial plans to keep them out of events we've seen onscreen. I will gladly tell you *all* the sources I'm drawing on for this section once we're completely through the next chapter...

...but I also need to get seriously caught up on the work that fell by the wayside this week as I was dealing with life becoming unexpectedly intense! So...know that this is not yet over, not by a long shot; I'll be back, hopefully still within a week :)

As always, thank you. This is eight months now of the most fucking amazing fandom experience I think I've ever had. <3 You're all really, really, really great, and I cannot express how much it means to me that you've been hanging in here with me this long.
Chapter 62

Chapter Summary

It feels like something out of a dream.

Chapter Notes

Yeah, this is a "heed the tags" kind of chapter. I MEAN IT.

Translations in the end notes.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

(“Everyone knows this place is haunted,” Bodhi says, hanging back uncertainly as Luke peers ahead into the dark cave. “We shouldn't have come out here. It's not right, we'll disturb the spirits.”

“Don't you want to see what's inside?” Luke asks, unhooking his lightsaber from his belt and igniting it with a snap-hiss. His eyes are twin stars, gleaming with reflected light. “We came all this way, let's have a look around, at least. You're not afraid, are you?”

Bodhi's eyes widen; he can barely see anything inside the sinister shadows, and he admits, hoarsely, “Yeah.”

“Well, don't be,” Luke says, fondly. “I'm right here with you.” He steps into the darkness, taking the blue-white beacon of his lightsaber with him, and Bodhi has no choice except to follow him into the twisting labyrinth of the cave. Luke darts ahead, though, excited and eager to explore, and Bodhi calls, “Wait—wait, please—”


His fingertips brush something rounded and smooth; it's fragile and hollowed out under his hand, gaping empty where the eyes would’ve been. He jerks back with a gasp, hearing the clatter of the skull falling and rolling among the bones, his own harsh panting breaths, but he reaches out again, trying to find the solid stone, and meets metal bars and empty air.

Air that settles and stinks like ancient dust and his own sweat and filth.

“No—Luke, come back—”

Light flickering around him now, shadows undulating along the wall, wriggling shapes that can only mean the monster is here to claim his memories once more. But the door to his cell slides open with a metallic rasp, and Bodhi turns and flees, the ground bucking and heaving under his feet. The stone stairs are slick from thousands of years of mourners bringing their dead home to rest, and he falls, pain stabbing through his leg as he forces himself upright to run, the weight of the cable spool on his back dragging him down.
He spares a breath to shout, “Luke! We have to leave—it’s too late—” but Luke’s disappeared, and he’s at the entrance to the catacombs, dim sunlight piercing his eyes. The dust in his lungs is no longer from the tombs, but it is from a tomb nonetheless, the cloud of ash and sand and stone roaring towards him over the absent horizon.

“Move!”

An open palm smacks him between the shoulders, and Bodhi starts to follow Jyn and Cassian to salvation, but the monster has crawled out of the catacombs, sickly pale and ungainly in the light. It lashes his arms and legs with its terrible fleshy tentacles, agony flaring everywhere it holds him fast — and it's strong, it's always been stronger than he is, even as he kicks and scrabbles at the walls to pull himself free. It hauls him away from the safety of the ship back into his cell, where the empty gazes of skulls and stormtrooper helmets and his mother Galen Roja indict him for all his failures— and he begs, choking on screams, thrashing in the monster’s implacable grip, pleading for his mother, for Luke— and outside, a ghost watches and waits for him to give up— and another man who’d once tried to kill him says, his voice a distant roll of thunder, the rain threatening to fall, “小弟弟, it’s okay. You can go. It doesn’t have to hurt anymore.”

The rising and falling susurrations of prayer, somewhere close by: wordless static in his ears. He tastes smoke and blood, smells singed flesh and—the cloying sweet scent of bacta, probably from the bandages on his face. His chest feels like the spool of cable is pinning him down, though he’s certain there’s only a bantha-wool blanket atop his strangely bare skin. His right leg hurts.

“You made it right,” Baze says, quietly. “You did everything Galen could have asked for. It’s okay. Luke will understand.”

(His own voice, broken and barely audible—“If I was brave enough—”)


“他要死了,” Baze says, sounding wretched. “我只要告訴他—”

“我聽到,” Chirrut snaps. “Bodhi, don’t listen to him. Listen to—”

(“—what was in my heart—”)

“—the Force—”

Amidst their argument, Bodhi opens his eyes. He’s cradled in Baze’s arms, that much he can make out; Chirrut is a slightly darker shadow beside him.

Everything hurts.

“那就是—我在講—”

Chirrut says, firmly, “這不是他的命運.”

“你怎麼知道? 我也有信心, 我也可以感覺到—”
Bodhi coughs, and attempts to curl up into himself, but the motion sends paroxysms of pain shooting down his leg—he wants to scream, but can’t muster up the strength for it.

“別動,” Baze says, alarmed. “Bodhi, don’t move.”

Bodhi leans his head back against Baze’s stolid embrace, trembling and panting through his clenched teeth. He tries to focus on the few stars he can see overhead, through the gaping wound in the transport’s hull.

*I’m not dead.*

But the unmistakable wedge shape of a Star Destroyer is slowly blotting out the stars—

Chirrut and Baze are talking to him again, but panic surges in his mind, along with the pain throbbing in his leg and all over his body, obliterating their voices, his thoughts. He clutches wordlessly at Chirrut’s arm; his hands feel strange, like they’ve been bundled up in layers of gloves.

*I’m not dead yet.*

He falls away into the darkness again.

*****

(“We’ll just have a quick look around, and then we’ll come back and warm each other up?” Luke says, hopefully, from inside the hood of his cold-weather coat.

“I’ll take that suggestion under advisement,” Bodhi replies. But the quick look turns into a half-hour trek into the snow, plunging into drifts that pile higher and higher the farther they go from the ship.

Bodhi’s cold, even inside his thick coat; he can’t stop shivering despite the layers padding him, and his hands are clumsy with the gloves. He can’t remember what they’ve come out here to look for, only that they’ve got to find some place safe—

Luke asks him strange questions about the snow, and Jedha, and Alderaan, and Bodhi does his best to make his replies make sense—it had rained on Jedha, seasonal rains that washed away the pollution from the kyber mines and starship exhaust and left the Holy City clean, for a time. His answers don’t seem to please Luke, though; Luke goes quiet instead of cheerfully chattering about something else, and Bodhi doesn’t know what to do.

And as they trudge on, and on, growing ever colder, the snow around them slowly turns red with Jedha’s dust, red as blood.


“You killed them,” Luke says, sadly. Bodhi, aghast, turns to look at him, but he’s disappeared.


*****

Chirrut is gone when Bodhi wakes a second time, his heart and head aching, though there’s sort of a haze over the pain in his leg and chest, like someone’s gotten painkillers into him. The emergency lights have come on, bathing Toryn in a sickly green where she crouches between Baze and the ladder to the decks above and below.

He’d be happier she’s alive if they weren’t all trapped on a dead ship.
“—the people still alive, they'll want him the most,” she's saying. “You have to take him in an escape pod and go back to Hoth—”

Baze says, grimly, “He won't survive on Hoth.”

“It's a better chance than he'll get with the Empire,” Toryn insists.

“We will stay and protect him. We will protect everyone we can.” He reaches over and touches her arm. “You should be in an escape pod.”

Toryn shakes her head. “There's too much to do here. And I won't leave my sister.”

“Then you understand,” Baze says.

“I guess I do,” Toryn says, softly. She looks down at Bodhi—puts her hand to her mouth as she realizes he's gazing back at her. “Bodhi?”

“Don't wanna get stuffed in a tauntaun,” he mumbles.

“Yeah.” She smiles at him, faintly. “Hang on, okay, Captain?” She touches his bandaged hand before getting to her feet and hurrying off towards the pod bay.

Bodhi stares up at Baze and rasps, “Escape pods?” Something’s wrong inside him, worse than when Yendor or Seerdon had broken his ribs; that must be why Baze is still sitting here holding him, instead of going to help Chirrut with whatever he’s doing.

“Only three have enough power to eject,” Baze says. “Toryn is trying to decide what to do. Who to send back down to Hoth.”

“You should go,” Bodhi whispers. “You and—and—” He lifts his head to look around for Chirrut just as Baze says, hastily, “Don't—”

But it's too late: Bodhi's seen the bodies of the unlucky dead lying beyond the reach of the containment shield.

“Oh,” he says, small. “Oh.” And then he jerks to the side, retching, choking up blood.

“It's all right,” Baze says, gently, gathering him back into his arms as he quivers and begins to cry.

“No,” Bodhi manages, between the half-formed sobs that wrench at his chest. “No, I—I couldn't—they trusted me to get us out, I always get them out, I'm—I'm the pilot, I'm the pilot, I killed—”

Baze shushes him. “We're alive. One hundred and eight people are alive. Toryn is working on a plan.”

Bodhi shakes his head and mumbles, weakly, into Baze’s palm, “Star Destroyers—”

Baze shushes him. “Maybe, when they tractor the ship in, we can surprise them. Overtake them. Steal you a fourth ship.”

“I don't want another ship,” Bodhi mutters, a tinge of petulance and hysteria in his voice along with the tears. He tries to curl into a ball again, but it still hurts to move, and the bantha-wool blanket scratches his bare skin, catches on the sticky edges of bacta bandages on his chest and arms. “I want—I want—”

The next words are out of his mouth before he can call them back, terribly childish and stupid: “I want to go home.”

Baze is silent, and for a moment Bodhi’s afraid he’s disappeared, like Luke in his nightmare, but that’s impossible; he can hear the Guardian’s steady breathing, feel the warmth of his arms around him. “I know,” Baze says, finally, stroking Bodhi’s hair. “I know.”

*****

(He sprints through the rough-hewn stone halls of Thila Base, desperate to get back to his ship so they can take off. They’d set a trap for Imperials, lining the base with explosives, but they’re done now, he can take them to the rendezvous point.

Cassian’s calling him on his comlink, and he can’t shut out the worry in his friend’s voice. “Bodhi, can you hear me? Tell me you’re out there. Bodhi!” He wants to reply, but Cassian keeps going, sounding more and more determined. “You’ve got to get us out. Find a way.”

But Bodhi’s an Imperial, isn’t he?

He’s going to set off the explosives just by being here.

Bodhi stumbles to a halt at the entrance to the darkened hangar bay, staring at the Cadera a hundred meters away, an impossible distance.

Cassian, tense and demanding: “Bodhi, are you there?”

He flattens himself against the wall, afraid to go out there, lest he trigger the trap his friends have made. “I can’t get to the shuttle. I can’t plug in—”

“You have to,” Cassian says, his voice about to crack under the strain. “You’re our only way out of here.”

But the Cadera is as far away as the stars—)

*****

Baze is trying to shift Bodhi in his lap without hurting him, but Bodhi cries out at an incautious touch, and he stops, resettles them both. “Sorry.”

“What’s happening?” Bodhi mumbles. “Where’s Chirrut?”

Baze tilts his head back to look up, out past the containment shield, to the jagged tear in the transport’s hull. A trio of tiny lights crosses the gap, moving fast, like meteors. “He is—” Baze glances down at Bodhi’s face. “He is praying with some people.”

Bodhi struggles to make sense of that; his head still feels like its engines are sluggish off the start, but the pain’s returning, flaring sparks in his immobilized leg that keep jolting him conscious. The people who’d been ordered to meditate with the Guardians hadn’t been religiously-minded, for the most part, but maybe in the face of their death, or capture, or both—“People,” he repeats, dully.

“Don’t worry about it,” Baze says. “Lie still—”

Toryn shouts, from somewhere down the corridor—“I want anybody who can fight up here now! We’re getting company. Get the wounded out of sight—we need barricades—”

Bodhi’s heart sinks as a handful of people rush past them, but then he sucks in a breath and braces
himself for the pain as Baze puts his arms around Bodhi like he is going to move him off his lap.

“Don’t be an idiot, you can’t move him by yourself,” Chirrut says, coming back to them, his hands outstretched to find the shape of things around him. “Your knee is fucked.”

“My knee is fine,” Baze retorts, as Chirrut lifts Bodhi off him carefully and he pulls himself up to his more-or-less full height.

“There is a ship approaching,” Chirrut explains, crouching down beside Bodhi as he puts his head back on the cold deck, gritting his teeth so he won’t cry out again. “Not Imperial. Toryn thinks bounty hunters, and we might be able to steal their ship.”

“My repeater cannon,” Baze muses. “I left it in the hold by the Cadera.”

“Well, there’s no way to go down there and get it, or my lightbow,” Chirrut says. “Unless you can hold your breath in the vacuum.”

“Then how am I supposed to fight?” Baze grumbles.

“Where are your other blasters?” Chirrut asks. Bodhi looks down the corridor; the people clustered around the docking port are more visible now, glow rods and headlamps bobbing among them. They’re gearing up and getting in position.

“On the Cadera,” Baze says, and Bodhi flinches, unnoticed.

Chirrut shakes his head. “Then stay here.”

“I have to protect you,” Baze mutters.

Chirrut turns his face up to kiss him, smiling. “I am one with the Force.”

Baze huffs, but replies, “The Force is with me.” He shoves Chirrut, a little. “Go.”

The transport twitches as the bounty hunters’ ship docks, and even from where Bodhi lies helpless on the deck, fidgeting with the blanket still wrapped loosely around his shoulders, he can hear the hiss of air being pulled into the docking tunnel. Toryn gives quiet but stern orders, glancing back as Chirrut joins the cluster of people around the port.

But Chirrut is empty-handed—

“Baze.” Bodhi coughs, painfully. “How’s—how’s Chirrut going to fight without his staff—he had it when you came on board, didn’t he?” A sneaking suspicion flashes through his mind: he jerks the blanket aside and stares down at his broken leg, splinted to half of Chirrut’s staff.

“It’s just a stick,” Baze says, as Bodhi gapes up at him in dismay. He shrugs, but Bodhi can tell he’s not happy about it, either—

—movement down the corridor at the port, a ripple in a still pond. Toryn’s arguing with a LOM-series protocol droid. Deckplates clatter at their feet and Bindu and a woman Bodhi doesn’t know pop up from underneath, but the droid seizes Toryn and backs down the docking tunnel, keeping her in front of him so the Rebels won’t shoot.

Bodhi holds his breath as a second bounty hunter, a Gand in an ammonia suit, emerges from the lighted tunnel into the shadows of the dead transport, making demands. For a minute or two, no one moves, voices raised at each other; then the LOM droid steps back out next to the Gand, and
someone’s finger twitches, and the corridor erupts into a firefight.

The LOM droid turns its head unerringly in Bodhi and Baze’s direction, though, and begins to push through the throng towards them, heedless of the troopers attempting to bring it down.

“No—” Chirrut flings himself in front of the droid, who lifts a blaster and fires a single shot—Baze shouts, “Chirrut!” and launches himself forward—

—and Bodhi pushes himself up against the bulkhead instead of trying to make himself smaller in the corner, his breath caught in his throat, unable to run or hide or do anything except watch Chirrut falling to the deck and Baze’s limping, desperate charge—

—the droid fires again, a beam too bright in the darkened corridor, and Baze yells, trying to tackle the droid even as he collapses—

Bodhi screams in rage and grief, staring wildly up at the LOM droid as it picks him up like he weighs nothing. “You killed them you killed them—”

The droid ignores him. “Zuckuss, I found Bodhi Rook,” he calls, loudly, turning to walk back towards the docking tunnel with Bodhi draped over his shoulders, and the blasterfire that had been tracking him suddenly ceases.

Bodhi struggles, cursing and weeping as the droid carries him past Chirrut and Baze’s prone bodies, but the droid’s grip is just as implacable as the monster’s had been, and he kicks at it—

—howls as his broken leg connects with its metal plating, and his vision whites out—

*****

(“Would you like to be carried?” Kaytoo asks, as they hurry away from the burning U-wing, laden down with crates of equipment.

“No!” Bodhi says. It’s more breath than he has to spare; his chest aches from being tossed around inside the ship as it crashed.

“I could carry you anyway,” Kaytoo says. His eyes shine like emergency lights. “That way you wouldn’t have to choose.”

“No,” Bodhi protests, staggering to a halt and panting, bent over, pain stabbing through him. “No, just give me a moment—I can make it.”

“I don’t think you can,” Kaytoo says, coldly, but instead of picking Bodhi up as offered, he strides away into the dark.)

*****

“You don’t—listen to me, you don’t have to put those on him—”

Bodhi’s eyes fly open in panic. He’s lying on a bunk in a holding cell, pain searing up and down his leg, and the LOM droid is clamping his wrists in restraints at his sides. Across the cell, shackled to the wall of the cell by her wrists and ankles, Toryn shouts, “This isn’t a rescue if you’re chaining us up—he’s dying, stop, please, he’s not worth anything to you if he dies, don’t do this!”

She stops, panting for breath.

Bodhi clenches his fists and pulls desperately against his restraints, not caring how badly his arms
and wrists and hands already hurt. *This is when Luke always comes for me*—

But Luke is gone, along with all of his friends, and Baze and Chirrut had sworn to protect him and *failed*, and—

Tears soak the bacta bandages on his face.

He’d learned a prayer for the dead, once, a long time ago, sitting on his neighbor’s rooftop with his mother, watching the sunset over the Holy City. Bodhi can’t remember it, though; can only remember what the Guardians had said to each other.

The only prayer he’s got left.

Bodhi goes limp on the bunk, muttering it to himself, searching for a measure of peace from his broken heart. The droid pays no heed to his mumblings and Toryn’s renewed pleas both, and leaves.

“Dammit,” Toryn whispers. “Bodhi, I’m so sorry—”

But he’s drifted off again, on the words *one with the Force*—

*****

(—trapped in the chair, and the monster’s trussed him up, the ends of its tentacles pinpricks of blazing fire at his temples, about to sear into his mind and memories. But Saw says, turning slowly into dust, “No. No more. I believe you.”)

*The monster uncoils slowly from around his chest and arms, and slithers away into the light.*

—*Celina turns to him in the landspeeder, racing along in the forest on Jerrilek, and says, “No cuffs, right? I remembered.” She smiles, and she’s nearly pretty instead of terrifying. “It’s okay, Rook. I’m not going to hurt you.”*

—and, *on the Falcon, hyperspace swirling and glowing softly outside the cockpit, Luke wraps his fingers gently around Bodhi’s wrist, covering the scars. “Are you all right?”*

*One of the strange little visions he’s had ever since he fell in love with Luke comes clear, suddenly, like he’s wiped the smudges off a display:*

*[Luke sitting inside a tiny house on a distant planet, insisting that he’s ready to learn, that he won’t fail—]*

*Bodhi looks up into Luke’s bright and beautiful eyes, knowing with a strange surety that he’s safe, wherever he is, and says, “Yes.”)*

*****

Someone’s undoing the restraints, big clumsy fingers still gentle on his wrists.

“You should have been listening to the Force all along,” Chirrut says, reprovingly, and, despite his vast confusion, Bodhi’s heart leaps.

“Yes.” It’s an unfamiliar voice, filtered through an environmental suit. “We are sorry things have gone—badly.”

“You should be,” Baze mutters.
Bodhi opens his eyes to find them both at his side in the holding cell, the droid releasing Toryn from the wall across from him. He reaches over and clutches at Baze, shaking. “You’re okay,” Bodhi whispers. “You’re okay?”

“4-LOM used a stun bolt only,” the Gand bounty hunter says, looking down at him through his faceplate as Baze nods and pats his hand.

“But we’ll send Too-Onebee right over as soon as we can to check on you,” Toryn says, rubbing her wrists. “Come on, Zuckuss, we’ve got work to do if we’re going to get out of here.” She flashes Bodhi a tight smile. “You fine with letting one of those kids fly your ship?”

Bodhi gapes at her. “My—the Cadera? You can get to my ship?”

Toryn jerks a thumb over her shoulder at Zuckuss. “He can, and then we’re all getting the hell out of here and flying to Darlyn Boda, where you’re going straight in the bacta tank, Captain.”

He beckons her over; she crouches so she can hear him, but he just awkwardly hugs her around the neck. “I don’t know how you did it, but thanks, Toryn,” he whispers, hoarsely.

“Ah, don’t mention it,” she says, straightening up again. “We’ll be right back with the others.” She leaves the holding cell with Zuckuss and 4-LOM, and Bodhi flops his head back down on the bunk, lets Baze fuss over him with the blanket, exhausted and still hurting, but endlessly relieved.

Chirrut turns his face towards Bodhi. “You see?”

“Not funny,” Baze mutters—

“All is as the Force wills it,” Chirrut finishes. He smiles.

And Bodhi closes his eyes, and dreams.

*****

(They’re on Yavin IV, in the middle of the commotion of the Council’s departure, and Jyn is looking at him, Galen’s eyes shining out of her face. “They prefer to surrender.”

Baze, ever watchful, says, “And you?”

Chirrut smiles and turns in Bodhi’s direction. “She wants to fight.”

—and Bodhi, fervent even though he’s been badly frightened, says, “So do I.”)

Chapter End Notes

The Bright Hope. (It’s a SHITSHOW. I hope that came across, uh, adequately.)

I have been monumentally delighted with the response to 61, by the way, and so-stunned that you are all still here with me. Thank you. <3

Thanks to morag for the medical advice :) and meledea for reading the initial version over! <3

Translations:
小弟弟: little brother
搞什麼鬼?: what the hell? (more or less, anyway)
他要死了: he's dying
我只要告訴他: I only want to tell him
我聽到: I heard
那就是—我在講—: That's what--I was saying--
這不是他的命運: This is not his destiny (or fate)
你怎麼知道? 我也有信心, 我也可以感覺到—: How do you know? I have faith too, I also can sense--
別動: Don't move
Chapter 63: Separation

Chapter Summary

Two rules.

Chapter Notes

Uh--

Well. Remember the mood whiplash tag? Yeah, that. Shit gets weird on Darlyn Boda.
Some references to animal abuse, and some oblique conversation about dub-con activities, both in the latter half of the chapter.

Also, Bodhi gets pretty drunk.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Bodhi is unconscious for the entirety of their flight through the Imperial gauntlet to Darlyn Boda. And, then, for however long he's sedated and submerged in the bacta tank, healing from the injuries he’d sustained in the explosion of the command pod.

Baze and Chirrut’s voices wind through his drugged sleep, sturdy threads braiding the past and present into his subconscious. Baze says things about Toryn and the bounty hunters, confusing even when he's speaking Basic. Chirrut tells him stories of life in the Temple, embellished, of course, with Baze's wry protestations.

It's peaceful enough in Bodhi’s head, though. Even suspended in the fluid of the bacta tank, only marginally aware of Chirrut and Baze's words, he smells the cigarra smoke from the street and the incense, mingled with the dust. Hears the laughter of old gossips and young acolytes alike; the grumbling over at the market stalls when haggling goes awry. Memories from before the occupation, almost comforting in their familiarity, blurry with time and the mess the monster made of his mind.

He dreams of kyber crystals, when their voices fall silent. Thousands of crystals, set in their individual shadowy alcoves in the Temple. None of them are clear, like the one on Jyn's necklace, reflecting starlight—they're cracked and cloudy, dulled further with the smeared fingerprints of pilgrims. He’s reluctant to touch even a single crystal, his reverence tempered by the reality of his betrayal.

Bodhi wakes with a lingering sense of loss, to the sound of Baze and Chirrut bickering once more. He lifts his head to see Baze sitting on an exam bed across the medcenter, looking indignant as the doctor turns his right knee this way and that. “I do not need surgery,” Baze insists, wincing.

“I have been telling him his knee is fucked since we were on Hoth,” Chirrut explains, to the doctor. “We were running away from walkers in the snow.”

“My knee was fine until you made me carry—”
“你傻瓜，I did not make you do anything, I only said Bodhi would want some of his own clothes, and you decided that meant you had to bring—”

“It wasn’t heavy!” Baze protests.

Bodhi looks blearily at the duffel bag lying forgotten at the foot of the exam bed.

*Our thing*-s

*My ship*-s

The doctor nods, patiently, but says, “I’m scheduling you for surgery. Too-Onebee is quite busy, but it’s not like any of you lot are going anywhere for a while. In the meantime—” She steps out of Bodhi’s field of view for a second, and returns to lean a pair of crutches against the side of the bed. “Keep your weight off it.”

Baze groans. She smiles, a little sympathetically, and disappears from Bodhi’s sight again. “Crutches,” Baze mutters.

Chirrut crouches down to put Baze’s boots on for him, only fumbling a little with the laces. “Would you rather she told you that you had to lie around all day doing nothing?”

Baze rests a hand on Chirrut’s head, running his fingers through his short hair, his expression going fond. “我可以想到事情要做, if I have to lie around all day.” His voice is low, and warm, and Bodhi wonders hazily if he should clear his throat, or do something to let them know he’s awake—

Chirrut finishes lacing up Baze’s boots and straightens again, putting his hands on either side of Baze on the exam bed. “那就好. 我去跟 Zuckuss 討論 —”

Baze growls, and pulls Chirrut in by his robe for a kiss. Chirrut laughs, pressed up against him, and says something softly, affectionately, and this time Bodhi *does* cough, politely.

“You can’t let your poor friends kiss in peace?” Chirrut says, louder. He turns toward Bodhi, grinning.

“Um, sorry,” Bodhi says, blinking at them. “Don’t mind me.”

Baze eases himself off the exam bed gingerly, and Chirrut reaches for the crutches and pushes them at his chest; Baze’s face goes tight, but he positions the crutches under his arms like he’s done it a million times before, and they both come over to Bodhi’s bedside. “How are you feeling?”

“Tired,” Bodhi admits. “How long—” He runs a hand over his face, startled to encounter bare smooth skin where his mustache and beard should be, like someone’s been at him with depil cream. “How long was I out?”

“Two days in the tank,” Chirrut says. “One day in bed. So far.”

“Two—*three days*?” Bodhi sputters hoarsely, alarmed. “What—are we—when are we going back to—” He flounders, and Baze reaches out to put a hand on his shoulder. “Did—did the rest of us make it here all right? Where’s—”

*Luke*—

*He left.*

*Oh, fuck, he thinks we’re dead—*
He thinks I'm dead—

Bodhi struggles to steady himself, feeling like he's siding nervously along the cliff's edge on Eadu again, one misstep away from slipping and falling into despair.

No.

The Force is with him.

It’ll be all right. He’ll come back.

Bodhi breathes, conscious of Baze's hand loosening on his shoulder as the tension goes out of him. “When are we going to the rendezvous?”

“When everyone is recovered and you are ready to fly again.” Baze smiles down at Bodhi. “But you should rest.”

“I just slept for three days,” Bodhi protests, weakly.

“Proper healing takes time,” Chirrut says, and Bodhi blinks at him; someone else had said that to him, once, months ago, but he can’t think of whom.

“Yes, time,” Baze grumbles. “And bacta. Not knives and cutting people open—”

Chirrut turns his face up to Baze. “You were an assassin.”

“I was not trying to fix the people I cut open,” Baze says, petulantly.

Bodhi grimaces.

“Want us to stay and keep you company?” Chirrut asks, poking Baze in the side.

“You’ve done so much already,” Bodhi says. “I think I’ll—I’ll be all right.” He racks his brain for the word he wants in his mother tongue; it’s got to be buried somewhere under the ash and sand, but he can’t seem to dig it out, not yet. He settles for what Wedge had called them, instead. “Thank you, Uncle Imwe—Uncle Malbus—thank you for—for—”

Baze interrupts, gruffly, “別客氣,” as Chirrut’s face lights up in pleased surprise. “Go back to sleep.”

*****

It goes on like that for a couple of days, just as it had the other times he’d been hurt.

He wakes up when Baze returns to have his knee operated on, the corners of his eyes pinched with strain, Chirrut’s sarcastic chattering barely concealing his own concern.

When Samoc comes in for Too-Onebee to check on her healing burns, Toryn at her side.

Bodhi talks to each of them, for a bit. Samoc is quieter than her sister, uncertain how to grieve for Roja, whom she’d only known for a short time on Hoth. He tries to tell her about Roja’s rough kindnesses, how he’d turned back from murdering stormtroopers on Fest—ironically channeling the man’s ability to say exactly the wrong thing, watching her face fall. He apologizes, haltingly, until she goes behind a curtain with Too-Onebee, leaving Bodhi and her sister alone.

He fidgets with the strap of his goggles—he’d wondered if they were lost for good, but someone had left them beside his pillow in the morning—and asks Toryn, quietly, “Do you have a—a list of the
people who—died, on the transport?”

She gives him an unreadable look. “I only have the names of the survivors.”

“Oh. Okay.” Bodhi licks his parched lips; despite the rainy and humid climate he’s been told is outside the bunker’s walls, the medcenter’s as arid as any desert. “I—I didn't want the others to be forgotten.”

“I don’t think we’ll ever know everyone who didn’t make it,” Toryn says, reluctantly. “It was such a scramble to get everyone aboard, and I was so focused on Samoc. Maybe when we get back to the Fleet, we can figure out who's missing.”

Bodhi holds onto an ember of grief, after that, thinking of Roja lying facedown in the snow. Of Dak and Zev, gone in instants, and the bodies floating out into the void, as he goes back to oddly dreamless sleep.

He’d be more concerned about his near-constant somnolence if memories hadn’t surfaced. Of waiting by Luke's side for hours and hours after he’d come out of the tank; of standing on the production floor of Zaltin Corp with Thranx explaining bacta and recovery time. Whatever variant the Darlyn Boda rebels have doesn’t taste any better, though; it’s still cloying in the back of his throat even when Too-Onebee finally kicks him out of the medcenter.

Bodhi immediately wants to go looking for the Cadera, hidden somewhere in the dense jungle outside of the city. A cursory investigation into the local fauna, however, suggests that’s an expedition not best undertaken still limping, alone, and unarmed.

He tries to find work to do on the base to distract him from worry and grief, but the speeder mechanics are uncomfortably overawed by his presence. The Intelligence division only gives him declassified reports to read about the various smuggling operations on the planet; Bodhi wonders if Draven’s gone and wiped his security clearance, assuming the worst.

And the NewsNet articles he gets are simply depressing. There’s plenty of propaganda-serving reports on the Imperial victory on Hoth, with far too few stories coming from Rebel-affiliated sources. Vader had been there, had personally overseen the final destruction of the base along with General Veers. The estimated number of dead—

Well.

It's high.

It's very high.

Bodhi finds himself wincing as he reads about insurgencies crushed, underground cells exposed, and, worst of all, executions.

There’s never any mention of Jyn or Cassian, or their aliases, at least.

But after going through another round of articles on Governor Graeber’s raid on a secret armory on Ralltiir—thirty-five Rebels captured or killed, and another hundred wanted—Bodhi hurls the datapad across the tiny room he’s sharing with the Guardians.

The datapad’s screen smashes against the wall, and he covers his face with his hands, shaking. The walls are too close, and the rain on the durasteel shell of the bunker is too loud—

It’s been a week since he’s seen the sky.
Bodhi gets up, abruptly, grabbing a jacket out of the duffel bag Baze had brought from the *Cadera*. It’s not Luke’s, the yellow far too conspicuous for a place like Darlyn Boda, but one of Cassian’s: black, with a high collar and no insignia whatsoever.

He doesn’t quite recognize himself in the ‘fresher mirror. His stubble has been growing back patchily on his newly healed skin, so he’s kept borrowing Chirrut’s depil cream, and now—now he looks years younger than he feels. Except for his eyes, of course, dark and haunted as ever.

“Going out?” Chirrut asks, as Bodhi brushes past him in the hall with a muttered polite greeting.

“Yeah. I—I need some air,” Bodhi says, sliding Cassian’s jacket on and putting his comlink in an inner pocket, a little leery of what he might find in the secret compartments he keeps discovering.

“Ah.” Chirrut nods. “Good. We’re going to test out Baze’s new knee, then.”

Bodhi’s eyes widen. ‘I’ll, uh, knock when I get back?’

“Be careful,” Chirrut says, but he’s humming as he goes past, unworried; the Force must not be stirring around Bodhi’s path.

No one else is terribly concerned about Bodhi leaving the base, either. The posted guards at the bunker’s entrance wave at him lackadaisically, and point him down the right streets to stay out of Black Sun territory, but otherwise seem to think Bodhi knows what he’s about, heading into the city on his own.

Darlyn Boda’s eponymous city is tense, to be sure; shadowports come with their own guarded mixture of lawlessness and suspicion. But there aren’t scars of fighting on the buildings, though it’s possible the incessant rain has simply washed the carbon scoring—*and the blood*, his traitorous mind whispers—into the muddy streets. People push past him, on their way home from work, or to evening shifts, heads bowed against the rain.

Bodhi breathes in, feeling almost *normal* despite the swampy humidity pressing on his chest, and rifles through his memories, trying to recall the last time he’d wandered through a city like this—

—because Vulpter had been busier, if anything, and he’d stayed clear of living cities when he and Luke had gone exploring. And from before his life in the Rebellion, he can only really remember the spaceport at Bamayar, or—home, the last time he’d skulked around anxiously in its crowded alleys before going to look for Saw Gerrera.

A faint and unfamiliar yowling sound draws his attention to the action in a pavilion up ahead, where a bedraggled creature lies pathetically in a cage at the feet of a human man in blood-spattered robes. The sign hanging above him says *The Happy Haruspex* in Aurebesh and a couple of other alphabets; the price underneath is *wildly* exorbitant in all languages.

The creature, a black furry thing with hooves and a long pink snout, makes the yowling sound again, as Bodhi approaches, watching him dully, and the man prods it in the side with the handle of a long knife.

“Want to see into your future?” the man asks. “Find out when you will meet the love of your life?”

“I’m good, thanks,” Bodhi replies, as politely as possible. “What are you doing with that—that animal?”
The man points up at the sign, and says, “Read the sign.”

Bodhi blinks at him. “I—I don’t know what that is.”

“Did you miss all the—” The haruspex frowns. “There’s only about a hundred ads in the spaceport, kid.” He makes a slashing motion in the air with the knife, and the creature curls up into a ball, its dark eyes peering miserably over its furred shoulder at Bodhi. “Haruspexes read prophecies from the entrails of freshly killed toccats. You’re in luck; my last customer caught two and left one, I’ll give you a reading for half price—”

“No, that’s—that’s okay,” Bodhi says, watching the toccat watching him. “What—um, what if I paid you for the toccat, um, alive?”

The haruspex scratches his cheek and glares at him. “You trying to start something? This is how I make a living.”

Bodhi exhales, unhappily. “I—no, but—it’s—scared, and you’re going to—”

“Get the hell out of here before you scare off the customers, pal,” the haruspex snarls, and Bodhi puts his hands up apologetically, and moves away, feeling ill.

The rain starts to taper off a bit as night falls; Bodhi passes a couple more pavilions, their toccat cages standing open, the haruspexes and stages stained crimson.

Another cutpurse is trying to sneak their hands into Bodhi’s pockets, as he gazes bleakly at the blood seeping into the mud at his feet.

“Seriously?” he demands of the thief, a human woman anywhere between twenty and forty-five. “Fuck off and leave me alone, will you?”

“You should carry a blaster if you want to be taken seriously around here,” she advises him.

Bodhi covers a flinch by scowling at her. “Thanks for the tip.”

“You’ve got secret pockets in this thing.” She’s running her fingers appraisingly over his sleeve. “Here to sell information to Nogo Sistek?”

He shakes her hand off his arm, not ungently. “No.”


“You just—d’you just go around running down all the major players to whatever strangers show up?”

“Only if I think they might need a tour guide,” she says, with a wink. “And if they pay me.”

“I’m good, thanks,” Bodhi insists, and starts to back away.

She flips a stolen credit chip up between her fingers and raises an eyebrow. “Least I can do is point you in the right direction.”

Bodhi grimaces, crossing his arms so he won’t make an utterly futile grab for his money, as she makes it disappear again. “Just going about my own business, all right, ma’am?”

“Best place for that around here is Pepper's Pax,” she says. “It’s a bar, couple alleys over. Maybe you’ll find some people to do business with. Or you talk to Sheryc Seka in there, she’ll set you up
with a good blaster, nice and untraceable.” She smirks.

Bodhi stares after her for a minute, the words *I don't use blasters* stilling on his tongue. No sense advertising it to the disreputable populace of Darlyn Boda.

However, he *could* use a drink.

*****

Pepper's Pax is wedged between a pawnshop and—a mortuary. The former looks interesting, the kind of place Luke would get talked into buying random, non-Jedhan trinkets from; the latter makes an unhappy shiver run down Bodhi's spine, along with the perpetual drizzle.

Bodhi almost turns to go into the pawnshop instead, but a flash of wild inspiration hits. He wonders what Cassian and Jyn would say, if he came home bearing important information from whoever Nogo Sistek is. Or a new line on weapons and supplies from Sheryc Seka.

Not that Bodhi has *any* idea how to go about making surreptitious contact with these people, or whether the Darlyn Boda rebel cell has done so already. And he’s *not* a spy—just a depressed cargo pilot looking for a drink, and maybe a game of sabacc to win back what he’d lost to the pickpocket.

So—he runs a hand over his dripping hair, discovering he’d somehow managed to leave his goggles behind, and walks resolutely down the alley towards Pepper’s Pax.

“You're new,” one of the identical, quill-covered bouncers inside says. “Two rules. No quarreling —” she holds up her left hand to show off her claws. “And no sissies.” She opens her right hand to proffer him a pile of shiny red seedpods.

“Firespice pods,” the other bouncer says. “Keep down a mouthful, and we let you in. You don’t, and we get to toss you out on your ass.”

“Firespice pods,” Bodhi repeats, baffled.

“Hottest in the galaxy, grown right here in Darlyn Boda,” the first bouncer says, holding them out to him. “Well?”

Bodhi shrugs. “Yeah, okay, why not.” He takes a small handful of the pods and pops them into his mouth. They're hot, hotter than Cassian's beloved chilaquiles when Jyn gets involved, but nothing he can't handle, having grown up on his mother's favorite spices. He swallows, and looks expectantly at the two bouncers.

“You’re not one of those species without capsaicin receptors, are you,” the second one says, belatedly suspicious. Her counterpart huffs a deep sigh.

“Nope,” Bodhi assures them, and coughs. His eyes are starting to stream a little.

“Okay,” she says, resignedly.

“Thank you,” Bodhi says, politely, and swipes at his eyes with the back of his hand.

Beyond the foyer, the place is shabbier than the place he'd frequented on Bamayar, but amiable enough, given the two rules. There's a Yarkora woman finishing up a transaction with six Mandalorians, and a blond-haired man presiding over a sabacc table with a Rodian and a freighter captain; all in all, not the worst clientele for a hole-in-the-wall like this.
But, at the bar, looking profoundly exasperated as he props up a drunk man in rumpled coveralls—

“You’re the help Moranda sent?” Talon Karrde demands. “Dammit. I should just turn both of you in to the Imperials and have done with it.”

Bodhi gapes at him, and at the man leaning heavily on his shoulder. “Um—you mean the pickpocket? She took fifty credits off me.”

Karrde shakes his head. “Sorry.” He pats the stool on his other side. “Have a seat. I’m buying, apparently.”

Bodhi doesn’t move. “I’d rather not.”

“Relax, Lieutenant,” Karrde says. “I’m not going to kiss you again. Or is it Captain now? Haven’t seen your friends in a while, but I’ll give you some information for them, if you’ll take this damned defector off my hands.” He attempts to nudge the man up off his shoulder and fails. “Meet Brivyl Goss.”

“A defector,” Bodhi says, disbelievingly, sitting down on the empty stool next to Karrde. He frowns at the holographic drinks list that pops up before him on the bar, and orders a Corellian ale from the MixRMastR droid that floats over. Goss is really unkempt for an Imperial, obviously unwashed and stinking more than a little of alcohol. “This guy?”

“Despite his current, ah, state, he does know quite a bit about weapons testing on Belgaroth,” Karrde says.

The sound of the bartender droid pouring Bodhi’s ale into a glass seems to rouse Goss, a little; he lifts his head from Karrde’s shoulder and mutters something that sounds like letdown.

“You’re giving me a defector, and information for—my friends, in exchange for—for what?” Bodhi slaps a credit chip into the droid’s tray and takes a sip of his own drink.

Karrde smiles. “Where’s Skywalker?”

Bodhi chokes.

“Everyone’s pretty sure he was on Hoth,” Karrde says, as Bodhi coughs and wipes his mouth with the back of his hand. The bartender droid is pouring something new into a glass for Goss; Karrde rolls his eyes, but doesn’t stop it, especially as Goss lolls off his shoulder and onto the bar counter. “Vader took a sizeable portion of the Imperial fleet out there. Stands to reason he was looking for somebody important.”

Bodhi blinks. “I don’t know where he is, Karrde, and even if I did—”

“Fair enough,” Karrde says. “What about Han Solo and Princess Leia?”

“What about them?”

Karrde gives him a patient look. “Do you know where they are?”

“The last I saw of them was about fifteen minutes before the ship I was flying blew up in my face, so —no, I can’t say I have any idea—” Bodhi’s heart is sinking, though the ember of grief is blazing into fury, now. “Stars, are you going to ask me where the hell Jyn and Cassian are, too? I don’t know—anything, anymore, I’m—he’s gone, don’t you understand? He thinks I died, and I never—I never—” He lowers his head, hunching his shoulders against the stares of the sabacc players and the
Karrde says, “You look pretty good for a dead man, Bodhi, though you should probably cut your hair if you’re hoping not to be recognized.” He runs his hand over his own beard. “Feels weird without the beard, doesn’t it?”

Bodhi ignores that, and looks at his hands clenched around the glass on the bar. He draws a shaky breath. “I can’t offer you anything in exchange for Goss. Or for my own life.”

“I know,” Karrde says. “Just as you know I had to ask.” The twist of his mouth is wry. “Fine. We can discuss other options once we figure out how you’re going to get all of us out of here.”

“What?”

“That’s what you do, isn’t it?” Karrde tilts his head appraisingly at Bodhi. “Extraction.” He ticks off missions on his fingers. “Scarif, Kessel, Chandrila—”

“Ex—extraction?” Bodhi sputters.

Karrde frowns. “Keep your voice down. I’m almost certain that man pretending to be a freighter captain back there is an Imperial spy—blast it, don’t look! It’s only because of the Pepper’s Pax truce that we’re alive to have this conversation.”

Bodhi swigs the rest of his ale and glares at Karrde. “You—you want me to figure out how to get you, your people—” He recognizes Aves, now, as the sabacc dealer—“And this guy out of here without breaking the truce? I thought you were supposed to be some kind of criminal mastermind, with loads of people to help out—”

Karrde shrugs. “I’m a little light on staff, at the moment.”

“Dammit, Karrde—”

“And I let myself get talked into drinking one too many Reactor Cores with Goss,” Karrde admits. “Meaning—precisely one. I apologize for not being at my best, tonight.”

Bodhi looks at the foamy drink the MixRMastR has set in front of Goss. “That’s not a Reactor Core,” he says. “It’s not blue.”

“Yes, I know,” Karrde says, wearily. “He switched to Meltdowns a couple hours ago. Mixed with Lum instead of Blue Tonic. I’m not entirely sure how he’s still conscious.” There’s a puddle of drool forming on the bar, under Goss’s slack mouth.

“He’s not.”

Karrde sighs. “You can have his Meltdown, then. Hate to let a fifty-credit cocktail go to waste.”

Bodhi blinks a couple of times, and then says, “Guess I already paid your friend Moranda for it.”

Karrde snorts and slides the glass on over; some of the foam spills over the sides and onto his hand. He wipes it off on a napkin and looks curiously at Bodhi as he sniffs the Meltdown, warily. It smells like—soap.

Bodhi thinks, *Can’t be worse than fermented dewback sweat,* and drinks the whole thing in one go. It’s probably too much too fast, judging by his suddenly spinning head and Karrde’s bemused face when he sets the empty glass back down. “What?”
“I didn’t figure you for a lumguzzler,” Karrde says, and Bodhi bursts into unexpected laughter.

Karrde makes urgent shushing gestures at him, but it’s the first time Bodhi’s laughed since Luke disappeared into the snow, and the giggles pour out of him, uncontrollably, almost hysterically. He puts his arms down on the bar and buries his head in them, shoulders shaking.

“I hope you’re coming up with a plan in there,” Karrde mutters, patting his back awkwardly. “Are you—”

“’m okay, I’m okay,” Bodhi gasps, wheezing a little as he straightens up. “Plan. Yes. Right.”

“I was thinking we need less attention paid to us,” Karrde offers dryly.

“Was your fucking joke,” Bodhi protests. He swipes his finger around the inside of the glass to scoop up the last of the foam, and licks it off.

“I’d say you should play the honey trap,” Karrde mutters, his eyes widening, and Bodhi remembers, rather fuzzily, that the man had kissed him once. “But—then you’d be stuck here with our freighter captain—and once he figures out who you really are, because let’s face it, you’re not a very good spy, then it’s off to the nearest Imperial torture chamber for you, isn’t it?”

Bodhi definitely drank that Meltdown too fast, because he says, far too blithely for present company, “Third time pays for all?”

Karrde’s eyebrows nearly disappear into his hairline. “Is that— He touches the back of his own neck.

Bodhi shrugs. “’s fine. I can take it.” He gets to his feet, unsteadily, looking back at the freighter captain, wondering if Luke will find him before it’s too late—

Karrde grabs his arm. “Sit down, blast it, we’re not doing that. Your friends would hunt me until the end of time if you wound up in the hands of an Imperial spy.”

“Done that before, too,” Bodhi mumbles. “She’s gonna kill me someday.”

Karrde grimaces, but he doesn’t ask who. “What the hell else has the Rebellion got you doing?”

“Running cargo,” Bodhi says, honestly.

“You could do that for me with a lot less chance of getting captured,” Karrde says. “Despite what you might have read on Thyferra, I do own some very fast ships.”

Bodhi blinks at him, an idea coalescing slowly in his mind. “I was captured.”

“I’m sorry,” Karrde begins, furrowing his brow.

But Bodhi shakes his head. “No—I was captured, Saw put me in with—a monster, and—I was—I was in—” He tugs at his jacket—Cassian’s jacket, looking for his comlink. “I’m a distraction—no, no, I have a distraction—”

*****

Twenty minutes later, there’s twin shrieks from the bouncers as one very wet and confused toccat dashes through the entrance, followed shortly by the haruspex Bodhi had met.

“Don’t let it get away!” the haruspex yells, and dives for the toccat. It yowls, much louder now than
when it had been caged, and leaps onto the bar, skidding on the polished wood into the MixRMastR droid, which crashes off its bolts, leaving soda water and alcohol in various colors fountaining into the air.

Pandemonium ensues.

Bodhi grins, wildly, for a second, watching a Mandalorian who’s trying to protect the blasters from getting wet, before Karrde shouts, directly into his ear, “Nice—let’s go!” Goss is swaying on his feet beside Karrde, yawning and blinking. Aves appears out of nowhere to grab Goss’ arm, and then they’re all four scrambling for the exit. Bodhi grabs a handful of firespice pods from a bowl by the door and stuffs them into his pocket, in case it turns out Luke likes them.

Chirrut and Baze, an empty cage under his arm, are chatting with someone in the alley when they emerge; as they get closer, Bodhi sees it’s the pickpocket, Moranda, hanging over the edge of the mortuary’s rooftop.

“Hi,” Bodhi says, breathlessly, looking up into her oddly ageless face. “Thanks for buying me a drink.”

“Hide now, talk later,” Moranda says. “Imperial response time here is shit, but they’ll be here soon enough.” Baze crouches to boost them up to her, one by one, though Aves and Chirrut simply climb up on their own.

“Sorry to take you away from testing out your knee,” Bodhi says, as he goes last, scrambling a bit for the grip.

Baze grins. “This is fun, too,” he says, heaving himself over the edge of the roof and hurrying away alongside Bodhi. “We should drink 白酒 together sometime, if this is the kind of plan you come up with when you are drunk.”

Ahead, Karrde and Aves are hauling Goss’ dead weight along between them, a trio out of Bodhi’s muddled memories of the escape from Hoth, but—no.

We’re alive. We’re alive.

It’s okay.

“Okay,” Bodhi says, aloud, and looks back down the alley just as the freighter captain—no, no, the spy—comes sprinting out of Pepper’s Pax, soaked with a rainbow of expensive alcohols, spitting angrily into his comlink. “Is Chirrut going to walk on his hands up here?” he asks, hopefully, and Baze laughs.

*****

A few blocks away from the Rebel bunker, Karrde, Aves, and Moranda take their leave from Bodhi, his friends, and Goss, who’s being sick in the street while Chirrut rubs his back. Overhead, the clouds have parted, and a few stars shine, trembling, in the dark.

“Thanks for not turning me in,” Bodhi says, to Karrde, and then, recklessly, “If—if I ever manage to steal another ship, it’s yours.”

“I’ll keep that in mind,” Karrde says. “Try to pick out something nice.” He pauses. “I told you I had information for your friends.”

“I don’t know where they are,” Bodhi says, softly.
Karrde nods. “Well. If—when you do see Andor and Erso again, tell them the Justice Action Network is on Cadomai Prime, and they’re planning to blow up the Calabar Queen.” He looks away for a moment, and then back, like he’s decided something. “I’m not going to search for Solo and Princess Leia.”

“You’re not?” Bodhi frowns.

Karrde shakes his head. “Like I told you. Vader’s looking for someone important, and nothing good ever comes of getting involved with Vader. I’ll keep my people out of it.”


Karrde reaches out and touches Bodhi’s arm, not quite smiling in the starlight. “I hope you find him.”

Chapter End Notes

YEAH. That took just about two weeks, didn't it. Sorry!! School started again, and I got very busy very fast. Not to mention trying to settle on a direction for the events of this chapter took much longer than I expected, though I'd planned for A Certain Someone's reappearance here a long time ago :P

Thanks to morag for talking through some of the rough bits today!

And, as always, thanks to all of YOU!! Passed 1900 kudos a few days ago, which absolutely BLOWS MY MIND. <3

Translations:
你傻瓜: You fool (still meant lovingly!)
我可以想到事情要做: I can think of something to do
那就好. 我去跟 Zuckuss 討論—: That's good. I'll go discuss with Zuckuss--
別客气: You're welcome
白酒: baijiu

References (and holy crap, there are a LOT this time):
Darlyn Boda
Haruspexes (yes, I know the proper plural is *not* this, but it's the GFFA) and toccats
Pepper's Pax (the two rules are from the canonical/EU source!)
Nogo Sistek (not present in the bar) and Sheryc Seka (selling weapons to Mandalorians)
MixRMastR bartender droids
Brivyl Goss
Merreik, the "freighter captain," who lives to fight another day...
Reactor Cores
Meltdowns

...and...
Lum.

*FACEPALMING SO HARD*
Chapter Summary

Is that what the Force tells you to do?

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

After that strange night—

The cell’s Intelligence agents escort Brivyl Goss away, to be cleaned up and questioned. Goss looks bleak and dull-eyed. It’s an expression Bodhi finds strange on a fellow defector, even if he might’ve seen it on his own face in the mirror, once, or—well, the night before. He can’t believe Wedge or Hobbie would’ve ever looked so pathetic, and Admiral Dorat had been grimly giddy in their escape. But Goss seems to have neither the fire of his friends, nor the rush of relief Bodhi himself had felt, when he’d gone to Yavin IV and met the Rebellion at last.

Bodhi remembers his own questioning in fragments, much like everything else. Draven’s people had simply listened as he poured out a torrent of words about Galen Erso, and the planet killer; waited patiently until he could falter his way through talking about Jedha, without once suggesting that they had a monster who could torture the real truth out of him. Or that they’d punish him for failing to come until it was too late. He’s certain they won’t punish him for the lives lost on the Bright Hope, either, though his own guilt only mounts when he sees other survivors around the bunker.

It's not misplaced, Kaytoo.

(If he'd been faster, or had reached for the laser cannons even once—)

But Goss—Goss had looked like the toccat in its cage, waiting for the knife to fall.

Bodhi wonders what Goss knows; he can’t imagine it could be anything worse than the message he’d brought. The cell’s leadership won’t tell him, though, and only gives Toryn a sealed report to hand over to High Command when they return to the Fleet, whenever that is. He’s being cut out again, though this time his lack of security clearance probably isn’t because he’s an ex-Imperial pilot, or because Draven thinks he’s a nervous wreck. It must really be because Draven thinks he’s dead.

He tries not to think much about that meaning Jyn and Cassian do, too, because it only makes him all the more anxious to get home to them. He misses Jyn’s stubborn wit, wounded but still warm; Cassian’s resolute determination to give them a chance at something like a life together. The way Cassian’s face softens and his hands come to rest on Kaytoo’s arm, Jyn’s waist, Bodhi’s shoulder. The quirk of Jyn’s lips when Cassian’s come up with something brilliant, or Kaytoo’s insight neatly punctures someone’s plans. Their mutual, unwavering intensity, and sense of purpose, and trust, and hope, and—

And then he winces, recalling the tense set of Cassian’s shoulders, the hurt in Jyn’s eyes when they’d fled from Jedha, or when he couldn’t bring himself to fire or fight—

Bodhi wastes half the day researching Cadomai Prime, hoping that he might be able to discover
something more to tell his friends about where JAN might be, to start to make up for what he’d done. Cadomai is a planet shot through with cave systems, though, and despite centuries of efforts to document them, there’s simply too many hiding spots to sift through from afar. Besides, reading about another frozen-over world is more than he can bear; he shivers, thinking of Roja and Dak and Zev, and all the others with snow for shrouds, and has to force his thoughts out of spiralling down into the ice.

At least it’s warm enough on Darlyn Boda.

He hopes it’s warm enough wherever Luke is, too.

The thought pops into his head, wholly unbidden, that Luke would love the rain here. He imagines how Luke would delight in it, face turned up to the sky, and come back to their room soaked to the skin, laughing. Bodhi’s been sweating through the sheets at night by himself as it is, but he finds himself aching for Luke’s constant warmth alongside him, his insistent roaming hands, his eager voice whispering and teasing and panting in Bodhi’s ear as they move together—

It’s a happiness he can’t quite believe he’s ever deserved.

*****

But if he can’t be with Luke, or his friends, at least he has his “uncles.”

Though—he’s not entirely sure where they’ve gone. Toryn thinks they’re out talking to Zuckuss about the Force, or talking to the haruspices, also about the Force. The latter is perplexing, but Bodhi figures Chirrut loves a challenge.

Bindu, Seito, and a couple of other pilots from the Darlyn Boda cell ask Bodhi to go over training simulations with them. He can’t say no, not when he’s heard that Seito gave up his seat in an escape pod to stay and protect the survivors of the Bright Hope, and it’s the first thing that doesn’t feel like it’s just killing time, or another futile attempt at distracting himself from grief. So he spends the evening clenching his fists in the pockets of Cassian’s jacket, watching the kids fight and fly and die alongside squadrons who never came home from Scarif, or the Death Star, or Vrogas Vas.

There’s no simulation for Hoth, yet.

Bodhi puts in the tape for Dantooine, after, and goes looking for the nearest ‘fresher to be sick while they finish the training run. He splashes water on his face, still on the verge of unfamiliarity without his beard, and thinks, How am I supposed to teach them when I failed again?

I brought death. Flew straight into it.

If it hadn’t been for the bounty hunters—

He shudders, thinking of Celina’s fierce green eyes, the ominous whirring of an IT-O droid as it floated into his cell.

And Vader was there, too—

Bodhi can’t remember ever seeing him up close, but the stories of the Emperor’s twisted, nightmarish servant who could kill you with a thought had spread to the Academy, of course. And later, Galen had verified them: some gossip with a core of horrible dark truth. He touches his throat, remembering the stormtrooper who’d tried to strangle him, and wonders, helplessly, how much worse Vader could’ve done. What he would’ve done to Chirrut and Baze for being Guardians, too close to the Jedi he’d slaughtered a lifetime ago.
If he'd have been worse than the monster—

It takes another five minutes of gripping the edge of the sink and frantically muttering the Guardians’ prayer, to get his ragged breathing and pounding heart slowed down enough so he can go back to the simulator.

Though, if either Bindu or Seito notice his lack of composure when he returns, they’re polite enough not to say anything about it. They take turns peppering him with questions about his ships, instead, and Bodhi develops a sneaking suspicion there’s money on which of them he’ll pick to co-pilot the Cadera when they depart. Bindu reminds him of Kasan, a little bit arrogant about his scores—not better than Luke’s, of course—and aloof with the Darlyn Boda personnel, but friendly enough with anyone who’d survived the Bright Hope. Seito’s more like Janson, deadly serious in the battle simulations, but playful on Dantooine, trying to push the limits of the sim’s computer.

Bodhi misses Wedge, suddenly; hopes he’s all right, and that the squadron’s taking care of him they way they’d always looked after Luke. He’s unhappily certain he’d asked too much of his friend, when he’d thought it was over.

But it was my last chance to tell Luke—

He trembles, thinking of Luke’s bright eyes brimming with tears instead of stars, and jerks his head up to try to catch the tail end of what Seito had been asking about.

*****

When Bodhi finally turns in for the night, the Guardians have returned, and are already in bed in their shared room, the lights dimmed. Chirrut, totally naked, is sprawled over Baze in the manner of an especially spoiled loth-cat while Baze, in a loose shirt, is trying to find a good angle to read something on a datapad.

“That’s mine,” Bodhi says, bemused.

“You left it on the table.” Baze pulls a fold of the blanket up over Chirrut’s bare ass, apologetically, and peers over the edge of the datapad at him. “You were reading about Snivvians on Cadomai? The transnovel authors? I found a good one, you can read it when I’m done.”

“Uh, okay, thanks,” Bodhi says. He strips off Cassian’s jacket and starts to toss it on the floor; thinks better of it, and stuffs it into their duffel bag, in case they need to leave in a hurry again.

“I started to read it to Chirrut, but he fell asleep,” Baze says.

Chirrut mumbles into his chest, “I’m just resting my eyes. Go back to when the boy was drinking by the river with the girl, that was a good part.”

“I’m not going that far back,” Baze says, reproachfully. “The girl’s dead now, and the boy is in jail —”

Chirrut shakes his head. “He didn’t do it.”

Baze says, “How do you know? You were asleep.”

“I was listening,” Chirrut insists. He turns his face towards Bodhi, sitting on the edge of his own narrow bunk. “Are we going to Cadomai to look for JAN?”

“Wasn’t planning to,” Bodhi answers. “Unless you know something?” A horrible thought crosses his
mind—“You didn’t ask the haruspexes to tell our fortunes?”

Baze snorts, as Chirrut says, indignantly, “Of course not.”

“He does not need other people to do that. He told fortunes when we were at home,” Baze says, propping the datapad on top of Chirrut’s head so he can keep reading.

Bodhi frowns at them both. “I thought you couldn’t see the future—” cuts himself off and groans in anticipation of Chirrut’s response. “Sorry.”

“I cannot see anything.” Chirrut smirks. He plants his hands on either side of Baze and turns over. Bodhi casts his eyes to the ceiling hastily as the blanket falls off when Chirrut sits up. “I was talking to the haruspexes about meditation instead of reading entrails,” Chirrut says. “There are not as many toccats in the jungle anymore. They need new ways of doing old things.”

“Oh,” Bodhi says, and then, thinking of the irritated haruspex he’d met: “How did that go?”

Baze laughs—grunts, as Chirrut shrugs and falls backwards, jabbing him with his elbows unrepentantly. “Not as well as talking to Zuckuss about meditation.” Baze huffs a sigh and tucks the blanket around Chirrut’s narrow hips again. “He is not bad, for a bounty hunter. Knows how to be respectful.”

“Anyway,” Chirrut says, waving a hand. “We could go to Cadomai Prime. It’s a resort world.”

“那裡也是太冷了,” Baze mutters.

“Baze could read more Snivvian transnovels, first hand,” Chirrut continues. “You could look for the Justice Action people—”

Bodhi offers, a touch dryly, even though his heart stutters hopefully at the idea of finding JAN for his friends, “Or we could just go to the rendezvous point like we’re supposed to, instead of getting mixed up with more people like—like Saw?”

“Is that what the Force tells you to do?” Chirrut asks. Baze raises his eyebrows and pokes Chirrut in the arm; Chirrut snatches up Baze’s hand in his own, almost faster than Bodhi can follow. Baze tugs, but can’t extricate himself from his husband’s grasp.

“Don’t know what the Force is telling me.” Bodhi pulls his hair free from its ties so he can comb his fingers through it. The humidity is making errant strands stick to his neck, though, and he starts to put it back up in a slightly tidier ponytail.

“But you’re listening,” Chirrut says. “Right?”

“Um,” Bodhi says, slowly. He pauses, but if there’s anyone he should be telling, it’s Chirrut and Baze, isn’t it? “Yes? I’ve had—dreams, or visions, I don’t know what to call them. About Luke. I think—I think he’s okay, wherever he is, that’s something, right? Different than on Hoth. It’s just not—not like the other visions, not that I knew what to do about those either, I didn’t even think they were real until things started happening—and I don’t understand why the Force never gives me a chance to stop—”

Baze, sounding baffled, mutters to Chirrut, “你說他不是—”

“—people from dying, I only see Luke—”

“他不是,” Chirrut replies. His blind eyes gaze at a point somewhere over Bodhi’s left shoulder.
“—wait, I’m not what?” Bodhi pulls up, hard.

“You’re not Force-sensitive.” Chirrut smiles, although Baze is furrowing his brow in seeming concentration. “That’s okay. You have many other good qualities.”

“Thanks,” Bodhi mutters, wryly. “Never thought I was—thought all of the shit in my head was just, um, me, at first.” He taps his temple with a fingertip, warily.

“Doesn’t mean your dreams aren’t real,” Chirrut says. “Or that you can’t listen. You say Luke is all right?”

“I think so,” Bodhi murmurs, blinking at Chirrut’s calmly curious expression. He looks away for a second before jerking his head back around to stare at Baze—“This is it, isn’t it. We’re—apart.”

Baze’s mouth works under his beard. Then he nods.

“But he’s coming back,” Bodhi says, hesitantly. “Luke wouldn’t leave the Rebellion, even if—I mean, he thinks we’re dead, so there’s that, but I don’t—why would the Force let me know he’s all right, especially after—I couldn’t save—” He swallows around the lump in his throat.

Chirrut shrugs, an elegant ripple of his bare shoulders. “What does that tell you about what you should do now?”

“I don’t know,” Bodhi says, frustration coloring his voice. “D’you go around in circles like this with Luke, too?”

Baze rolls his eyes. “Yes.”

“Literal circles,” Chirrut says, smugly. “Your boyfriend still can’t hit me.” He inclines his head towards Bodhi. “Want me to tell your fortune?”

“Oh, so now you know what I should be doing next?” Bodhi grimaces at him, uselessly.

“Yep,” Chirrut says, and grins. “You’re going to find me a new stick.” He stretches, and yawns, and the blanket falls free again. “About this long—” Chirrut holds his hands about a meter and a half apart. “Sturdy enough to smash in—uh—sturdy enough not to break when I use it.”

“You don’t have to,” Baze says, over Chirrut’s shoulder. “He’s going to be very picky about it.”

Chirrut says, “Don’t worry about finding a kyber crystal for it—”

Bodhi looks at Baze. “He sounds pretty serious about this.”

“I am serious,” Chirrut says, petulantly.

Baze blows out a breath. “This better not be like the egg slicer again. 這是 Bodhi, not one of your poor students who believes anything Îmwe 老師 says.”

“No, no, this is the will of the Force,” Chirrut insists. “I swear.”

*****

So—despite his doubts that the Force really has anything to do with it, Bodhi goes looking in the jungle for a new staff, with the thought that he can also, maybe, get back to his ship for the first time since Hoth.
Bodhi’s alone again; after seeing what a toccat really looks like, he’s not very worried about them, and his leg has been less stiff and sore, to the point where he could probably run again, if he had to. Though it’s hard enough just to work his way through the dense jungle towards the Cadera, and Zuckuss and 4-LOM’s Mist Hunter.

The bounty hunters have been holed up in their ship ever since they arrived on Darlyn Boda, Zuckuss confined to an ammonia atmosphere. They’re waiting to help take the Bright Hope survivors to the rendezvous point; Bodhi’s Cadera doesn’t have the capacity for the remaining ninety.

*Out of how many?*

He’d been restricted from seeing the reports on the damage the transport had taken, compiled from Too-Onebee and Toryn’s hours spent searching for survivors while he’d lain dying on the deck. But just thinking about the number of people that had been crammed onto the decks he knows had torn open to space—he’d added at least a hundred more to his longstanding tally of the dead.

As he wanders deeper into the jungle, it feels more and more like Chirrut’s just trying to give him something to do to shake him out of his grief and guilt. The branches littering the ground are short and gnarled, nothing Bodhi can imagine Chirrut using to fight. Bodhi shakes his head at himself as he pushes through a hanging wall of vines, because he can imagine Chirrut using pretty much anything to fight—

—stops short, his mouth falling open as he stares, not at the Cadera, but—

*What the fuck?*

—a battered G-1A fighter.

Not just any G-1A fighter, but the exact same ship that had fired on the Bright Hope, disabled their shields, and carved up the hull with flames.

With Mist Hunter stenciled in Aurebesh on the side.

“What—”

The Cadera is just beyond the bounty hunters’ ship, but Bodhi doesn’t go towards it, stunned with confusion and betrayal as pieces crash together in his mind.

*They must’ve jumped out of hyperspace just in time to attack, waited until the battle was over, and then come back to collect the survivors—*

*But why—*

Rage surges up in his chest like a storm as he tries to sort it out.

*It doesn’t make sense!*

*They killed—*

“Fucking bounty hunters!” Bodhi rasps through his gritted teeth, his hand clenched tight around the scanner, and stalks over to pound on the hatch. “Hey!” He hammers on the durasteel with a fist, the echoes driving avians away in the trees. “You brain-bolted—mud-licking—bhenchod—”

There’s a hissing sound, and then he has to jump back as the hatch opens, and 4-LOM climbs out, stiffly.
"You killed them," Bodhi shouts at him. "You—I could’ve saved them if you hadn’t—"

"I have been programmed with four point five million galactic languages," 4-LOM interrupts, flatly. "And I do not know what bhenchod means."

Bodhi flinches. It had just come out of his mouth, the sort of word his mother would’ve scolded him for—"‘Course not, it’s Jedhan, like—like me and Chirrut and Baze, and if you’d succeeded, you barvy fucking ship-rat, you would’ve finished us off for good—" He jabs a finger in 4-LOM’s face, angrily, talking too fast for anyone but a droid to understand. "What in blazes are you playing at? You blew up my—my transport, tried to abduct me, and now you’re—what?” He leaps straight to the worst possible outcome, his heart in his throat: "Hanging about so you can find out where the Alliance Fleet is? Turn us all in to the Empire in one go?"

"No," 4-LOM says. "Too-Onebee told us Zuckuss could have new lungs when we rejoin the Fleet."

"What?"

"Zuckuss damaged his lungs when he accidentally breathed in oxygen,” 4-LOM explains, patiently. "His suit and the ammonia atmosphere of our ship has kept him alive for the past several months, but he is getting sicker."

"I don’t—" Bodhi shakes his head, completely lost, fury blazing in his head. "Start from the beginning, dammit, not—"

"Zuckuss diverted us to the battle,” 4-LOM says. "He thought the Force guided us to Hoth, so that he could find help. I calculated the odds when we arrived, and concluded that we should fight on the side of the Empire. But it was a mistake to assist them. Toryn Farr and Master Îmwe have shown us that."

"So—then you came to collect our bounties?"

"Another mistake,” 4-LOM allows. "If Master Îmwe had not woken up from the stun bolt when he did, it would have been a—fatal error."

"It was already fatal,” Bodhi snaps. "For—for—"

"Two hundred and nine people,” 4-LOM says.

"You—” Bodhi reels back in shock, and holds up a hand to ward him off.

Two hundred and nine—

"Killed them,” 4-LOM says. "Yes. All of them. And I could have killed Master Îmwe and Master Malbus when I captured you.” He tilts his head. "Did you think about that when you knocked on the hatch and shouted insulting things at me?"

Bodhi’s eyes widen. His rage drains out of him, abruptly, and he darts an anxious glance towards the Cadera, the path back towards the bunker—

"Don’t worry, Captain,” 4-LOM says. "Since we began this conversation, I have calculated the odds of our continued survival if you were to mysteriously disappear. They are not in our favor."

Bodhi licks his lips, and says, hoarsely, "Do Chirrut, and Baze—do they know you’re responsible for killing our people?"
4-LOM pauses. “I think so.”

“Does Toryn? Or Too-Onebee?”

“No.” 4-LOM pauses again. “We would—prefer that you did not—”

“I’ll bet,” Bodhi says. He unclenches his hand from the scanner and looks at the crescents etched into his palm, breathing out unsteadily.

*Two hundred and nine.*

*I tried—*

*I’ll always try—*

*But I couldn’t have done anything different.*

*It was their chance to do the right thing, and—*

*And they fucking blew it.*

Bodhi lifts his gaze back to meet 4-LOM’s blank stare. “You know what?” He shakes his head, and the corner of his mouth twitches up in a wry, pained mockery of a smile. “Toryn Farr, my friends—Luke—they *all* know what *I* did. They know how many people are dead because—because of me, the *mistakes* I made when I helped the Empire. I’m not adding those two hundred and nine dead to *my* count. That’s *yours* to live with.”

He glances up into the cockpit of the *Mist Hunter*, wondering if Zuckuss can hear them. “Too-Onebee will still help you, if you tell them what you did. Can’t promise there won’t be anybody like—anybody who wants to go after you personally, but no one’ll stop you from joining up, if that’s what you want to do. To atone.”

Bodhi turns to go to his ship—thinks better of it, and takes a step back towards the bunker.

*The will of the Force, huh, Chirrut?*

“We saved your life,” 4-LOM says. There’s a new, unfamiliar note in his modulated voice.

“Only after you tried to end it,” Bodhi says, and walks away. Something’s coming loose inside his chest, like a ship pulling free from a planet’s gravity well.

Chirrut and Baze are at the table in their room, mostly dressed, when Bodhi gets back to the bunker. They look like a couple of—uncles, sitting down to breakfast in a tapcafe at home. “You didn’t bring me a stick,” Chirrut says.

Bodhi glares at them, half-heartedly, and folds his arms. “*You* sent me out there on purpose.”

“*Yes, so you could get me a new stick,*” Chirrut says, grinning. “Since I *broke* mine in half for your leg—”

A real smile starts to spread across Bodhi’s face, and he crosses the room to kiss Chirrut on the cheek, the word he’d searched for finally emerging out of the recesses of his mind. “Okay, okay, Ustad Îmwe, I’ll find you a stick.”

“Did you shave your beard?” Chirrut asks, sounding delighted and reaching up to touch his face, and Bodhi laughs, looking at Baze smiling back at him across the table.
I didn’t fail.

The last of the Jedhans—

We’re alive. We’re alive.

*****

And then, a week or so after that—

“This is quite the hiding place,” Toryn says, leaning over Bodhi’s shoulder to gaze out the Cadera’s viewport into the utter blackness, where there isn’t a single star to be seen. “You’re sure we’re at the right coordinates?”

Bodhi looks down at the navicomputer, even though he’s checked and rechecked it a hundred times since they’d left Darlyn Boda alongside the Mist Hunter, both ships loaded down with the people he’d helped save. “Yeah,” he says.

“Never thought I’d fly outside the whole galaxy,” Samoc says, wonderingly, from the co-pilot’s chair. Her red hair’s grown in where she’d been burned, shorter than Bodhi’s own faintly returning stubble, and she keeps running her hand over it. “But—where’s the Fleet?”

Bodhi points, as the first capital ships start to come into view off to starboard. “I see them—there’s the Redemption, and the Liberty, and—”

The comm beeps, and a tight voice barks out, “Unidentified ships—”

Bodhi feels Baze’s hand pat his back as he reaches forward to toggle the pickup.


And somewhere, in the swirling light of the galaxy below—


He’ll come back.

Or—

I’ll find him.

Bodhi grins, and says, “This is Rogue One, requesting permission to come home!”

Chapter End Notes

Happy Riz-won-the-Emmy week? XD

Thanks to morag and meledea for the help on this one <3

WELL, this is now officially past the nine month mark. HOLY FRICKING HELL. Thanks for hanging in there, especially this last month!! I have a giant pile of comments I need to respond to, but I still have a fairly sizeable other thing I need to do this week, too, so I’ll come back to those when I can. I see them, though, and they really do make
my day!!

By the way, I did write a Luke POV snippet for the end of chapter 61 that's, um, buried on my tumblr somewhere under all the Riz posts. I'll be collecting my alternate POV snippets and putting them here on AO3 when I have some time again.

References:
Snivvians
Transnovels
4-LOM
Zuckuss

Translations:
那裡也是太冷了: It's also too cold there
你說他不是—: You said he wasn't
他不是: He's not
這是: This is
Imwe 老師: Master Îmwe

...and...
bhenchod: sister-fucker ;) (Couldn't very well pass that up, now could I?)
Ustad: Master
The hangar bay of the *Redemption* is total chaos.

It's just like on Yavin IV, after Luke destroyed the Death Star: shouting and laughter and cheers; indistinct, as if from a much greater distance than just outside the Cadera. As if Bodhi's back there—back *then*, just listening to it all in the medcenter while he and his friends waited for Cassian to wake up, their worry broken only temporarily by relief that there'd be something for Cassian to wake up *to*.

But that’s in the past, and now—

—now, there’s multiple medical teams pushing their way through the throng towards the ships. Bodhi hesitates at the top of the *Cadera*'s ramp and grimaces at the sight of Yraka’Nes among them, thinking of Dak and all his reckless undone promises. Pilots in a rainbow of flightsuit colors dot the crowd, including an oddly familiar, green-skinned Duros, but Hobbie’s the only readily visible member of Rogue Squadron, jumping down the ladder from his X-wing and grinning at someone below him. And *Bright Hope* survivors are streaming out of the *Cadera* or the *Mist Hunter*, being collected by the medical staff, or greeted by commanding officers, or friends, or *family*.

Bodhi watches Toryn still holding on to her sister’s hand even as Rieekan sweeps her up in his arms. The general’s hair is grayer than it’d been on Hoth, his face more lined, and Bodhi thinks of how he'd stared at the deck during the memorial service for Wedge—

He draws a deep breath of familiar metal-and-grease tinged air, and wills himself to steady.

*It’s all right.*

And then he stoops under the profile of the cockpit to search, not the slightest bit eager to be seen, but *where are*—

“Bodhi!” Wedge is the first one up the ramp of the *Cadera*, unapologetically pushing his way through the disembarking survivors, with Kasan and Hobbie and Janson trying to come up after him, though he’s too short to be an effective—“You just had to—” Wedge grasps Bodhi’s arms, studying his face disbelievingly, his gaze flicking past to Chirrut and Baze sorting things out in the hold.

Hobbie grins, and Kasan’s trying to put a hand on Bodhi’s shoulder. They’re all talking at once, and it’s hard to hear Wedge’s cracking voice, but the sheen in his eyes is unmistakable as he gives Bodhi a vigorous shake. “Had to pull that leave-no-one-behind—”

“Self-sacrificing bullshit,” Bodhi says, ruefully, and grabs Wedge in a hug, who makes a sound somewhere between a laugh and a sob into the crook of his neck. Wedge trembles, and he feels far too thin, and Bodhi’s heart sinks, as he remembers what he’d asked of his friend: *Too much*. He starts to reach into his jacket; it's not nearly enough to make it up to him, but—“Wedge, I—”
“Could’ve sent word,” Kasan chastises him, but she’s smiling, even as Janson slumps against her side, looking inexplicably dazed. “It’s been weeks, you know.”

“Comms blackout, take it up with Toryn,” Bodhi protests, as Wedge lets go. He is thinner, with dark circles under his eyes, nearly as bad off as when they’d pulled him out of Kessel’s prison train. The rest of them look worn-out, too, ragged around the edges; Janson especially, like he’s been taking stims instead of sleeping. “Are you guys—what’s Rieekan got you doing, you all look like—like—”

“Like we lost four members of the squadron in one battle and have been trying to make do without ever since?” Kasan says, but she runs her hand over Bodhi’s arm, up to his shoulder, like she’s confirming he’s really there. “Glad you’re back with us.”

“Didn’t think anyone could’ve made it out, the way that ship blew apart,” Hobbie puts in; Kasan elbows him in the ribs. “What? What did I say?”

“It’s okay,” Bodhi says, the corner of his mouth quirking up, wryly. And it is—he’s barely limping anymore, and there’s no sense in mentioning how long he’d been in the bacta tank when he’s fine, he’s fine. “It was Chirrut and Baze, and—and Toryn who did it, they talked Zuckuss ’round to take us somewhere safe instead of turning us in, or we’d all be locked up waiting for—” Bodhi breaks off, pushing down the memory of his cell on the Star Destroyer, and looks at them all smiling at him, except for Janson, who—

—who bursts out, “It’s not okay, it was my stupid fucking prank that got you killed, okay, you weren’t, but we thought—and then Luke thought—and if I hadn’t—” Janson’s wild-eyed, clutching at Bodhi’s jacket. “I’m sorry, I’m sorry, you can have my bunk, I haven’t slept in days anyway—”

“Wes, knock it off,” Kasan says, but she draws him back gently, adding, “Everyone took it pretty hard, losing you guys, and then Luke didn’t show up here after. No one knows where he could’ve gone.”

“Been kind of a mess,” Hobbie says, brusquely, but he’s eyeing Bodhi hopefully.

Bodhi bites his lip, uncertain what else to say to put them at ease about Luke’s disappearance. He touches Janson’s arm, instead, nodding acknowledgement of his haphazard, slightly deranged apology. Janson breathes out, harshly, clasping Bodhi’s forearm, his knuckles whitening, and there are tears of relief standing in his eyes. It’s the first time Bodhi can remember seeing Janson’s jovial exterior crack in a long while.

The rest of the squadron’s forming up around Bodhi like they’d tried to do for the Bright Hope. It pulls at his heart, and the best he can offer in return is—“It’s Luke, I’m sure—I’m sure he’s all right, wherever he went.” I saw it doesn’t seem like the right thing to tell them. Not now.

“He doesn’t even have Han and Leia with him,” Hobbie mutters. “They’re gone—”

“We don’t even have to dump all the news on him at once,” Wedge interrupts, his eyes flashing.

“I knew about that,” Bodhi says, tugging his hands free from his friends. “We weren’t completely cut off, I—um, met with an informant?”

“Ah, that’s spy talk, and here I thought Rogue One was going to rejoin the squadron,” Kasan says, lightly.

“What—hey, hey, wait, I haven’t even been debriefed yet,” Bodhi says, startled, and then his eyes go wide, and all the blood drains out of his face. “Oh, blast it to oblivion, Draven.”
Wedge’s face goes tight, and Bodhi has the horrible realization that Wedge must’ve been the one to tell him, too. “You probably should—”

“BODHI ROOK.”

Bodhi can’t help it; he jumps, and looks around in a reflexive panic.

But he’s done nothing wrong, for once, and it’s Kaytoo, it’s just Kaytoo, striding through the lingering crowd below with Jyn and Cassian hurrying after him. There’s something different about them both; it takes a moment to sort out the change, but Jyn’s hair is chin length, and Cassian’s lost a few centimeters as well, their haircuts rather severe but tidy. For aliases? It pings something familiar, but he can’t quite fix it to a memory.

His heart leaps, though, at the sight of them, looking otherwise just as whole and wonderfully safe as when they’d left Hoth, and then he’s shouldering past the Rogues, the barest of apologies on his lips, and running down the ramp—

—has an awful, fleeting notion that Kaytoo is going to snatch him up by his collar like he’d done the Arbra rabbit, and skids to a halt two meters from the Cadera, suddenly very conscious that everyone is staring—

“Hi,” Bodhi says, dizzily, as Kaytoo, Cassian, and Jyn close with him. Jyn’s mouth is trembling towards a smile; Cassian’s eyes are intense as he reaches out, completely unselfconsciously, to cup Bodhi’s face in his hands and press kisses on his cheeks. “I’m not—we’re not—dead—”

“Not for lack of trying,” Jyn says, but she snakes an arm around his waist and ducks her head under Cassian’s left arm, coming up beaming at Bodhi, her eyes suspiciously shiny.

Kaytoo swivels his head to look down at her and says, sounding very put out, “I was going to say that.”

Cassian ignores them. “Are you—you were limping, are you hurt?” He puts his arm around Jyn’s shoulders, his right hand dropping to curve around the back of Bodhi’s neck.

“I’m fine, it’s—” Bodhi smiles crookedly at them, feeling Kaytoo’s hand closing on his shoulder. “I’m so glad you’re—Cassian—Jyn—” His voice catches in his throat, and Cassian pulls him close, leaning his forehead against Bodhi’s; Jyn makes a muted noise of protest, and Bodhi huffs a shaky laugh, looking down at her extricating herself from where she’d been squashed between them. “Sorry, sorry—”

“Quit making a spectacle of yourselves and welcome us home,” Chirrut calls, and Bodhi looks back to see Baze laughing as Wedge attempts to discreetly shoo the squadron off.

Jyn punches Wedge on the arm as they pass each other; Cassian shrugs apologetically as Wedge throws them both a wounded look. Baze catches Jyn up in his embrace, and Bodhi can hear him murmur, warmly, “小妹妹”—

“I’ll catch up with you later,” Wedge says, patting Bodhi on the back and then rubbing his arm where Jyn had punched him.

“Wedge, wait—wait,” Bodhi says, fumbling in the inner pocket of Cassian’s jacket. Wedge turns, looking at him quizzically. “When—when we thought you were dead, and we went through your stuff—um, I—I knew you couldn’t get your things back from me, while you thought I was—” Bodhi flips Wedge’s skifter out between his fingertips and offers it to him. “Thank you for what you did for me.”
Wedge shakes his head. “Bodhi, I didn’t do anything to help.”


Wedge bows his head, and says, just audible above the clamor around them, “I broke his heart.”

Bodhi bites his lip and says, even though his own heart skips a beat at the thought of Luke’s shattering grief, “He’s okay—he’ll be—I’m gonna be here when he comes home, it’ll be all right.”

He waves the skifter at Wedge. “D’you want it? I can’t give your pants back, they got left on—on Hoth, sorry—”

Wedge huffs a laugh, and snatches the skifter out of Bodhi’s hand, his eyes gone soft. “There’s a bunk for you with us, if you want. Not Janson’s. And no tricks.”

“Thanks,” Bodhi says, humbly.

Wedge smiles, and tilts his head in the direction of the Cadera. “Go on, go be with your family.”

Bodhi drops his hand to Wedge’s arm, squeezes it once, and then turns and darts back up into his ship.

“They cut their hair,” Baze is telling Chirrut, when Bodhi rejoins them in the hold. Baze sounds—flattered, or touched, and Bodhi frowns, something like a murmured, distant chant stealing slowly forward, out of his fuzzy memory, as he leans into Cassian’s open, welcoming arm.

“We did,” Jyn says, going to one knee by where Chirrut’s sitting on a plasteel crate, so he can feel the shortened length of her hair. “Burned offerings, too.”

Cassian says, “We did everything anyone could remember or look up about the Temple traditions. For you—for all of you—” He throws a sidelong glance at Bodhi. “Even though you never said whether you went to the Kyber Temple. Or if you believed.”

Bodhi rubs a trembling hand over his mouth. For Jedha’s dead—“I don’t know, I was more of a Central Isopter kind of—” But he can’t joke about it, not really, not with Baze clasping Jyn’s hand in both of his, Chirrut reaching up across to press a sliver of kyber crystal—the piece from his staff—into Cassian’s palm. He blinks back tears, instead, and says, quietly, “Didn’t remember about any of that, but—yeah. Yes. I—believed.” He swallows, hard, thinking of the sunset glowing on his mother’s tired face, the prayer he still can’t seem to recall, and combs his fingers through the end of his ponytail. “The Force was with us.”

“We should have been with you,” Kaytoo says, petulantly. “Instead of spending weeks uselessly searching for—”

“Kay,” Cassian sputters, but Chirrut turns his head up towards Kaytoo and says, “You would’ve had a good time on Darlyn Boda, my friend.”

“He would’ve complained about the rain,” Baze says, a low, affectionate rumble.

“I don’t mind rain,” Kaytoo says, looking at them curiously. “What was on Darlyn Boda?”

“You’re really okay?” Cassian murmurs into Bodhi’s ear, as Baze grins, wider, and Chirrut starts to explain about the toccat. “Baze wouldn’t say how bad it was, but Draven gave us Wedge’s report on the battle, so we had some idea of how you—” He can’t finish the sentence, his mouth curving down.

“Floated around in a bacta tank for a few days, that’ll make Yraka’Nes happy, I think. I’m all healed
up.” Bodhi pauses, looking down at Jyn’s attentive face. “And, um, ready to help you go after JAN?”

Jyn’s expression doesn’t change at all, but Cassian draws a sharp breath. “What?”

“Talon Karrde was on Darlyn Boda,” Bodhi says, eagerness stirring in his chest. “He told me where JAN is, he told me they’re going to blow up a cruise ship.” He catches Cassian closing his eyes, like he’s in pain, and says, “I’m all right, I can help—”

“Later,” Jyn says, firmly, but she smiles, like Galen never did, and gets to her feet so she can tuck herself against Bodhi’s side. “Just happy you’re with us.”

Bodhi leans over to drop a kiss on the top of her head. “Trying that spy shit without you—wasn’t the same,” he murmurs, and that makes the corners of Cassian’s mouth turn back up.

“What happened to ‘I’m just the pilot?’” Jyn nudges him.

“Still a pilot,” Bodhi protests.

“Our pilot,” Cassian says, fondly. He raises an eyebrow—“Did Karrde try to recruit you?”

“Sort of? He was kind of drunk.”

“I bet that was interesting,” Jyn says, amused. “Oh, hell, did he kiss you again?”

“No,” Bodhi says, and laughs. Chirrut and Baze are arguing again, Kaytoo looking on like a referee and providing acerbic commentary. Cassian’s arm is warm around his shoulders, and Jyn’s sliding her arm around his waist, probably dipping her hand into his pockets.

Two intimidating uncles, a security droid, an ex-con, and a spy—

Wedge called them my family.

“I missed you,” Bodhi says, sincerely, and relaxes into their embrace.

Cassian kisses his cheek, and brushes away a stray tear with his thumb as Jyn rests her head against his shoulder. “Welcome home.”

*****

And, after that, on his way to debrief with Draven:

“Damn.”

Bodhi turns, trying to spot the speaker; it’s not a mechanic who’s dropped their tools off the side of a ship, but someone much closer—

Grizz flashes a warm, delighted grin, as he steps out of the shadow of an S-foil. “Me and Joma already flipped a coin to see who got to keep the Beru.”

Chapter End Notes

Still more found family time to come...
Thanks to meledea and morag for the help on this one, and definitely quite a lot of thanks to morag for letting me borrow the Jedha headcanon (more to come of that, too!)

Translation:
小妹妹: little sister

I also started collecting my much shorter (MY BACKUP DOC FOR THE FULL THING IS NOW 503 PAGES LONG, O_O) associated POV ficlets (including Luke and Wedge on the end of 61...) over at love is a long, long road if you're interested in that. :D

And, as always, thanks, to all of you. I wouldn't be plugging away at this every night if it wasn't for your amazing support. <3

10/2/17
Tom Petty <3
Chapter 66

Chapter Summary

Back to work.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Bodhi pauses at the door to Draven’s office, report in hand, his relief at his friends’ fond welcome melting away, replaced by a creeping and somewhat inexplicable dread. From what he’s put together, he’d been right: Wedge had been the one to report their apparent deaths to High Command, but he hadn’t quite thought through to Draven having to tell Jyn and Cassian.

“And then he never talked about you again, not once,” Jyn had said. “He came to the memorial—for everybody—but he was like a statue, and he went back to work after that, like nothing happened.” Her mouth twisted, and she’d glanced at Cassian, who’d looked back at her with surprising gentleness in his eyes. “Like it was—easier, that way.”

Like it was easier for Draven to have me out of the picture? Bodhi doesn’t think that’s quite what Jyn had meant, but there’s a very bleak part of him that wonders, even as the door slides open and Draven looks up from a datapad, whether the general would’ve been happier if—

“Reports of your demise were a bit mistaken, I see.” Draven appears about the same as he had on Hoth; the grief that had greyed Rieekan’s hair and stolen sleep from Bodhi’s friends seems not to have affected him much at all. He turns his gaze back to his datapad and taps a key.

Back to work?

Okay. I can do that. Bodhi draws himself up straight and says, crisply, “Chirrut and Baze scraped enough of me off the bulkheads to keep—fighting. Sir.”

“Just how broken are you now, Captain?” Draven raises an eyebrow.

Bodhi swallows, but there’s no malice in Draven’s words, and something else, impossible to read, hidden behind the general’s appraising stare. He throws out a question, attempting to recalibrate:

“Not so bad you can’t send me with Jyn and Cassian after JAN?”

Draven snorts, but he studies Bodhi as he puts the datapad down. “Try again.”

“Too-Onebee’s got all the gory medical details,” Bodhi says, more firmly, but then he can’t quite stop himself from rattling on. “I—they put me in a bacta tank for days, Cassian wouldn’t have told me to report in if he, or—or Jyn, thought I was too messed up to handle you—” He steps forward to hand Draven his datapad, and pauses. Blinks at the two forgotten mugs of caf on the console where Jyn and Cassian must’ve been sitting when they’d heard he was home; underneath, the console’s normally glossy and pristine surface is spiderwebbed with cracks. “What happened to your desk?”

“I dropped something on it.” Draven rests his elbows on the console and steeples his fingers, not looking at Bodhi’s report. “What sort of trouble did you find yourself on Darlyn Boda, that we have yet another defector vying for bunk space?”
Bodhi stiffens, but Draven’s only being wry, maybe even a little amused. “Could’ve brought a couple of toccats home instead, sir, instead of—information. Whatever Brivyl Goss knows, Talon Karrde must’ve thought it was pretty important—”

“More likely Karrde was balancing some account with the Imperials,” Draven says. “For his precious neutrality.”

Bodhi chooses to ignore that, and the accompanying unhappy shiver that runs down his spine, and offers, “He told me where JAN is, too, and what they’re planning.”

“Did he.”

“I can help,” Bodhi says, letting his own sarcasm fall away completely in favor of nervous determination. “Sir—I was—being stuck on Darlyn Boda was like being grounded, already, I’ve had plenty of time, please, I’m—I’m—”

“Thinking of going rogue again if I don’t give you something to do?” Draven interrupts, very dryly.

Bodhi’s eyes widen. “No.”

“Not even to go looking for Commander Skywalker?”

At Draven’s flattened tone, Bodhi wonders fleetingly whether his old suspicions are surfacing again, but he says, “It’s—it’s a big galaxy, sir, I wouldn’t know where to—if he thinks—” Bodhi breaks off, and looks down at his hands.

“You really don’t have any idea where Luke could’ve gone?”

“I know he wouldn’t go back to Tatooine, that’s about it.” Bodhi thinks of all the places his friends have known and lost, how Cassian’s face still goes carefully blank whenever anyone wants to talk about Fest. “There’s nowhere—um, maybe—” Draven probably knows about Luke’s little jaunt after Yendor—“Devaron?”

“Hmm.” Draven’s frowning, a little, the first real reaction he’s had to anything Bodhi’s said. His sudden interest in Luke doesn’t quite make sense; Luke’s important to everyone in the Rebellion, but Draven had never seemed to place any more significance on him than anyone else. But Draven waves it off, and says, instead, “All right, you might as well start from the beginning—how, exactly, did you manage to cheat certain death this time?”

*****

It takes the better part of an hour for Draven to get through Bodhi’s report on the escape from Hoth, firing terse questions off at practically every line. But Bodhi manages all of it entirely on his own, keeping his wits about him even when Draven asks him to corroborate Wedge’s description of precisely the way the Bright Hope had come apart under the bounty hunters’ attack. Bodhi has no qualms about telling Draven the truth about that; Zuckuss is already being treated, and anyway, the unusual pair had ultimately rescued the survivors.

Draven almost cracks a smile when Bodhi fills in some of the details about his strange encounter with Talon Karrde—a smile that vanishes entirely at the mention of the freighter captain/spy.

“Did any other Imperials see you?” Draven asks.

Bodhi shakes his head, uncertainly. “I don’t think he got that good a look at me, either.”
“It’d be easier if you’re dead,” Draven muses, and Bodhi jolts back a step, going numb all over. Draven’s brow furrows as he gazes up at Bodhi’s appalled expression—“Ah. No. Sending you on missions would be easier if the Imperials think you’re dead, Bodhi, not—” He blows out a breath, and reaches for the stack of datapads at his elbow instead of finishing his sentence.

“Oh,” Bodhi says, faintly, releasing the fists he’d unknowingly clenched behind his back. “You’re going to let me fly?”

Draven pauses halfway through sliding one of the datapads out of the pile. “Yes, but not with Cassian and Jyn.”

“But—Karrde told me where JAN—”

“We’re stretched a bit thin, Captain, and I could use you on this Harkov thing,” Draven says, over Bodhi’s protest.

“—and I swear I can handle—” Bodhi pulls up short. “I’m sorry, what?”

“Admiral Harkov,” Draven reminds him, patiently. “With everyone thinking you died, and how different you look without—” He rubs a hand over his chin. “You could even meet Harkov on the Protector with no one the wiser.”

Bodhi stammers, “Boarding—boarding a Star Destroyer? Are you trying to get rid of me after all, sir?”

“Harkov still claims he wants to defect. You’ve helped bring in other high-ranking defectors.” Draven’s mouth twitches. “Plus this Goss fellow.”

“By accident,” Bodhi mutters.

“So this one’s on my orders.” Draven tilts his head. “Unless you don’t think you’d be up for it?”

Bodhi glowers at him, and holds his hand out for the datapad.

Draven pulls it back for a second, looking up expectantly. “And Karrde told you—?”

Bodhi makes a face. “JAN’s on Cadomai Prime. They’re going to attack the Calabar Queen.”

“Thank you,” Draven says, and nods at the datapad he puts into Bodhi’s hand. “Don’t take Jyn’s advice on dealing with Harkov, or you’ll end up in the Protector’s detention cells for assault.” A muscle jumps in his jaw, and he adds, reflectively, “I’d hate to have to explain that to Commander Skywalker. If he ever comes back.”

“Yes, sir,” Bodhi says. He hesitates. “About that—”

“Remembered something useful?”

“Just—Luke will come home.” Bodhi shakes his head, and holds up a hand to forestall Draven’s questions. “Not—not from a vision, I just—I believe it.”

“All is as the Force wills it?” Draven says, sardonically. Bodhi ducks his head, a little embarrassed at his own earnestness, sneaking a preliminary glance at Jyn and Cassian’s last report on Harkov, and Draven adds, almost to himself, his voice tinged with the barest fraction of warmth, “I suppose it brought you back safe—”

—Bodhi jerks his head up, eyes wide, his mouth falling open. Draven meets his gaze, steadily, for a
moment, his face gone unreadable again, and then he glances away, selecting another datapad from his stack.

Bodhi stares at Draven, not bothering to close his mouth, but the general doesn’t look up again. “You’re dismissed, Captain.”

Right.

Like nothing happened.

*****

But it isn’t difficult to pretend everything’s normal when Bodhi escapes the gauntlet of well-wishers back to the safety of the *Cadera*, and finds Cassian and Jyn tidying up the hold, as synchronized in mundane domesticity as they are on a mission.

“You don’t have to do that,” Bodhi says, touched. “It’s not *that* much of a mess, is it?”

“Just putting things to rights,” Cassian says, as Jyn pulls her hands back so he can push the remaining middle row of seats down and out of the way, clearing the floor. “Since you’re back to running cargo?” Cassian raises his eyebrows as he crosses the hold to check on whatever’s sizzling on their camp stove.

“Not exactly,” Bodhi hedges.

“Draven can’t have grounded you again,” Jyn says, crossing her arms and frowning. Her expression, combined with her severe haircut and her upraised chin, she looks rather like a drill instructor. “We’re stretched thin enough as it is—”

“He didn’t,” Bodhi reassures her, and waves his datapad at them. “I’m going after Harkov.”

“Draven gave you *Harkov*?” Cassian throws a startled glance over his shoulder at Bodhi, and points his spoon at Jyn before dropping it back into the pan with a clatter. “We’re going back up to fix this.”

“It’s fine,” Bodhi says, puzzled. “The war’s still on, no sense in me hanging around here waiting for Luke when I can try and—”

“Harkov’s in the *middle of the Sepan Civil War,*” Cassian says, taking hold of Bodhi’s upper arm as if he’s going to march him straight off. “Him, his whole fleet. He’s not going to step out for a moment to meet with you in a safe location—”

Bodhi blinks at him. “So? *Nothing*’s safe. Not—not *Hoth*, not *here*—okay, getting all the way here was a lot more difficult than I was expecting, maybe it is, but—*Cassian*, it’s not like I haven’t been—they’ve never stopped looking for me since I defected, but now that they think I’m dead, maybe —” Cassian’s hand tightens on his arm, and Bodhi stops, looking back and forth between his friends. “Hey, why *do* the Imperials think we’re dead, anyway? Wasn’t like they were listening in on squadron frequencies.”

“Someone had it put out on the NewsNet that you and Chirrut and Baze were killed,” Jyn says. “Condemning the Empire for completing the destruction of Jedha, that sort of thing.” She opens her hand, apologetically. “Admiral Dorat put in a nice word for you, too. He’s turning out to be quite the propagandist.”

Cassian says, as Bodhi sputters and fails to come up with a response to *that*, “If you show up very much *alive* on Harkov’s sensors—”
“Karrde knows I’m alive,” Bodhi manages, slowly. “Baze and Chirrut, too—”

“Karrde’ll save that bit of information as a bargaining chip,” Jyn says. “I wouldn’t worry about him.”

“Bodhi—” Cassian rubs the bridge of his nose. “I’m trying to keep you alive, don’t you understand? We just got you back—”

A flash of inspiration hits, and Bodhi reaches over to touch his arm. “So come—come with me. We’ll go to Sepan, see if Harkov’s got any more interest in defecting, and then we’ll go after JAN. All of us. Together.”

“It’s not a bad idea,” Jyn says, thoughtfully. She sniffs the air—“We can talk about it more later, Cass, dinner’s burning.”

Cassian acquiesces, turning back to the stove, but Bodhi doesn’t miss the way his eyes have gone tense and hard, or the downturn of his mouth.

Jyn pokes at his side, though, distracting him, and says, “It’s so crowded with the people you brought back, we gave Chirrut and Baze our quarters. Okay if we stay with you until things clear out?”

Bodhi blinks at her. “Here?”

“Well, I’m not cramming in with the Rogues,” Jyn says, lightly.

“Wasn’t planning to either, Zev—Zev—” Bodhi stutters to a halt; he’d been about to say Zev snores, but Zev is dead—

“Heard Hobbie complaining about how he can’t get to sleep without Zev’s snoring now,” Jyn says, her eyes knowing.

Bodhi lets out a breath. “Yeah. Yeah, you can sleep here.” He wills away the heartache, and goes over to where he’d stowed their duffel bag in a locked compartment, beckoning her to follow. “I’ve got some of your things, anyway.”

“You do?” Jyn crouches beside Bodhi; his hands shake as he pulls Luke’s yellow jacket out and sets it carefully aside. “Did you slice into our quarters on your way off Hoth?”

“Draven asked me to,” Bodhi protests, rummaging through a couple of layers of Cassian’s coats before his fingers find his goal. He pulls the holoprojector free, shaking a medal ribbon loose, and offers it up to Jyn.

Her chin is trembling, a little, as she reaches out to cradle his hands in hers. “I thought I’d lost them again, Bodhi, thank you—”

“It was—it was nice to see your father looking happy,” Bodhi murmurs.

“ Took a bit of a risk, turning it on to see what it was,” Jyn says, a touch breathlessly. “What if it’d been something really private?”

“Sorry,” Bodhi says, abashed, but she smiles—only teasing, like always—and leans in to kiss his forehead.

*****

Chirrut, Baze, and Kaytoo return for dinner a short while later, Chirrut looking very pleased with
himself and Baze favoring his other knee. “What?” Baze says, and frowns at Bodhi, who shakes his head and quickly gives up his cargo crate for Baze to sit on.

“It was the first time we had any real privacy since Hoth,” Chirrut says, by way of entirely too much explanation, as he squeezes in beside his husband.

“It was not private,” Kaytoo says, huffily.

Chirrut turns his face in Kaytoo’s direction. “I thought you were powered down?”

“Eventually,” Kaytoo mutters.

Bodhi can’t suppress a smirk, but he offers, “Kaytoo, you can recharge in here, we won’t be, um, mess about.”

Kaytoo starts, “If you think sleeping in the same space as you will make Cassian and Jyn keep their hands to themselves—”

“Kay,” Cassian snaps, his face reddening, but Jyn is laughing. “We’ll be very proper,” she promises.

“And what if Luke comes back?” Kaytoo continues, snidely, and Jyn stops laughing, and Cassian sets his spoon down harder than he needs to, splashing sauce onto Bodhi’s hand where he’s reaching over for a plate.

Bodhi looks at their faces, bewildered, and then he gets it. “It’s all right, Luke’s not on the list.” He sucks the sauce off of his thumb; it’s not as hot as the firespice pods from Pepper’s Pax that are still in his jacket pocket.

“You’re sure you’re okay?” Cassian asks. “He vanished. If it was—” His gaze slides sideways to Jyn; her eyes are just as clear and unwavering.

“Where is your faith?” Chirrut chides him gently.

Cassian hasn’t picked his spoon back up, reaching over to touch Bodhi’s arm again. “I have faith in you,” he says. “If you say you’re all right.” He exhales. “If you think you can do it. I—only—losing you, any of you, again—”

Bodhi swallows; he’d drifted sideways into contemplating the last strange vision he’d had of Luke huddled over dinner on some distant planet, and Cassian’s sudden intensity catches him off-guard. “You don’t have much more hair to cut off,” he manages, making Cassian’s mouth twitch.

“I offered to shave his head,” Kaytoo informs Bodhi, and drums his fingers over his own skull. “It would’ve sped up his morning routine by fifteen percent.”

“Chirrut shaved his head after the fall of the Temple,” Baze says. He slurps a spoonful of Cassian’s stew. “And then he complained about the cold until it grew back.”

“I was worried I was going to wake up one morning with my head shaved,” Jyn mutters, glaring at Kaytoo.

Kaytoo replies, “Not after someone told you where my reset switch is.”

“Good thing you were always warm,” Chirrut says, fondly, nudging Baze. “I have kept it short ever since,” he adds, running his hand over his close-cropped hair. “Can you imagine me with long hair like Bodhi or Baze?”
“I should’ve cut it after we lost our home,” Baze mutters, gruffly.

“We were a little busy then.” Chirrut pats his knee.

Bodhi pulls the end of his ponytail over his shoulder and inspects it thoughtfully. The memory of sitting with his mother on their neighbor’s roof at sunset is coming clearer: her black hair had been newly trimmed, threads of silver gleaming in it, and her eyes had seemed too big in her tired face.

And she’d said—*something*. The prayer for the dead.

Bodhi could *ask*, of course, but there’s a part of him that wants to remember on his own, to not have Chirrut’s voice forever overriding his mother’s in his memory of that moment. If he could just—

“Oh.” Jyn nudges him. “What’re you thinking about?”

“Nothing—no, not nothing,” Bodhi says, and pulls himself out of his reverie with an effort. *At least it wasn’t the sky of*—He nods at her hair, and tugs at the end of his own. “I should have done it, too, if I’d remembered. But I didn’t—I *couldn’t*—” He breathes out, harshly, half-expecting the monster to put in an appearance, but the only shadows are darkening in Cassian’s eyes.

*It’s all right. They remembered for me. For us.*

Bodhi looks across the hold at Baze. “Will you do it?”

“Oh, sure, ask him,” Chirrut says, mock-offended. “You trust him? With his hair the way it is?”

“寶貝, 閉嘴.” Baze slaps Chirrut on the arm. “Yes, of course. For Jedha?”

“For—all of it,” Bodhi says. “Everyone.” He glances at Jyn and Cassian, meaning *Galen*, of course, and Cassian’s unmentioned dead. Jyn nods, her hand disappearing into her pocket, where the outline of the miniature holoprojector is visible.

But all Cassian says, reluctantly, is, “If you look as different without your hair as you do without your beard, maybe it will be all right to go meet with Harkov.”

“Thanks, Cassian,” Bodhi says, sincerely—turns, hastily, at the sound of Baze pulling a vibroblade out—“Wait, wait—”

*After dinner,* Jyn orders, grinning, and Baze grumbles and puts the blade away.

****

Baze is, ultimately, just as careful in cutting Bodhi’s hair—with clippers—as he’d been on the *Bright Hope*, trying to help him find peace. They’re both silent, in the *Cadera’s* fresher, though Chirrut is laughing irreverently in the hold just outside about something.

“Do you miss it?” Bodhi asks, eventually, looking at Baze’s face in the mirror as Baze gently brushes the back of Bodhi’s neck clean. “Home, I mean. D’you—I’m sorry I never asked, it—it was too hard to talk about for so long—”

“You and I, we left.” Baze says. He puts the clippers down on the ‘fresher sink and takes his vibroblade out again. Draws a breath, and hacks off a lock of his own hair. “Maybe that’s why I miss it more than Chirrut.”

“Chirrut doesn’t—”
“Chirrut can find things from Jedha that make him happy,” Baze says. Another long lock falls away, and he meets Bodhi’s eyes in the mirror. He looks—younger, without so much of his mane. “How much do you really remember?”

Bodhi shakes his head. “It’s all bits and pieces. Hard to figure out what—what’s gone for good, when things keep”— He licks his lips. “When things keep popping back up. Like calling you and Chirrut Ustad, or—the way things smell, but—Baze, I left because I couldn’t stand it—”

“You came back to try to save Jedha,” Baze says, and shrugs. “You want to remember it now?” He tilts his head. “Good and bad?”

Bodhi gives him a small nod.

“Then I will pray that you do,” Baze says, and hands Bodhi the clippers. “Help me finish this?”

“Yes—” Bodhi pauses. “Yes, Uncle Malbus,” he says, just to make Baze smile, and does.

Chapter End Notes

Whew, I'm back. Sorry this took way, way longer than usual; in my defense (heh) I was, um, working on getting to be "all but dissertation!" I have every intention of doing better than posting twice a month; there's so much really fun stuff coming up that I want to get to already :)

So. Yes. Thank you all for waiting so patiently, not giving up on me, and (O_O) nearly putting me up to 2000 kudos! I promise that there is a PLAN and there is an ENDING and, Force willing, I'll actually get to it before the end of the year?

<3 <3 <3
Bodhi wakes up the next morning clutching Luke’s yellow jacket to his chest with one hand, and the other firmly ensconced in Jyn’s grip. Cassian’s buried his face against Bodhi’s shoulder, his breath slow, even, and warm, and his right arm’s slack, draped heavily across Bodhi’s waist.

He pushes away the rising frantic sensation of being trapped, and tries to match his own breathing to Cassian’s.

It’s okay.

It’s just Jyn and Cassian.

Bodhi’s learned over the scant years since Scarif that sleeping in proximity to his closest friends can be rather challenging, nightmares or no. Their habits aren’t any different than those of the Rogues, or the aspiring students at the Academy: late, often very late nights spent poring over reports, drinking, and arguing about everything, from the most trivial details of a holo someone vaguely remembered watching when they were a kid, to the politics of the pre-Imperial Senate, when the Senate had still been around. But when they’ve actually gone to bed—Jyn’s usually worse than Cassian; her eyes fly open for the slightest noise or errant twitch of someone’s legs, hand going straight under her pillow for her blaster, even after all this time. It’s easier when she falls asleep holding Bodhi’s hand like this, though he can usually feel his fingers.

Cassian had lived a life on the run, too, but within the relative safety of the Rebellion, he mostly seems to shut out those same minute sounds and movements, unless something serious demands his attention. Bodhi’s pretty sure that having Kaytoo, and now Jyn, to keep watch grants Cassian a certain measure of peace, but he’d been unusually restless the night before, curling and uncurling his fingers in the fabric of Bodhi’s shirt, at the shoulder, like he was afraid Bodhi was going to slip out of his grasp.

Still, it’s comforting, caught between them, even if his hand is starting to go numb.

Bodhi threads his fingers through the folds of Luke’s jacket and stares up at the ceiling of his ship, his mind drifting pleasantly as he listens to his friends’ utterly relaxed breathing. He’d wanted to run away, before; had thought he wanted nothing more than to assuage his guilt and then hide out at the edge of the galaxy, living an unassuming life.

Now, though—after living anything but—he dares to dream, just a little, about what it could be like with his friends, instead. Imagines sharing a house like they’d had on Sanctuary, sunlit and serene. He’d fly supplies in and out for Cassian to cook with; maybe he’d remember some of his mother’s recipes, and Baze and Chirrut would let him dip into their spices to share his part of Jedha with them. Someone would teach Luke how to swim, so Kaytoo wouldn’t complain about having to stand lifeguard on the shore. Jyn would catch fish and spar with Chirrut, and wear her hair down around her shoulders—one it grows out long again.

Or—a Core World, instead, some city planet crowded with all kinds of sentients, even more variegated than home. Bodhi thinks he’d fly there, too: start up a flight school for the broke city kids that thought they wanted to escape, see the galaxy. The squadron would probably help, if he asked;
they’d work out a compromise between their Imperial training and Luke’s haphazard, self-taught brilliance, and he’d name their ships after the people they’d lost—

Bodhi shakes his head, slightly, feeling odd without the sensation of the rest of his hair sliding across his pillow, and drags his thoughts back to the fancy apartment Jyn’s parents had lived in, on Coruscant. He could probably afford something like it, if he sells off a ship, or if anyone in the Rebellion ever gets paid. And then they’d all have a place together near the ruins of the Jedi Temple, where Luke and the Guardians would rebuild. Where they’d train and teach. Baze would describe the towering spires of the city for Chirrut, the way the lights shimmered on at night—

—and Jyn and Cassian would wear nice clothes, clothes that weren’t stained with blood and dirt and the things they’d done to survive—

—he looks down at Luke’s bright jacket over his heart, and shivers, despite its warmth—

—and they’d smile at each other, the same secret smile he knows they’ve shared since Scarif, and drink Daruvvian champagne—

“I told you they wouldn’t be able to keep their hands to themselves,” Kaytoo says, just at the edge of Bodhi’s hearing, and he struggles not to yelp or even tense slightly as Kaytoo looms out of the darkness, eyes gleaming, like a creature out of someone else’s nightmares.

“That—this isn’t what that means,” Bodhi hisses back, attempting to extricate his hand from Jyn’s; she makes a faint, annoyed sound, but lets go. He watches her face for a moment, holding his breath, but her eyes stay closed as her hand moves reflexively back to the kyber crystal around her neck.

“I know.” Kaytoo sounds amused. “But I find that quite often, the saying can be applied to Cassian.” He tilts his head curiously, and his eyes flicker. “Are you all right? Your heart rate is erratic.”

“You startled me, Kaytoo,” Bodhi whispers, hoarsely, but with his hand free, he carefully repositions Cassian’s arm back at his own side so it’s no longer a dead weight on him; Cassian mumbles and opens his eyes. “Shit, sorry, I was trying to let you sleep.”

“It’s okay,” Cassian says, a hint of a smile crinkling the corners of his mouth as he registers who’s lying next to him. He turns over onto his back and stretches, legs shifting inside his bedroll. “I got plenty of rest.”

On Bodhi’s other side, Jyn’s sitting up, combing her fingers through her hair and shaking her bangs out of her eyes. She yawns, and flickers a smile down at him. “That was, what, seven hours, Kay?”

“Six hours, thirteen minutes, and fifty-two seconds,” Kaytoo says.

Jyn shrugs, scratching her stomach under her sleeping shirt. “Better than we’ve been getting the past couple weeks. C’mon, Cassian, make us something for breakfast?”

And Bodhi thinks it doesn’t really matter where, or if there's fish, or Daruvvian champagne, and wriggles out of his bedroll to join them.

Chapter End Notes

Short one this time, just to wrap up the homecoming. Hope your teeth are still intact :P
Thanks, as always!! <3

Up next: what an odd word!
Chapter 68

Chapter Summary

They think we're Imperials.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

A few days later, back in the galaxy proper instead of watching it swirling in the starless void—

The navicomputer beeps the alert that they're coming up on the Sepan system, and Cassian reaches forward at the same moment Bodhi does, blocking him from the lever. “Are you absolutely sure about this?”

Bodhi blinks. As often as he’d flown actual Imperials around, or the number of times he’s seen his friends go undercover, he’s never going to get used to the sight of Cassian wearing that awful gray uniform beside him. “What?”

“It’s not too late to back out,” Cassian offers. “We could go home, or fly to Cadomai Prime to help Jyn and Kaytoo, the Guardians, find JAN?”

“I’m—I’m sure, you agreed I don’t even look like my wanted holo anymore.” Bodhi tugs at the jacket of his new uniform; it’s black, a lot more tailored than his old jumpsuit, and he hates the way the cap feels perched on his forehead instead of his usual goggles, but he’d barely recognized himself in the ‘fresher mirror. “Which is—probably only still circulating in the farthest reaches of the Empire now, I’ve been dead for a month.”

“I wish you’d stop saying that,” Cassian mutters.

“Yes, Captain—” Bodhi smiles as Cassian raises a warning finger at him, and tweaks him anyway. “Captain Aach.”

Cassian aims his finger in Bodhi’s direction more firmly. “Bodhi—”

“I have to practice using your alias, don’t I?” Bodhi says, and draws “Aach” out of the back of his throat—overdoes it, and makes himself splutter and cough, as Cassian huffs a laugh and tosses a canteen of water at him. He recovers, and flashes a grin at Cassian. “It’s fine. I’m just going to stay with the ship until you finish your ‘investigation,’ load up Harkov and anything else he wants to bring with him, and get out.” He taps his chest. “Cargo pilot. No problem.”

“Okay,” Cassian says, with a hint of reluctance pulling at his faint replying smile, and sits back in the co-pilot’s chair. Bodhi pulls the lever, and the stars streak back into existence—

—and emerald laserfire flashes across the viewport, followed by a trio of Z-95 Headhunters—

“You’ve got to be fucking kidding me—” Bodhi yelps, and hauls hard on the controls, swerving past a pair of Delta-class escort shuttles attempting to pin down a TIE Interceptor—one of the shuttles twitches as if it’s going to come after him, but only swivels one cannon in his direction.
Cassian gives a tight little shake of his head as he grips the firing controls, but he doesn’t take aim just yet. “I told you Harkov was in the middle of the civil war!”

Bodhi winces as half a squadron of TIE Interceptors zip past in pursuit of the Z-95s, Cassian’s face reflecting red and green flares. He evades the TIEs, scanning for openings to get clear of the battle while the Cadera shudders, stray bolts glancing off the shields. “Lull in the fighting, Draven said—”

“Yeah, well, someone probably should’ve guessed the Dimok or the Ripoblus would try something during a resupply,” Cassian snaps. He meets Bodhi’s wide eyes—“Can you get us out of here?”

More laserfire streaks across the viewport; Y-wings, this time, unfamiliar script and insignia splashed across their hulls. Bodhi’s not a commander like Luke, he’s never been the best at reading between the stars, but—it looks like three groups of fighters in the battle. The Y-wings are supporting the Headhunters, backed by an Assassin-class corvette and a light cruiser, but the dozen or so Delta-class shuttles are nearly on their own, fending off TIEs and a handful of XG-1 Star Wings.

“They’ve teamed up against the Imperials,” Bodhi realizes aloud. He swings the Cadera around, trying to sort out what the Dimok and Ripoblus are attacking instead of each other. A scant few hundred kilometers away, a convoy of TIEs is crossing between a carrier and the Protector, not Interceptors like the ships swirling like a fefze swarm to protect them, though they share the same angular solar array—

“They think we’re Imperials,” Cassian points out, as Bodhi kicks in the auxiliary power and dives towards them, passing incoming Dimok or Ripoblus ships without engaging, hoping the shields will hold. “Bodhi, what are you—I’m aborting the mission, we’ve got to—”

“Told you, I’m fine.” Bodhi bites his lip. “There’s the Protector, I want to see—those are new fighters, and—and—” He throws Cassian an anxious look. “If the Dimok and Ripoblus are fighting the Empire together, shouldn’t we—”

“We’re trying to bring Harkov over to our side,” Cassian says, sternly.

“I thought we were trying to win—” Bodhi starts to argue, but the comms are lighting up; he toggles them on at Cassian’s nod.

A surprisingly dispassionate voice—maybe an officer on the Protector or a particularly cool and collected Imperial pilot—says, “Bad timing, Shuttle Omlaut. Need an escort in?”

“Uh—” Bodhi looks up at Cassian again, who stares back at him grimly, but nods again. “Affirm—affirmative.”

“Hold tight,” the voice says again, and a TIE Interceptor streaks by overhead, heading straight at a Y-wing that’s gotten between the Cadera and the Protector; a quick glance at the scanners confirms that the Y-wing’s armed its proton torpedoes, and Bodhi holds his breath as it fires—

—but the Imperial pilot throws his ship into a spiral, wingtip cannons spitting improbably accurate laser fire, and the torpedoes detonate well before they can reach either the Interceptor or the Cadera. And then the Interceptor targets the Y-wing with all six of its cannons—

“No, wait—”

Cassian launches himself forward to slap at the comms before Bodhi can wrench out any more of a protest, hissing, “They think we’re Imperials—”

—the Y-wing comes apart in a fireball, nacelles shredding, bits of plating smashing against the
“Dammit—” Bodhi jerks back in his chair and slams a fist against his thigh. “Dammit.” All around them, the Dimok and Ripoblus ships are putting up a hell of a fight, but the Interceptors are pushing them back. At least there’s the capital ships for them to retreat to—

“Bodhi, Bodhi, we have to see this through, now, we can help—by getting Harkov to defect, okay? Stick to the plan.” Cassian reaches over and grips Bodhi’s upper arm. “Okay?”

“Stick to the plan, right,” Bodhi mutters. “Sorry, Cassian, I should’ve followed your—I should’ve —” He takes his cap off and runs a hand through his short hair, breathing shakily. 

Couldn’t have run.

Couldn’t have helped.

I’m in this fight—

Cassian squeezes his arm. “You’re all right?”

“Yeah.” Bodhi exhales, the drumbeat of his heart slowing in his chest again. “Let’s—let’s get you to Harkov.”

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The distant flares of dying fighters are still visible from the Protector’s hangar bay when Bodhi lands the Cadera a few minutes later, their escort Interceptor breaking off to rejoin the battle. The hangar bay’s much as Bodhi remembers, from his occasional trips up to the Star Destroyers that had menaced his homeworld: rigid lines of TIEs docked precisely in place, the deck spotlessly clean, the occasional chain of MSE droids skittering along.

The officer striding across the hangar to greet them, though, that’s different. No one with that many rank bars had ever given a damn about Bodhi’s comings and goings, before. He wishes this officer didn’t, either, even if Cassian vouches for him, standing and straightening his uniform jacket. “That’s Harkov’s man, Vondruln.”

“Read about him, in the file,” Bodhi says. “Not that there was much on him.”

“Well, Jyn wanting to punch Harkov in the face took up a lot of that report,” Cassian says, pausing and putting his hand on Bodhi’s shoulder. “I’ll comm you when we’ve finished negotiating.”

“D’you really think—” Bodhi swallows. “You’re gonna bring Harkov around this time?”

“I’m not going to punch him,” Cassian says, dryly, turning to head down the ramp. “Don’t keep the engines running, it’ll draw attention.”

“I know,” Bodhi says. “May—the Force be with you, Cassian.”

Cassian’s mouth twitches. “Thanks. Be right back.” He sets his shoulders—doing ‘Captain Aach of Imperial Intelligence’ means assuming a certain bearing that puts Bodhi a little in mind of ‘Colonel Sward,’ but when Cassian greets Vondruln at the base of the ramp, there isn’t a hint of the pomposity of the alias he’d used before in his voice.

Bodhi watches them go, and then settles in as best he can, to wait. His diagnostic on the Cadera—or, as the transponder code gives it, the Omlaut—comes up pretty clean, despite the brief flurry of the
fight on the way in. He scans the hangar bay curiously; the new model TIEs are being checked out by some techs, and for all that he’d never been able to fly them, they are—interesting. His fingers itch to check out their solar ionization reactors, because Luke would want to know all about—

“Anyone home?”

Bodhi jerks back from peering out the viewport and looks over his shoulder nervously. *I had the right clearance—we’re on a ‘mission from Imperial Intelligence,’ no one inspects those ships—*

“Hello in there?” A head pokes up from the ramp; an officer, too, in gray, not anyone Bodhi recognizes from the files on Harkov’s ranking staffers.

Bodhi hesitates for a second before offering him a tentative wave. *Everyone thinks I’m dead. My cover’s fine. ‘Hey.’*

“You know you don’t have to hide out in here while your commanding officer’s in meetings,” the officer says. “Unless he’s got you catching up on paperwork?”

Bodhi ducks his head. “N—no,” he says. “It’s—I was running diagnostics on my shuttle—” *shit, none of us could’ve owned our own—” the shuttle—“*

“Ah, you’re one of those pilots,” the officer says, lounging against the back of the jump seats and smiling—at Bodhi. “Probably had a name picked out for your first ship from the day you could talk, huh. Too bad you got stuck with *Omlaut,* courtesy of the great Galactic Empire.”

“It’s not so bad,” Bodhi mumbles, staring at him. His uniform’s a little rumpled, and his hair under his cap is an unruly mess on par with Luke’s; combined with the teeth in his smile, this is no ordinary Imperial officer.

*Does that make him more or less dangerous?*

Bodhi’s uncertain, but he steels himself, and sticks out a hand; might as well play the cover as best as he can. “Lieutenant Ohvan.”

The man’s smile broadens as he grasps Bodhi’s hand in his own. “Call me Trace. Did you see the new TIEs we just got in? Oh, right, you were out in it, weren’t you. Want to see ‘em up close and personal?”

Bodhi smothered a bewildered frown. “I don’t think—”

“C’mon, Ohvan, you’re with I-I,” Trace says, dropping Bodhi’s hand and beckoning him out with a nod. “Reports on these’ll probably make their way to your CO anyway.”

“Okay,” Bodhi says, following him down into the hangar and trying very, very hard not to look around nervously. “They’re—they’re not just upgrades of the Interceptors, right, the Ps engines look —”

Trace shrugs sheepishly. “I’m not up on all that, if you want to talk shop—talk ships—” He chuckles a little. “You want to talk to this guy.” He cups a hand around his mouth and yells across the hangar, in a volume much more appropriate for—well, anywhere besides the inside of an *Imperial Star Destroyer*—“Hey, Stele!”

A TIE pilot down by a just-docked Interceptor turns. Trace waves, loose and gregarious, and the man visibly sighs, but comes strolling over.
“Yeah, this guy,” Trace says, pleased, as Stele joins them. “Best TIE pilot in the Empire, save maybe Ree, if she hadn’t switched to Command track. Or Celchu, if he hadn’t defected. Or—”

“I think the Lieutenant here gets the point,” Stele mutters. He’s black-haired and pale-skinned like Wedge, though he’s stocky where Wedge is thin, and there’s no hint that he’s ever so much as thought of a smile in his life. He tilts his head. “You’re the pilot of the I-I shuttle I escorted in?”

Bodhi nods; Stele isn’t moving to shake hands, so he doesn’t hold out his own. He doesn’t feel like shaking hands with someone his friends might have to face, anyway. “I’m Ohvan. My—my thanks.”

“He’s with Captain Aach,” Trace says, gargling the name a bit in amusement. “If I were Aach, I’d have chucked the family name for something a little less like gagging the second I turned eighteen.” Bodhi stiffens a fraction, a sliver of cold piercing his chest; he’s certain he hadn’t told Trace Cassian’s alias.

Another of Harkov’s men?

Is Stele?

Bodhi studies Stele’s expression, but the TIE pilot just looks at Trace blankly.

“Someday I’m going to get that stone face to crack, you’ll see,” Trace says, beaming at Stele. “Anyway, Ohvan here wants to see the new TIEs, be a dear and show him around?”

“I’m not authorized to do that,” Stele says.

Trace slaps him on the shoulder. “I authorize you to show Ohvan the new Avengers. You can pick out the best one for when you get assigned to them, ‘cause I know you’re gonna be.”

“Trace—”

“Have fun doing your pilot thing!” Trace says, cheerfully, and gives Bodhi a little shove in the direction of the new fighters before turning on his heel and marching out.

Bodhi stares after him, utterly baffled.

“He’s always like that,” Stele says. “No sense of discipline, or propriety—” He shakes his head.

“He seems friendly enough,” Bodhi offers.

“Nosy,” Stele says, and Bodhi cannot tell how the man really feels about Trace, he’s gone so inflectionless. He starts walking back towards the new TIEs, not bothering to see if Bodhi keeps up. “All right, Ohvan, these are the TIE/ad fighters, there’s been some confusion with Lord Vader’s personal ship, so we’re calling them TIE Avengers instead of Advanced.” He throws Bodhi a look. “What do you want to see?”

Bodhi casts about for a moment. “Haven’t had a chance to catch up on fighter development,” he says, eventually, telling the absolute truth. “How do they match up against the Interceptor?”

Stele stops in front of one and runs a hand along the bottom edge of one of the bent-winged panels. “They’re faster, more maneuverable, but this design keeps the same solar array surface area.”

Bodhi asks, “Same configuration of wingtip L-s nine-point-threes as on the Interceptors?”

Stele nods. “Plus warhead launchers. Concussion missiles, mainly, smaller proton torpedo complement than TIE Hunters, but I’d rather have the better shielding than fancy S-foils.”
TIE Hunters? Bodhi covers his surprise at another new type of fighter with surprise at the notion of—“Shielding?”

“Yeah, and ejector seats, too.” Stele turns and raises an appraising eyebrow at Bodhi. “Some things have changed since you or I were in flight training.”

“I guess so,” Bodhi says, thinking of Hobbie’s face when he’d said they’re death traps, you know that?

“Not that most TIE pilots are going to get to fly these,” Stele says. “I’ll have one—” he casts a sidelong glance at Bodhi—“Not because of Trace, Lieutenant, there’s no fraternization to be found here.”

“Of course not,” Bodhi murmurs. His own Imperial career hadn’t been lonely, exactly; he’d had friends, and the occasional friend in his bed, but no one like Luke—

Stele’s still eyeing him narrowly. “What is I-I here to find?”

Bodhi meets his gaze as evenly as he can. “I can’t discuss that.”


“New engines, though, yeah?” Bodhi says, looking up as they step under one of the TIE Avengers, happy to let his sabacc face drop. “What’s their thrust rating?”

“Almost one and a half times better than the Interceptor,” Stele says, and then they’re off again, throwing technical details back and forth, and it’s almost possible to pretend it’s normal, just a couple of pilots spouting off jargon, comparing notes. Even if it has to be with this cold and kind of boring guy instead of Luke or the Rogues.

“But what about you?” Stele finally asks, after they’ve been all over the Avenger and Bodhi is starting to feel frantic at the thought of everything he has to report to Rieekan now, half-wishing Trace had never stuck his head up, or that he knew how to get more out of Stele. Stele jerks his chin in the direction of the Cadera, and they start walking back towards it. “You ever get a chance to fight instead of just shuttling your CO around?”

“I like flying,” Bodhi says, a touch defensively.

“Sure,” Stele says. He shrugs. “Bet your CO told you not to compromise his mission by getting involved in the fight out there.”

“Something like that,” Bodhi mutters.

“Well, if you stick around long enough, those Dimok and Ripoblus are bound to try again,” Stele says. “You could take this Lambda out for a proper spin.”

“Right.” Bodhi covers for his discomfort by turning to go up into the Cadera; turns back, because there’s no sense in being impolite. “Thanks—uh, for showing me the TIEs.”

Stele nods a dismissive farewell, and Bodhi retreats into his ship, breathing a sigh of relief, watching more TIE pilots stream into the hangar to pore over their new fighters. They don’t seem to congregate around Stele the way the Rogues do around Luke—or, if Bodhi’s honest, himself—and Stele takes it all in stoically for a little while before departing. There’s no trace of—

Bodhi’s comm chirps.
“On my way back to you,” Cassian says, when Bodhi answers. He sounds irritated. “No need to prepare for guests.”

“Oh,” Bodhi says, dismayed. “Um—okay.”

_Cassian failed?

It doesn’t sit right. They’d brought in Madine, and Dorat, and so many other defectors; he hasn’t met Tycho Celchu yet, the man’s practically a legend on par with Luke at this point, but_—what the hell is wrong with Harkov?

“He wants to defect with his _entire fleet,_” Cassian spits, exasperated. “But not for free, oh no, he’s a man of _principle._ He has to provide for his people, after all.”

“Sounds like Talon Karrde,” Bodhi observes.

Cassian breaks off his frustrated muttering and stares at him. “D’you want to go flirt with Harkov for a while, see where that gets us?”

“What.”

“I’m joking,” Cassian says, coming forward and dropping heavily into the co-pilot’s chair with a sigh. “Sorry to make you come all the way out here for nothing, Bodhi.”

Bodhi licks his lips, looking at the downturn of Cassian’s mouth, and says, hopefully, “Not—_nothing?_” He reaches over and drops the datapad he’s been filling with notes on the TIE Avengers into Cassian’s lap, wishing Luke was here to examine the information with him, to puzzle over what a TIE Hunter must be like.

“How did you—” Cassian starts, perplexed.

“This officer came and told me I should have a look at the new TIE fighters,” Bodhi explains. He launches off the deck and out through the forcefield. There’s a smattering of debris between them and the jump point, but nothing too identifiable, thankfully.

“What officer?”

“He said his name was Trace,” Bodhi says, unnerved by the way Cassian’s voice crackles with urgency.

“Trace,” Cassian repeats. “What did he look like?”

“Blond, a bit taller than you, kind of scruffy for an Imperial? Nicer than most officers, too—and he knew your alias, made a crack about gagging on your name—”

“Uh-_huh,_” Cassian says, at that last. “Kind of a—” He searches for the right word. “Like Janson?”

Bodhi nods. “Could see him as a prankster, if the Empire didn’t discipline it out of him. Who _is_ he?”
“Someone else I thought was dead,” Cassian says, his whole demeanor brightening. “Damn Draven for not telling me!”

“How long’s he been dead for?” Bodhi asks.

“Years,” Cassian answers. “I wish I’d seen him, if it really is him. I wonder if he’s been undercover since—” He trails off. “I can’t imagine being away from the Rebellion for so long.”

“Well, he helped us out with some information,” Bodhi says. “Maybe he can help you talk Harkov around?”

“Only if he’s got a couple million credits lying around,” Cassian says, ruefully. He flickers a smile at Bodhi as the navicomputer chirps. “Let’s go home. I’ll tell you about ‘Trace’ on the way.”

“Okay,” Bodhi says, and the stars smear into streaks, and then the familiar calming glow of hyperspace. And it’s all right, for his first mission back from the dead, having Cassian next to him, knowing they’re returning with something, even if it’s not Harkov. Jyn and Kaytoo and the Guardians are probably home already, waiting, and together they’ll figure out how to convince Harkov to defect, how to help the Dimok and Ripoblus keep fighting against the Empire instead of themselves.

And maybe, Bodhi hopes, Luke will be home soon, too.

He’s starting to really miss him.

Chapter End Notes

Moving right along with some plotlines out of various video games again! I hope to have a bunch of chapters throughout the end of this month.

Thanks, dear readers, as always. <3 And thanks to morag for letting me ramble about sorting out a plot dilemma earlier today as well as spurring me with some of the silliness herein :D

Also, if you haven’t read now there’s only love in the dark, which the amazing ladililn wrote for me as a gift, YOU SHOULD GO DO THAT RIGHT NOW. It is SUCH a beautiful story!!!

And, lastly, happy birthday to the lovely meledea, even though it is still only technically her birthday in my time zone, haha. <3
Chapter 69

Chapter Summary

Only so many we can win.

Chapter Notes

Tiny bit of panicking at the end.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Luke doesn’t come back.

It’s a disappointment, to be sure, but what’s more pressingly unpleasant is that Draven isn’t happy about Cassian and Bodhi returning without Harkov in tow, nor is he happy to hear that ‘Trace’ had crept out of the shadows, no matter how innocuously his friendliness might’ve come off to the Imperials. He won’t discuss the long-term goals of Alliance Intelligence, but it’s clear that Draven’s displeased Trace had risked his and Bodhi’s covers for information less crucial than whatever the spy’s really working on.

Not that Bodhi’s information isn’t welcome, of course. It’s valuable—Cassian had reminded him of that, when he’d started to ramble, words slipping out of control on their way to Draven’s office—just not as valuable as another admiral. Or an entire defecting Imperial fleet.

Draven has Rieekan join them for Bodhi to explain his information on the TIE fighters he’d seen, and what he’d determined about the Dimok and Ripoblus joining forces, but the latter is rendered totally meaningless inside of a day. Harkov’s “brokering” of a peace treaty between them is all over the NewsNets, and it makes Draven go even more tight-lipped and irritated when Bodhi sees him next; they’d missed an opportunity to counter the Empire’s twisted message of peace and unity through strength.

Bodhi thinks, reading about the installation of a sector Moff and increased Imperial patrols that evening in Cassian and Jyn’s quarters, that they’d missed an opportunity to help.

“’Cause Harkov isn’t helping, he’s going to do what they always do, what they did to my world, and yours,” Bodhi says out of nowhere, to Cassian, putting his datapad down on his pillow and stilling his trembling hands, palms flat on its surface. He can’t help but speculate, again, if there was anything they could’ve done differently. What it would’ve changed if they’d jumped in earlier, or if High Command could’ve spared diplomats like Mon Mothma or Leia, not that there’s been the slightest clue as to where she is.

“Sending troops all over the system, pretending like it’s about safety instead of keeping everyone afraid to step out of line—he’ll take whatever he wants from them, and there’s—”

“There are only so many battles we can fight,” Cassian says. He’s lying flat on his back beside Bodhi, eyes closed, but his words are clear, not slurred with somnolence. “Only so many we can
Focus on the next operation.” He opens his eyes and turns his head to look at Bodhi, his face serious. “Maybe we never really had a shot with this one. Maybe it’s just—good, I don’t know, that we got out of there so easily. That you saw ‘Trace’ alive and well.”

“All is as the Force wills it?” It comes out less wry than Bodhi intends.

Cassian lifts his hands in the air above him, a sketch of a shrug. “If you say so.”

Bodhi furrows his brow. Cassian’s been meditating dutifully ever since Draven ordered him to, and Bodhi’s almost certain he’s keeping the sliver of Chirrut’s kyber crystal close, if not strung around his neck. But his trust isn’t easily won. “Jyn would say so,” Bodhi murmurs.

“She would,” Cassian says, noncommittally, and then he yawns. “Are you done reading?”

“Yeah,” Bodhi says, still frowning a little. “Sorry. ‘Night, Cassian.” He gets up to turn off the overhead lights.

After Cassian’s silence shifts into actual sleep, sometime later, Bodhi prays, running his fingers down the pleats on the sleeves of Luke’s yellow jacket, like he might do if they were lying next to each other. Jyn and her team, their friends, are still out there, after all. And with the kinds of scrapes Han gets into, it can’t hurt to pray for him, and Leia and Chewbacca, either.

Luke is probably all right. Bodhi hasn’t dreamed about him in a while.

*****

Cassian takes over monitoring Jyn's comms, when Draven’s not interested in devoting any more of his or Bodhi’s time to figuring out how to win Harkov over without the application of millions of credits. Bodhi has a hard time lingering over those transmissions, when he's off shift and doesn't have much to do. Checking in about his friends’ progress is fine, although Baze has a tendency to want to recount the latest chapter of the transnovel he's reading.

It’s just that the one time they miss a check-in, dread and desperation eclipse the kindness in Cassian’s face, and his whole body goes taut and still as he reviews their last known position. Bodhi prays then, too, the words a soothing rill over the fear in his heart, until there’s a crackle of static and Kaytoo says, acerbically, “Tell your girlfriend she cannot give away another coat to a poor starving Snivvian child.”

“How many do you have left?” Cassian asks, wryly, slumping back in his chair, and Bodhi, shaking with relief, hears Chirrut’s warm laughter in the background. He endures a bit of teasing about not coming out to Cadomai Prime to rescue them from another miserable ball of ice, and listens for the code words Jyn slips into their conversation like slender blades. She’s close to making contact with someone from JAN, someone less vile than the murderous Earnst Kamiel, and more open to listening than Kelsek. Kaytoo’s working on pinning down ships that might be linked to the network, making sure they’re impounded or otherwise blocked from launching when the *Calabar Queen* enters the system. The sort of thing Bodhi thinks he could’ve handled, if Draven had sent him with them.

Draven sends him with Rogue Squadron, instead, on information from Brivyl Goss, to help them break a bunch of scientists out of a detention facility orbiting Bakura. Wedge’s mostly back to his old self, asserting command over the squadron and assigning Samoc Farr to be Bodhi’s co-pilot. He doesn’t caution Bodhi the way he once had, for fear of what Luke might do; they don’t talk about Luke at all.

Samoc doesn’t talk much, either, though for once Bodhi’s fairly certain his co-pilot’s reticence has
absolutely nothing to do with him. She’s just reserved, letting Bodhi tour her around the ship’s systems with few questions, and not a single story about her own exploits as a pilot. The squadron invites her to their pre-mission sabacc game, where she neatly weaponizes that quiet against them, absconding with the majority of their credits and quite possibly Janson’s heart.

Toryn laughs at Bodhi about it before they depart for Bakura. “Samoc’s a menace,” she says, fondly. “It’s the quiet ones you should watch out for.”

Bodhi promises to do that, but the mission to Bakura goes to shit almost as soon as the Cadera reenters normal space:

“We’re too late,” Samoc mutters. Her face is a bleak mirror of Bodhi’s sinking heart at the sight of the three Imperial dropships pulling away from the facility and their TIE escorts, her words a dull, hopeless echo inside his head, but she grips the firing controls, ready for anything. He tenses, concentrating on the squadron’s chatter, confirming on his own scanners that the prison’s emptied-out, one hand hovering above the navicomputer to start punching in coordinates for an escape.

“Switching to ion cannon,” Wedge says, instead, over the comms. TIE fighters start breaking off and coming about, continuously spitting fire. “Gonna try to disable a couple of those transports before they escape.”

“You sure that’s a good idea, Rogue Leader? They might self-destruct, take you with ‘em,” Hobbie asks, changing position to cover Wedge nonetheless.

“Then I won’t get too close,” Wedge responds, tersely. “Rogue One, see if you can pick up any transmissions, find out where they’re going?”

Bodhi calls back, “I’m on it,” and switches helm controls to Samoc’s seat. He clenches his fists for a second, hard enough to feel his blunt fingernails digging into his palms. I can—

Samoc spares a glance in his direction; she’s as good a shot as Dak was—maybe better, managing even the aft-mounted R-T0 as she weaves through the oncoming swarm. “Sir?”

“I’m fine,” Bodhi says, uncurling his fists. He doesn’t look at the scanners to confirm exactly how good she is; breaking through the Imperials’ comms needs all his focus, and he can’t let himself think about Stele or the other TIE pilots he’d seen on the Protector—

“Hobbie!” Janson yells. Bodhi snaps his head up from the comms, heart leaping into his throat at the sight of Hobbie’s X-wing plummeting in a wobbly spiral to Bakura’s teal-and-tan surface. Not again!

“Not again,” Hobbie says, more weary than frightened. “Sorry, guys, my stabilizer’s shredded.”

Kasan laughs, shakily; her X-wing is in pursuit, tracing an erratic pattern to cover his uncontrolled descent. “There’s surface missile batteries down there,” she warns.

“Rogue One, finish up with those transmissions, and if you can, go after him?” Wedge sounds grim. He’s hull skimming, strafing one of the dropships with ion blasts, but he’s not having any effect.

“I copy,” Bodhi says, fingers flying over the console. “Just—just a second—”

“Like you’d leave me behind,” Hobbie says, his voice strained. “Hells, I can’t fucking eject with these missiles going off every which way.”

“Sir,” Samoc says, again. The two other dropships have vanished into hyperspace; another moment
and the third is gone, leaving a dozen or so TIEs behind, swarming Wedge. She squeezes off a handful of shots, blowing holes in their formation. “Can we—?”

Bodhi bangs a hand on the console in frustration at losing the dropships’ signals, and takes helm controls back from her. “Yes, yes, Hobbie, we’re coming to get you, hang on.”

“Not much left to hang on to,” Hobbie mutters, and then his comms cut out with a horrendous squall.

“Shit,” Bodhi says, helplessly, and pushes the Cadera into a punishing dive. Wedge and Janson’s X-wings dart across the viewport, blasting the batteries on Bakura’s surface. Fireballs bloom in quick succession, wilting into columns of smoke.

“Are we gonna be able to land?” Samoc’s face is pale.

“I don’t—yes!” Bodhi spots Hobbie’s crashed X-wing in an empty field with the canopy still locked shut; he hadn’t ejected. There’s no movement inside the cockpit, though Hobbie’s astromech is detaching from its socket—it tips off the S-foil and disappears into the tall grass. “Find a place to put us down,” Bodhi orders Samoc. “And keep an eye out for—patrols, or bombers, or—or—walkers.”

She nods, so he unstraps and hits the ramp controls, nearly going over the edge before the landing gear’s finished lowering, anxious to retrieve at least one valuable person this time.

Bodhi stumbles through the grass to Hobbie’s X-wing, the wind not tugging at his hair, for a change, and pulls himself up on the nose. His hands are clumsy on the canopy latches; the astromech is whirring and chirping worriedly somewhere below him, and he has one utterly horrible moment of terror, imagining Luke lying senseless in his own downed X-wing, Artoo whistling fearfully—

No. He’s fine. He’s fine.

The canopy pops open, and inside, Hobbie’s unconscious, a line of blood seeping out under the edge of his helmet above his left ear, but he’s breathing. He starts to wake up as Bodhi works on freeing him from his straps, mumbling something about Rodma.

Bodhi shakes his head, confused—remembers he means Maddel, and tells him, “Sorry, Hobbie, she’s—with Jyn and Kaytoo.” He looks up uneasily at the roar of approaching fighters. Bakura’s sky is cloudy, though, and there’s no sign of whether it’s the squadron or more TIEs. “Hobbie, help me out here, we have to leave—”

“Trying,” Hobbie grunts, and then he’s grabbing Bodhi’s arm to pull himself up and out of the wreckage. “Hey, maybe I won’t have to go in the bacta again,” he adds, and promptly slides down the side of his X-wing into a heap in the grass. He pushes himself to his knees and is sick, noisily.

“You keep telling yourself that,” Bodhi says, forcing lightness into his tone as he pats Hobbie on the back; Hobbie grabs at his arm again and climbs carefully to his feet.

“Wait, wait,” Hobbie protests, swaying a bit as Bodhi tries to guide him towards the safety of the Cadera. “We can’t leave my ship like this.” He digs around in his flightsuit pockets and comes up with a blaster, points it waveringly at the X-wing. “Gotta destroy it.”

Bodhi flinches back from Hobbie firing a couple of wild shots that do nothing, and then understanding hits. Can’t leave it for the Imperials to recover. “Come on, we’ll do it from inside the Cadera.”

Soaring back into the sky a couple minutes later, the remains of his X-wing slag on the ground behind them and his astromech strapped into the hold, Hobbie leans forward from the jump seats and mutters, “Sorry, Samoc, this wasn’t the best example of why you should join Rogue Squadron.”
“You’re alive,” Samoc says, softly.

“There is that,” Hobbie concedes. “Thanks, Bodhi. Knew you wouldn’t take off without me.”

“At least it would’ve been really blasted obvious which prison you were in,” Bodhi says, and Hobbie lets out an exhausted laugh.

*****

They’ve failed again, and Bodhi doesn’t even have a holochip’s worth of messages to start to make up for losing the scientists, or Hobbie’s ship. The only bright side is coming back to discover Cassian making breakfast, although that small comfort is marred by the fact that Cassian clearly hasn’t been sleeping much, his usual cooking rhythm completely off.

“Hi,” Cassian says, throwing him a faint smile which shifts into alarm at Bodhi’s worried look—“What?” But he submits to Bodhi putting a hand on his face and gently thumbing his right eyelid up to check. “Stims,” Cassian confesses.

“I’m an ex-Imperial cargo pilot.” Bodhi gives him his best imitation of Jyn’s scowl. “I know.”

“Draven has me supervising half a dozen operations,” Cassian says, tiredly. “Trying to come up with a secure way to contact Trace, keeping an eye on the Brosin Underground in case they start harassing our agent there—”

“Jyn’s okay, though?” Bodhi interrupts. “Our—our team?”

Cassian nods, rubbing a hand over his face, scratching at his stubble. “Jyn and Baze are meeting the JAN cell leaders tomorrow. Their tomorrow.”

“It can’t go any worse than when you met Kelsek, right,” Bodhi says, crushing a firespice pod into his breakfast and stirring.

“Not hot enough for you? I made it as hot as Jyn can stand.” Cassian raises his eyebrows.

“It’s—fine,” Bodhi says. “Sorry, go on. What else are you working on?”

“Finding out where your scientists got transferred to,” Cassian says.

Bodhi coughs, and blinks at him. “You are? Already? How? I didn’t—they jumped to hyperspace before I could pick up any of their transmissions—”

“Listening post near Nelvaan picked up transmissions between a couple of Imperial ships near the Triellus Trade Route. I have people running the decrypt now.”

“Oh,” Bodhi says, startled. “Really?”

“Don’t look so surprised,” Cassian says, amused. “You work for Alliance Intelligence, remember?”

“Yeah, but—” Bodhi leans back in his chair, his frustration at their failure abruptly dissipating. “Then we didn’t—it’s not over, there’s a chance to get them back.”

“From another highly guarded Imperial facility, sure,” Cassian says. “If you can convince Wedge to wait until Madine sends over some SpecForces this time?”

“Or if we had Luke back,” Bodhi mutters.
Cassian snorts. “One partially-trained Jedi does not equal a dozen ground troops.”

Bodhi’s jaw drops. “Have you seen him fight?”

“No,” Cassian allows, slowly.

“Okay then,” Bodhi says, and makes a face at him.

“I’ve seen Jyn fight.” Cassian tilts his head thoughtfully. “What if—”


“Jyn fights dirty,” Cassian points out, his eyes brightening.

Bodhi aims his fork at him, the effect somewhat spoiled by the bit of egg yolk dripping off the tines. “Luke has the Force—”

“The dirtiest trick of them all,” Cassian says, wryly, getting up to tidy his camp stove. “Anyway, Chirrut beat both Jyn and Luke on Sanctuary, and if they finish their mission and come back before the decryption is done, maybe he and Baze could go with you.”

“Yeah, all right.” Bodhi watches Cassian moving around as if he’s only half awake, or only half here, hissing as he scalds his hand on the side of the pot. “Cassian?”

“What?”

“I’ll clear up the rest, go wait for Jyn to report in. Or—maybe take a nap? I—I’ll handle Draven, if he starts asking after you.” The corner of Bodhi’s mouth twitches up. “Unless the Rebel Alliance doesn’t take naps?”

“I can sleep anywhere,” Cassian says. “You’re—okay?”

Bodhi huffs a laugh. “Far as it goes.” He nudges Cassian in the direction of the bunk. “Thanks for breakfast. And—working on figuring out where we’re headed next, even if it’s probably incredibly dangerous.”

Cassian sits down, hard, on the edge of his bunk. “Probably.” He rubs his hand over his face again, revealing a real, fond smile when he lowers it. “But you’re welcome.”

*****

The Imperial transmissions, once decrypted, point them to Geonosis, and Bodhi misses Luke even more, curled up reading the Alliance database report in the cockpit of the Cadera. He knows the history from his classes at the Academy, has no idea if Luke does, but he’s certain Luke would be fascinated by the opportunity to see the place where so many Jedi had gathered to fight in the first battle of the Clone Wars.

Bodhi scrolls down the datapad, wondering idly if there’s anything he could bring back to show Luke of the place where his father and former master must’ve fought.

There almost certainly is not, because Geonosis is also where the Rebellion had discovered—

—where Saw had discovered—

—evidence of the Empire’s first genocide.
Saw?

His mouth is dry; the air tastes like ancient stone and dust. The light’s gone wrong, somehow, dim as the inside of his cell--

*Saw’s dead, the monster’s dead!*

*The Geonosians are dead—*

He’s shaking, sweating even in the cold cockpit. “*Shit,*” Bodhi croaks, aloud, panting for breath, fumbling for his comlink, but if he calls Cassian to tell him he’s *not* okay, Cassian will try to talk him out of going to Geonosis, and he won’t be able to help Wedge and his friends. He clutches the comlink in his hand, as afraid to depress the switch as if it was a detonator.

There’s a light blinking on the console directly in front of him; a cooling intake’s blocked, an easy fix, if he can convince himself to get to his feet. If he can calm down and *breathe.*

*If Luke was here to help—*

*What if he never comes back?*

Bodhi groans, and thumps his head backwards against the headrest. *Stop!* He struggles to slow his breathing, matching it to the fluctuating light on the console, moving his lips in the Guardians’ prayer. Pushes to his feet, dropping the datapad on the chair.

*Geonosis is dead.*

*I’m not.*

*Fix the cooling intake.*

His hands are unsteady when he reaches forward to shut off the indicator, but it's all right.

---

Chapter End Notes

Yeah, yeah, I know what number chapter this is. :P Sorry. I'll.....make up for it later?

It's been ELEVEN months now, and somehow you're--hanging in there, or coming back to this, or finding it for the first time, and I can't express enough gratitude for it. So--as always, thanks. <3 You are AMAZING. <3
But it turns out Bodhi didn’t need to panic nearly that much about Geonosis. He scarcely has time to wonder whether a ring could have formed around Jedha like the one he’s flying carefully through—his Academy studies on orbital mechanics had never covered what happens when one’s home is blasted into oblivion by an Imperial superweapon—before three Imperial capital ships emerge from between the drifting rocks. Wedge immediately aborts the mission, ordering the _Cadera, Beru, _and the other shuttles and transports back to Nelvaan to rendezvous with the _Liberty._

“Guess he’s not taking any chances,” Grizz says, when he and Joma come down the ramp to meet Bodhi and Samoc in the _Liberty’s_ hangar. None of them look particularly sorry to have missed out on the action.

“Yeah, I guess,” Bodhi says, still anxious for his friends. He glances around for the squadron and only sees Hobbie, who hadn’t deployed with them in the first place, recovering from his latest injuries from Bakura. “What were those ships, anyway? Never seen anything like them before.”

“It’s a new class of escort carrier,” someone says behind him. “Exclusively used by storm commandos. Captain Rook, may I speak with you a moment?”

Bodhi’s eyes widen as he turns and recognizes Leia’s white-haired aide, Winter, who he hasn’t seen since pulling them both off of Chandrila. “Yes—yes, ma’am, of course.” He throws a puzzled look over his shoulder at his various co-pilots and gets equally blank stares and shrugs in return.

Winter leads him off the main floor of the hangar and through a winding corridor before finding an empty simulation room. “Commander Antilles reported in a few minutes ago. He had a minor accident that cost us another X-wing, but he’s on his way here. In an antique Jedi starfighter, no less.”

“He’s safe?” Bodhi asks, instantly regretting that he hadn’t followed his initial impulse to stay with the squadron until they’d all retreated. Winter nods. Bodhi hesitates, and then adds, more eagerly, “Is he flying a Delta-7 Aethersprite?”

“You’ll have to wait until he returns to find that out, I’m afraid,” Winter replies. “But that’s not what I needed to see you about; I have two messages from General Draven. The first is that the _Calabar Queen’s_ been destroyed.”

Bodhi’s mouth falls open in shock. _They failed? Jyn—_

“Captain Andor’s on his way to Cadomai Prime to rendezvous with Lieutenant Erso’s team,” Winter continues, watching his face closely. “General Draven wanted someone to inform you before you found out on your own and decided to do something rash and impulsive.”
“Why would I—is Jyn—are they okay? Why is Cassian—what happened?”

“They survived the explosion,” Winter says. “Captain Andor received a garbled transmission from his droid—”

“They survived the explosion?” Bodhi makes for the door, his heart hammering in his chest. “I have to talk to Cassian—”

“Wait,” Winter says, putting out a hand to stop him, but he pushes past her into the corridor. “There’s more I’ve been asked to tell you—Captain Rook—” She catches up to him quickly; he’s less familiar with the layout of Mon Cal cruisers, can’t figure out the correct turn to take towards the communications center in his panic. “Bodhi, wait.”

Bodhi draws up short at her tone—she sounds exactly like Leia at her most royal—and twists his fingers together almost painfully, behind his back, trying to keep himself still enough to convince her. “Winter, they’re my friends, I have to know if they’re all right!”

“Listen to me,” Winter says. “I understand your concern, but General Draven has a different assignment for—”

Bodhi sputters, “A different—Winter, I promised them if anything ever—”

“And I’m sure that General Draven knows that, but Captain Andor is doing what needs to be done.” Winter’s eyes are as cold as a night lost on Hoth. “You’re to head to the Parmel system to retrieve Admiral Harkov.”

“What?” Bodhi’s voice cracks. “My friends are in danger and I’m supposed to to just—go—Harkov’s jerked us around for months, and now he comes running—doesn’t he have a fleet?”

“Not running,” Winter says. “Hiding. We’ve lost communications with the convoy we sent to resupply Admiral Harkov’s ships after he left the Sepan system, but we’re certain he intended to join us. You’re the likeliest candidate to be able to retrieve him on short notice.”

“I didn’t meet him,” Bodhi protests, feeling like his head’s about to fly apart. “Cassian and—and Jyn, they talked to him, I never even met him, how’m I supposed to—I thought we didn’t have the credits?” He raises his hand as if to ward her off when she opens her mouth again, trying to steady his voice even as his fingers shake uncontrollably. “Let me talk to Cassian, he’ll straighten this out, I can’t go after Harkov if Cassian needs me.”

She raises an impassive eyebrow.

“Winter, please,” Bodhi begs. “They’re—” He grimaces, thinking of the lie he’d tried to tell Saw’s people when they hauled him across the desert, but—”it’s true now, it’s true. “They’re the only family I have left.”

That does it, and a few breathless minutes later Cassian is answering his hyperwave on a secured channel; Bodhi pictures him standing at the comms station in the U-wing, hunched under the heavy headset. “Bodhi? I thought you were safe with the squadron on Geonosis. Is everything okay?”

Bodhi glances over his shoulder at Winter, who’s discreetly stepped away, conferring with one of General Madine’s aides. “Cassian, what happened? Is Jyn—Baze and Chirrut—” He’s sick at the thought of being the last person with Jedha’s wind-and-dust-etched stones and stories in his heart. Especially when he can’t remember most of the latter. “I can come up the Triellus Trade Route, I can be there in—in—”
There's a soft inhalation, as if Cassian’s bracing himself. “Bodhi. It’s all right. They're all right. Jyn broke her arm, and Chirrut and Maddel are pretty banged up from the fighting, but they—survived.”

Bodhi clutches his hand over his headset, pressing it hard to his ear. “Fighting? Why was there—”

Cassian goes on before he can spill over with more questions. “Jyn and Maddel had a JAN informant who told them there were hidden explosives on the Calabar Queen. They got on at the last spaceport before Cadomai Prime, and they tried to warn everyone, get the passengers off the ship. There were Imperials on board, and some JAN operatives.” His voice is strained. “Kaytoo said they evacuated as many civilians as they could in the Galen and escape pods, but they were unable to save—” He breaks off, breathing harshly.

“Why are you going to meet them?” Bodhi asks, relief for his friends warring with the grief and dread sinking cold inside him. “I’m closer, my ships are bigger than a U-wing, I can still help transport the survivors someplace safer than—than Cadomai Prime—”

Cassian says, emotion roiling under the surface of his words like a storm about to break, “I’m going to put a stop to JAN.”

Bodhi shakes his head, confused. “Kind of too late now, isn’t it? What d’you mean, put a stop to—” His eyes go wide as the realization hits, sending him reeling back in the chair. “You’re going to kill them,” he breathes, and Cassian’s hissed breath, audible even through the static, is all the confirmation he needs. “You are, you’re going to Cadomai Prime to find JAN and assassinate them —”

“They’re murderers,” Cassian spits, his voice fraying, and Bodhi envisions the frustration furrowing his brow and the tight, furious downturn of his mouth; he can't have slept any more than when Bodhi had last seen him. “This isn’t the first time they’ve blown something up. The pipeline on Albrae-Don? We were lucky that no one was killed.”

“You didn’t pull the trigger when it was Galen,” Bodhi snaps.

“This isn’t—him,” Cassian says, getting louder. “They’re not like him—or you—they had a chance to make things right, we gave them second chances, and they killed hundreds of people.”

Bodhi shudders with guilt. “So—they’re murderers. Criminals. Terrorists. The kind of rebels the Empire used to warn us about.” Rage is starting to surge dizzyingly inside him, lacing his words with sarcasm and poison: “The kind of people I ran away to join.”

Cassian’s angrier than Bodhi’s heard him since Jyn accused him on their terrible flight from Eadu. “What would you have me do now? You don’t know half the things I’ve done—that Jyn and I have done for the Rebellion. You don’t want me to do my job, but you’ll let Luke kill for you—”

“Leave him out of this,” Bodhi snarls, incensed.

“And Luke’s not the only one,” Cassian adds, cuttingly. “Your co-pilots—your squadron—but you can’t do it—”

“I never wanted them to!” Bodhi shouts, bolting to his feet. “I killed millions of people—is it too fucking much to hope that I can keep anyone else from—from—” He looks around at the suddenly silent communications center, aides and technicians and Winter gaping or staring at him, and he snatches the headset off and hurls it on the console, Cassian’s voice tinnily calling his name.

“So does Captain Andor need you?” Winter asks, not unkindly.
Bodhi scowls and picks the headset up again, holding her gaze. “Cassian.” He can hear Cassian breathing, deliberately, the way Chirrut’s taught them, in through his nose and out through his mouth, but each breath trembles with tension. “Cassian, if you don’t—if you don’t want me to come, then I’m going to rescue Harkov. He’s defecting, and I—I think it’s real this time.”

“What?” Cassian’s voice climbs. “No, no, wait, Harkov’s not going to let you just walk away if he isn’t really—you don’t know what you’re getting into—”

Fury flares brilliant as an explosion in Bodhi’s head. “Maybe I don’t, but when have I ever?”

“Bodhi—”

“Be careful, Cassian,” Bodhi says, tightly, and cuts him off. Clenches his hands into useless fists, his head bowed, staring at nothing.

Cassian’s going to do his job?

Fine.

This is mine.

Bodhi lifts his head and meets Winter’s gaze. Her face is still an impressively serene mask, even though he’d so carelessly thrown what he’d done to her homeworld into his argument with Cassian. “Tell me about Harkov.”

*****

The rancor and guilt burning inside him subside into a smoldering sort of petulance as Winter smoothly redirects him to focus on Draven’s orders instead of thinking about Cassian and his orders, and why he hadn’t killed Galen, or if Bodhi could’ve said anything else to convince him not to kill anyone else. There’s a part of his mind, the terrified part still trapped and writhing in the monster’s horrible arms, that chokes out what if Cassian had killed Saw—but he forces that idea away, grimly, and makes himself look at Draven’s intelligence about Harkov’s position near the space station DS-5, keeping it together long enough to get back to his ship and sort out what to do.

His team consists of most of his former co-pilots. Not all of them—Corona Squadron’s headquartered on the Liberty, but Bodhi has about as much desire to see Yendor as he does Darth Vader—but enough that he almost has a full crew complement in the Cadera for the first time since he’d flown around looking for possible new base worlds. Joma claims the co-pilot’s chair, leaving the other positions for Grizz, Hobbie, and Samoc to choose. Bodhi’s a little worried Samoc won’t speak up for herself, but when he turns to go up into the cockpit, she’s initiating a game of lizard-toad-snake to decide.

“You were gone a long time with Winter,” Joma says. “Longer than a briefing on ‘go to Parmel, board the Protector, find Admiral Harkov’ takes.” Bodhi casts a sidelong look at her. She flips the final set of toggles for her half of the preflight sequence and gazes back. “Did you hear anything about Rogue Squadron?”

Bodhi blinks at her for a moment, baffled, and then—the failed mission to Geonosis. “Wedge picked up an old Jedi starfighter, but he’s fine.”

“Anything about—” Joma breaks off as Grizz and Samoc pile in behind them, taking the gunner positions; Hobbie’s slower, grumbling a little under his breath as he straps in.
“They’re on their way back,” Bodhi says, acknowledging the Liberty’s deck officer waving them off. He bites his lip, hard, and launches, barely glimpsing the mottled blue marble of Nelvaan below as they make the jump to hyperspace. It’s not peaceful, for once, staring out at the swirling vortex; it’s too much like the stress roiling in his head and churning in his stomach— “Excuse me,” he says, and gets up abruptly to go be sick in the ‘fresher.

What am I doing?

What if they do need me and I’m running after this ass of an admiral—and I didn’t go because I was angry with Cassian—

(“—I thought you said we came up here to have a look?”

“I’m here, I’m looking—”)

—has a memory of the same hard and urgent expression on Cassian’s face, before he and Jyn had left Hoth; they must’ve been planning to hunt down JAN all the way back then, for the Albrae-Don pipeline bombing.

He didn’t want me to know.

Well, I’m not stupid. And I’ll be more convincing with Harkov than—

A knock on the ‘fresher door startles him out of his resentment. “Uh, Bodhi? You okay?”

Bodhi opens the door and frowns at Grizz; glares up into the cockpit, where Hobbie hastily jerks back from his line of sight. “Did you lose at lizard-toad-snake to come find out?”

“Not exactly,” Grizz says. “Hobbie figured since you’ve been pissed at me before, I’d know how to handle you being pissed off again.” He scratches his ear.

Bodhi makes a rude gesture towards the back of Hobbie’s chair. “I’m not angry with—with any of you.”

“Okay, but something’s up,” Grizz says, and reaches out, as if he’s going to touch Bodhi on the shoulder, but halts. “Was there something about the squadron you couldn’t tell Joma, or—or did you get news about Luke?”

Bodhi glowers at him, but—he means well. Just don’t tell him about—all of it. “The Calabar Queen blew up—Jyn’s team was supposed to stop it from happening, but they—couldn’t. Didn’t.” He shakes his head at Grizz’s appalled look. “I don’t know more than that—they’re okay, that's what—I just—” Bodhi fists his hands in the pockets of Cassian’s jacket. “We keep losing, even when we’re not fighting the Empire head-on.”

“Maybe we’ll get a win out of this one,” Grizz offers. “Bring Harkov and his fleet back safe and sound?”

Bodhi swallows, and nods.

Grizz is silent for a second, and then he asks, “The Calabar Queen’s a luxury liner?”

Bodhi raises his eyebrows, dismayed; he’d thought Grizz wouldn’t pry. “Yeah.”

“You ever think about taking one of those?”

He breathes out, shakily, shifting back to safer territory. “Flying one? They’re not built for joyriding.”
“No, I mean regular riding. Taking the scenic route somewhere, instead of hopping around like a, I don't know, a quenker.”

“A quenker,” Bodhi repeats, blankly.

“Yeah,” Grizz says. “Little armored rodent things, they hop, spit acid—they were all over Dantooine, don't you remember?”

Bodhi frowns, delving into his memories of Dantooine, only able to think of Luke’s mouth, and blba trees, and something about the Jedi—oh. “I wasn't—I didn't defect until after the Rebellion was on Yavin IV.”

“Oh, right.” Grizz scratches his ear again. “Anyway, the slow path?”

Bodhi shrugs, tracking Grizz back uncertainly to his original question about the Calabar Queen. “Ticket costs more’n any of us would make in a lifetime.”

“Yeah, but I bet if the last of the Jedi wanted—”


“Okay, but if you brought it up, he'd make it happen,” Grizz says.

Bemused, Bodhi attempts to imagine Luke among the glittering crowd of Core high society, obliviously towing him along in his wake while Artoo provides inappropriate commentary—“What would he even wear?” he murmurs.

“Dunno about that stuff,” Grizz says, waving a hand absently, and then he flashes Bodhi a wry smile. “We good to go, Captain?”

Bodhi hesitates, taking stock of his anger fading away, his determination not to fail again the only fire still burning inside him. “Yeah. Yeah. Thanks, Grizz.”

“Don’t mention it,” Grizz says, and flashes him a crooked grin. “C’mon, let’s go steal you the Protector.”

*****

But then—

“Fuck,” Hobbie snaps, at the sight of the Protector under attack, a couple hundred kilometers distant from the three-pronged DS-5 space station. Bodhi struggles to take it all in, snapping for Grizz and Samoc to disable the Xg-1 Star Wings lobbing concussion missiles and firing ion blasts at the Star Destroyer; switches full power to the engines and threads a reckless path through the battle, making for the hangar.

It’s impossible to tell which ships are Harkov’s, or how to be helpful, when there are:

—TIE Avengers squaring off with each other, dancing as fast and deadly as Chirrut—

—incomprehensible shouting on the open comm frequencies, interspersed with cracks and blips of static as ships are destroyed—

—a pair of angular cargo ferries laying a handful of mines around the space station and jumping to hyperspace—
—a single TIE Avenger bursting through the fireball of its twin disintegrating, swooping past the *Cadera* without firing a shot—

—“The *Protector*’s preparing to engage its hyperdrive,” Joma says, sharply, and Bodhi’s heart plummets; they’d been so close—“Wait, sensors picked up a shuttle heading for the space station, I don’t think anyone’s seen it—”

Bodhi spares her a brief look, flinching as Samoc picks off a TIE Avenger that did fire on them, its angled solar array the only recognizable part spinning away into space. “Think it’s *him*? Jyn—*Cassian*—the reports never pegged Harkov for the self-sacrificing type—”

“Maybe the *Protector’s* just a decoy—” Samoc’s voice crescendos in surprise as two *Assassin*-class corvettes jump in, TIE Avengers smashing themselves on their shields before regrouping and intensifying their attack. “What should we do?”

“I have no idea,” Bodhi yelps, dismayed. “I wasn’t expecting this!” He scans the battle, fast; the corvettes are drawing most of the fire now, there’s an opportunity—the *Protector* blurs away into hyperspace just as one of the corvettes goes down in a blaze, its counterpart twisting back towards the stars, flames scouring its hull. Trembling, he chokes back the memory of the *Bright Hope* shattering before his eyes, the bodies vanishing into the void.

*I couldn’t save—*

“*Bodhi*—sir—” Hobbie grabs his shoulder. “DS-5 is sending a distress signal to any rebel ships—*our* people are on that station, even if Harkov isn’t.”

Bodhi glances around at his crew. Samoc and Hobbie are pale; Joma’s mouth is set in a determined line.

Grizz’s eyes blaze. “Maldra IV,” he says, and in an undertone, looking directly into Bodhi’s face, “The *Calabar Queen*. I’m with you.”

“Okay,” Bodhi says, fear solidifying into certainty, and turns back to the controls, speeding towards the station. “Okay—dunno who’s in that other shuttle, but if it wasn’t Harkov—Grizz, you take it, we’ll evacuate everybody we can.”

“Sure you don’t want a fourth ship?” Grizz asks, and Bodhi huffs a jittery laugh.

“You got it, Bodhi,” Joma says, with a firm nod. “Let’s go get them.”

The fight’s started to track towards the station when Bodhi lands the *Cadera* inside one of the three hangars, the one the other shuttle had docked in, unclenching his hands from the controls. Hobbie’s talked himself hoarse, convincing DS-5’s deck officers they’re not the *Imperial* shuttle *Omlaut*; Bodhi wonders if that designation and all the confusion had kept them alive in the Imperials’ battle against themselves.

“No one’s on board,” Joma says, unstrapping from her seat and peering out the viewport at the other Lambda-class shuttle.

“Okay,” Bodhi says, and licks his dry lips. “Joma, Samoc, you clear the main hub, I’ll check the other two docking bays for more—more people, or ships, or—or Harkov. Hobbie—”

“I’ll let you know when it’s time to go,” Hobbie says, flatly, and leans over to grip Bodhi’s forearm. “Don’t want to have to explain anything to Wedge, got it? Or Luke, when he gets back.”
Bodhi nods, jerkily, and then they’re running down the ramp of the Cadera, leaving Hobbie to stand watch. He nearly trips over a MSE droid, saved from crashing ignominiously to the deck by Samoc’s quick hand out for him, tight on his elbow.

“Watch out, sir,” she says. The MSE droid squeals and swerves away erratically. “Jittery little things.”

“Thanks,” Bodhi says, and the hangar bay doors slide open onto the station’s curving main corridor beyond, and more chaos. The Rebels just beyond are well-armed and tense, but stand down quickly—there are too many of them for the Cadera alone, and they might overload the second shuttle—

“I’ve got this,” Joma says, clapping Bodhi on the back. The station vibrates, once, like an earthquake; the other corvette must’ve gone, too. She turns to the assembled fighters and starts barking directions, waving Samoc on through the crowd behind Bodhi.

“Anyone else come through before us?” Bodhi asks, frantically, turning this way and that to get past the press of bodies. “Admiral Harkov? Imperial? A—a defector?”

One woman finally hears him and points to the left branch of the corridor. “Docking Bay III,” she calls. “He had a freighter waiting, but he locked the bay doors behind him—probably bailed out by now.”

Bodhi’s heart races. I’m too late—

\textit{Maybe there’s still a chance—}

“Samoc—” Bodhi yells, over the din; but she’d heard, too, and gives him a thumbs up, veering off to the right. He staggers, panting, against the silvery-gray bulkhead as the station shakes under heavier weapons fire. The metal tang of recycled air is too close to the scent of smoke and ozone, but it’s dry, and cold, and he hauls himself upright and runs for Docking Bay III, jumping over another MSE droid that meeps and rolls to one side of the corridor.

The bay door is locked, but Bodhi’s sliced worse before. He curses Harkov with every gasping breath, hoping the admiral’s managed to flee—hoping that he hasn’t, so Bodhi gets to be the one who finally punches him for abandoning the Protector, abandoning the Rebels on the station—finally breaks through, and the door hisses quietly open.

Onto a standoff, twenty meters away.

\textit{Oh, for fuck’s sake—} Bodhi thumbs off his comlink and takes cover behind the nearest plasteel containers, the wall of them running perpendicular to the two men, and cautiously sidles further and further into the hangar, heart thudding in his chest, not at all sure what to do now. He recognizes Stele, of course, grim and unwavering. The other man—thin, graying, and twitchy—can only be Harkov. Stele has a standard stormtrooper rifle pointed at Harkov, who aims a blaster right back at him. A Corellian freighter is dark and silent behind them, along with a TIE Avenger; presumably Stele had seen Harkov flee the Protector, too, and snuck in to wait.

“Traitor,” Harkov snarls, and it’s very strange for Bodhi not to hear that word aimed at himself. The admiral’s blaster hand is remarkably still, more steady than Bodhi would ever been able to hold it.

“I had orders,” Stele says, coolly.

“From \textit{whom}?”

“The Emperor himself,” Stele replies, and Bodhi flinches, wondering if Stele’s another Emperor’s
Hand.

Harkov laughs. “A likely story. I monitored your communications from the moment you began poking around in my affairs, and you never received anything from the Emperor.”

“No, but I did,” comes an all too familiar voice from the antechamber. Bodhi’s racing heart skips a beat, as he tentatively pokes his head up to see Celina striding past his hiding spot into the hangar at the head of a handful of stormtroopers—from the direction of Docking Bay II, not where he’d left the Cadera and his team.

“You,” Harkov cries, drawing a second, unfamiliar hold-out blaster, pointing it at Celina, and—

No—

—and without thinking, Bodhi vaults over the cargo containers and launches himself at her, hearing Harkov fire as she turns her head, recognition dawning in her narrowed eyes—

—but it’s not the familiar sound of a blaster discharging, it’s a sharp crack—

—and Bodhi collides with Celina at the same moment something hits him in the shoulder with all the force of a stormtrooper swinging the butt of a blaster rifle at his head, and he screams, dragging Celina down with him.

“Rook,” Celina growls, furiously, pushing him off of her and over onto his side. He scrambles backwards away from her towards the other wall of cargo containers, clutching his injured arm to his chest, panting. But she only scans him quickly, barks, “Stay down,” and rolls to her feet, lightsaber already blazing in her hand. Her priority is Harkov, who’s running for his freighter, wildly firing his —slugthrower, Bodhi recognizes it now, with the searing pain of the slug in his shoulder—back at Celina and the stormtroopers. Molten lumps of metal spark off of Celina’s lightsaber as she catches the slugs on her blade; Bodhi falls back among the crates, watching Stele sprint for his TIE Avenger, rage scrawling across his face.

He struggles to his knees, his shoulder burning, and crawls further away from the stormtroopers blocking his path, into the maze of plasteel crates, gasping in pain and fear. Dammit, that was stupid—but if they’re fighting each other, I still have a chance—

—more blaster fire from the direction of the antechamber—Samoc, and a dozen rebels running and scattering on the side of the hangar where he’d originally hid, trying to take down Stele’s TIE Avenger. Harkov’s freighter launches, and then Stele’s fighter, and then Celina and her troopers turn their attention to Samoc’s rebels.

Fuck, fuck! They were supposed to get away!

He doesn’t have a blaster he can set to stun, nor any half-remembered visions of Luke swooping in to the rescue. Nor any hopes that Cassian might turn back from his own murderous mission to support Bodhi’s utterly pathetic attempt at extracting Harkov.

All I have is—

—a MSE droid warbles in fear, skittering furtively towards him, still dutifully cleaning spatters of his blood off the deck as it veers back and forth between the stormtroopers’ feet—

—myself.

Bodhi stares at the tiny droid, a terrible plan starting to form in his head, one that might be enough to
save himself along with everyone else.

_This is a really stupid idea—_

But there are bolts flying over his head, from people on his own side—it’s not like Scarif, _I can end this_—and Celina’s lightsaber hums amidst the crackle of blaster fire, and—

_They’ll die, and Luke is not coming for any of us—_

_Fuck it._

He grabs the MSE droid, gritting his teeth against the spike of pain in his shoulder, and braces it against the side of the cargo crate, shutting it down before it can squeal. Pries off the casing with his good hand, and, adrenaline surging, sets to slicing as fast as he can, reprogramming the droid with two simple directives: _find Lieutenant Grizz Frix_, and _hop up and down_. He’s pretty sure the second one will work, though he’s never seen a MSE droid actually do anything like it—they’re very basic droids, bound to their programming in ways Kaytoo would disdain.

_Kay—Cassian—blast, I hope this fucking works!_

Blood is streaking the back of his left hand by the time he’s done, smeared all over the poor MSE droid, and his arm’s going worryingly numb, but the little droid switches back on easily, scurrying away like nothing’s happened. He leans his head back against the crate with a shuddery sigh of relief.

_Okay._

_Here goes nothing._

He presses his right hand to his shoulder, gathering his fading strength, and shouts, “Celina!” _This has to work. I know her._ Waves his bloody right hand above the crate, hoping no one from either side takes a shot at it. “Celina—_please, let them go_, and I—I’ll stay.”

“Captain, no!” Samoc yells, horrified; she sounds exactly like her sister. He peers over the corner of the crate at her, trying to catch her eye, find some way to tell her that it’s all right, he has a plan, even if it’s a bad one.

“Why would I want you?” Celina calls, disdainfully. “I don’t have a _use_ for you now.”

He pulls himself up on the crate to his knees, praying they won’t shoot him when he stands. _If_ he can stand. There’s a _lot_ of blood on the deck, where he’d been huddled with the MSE droid. “Because I know where Luke went,” Bodhi says, as loudly and clearly as he can, attempting to sound like the long-absent Misurno, certain and sure. “It’s—a _trade_, you lost Harkov, but you get—me—”

“So, what’—Celina shouts back. The hum of her lightsaber falls silent.

Bodhi whispers one last prayer, and pushes himself to his feet, hands raised as high as he can get them. The edges of his vision are starting to white out with pain.

“Okay, you heard him, get out of here,” Celina barks. Samoc calls his name again, desperate, but there’s nothing for it.

“Go,” Bodhi orders, just like he’d said to Dak, once, before he died, and then he can’t hold himself up anymore, the deck rushing towards his face—
—rough hands on him, white plasteel gloves smudged with blood—

[“—you can’t die—”]

—Celina’s green eyes piercing him, her mouth twisting in anger as she slices through Cassian’s jacket and the shirt underneath with a wicked-looking vibroblade: “—an idiot, you know that? Which one of us has the Force? You didn’t have to—come on, Rook, I kept my word—”

“Sorry,” Bodhi manages. They’re alone, for some reason, in a tiny cabin on a ship he doesn’t immediately recognize, not Kuat Drive Yards or SoroSuub or Incom-make. He’s flat on his back on a hard bunk, Celina crouching on the deck at his shoulder. He looks down at himself; his hands aren’t bound, and her blaster is lying on the deck beside her, easily within reach, but there’s nothing he can do about it, he’s never been able to—

“At least this time I’m sure you’re not faking,” Celina says, concealing her knife in her jacket. “Hold still, I’m just going to put this bacta patch on.” Bodhi tenses, certain it’s going to hurt, but she places the patch over his wound very gingerly, almost like she’s trying to avoid touching him. “There.” She sits back on her heels and looks at him, her expression going unreadable. “As I was saying. You’re an idiot.”

“I didn’t want Harkov to kill you,” Bodhi mutters, dizzily, fully aware it sounds just as stupid as she thinks.

“Nice of you,” Celina says, drolly. “If he had, you probably wouldn’t have had to pull that ridiculous move to get your people clear.”

He turns his head away from her, putting his good hand over his eyes. “Your troopers would’ve killed him.”

“Well. About that.” Celina sounds—flat. “I thought you should know. Lord Vader scooped up Harkov’s freighter shortly after he took off from the station.”

Bodhi stops breathing. His shoulder pulses with the same dull agony he remembers from being shoved around and beaten by Saw’s people, by Seerdon’s stormtroopers. No, no, no—failed again—

“Don’t worry, I didn’t let Vader take any of your people,” Celina says, a fraction less bluntly, and a horrible rush of gratitude floods him, swiftly dammed when she adds, “He doesn’t know I have you, either.” She pushes up to her feet, scraping her blaster up off the deck, and gazes down at him. “Now that you’re not in imminent danger of dying on me, I believe you had something you wanted to share about Luke Skywalker?”

Bodhi gulps, and nods.

Stars. I hope he’s not there.
“Dantooine,” Bodhi says, and closes his eyes. *Please believe me.* “He’s on Dantooine.”

Chapter End Notes

Happy it's-still-Riz's-birthday-in-my-time-zone :)

Ah, 3 ABY, when nothing goes right for the Rebellion, and I mean NOTHING. Thanks to brynnmclean & moragmacpherson for looking at the first part of this chapter!

And, as always, thanks to all of you. <3 Hang in there. Really fun stuff is coming. :D

References:
MSE droids
Battle For Honor
Harkov's slugthrower (yeah, it's a gun.)
Chapter 71

Chapter Summary

You've got it all wrong.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

*She’s going to figure it out* is Bodhi’s first thought upon waking again, some time later, still on Celina’s ship. His shoulder hurts, his arm’s been strapped into a sling, across Cassian’s ruined jacket—his blood is nearly invisible on the black leather—and he’s woozy, sorting through what he’d done to wind up here, afraid and alone. The ship’s cabin is cramped and smaller than any cell he’s been held in before, although the lack of skulls or torture devices is *just* about enough to recommend it. The faint and familiar vibration of a hyperdrive thrums through the hard bunk, not quite comforting. They’re headed towards his doom, after all.

Because he’d lied to her.

It had seemed like—well, not the worst idea, at the time. But sustaining a bluff through a hand of sabacc, or spreading chaos over Imperial comm frequencies was one thing; prevaricating in the presence of a Force-user is something entirely different. Even if Celina had sworn before that she wasn’t in his head.

*She’s going to figure it out.*

Bodhi swings his legs over the side of the bed and tries to sit up, the notion of *escape* fleeting through his mind, though the effort leaves him gripping the edge of the bunk with his right hand, white-knuckled and dizzy. He stares at the door less than a meter from him, feeling foolish. It’s probably locked, anyway, and he should probably rest, if he’s going to come up with a *real* plan.

He’d tried to give himself an outside chance, sending that MSE droid to Grizz, but—those were very long odds, and nothing he’d staked his life on had *ever* gone according to plan, not since he’d fled Eadu with Galen’s hope in his heart and a holochip hidden in his boot. Not meeting Saw, not stopping the Death Star, not any one of the dozen recklessly stupid things he’d done after, trying to make it right. The kinds of things people thought made him a hero, when he’d screwed up time and time again and needed Cassian and Jyn and Kaytoo, or Tonc, or Baze and Chirrut—

—or *Luke*—

—to save him, in the end.

*Luke thinks I’m dead.*

*And when she figures out that I lied*—

(“*No lie is safe,*” Saw whispers, *but he sounds sad, not angry and paranoid.*)

Bodhi’s heart races, at that, and his hands and his injured arm tingle unpleasantly, like non-existent restraints are too tight around his wrists—
He shivers and hunches up, struggling to make himself breathe calmly, trying to focus on—the memory of light from the Dantooine simulation glimmering on Luke’s face like a distant mirage of water in the desert. His own hopefulness about visiting the planet, flying through the twisted blba trees, and exploring the ruins of the Jedi Enclave.

With Luke.

Not her.

The hum of the hyperdrive rushes loudly in his ears, his pulse throbbing dully under the bacta bandage. It hurts, and he’s so sick of the pain—jerks at the sound of the door sliding open—it’s a chance, but he can’t—

“No!"

“Rook?”

He’d scramble away from her if he could move—wants to scream at her to leave, but then he’d be alone with his ghosts—“No—you promised—"

“I’m not hurting you,” she says, raising her empty hands, staying well back. “Whatever’s happening, it’s only in your head.”

“No shit,” he manages, through his teeth, a spark of anger breaking through the icy terror for a second. He turns his face away from her, panting for breath, away from the spectre of Saw looming quietly just out of the corner of his eye.

“Tell me what to do,” she says, firmly. “Skywalker’s seen you like this, right? What does he do to help you get through it?”

He shakes his head, momentarily unable to speak past the lump in his throat, at the horrible wrenching knowledge that Luke isn’t coming, no matter how hard he might pray. But there’s no one else, and his thoughts flicker in and out of coherence like ships jumping to hyperspace. “Flying,” he mumbles, hoarsely. “He talks to me about flying, ships he wants to fly—anything like that.”

“That’s it?”

He musters up an indignant, sidelong glare.

“Ships, huh?” she says, bemused. “Rook, this had better not be a trick to get me to tell you about my ship so you can steal it—"

“I thought you said you knew I wasn’t faking,” Bodhi accuses her, drained, clinging to his irritation like a lifeline.

“Oh, you got shot, that’s for certain. I almost expected you to bleed out before my men could bring you on board.” She raises her eyebrows. “Better now?”

Bodhi nods, staring down at his clenched fist on his thigh. “Think so.” His shoulder aches from curling in on himself, and he’s so tired. It’s sheer force of habit that makes him add, “Thank you.”

“At least you didn’t have nightmares,” Celina says. “Listen, you don’t have to stay cooped up in here the rest of the flight, if that’s going to happen again. I’m not running a prison ship, and I’d rather not have you falling apart before we get to Dantooine.”
Bodhi lifts his head to stare incredulously at her. “You’re not worried I’m going to steal your ship?”
“I’d like to see you try.” A wry smile tugs at the corners of her mouth.
“Stole two Imperial shuttles,” Bodhi mutters reflexively.
Celina snorts. “Confessing your crimes against the Empire?”
Bodhi shoots her a dirty look.
“We’ll be on Dantooine soon,” Celina says, ignoring that, and jerks a thumb over her shoulder.
“Fresher’s forward if you want to get cleaned up. Don’t even think of trying to slice into the cockpit or engineering compartment.”
“Okay,” Bodhi mutters, not moving, and she stares at him for a moment longer before slipping out the door, which doesn’t lock behind her, as promised.
He’s no less her prisoner.
Still.
Celina had helped.

It had probably been self-serving, if she could sense his fear and pain and was bothered by it, but she’d taken his cuffs off on Corellia, provided him an escape from the Star Destroyer, and prodded him out of his panic.

Is she trying to get me to trust her?

I don’t.

I won’t.

I know what she’ll do. That’s different than trusting her.

She’s going to figure out that I lied, and I know what she’ll do then.

Bodhi takes a deep breath, trying to steady.

So—find another way out.

But how?

He looks around, wondering if there might be a way to disrupt a coolant line, or cut the power, even inside his cell—inside the cabin. Something to distract her when they land on Dantooine, or make them drop out of hyperspace early where he could send another message. Somehow. If he could get himself rescued without getting anyone killed. But he’s hampered by his immobilized arm when he tries to pry up the deck plate, and every attempt to adjust the sling for more maneuverability has him biting his lip to keep from crying out.

Spent, Bodhi falls back against the bunk half an hour later, tangled up in the sling.

This isn’t going to work.

He thinks about where else he might find access to the ship’s systems for a minute, and then goes out into the main—lounge compartment?
The cockpit and engineering compartment are sealed off completely, no trailing wires or exposed components like on the *Falcon*, another blow to his increasingly fragile hopes, although he’s almost too distracted by the unexpectedness of her ship to worry. There’s a novacrown board with half the blue pieces already captured, and a couch, and a bottom-of-the-line autochef, lit by hyperspace uncoiling outside the overhead viewport. Like the cabin, the furnishings are spartan, clearly recycled or scrounged out of military surplus supplies, signaling that despite the privileges of her position, Celina apparently hadn’t bothered to upgrade much for fashion. She hadn’t needed to, not for anyone who knows their stuff; the ship itself is *gorgeous*, all sleek swooping lines, not from any modern shipwright he can think of.

“I was beginning to think you’d passed out again,” Celina says, and he turns to see her standing in the vestibule to the cockpit, arms crossed.

“Your ship—” Bodhi bites his lip, wishing for a millisecond that Luke really was on Dantooine so they could appreciate the ship together, even though that would mean she’d caught them both and was hauling them off to the Emperor. “I’ve never seen anything like it before.”

“No, I wouldn’t think so,” Celina says, sounding amused at his near-delirious fascination.

“Is it—is it from the Nubian Design Collective? I thought I knew their, um—” He fumbles a little, not wanting to say *historical relics*; it doesn’t seem old enough. “Classics?”

Celina shakes her head. “It’s the only model produced from the Rendili-Surron collaboration. *Starlight*-class freighter.” The glint in her eyes softens, but only for a second. “No classified Imperial secrets to learn here.”

“I’m not a spy,” Bodhi says, wearily. He drifts over to the novacrown table and picks up a toppled blue piece shaped like a Kubaz with a long snout.

“I’d expect a Rebel spy to do more to disguise himself than cut his hair and shave,” Celina agrees. “Of course, that, plus your apparent death, might’ve worked if you hadn’t run into me.” She pauses. “Has Skywalker seen you looking like this? What's he think?”

Bodhi bobbles the novacrown piece as he goes to set it down again, knocking it into the couch cushions. “What? N—no, he thinks—he thinks I died. He left, I haven't seen him since—”

Celina frowns hard at him. “Since the Battle of Hoth? Then how do you know he's on Dantooine?”

Bodhi’s hands are clammy and cold. “He told me. We—we talked about it, where he'd go to learn about the Jedi, we—I wanted to go with him.” *Stick close to the truth*. “Luke, um, he didn't learn a lot of stuff about the galaxy, and—he *shines*, whenever I take him someplace new. Not that—not that I really know the galaxy much better than he does, Jedha was a Mid Rim backwater too, but—I’d been offworld before, and he hadn't ever, until—”

Celina looks at him. “You convinced me to save your people based on a *guess*?”

“Not a guess, it's where he'll be, I *know* it. I feel it—”

Her stare could bore holes in duracrete. “You don't have a Force bond.”

“A—a what?”

“Exactly,” Celina says. Her hand drops to the hilt of her lightsaber, almost lazily.

Bodhi swallows. Plays a card out of the suspension field, uncertain what its value will be when it

“That’s not a Force bond,” Celina says, but suspicion is only a faint shadow in her voice. “What was Skywalker doing in this vision?”

“I—I don’t think I understand what I saw until it starts to happen,” Bodhi hedges, anxiously. “But—he was there, he’s there with me in the visions. Protecting me.”

Celina taps a fingernail on the hilt of her lightsaber, studying him for a long, tense moment. “Well, won’t that be sweet, then, reuniting lost lovers? Provided he won’t be angry that you sold him out to save your crew.”

Bodhi’s eyes go wide. “No.”

“Or are you planning to warn him so he has a chance to run?”

“Luke won’t run,” Bodhi says, glowering at her.

“He’ll do anything for you,” Celina surmises. “Including surrender, if you asked?”

An inexplicable chill shakes him. *He’s safe. He’s nowhere near Dantooine. I hope. I hope.*

“Yes,” Bodhi whispers, not needing to feign the break in his voice.

An alert goes off in the cockpit. “We’ll see,” Celina says, doubt narrowing her eyes. “Get strapped in. I wouldn’t want you more injured before Skywalker sees you for the first time in months.” She waits until Bodhi’s strapped in on the couch before unlocking the cockpit and disappearing inside. He digs the novacrown piece out from under his ass, turning it over in his fingers, watching the light change and dim on its ridges as the ship returns to normal space.

*I think she bought it?*

But he’s out of ideas for how to extricate himself, and he can’t stall for a rescue that might never come—and which might get more people hurt than he’d tried to save on the station.

*Maybe—I’m distracting her from going after anyone else.*

Bodhi sets the novacrown piece back on the board in front of him and lets out a breath, closing his eyes and praying as Celina pilots them across the terminator into daylight.

*Maybe it’ll be enough.*

*****

The long-abandoned Rebel base looks just as it had in the simulation Bodhi and Dak had flown on Hoth. Pre-fab buildings crumbling at the edges, windows crazed or smashed, whole stories gone. Cream-colored grass stretches into the sunlight from between the cracks in the duracrete landing pad, soft under Bodhi’s questing hand. There’s no sign of anyone around; the nearest town is barely a smudge on the horizon.

*Good. They’re safe.*

Bodhi lingers under the asymmetrical wing of Celina’s ship, in the shade, while she checks over her gear, keeping one eye on him. He tilts his head back and trails his fingertips across its hull so he won’t have to look back at her. “Surron stopped making ships because the business was too
commercial and restrictive,” she says, casually. “They retreated to their hives to make art, instead. If you want one of their ships, you have to know the right people.”

He huffs a sarcastic laugh. “The Emperor didn’t just conscript them to build more? There’s a war on.”

“We have plenty of ships.” Celina’s taken out a handheld scanner and is frowning over it. “You said Skywalker wanted to learn about the Jedi, right?” She throws him an irritated look when he doesn’t respond immediately. “Stalling won’t change anything. Start walking.”

“I’m not,” Bodhi grumbles, moving out from under her ship when she gestures with her blaster for him to precede her, heading away from the base towards the ruins of a very different set of buildings. They’re nothing like the Temple of the Kyber had been, lying low-slung in the hills rather than standing proudly over everything as the grand symbol of Jedha’s faithful, but something about the place—maybe the sudden pang of guilt—makes him certain it’s the Jedi Enclave Luke had mentioned. “Yeah, he wanted to learn about the Jedi, about the Force, which—I imagine that’s been a bit difficult. Where did you learn how to—” He glances over his shoulder at her and waves his hand to suggest Force powers. “The Emperor teach you how to move things with your mind?”

“Among other skills,” Celina says.


“I don’t question the Emperor’s decisions,” Celina says. “But removing Skywalker from the fight would be a step towards restoring peace to the galaxy—”

“Peace?” He casts a disbelieving look at her.

Celina stares back, evenly. “The Empire maintained the peace, until people like Skywalker—like you—disrupted that order. Can you say you really prefer this life of chaos? Not knowing where your next meal’s coming from, or whether you’re safe—”

Bodhi stops in his tracks, glaring. “In case you had forgotten, I came from Jedha, and while we were occupied by the Empire, I didn’t know where my next meal was coming from, and it wasn’t safe—”

“Because of the terrorists who resisted,” Celina says, close to condescending. “I studied the Partisans, you know. How many civilian casualties did Saw Gerrera cause?”

A tremor goes through him, cold as the air he’d desperately tried to suck through the sack over his head, but Bodhi gets a grip on his wandering memory and says, “It wasn’t Saw who blew up my home, and it wasn’t a mining accident, either, that’s a blasted lie.”

“I studied that, too,” Celina says. “There were reports on the regulations your people didn’t follow—”

Bodhi barely manages to bite back another curse. “I was there,” he snaps, and turns to stalk off into the ruins, cracking grass stems underfoot, his boot heels ringing off the shattered flagstone walkway. She rustles after him, but his fury’s kicked in like the auxiliary power, and he widens the gap between them so fast that a blue stun ring whistles past him—

He halts, raising his right hand over his head. Wasn’t testing, but—guess I can’t get very far.

“What do you mean, you were there?” Celina demands, catching up and leveling her blaster at him. “Gerrera sent you and a team back to Eadu to extract Galen Erso—”
Bodhi laughs, hollowly. “No. You—you know what he did to me. Saw was never gonna believe me, much less send me back out after my friend.”

Celina goes still, searching his face. “So what happened? If it wasn’t a mining accident?”

“You figure it out,” Bodhi says, annoyed despite the familiar sense of loss yawning open in his heart. He takes a step back from her blaster, rubbing at his shoulder.

“Rook, quit stalling,” Celina accuses him. “What are you waiting for? I’ll see him coming, there’s no sign of life larger than a quenker for twenty kilometers.” She scans the ruins in all directions, frowning down at the handheld device.

“You’re stalling,” Bodhi snaps, his heart pounding again. “Can’t believe the Emperor’s Hand wouldn’t know the truth.” He catches at the scanner and jabs at the screen nervously. “Maybe—maybe he’s on one of the sublevels.” Maybe I can lose her down there.

“So tell me while we keep moving,” Celina says, warily, and gestures him on.

“Don’t you care about whether the Emperor lied to you?” Bodhi asks, picking his way across the courtyard. There’s a pair of blba trees swaying their gnarled branches gently in the center, and the pools of water are clear of algae, somehow still circulating; it’s a serenity he can’t reach, guilt and dread weighing him down like an overloaded transport struggling to clear atmosphere. “Don’t you want to know what I was doing on—Jedha?”

“I thought you’d been captured by Gerrera’s Partisans and tortured so you’d turn traitor,” Celina mutters. “No—that way, start climbing. Then it comes out you’re some kind of hero to the Rebellion for what you did on Scarif, no matter if it got all those people killed.”

“Scarif is where you think—” Bodhi cuts himself off, it’s too hard to talk and climb down the pile of rubble with his wounded shoulder at the same time, anxious about his dwindling opportunities to escape once they’ve gone into the depths. If he wasn’t injured—if she wasn’t certain to catch him—he might’ve tried to go up over the heap in the opposite direction and onto the roof to run like he had in the Holy City as a child, before he’d started avoiding the Temple of the Kyber and the Imperial officers who patrolled it.

She pokes him in the back, not terribly gently, with her blaster, when she reaches the bottom of the rubble a couple of seconds after he does. “You brought the entire Rebel Fleet down on one security complex—”

“Wait, wait, you’ve got it all wrong,” Bodhi says, wide-eyed.

“Thousands of people were stationed there—”

Bodhi chokes off a weary, horrified laugh; it sounds almost like a sob. Celina’s eyes blaze, and she raises her blaster hand as if to strike—“No, no, it’s—not what you think.” He rubs the back of his right hand across his eyes. “It was—” He breathes out, grief swirling up in a storm. “I thought everyone was going to die there. When the Death Star came out of the clouds, I thought that was it, I was too late again—and I was, I was, I know. I’m—sorry. They must’ve assumed there were more of us on the surface.”

She’s staring at him once more, her face in shadow. “Again?”

Bodhi swallows and nods, tasting nothing of home but blood and stone dust. He doesn’t look at her.

“Not a mining accident,” Celina says. “Okay. Got that off your chest?” Bodhi’s mouth falls open in
indignation—“It’s not that I don’t care,” she adds. “I simply don’t have a way to independently
verify your claims at the moment.”

“And if you did?” Bodhi rasps.

“Then I would find out who was truly responsible for the deaths of the people on your homeworld
and the base on Scarif, and bring them to justice,” she says, flatly.

“Oh,” Bodhi mumbles, weakly, thinking of his argument with Cassian. “It—then it still might be
me.”

Celina sniffs, a little derisively. “I thought you were a cargo pilot, not a bridge officer on the Death
Star.”

“I—you don’t understand,” Bodhi protests.

“No, you don’t understand,” Celina says. “I will work to clear this up later. Right now, my mission
is to locate Luke Skywalker and bring both of you back, safe and sound, to the Emperor. Your guilt,
or your grief, whatever it is you’re dealing with?” She taps her temple with a finger. “Stop trying to
use it to distract me, or I’ll stun you and leave you tied up for the kath hounds to eat.”

Bodhi sputters, “What?”

“Come on, Rook, you’re obviously bait.” Celina prods him on the arm with her blaster. “Shake it off
and let’s go already. I’m picking up multiple life signs ahead.”

Bodhi can’t shake it off, though; it feels like his comm’s intermittently picking up a second frequency
from out of memory as they continue into the darkness. The stone walls, the twists and turns of the
lower level remind him of the catacombs, or the places he’d been allowed to explore in the Temple,
bunching up the length of his one formal outfit so he could run and climb more easily. He’d never
finished counting the kyber crystals in their alcoves—

“Get out of the way,” Celina orders, her lightsaber snapping to life in her hand, illuminating a
segmented horror skittering around at the far end of the hallway. Its compound eyes reflect red, and it
hisses, scuttling towards them on knife-sharp legs.

Bodhi promptly flattens himself against the wall behind her, searching for more of them, frantically
debating whether he can take advantage of the diversion to escape, if he even remembers the way
back out—the insectoid creature rears back on four legs to strike, doubling its height and reach, and
he doesn’t like his chances of getting away from one of those. Celina fires, hitting its pale underside,
and it screeches, but she has to shoot it five more times to stop it trying to slash at her.

And then she turns to him and says, eyes glittering in the light of her magenta blade, “So I’m
beginning to think Skywalker didn’t come this way.”

Bodhi licks his lips, trying to keep still. Oh, shit. “I—I’m telling you, I saw—” That cross-channel
sensation tugs at him again. There’s something else in his mind, not painful like the monster’s
devastating attack on his sanity, not like Luke’s accidental, sunlit intrusion, but—is it her? “Are you
—please—” His heart pounds, and he clutches at his head with his right hand, suppressing a terrified
moan.

She’ll shred it all to pieces again—I’ll be lost down here—

“He would’ve left a trail of dead laigreks,” Celina observes, shifting her grip on the lightsaber. “He
would’ve set up a camp in the base, or in the courtyard, some place more defensible—”
—something curling around his thoughts, buzzing, humming static—like the monster is *pulling* at him—

“*Stop it!*” Bodhi shouts, panic pouring out. “*Please—I won’t lie to you any more, I *swear*, please—please get out of my head!*” He doubles over, gasping for air, his shoulder burning with it.

“I’m not,” Celina says, sharply. “You’re—you’re panicking again, it’s just—come on, take deep breaths—”

Bodhi shakes his head, stammering, “No, *no*, it’s different, it’s not me, something’s *here*, and it wants—I don’t know what it wants, but I *can’t*—” has enough presence of mind to insist, “It’s not a *trick*."

Celina lifts her head. “You’re right. I sense—something.” She holsters her blaster and moves to put her hand on his uninjured shoulder—hesitates, and then pats him awkwardly. “Breathe, Rook.” He squeezes his eyes shut, and pants, open-mouthed, smelling the foul blood of the dead laigrek on the floor, the millennia-old dust around them. Her hand is light on his shoulder blade, vaguely reassuring even though she’s still probably going to kill him after they find—whatever it is that’s tormenting him now.

“It feels like a ripple in the Force,” Celina says, thoughtfully. “A current. I don’t know why I didn’t sense it earlier.” Bodhi shudders, thinking it’s more like an undertow, the way it had cut his feet out from beneath him. She pats his shoulder again, more firmly. “Think you can manage now? I want to check this out.”

“I’d rather go back,” Bodhi mutters, rubbing his face.

“We came all this way, let’s have a look around, at least,” Celina says, and gives him her hand to pull him to his feet. She *hmms*, and toes the laigrek’s corpse. “I hope there’s not a hive of these things.” Then she nods at Bodhi, apparently coming to a decision. She unholsters her blaster again and holds it out to him. “If we run into more of them. You know what’ll happen if you try to shoot *me*.”

Bodhi shudders again, harder, lingering pain and stress and this *new* fear threatening to drown him, but he accepts the blaster, for all the good it’ll do. He’s barely able to focus, feeling his way forward with the back of his blaster hand along the walls of the haphazardly excavated passage Celina finds, exhausted and frightened of what might leap out of the darkness beyond the illumination of Celina’s lightsaber shining from behind him.

But the undefinable *something* is like insistent static, or the susurrus of prayer. He slips into murmuring the only one he can remember, putting his whole heart into the words barely wheezing past his dry lips, even though he has no hope for the kind of unexpected help that had always come before.

Celina mutters, “If you start on that damned jingle again I will *stab you in the back*—”

She doesn’t mean it. Bodhi’s as certain of that as he is uncertain of what to do, or where to go. He follows the passage deeper and deeper into the caves; it’s not comforting to keep saying the prayer, only something to do to keep his thoughts from splintering, the static growing ever stronger. And then he stops, abruptly, as the passage widens into a chamber, the glow of Celina’s lightsaber reflecting off of—

—dozens of *kyber crystals*, clustered in formations on the floor that are as tall as he is, studding the walls and ceiling of the cave, clouded or transparent as a still lake—
—and Bodhi stumbles forward, to a small formation at the base of a stalagmite in the corner of the chamber, the static in his head rising, sharpening. Collapses to his knees, dropping her blaster at his side, utterly confused. The largest crystal in the cluster is less than three centimeters long, and it’s humming.

He’d transported thousands of kyber crystals off of Jedha, and none of them had ever made a sound.

Bodhi reaches out gingerly, and closes his trembling fingers around it—

(—sitting with his mother on top of their neighbor’s roof, the sunset glowing on the soaring edifice of the Temple and on her tired face, framed by her newly trimmed, greying hair. She’d held his hand, and said, “In darkness, cold—”)

“In light, cold,” Bodhi murmurs, the words coming back to him as gently as his mother’s hand stroking his hair. “The old sun brings no heat, but there is heat in breath, and life. In life—in life, there is the Force.”

“You’re not Force-sensitive! You can’t be—I’ll have to kill you—” Celina says, sounding horrified somewhere behind him.

But Bodhi is lost in his grief for his mother, for Jedha, for all the lives lost in their war, curled over the kyber crystal in his hand, reciting the prayer for the dead, whispering the final line between his tears. “In the Force, there is life, and the Force is eternal.”

The kyber crystal is warm.

*I’m one with the Force—*

*[Luke, adrift in the dark: “I can’t go on alone—”]*

Bodhi has no idea where Luke is, or who he’s talking to, but—

*He’s coming back.*

*I have to try.*

Celina’s promising the direst of fates if he doesn’t start explaining himself, nearly reaching out to touch him, her hand hovering over his wounded shoulder. Bodhi tucks the kyber crystal into the pocket of Cassian’s jacket, over his heart, his path suddenly clear. Wipes his eyes, snags her blaster off the ground, adjusting a setting, and gets to his feet, unsteadily.

“Skifflin’s out of the sack,” Celina says, almost more anguished than angry. Her eyes shine in the magenta light of her blade. “I don’t know how you managed to hide from the Emperor for this long, but no matter. My—my orders are clear.”

Bodhi straightens his shoulders as best he can. “If—if you’re going to kill me, make it quick,” he
says, and positions the muzzle of her blaster against the wide facet of the closest kyber crystal, his finger settling on the trigger.

“What are you doing?”

“I’m sorry I lied to you about Luke, but I couldn’t let anyone else die, not when I had a chance to save them,” Bodhi says, shaking a little with adrenaline. “D’you—you remember what I was saying, about why I was on Jedha? What I did for the Empire?”

“Cargo pilot,” Celina growls, furious again, leveling the tip of her lightsaber at his chest. “Give me the fucking blaster, Rook, or I’m going to make you wish I’d killed you on Corellia when we first met.”

“I transported kyber crystals,” Bodhi says, louder, determination stiffening his spine. “I transported them to the refinery on Eadu, which is where I met Galen Erso, and eventually—eventually I asked him about what they were building—he wanted me to ask, he wouldn’t come right out and say it, probably didn’t trust me enough though it would’ve saved us a lot—a lot of time, and heartache—”

He’s losing the thread, blaster wobbling a bit with exhaustion. He presses it harder against the crystal, and licks his lips. “The—the point is, I learned from Galen what happens if you overload a kyber crystal with energy. So you’re going to leave Dantooine now, or we both die in quite the impressive explosion.”

“After you went to all that trouble to save my life,” Celina says, dryly, and then, challenging, “You think you can make it back to the surface without me?”

Bodhi lifts his good shoulder in a tired shrug, holding her fierce gaze the best he can. It’s not a bluff. In the Force, there is life—“I was never supposed to come here with you.”

Celina stares at him, her green eyes hard on his face. Then she closes down her lightsaber and hooks it on her belt. “You know, just when I thought I had you all figured out—” She shakes her head. “If I ever see you again—”

“I know,” Bodhi says, and holds down a shiver. “Goodbye, Celina.”

She turns, and stalks out of the cave, back the way they’d came. Bodhi waits a tense thirty seconds longer, and then he drops the blaster from his suddenly numb hand and thumps down against the wall, laughing, more than a little hysterically, his eyes wet.

The Force is with me.

Chapter End Notes

Happy first day of the Rogue One anniversary celebration!

Thanks to morag for a lot of help on this one, as well as brynnmclean and WBH for some fun chats about things related to this chapter, and, lastly, my husband for some late-night plotting this week XD

I am superduper excited for the end of this coming week. I don’t know exactly which day 72 will be out, but the weekend is such a confluence of fun Star Wars things: TLJ, of course, and the anniversary of R1, and then shortly after that is the anniversary of the
start of THIS ridiculous thing. So...yeah. Be on the lookout for THAT happening very, very soon.

And, as always, thank you. You're amazing. <3

References:
laigreks NOT FRIENDLY BUGS LIKE THRANX!
...also, yeah, basically I'm lifting my mental map of the Enclave from KOTOR/KOTOR 2, but it has been a millennium since then... ;)
Mara's ship

(No, Bodhi's still not actually FS!)
Chapter 72

Chapter Summary

There's nothing to do but try.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Getting out of the caves and Jedi Enclave sublevel is just as unpleasant as going in. Fortunately, once Bodhi rigs up a makeshift torch from the cloth of his sling and a femur he unearths from a nasty laigrek midden—he assumes it's from a kath hound, and prays he’ll never encounter one of those—the terrifying insects leave him more or less alone. Since he’d missed one out of every three shots at the laigrek that had crawled out and tried to slash him to shreds, hissing and occasionally attempting to breathe fire, that’s only for the best.

And then he’d run for it, blaster in one hand and torch in the other, relying on the Force to guide him back safely, thinking of Chirrut and Luke and their uncompromising confidence that they were exactly where they were supposed to be. The thought of Luke coming home when Bodhi’s not there and learning what he’d done gives him speed, too, though a part of him hopes Luke will find out. That he’d be waiting in the Enclave courtyard with stories, and a ship, and delight at the prospect of going exploring—after he’s tended to Bodhi’s shoulder. His daydreaming gets a little delirious, partly from exhaustion and partly because it’s been months since they’ve seen each other, and he can’t really imagine just how thrilled Luke will be to discover he’s alive.

But he has no idea how he’s going to climb up the tons of duracrete and other debris spilling down into the sublevel while he’s still holding onto the torch; night had fallen as he’d been making good his escape, and the courtyard above is nearly as dark as the caves below.

There’s nothing else to do but try.

He starts to wedge Celina’s blaster into the waist of his pants—reconsiders, flashing on one brief moment of Academy training of never point a weapon at something you don’t want to destroy—and tucks it in along his spine, instead. Tells himself it'll be like scrambling around on the mesas back home, and, taking a deep breath, readies for the burst of pain in his shoulder—

—lights playing around the courtyard overhead, casting the weird tangled shadows of the blba trees, and there are voices—

Fuck! What if she didn't leave? What if she brought reinforcements?

Bodhi hurries to smother the torch, easing himself down to hide among the broken stones and statues like just another shadow. He’d come so close to freedom, but he can't conceive of letting the Empire get their hands on a single kyber crystal ever again. Takes the one that had called him from his pocket; it's quiet, still warming to his touch, and he wonders if he'll be able to set off a—

“He is here,” Chirrut insists, from above, and though Bodhi can't hear Jyn's reply, his heart leaps with joy.
“Down here!” He struggles back to his feet. “Jyn, Chirrut, I’m down here—”

“Bodhi?” Jyn’s a small dark shape at the top of the hole, and then light shines directly in his face, though she jerks it to the side when he winces and throws his left hand up to block it. Her voice sharpens. “Is it safe?”

“Yes, if you don’t mind a few bugs,” Bodhi calls up, exhaustion shading his elation. “I—I can’t climb up on my own, if you could throw—”

“Hang on,” Jyn says, promptly, and the light flashes away from Bodhi again, leaving him blinking at spots.

“What are you doing in that hole?” Chirrut asks, sounding amused, as Jyn talks urgently to someone on her comlink.

“It’s a long story,” Bodhi says, letting all his plans—how he’d have to find a power supply to get a communications station working in the abandoned Rebel base, or whether he could’ve walked to the nearest town to get a ship—fall away in his relief. “I’d like to get out of it now, please.”

“Jyn is working on it,” Chirrut says. “Did you find anything interesting?”

Bodhi frowns up towards him. “Why do I think you already know the answer to that?”

“Because you are a very smart boy,” Chirrut says, warmly. “Oh, here are Kaytoo and—” His voice shifts away. “Where is Cassian?”

“He’s coming,” Kaytoo says. “Cassian told me to hurry, so I hurried.” He peers down at Bodhi. “Hello, Bodhi. What are you doing in that hole?”

“Waiting for you, apparently,” Bodhi says, puzzled, and then he’s abruptly enlightened, as Kaytoo clambers down onto the rubble, coming for him. “Hey, hey, hold on a second—”

“Today you don’t get to choose,” Kaytoo informs him, disturbingly gleeful, and scoops Bodhi off his feet and into his long arms, carefully negotiating Bodhi’s shoulder. “I carried Baze like this too, when he couldn’t run,” he says, crossing the debris with deliberate steps. “He was very upset about it.”

“Baze—Chirrut, where is—where is he?” Bodhi tries to twist in Kaytoo’s arms, but that hurts, and he’s starting to fade. “Is he okay?”

Chirrut snorts. “Baze is recovering from surgery. He had to get his other knee replaced.”

Kaytoo puts Bodhi down on the ground, near one of the water features, and Jyn crouches next to him, examining his face. Her right arm’s in a sling, a much nicer one than Celina had fashioned out of some coarseweave. “Couldn’t have sent Grizz a clearer message?”

“It worked,” Bodhi protests. “You—you came—” He has a moment of dread— “You didn’t go rogue again—”

She shakes her head. “Draven figured at the very least, we’d learn something about the Emperor’s Hand.”

“Nice of him,” Bodhi says, and then, “Ow!” as she tries to move Cassian’s jacket aside to inspect his shoulder. “Jyn, stop, Celina put a bacta bandage on.” She raises her eyebrows. “Might have been a few hours ago,” he mutters, reluctantly. Maybe a day? Calculating the distance and time between
Parmel and Dantooine is too hard, at the moment.

“Other than his shoulder injury, Bodhi is unhurt,” Kaytoo reports, turning aside to let Cassian—oh, Cassian—get close. His face is impossible to read by the faint lights of Jyn’s glow rod and Kaytoo’s eyes.

“Hi,” Bodhi says, wary. “I’m sorry about your jacket—”

“You got shot,” Cassian interrupts, tightly. “You ran off to save Harkov, and you got shot and captured—”

“Cassian,” Jyn starts, but Chirrut taps her on the shoulder and shakes his head.

“—the last thing I said to you was that you didn’t know what you were doing—” Cassian’s voice breaks.

Bodhi hauls himself up, grabbing at Kaytoo for support—thinks better of it and takes Chirrut’s proffered hand. “Okay, so—so I didn’t, I was in way over my head, I have no idea how she knew to be on the station or what Stele was even doing there, you were right, Cassian, I’m not a spy, I couldn’t—” He waves his right hand, helplessly. “Harkov’s dead. Vader killed him.”

Chirrut lets out a soft sigh and shakes his head, but Cassian simply reaches out to touch Bodhi’s arm. Holds on, not squeezing. “I didn’t kill anyone.”

Bodhi gapes at him in surprise.

“So you both failed your missions,” Kaytoo says, acerbically.

“Not now, Kay,” Jyn mutters.

“I got our family out, instead,” Cassian says. “And then we came to get you out.”

“I was prepared to fight the Emperor’s Hand,” Chirrut says, mock-disappointed.

Jyn makes an exasperated noise. “Can’t the two of you see they’re having a moment?”

“I cannot—” Chirrut starts, grinning towards Bodhi impishly, and Jyn groans.

“Thank you,” Bodhi says, heartfelt. “Really. I—thanks.” He hugs Cassian with one arm, gingerly. There’s more to be said, so much more to worry about: protecting the kyber crystals; whatever they’d actually done with JAN; whether his team had all made it home safely, but feeling the tension in Cassian’s body dissipate, even in this awkward embrace, is enough.

Chirrut rises to his feet, suddenly. “Jyn.”

“I see it,” Kaytoo says, and plucks the blaster from the small of Bodhi’s back, turns, and puts three shots into the laigrek that’s scuttling up over the debris. “There are more of them coming. We should leave.” He moves as if to pick Bodhi up again—

“I can walk,” Bodhi says, quickly. “But thank you.”

“We’ll see about that,” Kaytoo says, skeptically. “You’ve experienced significant blood loss, and you’re showing signs of—”
“How did you manage to get away from the Emperor’s Hand?” Jyn asks, hurriedly, tucking her left hand in the crook of Bodhi’s elbow as they set off, Kaytoo a menacing wraith at the rear of their group. “Grizz was laying odds you were going to steal her ship.”

Bodhi bites his lip. “I threatened to blow up the kyber crystal cave with us in it?”

Chirrut bursts out laughing, as Cassian rounds on him. “You what?”

*****

Safely back in the Galen and headed for space again, after they’ve helped him get out of his mangled clothes and rebandaged his shoulder, Bodhi looks up at Jyn and Cassian and says, “Can I—I need to talk to Chirrut for a minute alone, please.”

“You should get some rest,” Cassian says, not moving to go up to the cockpit.

“I will,” Bodhi promises, gathering Cassian’s jacket up over his bare shoulders. Jyn pats him on the back and turns to go. “Feel like I could sleep for a week.”

“I’ll knock him out if he keeps me awake for too long,” Chirrut offers, and Cassian’s mouth actually twitches at that. He nods, and follows Jyn away.

Bodhi waits until Cassian’s boots vanish up the ladder before reaching for Chirrut’s hand, turning it palm up, outstretched. “Something happened in the crystal cave,” he says. “I was—I thought it was Celina trying to get inside my head, but it was something else.” Bodhi takes the kyber crystal out of his jacket pocket and puts it into Chirrut’s palm, folding his fingers over it. “The interesting thing I found when I was in the caves, I think—I think you should have it.”

Chirrut says, “Bodhi. It called you.”

“But I’m not—”

“You do not have to be Force-sensitive to pray,” Chirrut says. “You do not have to be Force-sensitive to be one with it. You just have to listen.” He pushes the kyber crystal back into Bodhi’s uncertain hand. “Baze would say, a long time ago, that it helps if you undergo years of dedication and training. But that was a long time ago.” He traces a fingertip over the topmost facet reverently. “What did Galen Erso tell you to listen to?”

Bodhi gazes at the crystal growing warm in his hand again, trying to hold back the tears threatening just under the surface of his fatigue. “I’m not a very good listener,” he confesses.

“But I’m not—”

“Sometimes you listen to me,” Chirrut says. “I think you listen more to Baze, I don’t know why, he never liked teaching. Always let class out early to disrupt my meditation.”

Bodhi smiles faintly to himself, folding his legs up, trying to get comfortable. “He’s really okay?”

“Eventually Baze will have everything replaced from the waist down,” Chirrut says, brightly, and then his grin goes wicked. “Although—”

Bodhi’s eyes widen, and he unfolds and gets up hastily, jerking a thumb over his shoulder. “I’ll just—go—check on—”

“—cybernetics have not advanced far enough for some things,” Chirrut finishes, and Bodhi practically leaps for the ladder to the cockpit, bad shoulder be damned.
Back at the Redemption hours later, Bodhi surveys the hangar with dismay. Rogue Squadron’s gone again; the Beru, too, and there’s only a handful of Corona Squadron’s X-wings undergoing some routine maintenance. Draven’s gone off somewhere, too, inexplicably, and while it’s nice not to have to face him right away, it means no high-ranking staff are around to be filled in on his most recent—

“Fiasco,” Kaytoo suggests.

“Misadventure,” Jyn says.

“Strategic retreat,” Cassian corrects them both, and sighs, as Chirrut offers up, “Shit show?” and Jyn can’t conceal a grin. “That makes me ranking Intelligence officer on board—”

Bodhi’s eyebrows shoot up.

“Oh, yeah, Draven promoted Cassian for delivering JAN into the hands of the Snivvians,” Jyn says, elbowing Cassian in the side.

“So I order you to take a day off,” Cassian says, shooting Jyn an impenetrable glance before putting his arm around Bodhi’s good shoulder and ushering him towards the dark and empty Cadera. “Your ships can wait until you’re healed.”

“Again,” Bodhi mutters, but he really does need his left hand not to be trapped in a sling in order to work.

“Well, if you would stop getting hurt,” Cassian retorts, not unkindly.

He throws another look at Jyn, who just shrugs and says, “C’mon, Bodhi, I’ll teach you all the insults I learned in Snivvian.”

“Okay,” Bodhi says, and follows her into the Cadera, relieved all over again to be home. Luke’s jacket, their medals, even his flightsuit are stowed exactly where he’d left them—it’s hard to believe it had only been a few days’ worth of his latest—“Ordeal,” he says, snapping his fingers, and Jyn turns, and blinks at him.

“You okay?”

“Just thought of the right word,” Bodhi says, and Jyn’s mouth tightens.

“It’s not so bad,” she says, though, after a moment. “A few broken bones—” she wiggles her elbow. “And a bloody hole in your shoulder. We’re still here, aren’t we?”

“Yeah,” Bodhi says, softly.

“Just returning the favor,” Jyn says, making him smile a little.

*****

Bodhi’s back to work within a couple of days.

Yraka’Nes agrees he doesn’t need to go in the bacta tank, especially since the fighting’s intensified on various fronts and they’ll need to save as much as they can for more grievously wounded. The new sling is irritating, but the constant application of bacta patches helps, and even though it still
pains him to stretch too far in any direction, he’s leaving the sling off more often than not. Jyn looks at him askance at night, though, pointing at her own sling and scowling, so he dutifully straps it back on before curling up against Cassian’s side. By unspoken agreement, they’ve started putting Cassian in the middle, keeping him from leaving before he gets enough rest; Kaytoo’s gotten in on it, too, powering down in front the ‘fresher—once, because that actually proves to be kind of a problem—and the ramp controls.

The Cadera’s in decent shape after his ill-fated excursion to the Parmel system. Whoever had flown it back had made sure to get it looked after, meaning he can’t use repair and maintenance as an excuse to avoid writing his report on said ill-fated excursion. He does put it off, though, in favor of tracking down information about the squadron and the people his team had pulled out of DS-5. The latter are all fine, dispersed again to fighting in various parts of the galaxy, but discovering where the squadron had gone is deeply unsettling; they’re chasing down more of Brivyl Goss’ weapons research on Destillion, as well as reports of the TIE Hunters Stele had mentioned.

There’s no sign of Draven.

The kyber crystal in Bodhi’s pocket remains silent, even when he takes it out, curious, and prays, both the Guardians’ mantra and his newly remembered prayer for the dead. It still warms in his cupped hands.

And then, one morning, while he’s sitting with Jyn and Baze—his new knee is apparently in perfect working order, or so Chirrut sincerely enjoys informing them—drinking tea at the top of the Cadera’s ramp, Too-Onebee and Yraka’Nes come sprinting into the hangar with a medical team and an antigrav gurney. Bodhi looks out past the forcefield for the familiar shapes of X-wings with their S-foils folded, but instead—

“That’s the Falcon,” Bodhi says, and gets to his feet, alarmed, listening for the comms inside his ship. “Did you hear anything about who—”

Jyn shakes her head, putting her teacup down to the side and getting out her comlink. “Cassian, do you know—”

“I hope everyone is all right,” Baze says, as the Falcon lands and vents gas. There are carbon streaks along its hull, but Bodhi’s eyes are drawn to movement in the cockpit; Chewbacca getting out of the pilot’s seat, and a dark-skinned man he doesn’t know shutting down the engines from the co-pilot’s side.

“Who is that?” Bodhi asks, glancing down at Jyn, but she draws a breath, her eyes widening, and he looks back, swiftly, in time to see Chewbacca carrying Luke down the ramp of the Falcon.

Bodhi stumbles forward, his mouth falling open.

“Wait, Bodhi—” Baze says, but Bodhi doesn’t hear him, going down the ramp, trembling, his heart soaring with each step.

He came back.

He came back.

The kyber crystal hums, very softly, in the pocket of his flight jacket, but Bodhi doesn’t notice, watching as Chewbacca gently deposits Luke on the waiting antigrav gurney. Leia, pale and grave and sad, takes Luke’s hand as the handsome stranger settles a survival blanket over him and Threepio fusses. Bodhi can’t make sense of it, the loss on everyone’s faces, not when Luke is back,
he’s here, and his voice flies out of his throat along with his heart, racing towards the stars—“Luke!”

—and Luke calls his name in return, twisting and pulling free from Leia’s grasp, eyes blazing in his bruised face, trying to climb off of the antigrav gurney; then he’s caught in the survival blanket, crashing to the deck, unable to catch himself because—because his right hand is gone—Bodhi puts on a burst of speed and slides to his knees scarcely in time to break Luke’s fall, babbling, “I’m here, I’m here—I’m alive”—as he tries to gather Luke into his arms without hurting him, Luke’s bloodied and grey as ash, and still beautiful—I’m all right—


Overhead, the transparisteel of the Falcon’s viewport shatters. The antigrav gurney is flung off its repulsorlift, sparking on the deck, and Artoo shrills, and the hangar erupts into chaos, equipment exploding, the metal-on-metal of X-wings screeching off their landing gear.

“Get down! We’re under attack!” the newcomer shouts, drawing his blaster and ducking back to the Falcon for cover, pulling Leia after him. Threepio totters in a panicky circle, trying to stay out of Chewbacca’s way and protesting in mortal terror; Chewbacca roars, loud as thunder, pivoting to find their unseen enemy.

Bodhi cries out and curls himself over Luke, determined to hold on as long as he can. Kisses his face, tasting the salt of tears and blood—“Luke, Luke, I knew you’d come back—”

Luke claws at Bodhi’s jacket with his remaining hand, shaking to pieces, insensible to the threat, sobbing, “I thought you were dead! They told me you died!”

“I’m here,” Bodhi says, and kisses Luke again, his heart pounding wildly, and braces for whatever hell is about to rain down upon them, knowing he’ll remember the feeling of holding Luke in his arms for the rest of his life. “I love you—”

Chapter End Notes

Holy shit I have a really long day ahead but I'm going to see a new Star Wars movie tonight! So...happy NEW STAR WARS day, I guess!

Thanks to meledea & morag for the help with this one--I posted without a final pass from them, so all mistakes (as, well, per usual) are mine. Posting and running, so there may well be some edits that show up down the line. (Also thanks to my husband for one morning's conversation about how to make a light source in the caves, lol.) ALSO: thanks to Not Now, I'm Reading for the lovely rec! I have acquired a new podcast to listen to!

I'm sure I'm forgetting someone this chapter. If I have--eep! I'll fix it. <3

Closing in on the end of ESB, next.

And, as always, thanks. <3
Chapter 73: So You're Back (Sucks To Be Luke)

Chapter Summary

I don't know what happened to him.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Luke shakes and sobs harder, trembling like a stabilizer gone out of alignment, and buries his face against Bodhi’s chest. The movement jars Bodhi’s shoulder painfully, and he fights not to flinch, clinging to Luke’s warmth. The thrill of seeing Luke again shares his heart with renewed fear, but there’s a strange peace in it, a certainty that of course the Force would reunite them before the end—

—and then, abruptly, Artoo’s shrilling into silence, the metallic clanging echoes of equipment and tools falling to the deck reverberating away.

“別著急,” Baze rumbles, softly, kneeling at Bodhi’s side. “安靜一點.”

Completely confused, Bodhi peeks up over Luke’s sweat-matted hair to look for what’s coming at them, to beg Baze and Jyn to get Luke to safety. He finds Jyn standing over them with a blaster in her left hand, Leia and the newcomer sidling cautiously down the Falcon’s ramp into the hangar behind Chewbacca, and the deck officer staring wildly around at the damage. It looks like a whirlwind’s battered through, or like someone’s thrown a detonator at half-charge, but there’s otherwise nothing out of the ordinary at all, no impending threat or disaster. No Imperial ships hovering to starboard; no troopers piling out of a hatchway to attack.

Then what in blazes—

“I’m sorry, I’m sorry,” Luke mumbles, almost incoherently, and it instantly doesn’t matter what happened, because Luke is here, whispering his name, sounding more desperate than Bodhi’s ever heard him. His eyes are glassy with a sheen of pain and bewildering grief when he turns his face up to Bodhi. “I hurt you—”

“No, no no,” Bodhi murmurs, pressing his lips to Luke’s forehead, clutching the fabric of Luke’s bloodied and ruined fatigues between his fingers. “You didn’t hurt me, I know you’d never—” He doesn’t know why Luke would think that. Can’t think straight himself, can’t stop babbling even as Baze prods him up, urgently, and between the two of them, they get Luke resettled on the newly righted antigrav gurney, tucking the survival blanket around the protective cuff covering his forearm. “No, I’m okay, you didn’t do anything, you’re here, you’re safe. I’m all right, we—Baze and Chirrut made it out too, see? We’re—we’re okay, everything’s going to be all right. I—” I love you in his throat again; Bodhi burns with it, like he’s swallowed a handful of firespice pods. But Luke is a red-faced and teary wreck, and Bodhi suddenly isn’t even sure he heard him the first time.

Aggrieved chirruping makes him tear his gaze from the torment in Luke’s eyes. Artoo’s rolling straight at them, warbling you nerve burner you can cuddle later help Luke if you love him so much! Go! Too-Onebee shoulders past him to direct the gurney away, and Luke blurts out, anguish, “Bodhi—”
“I won’t leave you,” Bodhi promises.

“We’ll be right behind you,” Leia says, from where she stands talking to the deck officer, the stranger and Chewbacca hovering like the bodyguards she typically eschews. Jyn’s holstered her blaster, and Baze is frowning around as if he sees something Bodhi doesn’t, but he doesn’t have time to wonder about that, with Yraka’Nes and Too-Onebee whisking Luke off to the medcenter and Artoo circling around to ram into the backs of Bodhi’s legs so he’ll catch up.


“I know,” Bodhi says, and squeezes his hand, gently, trying to keep himself together as they hurry through the Redemption towards the medcenter.

“Your ship, Han and Leia—oh, Han—I couldn’t—” and Bodhi’s heart skips a beat—no!—but Luke’s still speaking, staring fixedly up at him, or somewhere past him. “—stop any of it, I couldn’t save you—if—if he knows you’re alive—”

Bodhi shudders, strangely put in mind of Celina’s stricken face in the cave. “Don’t worry about me,” he says, struggling to sound light. “Um, is—is Han—”

“Bounty hunter took him,” Luke says, and closes his eyes. “It was a trap. It was a trap for me, but they took him. Leia tried to warn me, and I didn’t listen to her, or anyone, and—” He turns his head to the side, tears slipping out from under his eyelashes.

Bodhi doesn’t know what to say. He’d envisioned their reunion all wrong, dreaming of Luke’s joyous relief, the brilliance of his smile when they came together again; he’d never imagined Luke returning like this, shattered and weeping, with no one else who loved him the wiser as to where he’d been, or how to even begin to support him in his sorrow.

But Bodhi had been right to believe he’d come back, at the least. It’s the finest thread of trust in the Force, but he stubbornly embraces it, holding on to that as tightly as he does Luke’s hand, even when Luke starts to deteriorate, frighteningly fast. He’s shivering, gone even paler, his lips as blue as they’d been on Hoth, and his pulse fluttering under Bodhi’s thumb.

Yraka’Nes says, urgently, “We have to move quickly now, Captain—” and then they’re running, Rebellion personnel seeing him and dashing out of their way.


Luke’s eyes fly open again, and dart about in confusion as he struggles to sit up. “Leia, please—”

The deck plating under Bodhi’s feet rattles.

“She’s coming, she’s right behind us,” Bodhi says, throwing a glance over his shoulder as Too-Onebee hustles the gurney into the medcenter; she’s hurrying after them, uncoiling from her own sadness and snapping orders to the personnel who had cleared out of their path.

Luke’s face crumples, and his eyes focus on Bodhi again. “You didn’t come,” he says, painfully. “I thought—you were with the Force, but I couldn’t find you anywhere—why didn’t they tell me—”

“I’m here, I—I’m right here,” Bodhi stammers, feeling like he’s been yanked out of hyperspace by an unexpected gravity well, his heart sinking into the void. “I’m sorry, I didn’t know where to look for you, I knew you were—you weren’t where I went—” but Luke’s drifting off, begging for his dead Master’s help.
Where did you go? What happened? Luke! Don’t leave me!

Then Yraka’Nes is pulling Bodhi out of the way so Too-Onebee can get Luke on a bed and start fluids into him. Bodhi has to let go of Luke’s hand, and when he does, Luke cries out in delirium, and a tremor goes through the entire medcenter.

Oh my ever loving stars—

“It’s him,” Bodhi says, taking a step back, his eyes wide, as Luke calls his name, increasingly agitated. Too-Onebee is trying to examine the readouts from the protective cuff around his right arm, but Luke won’t lie still, nearly thrashing his way out of the bed in panic, his gaze unseeing. The deck plating vibrates again, and the nearest trays of medical equipment are close to shimmying off onto the floor.

“A blind man could see it’s him,” Chirrut barks, from the doorway, where he’s somehow managed to beat Leia inside. “Are you going to just stand there and let him scream for you because you’re afraid of what he can do now?”

Bodhi throws him a withering, entirely useless glare, and defiantly crosses to Luke’s side; he’s not afraid, not of the man he loves. “Luke, Luke, it’s okay, come on, you’re scaring Chirrut—” Chirrut makes a rude gesture in Bodhi’s direction. He strokes Luke’s hair back from his forehead as Luke shivers uncontrollably, his lips shaping names, fears, pleas without giving them voice. “And I promise, whatever happened to you, or—or if you—” Bodhi can’t imagine Luke doing anything as terrible as when he’d nearly killed Seerdon, or Yendor, but if he had—“We’ll make it right. Just stay—stay with me. Please.”

Chirrut’s begun to mutter his prayer. It’s comforting, and terrifying, and Leia’s pale face, Chewbacca’s mournful howl, and the stranger’s worried eyes don’t make it any better. Bodhi smothers the sob rising in his own chest, and crouches by Luke’s bed, resting his hand alongside Luke’s face, listening to Luke’s shallow, gasping breaths as he regains control of himself. And, gradually, Luke curls up under Bodhi’s touch, murmuring, “Sorry, Bodhi. I’m so sorry.”

Bodhi looks up at Yraka’Nes and Too-Onebee as Luke continues to mumble, his eyes sliding closed. “Is he—is—”

“Commander Skywalker went into shock,” Too-Onebee says, for the benefit of the others. “You did well to keep him alive for the duration of your flight here.”

Somehow, Leia’s face goes even whiter. “He’ll be all right now? You don’t need to put him in a bacta tank?”

Yraka’Nes says, “Bacta can’t regrow a hand, Your Highness.”

“I know that,” Leia says, a little stiffly.

“We’ll put him on the list for replacement cybernetics immediately,” Yraka’Nes adds.

Leia nods, and glances at Bodhi. “You’ll stay with him?”

“Yes,” Bodhi says, firmly. “I—I’ll get someone to cover—”

“I think everyone will understand,” Leia says. She tilts her chin up, giving him a thorough once-over. “It’s good to see you alive and well, Captain.”

“You, too,” Bodhi says, softly, meaning both her and Chewbacca. A very faint, tired smile pulls at
the corners of her mouth, and she turns to leave—

“Princess,” the newcomer says. “Shouldn’t you have the medics take a look at you? And Chewie?”

He’s splayed his hands in front of him, vulnerable, beseeching.

Leia’s eyes flash. “I will take your suggestion into consideration,” she says, icily. “Let’s go. Now that Luke’s in good—” She presses her lips together. “Now that Luke is being taken care of, we have much to discuss with General Rieekan.”

“Yes, Your Highness,” he says, and follows her out, Chewbacca grumbling at his back.

“Who was that?” Chirrut asks, once the door slides shut again.

“I have no idea,” Bodhi says, turning his attention back to the slowly gentling rise and fall of Luke’s chest.

*****

Jyn and Baze look in on them, after a little while. Baze collects Chirrut because they have meditation to run, or training, or something. Bodhi doesn’t catch all of the conversation in their language, he’s sitting in a chair at Luke’s bedside, making a list of things to tell Luke about flying, and ships; Yraka’Nes is concerned about Luke’s mental state when he wakes up again, and especially keen on keeping him calm. Too-Onebee’s circuits had mostly escaped being scrambled in the wake of whatever Force powers Luke had deployed in his delirium, but there’s more delicate equipment that the medics want to protect.


“All is as the Force wills it,” Bodhi says, crisply.

Jyn touches the kyber crystal at her neck, at that. “Do you want me to stay? I have a little bit more to do on my report for the Snivvian prosecutors, but I can, if you want.”

Bodhi shakes his head. “It’s okay. I know—I know there’s a lot to do.”

“We’ll check in on you later,” she promises.

“Okay,” Bodhi says, and Jyn leans down to kiss his cheek.

She passes the newcomer on her way out, and Bodhi blinks at him, startled—even more so, when Chewbacca takes up a guard position just inside the door.

“Hello, Captain Rook,” the man says. He’s dressed in clean clothes that look strangely familiar—Han’s clothes, Bodhi realizes, with an unpleasant shiver, wondering what exactly Luke had meant by they took him. “I’m Lando Calrissian.” Calrissian smiles, a little self-deprecatingly. “Leia said I should be the one to come to talk to you about what happened while she wraps up her debrief with General Rieekan. I’m frankly a little surprised she didn’t have me thrown in the brig, but here we are.”

“Why would she do that?” Bodhi asks, and then, “Where’s Han? Who are you?”

“I’m the—now former administrator of Cloud City, on Bespin,” Calrissian says. “Have you been there?
“No,” Bodhi says.

“A shame,” Calrissian says. “Perhaps someday I might be able to take you for a visit.” He gives his head a small shake, like he hadn’t quite intended to say that. “As to your other questions. I don’t know where Han is. The arrangement I made was supposed to protect him, Princess Leia, and Chewie, but Lord Vader gave him over to the bounty hunter.”

Bodhi’s breath catches in his throat. “Vader?” he rasps, appalled.

Calrissian nods. Something passes over his face like a cloud, haunting his dark eyes. “I was to help Vader lure Luke to my city in exchange for our continued sovereignty apart from the Empire.”

“What?” Bodhi jolts to his feet, his datapad clattering to the floor.

Calrissian’s hands fly up, but he doesn’t step back from Bodhi’s fury. “I allowed Vader to take them into his custody. I swear to you that I didn’t know he was planning to torture them to bring Luke there. I don’t know how he was broadcasting it, if it had gone out on the NewsNets, the Rebel fleet would’ve been on my doorstep in moments—”

—but Bodhi hasn’t heard a word past the point he’s always dreaded, remembering all his reckless near-misses with the Empire, the two instances he’s almost crossed paths with Vader, Draven’s warning—

—and then—

“Oh, fuck,” Bodhi breathes, putting it together. “Luke came for them. He walked right into it, and you—” His hands clench into fists at his sides. “You—”

“I had to protect my people,” Calrissian says, visibly bracing for Bodhi to hit him, but not flinching away. “A whole city, you understand? I know now that he’s—” Calrissian shakes his head. “He’s something else, but I couldn’t give up my city—”

Bodhi gulps back a sudden, horrified gasp, ash and sand and spice in his mouth. “No, no, of course not,” he manages.

“And none of it mattered anyway,” Calrissian says, flatly. “Vader wanted Leia and Chewie, and it was clear he was going to have more troops sent in regardless of what he’d promised. So we got out of there after the bounty hunter took Han, and rescued Luke on the way.”

Bodhi frowns, and starts to ask—

“I don’t know what happened to him,” Calrissian says, before Bodhi can get any words out. He looks pained. “Luke was hanging from the underside of the city when Leia found him. He talked to himself most of the flight here. Nothing audible enough to comprehend. I’m sorry I don’t have more to give you than that.”

“What the fuck,” Bodhi mutters, looking away from Calrissian, his eyes landing on Luke’s bruised face. “Luke, what in the names of all the stars did you do?” He touches Luke’s remaining hand, and then glances up to Calrissian. “Okay, so that—that answers why Leia would have you in the brig, I guess.”

Calrissian looks over his shoulder at Chewbacca. “Did I miss anything?

Chewbacca growls that Lando left out the part where Han was frozen, and then an untranslatable Wookiee phrase that is still clearly an expletive, and Bodhi stiffens up, suddenly very aware that the
“Oh, right,” Calrissian says, clearly uncomfortable. “Vader put Han in carbonite. As a test of the process for when Luke arrived.”

“No,” Bodhi says, his chest constricting. “No, oh, blast it, why did you have to tell me that—” His voice climbs, and he can feel the darkness seeping in around the edges of his mind. Chewbacca huffs in alarm and apology; Calrissian starts forward, reaching out to Bodhi in concern. Bodhi grabs for Luke’s hand, instead, running his thumb over Luke’s knuckles, determined to stay present, the words of the Guardians’ prayer scraping off his tongue.

“Are you—”

Bodhi sucks in a breath through his gritted teeth, and says, “I’ll be—tell—tell me something else, like—why the hell you’re wearing Han’s clothes?”

Chewbacca laughs, and Calrissian shrugs, a little cavalierly. “Some of them used to be mine?”

Bodhi’s mouth falls open, and he sputters, “Does Leia know?”

Calrissian chuckles, only slightly abashed. “The Falcon was mine, too, until I lost it to Han one night in a sabacc game. Corellian Spike. I saw he kept the dice.”

“Wow,” Bodhi mutters, stunned, but back to himself, and Chewbacca barks another laugh.

*****

Every one of their friends and family who are currently stationed on the Redemption has come and gone by the time Luke wakes up. Cassian stops by, looking tense again, and like he wants to have another serious conversation with Bodhi, but he’s called away almost immediately; something is going on with the war. Something Bodhi’s distantly aware he’ll probably have to face, but that’s all right, if they’re all together.

Luke is clear-eyed, calm, and cogent when he comes to; nothing around them vibrates, not even the glass of water by his bed. “I didn’t dream it,” he says, looking at Bodhi steadily, almost—but not quite—happily. “Your hair is shorter.”

Bodhi runs a hand over it, slightly self-conscious; he hasn’t asked Baze to keep it trimmed and it probably looks a mess. “I’m growing it back out,” he offers. “The beard, too.”

“Good,” Luke says, fondly, and then, with a hitch in his voice, “You’re alive.”

“So are you,” Bodhi says, a touch weakly. He’s been holding Luke’s hand loosely in his own; now he lifts it to his lips—

“Please don’t count my fingers,” Luke says, more lightly than Bodhi would’ve thought possible.

Bodhi stifles a sound caught between a laugh and a sob. “I’m so sorry you lost—” He swallows; he’d figured it out eventually, what must’ve happened: a lightsaber battle with Vader for the safety of his friends, one Luke hadn’t stood a chance of winning. “Your father’s lightsaber. I know how much—”

“It’s all right,” Luke interrupts, swiftly. “I was going to have to build a new one as part of my training, anyway.”
“Um, okay,” Bodhi says, unable to make sense of the sudden lack of affect in Luke’s eyes. He reaches over and strokes Luke’s face. “I’m just—I’m glad you’re here. Lando Calrissian said you were—”

“I don’t want to talk about that yet,” Luke says, quietly. “Please? I—a lot of things happened while I was away, and I’m not—”

“It’s all right,” Bodhi hastens to reassure him. “Believe me, I get it—” and Luke’s blue eyes are welling up again, inexplicably. “Oh, Luke, no, don’t—don’t—I’m perfectly fine, really.” That’s a lie, but he doesn’t have to tell Luke about the slugthrower wound in his shoulder until there’s a reason for his shirt to be off, and he doubts Luke will be in any shape for that sort of thing any time soon. “I was writing—I wrote down all these things to talk to you about instead, ships mostly, like you always do for me.”

Luke tries to smile, but he can’t hide the misery in his voice. “Will you steal me another ship? I think I left my X-wing on Bespin.”

Bodhi swallows. “Yeah,” he says, softly. “Whatever you want, but—there’s, um—there’s this one I just saw, it’s a Rendili-Surron collaboration, really something special. Never got a good look at the engines, but I bet I could refit it for you.”

“We could work on it together,” Luke corrects him, sleepily.

“Yeah, of course,” Bodhi agrees, and settles in to tell him everything he’s been able to figure out about Celina’s ship.

*****

But Bodhi can’t bring himself to tell Luke that he loves him again.

Not yet.

Not when Luke had cried so hard, and frantically, like Bodhi had hurt him by saying it. It makes a certain amount of sense; he’d tried to ignore Luke’s surreptitious declarations, before, when he hadn’t thought he was ready, or worthy. Which worries him: what could Luke have possibly done to think that of himself? But Luke flat-out refuses to tell anyone where he’d been prior to Bespin and what he’d been doing; Bodhi’s certain it has something to do with the Jedi and the astonishing display of his power when he’d returned, but even Chirrut and Baze can’t pry it out of him.

And not when Luke’s in and out of consciousness for the next couple of days, his few waking hours devoted to their fantasy overhaul of Celina’s ship, or consulting with Too-Onebee on his upcoming cybernetic hand surgery. Or talking with Lando, Chewbacca, Jyn, and Cassian about where Han might have been taken. 4-LOM and Zuckuss get roped into that last, too. Bodhi doesn’t particularly like being around the bounty hunters, even if they’d saved his life and those of everyone else who’d survived the Bright Hope, and excuses himself to get caught up on some of his neglected work. Otherwise, he sees Jyn and Cassian in passing, Cassian increasingly tight-lipped about whatever the hell is happening, and Jyn unable or unwilling to discuss it, either.

Lando Calrissian comes by almost more often than anyone else, charming and chatty; Bodhi suspects it’s out of guilt, but he, of all people, has little argument for denying anyone their means of atonement. And it’s not terrible, once Lando quickly determines which topics are off-limits and sticks firmly to bounty hunter lairs, the minutiae of tibanna gas mining, and, somewhat oddly for a man mostly wearing his ex’s clothes, fashion.
Bodhi worries about Luke’s deepening despair and talks more, too, anxiously. Runs out of things to say about Celina’s ship that won’t prompt worrying digressions into exactly how he’d come to learn about a Starlight-class light freighter, and swaps for one of Baze’s favorite transnovels. They don’t get very far into it, though, before Lando and Jyn think they’ve hit on Boba Fett’s trail and start prepping for Lando and Chewbacca to go search for Han in earnest. A Lieutenant Ematt keeps trying to get involved, to bring in the Shrikes, but Lando insists it’s not the sort of mission that requires an entire strike team, just a couple of shady smugglers and a fast ship. Luke is animated, then, something of his boyish enthusiasm returning as he circles planets and maps out hyperspace routes.

When they’re alone, though, it’s clearly easy for him to fade into the kind of depressed silence Bodhi is far too personally familiar with. Luke allows Bodhi to climb into bed with him while they read and talk, resting his head against Bodhi’s shoulder, but he’s quiet, rarely teasing or hopefully insinuating, or asking after anything more serious than whether Bodhi’s had anything to eat. It’s—all right, Bodhi supposes; after Seerdon, he’d been a bit of a disaster himself, but Luke shutting down like this is downright disturbing. He doesn’t ask, or push, trying desperately to be patient the way Luke had been for him, before.

Leia finally comes to see them in person the day that Luke’s in surgery to get his new hand. She’s called to check in, brief chats in between her horrifically busy schedule of shuttling back and forth for meetings between the Redemption and Home One, to be kept updated on the plans to find and rescue Han. Conversations that make Luke brighten, though the subject is underlined with their shared devastation at losing Han.

“I told Han I loved him,” she says, leaning up against the bulkhead next to Bodhi where he’s waiting outside Luke’s operating room.

“What?” Bodhi says, turning his head to look down at her. She’s wearing a white, high-necked dress, her hair formally done up, like she’s just come from a meeting.

“Before he went into the carbonite,” Leia says. “The stormtroopers pulled him away from me, and he stood there knowing he was going to—” She breaks off. “We—Chewie and I, we didn’t know about what happened to you until Luke told us.”

“Oh?”

“He said your squadron came and told him you were on the Bright Hope, just like in his vision,” Leia says. “That your last message was for him.”

“Did Luke tell you what I—”

“No,” Leia says, and then she looks up at him. “But I think it wouldn’t hurt if you told him again.”

“I don’t—I don’t know if he wants to hear it,” Bodhi says, softly.

Leia makes a dismissive noise. “Well. Like I said, I finally told Han.”

“And?” Bodhi asks.

Leia’s mouth quirks up a fraction. “He already knew.” Bodhi stares at her; the Han Solo who’d left Hoth almost certainly hadn’t. He’s gathering the courage to ask her what had happened between Hoth and Bespin when Threepio and Artoo arrive, and Too-Onebee summons them in to see Luke.

Bodhi’s comlink chirps as Threepio fusses over Luke, reclining in the sole chair in the room; he hands it over to Luke once it’s clear it’s Lando, and leans in over Luke’s right shoulder to listen,
looking down at his new prosthetic. It’s very realistic, except for the open panel at his wrist, exposing the servos and sensors Bodhi’s studied in the proposed design.

“Luke, we’re ready for takeoff,” Lando says.

“Good luck, Lando.” Luke doesn’t sound the least bit groggy; Too-Onebee must’ve had him awake for some of the latter stages of the surgery to check the nerve connections.

“When we find that bounty hunter, we’ll contact you,” Lando says. “Princess? We’ll find Han. I promise.”

Leia smiles, warm though her eyes have gone distant, and doesn’t say anything.

“Chewie, I’ll be waiting for your signal,” Luke says, and over Bodhi’s comlink comes an acknowledging howl. “Take care, you two. May the Force be with you.” He hands the comlink back up to Bodhi.

Too-Onebee pricks each of Luke’s fingers in turn with a diagnostic pin, and Luke turns a crooked grin in Bodhi’s direction. “Ow!” He wriggles his fingers, and makes a fist; everything’s functional, and Bodhi releases a breath he didn’t know he’d been holding. And then Luke slides off of the chair to join Leia, Threepio, and Artoo at the viewport to watch the Falcon depart, the brilliant spiral of the galaxy in the distance.

Artoo warbles *he better not be trying to steal the Falcon back or Chewbacca will rip him to shreds*, and Threepio says, scandalized, “Artoo!”

Luke huffs a short laugh, the first one Bodhi’s heard from him since his return, and squeezes Leia’s shoulder—looks at his new hand resting there with some surprise. Leia turns under his arm. “Feels all right?”

“It’ll take some getting used to.” Luke flexes his fingers again. “Thanks for looking in on me. I know you’re busy.”

Leia kisses his cheek. “You’ll let me know as soon as Lando gets in touch?”

“If you don’t find out first,” Luke says.

She smiles at him, and raises an eyebrow at Bodhi. “Enjoy the new hand,” she says, and then she sweeps out again, Threepio, with some prompting from Artoo, following in her wake.

“I think I should sit down,” Luke says, going slightly green, and Bodhi jumps to his side to assist him back to the chair.

“I have a datapad with recommended exercises,” Too-Onebee says, sounding kind of reproving, like he’d understood Leia’s meaning. “It may take some time for you to gain full control of your strength.”

Bodhi smother a snort. “Please do that,” he murmurs, getting a tiny smile from Luke in return.


“You are welcome, Commander Skywalker,” Too-Onebee says, and then he’s gone, too, back to his other medical duties.

Luke sighs, heavily, and leans back in the chair. He tilts his head to look at Bodhi, tired again. “You
Bodhi hesitates. “Can I try something else?” He holds out his hand, palm up.

Luke meets his gaze, trusting. “Okay.” He pushes back the sleeve of his medcenter robe and matches Bodhi’s gesture, and for a second Bodhi doesn’t move at all, looking at the synthskin. Then Bodhi gently strokes his fingertips over the panel Too-Onebee had closed, and Luke shivers, but only just, the hairs on the back of his arm barely ruffling. “I’m so sorry they hurt you,” Bodhi murmurs, and then he wraps his fingers around Luke’s wrist, at the seamless transition of skin to synthskin. “Is this all right?”

“Yeah,” Luke whispers, looking down at their hands. He’s trembling, but Bodhi doesn’t think it’s from fear or pain. “Yeah, Bodhi, I think it will be.”
550 bookmarks. 46355 hits. HOLY CRAP. You, dear readers, are beyond amazing. I could not have imagined this reception a year ago, and as I've alluded to often in these notes, I am still completely stunned by it now. I’ve obviously never done anything on this scale before, and it just makes me so incredibly happy that you all like it and say nice things about it here and on various social media.

I have also been incredibly privileged to make some amazing friends over the course of the past year because of this thing! You know who you are, and I hope you know that I love you <3 (And that I’m deeply sorry about inflicting my grading agita on you on a regular basis! ONE MORE SEMESTER. PROBABLY.)

We are STILL NOT DONE, friends. There's more to come, and probably even more than you or I think. Thank you for sharing in this ridiculously long roller coaster with me. As a gift--that I originally commissioned for my birthday, back in JULY, here is another amazing piece of art by Stitchy for this chapter!! (now added into the main body :) ) Major, major thanks to Stitchy, and to morag for looking at the first part of this chapter.

<3

Translations:
別著急: Don't worry
安靜一點: Calm down

(By the way. As we are now past TLJ, a couple things: 1) there will be no spoilers in this fic, or notes. 2) yes, there will be a sequel to this, though...it may not go the way you think! I have a title picked out, and some scenes in my head, but I have to finish THIS, and quite possibly my dissertation, first. ;) )
Chapter 74

Chapter Summary

I warned you before.

Chapter Notes

;) See the end of the chapter for more notes

It’s not.

Though Bodhi doesn't realize it, at first.

With so many people coming and going, enough space is cleared that Luke and Bodhi get officers’ quarters to themselves again, though he would've been perfectly happy to squeeze Luke into the Cadera along with Cassian and Jyn and Kaytoo.

“It’s, um, warmer than Hoth,” Bodhi offers, apologetically, as Luke takes in the room. It’s not the one they’d shared on the Redemption before, and it’s empty and sterile even with the few things Bodhi’s moved in. Most of Luke’s belongings are gone, left behind with his X-wing—and his lightsaber, and his hand—on Bespin, but Bodhi had hung his yellow jacket over the back of a chair, and begged new boots from Logistics and Supply that stand stiffly upright by the door.

Luke walks over to the bunk. “I thought you said you were gonna keep me warm?”

“I will, if you want,” Bodhi says. Despite the inexorable pull of his heart and Luke’s hint of an invitation, he doesn’t move from the doorway; Luke’s facing away from him, shoulders slumping, looking for all the galaxy like someone who doesn’t want company.

“Haven’t slept in a real bed in months,” Luke says, just audibly, and presses the mattress with his left hand.

“Really?” Bodhi frowns; it’s the first piece of information he’s volunteered about his whereabouts.

“Yeah,” Luke says. He straightens, looking over his shoulder, familiar humor and eagerness flickering in his eyes. “So? What’s keeping you?”

Bodhi rubs the back of his neck. “What?”

“I've been doing Too-Onebee’s biofeedback exercises, and I think I'm starting to get the hang of it.” Luke turns to him, holding up his right hand and wiggling his fingers. “Call it—physical therapy?”

“Um—”

“Or you could come and kiss me,” Luke says, quickly, and Bodhi aches at the look of nervous,
naked longing on his face. “Please? I'd like it if—for a little while, anyway, if we could pretend like
nothing’s changed? Before people start asking questions I can't—”

anything you want.”

“I mean, I have questions, too,” Luke says, letting Bodhi push him over backwards onto the bed. He
curls his left hand around the back of Bodhi’s neck as Bodhi sheds his jacket. Slips his fingers just
under Bodhi’s shirt collar, caressing his skin. “Like why you’ve been favoring your left shoulder?”

Bodhi sits back on his heels, startled. “It’s—nothing. I’m fine.”


“I didn’t—you’ve got your own—I didn’t want you to worry about me,” Bodhi says, trying to free
himself from the flight jacket he’s gotten tangled around his forearms. Luke reaches around him to
assist, his eyes darkening with concern and—something else, his cheeks flushed pink.

Bodhi pants a little, suddenly more than warm enough despite the chill of their room, and bends
forward to cover Luke’s mouth with his own, impatiently. Luke whines, and his hands tighten
involuntarily in the folds of the fabric of Bodhi’s jacket, still trapping his wrists behind his back;
Bodhi squirms, and Luke—

“Shit, are you okay?” Luke murmurs, pulling at the flight jacket. “Sorry, sorry, didn’t mean to—”

Bodhi huffs a laugh as his hands come free and he falls forward, bracing himself over Luke. “I’m
fine—” He dives at Luke’s mouth again, almost shaking with desire, eager to reclaim him from the
past three months.

Luke, equally fervent, hooks a heel around Bodhi’s hips to haul him down. His new strength isn’t a
surprise; Bodhi had felt it in his body, huddled together in the hangar and wedged in beside him in
the medcenter, unmistakable despite his weakening wounds and grief. But he’s still Luke, careful to
avoid Bodhi’s shoulder with his roving hands, lips parting sweet and warm for Bodhi’s tongue. He
moans; Bodhi smiles against his mouth and fumbles down between them, tugging up Luke’s shirt to
skim his fingertips across his heated skin.

“Ah!” Luke gasps, and writhes, flailing to catch Bodhi’s hand. “I warned you before—not a good
idea to tickle a—aah!”

Bodhi outmaneuvers him and runs his fingers up over his ribs, enjoying the way Luke giggles
helplessly and thrashes beneath him, the frantic press of his body. “You’d never do anything to hurt
me,” he says, confidently, leaning in to steal another kiss—Luke grabs his hands, careful not to
clutch too hard with his new cybernetic one, and flips Bodhi over onto his back, straddling him.

“I almost did,” Luke says, holding Bodhi’s hands over his head on the pillow, breathing hard, his
eyes intense, like light refracted through a kyber crystal.

Bodhi shivers, but he lies still and doesn’t fight Luke’s grip on his wrists, arousal overriding any
sense of encroaching panic, gazing at him like he would the stars. Luke’s unbelievably beautiful, his
hair and shirt rumpled up and his pants half-open, exposing the pale skin of his stomach and the
crease of muscle at his hips.

“But you—but you didn’t.” Bodhi bites his lip and arches his back encouragingly; is rewarded with
Luke’s reddened mouth going slack at the contact. “It’s okay, c’mon, I keep telling you I’m okay.”
Takes a breath, and adds, a little hoarse with it, “I missed you. I—I want you—”
Luke shudders all over, and for a moment Bodhi doesn’t dare move, fearing he’s pushed too much, or said something wrong. And then Luke yanks his shirt off over his head, baring the fading bruises and scrapes of his battles, and sprawls down on his side, struggling to get Bodhi’s pants off—

“Faster with your left, I think,” Bodhi mutters, wryly, threading his fingers into Luke’s soft hair.

Luke shoots him a dirty look, wrapping his prosthetic hand around him and stroking, not quite firmly enough, but Bodhi gasps and squeezes his eyes shut at his touch anyway, it’s been so long—“I checked the records, and you still don’t get to give the orders,” Luke says, sounding mock-affronted. But he hesitates, in between nibbles along Bodhi’s collarbone, and murmurs, “This is—”

“*Stars, Luke, yes,*” Bodhi says, wholeheartedly, nearly over the edge. Luke chuckles softly, though his motions are slowing down, and Bodhi groans, “Your hand *can’t* cramp up now—”

“No, it can’t,” Luke agrees, his mouth very close to Bodhi’s ear. He’s grinding against Bodhi’s thigh, and Bodhi slides his own hand down, stroking over Luke’s hot, silken skin. Luke’s voice hitches on a faint whimper, but he murmurs, pleading and insistent all at once, “Open your eyes, Bodhi, look at me—” He’s only able to look into Luke’s face for a heartbeat, seeing his pleasure reflected back as beautiful and fleeting as a desert mirage—and then Luke’s kissing him through it, desperately, like he’s trying to bring Bodhi back to life after three months dead and gone, like the breath between them is all the air left in the galaxy.

Overwhelmed and panting, Bodhi tries to ground himself by clutching at Luke’s back, as Luke shudders in his embrace. Then Luke’s wiping his hands clean on his discarded shirt, and reaching up to cup Bodhi’s face, his flesh-and-blood hand distinguishable from the cybernetic only by the way it trembles. His eyes blaze like twin stars, and Bodhi can’t speak in the face of that intensity, can’t find the words he needs to say.

But it doesn’t seem to matter. Luke’s tracing over his face, his eyelids and cheekbones, almost reverently; Bodhi licks his lips, tasting the not-quite-nothing of synthskin as Luke’s thumb brushes over them. “What—what are you—”

“I didn’t have a holo of you,” Luke says, softly, the light in his eyes no less brilliant for the tears forming there.

Bodhi swallows the lump in his throat, and offers, “You can have my old Imperial ident card?”

Luke nods, and slides down to lie fully next to him, still resting his prosthetic hand on Bodhi’s cheek. “Okay.”

They rest like that for a while, minutes drifting away into memory, neither of them willing to relinquish their closeness in order to get cleaned up, nor trying to provoke anything beyond this comforting intimacy. Luke can’t seem to stop touching Bodhi, rubbing the fingers of both hands over his returning stubble as if to compare the sensation. Bodhi tangles his fingers in Luke’s hair; it’s darker than it used to be, and shaggier, and he wonders if Luke would’ve cut it, if anyone had gotten around to telling him about Jedhan mourning tradition prior to—

Prior to their *escape* from Hoth.

Luke senses Bodhi’s change in mood, and stills, looking a little sad. Bodhi draws a shaky breath, and steels himself to ask, but Luke beats him to the first question, terrible and wholly unexpected—

“What do you remember about Darth Vader?”
Happy Holidays, dear readers!! <3
Bodhi’s heartbeat stutters in his chest, and though they’re sharing body heat, he feels ice all down his spine—“Are you serious? That’s where you want to start? I thought you were gonna ask about—”

“I didn’t think he was on your list.” Luke lets out a breath. “If it’s too hard, or if you can’t remember, that’s okay.” His mouth curves down, though, and his gaze is entirely directed at his own hands smoothing the fabric of Bodhi’s shirt over his chest. His left hand is warm; his right slightly stiff, a bit like a first-time pilot on the controls, for all that he’d been careful and gentle on Bodhi himself.


Luke doesn’t look up, shifting under Bodhi’s touch, not the same way as if he’d been tickled, but also not like he wants anything more. “It’s—important to me, that’s all.”

“Oh.” Bodhi lies there for a second, contemplating Luke’s defeat, acutely aware that the room is cold on his bare skin and they’re both still rather messy, and decides that the physical discomforts overrule mental ones in terms of priority. “Let me—let me think about it,” he says, and rolls out of bed. “If, um, if we’re doing the—” He points vaguely at Luke, and then back at himself—“depressing catch-up conversation now, I’m taking a shower first.”


“Oh,” Bodhi lies there for a second, contemplating Luke’s defeat, acutely aware that the room is cold on his bare skin and they’re both still rather messy, and decides that the physical discomforts overrule mental ones in terms of priority. “Let me—let me think about it,” he says, and rolls out of bed. “If, um, if we’re doing the—” He points vaguely at Luke, and then back at himself—“depressing catch-up conversation now, I’m taking a shower first.”

Luke pushes his wet hair back from his face. “Hoth, I think,” he says, ruefully. “I mean, I bathed, more or less, but there were creatures living in the water. One of them tried to eat Artoo.”

Bodhi raises his eyebrows.

“That’s your first question?” The corner of Luke’s mouth quirks up, something of his good humor finding its way to the surface again.

“Sorry,” Bodhi says, leaning back and resting his head against the shower wall, blinking away the droplets of water in his eyelashes to watch Luke scrubbing himself down, appreciating the way the soapsuds slide over the lean curves of his body. “I’m trying to think of an answer to yours.”
“Did you ever *meet* Vader?” Luke asks, balancing easily on one foot to wash the other; he’s more flexible than Bodhi remembered. “You’d have to remember that, wouldn’t you?”

“I—he came to Eadu,” Bodhi says, sifting through scraps of memory. “Galen met with him, but I—I had no reason to, right, I tried to stay out of the way. Worried about Galen, you know? There were stories—if Vader didn’t like what you did, he could—” He holds out his hand and clenches it into a fist. “Strangle you. With his bare hands, or with a *thought*. That’s what people said at the Academy, anyway, and Galen was going so slowly with the work, I thought for sure—”


“No, but he might’ve threatened to, or threatened to hurt—I don’t know, the other engineers?” Bodhi shakes his head. “I can’t really remember what else Galen said.”

“So that’s it, then? Eadu?” Luke says.

Bodhi frowns at the disappointment Luke still can’t hide, trying to dredge up something more than the ominous swirl of a black cape against a white wall, the rasp of a respirator from around the corner. He can’t settle on whether the mechanical breathing in his mind is Vader’s, or Saw’s, but there’s got to be more to why he’s started to shiver under the shower spray. “Eadu, sort of, some stories at the Academy.”

“What kinds of stories did people tell at the Academy?” Luke asks, turning to shut off the water. “Was it *all* fear and death?”

“No one exactly talked about him like he was bringing glory to the Empire,” Bodhi says, slowly, draping the towel Luke hands him around his shoulders; Luke’s gaze flicks over the bacta patch before Bodhi obscures it with a fold of the towel, but his eyes only narrow and he doesn’t say anything, as promised. “Even the professors who thought the Republic needed to end didn’t think, um, much of his part in that.”

“The part where he killed all the Jedi,” Luke says, very flat.

“Yeah,” Bodhi murmurs, and thinks, *in darkness, cold*. Shivers again, not comforted by the whisper-memory of his mother’s voice reciting the sunset prayer. There had been—something *else*, buried not under the weight of Jedha and guilt but simply time; a deeper, older fear awakened by Saw’s harsh inhale, one he hadn’t lost completely to the monster.

Luke steps close to put his arms around Bodhi. “I’m sorry,” he says, nuzzling at Bodhi’s neck gently. “You don’t have to keep trying to think about it for me.”

“I will, if you want me to,” Bodhi offers. “Though I don’t—I won’t be much help, if you’re hoping I’ll know anything about weaknesses in—in his armor, or anything that’ll help you fight him again.” He swallows down a surge of panic at that thought, skimming his hands over the fading bruises on Luke’s back. “But—I’d rather you didn’t run off to do that just yet?”

Luke huffs a humorless laugh into Bodhi’s ear. “I won’t.” He takes Bodhi’s hand and tugs him back to bed, though he still doesn’t try to start anything, only curling against Bodhi’s uninjured side, after he adds their towels to the growing pile of laundry on the floor. Luke runs his hand over Bodhi’s hair, ruffling it up. “Though I’d like to spar with Chirrut, once I’ve gotten used to my hand. Maybe see if I can talk Baze into giving it a try, too—”

—and Bodhi stiffens at the mention of the Guardians, the feel of Luke stroking his hair.

He’d remembered it *wrong*. 
(Sitting on their neighbor’s rooftop—

—it had been sunset, or near enough, but the glow on his mother’s face, the glow on the Temple hadn’t been the golden last light of day—it had been the Temple itself, burning. When the Empire had come and begun to ravage Jedha for the kyber crystals, had cast the Guardians out into the street, and his mother had cut her hair, spoken the prayer, and mourned—)

No.

That isn’t it, either.

“What isn’t?” Luke says, touching Bodhi’s face, thumb brushing unexpected wetness from his cheek. “Are you—”

“I’m all right.” Bodhi catches Luke’s hand and presses a kiss into his palm. “I—I’m trying to remember.”


“It’s—something to do with the Temple,” Bodhi says, uncertainly, tracing the memories back slowly in his head, thinking of Chirrut’s deadly grace, the subtle alertness of his body even in meditation. “They—the Guardians didn’t—they didn’t mind us playing there, as long as we were respectful, and I used to—I’d try to count how many kyber crystals there were, but I was too little to make it all the way to the top, maybe, I don’t—or I just lost count.” He shakes his head. “Maybe Chirrut knows how many there were.”

Luke breaths in and out, slowly, and asks, “Was Vader there, when the Empire sacked the Temple? Is that what you’re trying to remember?”

Bodhi ducks his head. “I’m not—no, that’s not—” But there is still fear welling up out of the dark recesses of his mind, seeping out between the cracks of thought, and his heartbeat is picking up speed: Vader had come to Jedha—

(—the shuffling worn hems of Guardians’ robes, the polished black and white of Imperial boots trampling through Jedha’s dust, red as blood—)

“I—I think he killed someone,” Bodhi says, tense and trembling, though there hadn’t been blood on the dust, afterwards. “Vader came to Jedha to look for—he must’ve been looking for Jedi among the Guardians. Someone Force-sensitive.” He touches two fingers to his throat, gingerly, remembering a plasteel-armored hand choking him—

(—a black-clad horror, tall as the sky and blotting out the sun, suspending a Temple monk in the air with one gloved fist around her neck, rasping orders over the inhuman wheeze of his respirator and her gasping pleas—)

“I was playing—probably running in the alleys trying to keep away from the bullies, you know, or the merchants who got mad when me or the other kids knocked over their stuff, and then we scattered and hid, because—there were Imperials, and all the Guardians came out of the Temple, and then—and then—I—”

(—red as a lightsaber blade burning bright—)

Luke’s hand is motionless on his cheek. “I’m sorry,” he says, very softly.


“No, I meant—” Something unreadable flickers across Luke’s face, twisting his mouth. “Okay. Good. But Chirrut and Baze, they were safe, even though Chirrut is—Chirrut does—whatever he does?”

Bodhi considers it, imagining Chirrut cursing out the Imperials and Baze doing his damnedest to hold him back as Vader murdered whoever he’d found in front of them. Or vice versa? Baze’s anger—they would’ve been young, then, blazing beacons of faith. “Maybe there were higher-ranking monks who made them keep silent,” he says, hesitantly. “You’d have to ask them how they were spared.”


“I can keep trying to remember for you,” Bodhi says, attempting to keep anxiety from his voice. “I should keep trying to remember—things, anyway. Try to get back more of what I lost.”

“Not if it hurts you,” Luke says, firmly. “I don’t want anything in the galaxy to hurt you ever again.”

Bodhi pokes him in the chest ruefully, not very hard. “I don’t think that’s how it works?”

Luke catches Bodhi’s hand with his cybernetic one and holds it over his heart, delicately. The synthskin is cool. “How what works?”

“The Force,” Bodhi says, nudging him, a little playfully, curious. “All is as the Force wills it?”


“Yeah, yeah, of course,” Bodhi says, promptly. He watches Luke roll over onto his back, letting his hand linger for a moment longer, wondering, and then he gets up to shut off the light.

*****

But despite Luke’s claim, and his obvious need to rest after his surgery and whatever he’s still not sharing, Bodhi wakes up in the middle of the night to discover him huddled in a blanket at the console, its light turning his face pale.

“Come back to bed,” Bodhi murmurs, muzzily, confused, and Luke jerks. He hastily switches the console off and crosses the room in two strides, vaulting clumsily over Bodhi to his side of the bunk.

“Sorry,” he whispers, averting his face.


—and as he drifts off once more, warm and comfortable tucked in beside Luke, who’s here, and safe, the last thing he hears is Luke choking back a sob.

Chapter End Notes
Happy New Year!! I hope everyone's 2018 is starting off well. I've been a bit busy with travel, and it turns out my brain doesn't want to cooperate even when I've got really fun writing planned, so sorry about the delay on this one. I have two more aftermath-y chapters planned, and then a little bit to go before ROTJ kicks off?

I've also been playing Galaxy of Heroes, and I'm working on making Bodhi the very best support I can for Luke, heh ;)

Thanks to morag for kicking ideas around with me (I do know exactly which Jedi Darth Vader killed on Jedha, btw, we'll see if it comes up again) and, as always, thanks to all of YOU, dear amazing readers!!! I'm going to try to get caught up on responding to comments today/tomorrow!! <3
Chapter 76

Chapter Summary

Why don't you trust me?

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Luke leaves no room to ask about anything at all, in the morning, between getting word that Rogue Squadron is coming home and badgering Toryn and her communications staff about a secure line with Lando. And—though he remains quieter than normal, he shows little sign of the distress and depression from the night before, when he leans in over the console to ask questions, tapping at displays with his new hand. He beams as bright as a new dawn, familiar confidence and authority shining out of his face.

Bodhi’s pretty sure he’s faking it.

“He’s really pulling that off with everyone else?” Jyn asks, when Bodhi’s summoned away to meet with her, Cassian, and Kaytoo.

They’ve taken over Draven’s small office in his prolonged, as-yet unexplained absence, and it’s starting to look distressingly more like an armory than it used to, or like their arsenal’s finally expanded beyond the confines of their quarters. Blasters, both intact and in various stages of disassembly and repair, cover every surface not already occupied by datapads. Jyn perches on the arm of her usual chair, sorting through parts with the hand not still out of commission in a sling.

Bodhi shrugs, picking up a drained power pack and turning it over in his fingers. “I don’t—maybe? They—they look at him like he’s Commander Skywalker, hero of the Rebellion—maybe they don’t know he’s pretending.”

“Luke doesn’t pretend,” Cassian points out, a little shortly. “Luke has always worn his heart on his sleeve.” He looks more exhausted than Bodhi’s ever seen him, worn and frayed around the edges. Jyn can’t quite keep her eyes from flicking back to him every three seconds, like she’s afraid to lose him in a crowded market.

What is Cassian doing?

Where is Draven?

“Like installing a personality matrix on my outer plating,” Kaytoo says.

Bodhi blinks at him, parsing it as Jyn mostly succeeds in suppressing a snort—“Oh, um, yes. Thanks, Kaytoo, that’s—that’s helpful.”

“Kay’s gotten into exploring his literary side,” Jyn says, amused. “Metaphors.”

“O—okay,” Bodhi says. “Um, what was I talking about?”

“You were worrying about Luke,” Jyn prompts him. “But—could it be he’s having a better day after
you spent the night together?” Her mouth quirks up, slightly.

Heat rises into Bodhi’s face as he tosses the power pack at her. “Don’t think that’s it.”

Kaytoo swivels his head to look at him. “Is Luke in need of further repairs before you resume sexual relations?”

“Kay!”

Bodhi sputters, “Wh—no, no, he’s—we’re fine, everything was, um—I’m not worried about—” He glances at his friends; Jyn is trying valiantly not to laugh, while Cassian makes urgent shushing gestures at Kaytoo.

He shakes his head and tries to start again. “No, Kaytoo, it’s more that—I think I have a pretty good idea what it looks like when you’re doing a shit job of holding it together, right? Luke doesn’t want to tell me about what happened while—while we were apart, and he asked me about one thing last night, and this morning he was acting like nothing—” Bodhi rubs the back of his neck self-consciously. “I just thought he’d talk to me. If—if I stayed right by—if I showed him that I’m not going anywhere.”

“Do you really want to know what he did when you were apart?” Cassian asks, low.

“What?” Bodhi’s eyes go wide. He points a hand at Cassian; it’s shaking like the beginnings of a stabilizer going out of alignment. “Do you—did you know where he was?”

“No,” Jyn says, hastily, as Bodhi rounds on her, too. “Bodhi, believe me, if anyone had any idea where he’d gone—”

“Someone would have slipped up and told you,” Kaytoo observes.

Jyn huffs a laugh. “That’s true.”

Bodhi attempts to douse his outrage, feeling embers smoldering in his chest, as he turns back to Cassian. He’s folded his arms, his dark eyes gleaming with something tense and unfamiliar. “What d’you mean, do I really want to know? Of course I do!”

“It took less than a minute for Luke to tear the hangar bay to pieces,” Cassian says, tersely.

“That was an accident,” Bodhi snaps, bewildered. “Cassian, come right out and say what you’re trying to say—”

“Luke could have done a lot more damage. The Jedi were very powerful, very dangerous. He could have hurt you, and it would have been by accident.” Cassian’s face is pinched, his brow furrowed. “How did he learn this new power? What will he do with it?”

“That’s fucking absurd—Luke would never—”

“Cassian, don’t,” Jyn says, her hand going to the edge of the scarf draped around her neck, and presumably the crystal underneath.

“Jyn, you were there,” Cassian says, casting a glance in her direction. “You saw what he did—”

“He’s on our side,” Jyn shoots back.

Bodhi hasn’t a clue what that’s supposed to mean, or how it’s even remotely relevant to what his concerns are about Luke. But—“Whatever happened to—I thought you said you wouldn’t get in the
way of anything I wanted,” he says to Cassian, angrily.

“That was before Luke ran away from his responsibility to his squadron,” Cassian hisses. “To the Rebellion.”

Bodhi gapes at him, utterly appalled at the implication. “No, no, Luke was always—I—I knew that he’d come back. Even though—even though he thought I was—he was always going to come back.”

“ Blind faith,” Cassian spits.

“Don’t let Chirrut hear you say that,” Jyn says, warning beyond her words. She’s risen from her chair to stand between them.

“It’s—it’s not,” Bodhi says, fire blazing up. “Cassian, the hell’s gotten into you?” He glares at Jyn and up at Kaytoo. “I thought you guys were—were taking care of—fuck, do other people think Luke deserted? He fought Vader!”

“Is that what he left to do? Kill Darth Vader? Out of vengeance for the people we lost on Hoth?” Cassian says, disbelief seeping through his words like poison.

“Cassian,” Jyn snaps.

“What is wrong with you?” Bodhi shouts. “Why don’t you trust him? Why don’t you trust me?”

“Because you’re in love with a Jedi,” Cassian shouts back, his face contorting. Jyn’s glaring daggers at Cassian, and Kaytoo is saying things, but neither Bodhi nor Cassian can hear them. “They brought destruction, not peace—”

Furious, Bodhi shakes his head, jabbing a finger at him. “I wanted your advice on how to help him, because you all helped me, you helped me come back to—to who I was, and—and instead you’re trying to warn me off? It’s too fucking late for that, Cassian—you were fine with him when he wasn’t a—a dangerous Jedi? He’s still Luke. I know he’s still—he loves me, dammit, and I’m going to figure out how to help him.”

He turns on his heel and marches out, ignoring the stunned look on Cassian’s face, Jyn’s burning eyes, and Kaytoo calling after him, “We were supposed to have a meeting!”

*****

Bodhi seethes about it all the way down to the hangar bay.

**Cassian doesn’t trust Luke because he’s a Jedi?**

Something like a memory filters in through his anger, though Bodhi can’t put it to time or a place:

(“—the Force and I have different priorities—”)  

**Cassian’s never believed in the Force.**

**But he trusts Jyn, and she believes—**

Bodhi lets out a frustrated breath, and gently touches his fingertips to the kyber crystal nestled in his pocket. He’d never been good at following the convoluted paths of faith, at home. His mother had prayed, and let him play around the Temple on his own, perhaps hoping he’d absorb some of the Guardians’ teachings the way the sandstone walls absorbed sunlight. The other orders had been
—what? The Central Isopter, Clan of the Toribota, and the Brotherhood of the Beatific—something—Bodhi rubs his forehead, trying to remember the name—they’d covered themselves with ornate faceplates and heavy robes, or moved through the streets in eerie silence. Too frightening, maybe, for an easily scared boy.

*I wasn’t afraid of the Guardians. Or the stories they told about the Jedi.*

*I’m not afraid of—*

“Hi,” Luke says, from where he leans up against the bulkhead, just outside the hangar bay doors. “Everything okay?”

Bodhi stares at him, jolted out of his thoughts. “Yeah,” he says, as they go in together. Green Squadron’s just coming in from running drills; a short, dark-haired human woman and a Duros man are inspecting one of their A-wings together, chatting amiably.

“I could sense you were angry,” Luke says, a little quietly, hard to hear under the din.

Bodhi shakes his head. “It’s fine. Is that why you came down here?”

“I finished up with Toryn’s team and came down here to meet the Rogues when they get in,” Luke says.

“Oh,” Bodhi says, and then he tries, “Listen, about last night—”

“Tonight, you’ve got to tell me what you did to your shoulder,” Luke says, a tentative smile flickering about his lips.

Bodhi reaches for his arm. “Luke—whatever happened, I want to know. I can—I can handle it, I can help—”

Luke stops walking, and puts his hand on top of Bodhi’s, looking up at him through his eyelashes. “Let’s do this later, okay? It’s gonna be hard enough apologizing to the squadron for vanishing on them.”

Bodhi swallows. “Okay,” he says. “Didn’t think of that, sorry. Though—I’m sure they’ll just be glad to see you.” He squeezes Luke’s arm, adding shyly, “Not as glad as I was.”

Luke’s mouth twitches, but his eyes do gleam a bit, at the sight of streaks of ships jumping in to the rendezvous point. “Wedge probably won’t kiss me.”

Wedge doesn’t.

He *does*, however, nearly tackle Luke in a hug, burying his face against Luke’s jacket and laughing. “Hey, boss,” he says, when he’s gotten control of himself again, stepping back and straightening his flightsuit.


“Oh, you’re still alive,” Hobbie says, coming up from behind them with Kasan and Grizz. Hobbie looks endlessly relieved to see him too—*no*, not Luke, he’s reaching out to slap Bodhi on the shoulder—

“Not there, you asshole, that’s where Samoc said he got shot,” Grizz says. “Uh, hey, Commander Skywalker. Bodhi.” He glances down, a funny resigned expression on his face, as Hobbie grabs
onto Luke and Kasan’s face lights up. “Guess you’ll be wanting this back?”

Bodhi follows his gaze down to—

—the MSE droid?

It squeaks, and ventures a tentative hop.

“You kept it?”

“It won’t leave me alone,” Grizz says, sounding fond and aggrieved at the same time. “You kind of broke its programming. I tried to slice it—everyone had a go at it, actually, but even after Janson thought he fixed it, it follows me everywhere.”

“I don’t want it back,” Bodhi says, bemused. “It wasn’t mine in the first place, just—I just needed something—” He huffs a wry laugh. “Which—thanks, Grizz, I knew you’d get the message. You keep it.”

Grizz throws Bodhi a crooked smile. “Never had a pet growing up.”

“Oh, hells, he’s going to keep it, aren’t you,” Joma says, joining them and toeing the MSE droid gently in the side. It scurries away from her boot and hides behind Grizz’s legs. “Can we get someone to slice it to do something useful?”

“You need a whole chain of them to do something useful,” Bodhi says, trying and failing to keep a straight face as Joma gives him a look. “How’s my ship?”

“Still in one piece, Captain,” Grizz reports. “We’ve been talking about converting over to an ion cannon, something to give the rest of the squadron some cover when they’re not flying fighters carrying their own.”

“Would’ve been great to have some extra help disabling those superlaser relays,” Hobbie puts in.

“What superlaser relays?” Bodhi’s voice cracks.

“The three on Dubrillion that we took out,” Hobbie says, just as Kasan turns and swiftly pokes him in the ribs. “Lost a whole corvette to ’em before—ow, Kasan, what?”

“Shut up,” Kasan snaps at him. “You don’t just—sorry, Bodhi, Hobbie’s an idiot.”

“Hey!”

She jabs him again. “We didn’t expect to see you right away. Some of your team thought you’d still be in the medcenter, or we would have come up with a plan for how to tell you.”

“Superlaser. Like on the Death Star,” Bodhi says, hoarsely. He shoves his hands in his pockets to keep his friends from seeing them shake; Luke’s turning towards him nonetheless, warm concern in his eyes.

“No, not like that,” Joma says, quickly. “It was a facility in the Dubrillion ocean. Commander Antilles hijacked a walker and led a run on it.” She links her arm through Kasan’s, reassuringly.

“They were testing it on us, though,” Hobbie mutters, dodging yet another poke from Kasan. She grimaces, and puts her hand on his shoulder, spinning him to face Wedge and Luke, instead.

Bodhi shivers, and looks around for the rest of the ships docking in the Redemption’s hangar. “A
whole corvette—oh, no, where’s—"

“Don’t worry, Samoc and Janson are fine,” Joma says. “Samoc has her own X-wing now, and Janson’s—” She holds her fingers up and makes quotation marks in the air. “‘Helping her get used to routine maintenance.’”

“Toryn’s going to kill him,” Grizz adds, wryly.

“Samoc’s just having some fun,” Joma says, shrugging. “She needs someone less serious to balance her out.”

Bodhi can’t quite believe it— “You’re gossiping? After—after you had to take on a superlaser?”

“Antilles said it wasn’t like the Death Star at all, Bodhi, stop looking like you’ve seen a ghost,” Joma says. “I saw it too, but Wedge got up close and personal with it, he should know. And anyway, we destroyed it, and General Madine’s reporting to High Command—don’t worry, it’s taken care of.” She flashes her brilliant smile at him. “Back to running boring supply runs with you, all right? No more heroics.”

The MSE droid chirps agreement.

*****

Later, Bodhi ducks out of their sabacc game—he’s too distracted by everything, and keeps losing, while Luke’s starting to win, and that’s really weird, but at least he seems like himself, not pretending at anything except his successful bluffing—and slips back to their quarters. Wedge’s report is in the system already, and with Bodhi’s security clearance restored, it’s not too hard to cross-reference Brivyl Goss’ information with the squadron’s mission to Destrillion and Dubrillion.

It’s just another weapon. Just like the ion cannon we had on Hoth for planetary defense. It’s not—that.

But he feels sick, thinking about the kyber crystals he and Celina had found, wondering if she’d prompted the Empire to take Dantooine before the Rebellion could protect it. He doesn’t see anything in the files he can access, but there’s always the possibility that Cassian’s taken care of it with a covert squad, or something.

Cassian.

Bodhi groans, and rubs his face with a hand.

What am I going to do about Cassian, prove him wrong again? Ask Chirrut to convert him? Jyn?

He’d known the Jedi weren’t universally revered, of course; the way their history was covered at the Academy was sign enough of that. But Bodhi had thought—with the way the Rebels all said may the Force be with you before missions, the respect Cassian had always shown Baze and Chirrut—

They’re not Jedi.

Maybe it was easier for Cassian to think the Jedi were extinct. Symbols that other people could follow.

That thought makes him deeply unsettled.

Luke isn’t—
No. Luke is.

A chill makes all the hairs on Bodhi’s arms stand on end.

*Maybe Luke thinks he can’t be the hope of the Rebellion if he lost to Vader. If people knew he lost to Vader.*

Bodhi sits up a little straighter at the console, running his fingers over the keys, newly determined.

*He won’t lose again.*

*Not if I can help it.*

Chapter End Notes

I know. They all need a vacation. :)

Thanks to morag for being the sounding board all over this one (yes, Kaytoo, I know that doesn't work as a metaphor at all!) Thanks to all of you, as always. <3
Chapter 77

Chapter Summary

Now you're just doing it on purpose.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

But Bodhi only gets about half an hour into his research into the monster who’d defeated Luke. He’s reading, with a kind of horrified fascination, specs and speculation about Vader’s gloves being servo-powered Mandalorian crushgaunts, when Jyn strolls in, and before he can say anything, lobs a datapad straight at his head.

“You walked out on a meeting,” Jyn says, as he jerks away and the datapad bounces off the wall and clatters somewhere behind his console.

“Shit,” Bodhi mutters. “Jyn, I'm sorry—”

“You should be,” she says.

“I—I—” Bodhi gets down on his hands and knees to look for the datapad, grateful for an excuse not to meet her piercing gaze. “Didn’t think he’d pick a fight over Luke.”

“Cassian’s been spoiling for one ever since we got back.” Out of the corner of his eye, Bodhi watches her stroll to his bunk and sit down on it, crossing her legs at the ankles. She adds, “And you should’ve remembered—”

Bodhi flinches, and loses his fingertip grip on the edge of the datapad. “Jyn—”

She makes a face, torn between apology and exasperation. “Come on, Bodhi. You knew Cassian grew up Separatist.”

“So he hates the Jedi, is that it?” Bodhi asks, flatly. “It’s Luke we’re talking about, how many times do I have to say that?”

“And it's Cassian,” Jyn retorts. “He’s been in this fight longer than any of us, he's got perspective neither of us have.”

“Jyn—”

“I'm not saying he's right.” Jyn uncrosses her ankles and leans forward, resting her elbow on her thigh, looking annoyed with the sling still wound about her other arm. “Not about all of it.”

“Yeah?” Bodhi finally manages to slide the datapad out and dusts it off on his pant leg before tossing it onto the console without a backwards glance. “Please, tell me which part Cassian had correct? The part where Luke’s—Luke is a dangerous, immensely powerful Jedi who’s a threat to me and everyone I care about, even though he’s only ever used his powers to fight for the Rebellion and keep me safe through all the stupid crap I’ve ever tried to do, which is what I thought Cassian wanted, or—or the part where he deserted?”
Jyn’s eyes flash, bright as blaster fire; Bodhi grimaces, and wishes he could call that last bit back.

“No one—not even you—knew where he went. He left everyone behind. And spare me the ‘I knew he was coming back’ line, because that shit is just—”

“I thought you believed in the Force?” Bodhi interrupts.

“I do, but not like it's going to magically grant my wishes,” Jyn says, sardonically.

“That’s for damn sure, ‘cause I’m not gonna apologize to Cassian.” Bodhi glowers at her, but his irritation fades at the fatigue sketching lines in her face, the droop of her shoulders. “What’s going on with him? You? Are you guys okay?”

“Nice of you to finally ask,” Jyn says, but without much heat behind her words. “I don’t know what Cassian’s doing for Draven, but he’s got me keeping tabs on a couple resistance cells on Abridon and Sullust—the Abridon Nationalists are gearing for a big push, if we can throw some support behind them.” She rubs the heel of her hand against her eyes. “Cadomai Prime—losing the Calabar Queen, even if it was full of Imperials on holiday—was hard. On all of us, and Kaytoo, even if he likes to pretend he’s unaffected ‘cause he’s a droid. It’s been one thing after another, since.”

“Imperials get to go on holiday?” Bodhi asks, thinking guiltily, I was one of those things—

“I—I barely got leave for my mother’s funeral.”

“Just officers, mid-level bastards. You know the type, their idea of a good time is subjugating the locals,” Jyn says, dryly. She shrugs, and blows out a breath. “We’re—doing better, now that everyone’s safe, and home. Chirrut’s given up on trying to get Cassian to meditate properly and just thinks he should come spar when I do. Work it off.” She eyes Bodhi. “Might not be a bad idea for you, either.”

“Great, Jyn, getting my ass handed to me by any one of my closest friends sounds great,” Bodhi mutters, coming over and sitting on the bunk next to her.

“Cassian would probably go easy on you,” Jyn says, thwacking his knee gently with her closed fist. “Maybe not while you’re still having religious and political differences, but after he got a few punches in, I’m sure—”

Bodhi pokes her in the ribs—or tries to, anyway; she catches his hand and pins it flat on the mattress, smirking tiredly at him. “Whose side are you on, huh?”

“Hey, I’m just trying to make nice so Cassian won’t have another reason to work himself to death,” Jyn replies.

Bodhi winces, tugging his hand back and scooting away from her. “I didn’t mean for—”

But she goes on, “He hasn’t even stopped to cook, and you know how much—”

—and Bodhi narrows his eyes at her. “Now you’re just doing it on purpose.”


“Trying to—to—he’s the one who started”— Bodhi stammers, helplessly.

“Yeah, well, your attempt to finish it was a disaster,” Jyn says. She nods over at the datapad he’s left lying on the console. “So Cassian is gonna end it.”

Bodhi gets up slowly, wary. “How, exactly? By grounding me, since Draven’s not here to do it?
Demoting me for insubordination?"

“I told him he couldn’t have done a better job of pushing you towards Luke if he’d been trying,” Jyn says. Puzzled, Bodhi picks up the datapad and looks back at her, at the small, determined smile dawning across her face, the sort of expression she’d worn before they’d gone into the Council meeting to convince the Alliance to attack Scarif. But she’s got other memories in mind—“Reminded him of the times he stood up for me, right after Yavin, when Draven acted like I was going to make off with the rest of the Alliance treasury. How he had to protect Kaytoo from assholes who wanted to smash in his plating, before Kay figured out how to protect himself without smashing them.”

Bodhi blinks at her, rendered momentarily speechless, his own memory wandering all the way back to fragments of shouting outside his medcenter room. Cassian had a black eye—looks down at the datapad, at the list of sectors scrolling under his motionless fingertips. “Jyn, what is this?”


“What?”

“Course, if you don’t want to, I’m sure there’s something else—” Jyn reaches for the datapad, but Bodhi whisks it out of her grasp.

“No, no, of course—I’ll do it.” Bodhi swallows, the old, familiar eagerness for exploration overriding his bewilderment. “Thank you. For getting us sorted. And tell Cassian—no, I should—”

“Yeah, probably,” Jyn says. She shakes her head at herself. “Next time you two fight, I’m making Kaytoo fix it.”

Bodhi waits until she’s out the door to comm Cassian, who picks up and says, simply, “I trust you.”


Cassian sighs, barely audible over their crackling connection, but he says, “You never have.”

It doesn’t solve anything, not really, and definitely not their religious and political differences, but it’s enough that Bodhi turns back to his original grim task with a lighter heart.

*****

He’s caught unprepared, though, when Luke returns to their quarters and drapes a pair of pants over Bodhi’s head.

“I won,” Luke says, delighted, as Bodhi sputters and flails in surprise, the pants—maybe Hobbie’s?—drifting into an orange heap on the floor. “Maybe because you weren’t there to distract me with your eyes, for once.” Luke presses a kiss to Bodhi’s temple, lightly. He fans out a sheaf of credit chips on the console, letting Bodhi get a look at them for a second before straddling his lap and twining his arms around Bodhi’s neck. “A hundred and twenty credits and Janson’s pants, not bad, right?”

Bodhi tilts his head so Luke can kiss him more easily, pleased at the way Luke’s beaming at him. He settles his hands on Luke’s hips, hooking his thumbs into the low-slung waist of his pants, and then skims his palms flat over Luke’s thighs. “Reasserting your position as squadron leader, Commander Skywalker?” he teases.

But Luke hesitates, hands halfway done unfastening Bodhi’s flight jacket, seriousness dimming the
light in his eyes. “Actually, Captain, I think it’s better if Wedge stays on as Rogue Leader. I haven’t flown a mission in months, and I don’t even have my X-wing—”

“You can always fly with me,” Bodhi offers quickly, hoping to entice him back from his sudden, strange dip into melancholy. “I’ve a mission—”

Luke gently traces along Bodhi’s collarbone, and then draws his hands back. “I don’t know, Bodhi. I—it’s too early, anyway. If General Rieekan was here, he’d have me grounded until I got on the sims again, proved I could handle myself in a fight.” He flexes the fingers of his cybernetic hand. “My reflexes aren’t going to be the same.”

“I thought your reflexes were just fine last night,” Bodhi says. He touches his hand to Luke’s, twining their fingers together, and Luke manages a faint smile and leans into his chest, mindful of his shoulder. The feel of Luke’s synthskin under Bodhi’s fingers, just a shade less than human body temperature, sparks inspiration—“Maybe that’s it,” Bodhi mutters to himself. He reaches around Luke to the console and calls up some of the wilder rumors he’d been reading about Vader. “Maybe he’s like General Grievous? A cyborg, with reflexes better than any human, who kills Jedi—”


“I’ve been looking into Vader,” Bodhi says, glancing up at him. “I—I didn’t remember anything else, but there’s all these stories—” He gestures at the console. “Thought I could find something to —”

“Bodhi,” Luke snaps, scrambling off of their shared seat. The glimpse Bodhi has of his expression before he turns away, is one of bleak despair. His shoulders hunch under his black shirt, and he’s clenching and unclenching his prosthetic at his side. “Don’t—don’t do this.”

“I don’t understand,” Bodhi says, frowning, feeling sick. What did I do wrong? He wanted to know! Attempts to explain, again, uncertain if Luke can catch all of the words pouring out of his mouth, but he has to make it make sense. “I couldn’t think of what else to tell you. I don’t think Vader ever came back to Jedha, not even when I—when the—the Death Star—and Chirrut and Baze were busy, so I tried to find out on my own, like I did for finding out about your father’s podraces, but there’s so much missing, I’ve been piecing together what I can. Did you know no one knows where Vader ca —”

“Bodhi, please,” Luke says, throwing an utterly wretched look at him over his shoulder. Under the overhead light, his eyes are wide and shining with tears, and Bodhi’s heart skips a beat. No—I hurt him—“Please don’t tell me any more.”

Bodhi rises to his feet, holding his trembling hands out, like he would for a wary toccat or skittish tauntaun, though he doesn’t dare take a step closer. “You asked—and I want to help, Luke, I do, I’m not afraid—”

Luke shakes his head. “You can’t. You should be. I thought I could handle it, with you, because I—but I—I can’t do this, Bodhi, I’m so sorry—”

—and he’s gone, leaving Bodhi calling after him, completely confused, “Wait!”

And then, horror falls like a shadow over Bodhi’s mind, the shock tethering him in place as surely as the monster’s tentacles had bound him to the chair—

Oh, no.

He’s just like me.
So...sometimes I can bang out 3500 words for a chapter in five hours, and then there are times like this, when even getting 2000 words down takes a solid fricking week! Next one should be arriving in a more timely manner, though, 'cause that's just about enough of that. (The post-Seerdom stuff took a month, too :) Nothing quite as much fun--or as long--as Sanctuary coming up, but hopefully what's coming will make up for that!)

Thanks to morag for the help all week on this one!! And--to you all, of course. I've been reading ao3commentoftheday over on tumblr a lot lately because of the interesting conversation on community expectations about feedback, and you all are above and beyond anything I could have ever imagined. <3 <3 <3
Chapter 78

Chapter Summary

This isn't about me.

Chapter Notes

This chapter includes a brief (and not very...nice or understanding) discussion of a canonical moment in ESB that I read as a suicide attempt.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Shit!

I thought he wasn’t afraid of anything!

Bodhi shakes himself free of his paralysis and darts into the corridor after Luke. His voice echoes, cracking and unsteady, as he calls, frantically, “Luke—wait, please come back—”

Luke’s gone, the hallway empty. Bodhi ducks back into their quarters and digs in his pocket for his comlink, almost fumbling it to the deck. He shivers and tries to breathe calmly; it feels like their room’s a decompressing airlock, all the warmth and safety sucked out.

I fucked up. Stars, I fucked up—

Luke doesn’t answer his call.

For a split selfish second Bodhi is tempted to let his oncoming panic wash over him completely, knowing Luke would sense it, no matter where he’s fled to on the Redemption. But he can’t, he can’t, not when Luke needs—

When Luke doesn’t need me to keep hurting him.

If he’d pushed and pushed when he wanted to know about Scarif—

—or the monster—

I never would’ve trusted him.

Bodhi runs his fingers anxiously over the ridges of his comlink, fighting off another icy wave of apprehension.

What do I do now? I have to make it right, but I don’t know—

No.

Of course I know.
He slaps his hand against the doorframe, grounded in the certainty of it, and hurries out.

Bodhi’s doubts and fears begin to resurface, though, when Luke isn’t in the hangar bay, helping with someone else’s ship or holed up in the Cadera poking at the most recent modifications, the sorts of places and tasks he would’ve fled to for distraction on his own bad days. The mechanics on shift have only seen Luke with the squadron, but he can’t very well comm the Rogues to check without them turning out an impromptu search party. He doesn’t think Luke would’ve gone back to them, anyway, near tears and visibly shaken, not when he really wanted—peace.

Oh—maybe—

But Luke isn’t folded up into a meditation pose in the briefing room Chirrut likes to commandeer. And when Baze comes to the door of their quarters, Bodhi asks, craning up on his tiptoes to peer over Baze’s shoulder, “Is—is Luke here? With you?” Then he realizes, abruptly, that Baze is holding his robe closed with one hand, brown skin and wisps of gray and black hair showing along the collar. Chirrut is equally unclothed behind him, sitting on the bed with a portable dejarik board over his lap, holographic pieces impatiently waiting for Baze to take his turn.

Bodhi thumps back down to his heels, embarrassed, and attempts to regain his equilibrium. “Never—um, never mind—”


Bodhi shakes his head and backs away from the door before Chirrut can do anything like get up.

“I’m—I can’t get ahold of him, and I thought he might have come here. To you. To talk about what—but you’re—you’re busy, sorry to bother you—”

“No bother, I’m winning,” Chirrut calls, from the bed.

Baze whips his head around and fixes his husband with a futile but still deadly glare. “Are you cheating?”

“You have an unfair advantage,” Chirrut protests. “I should blindfold you.”

“Sorry,” Bodhi says, again, quickly, and makes a break for it. Baze calls after him, gruffly concerned, but he’s to the turbolift before Baze can decide whether to follow on his bare feet.

Luke, where in blazes are you?

There’s one last possibility Bodhi can think of. He pulls his comlink out in the turbolift and stares at it, trying to gather the courage to call Leia. He’d never, ever, sought her out before; is still more than a little in awe of her despite the infinite kindness—if not forgiveness, a treacherous part of his mind points out—she’d shown him.

But he has to try. For Luke's sake.

Bodhi draws a breath, and thumbs the switch.

“Captain?” comes the immediate reply, formal and cool, and his heart skips a beat.

“Leia—is this a bad time? I'm sorry to disturb—”

“What’s going on?” Leia asks. Bodhi steps off the turbolift on a random deck; takes a step backwards, hastily, as the overpowering scent of bacta nearly makes him gag.
“I—” Just spit it out, she'll help—“I—”

“Bodhi?” Leia sounds more alert, and worried. “Is everything all—”

“I will make it right,” Bodhi manages. “I will, but you have to tell me—Your Highness, please, do you know where Luke is?”

There’s a brief silence, and Bodhi’s suddenly, horribly afraid that Luke’s gone to her for solace, that he’s sitting in her quarters mouthing No and shaking his head because he really doesn’t want Bodhi to pursue him. Blast, what am I going to do—

“He came by to pick up Artoo,” Leia says, finally, and Bodhi breathes again. “They were going to go over to engineering, so Luke could take care of some repairs he wanted to handle himself.” She pauses. “He—Bodhi, he wouldn’t talk to me.”

“I’m—I’m gonna fix it,” Bodhi promises, hearing in her hesitation something of that long cold night on Hoth. He swallows, hard, and slaps at the turbolift controls; he hadn’t meant to hurt her, too.

“Thanks, Leia. I’ll bring him back in one—I’ll be careful. We’ll be careful.”

“All right,” Leia says, warily, but with a touch more warmth. “Good luck.”

Bodhi clenches his fist around his comlink, clinging to that small victory, his heartbeat quickening with warring hope and dread. Never been able to convince anyone of anything—how am I going to talk Luke around?

He grimaces, shoving his comlink into his pocket, and straightens his shoulders. No. I can do this. The turbolift doors slide open, and he hurries across the narrow neck to engineering, barely noticing the gleam of the galaxy outside the viewport.

Just don’t bring up Vader, or the Force, or ask about anything except—

An electronic whistle startles him, and Bodhi skids to a halt, just beyond the alcove at the end of the crossing. He turns, slowly, and discovers Artoo swiveling his blue-and-silver dome, aiming his photoreceptor at him. And Luke, kneeling at Artoo’s side with a micropoint tool in his hand, frozen and forlorn.

Bodhi licks his lips, and opens his mouth—

Artoo warbles, surprisingly menacingly, you made him cry again, and extends his arc-welding arm in Bodhi’s direction.

Bodhi takes a cautious step back, putting almost the entire span of the corridor between himself and the sparking tip of Artoo’s arm, and says, “I know, Artoo.” He twists his fingers together behind his back, and lifts his gaze from Artoo’s dome to Luke’s face. “I came to tell you I—I’m sorry. I’m so sorry. I shouldn’t have pushed you. Shouldn’t have gone looking for what I did.”

He scrapes his teeth over his lower lip, his heart sinking at Luke’s unchanging expression, and splays his hands out in front of him in offer. “Cassian gave me a mission, recon of some—of some systems, so we can move the Fleet somewhere—it’d just be the two of us, unless Artoo wants to come—?”

Artoo gives him a neutral chirp, and pivots back towards Luke. Who looks down, his hair falling in his eyes, and says nothing.

Bodhi’s breath catches in his throat, but he forges ahead, hoarsely, “I won’t—I promise I won’t ask after anything. You don’t have to—just—please say—Luke—” His voice quavers and nearly breaks,
but he puts everything he has of love and hope into the words. “Please say you'll come fly with me?”

A muscle in Luke’s jaw works. He gently closes Artoo’s open panels and tucks the micropoint tool back into his repair kit. Artoo trills wordlessly, very softly, watching Bodhi as Luke gets to his feet and wipes his hands on his pants.

“Wedge said he’d let me poke around in that Aethersprite fighter he brought back from Geonosis,” Luke says, after a moment. He rubs a fingertip over Artoo’s logic function display, smudging it.

Bodhi struggles to keep his disappointment off his face. “Oh, um—that’s all right, then—”

“Won’t seat two, though,” Luke adds, throwing Bodhi a sidelong, capitulating glance, and Bodhi’s heart lurches towards the stars.

*****

He’s further reassured, as far as it goes, having Luke in the Cadera’s cockpit plotting their hyperspace jumps, while he finishes packing supplies in the hold. Luke might lack his old effervescence, but it just seems right, to glance forward and see the curve of his shoulder, the overhead light shining on his hair. Even if that curve isn't as confident as it used to be, and the shadows lingering about him are darker.

It has to be all right.

Artoo informs Bodhi that he has no intention of being a third wheel on their trip, but he doesn’t trundle off to wherever he usually goes when he’s not with Luke. Bodhi checks over his shoulder as he straps cargo crates in place, half-expecting the astromech to take the opportunity to harangue him in invective-laden Binary, but he doesn’t. Instead, he bumps against Luke’s legs and inspects the latest upgrades to the ship’s navicomputer, all the while keeping his photoreceptor aimed in Bodhi’s direction.

“All right, Artoo, I think we’re ready to head out, so if you’re really not coming, back to Leia with you,” Luke says, patting Artoo’s dome. “I’ll check in about Lando’s search as often as I can. We’ll only be gone a few days ourselves.”

Artoo trills acknowledgement, and unlocks his wheels to roll back out of the cockpit.

Luke lifts his gaze to Bodhi’s face. “I'll get started on the preflight?”


“Did you change your mind? You can come,” Bodhi says, uncertainly. Adds, with some reluctance, “I'm sure Leia could spare Threepio, if you'd prefer—”

Artoo swivels his dome, chirping a negative. And then he says, without inflection, just a simple statement of fact, He thought you died.


He thought it was his fault for doing something reckless on Hoth and not going to you fast enough, Artoo warbles, just at the edge of Bodhi’s hearing. When we came back he looked up what happened to you how badly you were hurt and how long you were in a bacta tank afterward.
“Artoo—”

Three days is a long time, Artoo observes, making Bodhi shiver uncomfortably. He doesn’t tell you things because he’s afraid he’ll hurt you again.

“Even when they hurt him?” Bodhi whispers, throwing a quick look towards the cockpit. “Artoo, I just want to help.”

Artoo goes silent. Then he chirrups, dripping with distaste, Don’t take him anywhere with a swamp, and rolls the rest of the way down into the hangar.

Bodhi doesn’t intend to.

Besides, moving the Fleet means they only have to locate nice safe systems, not check out planets for unpleasant surprises like acid storms, killer bunnies, mass untended graves, or malevolent dark side presences. And Bodhi resolves not to let that last overshadow their trip; he’s promised, after all.

Luke’s all business, focused on flying until they’ve gone safely to hyperspace, the bright swirl of it welcome around the viewport after far too long in the empty void. He doesn’t miss a step, and Bodhi wonders, a little, at his stated intention to give up the squadron. The Jedi of the Republic had been pilots, and fighters, and no matter what Cassian thought, Luke would—

“Off we go,” Luke says, softly, interrupting his thoughts.

Bodhi forces himself to meet Luke’s curious gaze, though he rubs the back of his neck nervously. “I hoped—I thought it would help, going away for a while. No—no questions asked. We don’t—you don’t have to—I talk enough for the both of us.” He stops, starts again, gripping the controls to make his hands stop trembling. “And—and there’s the schematics for Wedge’s new antique in the ship’s computer, if you’d rather not—”

“Bodhi—”

“—it won’t be—I can’t take you to Sanctuary for peace and quiet, like you all did for me, but I wanted to—”

“Bodhi, You got me in your ship already.” Luke reaches over to rest a hand on his arm. “I’d say you’re all the peace and quiet I need, but that’s not very accurate,” he adds, wryly.

“Hey,” Bodhi protests, half-heartedly, though he relaxes a little under Luke’s touch, letting half a smile flicker across his mouth.

“And I do—” Luke swallows. “I have more questions, about the things I think I can handle better. What you were doing while I was—away.”


*****

It’s better—well, easier, anyway, telling Luke the story of a toccat wreaking havoc in the bar, though that is just about the only thing Bodhi can think of that won’t lead directly to conversational disaster. Luke screws up his face as he tries to remember if his childhood dog had been a native rock hound
or whether his aunt had bought him an imported animal; Bodhi vaguely recalls people keeping
fluffy-feathered avians in fancy cages.

“Some were bred for show, I think,” he says, watching Luke sprawl on his back on their bedrolls,
spread out in the hold like usual. “But more were for racing, or eating.” He pulls his shirt off over his
head and comes to lie down next to Luke.

“You didn’t have any yourself,” Luke surmises, rolling onto his side and stroking the palm of his
hand over Bodhi’s left arm.

Bodhi shrugs. “No place to keep ‘em.”

“Ah, right.” Luke looks down, and Bodhi follows his gaze to where his hand hovers over the neatly
affixed bacta patch. “Hobbie said you got shot.”

“We don’t have to talk about it,” Bodhi mutters. “I’m fine. Doesn’t—it doesn’t hurt much, really.”

Luke’s hand is soothing and warm, tracing circles on his skin, and he’s cuddling closer, his eyes
wide and guileless. “Tell me how it happened?”

Bodhi hesitates, thinking of Artoo’s parting words, and trying to come up with a way to explain
about Harkov that doesn’t involve the black-armored bantha in the room. He settles for, “I jumped in

Luke just keeps petting his arm. “Who was it?”

“The—um—” Bodhi blinks at him. “What d’you mean?”

“Who were you trying to protect?” Luke ducks his head so he can gaze up at Bodhi through his
eyelashes, with a faintly familiar expression of—

“Knock that off,” Bodhi says, poking him in the chest. “It wasn’t heroic, it was stupid, and it was
really stupid, because I stopped the blasted Emperor’s Hand from being shot, and she could’ve just
deflected it with her lightsaber—why are you shaking your head?”

“Wouldn’t have worked,” Luke says, catching Bodhi’s hand and folding their fingers together,
between their bedrolls. “If she’d caught the slug on her lightsaber blade, all it would’ve done was
throw bits of molten metal around. It would’ve been more dangerous for both of you.”

Bodhi narrows his eyes at him. “I didn’t say it was a slugthrower that got me.”

“You didn’t?”

Bodhi pokes him in the sternum again with his free hand. “No. You knew?”

Luke nods sheepishly, his face reddening a little.

“Then why have you been after me to tell you what happened?” Bodhi frowns at him, even as he
appreciates the rise and fall of Luke’s chest under his flattened palm.

“Mission reports and flight logs are one thing, and Hobbie’s—well, Hobbie’s something else
altogether, but I wanted to know if you were okay. If it was something that was gonna go on the list.
It didn’t seem like it, but I wanted to be sure.” Luke runs his thumb across the back of Bodhi’s hand;
his fingernails have grease under them from working on Artoo, even the ones on his prosthetic, an
touch of their old normalcy even as they drift further from it. “And I wanted—I’m trying to listen.
Hear what people want me to understand.”

“Um—” Bodhi turns his head on the pillow, staring up at the ceiling of the Cadera’s hold for a minute, sorting through his surprise and confusion, though he doesn’t extricate his hand from Luke’s grasp. Then he looks back at Luke, the earnest and somber cast of his face. “Then—then I want you to understand that I am okay. I’ve been—I did some reckless things while you were gone, I guess you saw that in the reports, but I’ve been all right.” He doesn’t bother to think about the times he’d lost control in front of Celina, stress and darkness and fear pressing in on all sides. “But I’m worried about you.”

“I know that, too,” Luke says, quietly. “I know you meant to help, earlier. I just wasn’t ready. I thought I was, but I was wrong.” His hand tightens on Bodhi’s, like he’s holding on for dear life. “I’d like to tell you—a lot of it, but I’m—”

Bodhi puts his other hand over Luke’s mouth, shaking his head. “Luke—”


Bodhi swallows, and traces his thumb over Luke’s lips, refusing to look away from the pain and anguish burning in his eyes, like stars going nova. “So—so tell me what you can, and maybe make the list, for what you can’t? The—all the things that you have to face.”

Luke mulls it over. “Okay,” he says, softly. “But there are some things I can’t tell you. It’s too dangerous.”

The bleak thought flashes through Bodhi’s mind that Cassian thinks just being in love with you is dangerous, but he doesn’t let it off his tongue. “All right,” he agrees, instead, and moves his hand to curl around the back of Luke’s neck.

“And—you’ll give me a little time?” Luke asks. “I don’t think I can do it—right now, or all at once.”

“Yeah, of course,” Bodhi says. Luke gives him a nod, and Bodhi hesitates for a fraction of a heartbeat before darting in to kiss him, to seal it.

*****

The flight plan for sector-hopping gives them plenty of time, though Luke is understandably still reluctant to start talking the next morning. After they’ve checked off a few primary systems of the Corva sector and are setting coordinates for the next one, Bodhi finally surrenders to the impulse to fill the quiet, watching Luke sigh and reach for his canteen, and says, just as Luke takes a sip, “So you didn’t shower for three months?”

Luke chokes on his water.

“Sorry,” Bodhi says, insincerely.


Bodhi widens his eyes. “I would never. I’m just saying, we’ve got a perfectly good ‘fresher in the back, no excuse for smelling like—”

“I’ll give you a shower,” Luke says, sticking his fingers in the mouth of his canteen and flicking droplets of water at Bodhi. Bodhi wipes his face with studied aplomb, a grin tugging at his mouth, and Luke pouts at him. “This is how you’re gonna ask me about where I went?”
“Artoo said not to take you anywhere with a swamp,” Bodhi says, helpfully. “Which only rules out, what, a sixth of the galaxy?”


“Do Chirrut and Baze know?” Bodhi asks, and Luke shakes his head, but he throws Bodhi a sidelong, suspicious glance. “Luke, it’s pretty obvious you went somewhere for Jedi training.” A strange sensation in his heart flares to life, like an offering of incense lit in a Temple alcove—“Are there other Jedi?”

“See, these are exactly the kinds of things that are too dangerous for you to know,” Luke says, folding his arms, but he relents, becoming serious. “I learned the ways of the Force, yes, but I have to—I didn’t finish my training.”


Luke blinks at him, an oddly grateful expression crossing his face. “There was a lot more running,” he says, ruefully. “Just about as much meditation as I could stand, and not nearly as much lightsaber practice as I wanted.” He takes a breath, gathering himself, and his gaze drifts to the starfield outside the viewport, the lush green moon of Jaresh vibrant in the darkness. “But becoming a Jedi isn’t just about learning to fight.”

Bodhi reaches over to touch Luke’s hand, aching at the grief in his face, raw and ragged as freshly cut stone.

“There was a cave,” Luke whispers. “It was evil. I wasn’t supposed to take my weapons with me, but I did. My—my lightsaber was my life. How else was I supposed to fight?” His hand, under Bodhi’s, clenches the arm of the co-pilot’s chair. “I don’t know what I would’ve seen if I’d left it behind. I wish I had.”

He turns to look Bodhi directly in the eye. “Because I saw you.”

Appalled, Bodhi rasps, “Luke, how—that’s impossible—”

“You never told me—you never told anyone exactly what Saw Gerrera did to you. I checked your debriefing, from when you first came to Yavin,” Luke says, and Bodhi’s lips part, but no air passes between them. It’s Luke, it’s Luke, he won’t—he can’t—”

Bodhi starts to shiver, and all the hairs on his arms are standing on end, but he gives him a tight nod, and Luke goes on, his carefully controlled voice beginning to crack. “With the monster wrapped around you, and you were screaming, and there was nothing—I attacked him, I tried to kill Saw for what he’d done. But it wasn’t really him. He came at me out of the mist, and it wasn’t Saw, it was Vader, and when—” He gulps. “When I cut his head off, it was my face under the mask.”

“You saw it,” Bodhi echoes, dully.

Luke’s face is crumpling, and his eyes are wet. “I thought that vision meant it was my fault that you died.”

Bodhi tightens his hand over Luke’s, anxiety over Luke’s distress overriding any sense of his own nightmarish memories coming to the fore. “No. No. I lived, okay? I survived—all of it. You can’t be everywhere, I know that, you can’t always—”

But Luke isn’t quite finished. “So when I had a vision of Han and Leia and Chewie in trouble, in
pain—I couldn’t let anyone else I cared about die.”

“Oh, stars, Luke,” Bodhi says, at once horrified and astonished at the revelation of Luke’s power; he’d felt their friends’ torment from across the galaxy and known precisely where to go, a far cry from when he’d had to send people out searching for Bodhi on Thila Base.

“There’s more, if you can stand to hear it,” Luke says, bleakly, and Bodhi licks his dry lips and motions for him to go on, willing himself steady. Luke casts his eyes down, studying their joined hands. “I fought Vader, and lost. I was just as reckless as everyone always said, and I was going to die for it, at—at the hands of the monster who—but the vision in the cave was a kind of warning, I think. Not to—fall to the dark side.”

“You wouldn’t. I know you wouldn’t—” But Bodhi remembers the strange and ultimately prophetic vision of Luke standing over Seerdon on a catwalk, preparing to strike him down. “You didn’t,” he says, helplessly.

Luke still doesn’t raise his head, tensing, as if bracing himself for impact. “Vader offered me the chance to join him.”

Bodhi jerks back so hard he smacks the side of his head against the chair. “What?”

“I didn’t consider it, not even for a second,” Luke says, quickly. “I thought that I’d failed everyone I cared about. I’d—lost you, I’d abandoned the Rebellion, and walked straight into a trap instead of doing anything to save my friends.” He bites his lip so hard Bodhi’s certain he’s about to draw blood, and adds, in a rush, “So I let go of the gantry and fell into Cloud City’s reactor shaft.”

Bodhi opens and closes his mouth, scrabbling about for his wits. Manages, hoarsely, “You jumped?”


Bodhi throws his hands in the air, flabbergasted, for once not noticing how badly they shake. “What the fuck?”

“I—”

“I was waiting for you to come back, and you let go?” Bodhi’s voice climbs.

Color rises into Luke’s cheeks. “You’re pissed at me? You’re one to talk—how many times have you tried to sacrifice yourself?”

“That’s different,” Bodhi retorts. “I—I’m—”

“Just a cargo pilot,” Luke says, shaking his head, his eyes glittering. “I thought you were starting to understand how much—”

“I wasn’t gonna say—this isn’t about me,” Bodhi snaps. “This is—you were just, what, going to go on and be one with the Force, permanently?”

Luke chokes out, “I thought I was going to be with you,” and Bodhi’s disconsolate, terrified heart comes crashing to a halt.

No—I keep fucking this up—

Bodhi jolts up out of his seat and squeezes between the console and Luke's knees. He brushes away
the tears trembling on Luke's eyelashes with unsteady fingers, and, with as much conviction as he’s ever felt about anything, from his decision to defect all the way to the moment he’d faced down Celina with the song of the Force in his heart, says, “You’re with me now.”

Luke squeezes his eyes shut, his chest heaving with scarcely suppressed sobs, and then he reaches up, grabbing Bodhi around the waist and pulling him down so he can bury his face in Bodhi’s shoulder. It’s awkward and uncomfortable, trying to balance half-on, half-off the edge of the copilot’s chair, Luke sniffling wetly into his collar, and there isn’t a single blasted thing Bodhi would change about it.

Bodhi holds on, and on, thinking of his own crushing failures and agonizing near-misses with death; of how he’d fled from Luke’s first, utterly innocent push to talk about Scarif, in his attempt to avoid all the things that had hurt him.

Of how long Luke had waited for Bodhi’s trust—and love.

“I’m so sorry,” he murmurs, into Luke’s hair, inhaling his clean summer scent. “I’m here, I promise I won’t—” Bodhi breaks off, listening to Luke’s breath hitching in his chest, and tries to start again.

“You were right, before—I’ve put myself on the line, but you didn’t—you didn’t think about the part that matters the most, Luke, the part where—if I’d take a shot for the Emperor's Hand, there isn’t anything I won’t do to—to help you, however long it takes.”

“I don’t want to hurt you anymore,” Luke whispers.

“You won’t,” Bodhi says, firmly. “You came back.”

And Luke raises his head, and like the first beams of sunlight venturing out after a storm, tries to smile.

Chapter End Notes

Well, whew.

There's more of their trip to come that's a looooooot less emotionally draining, and hopefully a looooooot easier to write, hahahahahahaha. *facepalms* ALL THE THANKS in the world (and a week-belated happy birthday!!) to moragmacpherson for shepherding me through this fucker of a chapter literally a hundred words at a time while I whined and moaned about it. <3 <3 <3

And--thanks, dear readers, for coming along this far. Not much further, now.

(But still further than you might think! ;)

<3
Chapter 79

Chapter Summary

Where am I even going?

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

It isn’t entirely fixed, of course. Even Luke can’t come to grips with his fears and grief that fast.

Bodhi perches awkwardly on the edge of the console as Luke unspools the rest of his travails, gradually, as if he’s trying to keep the tale from snagging on sharp corners. How he’d been sucked into the workings of the undercity, lost and hopeless despite miraculously surviving the fall; how he’d fallen out of the city entirely and only caught himself on a weather scanner vane.

How he’d called out to Leia with the Force.

“I broke a promise,” Luke murmurs, looking past Bodhi at the moon and stars beyond.

“You’ve been making promises not to—to call for help?” Bodhi asks, attempting to sound reasonable and calm, not as bewildered and angry and scared as he’d been, although the idea of Luke dangling above the clouds by one arm is utterly terrifying. “That’s not—um, everyone needs help, sometimes.”

Luke shakes his head. “I swore I’d stay out of your mind, after Corellia.”

“Yeah, but that was just—me.” Bodhi tugs his hand free to tap his temple. “My messed-up—”

“Not just you,” Luke says. “It wasn’t okay for me to do it then, and I didn’t want to invade anyone else’s mind, either, but I knew she was there. I knew I could reach her. We’ve always been connected, somehow.”

“So—it was like a comm call, right,” Bodhi offers, hesitantly. “On a different frequency that most people don’t get to use.” He touches Luke’s face, trying to draw his gaze back up. “Leia would’ve told you straight off if it bothered her.”

Luke turns so he’s resting lightly against Bodhi’s palm, though his eyes are still downcast. “Maybe. Sure bothered me when Vader reached out with the Force.”

Bodhi freezes in place, his fingers trembling against Luke’s cheek. “He did?”

“Just like a comm call,” Luke says, wryly, his mouth twisting. “He only—talked to me. Tried to convince me it was my destiny to join him.” He sighs. “I haven’t dared to reach out to the Force—not on purpose, anyway—since we escaped. In case he can find me that way.”

“Oh,” Bodhi murmurs, at a loss. He touches his jacket pocket, feeling for the lump nestled there above his heart, but it’s only one tiny crystal, and Luke had never indicated that he could sense them. The rest of it—he can’t fathom what Darth Vader could possibly say or do to wrest Luke from his allegiance to the Alliance, but it doesn’t matter. Luke would never go over to him. Bodhi’s as sure of
that as he is of anything.

Luke tilts his head back against the headrest, gazing up at Bodhi through his eyelashes. There are lines around his mouth that Bodhi doesn’t remember seeing before, that match with the weariness in his eyes. “That’s everything I can tell you.”

“Is it—are you okay?” Bodhi asks, softly. “You told me a lot, and I know you didn’t really want—”

Luke says, “It’s what you wanted.” Bodhi opens his mouth to argue that he still only means to help, but Luke holds up a hand, and there’s no trace of animosity or reproach in his voice. “And—I did want you to know, honestly, or I wouldn’t have suggested we trade questions. I just—” His half-smile barely lights his eyes, and Bodhi’s cold, in the shadow of it. “I panicked. But I’m okay now.” He touches Bodhi’s hand. “I’ll tell you about the snakes and the mud and this awful root stew I had to eat—some other time?”

Bodhi licks his lips, considering it. “No, I don’t think so,” he says, after a moment, as he goes and sits back down in the pilot’s chair, though he sidles between the seats carefully, so their hands stay linked together.

“But we always talk about strange food—or is it the snakes?” Luke furrows his brow.

“It’s your turn to ask, next,” Bodhi says.

Luke’s eyes widen. “It is?”

Bodhi shrugs, throwing him a crooked smile, and reaches for the controls. “It’s only fair.”

*****

Luke mulls that over while they continue on their mission, jumping to hyperspace once more, and Bodhi wonders, uneasily, about Luke’s choice to avoid actively using the Force. He doesn’t chalk his dismay up to his fight with Cassian, who’s just wrong, after all; nor is his renewed faith in the Force diminished, not when Luke had survived after losing and falling so far. It just feels strange, thinking of Luke giving up the power he’d been curious and excited about for so long, almost as if Luke’s cutting away another part of himself.

He’s still Luke, Bodhi thinks. Even if he gives up his rank and the Force, if he doesn’t want to be the embodiment of centuries of tradition—

Bodhi gulps and convulsively clenches the controls. He doesn’t want Luke to stop being a Jedi, even if he’s certain he’s always loved Luke for the sweet farm boy he is, not his abilities or what his abilities mean. But thinking about what it would’ve meant if Luke had truly fallen to Vader or his death, not only to Bodhi’s own heart, but the galaxy—

How am I gonna help him with this? It’s too much—

“I’m not so sure about this sector,” Luke says, doubtfully, interrupting his thoughts, and Bodhi jerks his head up just as the starlines resolve back into points of light. He darts a glance at the navicomputer; the Suolriep sector’s on the loosely-defined border of the Mid and Outer Rim, and they’ve come out a few lightyears away from Saleucami or any other populated planet. “There’s already a base on New Krisge—General Willard’s training facility, off Chaasch.”

“He designed the hardest training simulation there is,” Luke says. “My scores were why they let me fly with Red Squadron in the first place. It was based on the Battle of Brigia.” He looks thoughtful. “Before either of us came to the Rebellion.”

“Don’t think they made me try that one” Bodhi says, ruefully.

“You wouldn’t like it much,” Luke agrees. “You have to protect the Redemption, actually, during a—transfer of the wounded. A handful of X-wings against TIEs, TIE bombers—it’s lucky they came out on top, that time.”

Bodhi leans sideways in his seat to consult the navicomputer again. “Boonta’s not far from here,” he observes. “In the Dernatine system.”

“Boonta?” Luke asks. “As in, the original Boonta Eve podrace?”

Bodhi nods and says, eagerly, “We could slip in and check it out—”


“—see if there's anything left to—” Bodhi breaks off, blinking at the grimace contorting Luke's features. “Oh, right.”


“It’s all right,” Bodhi says. He doesn’t quite understand why Luke looks so sad, but he ventures, “It's, uh, Hutt space, too, I guess you wouldn't want to get caught up in that, either.”

“Yeah,” Luke murmurs. He rubs his cybernetic hand over his mouth. “Let's have a look in the Zarkis system?”

“Okay,” Bodhi says, and lets Luke handle the navigation, thinking about his odd reactions to things Bodhi had said over the course of his recovery.

Where else can I take him?

What am I going to do?

*****

Hours later, the Cadera is in orbit over the nighttime side of Laboi II, and they're sitting on the deck in the hold eating dinner while the navicomputer calculates another jump, when Luke finally says, “I thought of what I want to ask you.”

“Okay, shoot,” Bodhi mumbles, around a mouthful of ration bar, already anticipating Luke’s worry over his encounter with the Emperor's Hand, and wondering if that's enough to get him to reconsider using the Force.


A bit of his ration bar goes down the wrong way, and Bodhi coughs, gesturing for the canteen by Luke's knee. Luke hands it over, making an apologetic face, though Bodhi eyes him suspiciously over the rim as he drinks. “You know why,” he says, wiping his mouth with the back of his hand. “Don't you? If you read what I said in the debrief back on Yavin—you talk to Chirrut and Baze, they know—didn’t I tell you, when you came and talked to me, on Thila?”

“Not exactly,” Luke answers. “I told you why I was with the Rebellion, but you—” He leans back
against the bulkhead and tilts his head appraisingly at Bodhi. “You told me you were from Jedha.”

“Well, that's it, really.” Bodhi frowns at him. “I had to try to make it right, what I'd done. Galen told me I could, if I helped him, but I—I—” He reaches up to pull his goggles off and fiddle with them, but they're not perched on his forehead; he frowns harder, his heartbeat picking up speed, as he glances around the hold for them. “You know all this,” Bodhi says, distractedly, wondering if, in his haste to get Luke off the Redemption and away from everyone else, he’d left his goggles in their quarters. He twists his hands together in his lap, instead. “The—the whole bit with Galen waiting for me to come 'round to asking about the Death Star, but it was too late—all of that shit on my list, you know it—”

Luke is leaning forward, hands on both Bodhi's upper arms, gazing steadily into his face. “Hey—I’m sorry—I didn't know, Bodhi, it's not like that debrief got recorded verbatim, and Chirrut never—he just said you were very brave to come home, that's all. Don't—don’t—”

“I'm not, I’m still here—” Bodhi shakes his head. “I just wasn't expecting—that.”


“I mean, I guess,” Bodhi mutters. “Should I get the list, see if I can handle running down the rest of it for you?”

Luke huffs a small laugh. “No, I think I’ll stick to just this part.” He runs his hands up and down Bodhi's arms. “Tell me about why Galen Erso thought he could stop it by sending you with the message, even though he was the one building the Death Star?”

“Don’t you think that’s a second question?”

“No really,” Luke hedges, and then, with a touch of acerbity, “Do you think you really answered my first?”

Bodhi raises his eyebrows. “Should we draw up rules for this? How many panic attacks are we each allowed—”

“How many times we're allowed to apologize to each other,” Luke suggests, dryly. “If you want me to stop—”

Bodhi shakes his head again, and draws back from the protective circle of Luke’s arms, steeling himself. “I didn't know Galen for very long,” he says. “I didn't even watch the message he sent with me—probably should've, what if he'd been sending me to Saw with a message to have me tortured —” His voice goes flat, and Luke looks thoroughly dismayed, probably all the more because he'd actually seen it, somehow. “Or—or killed. But I think it—only Jyn saw the message. Only Jyn knows how Galen really justified what he did. Had to do.”

“Was he a good man?” Luke asks, very softly.

Bodhi doesn’t answer right away. He hooks his elbows around his knees, thinking of how Galen had nearly sent his own daughter and everyone Bodhi loved to their deaths, to bring down what he had built. How Cassian had said Galen had thrown himself in front of the frightened engineers on Eadu, even though it hadn’t mattered, in the bitter, burning end. How Galen had—

(—reached out uncertainly, kindly, to pat Bodhi’s shoulder, as they stood on that same platform in the rain, after his mother died—)

“I liked him.” Bodhi struggles a little to get the words out past the lump in his throat. “He was my
friend.” He swipes his sleeve across his watering eyes, and Luke makes a tiny, pained sound, shifting around to sit by his side and put an arm around his shoulders. “Luke, why—"

Luke leans into him, pressing his face into the crook of Bodhi’s neck, his slow and even breathing warm on Bodhi’s skin. “When I was away, I would—try to make myself feel better by thinking about how I got to be with you at all. If—if you hadn’t defected—if Galen Erso hadn’t been building the damn Death Star—"

“If you hadn’t blown it up,” Bodhi says, swiftly. He rubs Luke’s tense back, wishing he could figure out what it would take for Luke to relax again, and hoping it’s not having to answer more things from his wretched past. Then, he adds, morbidly curious to see how Luke will react, “All is as the Force wills it?”

Luke utters a humorless laugh. “I thought about that, too, but it never made me feel better about you being dead.”

“But I’m not,” Bodhi points out. “You’re not, even after you—um, let go.”


Feeling horribly awkward and a bit like he maybe should’ve stopped running around the Temple to listen every once in a while, Bodhi says, “I mean, you’re a Jedi.”

Luke stiffens against his side. “Am I?” he whispers, so quietly Bodhi barely hears it over the hum of the Cadera’s engines.

Bodhi can’t think of anything of to say in response. He’d only ever been a cargo pilot, after all, and except for when the monster had made him forget, he’d never questioned that.

*****

They get back to work checking off Cassian’s proposed systems; they have a near-miss in the Calaron sector, dipping into an apparently barren system to discover they’ve set off an Imperial sensor net.

“Shit,” Luke bites out, a millisecond before the comms blare to life with alarms and Bodhi swings the Cadera around for deep space, his heart pounding. “Go, Bodhi, go—you haven’t made this thing go any faster?”

Bodhi throws him a peeved look—but Luke’s the most energized Bodhi’s seen him since he came back, practically on the edge of his chair, his eyes darting over the console for warnings of incoming ships, his hands hovering over the firing controls. He’s tempted to just punch it and to hell with proper navigation procedures—

—the Force is with me—

—but if there are Imperial ships on the way, and if Luke comes alive like this at the possibility of flying against them—

“What are you waiting for?” Luke says, urgently. The navicomputer’s beeping, and Bodhi bites his lip, a little appalled at himself, and pulls the lever for the hyperdrive. The stars blur to streaks, and then to the vortex, and Luke sighs in relief, slumping back in his seat.

What the fuck was I thinking? I can’t put us in danger just for a chance to snap him out of it. Doesn’t work like that!
“Nice job, I don’t think they got a good look at us,” Luke is saying.

But if I could find someplace that’s interesting to fly, give him someplace to go in his head when it gets hard again—

“Bodhi?”

“Yeah?” Bodhi blinks at him, trying to hold onto the idea before it vanishes.


“Yeah,” Bodhi says, slightly hypnotized by the way the glow of hyperspace illuminates Luke’s eyes in shifting shades of blue like the lightning clouds on—on Bamayar. His heart leaps, incongruously.

“Um, after we finish up in the Zastiga system, there’s another place I want to take you, if—if—it’s beautiful, and peaceful, and I think you’d like it—”

“Did you notice we just escaped an Imperial installation of some kind?” Luke frowns at him.

Bodhi nods. “I’ll attach the Cadera’s sensor logs to our report.”

“No, I meant—” The corner of Luke’s mouth twitches up, quizzically, but his eyes are soft as he reaches over to touch Bodhi’s arm. “Listen, I’ll be all right, eventually, I promise. You don’t have to do anything special for me.”

“Just being alive is enough?” Bodhi says, wryly, not thinking.

Luke’s mouth falls open a couple centimeters. Bodhi shakes his head, about to apologize, but Luke recovers, and says, equally dry, “Well, there’s the sex—”

Bodhi snorts a laugh. “You’re telling me that’s not special?” and Luke can’t help but blush at him in return.

*****

He insists on taking Luke to Bamayar anyway, hopeful it’ll help. The gas giant isn’t quite in Imperial territory at the moment, apparently a locus for all comers, though he’s planning to avoid the space station in orbit, just in case. His eagerness to see the place again seems to be rubbing off on Luke, too; he drops all of the serious and depressing questions in favor of his former curiosity about what Bodhi’s learned and seen and done. When they return to normal space, a few thousand kilometers above Bamayar’s hazy surface, Bodhi is in the middle of describing the ancient Nu-class shuttle he’d flown, how once he’d accidentally failed to notice that the magnetic clamp hadn’t retracted, and it had subsequently scooped up every piece of loose metal from the hangar.

Luke gazes out the viewport somewhat blankly. “Not that I don’t believe you, Bodhi, and I’m hardly one to talk, coming from a big ball of nothing, but there doesn’t seem to be much here?”

“Just wait,” Bodhi says, as he starts their descent into the planet’s upper layer, the clouds swirling around the Cadera, glimmering emerald and turquoise like the oceans of Scarif, of Sanctuary. He unstraps from his chair and stands.

“What are you doing?” Luke looks up at him.

“You’re gonna fly it,” Bodhi says.

“Fly what?”
“It’s not a race or anything, it’s just—it’s just flying around, for fun,” Bodhi says, and then he can’t quite stop himself—“Jedi still do that, right?”

Luke huffs, shooting him a brief glare, but he pushes to his feet. Bodhi takes a step backwards to let him squeeze past to the pilot’s chair, lingering for a moment between the seats to rest a hand on Luke’s arm—

—the cockpit flashes brilliant white, and the Cadera pitches violently to port, throwing Bodhi off his feet into the bulkhead. He flails to grab onto something and misses, crashing to the deck, his injured shoulder protesting painfully.

“Bodhi!” Luke’s unstrapping, his face pale—

“No, no—you’ve got to stay—” Bodhi manages a faint grin as he pulls himself up and forward into the empty seat, though it probably looks more like a grimace. His shoulder aches, but he ignores it as the Cadera shudders and Luke clutches the controls. “It’s fine, should’ve expected it—it’s what I wanted you to see.” He points out the viewport at the lightning leaping and dancing between the blue-green clouds.

“You getting dumped on your ass?” Luke says, sharply, casting an appalled glance in Bodhi’s direction between flashes of light, even as he guides the shuttle into a diving downdraft. “I thought you said it was peaceful here!”

“It is,” Bodhi swears. “Luke, stop worrying about me and fly, already!”

“Where am I even going?” Luke yelps. Ahead of them, the edge of a cerulean cloud sparks twice in rapid succession, and then it ignites and bursts, showering the viewport with glimmering filaments.

“I don’t know,” Bodhi says, rubbing his twinging shoulder and beaming at Luke, a little dizzily. “Does it matter, if we—if we’re together?”

“It matters if we’re gonna live through this together,” Luke retorts, but his mouth curves up, and he turns back to the controls. Bodhi settles into his seat to watch, gripping the armrest in exhilaration as the Cadera swoops and soars in Luke’s hands; his reflexes are as good as they ever were, if not better. Bodhi laughs, giddy, and urges him on, as the ship climbs through a towering column of jade-green cloud, dodging sideways bolts of electricity, until they’re tearing out of Bamayar’s atmosphere, wisps of vapor trailing off the viewport.

“Still not what I’d call peaceful,” Luke says, turning in his chair, but he’s smiling at Bodhi, nearly as dazzling as the lightning below. Then his eyes widen in alarm—“You’re bleeding—”

“Huh?” Bodhi looks down at himself, half-expecting it to be his sore shoulder, but instead, there’s a rip in his shirt and a slowly spreading stain across his left side, just below his ribs. “Oh—must’ve scraped it on something when I fell.” He touches it, gingerly, and makes a face at the crimson smudge on his fingertips.

“You’re hurt,” Luke says, anxiously. He’s out of his seat, catching at Bodhi’s arm.

Bodhi follows him dutifully, pulling his shirt away from his skin to frown at the tear in it, and glancing down at the deck to look for what he must’ve cut himself on. “Did you—was I right, was it fun to—”

Luke shakes his head, and nudges him towards a jump seat, ordering, “Bodhi, take your shirt off, c’mon, let me take a look.”
“It’s not a big deal,” Bodhi protests, wrestling with the sleeve of his jacket and hissing as he tweaks his shoulder again. A line of fire burns across his side with the motion, too, and he suppresses a wince. He gives up trying to get his jacket off and simply holds it open and out of the way so Luke can tug his shirt hem up. “Just a scrape. Slap another bacta patch on, it’ll be fine, it barely even—” Luke raises his eyebrows, dropping to his knees in front of him, and Bodhi subsides.

“You’re hurt,” Luke repeats, softly, and Bodhi flinches away as Luke hovers his hand over the cut; it’s nastier than he’d thought, zigzagging over his ribs and as long as Luke’s fingers, and—

—and then Bodhi gasps in shock as the jagged edges of the cut start to close, and the searing pain he’d just begun to notice seeps away. Luke’s eyes are squeezed shut, his face gone still with concentration, and Bodhi trembles, moving to grasp his shoulder. “No—Luke, stop, you—you said —”

Something hums, beckoning and familiar, and Bodhi freezes, stunned.

Luke gently touches Bodhi’s side, and opens his eyes. “Better?” He smiles—furrows his brow at the look on Bodhi’s face. “What?” Then he hears the hum, too—“What is that?”

“It—” Bodhi’s eyes dart from the healed gash to Luke’s concerned face. “I—I would’ve told you, when you got around to asking about Dantooine,” he says, slowly, and reaches into his jacket pocket. The kyber crystal warms to his touch, like always, and he wraps his fingers around it, scarcely breathing, overwhelmed. “Chirrut said it called me, but now—not now I think—” Bodhi draws the crystal out of his pocket and puts it into Luke’s hand. “I think it was waiting for me to bring it to you.”

Luke places his other hand over Bodhi’s, not quite willing to look. “Bodhi—”

“I—I know you’re not—this isn’t me trying to make it all right,” Bodhi goes on, in a rush. “I mean, yeah, I thought coming here and flying might make you happy, at least for a little while, but I didn’t think it was gonna fix anything, it—it’s okay if you don’t want it, if you don’t want to be a—” He swallows, and licks his dry lips. “I’ll love you no matter what.”

“I never thought—” Luke looks up through his eyelashes at Bodhi, his eyes bright and brimming over. “I never thought I’d ever get to hear you say that to me.”

“Well, I told Wedge—” Bodhi starts, helplessly, and Luke hiccups a laugh and surges up from his knees to kiss him.

“The Force is strong,” Luke murmurs, against Bodhi’s lips, and then, earnest as always, “I love you, Bodhi Rook—”

—and, between their clasped hands, the kyber crystal sings.

Chapter End Notes

Happy Valentine's Day!! Still counts in my timezone for like ten five more minutes :P
Thanks to morag for endless patience and assistance with this chapter too, though all final mistakes are mine.

A couple of gifts I want to share with all of you wonderful people:
-The lovely cesiasaurus commissioned another amazing stitchyart piece which you can see here...
-...and I have been HORRIBLY remiss in not posting attackedastoria's incredibly sweet drawing of the boys!!

And--thanks for your patience and kudos and comments and bookmarks and EVERYTHING, dear readers. All my love. <3
“You don’t suppose it's going to keep doing that all the time,” Bodhi pants, as he comes up for air. Luke's dragged them both to the deck in the tangle of half their clothes and bedrolls, but his right hand is closed in a fist around the still-humming kyber crystal. Which hasn't dampened Luke's enthusiasm in the slightest; Bodhi suspects he’s even been augmenting what he can do with his mouth and tongue and other hand with the Force. It's practically a miracle to discover his pants are still on.

Luke props himself up on his elbow, smiling; he’s down to his shorts, the fabric snug around his lean and muscular thighs. “I think it's a kind of nice sound.”

“We're going to have to sleep, eventually,” Bodhi says, wadding his jacket up for an extra pillow and flopping down again with his arms wrapped around it. He chances a peek at his bare chest; there’s no sign whatsoever that he'd cut himself, not even a streak of blood to be seen, and his shoulder doesn’t hurt anymore—had Luke been sneaking in more Force-healing while they’d been kissing?

“Then you probably don't want it glowing, either.” Luke opens his palm between them, revealing the crystal’s not only doing that, but—

“It—it’s green?”

Luke’s eyes widen, innocently. “Was there a different color kyber crystal you were planning to give me?”

“No, no, there wasn’t—I’ve never—it wasn’t green before,” Bodhi stammers, getting to his knees and staring down at it, awe suffusing his voice. “It was colorless, clear—Luke, I’ve seen thousands of kyber crystals, in the—in the Temple, or fresh out of the, um, the Imperial mines, and they—none of them ever changed color!”

“It gets warm, too,” Luke observes, delighted, picking it up between thumb and forefinger and reaching over as if to touch it to Bodhi’s cheek.

“I knew that already.” Bodhi catches Luke’s wrist before he can close the distance between them, irrationally worried that it'll stop humming or turn clear again if he touches it, now that he’s given it to its rightful owner.

“Does Jyn’s?”

Bodhi shakes his head. “Dunno. She wears it pretty close.” He puts two fingers to his throat and scratches along the dip between his collarbones.

“What about the crystals in the Temple?” Luke peers at him, the corner of his mouth quirking up
even as concern shades his eyes. “Or were you such a well-behaved child that you always kept your hands behind your back and didn’t touch?”

“Ha. No.”

“Galen Erso never mentioned—”

“No,” Bodhi says, gently pushing Luke’s hand back until his fingertips brush the warm skin of Luke’s chest. “Not the Guardians, either, they didn’t go in for the high-level physics or crystallography Galen was into, more—poetry. Like kyber crystals were born in the hearts of stars, nothing about turning colors or making noise. Singing.”

“I think the humming’s my fault, at least,” Luke offers. “I think if I stop using the Force—” His face reddens. “I know, I said I wasn’t going to, but you were hurt, and then it didn’t seem like there was any reason to, um, stop.”

Bodhi raises his eyebrows.


“It was a scratch,” Bodhi mutters, his face flushing hot, and changes the subject. “You gonna do that sort of thing now? Be a—a healer, lend—um, help Yraka’Nes and Too-Onebee out?”

Luke rubs his thumb over the facets of the kyber crystal. Its hum is fainter, now, though its glow hasn’t diminished in the least; Bodhi’s almost hypnotized by it, and the way Luke’s eyes refract the green gleam like sunlight under clear water. “Half the Rebellion thinks I’m going to rebuild the Jedi Order from the ground up.”

“What, after the war?” Bodhi thinks of his wistful imaginings of a new Temple on Coruscant, as he settles on the bedroll in a mirror of Luke’s posture.

“Right now. The NewsNet has it I spent the last three months looking for Jedi.” Luke shivers, cradling the kyber crystal to his heart like it’ll warm him. Bodhi doesn’t ask if he found any, and instinctively wiggles closer, draping his arm over Luke’s hips, smoothing his hand over Luke’s pale and pebbling skin.

Luke sighs. “But I don’t know what I’m really going to do next, Bodhi. I know Leia’s got a datapad with all the positions she needs filled, except—” He takes another breath, and lifts his chin, something of his former surety creeping back into his face, though it’s not quite the same as his old brash confidence. “I have to find Han. I owe that to him. To Leia and Chewie. And Lando.” Then he hooks his bare foot behind the backs of Bodhi’s knees, and his voice brightens. “But after that, d’you need a co-pilot, Captain?”

Bodhi traces his fingers up Luke’s spine and says, attempting to sound as thoughtful and serious as befits a commissioned officer of the Alliance Fleet, “Well, not if Samoc washes out of Rogue Squadron—”

Luke snorts, and jerks his foot sideways and moves, almost faster than Bodhi can process what’s happening. “Don’t lose the kyber crystal!” he yelps, as Luke deftly flips him onto his back and straddles him. Luke holds it up, and Bodhi, relieved, lets his head fall backwards onto his flight jacket. “Sorry. Went through kind of a lot for it.”

“I won’t lose it,” Luke reassures him, twisting to locate one of his own scattered pieces of clothing and put the crystal carefully away.
“Got any other fancy new maneuvers you want to show me?” Bodhi asks, as Luke turns back.

Luke’s eyes sparkle faintly with amusement. “Nothing relevant to the situation at hand,” he says, working Bodhi’s pants open with renewed determination. “You?”


“What is it? Are you okay?”

“Can I—look, you’re always—” Bodhi wills his racing heart under control. He licks his lips and tries to start again. “Let me take care of you first, for once?”

“You’ve been taking care of me ever since I got back.” Luke frowns, puzzled, and crawls back up to him on all fours.

Bodhi pokes him in the chest, lightly. “I didn't know what I was doing, most of the time, and I couldn’t stop screwing up, but this—I think I can get it right.” He strokes his hands over Luke’s body, palming his length through his shorts.

“Oh,” Luke says, and flashes him an abashed smile, his cheeks and ears turning pink. He rolls his hips, once, almost involuntarily.

“Is there anything you want?” Bodhi asks, low in his throat, and a tremor goes through Luke like a wave. “For—for here, and now, I mean, I know you must want—” He flounders, and reels back the words about to incautiously tumble from his mouth about the war, the Force, all the things he’d tried to help Luke with and failed on at every turn.

“Um,” Luke says, a little hoarsely. He’s holding himself very still, but his eyes scan Bodhi’s face with laser-sight intensity. Bodhi caresses him again, helpfully, hopefully, and Luke swallows and mutters, blushing as fiercely as a storm-caught sunrise, “There was—I seem to remember you saying something about what we could, um, do, back while we were still on Hoth?” He jerks a thumb over his shoulder towards the cockpit.

“Bodhi,” Luke implores him, climbing to his feet and stripping clean out of his shorts.

“Right,” Bodhi says, and grins as he gets up to follow, pausing to rummage through a cargo container for the closest thing he’s got to the necessities.

Bamayar’s clouds bathe Luke’s skin in aquamarine light as he leans backwards over the console, bracing himself on his elbows. “I locked down the controls,” he says, sounding close to as cheerful as ever, and props a foot up on the pilot’s chair.

“Luke—” Bodhi steps in between Luke’s splayed legs, the view of his pliant boyfriend spread out across the controls of his ship more inviting than any oasis. Then he drops the canister of lubricant on the seat and bends down to press a line of kisses along the taut column of Luke’s throat. “It’s not a race.”

Bodhi catches Luke’s foot and runs his fingers over the sole, and Luke whines and squirms delightfully against him. “Stars, Luke, cool your thrusters.” He gets a raised eyebrow for that, which he supposes he deserves. “I’m serious! There’s no way you’ve done this—uh, recently, unless you met some buff Jedi warrior in that swamp and let him—”

Luke makes a horrified face.

“That’s a no, then?”

“No!” Luke rubs the heel of his hand against his eyes, like he’s attempting to rid himself of whatever appalling vision Bodhi has summoned. “Bodhi, Bodhi, please—”

Bodhi takes pity on him and kisses him to stop his pleading, sucking hard on Luke’s lower lip and making him whimper, and shimmies out of the rest of his clothes, tossing them over the back of the chair. Then he reaches for the canister, and then he reaches for Luke, his arms and slick hands—his whole being trembling with adrenaline, with desire. Luke nearly arches completely off the console into Bodhi’s arms as their bodies begin to converge, muffling a moan against his mouth.

“Okay?” Bodhi manages, easing gradually into him.

Luke lets out a stuttery breath and lies back on the console, shifting his shoulders as if he’s simply adjusting his position among the uncomfortable controls poking into his ribs. “Yeah.”

“You’re still not a very good liar,” Bodhi chastises him, and tries an experimental, shallow thrust.

“I’m fine, just—keep talking to me—” Luke’s voice catches, and Bodhi stops moving for a second, holding fast to self-control, but Luke shakes his head, his hair sweeping across the toggles and switches, and adds, “It’s how I know you’re okay—”

“Never better,” Bodhi pants, and Luke laughs, the first genuine laugh Bodhi’s heard from him since he came home. It ripples in the air around them like how he imagines Luke must feel the Force, warm and comforting. He pushes all the way in, driving another heartfelt sound out of Luke’s throat. “What—what do you want to know? What should I say?”


“How politically savvy of you,” Bodhi teases, and leans down over him, pistoning his hips faster as he frames Luke’s body with his forearms. He’s dizzy as if he’s been pulled into a whirlwind, spiralling higher and higher with pleasure. “Got any—new Jedi sayings I should know?”

“There’s one, but I think—ah!” Luke writhes frantically, and Bodhi withdraws a bit and aims for the same spot again, nearly on the brink of it himself. “I think you’ve got it figured out—tell me—”

Luke grips his shoulders, meeting him thrust for thrust, and Bodhi reaches down and wraps his fingers around him, intending to bring them over at the same moment. “Tell me you love me, again?”

Bodhi shudders as he holds off for a heartbeat longer, but he lifts his head and looks straight into Luke’s eyes, as luminous as galaxies, and breathes, “I love you, Luke Skywalker—”

Luke’s keening cry in return might not have the beauty of the kyber crystal’s song, but—it’s more than enough.

Chapter End Notes
A thing I said to morag as I was perusing exactly what's available in the GFFA: "thruster lubricant is gonna, uh, be hard to *sighs* get off" XD

Okay! *facepalms* Shmoop--such as it is--accomplished. Luke's back to more-or-less even keel, though there is still PLENTY of angst ahead. BACK TO SOME OTHER PLOTTY GOODNESS NEXT ISTG

Thanks to morag for the help, and thanks, as usual, to all of you, especially for hanging in over the past 2+ months (real-time) of Luke's return. It's about to get REAL fun.
Chapter 81: Statecraft, Squalor, and Scares

Chapter Summary

I don’t accept that.

Chapter Notes

A number of bits in Mandarin that are mouseover for online reading, but which won’t work on mobile. Translations in the end notes.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

It's easy to let Luke talk him into a couple more rounds on the flight home—it's what everyone will think they've been doing the whole trip, anyway. Bodhi tries not to let it become a blur, memorizing as best he can the way Luke’s hands look, braced flat over his own on the bulkhead; the sound of Luke panting urgent breaths, in time with his own, on the back of his neck; how they fit together, turn and turn about, slick and hot and perfect. He surfaces occasionally to get them water, to put a cushioning bit of clothing down between exposed skin and the unforgiving deck plating. But otherwise, Luke’s happiness, or what passes for it, is an all-consuming tide, sweeping him under.

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Back at the Fleet, though, reality sets in, as the Cadera swoops past Blue and Green Squadrons engaging in drills. Bodhi turns to watch Blue Squadron in Admiral Ackbar’s prized B-wings, but he can’t see anything all that special about them. They’re certainly no faster or maneuverable than the other squadron’s A-wings, which are practicing something twisty and complicated.


“No, I know you weren’t,” Bodhi says. He hesitates. “You sure you don’t want to lead the squadron, if there’s a ship free?”

“Wedge and I worked it out already.” Luke’s eyes are fixed on the Redemption growing ever larger in the viewport. “Besides, my destiny lies elsewhere. I think.” He smiles ruefully at Bodhi. “Sometimes the Force could stand to be clearer about what it wills.”

Bodhi shrugs, and says, a little flippantly, “You’re the Jedi.” Luke opens his mouth like he’s going to retort, but instead he just turns back to the controls to guide the Cadera safely into the hangar, and Bodhi stumbles over his words, anxious to keep from undoing the progress and promises he’d made. “I—I mean—you’ve got the Force, you’ve got the—the kyber crystal, so if—”

“If I want to be, I know,” Luke says, and unstraps from the co-pilot’s seat so he can stand and twine his arms around Bodhi’s neck, the ramp hissing down behind their chairs. “I’ll be all right. Thank you,” he murmurs, as Bodhi pulls him down to kiss him.
Cassian and Jyn and Kaytoo are still occupying Draven’s office, and there’s no sign that the general has even been by in Bodhi’s absence. None of his friends seem concerned about it—of course, they could be lying and he wouldn’t have the slightest idea. But there are some things Cassian and Jyn can’t hide, not when there’s plenty of room in the office and she’s tucked right along his side at the console going through a stack of datapads, his fingers hooked into the back pocket of her pants.

“Welcome back,” Cassian says, moving his hand to the console, but not distancing himself from Jyn.

“Had a good time?” Jyn asks, a touch salaciously.

“About as good as I could’ve expected, when Luke’s been through—what he’s been through,” Bodhi says, evasively. “He’s—we’re both better, now. I think.” He holds the datapad with their report out to Jyn and Cassian, uncertain which of them should take it, but Kaytoo pounces first, his metal hand latching on like the claw of an especially creepy rock-vulture.

“Hello, Bodhi,” he says.

“Hi, Kaytoo.” Bodhi blinks at him. “What are you doing?”

“Jyn talked Kaytoo into trying to be a proper aide to me,” Cassian says. He looks tired, as usual, but it’s fondness crinkling the corners of his eyes, not the terse anger of their last meeting. “Put his new literary ambitions to work writing some memos. Poor Major Harinar didn’t know what hit him.”

“Oh,” Bodhi says, trying to remember who Harinar might be. He has a vague inkling of a white beard and a grandfatherly air.

Jyn smirks at him. “Harinar deserved it, sending over all those technical manuals when he could’ve just told us to go have a look at the underside of a VCX freighter. Taim & Bak did up their laser turrets, too.”

“My specialty is still strategic analysis,” Kaytoo informs Bodhi. “In case you were worried that my primary programming had been overridden.”

“I wasn’t,” Bodhi says, and then he offers, “Um—I’m glad for you?”

“Technically I am also Jyn’s aide,” Kaytoo says, sounding resigned.

“It is just for this next mission,” Cassian assures him, exchanging amused glances with Jyn.

Kaytoo mutters, “You sent me with her on our last mission.”

“Face it, Kay, you’re stuck with me until the day I die,” Jyn says, overly bright.

Kaytoo stops grumbling, and when he promises, “I will not let that happen, Cassian,” his tone is as sincere as Bodhi thinks a droid can get.

“I know,” Cassian says, his eyes warm and his lips curving up under his mustache. “Anyway, Bodhi, the Abridon Nationalists have retaken their world, and the Alliance is sending supplies to help their refugee camps. I want you, Jyn, and Kaytoo to go.”

“But not you,” Bodhi says.

Cassian holds his gaze, steadily, the smile fading. “No. I have to stay here.”
“Are you going to explain why Draven’s missing and you’re running the show?” Bodhi asks.

“No.” Cassian’s mouth thins into a line.

Bodhi draws a breath. Lets it out, slowly, and casts another glance at Jyn; she’s taken his datapad from Kaytoo and started to read, like she’s been part of this conversation before, and doesn’t need to do it again. “Is he dead?”

Cassian looks down at his clenched fists on the console, knuckles whitening, and unfolds his fingers, one by one. “I don’t know. I don’t think so.” He looks up again, and his eyes are as dark as the last coals in a fire, his voice sharpening. “I’ll tell you what I can, when I can. I’ve already promised Jyn and Kaytoo and everyone that. Can we talk about Abridon now?”

“I guess,” Bodhi mutters. He doesn’t mean to keep poking at Cassian like he’s a nashtah in a repulsor cage, but—he sighs. Not gonna storm out of another meeting. “Sorry, Cassian,” he adds, softly.

Cassian gives him a brief nod. “The Nationalists’ governor wants to open negotiations to join the Alliance. The Diplomatic Corps is sending Mon Mothma’s top people, and they want certain other faces to be there.”

Bodhi frowns, but Jyn interjects before he can speak. “Not mine. Yours, now that you’re not dead. The Guardians.”

“It’s politics,” Cassian says, flatly, at Bodhi’s baffled look. “Showing Abridon—the NewsNet—that the Alliance takes care of the survivors of this war.”

“I’m a pilot, not—not a propaganda poster.” Bodhi grimaces, though he has a vivid mental image of Luke in his orange flightsuit, posing by his X-wing, sunkissed and golden. He wonders if anyone will ever see Luke that way again.

Jyn smiles, humorlessly. “Chirrut and Baze are going along with it. You can ask them.”

“But we’re going to help at the refugee camps,” Bodhi says, deciding to put up with it, for now, certain the cam droids will stay off him if Chirrut’s around. “I—we’re taking the Galen, right, we’re really flying in supplies?”

“Yes,” Cassian says. “This—it is just another thing that has to be done.” He pushes back from the console and rakes a hand through his hair. “I wouldn’t mind going with you, if I could,” he admits, quietly, his gaze flickering across the three of them, and Bodhi can’t fail to miss the openly wistful expression on Jyn’s face in return.

But she says, slightly sardonic, “Get Draven to name Harinar his successor and you can come back out in the field with us.”

“Cassian sleeps even less on missions than he does when he is in the office,” Kaytoo reproaches her. Bodhi sinks; he’d gotten to run off with Luke for days, even if they’d been awful at times, and Cassian had stayed put, and worked, watching over everything, and it wasn’t right—

Cassian huffs a wry laugh, picking the top two datapads off of his pile, and slides them across the console to Bodhi, tapping one. “General Taskeen’s report to High Command, everything you need to know about Abridon. The other has the files on our people who are going with you.”

“Okay,” Bodhi says, and then, in a rush, “Are you—are you free for dinner? I don’t have anything except ration bars, but I’d hate to—we’ve barely seen each other, and now you’re sending us off on
another mission—"

“Yeah, we’re free,” Jyn says, over him. She nudges Cassian in the side with her elbow when he looks like he wants to object. “Ration bars are fine, Bodhi, thanks. 1900 hours, in the Cadera?”

Bodhi’s eyes widen, envisioning the utter disarray he and Luke had left it in. “No, uh, our quarters.”

Kaytoo says, very dryly, “I don’t suppose the invitation to dinner extends to me as well?”

“What? Oh—of course it does, Kay.”

“All right,” Kaytoo says, and closes his hand on Bodhi’s shoulder.

“Well, that’s settled, then,” Jyn says, and grins at him. “Better go clean your quarters, if they’re still like I saw before you left.”

Bodhi thinks for a second. “Shit,” he mutters, and hurries out, Jyn’s snort of laughter trailing after him.

He’s promptly distracted, though, by the sound of Luke’s voice coming from the briefing room. He stops in the doorway and looks down, at Chirrut sitting on the far side of the room, in the front row behind the rail, and Baze fiddling with the holoprojector.

Luke’s folded-up on the floor, his back to Bodhi, and he gazes steadfastly at Chirrut, sounding passionate and pensive all at once: “—been there, during the occupation? Was there some way you think I could’ve stopped—I don’t know, the mining, or what Saw Gerrera was doing, or—what could I have done?”

“Died,” Baze grunts.

Bodhi’s mouth falls open in sheer horror, but he must be in more control of his emotions than usual, because Luke doesn’t turn, and simply says, firmly, “I don’t accept that.”

Chirrut laughs, and somehow the sound isn’t sharp, or hollow. “It’s true, my friend. You would have tried to stand up for Bodhi, or us, or the poor noodle merchant who sold bad worms, and the Imperials would have ground you into the dirt.”

“But you fought back,” Luke says. “You both did. I know you couldn’t have left it alone.”

“Quietly,” Baze says. “In small ways. Nothing that could bring too much attention.”

“Well, not that one time,” Chirrut says. “Remember?” By the door, still unnoticed, Bodhi frowns; he can’t come up with anything particularly dramatic they might’ve done, though it’s possible he’d been at the Academy, or gotten his posting to Eadu by then.

“Let’s not talk about that,” Baze says, irritably.

“那個別德時候——”

“Or that,” Baze grumbles.


“Or the third thing we did,” Chirrut says to his husband, and then, to Luke, “You would not have lasted. And anyway, things are different now. Take the fight straight to the Imperials, if you want.”
“I can’t,” Luke murmurs. “I need to learn a—another way to help.” Bodhi clenches his hand on the
doorframe, dismay rippling through him. *I should’ve thought of something else—*

“What makes you think we know what that is?” Chirrut asks.

Luke shrugs, and looks down at his hands. “You’re my teachers?”

Chirrut snorts. “*Baze* hasn’t taught you anything.”

Baze says, very indignantly, “我教他許多事情.”

“Name *one,*” Chirrut says.

Baze flips a toggle on the holoprojector back and forth; it doesn’t affect the holo of a map of Abridon
he’s been studying. “真麼泡茶.”

“What? That doesn’t count.”

“You didn’t say it had to be *Jedi* things,” Baze points out.

“Oh, okay,” Luke says. He turns his head to smile at Baze, and Bodhi tenses, ready to flee, as
to his feet, his face paling. “I didn’t know you were there.”

“我們該走了,” Baze mutters to Chirrut.

“來坐一下,” Chirrut replies, cheerfully, and pats the seat next to him.

“I was—I was just—” Bodhi stammers. His thoughts whirl, but they settle back into the right places,
and there’s nothing *wrong* with what they’ve said. And he doesn’t need to fall apart over this—*Luke*
doesn’t need him to fall apart—“I heard you talking, and I—you were talking about *home.*” He tastes
spice, and swallows, hard. “Which noodle vendor?”

“Sesquifian,” Chirrut says. “Sometimes he bought the worms from Dobias, and then there would be
sand in them.”

Luke blinks, his lips parting a little in confusion, but some color returns to his cheeks as Bodhi comes
down into the middle of the briefing room.

“Yeah, okay, I don’t—I think we didn’t go to him.” Bodhi reaches over for Luke’s hand, determined
to hang on, and Luke brightens, and squeezes back.

“That’s good,” Baze says, still watching Bodhi warily. “Poor Dobias. He tried.”


Chirrut leans back in his chair. “Yes?”

Luke turns the full force of his gaze on Bodhi. “You gave me shit for *my* food, and you *ate* worms?”

“I didn’t,” Bodhi protests.

“Were—were the *noodles* made out of worms, or—”

“What—no!”
Baze takes pity on Bodhi, and clearly trying not to laugh, informs Luke, “It was a stew. The worms were easy to catch, and cheap, and we needed the protein.”


“It would have been all right if Sesquifian cleaned them properly.” Chirrut grins in their general direction. “Okay, enough talk, you were supposed to be meditating for the last twenty minutes.”

Bodhi blinks at Luke. “You were?”

“I just wanted to talk to them,” Luke mutters, helplessly. “But Master Îmwe wouldn’t answer any of my questions until I got in the right position, at least.” He tugs Bodhi’s hand closer. “Stay and meditate with me?”

“I’ve got to clean our quarters,” Bodhi says, jerking a thumb over his shoulder. “I was on my way—Cassian and Jyn and Kaytoo are coming over for dinner—” Baze clears his throat, and Bodhi adds hastily, startled at his appalling lapse in manners, “Um—Uncle Îmwe, Uncle Malbus, do you want to have dinner with us?”—and even more horrified at himself, Bodhi turns to Luke—“Sorry—is—is it okay if all these people—”

“Yeah, of course,” Luke says, smiling at him, and Bodhi shakes his head apologetically and kisses Luke on the cheek.

“Are we already doing something else?” Chirrut asks Baze, who’s observing Bodhi and Luke with greater amusement.

Baze rolls his eyes. “No.”

“You’re sure?”

“Yes,” Baze says, with a sigh.

“Then we’re in,” Chirrut says. He gets to his feet and vaults lightly over the railing—Baze makes a noise of exasperation, but says nothing. “Meditate first, then dinner.”

“And you’ll help me figure out what I should be doing?” Luke asks, arranging himself in the same position he’d been in when Bodhi had found them. He looks up at Bodhi through his eyelashes, hopefully, and—our messy quarters can wait. Bodhi settles down beside Luke, brushing his thigh with the side of his hand.

“Baze, any ideas?” Chirrut sinks gracefully to the floor in a flourish of his robes.

“I thought I didn’t teach him anything,” Baze says.

“Now is a good time to start.”

Baze sighs, and makes the holoprojection zoom in on Abridon’s capital city. “他可以去—”

“You are not getting out of going,” Chirrut says.

“What? Where?” Luke opens his eyes and angles his head backwards to look at the map. “What are you going to do?”

“Supplying refugee camps,” Bodhi says, at the same instant that Baze says, rumbling with mistrust, “Diplomacy.”
“I’ve talked to Leia about joining one of her diplomatic assignments before, but the timing never worked out,” Luke says, looking thoughtful. “High Command used to be after me to—” He bites his lip. “To learn about how the Jedi worked with the old Republic Diplomatic Corps.” He turns back to Bodhi. “Or—the co-pilot offer still stands, Captain.”

But Bodhi’s mental image of Luke in his orange flightsuit has vanished, replaced with Luke in something more refined, like the elegant cloaks the councilmembers had worn on Yavin IV when they’d argued over the fate of the Rebellion.

If Luke had been there—

Maybe things would have been different.

“You’ll have to ask—Mon Mothma, I think, or Leia,” Bodhi says. He holds on to Tonc and Melshi and Sefla’s faces in his memory before letting them drift away like sand. “But I—I’d like it if you came along.”

“I don’t know how much you will learn from Baze about diplomacy,” Chirrut says, affecting a concerned air.

“你敢说—” Baze says, and they fall to bickering again. But Bodhi ignores them; Luke’s hand is warm on his knee, and his eyes are lit with an eager but steady fire.

Yeah. This could work.

*****

Except, at dinner—

“I don’t think it’s a good idea for you to go with them,” Cassian says.

Jyn’s gone and obtained some Aqualish hoi-broth soup from—somewhere, and is dunking bits of her ration bar in it the way Baze does with tarine tea. “It’ll be fine,” she says.

“Having Luke there raises the security risk. The Empire could send a strike team—”

“We have an entire base on planet,” Baze points out. “General Taskeen and his people can handle it.”

“Or you could ask me what I think,” Kaytoo mutters, from the corner with the charging port. “I only run these analyses all the time.”

Luke swirls his hoi-broth tube, evidently entertained by the strands of seaweed drifting around in the liquid. “Leia is just as wanted as I am, and she—”

“Travels in secrecy,” Cassian says.

“So get rid of the cam droids,” Jyn says. “Don’t let Mon Mothma’s people turn it into a—propaganda piece. We’ll get the work done, Luke can help with that, and then we’ll leave, with the Rebellion one world stronger.”

Bodhi nudges her with an elbow. “Maybe you should do the diplomacy bit.”

She shrugs. “Same as talking an informant down, really.”

But neither of them are paying quite enough attention to Cassian, who’s gone on—“is what I didn’t
want—you barging in like you know better, like you can wave your hand and make everything—"

“Cassian,” Bodhi snaps, appalled; he’d seemed fine about Luke being at dinner, and there isn’t even any alcohol to blame his friend’s rudeness on.

“Colonel Andor, I’m asking to go because I want to learn,” Luke says, firmly. “I’m a moisture farmer. I don’t know the first thing about diplomacy or negotiation except how to haggle with a bunch of Jawas over—over a malfunctioning droid.”

“You’re a _Jedi._” Cassian narrows his eyes, and Luke stills, his expression tightening.

“Cassian,” Bodhi says, quickly. “We’ve been over this. Don’t—don’t—"

“他為什麼這麼說?” Chirrut says, louder.

“因為 Cassian不喜歡那些Jedi的做法—”

“Oh, that.” Chirrut huffs. “The old Jedi were assholes.”

Bodhi’s mouth falls open. He flicks his gaze sideways around the table, and Jyn and Cassian look similarly stunned, hurt anger sparking to life in Luke’s eyes.

“Not Tai,” Baze says, defensively.

“No, but she _died._” Chirrut pats Baze’s arm. “And probably others would have died for the Temple, or for Jedha, if they had not all been killed already.”

“I’m sorry—” Cassian starts, as Bodhi scrambles to put the name to a face, horribly certain they mean the Jedi he’d seen Vader kill.

“But they had rules that were not just, or kind,” Chirrut continues, and whatever storm had been brewing on Luke’s face dissipates instantly. “If Luke wants to be a Jedi, he does not have to be like them. He is doing a lot of things wrong already. _And_ he is not an asshole.”

“I—” Cassian sets his hoi-broth tube carefully down on the table, his hands shaking slightly. “I know.”

“Are you sure?” Chirrut says, and Cassian jerks his head up to glare uselessly at him.

“I didn’t even finish my Jedi training,” Luke says, helpfully. Under the table, his hand tightens involuntarily on Bodhi’s leg. “I had to go save my friends, for all the good _that_ did—I don’t know what else you think of me, or the Jedi, but I promise you, I’ll do everything I can to keep the people I care about out of harm’s way.”

“And for the Rebellion?” Cassian asks, low. Jyn shifts towards him, just barely, but she says nothing.

Luke meets his gaze. “I only want to go where I’m needed. Where I can help. Which I can do _better,_ if I have the chance to learn.”

Cassian leans back in his chair, and in his sigh, Bodhi can nearly hear all his long-held bitterness uncoiling out of him. “I will hold you to that promise, Commander.” He doesn’t glance at Jyn, or Bodhi, or any of the rest of their family, holding himself straight and still.


“Okay, all friends again?” Jyn says, wryly, her relieved expression a mirror of Bodhi’s own, but—
“Wait, I don’t—what’ve you been doing wrong?” Bodhi frowns at Luke.


Chapter End Notes

*cringes* Sorry it's been more than two weeks on this update. Things, you know? I'm really excited for the next bit, though, so hopefully I can get that out on a slightly more regular timetable (I'm also scheduling my life better now, I think???)

Endless thanks to morag for the assist <3

And thanks, of course, to all of you. 275k words, friends. WHAT. <3 <3 <3

Tai Uzuma.
Hoi-broth (which I picture as kind of like miso soup with seaweed?)

Translations:
那個別德時候—: That other time
我教他許多事情: I taught him a lot of things
真麼泡茶: How to brew tea (Luke: "Um, I know how to put leaves in hot water, Baze."
Baze: "Yes, but this is--Bodhi will like it if you make it this way--")
我們該走了: We should go
來坐一下: Sit for a second
他可以去: He could go
你敢說—: You dare--
他為什麼這麼說?: Why did he say that?
因為 Cassian不喜歡那些Jedi的做法—: Because Cassian doesn't like what those Jedi did

(thanks to morag for the title of this section :) )
Chapter 82

Chapter Summary

This isn't who we are.

Chapter Notes

Not entirely sure how to tag for this, but, well, Bodhi gets pretty stressed out about some stuff towards the 2/3rds mark of the chapter.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Abridon is—

Nice isn't quite the right word for it.

Not when the Nationalists’ victory is only a few days old, and the gleaming transparisteel buildings of the government center are still stained hazy with smoke.

Not when the expression on nearly everyone's faces is a mixture of delirious exhilaration and exhaustion. It makes Bodhi realize he's never been around for the aftermath of a Rebel win, except for Chandrila, and that mission had come so close to disaster it doesn’t really count.

And not when Winter had taken one look at Bodhi, Luke, and Jyn, as they’d stepped off the Galen, and promptly hustled them off to find something more appropriate to wear to the governor's welcome reception in the evening, instead of putting them to work. Bodhi can't figure out how Baze had escaped her adherence to protocol, nor where he and Chirrut even are. He does admit, though, that Luke and Jyn are elegant in black, and his own formal tunic—blue as Jedha’s sky just before the stars came out—is actually comfortable, with the added bonus of making Luke look at him like that.

And, of course, it certainly isn’t nice to have fully half of the reception staring at them, too, even as they’re partially blocked by a large and rather peculiar statue of an egg made out of ship components.

Bodhi twists the end of his gold scarf between his fingers and glances away from Luke’s conversation with the governor, a small, pale human man in a garish suit named Hamman Flatt, curious how the others are managing. Kaytoo stands out, naturally, and aside from a couple of chatty Nationalist soldiers, most of the guests, even General Taskeen’s senior officers, are giving him a wide berth.

But Jyn is the center of attention of a group of Flatt’s immediate subordinates, and Bodhi can’t begin to guess what they’re talking about; Jyn’s not quite smiling, but her face is open and friendly in a way that doesn’t seem much like her—

Oh. Right. Spy.

She raises an eyebrow at him, and he gives her a small wave before turning back to the conversation.
at his elbow.

“—just here to learn from Auxi Kray Korbin, Hostis Ij, and Winter,” Luke is saying, modestly, cradling his bottle of Corellian ale. “I’m not much of a negotiator, I couldn’t even talk my uncle into letting me apply to the Academy.”

“Good thing you didn’t, huh?” Flatt laughs.

Caught off-guard by the notion of Flatt finding that funny, Bodhi stiffens, but he doesn’t get a chance to spiral after the horrible implications or blurt out anything stupid; Luke slides his free arm around his waist, warm through the lashaa silk, and says, sounding fond, “Good thing, or we’d never have met.”

“Indeed,” Flatt says, lightly, giving Bodhi another once-over. “How are you finding Abridon, Captain?”

“I’ve never seen a purple sky before,” Bodhi replies, gesturing at the full-length transparisteel windows, which look out at the city lights shimmering in the dark. “It’s, um, pretty.” He winces, a little, at his inanity. He’d always been fine chatting with fellow pilots, the low-level officers who didn’t bother to order him around; in the midst of planetary and Alliance officials, recounting his misadventures or launching into a discussion of the latest ship designs won’t precisely fly.

“Our sunsets have been especially beautiful with all the smoke in the air,” Flatt says. He’s still affecting his cheerful demeanor, but Bodhi comes alert at the note of bleakness in his voice, inviting—what? He hesitates, aware that Luke’s picked up on it, too, and is frowning.

What does Flatt want from me?

Reassurance?

Commiseration?

He settles on the latter, thinking, it could be worse, and murmurs, dryly, “Then—it’s just like home.”

As awful as it is—and as startled as Luke is—somehow that is the right thing to say. “I imagined it would be,” Flatt says, nodding, a faint and equally wry smile twisting his mouth, and then he shifts to geniality again. “The view from the rooftop gardens is still spectacular. I hear people used to think it was quite romantic.”

“Not so yourself, Governor?” Luke asks, matching Flatt’s tone, though his fingers are still tight on Bodhi’s side, like he’s determined to ground him.

“My wife doesn’t have much of a head for heights,” Flatt says, ruefully. “I was hoping she’d be able to join us tonight, but the refugee camp to our east had a medical emergency, and she was called away. She’ll be very relieved to have the supplies you’ve brought.”

Bodhi clamps down hard on his instinctive response that she’s doing something useful and real, not getting dressed up and—putting on a show. It’s not totally fair: after all, the Nationalists and General Taskeen’s forces deserve a respite, too, but neither Bodhi nor his closest friends and family had joined the Rebellion to wear nice clothes and mingle.

This isn’t who we are.

Bodhi glances over his shoulder for Jyn, calmly sipping Chandrilan wine and making small talk like she’s Core born-and-bred. Looks back at Luke, who is wearing quite possibly the most expensive
clothes a farm boy from Tatooine has ever seen, and who is utterly unconcerned with the locked-on
gazes of the people around him.

Huh.

Well, it’s not who I am.

Flatt offers a few more pleasantries about looking forward to working with the Alliance, and then he
excuses himself to greet General Taskeen, arriving surprisingly late. A few starstruck Nationalists,
who have been hanging around hoping to talk to Luke, try to make a move, but Kaytoo is faster,
scooping up some personal space.

“Hostis Ij told me that I am a rather unusual protocol droid,” Kaytoo says. He sounds—annoyed. “I
have no use for six million forms of communication.” He extends one finger to touch the composite
egg piece on its pedestal. “This is a very ugly sculpture.”

“Can’t imagine what kind of creature could’ve laid it, but I’m sure it’s expensive as everything else,”
Bodhi says, his shoulders loosening a fraction, though he can’t seem to stop himself from fiddling
with the hem of his scarf, and Luke has yet to move the arm draped comfortably around him. “This
your idea of small talk, Kay?”

“Cassian did not reprogram me for these functions,” Kaytoo replies, huffily.

Bodhi tries and mostly fails to hide a sudden smile, as Luke simultaneously smothers a chuckle.
“Didn’t you help Jyn pick out her dress?”

Kaytoo swivels his head down to glare at them. “I merely told her when she had achieved an illusion
of increased height.”


“She was not as amused as you are,” Kaytoo says. “Especially not after the TL-4 droid told her that
the hem needed to be altered by several centimeters.”

“Yeah, I bet,” Bodhi says, surreptitiously looking to see how high Jyn’s heels must be. His gaze is
arrested instead by the sight of the Guardians arriving behind General Taskeen and making their way
over, because Baze is—

Baze is—

Bodhi’s eyes widen, and he grips the inside edge of his scarf with fingers gone abruptly nerveless.
“Ustad Malbus,” he breathes, shakily, childhood reverence threading through his voice.

Baze straightens the sleeves of his charcoal Guardian’s robe self-consciously. “It was Chirrut’s idea,”
he mutters.

Chirrut grins; he has a new staff, too, and he prods Bodhi gently in the chest with the end of it. “No
one would take Master Malbus seriously if he came to a party in his old jumpsuit.”

“You’re still carrying two blasters,” Kaytoo says, curiously, though none are visible to Bodhi’s
stunned scrutiny. “Is that allowed?”

Baze glowers at him.

“I think you look great.” Luke inclines his head in a polite bow.
“Thank you,” Baze says, uncharacteristically awkward. Bodhi can’t stop staring; although the colors are newer and brighter, every drape and fold of his robes matches Chirrut’s exactly. He’s grown accustomed to Baze in faded fatigues, geared for action, not looking like he's about to call novices in to class.

And with the realization that Bodhi himself is dressed as if he were going to attend a festival day, albeit in a fancier tunic than he could've ever afforded before—he swallows, feeling like he’s teetering at the edge of a hole cratering open.


Bodhi shakes himself. It’s not like home. It’s fine. I’m fine. “Yeah. Yeah. Just surprised, that’s all.” Though, now that he’s considering it, there had been something else unpleasantly familiar about their approach to Abridon’s capital city, besides the residual smoke—

“I’m surprised you passed through the security screening,” Kaytoo says, apparently still scanning Baze for additional weaponry. “Why do you need a vibroblade at a party?”


“Yes, that’s clearly exactly the same thing,” Kaytoo says, sarcastically.

Luke is once again doing his damndest not to laugh, and Bodhi’s cheered by the way his eyes dance, instead of going downcast at the reminder of his loss. “Well, I'm glad you're both here with us, weapons or no.”

“As am I,” Winter says, drifting over to them, nodding graciously at General Taskeen and some of the Nationalists. She’s wearing something that looks like it could have come from Leia's wardrobe, stylish in its simplicity, and white, of course, unmarred by even a drop of the red wine she’s holding. “Governor Flatt wants to say a few words of welcome, and he’d like the Guardians and Luke to join him up front.”


“And Auxi and Hostis Ij,” Winter says, indicating the tall Togruta woman already weaving her way towards Flatt.

Luke bites his lip and looks at Bodhi. “No, I meant—”

“I'll hold your drink,” Bodhi offers, quickly, absolving Winter and whoever else had seen fit to overlook him.


Jyn strolls up, her wine glass empty; Bodhi wonders how much of it she’d really drank, or if she’d watered it down the way he’s heard Leia’s mother used to do, to keep her head during these sorts of events. “Having a nice time?”

“It’s all right,” Bodhi allows, watching Luke shaking hands with Flatt’s second; he still looks entirely at ease, unperturbed by the fact that now all the attention in the room is on him.

“What about you, Kay?” Jyn asks, a glint in her eyes.
Kaytoo lifts a hand in a helpless gesture. “At least this place let me in the door.”

“No one could possibly mistake you for a serving droid this time,” Jyn says, dryly, and then, lower, as Flatt begins to speak, “Did you hear anything interesting?”

Kaytoo says, sounding disappointed, “No,” but Bodhi jerks his head around, alarmed, and hisses, “Anything interesting?”

“Yes,” Jyn murmurs. She casts a knowing glance at him. “The kind of stuff you and I would’ve been on the lookout for, if this were five, six years ago. People who’re a little too happy that we showed up to help, you know, threw in with the Nationalists only when it looked like their side was going down.”

“And? Did—did you find anybody like that?” Bodhi’s mouth is dry. He takes a swig of Luke’s ale.

“Well, the guy who tailored our clothes, for one,” Jyn says.

Bodhi chokes. Jyn pats him on the back, apologetically, and somehow managing to keep from drawing anyone’s attention from Flatt’s effusive gratitude to General Taskeen and his forces, he whispers, “Winter took us to a—” Jyn’s eyes flash warningly at him. “What’re you gonna do about him?”

“Nothing,” Jyn says. “Just keeping tabs on him, and any others we come across.” Her mouth twitches. “It’s not usually the talkative ones we have to worry about, anyway.”

“Great,” Bodhi mutters. He takes a deep breath, attempting to calm his racing heart, and forces himself not to anxiously scan the room. It’s all right—

—up front, Flatt is going on, “And we are so glad that Master Îmwe and Master Malbus could join us for these negotiations, along with Captain Rook. I know I speak for many in this room, when I say that we have much to learn from the survivors of Jedha—”

—Bodhi tenses, as a decent percentage of the heads in the room turn back towards him, heat rising in his face not only from their stares, but the fatuous smile Flatt’s giving him—he’d thought Flatt understood—

—about reconciling with our neighbors who chose the path of least resistance, nearly dooming the world we share. The way forward will not be easy, but I know we are inspired by the memory of those who fought and died for us. And with the help of the Rebel Alliance, we can rebuild.”

Rage flares white behind his eyes, and it takes every last ounce of self control not to pitch Luke’s bottle of Corellian ale straight at Flatt’s smug, simpering face. “He fucking dares—” Bodhi snarls, under his breath, though he needn’t have bothered; his words go unheard in the applause.

Jyn grabs for his elbow, hissing something—he’s taken a step towards Flatt and their friends, fist clenched around the neck of the bottle, but he shakes her off, awareness that he really shouldn’t make a scene during Luke’s first diplomatic outing a faint but crescendoing klaxon beyond the roaring in his ears—

Oh, fuck, not now—

Luke is too far away, and the room is too close and crowded, a dozen people still looking in his direction; Bodhi jerks around, breathing hard. “I—I gotta get out of here—”

“Flatt’s a mudlicking son of a barve,” Jyn snaps. Her face is pale. “Sorry, Bodhi—”
“I don’t want—I’m not gonna screw this up for him, Jyn, I need a—a distraction so I can get out of here.” Bodhi stammers, the words tumbling out faster that she can probably even understand.

But Kaytoo does. “Yes, Mistress Erso,” he says, loudly. Jyn’s eyebrows shoot up. He takes a step back, turning as if to walk away on her orders, and knocks the egg sculpture over. It crashes to the floor in a thousand pieces of wiring and durasteel, the noise like an explosion. Bodhi gapes at Kaytoo for one astonished second, certain as anything that the droid is smirking—and then, as the crowd presses forward, exclaiming over the accident, slips away, feeling Luke’s worried eyes on his back.

His rising panic and anger don’t subside once he’s escaped into the turbolift in the hall.

Stupid to think I could stay off their scopes just ‘cause I’m not here for the negotiations—

He gulps a breath, and slaps at the controls to take him up to the roof; it’ll be in the open air again, closer to the stars, and blast Flatt for calling it romantic, like he’d actually given a damn about that—

—why did he—

I shouldn’t have—damn him anyway! I never wanted to be propaganda in the first place—

The turbolift door slides open, and Bodhi stumbles out, the sheer unexpectedness of the garden jolting him briefly from his anger. Water is running, somewhere, and gently lit stone paths wind away between the trees. It’s so damp and green, nothing like the cool and dusty places he’d played and hidden in as a child—not like home, not at all—

—except for the acrid smell of smoke that permeates everything, even this tranquil refuge.

And that one of the capital city’s spaceports had been too bombed-out to land at.

And that they’d passed the wreckage of an X-wing down one of the side streets on the way to the government center, just like the one that had been smashed to pieces between the Old and New City, the very last time he’d gone home.

Fuck.

But—

“Hey,” Luke says softly, behind him, and Bodhi whirls, startled, but of course he shouldn’t be.

“Here’s your drink,” Bodhi mumbles, holding the bottle out to him.

Luke shakes his head. “Got a feeling you might want it more than me, right now.” He closes the gap between them and takes Bodhi’s free hand in his own. “C’mon, let’s take a walk.”

“You didn’t have to leave the party,” Bodhi says, allowing himself to be led. “The diplomats—Winter—”


Bodhi’s eyes go wide. “Oh, stars, Winter.”

“What?”

“Flatt—that ship-rat.” He blows out a breath. “There’s nothing left of Alderaan to rebuild, either—why’d he fucking invite us here if he was just gonna throw that in our faces—”

“Bantha shit,” Bodhi snaps, and then he’s utterly unable to hold back his anger any longer. “What the fuck was all that about, then? Showing off how much better Abridon is at resisting the Empire? I thought he wanted to hear that—that I, I don’t know, empathized, or something, but—he—he wanted to hold up this example of the poor dumb Jedhans who didn’t fight back and let the Empire destroy—I—I should’ve gone straight out to the refugee camps instead of letting Winter put me in these—”

“Hey.” Luke darts out in front of Bodhi and tugs on the ends of his scarf, bringing him up short. “I won’t have you badmouthing these beautiful clothes, all right?”

“Luke—”

“I’m sorry no one knew Flatt was going to bring up all of those things.” Luke wraps his hand up in Bodhi’s scarf. “I don’t think he meant it to be hurtful. He wouldn’t have had Chirrut and Baze standing right next to him if he was going to insult them—even dressed like a monk, Baze’s kinda intimidating. Or me, if he was planning to insult you.”

Bodhi scowls. “Are you trying to—I’m not wrong to be pissed—”

“No, no,” Luke says, holding up his silk-covered hand. “It wasn’t thoughtful, or kind, and—if Auxi or Hostis don’t ask for an apology, I will.”

“But?”

“Flatt doesn’t know you,” Luke says. “He doesn’t know how much you still want to make things right. Or how much you miss—your home.” He pulls on Bodhi’s scarf, gently. “I saw your face when the tailor had all of this for you.”

Bodhi takes a shuddery breath. “He was a collaborator,” he mutters, painfully.

Luke stops messing about with his scarf. “He was?”

“I think—Jyn said he—I think he was trying to—win me over, in case he got found out.” Bodhi plucks at his tunic, aggrieved all over again. “Jyn, I left Jyn back there, and she’s—she used to keep her head down too, like me, she must’ve been just as furious—”

“She’s got Kaytoo to talk her through,” Luke says, half-smiling. He tilts his head. “Oh, look, there’s another one of those egg sculptures.” He points between the trees to another pedestal arrangement, more refined and far less ugly than the other.

“They’re probably going to bill us for the one Kaytoo smashed,” Bodhi says, ruefully.

Luke shrugs. “I’m sure someone will negotiate it down.” His smile broadens, tentatively. “Still angry?”

“I’m not about to go back to the reception, if that’s what you’re asking.” Bodhi eyes Luke balefully, and tips his head back to drain the rest of the Corellian ale. “It’s not—fixed.”


“Just came up here to take a walk around the garden,” Bodhi says.

Luke starts to reel him in, gradually, the silk sliding on the back of his neck and making him shiver.
“Yep.”

“Not to do—” Bodhi waves a hand. “Jedi stuff, like—mediating.”

“Well, it probably would be good for us to meditate a bit,” Luke says, solemnly.

“Uh-huh,” Bodhi says, and then he relents, because Luke’s eyes are sparkling, and it would be a shame to waste what is, after all, a pretty nice garden.

Chapter End Notes

>_<_ Sorry! Meant to get this done more quickly, but there were a few things that got in the way. Massive thanks to morag for talking this through over the past couple weeks, though I posted without a final look-see, so all errors (and potential for additional edits) are mine, as always. :) 

Some fun references for you this time!

Bodhi's clothes
Jyn's dress
(Guess what Luke's wearing. XD)
The wine from Alderaan that Breha Organa used to water down for some guests. It is far, far, faaaaar too precious to show up at *this* reception, though.
Kaiser Roof Garden, which is what I'm envisioning for the government center's garden.
Some liberties taken.
And, lol, if anyone can figure out where in the world I got the egg sculpture thing from, I will be *extremely* impressed and delighted XD

Thanks, as always, for sticking around. I promise things are going to really pick up, soon. <3

edit: ALSO!! timid_aisling on tumblr drew this lovely sketch for me!!!
Things seem better in the morning once Bodhi’s in the air again, looking out at the mountains turning pearly and lavender with the sunrise. He wonders if Luke’s enjoying the same view from wherever he is in the government center; probably not, if the berating they’d gotten from Hostis Ij over the caf pot in the mess at the base about sneaking off from an official function is any indication. At least the fussy Chandrilan man hadn’t seemed terribly concerned about the sculpture Kaytoo had smashed.

“Putting it on display in the middle of a crowded gathering increased the possibility of its destruction tenfold,” Kaytoo says, dismissively, when Bodhi hesitantly attempts to thank him for that, still worried about the cost of the artwork. “One of the more inebriated Nationalist soldiers was bound to knock it over eventually.”

Bodhi blinks. “You did strategic analysis on—on that?”

Kaytoo nudges the Galen around a ridge into the valley where the first refugee camp is hidden. “That is my primary function.”

“But—”

“I also analyzed the likelihood that Jyn would attempt to use it as a weapon against some of her more aggravating conversational partners,” Kaytoo adds, just as Jyn pokes her head up from the ladder and climbs into the cockpit.

“Use what?” She leans over Bodhi’s shoulder to check out their approach. “Someday, get around to installing more comfortable seating in the hold? It’s only been, what, years since you stole this ship, plenty of time to fix it up.”

“The sculpture,” Kaytoo says. “I estimated a thirty-seven percent chance that you would try, at the very least.”

“I’ve got three ships to look after,” Bodhi protests. “I don’t—Chirrut’s not complaining—”

“That’s ‘cause he’ll sit anywhere,” Jyn says. “And I would’ve stabbed someone with my heels before I got to the sculpture, Kay.”

Kaytoo swivels his head to stare blankly at her. “I did not think you had blades hidden in your footwear.”

Bodhi stifles a snicker.

“Nice to see you smiling again,” Jyn says, wryly. “Didn’t run into Flatt before we took off, huh.”
“No.” His face falls, and he licks his dry lips before he can make himself go on. “Jyn, listen, I’m sorry I bailed on you, on everyone, last night. It was—it was—what Flatt said wasn’t the worst I’ve heard about what—about Jedha. About collaborators.”

“I’d imagine not, what with Yendor and all,” Jyn says.

Bodhi winces, but ignores that. “I shouldn’t have done it. Snuck out. I left—you, Chirrut, Baze—I left you behind, and I never—”

“A formal reception is hardly the same as a battle,” Kaytoo says.


“It is what I think, or I wouldn’t have said it. The probability of someone starting a firefight—”

“Excuse me, Kaytoo, I’m trying to apologize here—”

“It’s fine, Bodhi.” Jyn punches him on the shoulder and steps back. “Stop worrying about it. We’ve got work to do.”

*****

They have a lot of work to do, and it isn’t at all like shipping kyber crystals from Jedha to Eadu, or transporting dignitaries, or troops, or even like the simple supply run Bodhi had expected the mission to be. He’d seldom seen more than a handful of people waiting around the spaceports or landing pads, usually landing crews or aides of various ranks sent to escort whoever Bodhi had flown in. Even at home, there had always been a few stormtroopers keeping a wide perimeter around his cargo shuttle to prevent insurgents and the despairing faithful from doing anything too audacious.

At Camp Besh, though, Jyn and Chirrut, as Alliance observers, disappear among the di-chrome tents to meet with Flatt’s wife and the camp’s leaders, and Bodhi is left with a veritable platoon of refugees forming a—

Well, he can’t call it a human chain, not if a good ninety percent of them are Rodians and Ithorians.

Bodhi searches through his memory of xeno class for about twenty seconds, trying to recall whether Ithorians differentiate themselves by color for any reason, squinting at two reddish-brown Ithorian women who stand out. They seem healthy, at least; it’s hard to tell if they’re doing otherwise all right, after spending so much time living in the austere camp, knowing what the Empire would do to everything and everyone they’d left behind.

Maybe they’ll get to go home soon.

Maybe it will be different for them, here.

And then Bodhi shakes himself, pulling the datapad with the manifest out of his flight jacket.

Luke didn’t walk with me around the entire rooftop garden three times just so I could fall apart again less than twelve hours later.

Get to work.

Unloading doesn’t go quickly; there isn’t room on the narrow landing pad or between the tents for the loadlifters Bodhi’s accustomed to. The refugees and the Nationalist soldiers who’ve been dispatched to help are well-versed in the process, sending crates and containers down the line and off
wherever they’re supposed to go, but Kaytoo is the most efficient at it, especially on the steepest terrain in the valley.

And especially, once it starts to rain, in the mud.

“My father used to say this weather reminded him of Rodia,” a female Rodian says into Bodhi’s ear in lisping but understandable Basic, helping Bodhi up the second time he slips and falls, smothering curses for the sake of the curious kids hanging around—not that any of them can possibly hear him over the pelting rain. “Don’t know why, everything he said about growing up there made it sound like our people lived in weather-controlled domes.” She’s almost shouting to be heard as they dart back into the shelter of the cargo pod, where she wipes her hands off on her utility vest and holds one out again. “I’m Kelka.”

“Hi,” Bodhi calls back, doing his level best to keep his handshake firm; Kelka’s suction cup-tipped fingers are still a bit clammy. “I’m—”

“Captain Rook, I know,” Kelka says. She seems sort of young, her greenish skin pebbled both normally and with what Bodhi thinks might be acne. An adolescent, then, more confident than Bodhi had been at that age, but taking precautions; there’s a wicked-looking blaster pistol strapped to her hip. Her antennae twitch. “Is your droid going to rust out there? He’s got some exposed joints.”

“He’ll be all right,” Bodhi says, though he’s sure they’re going to get an earful about it later, watching Kaytoo’s hunched figure plodding carefully across the landing pad with a plasteel crate in his arm after a poncho-clad Nationalist soldier. “He’s not—Kaytoo isn’t my droid, he’s not really—he’s a friend.”

Kelka nods, a touch skeptically. “How much more is there?”

Bodhi wipes mud and raindrops off his datapad, relieved to find it’s undamaged despite his clumsiness. “Few more crates, I think.”

“Any spare comms equipment?” Kelka peers over Bodhi’s arm. “Our whole system went down last night, it wouldn’t have been on your manifest.”

Bodhi jerks a thumb over his shoulder in the vague direction of General Taskeen’s base. “Doubt I’m carrying anything that’ll help with that, but I can check when we head back. What’re you using?”

“Chedak subspace transceiver,” Kelka says, and Bodhi suppresses a smile at the way the girl’s eager voice flattens out, going technical, professional. “Their antenna’s the only kind that works in these mountains.”

Bodhi shakes his head. “Sorry, um, I don’t think we’re gonna have twelve kilometers of the right kind of superconducting wire lying around—”

Kelka does something with her narrow snout that Bodhi hopes is a smile. “The antenna is fine. It’s the main terminal that went.”

“I could come take a look, see if there’s anything I can do?” Bodhi suggests. He looks around; part of the original chain of Rodians and Ithorians is still passing crates out, the operation well in hand, and Jyn and Chirrut aren’t going to return any time soon. “They’ve got it under control here.”

“Thanks,” Kelka says, and this time the thing she does with her snout is definitely a smile. “It’d be a big help to us.”

“Where are you going?” Kaytoo demands, moments later, as they pass each other.
Bodhi pats him on the arm, rainwater already dripping off of his poncho as he does. “Camp comms are down, I’m gonna check it out. Uh—you’re in charge, Kay, until me or Jyn gets back.”

“Ah,” Kaytoo says, straightening up. “Well, all right then.”

“That might not have been the best idea,” Bodhi admits, turning to watch Kaytoo proceed confidently back across the landing pad, pointing at some Nationalist soldiers who’ve taken shelter from the storm under the Galen’s nose and snapping orders.

“I didn’t think anyone could get close enough to a KX droid to reprogram it,” Kelka says, blinking rain out of her large black eyes. She sounds awed. “You made it your—friend? Before you escaped from the Empire?”

Bodhi frowns as they walk between the tents, up the hillside. “What? No, no, it—he was already with the Rebellion when I defected, I don’t—I don’t actually know how Cassian did the reprogramming, just that—well, Kaytoo’s got his own personality now, whatever he did.”

“But you can fix a comms system, right?” Kelka asks, antennae twitching again.

“No, I’m just going with you as an excuse to take a break and enjoy this lovely weather,” Bodhi says, dryly.

“Sorry,” Kelka says. “What system are you running in your shuttle?”

“Standard SFS model,” Bodhi says, with a shrug, and then he lets Kelka’s derisive hoot draw him into a debate over the merits of tech designed for short versus long-range transmissions. The rest of the walk up the slope to the comms tent is brief, but treacherous in the mud. Bodhi studies the path under his feet: it’s well-trodden, to the point that additional trails are starting to develop along its edges in the stubby grass.

“Get a lot of comms traffic still, huh?” Bodhi asks, as Kelka ushers him into the tent. He pulls his poncho off over his head, not wanting to drip on the equipment, and then he looks around.

At the very small, very clearly lived-in tent.

“I thought you said this was the comms system for the whole camp,” Bodhi says, staring at the cot, and the dishes piled up on the camp stove. “Kelka, I'm sorry, but I can't go around fixing every single personal—” He shakes his poncho out again, ready to pull it back on.

“It is for the whole camp, Captain,” Kelka says, her previous confidence dissolving into indignation. “A bigger family needed the tent I was staying in, so I said I could move here, and I'm the only one who knows how to work a Chedak—”

Bodhi holds his free hand up. “Okay, okay. Kelka—”

“—and if you’re gonna ask why I’m by myself, or where my father is—”

“I wasn’t going to—” Bodhi stops himself. Kelka’s crossed her arms, and her greenish skin is darkening, a sure sign of heightened emotion even if the spines that had been laying flat on her scalp weren’t also standing up. A flat-holo is pinned up to the wall of the tent above the comms terminal, of a Rodian man holding a holotrophy up for the camera. He’s wearing Kelka’s blaster pistol on his hip.

Oh.
“I wasn’t going to,” Bodhi repeats, more softly, thinking of Jyn, and her hidden holo.

Kelka follows his gaze, but only says, stiffly, “So are you going to help me, or not?”

“Yeah,” Bodhi says, draping his poncho over the foot of her cot. “Okay. Show me what the problem is.”

Fortunately, it’s not the antenna made out of twelve kilometers of superconducting wire, but the list of parts that are damaged and in need of replacement is growing by midday. The spines on Kelka’s head have flattened again, and she eventually shifts from complaining about the solutions she’s tried and equipment she lacks, to talking about the other things she’s been trying to engineer, to asking—

“Would you go back to Jedha, if you could?”

Beneath the terminal, gently coaxing a couple of stubborn fuses out, Bodhi jerks and bangs his head on the plating. “What?”

“My father said he could never take me back to Rodia,” Kelka says. “Wrong clan. The grand protector would have us killed before we even got off the transport.” Despite the stifling heat inside the tent, a chill goes down Bodhi’s spine, and he starts to slide out from underneath the terminal. “The Empire didn’t like us here either,” she adds. “Not the clan part, I don’t think they cared about that.” Kelka is adhering her fingers to his datapad and then prying them off with a soft pop, one at a time.

Bodhi sits up, wiping his forehead with his sleeve. “But the Nationalists won, and—and they’ll need people like you to—” He swallows, hard, on Flatt’s platitudes of the night before.

“The Nationalists said they needed my father, too.” Kelka shakes her head. “Would you go back?” She lifts her gaze to Bodhi’s face, and his own eyes reflect back at him, wide and sad.

Bodhi breathes out, slowly. “I—had to.”

Kelka makes an odd expression with her snout. “I don’t think I want to.”

“It won’t be the same,” Bodhi says, and she lets out a soft, sarcastic hoot. “No, I mean—it won’t be the same here, for you—the Empire’s gone, and there—there’s hope, more hope than I had.” He holds his hand out for his datapad. “But—if you don’t want to go back to the city, it’s—it’s a big galaxy, plenty of work for a smart comms engineer. I know a—a friend of mine in the, um, Alliance would love to take you on as an apprentice.”

“Even if I’m a Rodian from an outcast clan,” Kelka says, dubiously, slapping his datapad back onto his open palm.

Bodhi smiles wryly at her, and gets to his feet. “Well, we can't all be Imperial defectors.”

“Guess not,” Kelka says. She nods at his datapad. “Will you really be able to get everything on that list?”

“I'll try,” Bodhi promises. “It might be a day or two, we've got to go to the other camps, too, but I'll do what—everything I can.” He pauses. “Do you want to walk back with me and meet Kaytoo?”

Keltoo does.

Kaytoo is completely taken aback by the number of questions Kelka has for him as he and Bodhi prep the Galen for departure, but he replies with a wealth of technical detail, except for a few rather
surprising things that are still classified. He does explain, so deadpan that Bodhi isn’t sure if his humor subroutines are firing or not, that Cassian had reprogrammed him by turning him off and on again, which flabbergasts Kelka to the point of silence for a full minute.

Bodhi sees her down the ramp just as Jyn and Chirrut are returning. The rain’s finally let up, and the kids who’ve been hanging around the edges of the landing pad are splashing about in the mud and shrieking. It reminds him of a monsoon festival in some less popular corner of the Old City, a very long time ago, and from the way Kelka’s watching them, he suspects she’s having similarly distant memories of her own childhood.

“Well, thanks, Captain,” she says, shaking Bodhi’s hand. “See you in a couple of days?”

“Yes, absolutely,” Bodhi says. “Even if it doesn’t—if there’s nothing—I’ll come and let you know.”

“Okay.” Kelka smiles, and then she’s gone, walking purposefully past the kids in the mud towards the only home she’s got left.

Jyn touches Bodhi’s arm, and he looks away from Kelka to find her gazing up at him inquisitively. “Looks like you made a friend?”

“Sort of,” Bodhi says. “Kelka. She’s managing comms for the whole camp, and she’s—” He shakes his head. “She’s just a kid.”

An understanding look crosses Jyn’s face. “Valery Flatt mentioned her. Said she came a couple of years ago, all by herself. Sounded kind of lonely, even if she’s the comms operator.”

“She reminded me a little of you, actually,” Bodhi says, without thinking.

His eyes widen as the words register in his ears, and he casts an apologetic look at Jyn, who just gives him a tight smile and says, “Then I’m glad she got a chance to talk to you. Ready to move on?”


Chapter End Notes

More Abridon chapters to come (omg I have to make up more OCs now.)

Gonna save all the references until the end of this section, but Wookieepedia has been truly invaluable for the past couple weeks!

As has morag, beta and cheerleader extraordinaire. Thank you, friend <3

And, as always, thank you, dear readers. Every single one of your kudos, comments, bookmarks, tweets (yes, I see them!), subscriptions, messages--I appreciate them all. <3
Chapter 84

Chapter Summary

I know what everyone expects.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

They return to base with the sky going velvety and violet at sunset. Bodhi hardly has time to appreciate it, consumed as he is with reorganizing the cargo pod for the camps they'll fly out to the next day. Tracking down additional supplies—comms equipment for Kelka, though no one has the exact right kind of transmitter; parts for an ancient medical droid at Camp Cresh—takes longer still, even with help from Kaytoo and General Taskeen’s people.

Jyn helps, too, until Winter’s team comes back and she and Chirrut are pulled away to report on what they had observed of the camps. Bodhi half expects Luke to come bounding across the landing pad in trade; instead, he catches a glimpse of him, trailing after Auxi Kray Korbin and Baze like a shadow. Bodhi squints into the base's floodlights, unable to see Luke's face—spares a moment to hope that the negotiations had gone well, that Luke is doing all right—and then there's another loadlifter to unpack, and more crates to inventory.

Hours later, completely wiped, Bodhi dismisses Kaytoo and the ground crew, and ducks back into the Galen’s hold to discover Luke is all right, or at least doing well enough to have set up their bedrolls and—fallen asleep. Luke's gone over on his left side, still fully dressed—in black, though not the same formal suit he'd worn to the reception, of course—and is clutching a datapad in his right hand, its faint glow highlighting his eyelashes and golden hair.

He looks peaceful.

A wave of exhausted irritation sweeps over him. Luke hadn’t slogged through the mud, or gotten zapped by faulty, outdated equipment, or had to see the weary painful hope on half the faces of the people in the camps, and he’s just sleeping—

Bodhi sighs, and pushes that uncharitable thought away. It isn’t as if he would’ve wanted to switch places with Luke; no stunning mountain view could possibly balance having to listen to Flatt all day. He runs a hand over his own sweat-grimed hair, finding bits of mud caking strands together. His muscles ache from—everything, but the distance between the Galen and the prospect of a long, hot shower in the base is too daunting to contemplate seriously.

Shrugging out of his flight jacket, he flops down on his bedroll, debating whether to wad his jacket up for an extra pillow or drape it over Luke’s shoulders. He’s reaching over to do the latter, and possibly attempt to pry the datapad free, when Luke stirs, and gives him a sleepy smile—then his eyes widen in chagrin.

“Oh, no—Bodhi, I’m so sorry, I was going to come and see if you needed any help, after I finished reading this,” Luke murmurs, putting the datapad down on the deck and rolling over onto his right side to face him. “Are you all done now?”
“Yeah,” Bodhi says, regretting his flare of resentment, seeing the dismay deepening the lines around Luke’s eyes and mouth. He smooths his jacket over Luke’s shoulder and down along his arm. “Don’t—don’t worry about it. Did everything go okay with the negotiations?”

Luke yawns and burrows his face against Bodhi’s chest. “Baze is more subtle about poking me when I’m supposed to pay attention to something,” he says, drowsily. “I think it’s ‘cause he doesn’t have a stick.”

Bodhi blinks, imagining Baze and Chirrut sparring with staves in the Temple courtyard, when they were younger men, and wonders if Baze had really given that kind of fighting up when he’d become an assassin. “And he couldn’t exactly pull any of his knives out,” he says, dryly.

Luke comes wide awake with amusement, and props himself up on an elbow. “Actually—”

“No.”

“He cleaned his nails with it,” Luke says, his eyes sparkling at the appalled look on Bodhi’s face. “Nearly made Hostis Ij turn purple. Anyway, it’s different, with just Baze around. He doesn’t get after me for not meditating.”

“That’s ‘cause he naps during meditation.” Bodhi sits up so he can take off his boots. He lobs one into the far corner of the hold, and is tugging the other off when he realizes—“Wait, you—you’re not meditating? I thought—last night, I thought you were—you—” Luke looks down, his hair falling in his eyes, and Bodhi stops. Licks his lips, and tries to smother the slightly frantic note rising in his voice, to little avail. “You walked around all night with me instead of what you were supposed to be doing?”

“No, Bodhi, it’s—there’s not a rule—can we talk about this some other time?” Luke scrubs a hand over his face, wearily.


Luke waves a hand, and crawls over to rest his head in Bodhi’s lap, all forgiven. “Comparative analysis of Abridon’s exports during the Republic era and under Imperial occupation.”


Luke makes a soft sound of pleasure, and caresses Bodhi’s thigh in return. “It was like that the whole day. I’d much rather have been helping you. Doing real work.”

Bodhi twists a lock of hair around his finger and frowns down at him. “Don’t let Winter—or, stars, Leia—hear you say that,” he admonishes Luke, lightly.


“Tell you about what I did today instead of listening to a bunch of people drone on about Abridon’s glory days and—and doodling X-wings all over a datapad?”

Luke tilts his head back to smirk at him. “You know me so well,” he says, fondly.

Bodhi lifts his free hand in a shrug. “It’s what I would've done in a boring class, except—” He makes a face. “Wouldn’t have been X-wings. And—I dunno, Luke, it was—they’re stuck, you know?
Couldn’t afford to escape off-world when the Empire came, couldn’t stay in their homes when the fighting started, no idea if their homes are even still standing, or if they can even go back—” He shivers, although Luke is warm in his lap. “You didn’t hear anything about that during your meetings, did you?”


“Yeah.”

“You’re worried,” Luke says, sitting up so he can look Bodhi in the face. “Why? I’m sure—Flatt may be kind of, well, a politician, but I’m sure he’ll work to bring the refugees home.”

Bodhi blows out a breath. His eyes feel like they’re filled with grit and sand, as if he’d been fighting his way through a dust storm instead of ducking his head in the rain. “Are you? I mean, you heard what he said about people like me, and—and the refugees—they didn’t turn traitor, or anything, but they didn’t fight, and they’re mostly—” He shakes his head, thinking of Kelka sitting alone in her tent trying to fix the comms system, the Ithorian kids playing in the mud. “They’re mostly nonhumans, Luke, and I know perfectly damn well the Empire changed the way I felt about—about them, xeno class and all.”

“Flatt’s wife is out there,” Luke offers, furrowing his brow. “Valery.”

“She’s a doctor, she has to help,” Bodhi says, doubtfully. “I just—I keep thinking, what if they can’t go back? I—I found, well, Cassian found me, and then I found you, but—” He breaks off; he’d meant to say something else, something laced with annoyance about how Luke was supposed to be learning all this stuff, how he was supposed to help, but exhaustion fogs over his thoughts, and Luke is—Luke is curling his hand around the back of Bodhi’s neck, fingers seeking out and gently massaging a lingering line of tension.

And he’s smiling, just the smallest curve to his lips. “Winter and Leia found homes for the Alderaanians. If it comes to it—I don’t think it will, if Baze puts in a word, he’s fierce as a krayt about anything having to do with, uh, this stuff—then they’ll help.”

Bodhi isn’t entirely reassured, though he can sort of picture Kelka having a debate with the Chandrilans. Luke’s kneading hands have drifted down along his shoulder blades, his efforts making Bodhi’s spine loosen as much as his tongue. “You’ll say something, too, right? You and me, and Baze, and Leia—blast, it’s gotta be more’n half the Rebellion calling capital ships home. We have—we have to—” He looks up; Luke’s stopped rubbing his shoulders. “What?”

“I shouldn’t have gotten you started,” Luke says, ruefully. “You looked ready to drop when I woke up, and I should’ve known—” He’s tugging Bodhi down, fumbling around for the jacket he’d let fall aside. “It’s not very much fun, this part of—of the war, is it.”


“Yes?”

“I love you, but you’ve been—” Bodhi settles his hand on Luke’s hip and closes his eyes. “You’ve been chewing luna-weed, if you think the war ever was.”

For a minute, Luke breathes in and out, so slowly that Bodhi isn’t sure if he’s dropped right off to sleep again. Then he says, sounding nothing like either the brash commander of Rogue Squadron or the sweet farm boy, “You’re right. I’m sorry. I’ll convey your concerns to Winter, in the morning.

He’s asleep before he can realize Luke didn't kiss him back.

*****

Luke is already packed up and gone, when the ship’s chrono goes off; Bodhi doesn’t see him at breakfast, or with Chirrut and Baze when they take their leave of each other in a familiar swirl of black and red. He has a moment of worry—did I say something wrong? Why wasn’t Luke—before Jyn is shoving a canteen of caf at him, and they’re out into the pale light of day again.

The rest of the camps are farther into the mountains, higher and colder, and the Aqualish, Mon Cal, and Ithorian refugees don’t seem very comfortable in the thin air. The young Twi’lek twins who are currently shepherding him over to the wind-powered generators appear unaffected, though, cheerfully bantering back and forth while Bodhi regrets not stealing one of Cassian’s remaining coats.

“C’mon, Captain, it can’t be that cold,” Ilar says, smiling up at Bodhi shyly, as he shivers and rubs his hands together.

“No way this is colder’n Hoth,” Alask puts in, hopping up on a rock and then leaping back down just as quickly. His lekku—blue, both boys are, the color of the noonday sky on most other worlds—swing wildly as he lands. “It was Hoth, right? Where everyone thought you died?”

“Alask,” Ilar says, reprovingly, as Bodhi throws him a startled look and narrowly misses stumbling over a tree root growing up through the path.

“What—how d’you know about—about that?” Bodhi stammers. “I thought Valery—Dr. Flatt said you boys have been living here since before the Battle of Yavin? You—you get—”

“News!” Alask chirps.

Ilar rolls his eyes and says, “Gossip.”

“Was it scary?” Alask says, undaunted by his brother's embarrassed groan. “Did you think you were gonna die?”

Bodhi draws a bracing, icy breath, ignoring the way his heart pounds, the shouting of the squadron in his head. He glances from one twin to the other. “Wouldn't you rather show me how the generators work?” He points at the nearest turbine, about two meters away.

“Our moms thought we were all gonna be killed by Imperials,” Alask says, matter-of-factly, and Bodhi stares at him, trying, not for the first time, to figure out how old the boys are. Older than he’d been, when the Empire began; not much older than Cassian had been, when he'd first picked up a blaster.

“I wasn't scared,” Ilar pronounces, disdainfully.

“Yes you were,” Alask retorts. “You wouldn't let go of your tooka doll the whole way here.”

Ilar shoots a quick look up at Bodhi and says, “That's not true!” He flicks a pebble at his brother.

“Uh—” Bodhi says, putting a hand on Alask’s shoulder when he looks like he's going to retaliate.
“How—um, how old were you when your mothers brought you here?”

“Three.” Ilar glares at Alask.

“Ilar still sleeps with his tooka doll,” Alask says, mockingly.

“You're just mad because you lost yours,” Ilar says.

Alask’s face crumples. Bodhi is horrifyingly certain he's going to burst into tears, or fling himself bodily at Ilar in fury, and he doesn’t relish either prospect. He wishes he’d paid more attention to the kinds of things the merchants and monks had kept stashed in their pockets, when they needed a distraction. “Hey, hey—”

“Hi, boys,” Jyn says, from behind him, and Bodhi turns in surprise.

“Jyn,” he says, unaccountably relieved; he’s never seen her interact with children, but her sudden appearance has at least jarred the Twi’lek twins from their impending argument. “Are you—are you and Chirrut done already?”

“Just me. Chirrut went to talk to one of the Aqualish ladies about some meditation beads she’s had in her family for generations.” She looks past him, at Alask sullenly pulling a tuft of moss apart, Ilar shuffling his feet and trying unsuccessfully not to gape at her. “Did I hear you talking about tooka dolls? I used to have a couple myself, but I lost them, a long time ago.”

Ilar tugs one of his lekku over his shoulder and feigns a careful examination of it, his eyes flicking up to Jyn’s face. “How come you lost them?”

“I had to leave my home, just like you did, when the Imperials came,” Jyn says. Bodhi winces, but Alask has stopped throwing bits of moss on the ground and is gazing at her too, curiously. “I didn’t have time to decide on one, so I left all my toys behind.”

“What color was yours?” Alask asks.

“Koodie was gray,” Jyn says, very seriously. “Starrie—well, Starrie didn’t look so much like a tooka cat, but she was red and white.”

Alask nods, equally grave. “Mine was purple.” He points up at the sky, and then he studies Jyn again, tapping his own chest where a rank badge would be pinned. “You’re not dressed like a soldier,” he says, dubiously.

“No,” Jyn agrees, looking down at herself and brushing some dirt off of her coat; Bodhi guesses it’s the one Cassian had made her buy, on Onderon.

“But you fight,” Ilar says, his eyes flicking to her blaster, the baton hanging at her belt. He frowns at Bodhi. “Where’s your blaster?”

Bodhi raises his eyebrows, too bemused by the twists and turns of the boys’ conversation to feel terribly affronted by the question. “I don’t actually like them very much,” he says, carefully. “And I’m a pilot, Ilar, so I don’t really need one.”

Alask flings the last bit of moss at his brother, who ignores it, resuming his attempt to appear mature in front of Bodhi and Jyn. “But what if you crashed your ship into the middle of a bunch of Imperials?”

“My—my ship has shields, and cannons,” Bodhi says.
The boys look at each other, something of a truce silently declared, and then hit him simultaneously with a barrage:

“But what if your shields were down?”

“What if your cannons jammed?”

“What if the Imperials boarded your ship?”

Bodhi takes stock of the two of them, their faces nonjudgmental and openly curious, in the way he might’ve been, once; of Jyn’s darkly amused eyes where she’s gone and perched on a boulder. Takes a breath, and holds up his index finger. “I—I’d assume the Imperials want me, and—and my passengers, whoever they were, alive, so they wouldn’t—they wouldn’t just blow my ship up once it was on the ground.”

He holds up a second finger. “The—my ship, my favorite ship, has three pairs of laser cannons, and if they’ve all jammed, then I’m not a very good engineer.”

A third finger. “And—if we were being boarded—if we were outnumbered and being boarded, I’d—I would surrender, and hope that me, and my friends could come up with a rescue plan to get us free.”

Ilar’s mouth is hanging open.

“You really wouldn’t try to—” Alask starts, uncertainly.

Jyn smiles at him. “Did your moms try to kill every Imperials they saw when you were coming here?”

“No,” Ilar mutters.

“They were protecting us,” Alask says, lifting his chin. “But they do have blasters, and if Imperials came here, I’d get one too, and—” He leaps behind Jyn’s rock and mimics the sound of blasters firing, pointing his thumb and index finger into the trees.

“It’s always good to have a plan,” Jyn says, diplomatically. “Even if it’s sh—not the best.”

“I guess so,” Ilar says. His eyes brighten, another possible option sparking to life in his mind: “Do you know how to use Luke Skywalker’s lightsaber?”

Bodhi sputters, and Jyn just barely manages to keep herself from falling off the boulder with laughter.

Ilar and Alask eventually stop messing about long enough to show them around the camp’s wind-powered generators. Alask is obviously bored when they stop to troubleshoot the one that’s working sluggishly; it’s a simpler fix than what Kelka had needed, and Bodhi even thinks he might have the right parts on the Galen. The boys dash on ahead as they head back towards the center of the camp, darting in and out between the tents, evidently excited to tell their friends or mothers about their experience escorting Bodhi and Jyn.

“Koodie and Starrie, huh,” Bodhi says to her, once they’re out of earshot.

Jyn huffs a laugh. “Yeah.” She nudges him in the side, her sharp elbow blunted by the padding of
her jacket. “You would’ve liked the ships my father carved. He made this one—you’d know what it was, the kind of fighter the Jedi used to fly. He built a hyperspace ring for it.”

“I—I didn’t know that.”

“I expect he was rather too busy for hobbies when you knew him, designing the Death Star and plotting to destroy it from the inside and all,” Jyn says, wryly.

“Yeah,” Bodhi murmurs. “Did Ilar and Alask—does—does all this make you think about when you—they’re just kids, they can’t be older than—”

“Eight,” Jyn says. “I was eight when the Empire finally tracked us down. When—” She throws a sidelong, assessing glance at him. “When I went to live with Saw Gerrera.”

Bodhi licks his suddenly rather dry lips. “I knew about that.” He’d learned it, sometime in the middle of the Council meeting, or later, once they’d survived the chaos of those early days, though he hadn’t been able to reconcile his torturer with anything of Jyn. Not the way he saw Galen in her eyes, or the way she cared for their strange little family.

*But Saw must’ve cared for Galen, to promise to look after his daughter.*

*Cared for Jyn.*

The thought of that terrible ghost, though, even as second father to her—even as a *man*, and not the monster he’d set on Bodhi—makes Bodhi’s shoulders hunch. He reaches out to brush his hand across the taut surface of the nearest tent, intending to ground himself, but the faint electric buzz of its charged fabric tingles down to his fingers, a match for the tense wild feeling in his chest. “Jyn, you weren’t out there fighting when you were eight, like—like Cassian, were you? Saw, the Partisans, they didn’t expect—”

Jyn casts a skeptical glance at him. “Saw didn’t carve toys for me. The first blaster he gave me was real. It didn’t just light up and make sounds.”

Bodhi gives her a jerky little nod. “You didn’t—try to keep hiding from the Empire.”

“I wouldn’t call this hiding,” Jyn says, tilting her head at the tents around them. Valery Flatt and the boys’ mothers are down by the main tent, distributing the day’s food rations to a line of adults. “The di-chrome’s decent camouflage, but any heat sensors would still pick up all of these people—”

“No—no, I meant—” He sighs, his breath steam in the sunlight. “Your parents sent you to Saw so you could do something.”

Her hand flashes out and catches Bodhi’s arm, stopping him in his tracks. “I don’t think they knew what he was going to ask me to do. Or what he would do to innocents for the sake of his goal.” She holds his gaze, her mouth tight. “He wouldn’t have thought much of people who didn’t fight, either. But I hope Alask’s moms don’t give him a real blaster. Not for a long while.”

*****

Supplying the rest of the camps—and observing their conditions, and talking to a handful of inquisitive Ithorian children, whose stereophonic voices are lovely, though they give Bodhi one hell of a headache—takes less time than he expects. He’s flying the *Galen* back to base early, eager to jump in the hot shower he’d foregone the night before, when Winter comms.

“Captain, I’d like to send you to the shipyards at Sayan,” she says. “There are some discrepancies in
the documentation we have about the A-wings currently on-site, and Commander Skywalker assures me that you’d be able to sort it out before we agree to take them in trade.”

In the co-pilot’s seat, Kaytoo swivels his head at Bodhi. “You have never flown an A-wing.”


“Then you can both go,” Winter says, smoothly. “Though you should take a speeder instead of your cargo ship, as I am told that the landing pad is still undergoing repairs.”

“Copy that,” Bodhi replies, a tiny thrill of excitement running through him at the idea of taking a speeder out with Luke; he wonders if there’s anything fast available at the base. “Please tell Luke I’ll pick him up from the capital in—as soon as I can.”

“All right,” Winter says, and signs off.

Kaytoo is still looking at him. “The city of Sayan is on an island.”

“Yeah, so?”

“I believe I have established my distaste for sand,” Kaytoo says.

Bodhi blinks. “Sorry, I think Winter just means for me and Luke to go.” He suppresses a tired smile, thinking of the last time they’d been on an island together. It would be a too-brief respite from the work still to come, but—maybe we can stay til sunset?

“I am your co-pilot on this mission,” Kaytoo says, huffily. “I can certainly operate a speeder—”

“I thought you were Jyn’s aide?”

Kaytoo’s eyes flash. “Hardly, as I seem to have been reduced to a stevedore on the basis of my superior strength and stability.”

At a loss, Bodhi casts about for something more to offer his friend. “No—no, Kaytoo, that’s not the only—look, you remember the Rodian girl from yesterday, Kelka?” Kaytoo nods. “When we get back to base, if someone’s managed to find the transmitter she needs, you—you run it out to her.”

“So now I am a delivery service?” Kaytoo taps his fingers on the console.

Bodhi frowns at him. “Hi, have we met? I’m Bodhi Rook, cargo pilot. Kelka liked you. You can hang around telling her more of your horrib—your interesting stories while she fixes the comms system, and you can help her test it out. That’s more than, um, lots of other—aides get to do, isn’t it? I’m trusting you.”

“Oh, well then.” Kaytoo straightens his posture. “Enjoy the shipyards.”

*****

Bodhi hopes they will, until he drives up to the government center and Baze promptly corners him, looking as fierce as Bodhi’s ever seen, and asks him to help find his missing blaster.

“I’m supposed to get Luke and go—” Bodhi jerks a thumb over his shoulder at the speeder he’d probably parked illegally on the sidewalk.

“Well, he’s not here, and I need you,” Baze says, gruffly. “And you can’t tell. Definitely don’t tell Winter.”
“But—”

“Or Chirrut,” Baze says, his heavy hand landing on Bodhi’s shoulder and steering him in the direction of the conference rooms.

“I don’t know how I ever thought you were the responsible one,” Bodhi mutters, crouching under a table and sticking his hand into the odd nooks and crannies some twisted furniture designer had seen fit to include. “There better not be Abridanonian desk spiders or something else that bites in here.”

“I am the responsible one,” Baze protests. He’s moving a large potted plant around in the corner; Bodhi sincerely hopes the plant survives the experience. “That is why we are looking for it.”

“I should be looking for Luke,” Bodhi says, standing and dusting his hands off. “We’re gonna miss the suns—uh, the shipyard foreman if it gets much later.”

Baze hmms. “You should call and tell him you will be late.”

Bodhi blinks at him.


“Right, yeah, okay,” Bodhi says, pulling his comlink out of his pocket, but Luke doesn’t respond. “He’s not picking up, I should really go find him. Maybe you should tell Flatt’s security detail? Seems—seems like the kind of thing they’d want to know about, your blaster going missing.”

“They will not be happy.”

“Yeah, well, neither will Winter, if we don’t head for Sayan soon,” Bodhi says.

Baze grumbles under his breath. “Fine.” He points at Bodhi mock-threateningly. “If they kick me out of the negotiations because I caused a security breach—”

Bodhi holds his hands up. “Sure, it’s my fault,” he says, not feeling responsible in the slightest, and heads out in search of Luke, throwing the quickest of glances at the speeder as he passes, to make sure no one’s tried to tow it.

Except Luke is nowhere to be found.

He isn’t with the other diplomats; Auxi Kray Korbin thinks he might’ve gone for a late lunch, but when Bodhi finally figures out how to get to the commissary, it’s closed.

Where the hell is my fucking boyfriend?

Bodhi silently adds a curse in Darth Vader’s direction; he’d never had to search for Luke, before Hoth. Before whatever it was Vader had done to him.

He tries Luke’s comm again, thumbing the switch off and on and off, a worried feeling settling in his stomach. Something had been wrong, and he’d missed it, or messed up, and Luke had been so attentive with him, that night on the rooftop—

The rooftop.

Of course.

But his unsettled feeling swiftly resolves back into annoyance when he steps out into the garden and finds Luke practicing combat drills with a remote—and Baze’s missing blaster.
“What are you doing?” Bodhi demands, the words out of his mouth before he can stop himself from snapping at a man with a blaster and deadly reflexes. Luke merely freezes in place, though, taking two rapid-fire stinging blasts in stride.

“I must’ve lost track of time,” Luke says, shutting the remote down.

“You didn’t answer your comlink,” Bodhi says. “I didn’t—no one knew where you were. Baze didn’t know you took his blaster.”

“I needed to practice.” Luke holds the blaster out to Bodhi, grip first. He lets go, and it hovers in midair in front of his outstretched hand. “That’s what everyone expects of me, right?” He drops his hand back to his side, and the blaster falls, bounces on the grass.

“What—are you okay? Did something happen today?” Bodhi tries to decipher the slump of his shoulders, the odd sound of his voice. A horrible thought strikes: “Did—did you ask—stars, did that asshole Flatt say the refugees can’t—”

Luke shakes his head. “That’s all settled. It’ll take time to rebuild some of the neighborhoods, but they can start coming home any day now.”

“Okay, so why’re you messing around up here instead of—of meeting me? Winter told me we’re to go to Sayan, I brought a speeder, it’s a really old Seraph-class flash speeder, but it seats two.” Bodhi takes a cautious step towards him, pushing his irritation down and mustering up a hopeful smile. “You can drive.”

“I came to try and clear my head,” Luke says, looking away. “I didn’t want to still be angry when I saw you.”

“Oh,” Bodhi says. He bites his lip. “Wanna tell me why?”

It comes out sharper than he intends, the day’s stress taking hold, and Luke jerks back around, his eyes starting to shimmer. “Because of what you said last night.”

“Which would be—?” Bodhi crosses his arms.

Luke draws a breath, and says, his voice trembling with the effort to keep it level, “I’m not the naive farm boy who wanted to know all about Scarif anymore, Bodhi. I’m aware the war isn’t fun. I’ve seen what it’s done first hand—I watched my—” He cuts himself off.

Bodhi narrows his eyes. “Then why—I don’t understand why you’d want to get out of this part—it’s not fighting, it’s just—talking.”

“They look at me like I’m a Jedi, like I have all the answers.” Luke clenches his fists at his sides as he jumps from one thing to the next like lightning among the clouds, turmoil surging in his eyes. “And I don’t have a blasted clue how to solve any of this, I only wanted to understand how to help, and then you start in on me, too, like—”

“I wasn’t asking you as a Jedi, I was asking you as a person who lost their family, their home—”

“—and no, I haven’t been meditating ever since the last time I did, I had a vision of my best friends being tortured, and it turned out there wasn’t a single fucking thing I could do about it!”

“But you tried—”

Luke laughs, hollowly. “Do, or do not. There is no try.”
Bodhi stares at him. “I don’t have any idea what in blazes that’s supposed to mean.”

“No, of course not,” Luke says, cuttingly. “No one does. No one who’s not—” He grimaces. “Everyone says they want my help and then it turns out I’m useless! I don’t know what to do, I’m doing everything wrong as a Jedi—”

Bodhi flinches. For all that Chirrut had been teasing, that night, the hurt on Luke’s face is as vivid as the way he’d blushed. But his own frustration flares hot in his chest. “So what? I never have any idea what I’m doing, all my plans are shit.” He jabs a finger at Baze’s blaster lying in the grass. “Nothing’s stopping you from going off to be Commander Skywalker again instead, if that’s what you want.”

“I don’t know what I want,” Luke snaps. “I know what everyone expects, and I—I can’t, Bodhi, I can’t be—”

Bodhi’s comlink chirps. He ignores it the first time, is opening his mouth to say *I wasn’t either* when Luke’s comlink goes off, too, a flurry of calls coming in. More than just Winter politely encouraging them to go to Sayan before dark.

Luke frowns, hard, but plucks his comlink from his belt to answer, nodding for Bodhi to take his call.

“Where are you?” Jyn says, tinny and tense.

“Government center,” Bodhi replies. “Jyn, what—what’s—” He looks at Luke tilting his face up to the purple sky, the anger abruptly erased from his eyes. Bodhi does the same, no longer listening to Jyn’s urgent voice calling them in, and a horrible, familiar fear wraps around his throat at the sight of the wedge-shaped destroyer looming bright out of the atmosphere, its three ion engines roaring as it maneuvers carefully into orbit.

“I’ve got a very bad feeling about this,” Bodhi mutters, weakly, whatever else he might have said to Luke dissolving to ash and sand on his tongue.

“Come on, Bodhi,” Luke says, tersely, and scoops Baze’s blaster up from the grass.

Chapter End Notes

Happy May the 4th!! In celebration of Star Wars Day, [here](#) is this gorgeous, amazing piece I commissioned from petimetrek that goes all the way back to Sanctuary, and (slightly) happier times ;)

Massive, massive thanks to morag and brynnmclean for all their help working through this one. <3 <3 <3 Your cheerleading and looking-shit-up when I didn't have the right resource at hand is, as always, INVALUABLE.

And, as always, dear readers, thank you. <3 The semester's wrapping up, but I have also been tasked with writing a chunk of my dissertation this month, so...we'll see how this goes. I'm VERY excited about 85, though, fingers crossed it'll be sooner than I think!!
Chapter 85

Chapter Summary

Should've gone with them.

Chapter Notes

This is one of those HEED THE TAGS kinds of chapters. Imperials are not nice. Bodhi is not having a good day.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Bodhi shuts his comlink off once they’re headed down in the turbolift, struggling not to bite his lip bloody, because he’s been unable to reach Kaytoo. According to Jyn, Kaytoo had gotten a transmitter and headed to Camp Besh, in the Galen, and it’s simply that the mountains are interfering with their comm signals, but—

Without my ship—

There’s no way out.

Luke throws him a sharp glance, and Bodhi swallows hard, realizing he’s mumbled that last part aloud. His hands shake on the turbolift rail. “Glad to have something to do now?”

“I promised Cassian I’d do my best to keep you all safe,” Luke’s voice is low, the leading edge of a storm dark in his eyes.

“Well, you won’t have to worry about me,” Bodhi says, tightly. “I’m useless in a fight—”

Luke puts his hand over Bodhi’s, abruptly. “Don’t—”

—the turbolift doors hiss open, and Winter, Baze, and a dozen Nationalist soldiers are coordinating the people in the government center lobby, and whatever exasperated entreaty had been on Luke’s lips goes unheard in the tumult.

Baze spots them coming out of the turbolift and, surprisingly gracefully, though it might just be the illusion of his robes swirling, edges his way around Winter and through the crowd towards them. “Luke, Bodhi, we have to go, Taskeen ordered us to—is that my blaster?”

The frown under Baze’s beard isn’t nearly as withering as Bodhi is certain it once was, turned on novices at the Temple, but Luke visibly braces himself, holding the blaster out to him. “Sorry, Master Malbus.”

“I didn’t know you took it,” Baze growls. He sighs. “Whatever. You don’t have one? Keep it.” He does something complicated with a fold or two of his Guardian’s robes, produces another hold-out blaster, and shoves it at Bodhi. “You need one.”
“No, I don’t,” Bodhi says, irritably. “Baze. Uncle. I—I’m not going to—I’ll go back to Jyn at the base, help them out on comms—” He rises up on his toes, craning his neck to search in vain for his speeder, unable to see it through the press of people coming into the government center; there must be an established shelter here.

Baze shakes his head. “You would be out in the open. Stay.”

“There’s a comm station up a few floors,” Luke adds. His mouth is bracketed with tension, but the intensity of his expression is kind of familiar—

“It’s well protected.” Baze hikes up his robes to put his blaster somewhere. “The governor already went up to make a speech to the city; his security team went with him.”

“Great,” Bodhi says, annoyance surging anew at the thought of encountering Flatt and very nearly overriding his anxiety about the impending Imperial invasion. “Well, I guess you have to go—” He looks down at where Luke’s hand is suddenly gripping the front of his jacket, skin taut and whitening over his knuckles. When Bodhi looks up again, the blazing brilliance of Luke’s eyes is dazzling—

—and then Luke’s mouth is on his, a little clumsy and frantic in his insistence, teeth scraping across Bodhi’s lower lip like their argument had abraded his nerves, the sensation searing itself into his memory. And then Luke steps back, just as quickly as he’d darted in, releasing Bodhi’s jacket and reaching for Bodhi’s hand. “I’ll come back.”

Bodhi licks his lips and mutters, hoarsely, “You’d better. Need to finish our little—chat.” Luke nods, squeezing Bodhi’s hand, his eyes still as bright as looking into the sun.

Baze claps Luke on the shoulder, drawing him away, but he says to Bodhi, just as the first rumble of a distant explosion hits, and a murmur of fear ripples through the incoming civilians, “May the Force be with you.”

Stars. I hope it is.

*****

Twenty minutes later, Bodhi sincerely regrets not accepting Baze’s offer to join him and Luke in establishing a perimeter, or whatever Taskeen’s orders had been. Even if he’d only have gotten in the way, or frozen up at the first sign of white stormtrooper armor—

—or panicked—

—anything would be better than having to listen to Flatt.

The governor isn’t directing any of his frustrated bluster about being kept off the front at Bodhi, though, at least not yet. He alternates between griping at his guards about being stuck here, tying up valuable comm lines to argue with his second, or attempting to get ahold of General Taskeen. The other Nationalist communications personnel seem immune to Flatt’s invective, keeping their heads down at their consoles.

Bodhi’s doing his best to tune him out, too, though his headset isn’t doing a great job of canceling out the noise. He’s simultaneously listening in for any word on his friends’ movements, and trying to pull off his comms piggybacking trick from Chandrila so he can get a message to the Fleet. He’d lost track of where Ackbar’s taken his precious B-wings, but the Rogues had still been at the last rendezvous point, and maybe—
“What are you doing?” Flatt stops by his console, and plants a finger right into the center of the display. “Those are Imperial frequencies.”

“Yes, yes they are,” Bodhi agrees, shortly. He has a pretty good idea of the number of Imperial troops on the ground now; he doesn't get why they've landed between the city and Taskeen’s base, but there's certainly enough of them that he's got plenty of comms traffic to sneak a signal out with. But Abridon's transceivers aren’t that similar to the SW-95 Cirenian model, and it isn't working—

The suspicious tone of Flatt's voice registers, and Bodhi jerks his head up, suddenly very aware that he's the sole Alliance representative in a room full of Nationalists.

He gulps.

Sole Imperial defector in a room full of Nationalists.

No.

Flatt isn't Yendor.

And I—

Don't have time for this.

Bodhi uncurls from his hunched position over the console, grimacing as the building shakes, and outside, not far, a new plume of smoke billows up into the purple sky. “Governor Flatt, if—if you suspect my loyalties, you probably should've said something before your security staff let me in here.” It comes out louder than he'd meant it to—the peril of still half-wearing his headset—and he catches one of the comms officers throwing a very startled look his direction.

Flatt sees them looking, too, and his already thin-lipped mouth draws into a line. “I trust my people.”

His voice is pitched to carry.

“Yeah, okay,” Bodhi says, not caring how rude he sounds, and turns back to his console, because he hears Jyn’s voice calling orders. Taskeen’s given her command of a full platoon, and they’re heading out from base on a transport, hoping to come up behind a handful of straggling Imperial walkers. His heartbeat stutters at the idea; she hasn't specified what kind of walkers they are, and he doesn’t know how in blazes Chirrut is going to face them, Guardians’ lightbows aren’t exactly—

Flatt is tapping his fingers on the display again, beckoning, and Bodhi refocuses, reluctantly. “I realize that you may seem a great hero to many in the Alliance,” Flatt murmurs, silkily, and Bodhi has a resigned moment of fuck, I do have to pay attention to this guy—“but Abridon is my world, and I will not allow your mistakes to doom us the way you—”

Bodhi grits his teeth, pushing down the hot rushing wave of memory and ash and stone. “Would—you rather I stop trying to contact the Fleet? Your people are—” A horrible mental image surfaces, of Kelka or the Twi’lek twins alongside their mothers, seeing the Star Destroyer over the city. As far away as the camps are, in the falling dusk, it must be impossible, and he rallies, a little, at the thought that they’re safely hidden, with Kaytoo. “Your people are out there fighting next to my friends, my family—”

“But not you.” Flatt’s answering smile is humorless.

“Like you said, Governor. I’m no hero.” Bodhi runs a hand over his hair, wishing he hadn’t left his goggles in the Galen so he’d have something to fidget with. He wonders if Flatt would’ve dared to be this much of an asshole to Baze, or if Baze would simply have cleaned his nails again and smiled.

Flatt nods, and finally steps back from the console. “Well. I’ll let you get back to work, then, *Captain.*” He snaps his fingers and points at one of the members of his security team, though, a blonde woman in a dark suit, and she comes to stand over Bodhi’s shoulder as Flatt walks off.

“Can you even tell if I’m doing something I’m not supposed to?” Bodhi asks, wryly. She raises her eyebrows at him, and he hastily adds, “No offense.”

“None taken,” she says, curtly. A muscle in her jaw twitches. “Can you really get help from the Alliance?”

“I—I’m *trying*, I swear—” His personal comlink chirps, loud and urgent, as the console lights up with warnings and the voices of the comms officers rise in alarm all around him. Flatt turns towards the floor-to-ceiling transparisteel windows, the glow of the sunset mottling his face, and Bodhi lurches to his feet, swearing under his breath as the roar of a dozen TIE engines makes the building shake.

No. No no no—

But they’re *not* the bombers Bodhi dreads most, and they don’t even attack, making a terrifyingly close pass that vibrates the transparisteel window, and then another, like rock vultures circling. Bodhi pushes away from the console, casting a frantic, beseeching glance at the blonde woman, fear clogging his throat. “It’s not my fault—I—I was *careful*—”

Should’ve gone with Baze and Luke—

“They know better than to attack,” the blonde woman says. Bodhi blinks at her, baffled, and she adds, “Turrets hidden in the rooftop garden.”

Flatt’s smooth facade is cracking; he’s unbuttoned his garish suit jacket and is belligerently demanding information from the people nearest him. A couple of techs who don’t look much older than Kelka are at the window, pointing and talking in low, frantic tones. The comlink in Bodhi’s jacket pocket chirps again, and he fumbles it out under the blonde woman’s frown, watching another set of TIEs approaching in a familiar formation. “Y—yes?”

“Bodhi,” Luke says, the strain in his voice punctuated with the stutter of blaster fire. “Bodhi, a dropship got past us, and the one—we took one down and it was all fucking jumptroopers inside! More are on the way, you’ve got to get Flatt to evacuate the city—” Static cuts Luke off, and an unearthly squeal from Bodhi’s headset around his neck makes him and the blonde woman jump.

“They’re jamming us,” Bodhi says, tossing the useless headset onto the console; a couple of desks away, another comms officer has knocked over their chair in a rush to tell Flatt the same news. “Will—will Flatt listen, if—”

She shakes her head. “No place left to run. We fought ‘em in the streets before, we can do it again.”

Bodhi bites his lip. “I don’t—I don’t think that’s why they’d send jumptroopers,” he says, hesitantly. There hadn’t been any stationed on Eadu, or Jedha; no need for specialized infiltration units on worlds already well cowed.

“Sure it is. Get squads in the city pushing out the same time the walkers are pushing in,” she says, making a disturbingly illustrative gesture with her hands. Out the window, the first group of TIEs has gone and merged into the new formation—a *shield formation*, around the dropship Luke had warned about, and they’re coming straight at the government center. Then their angle of approach changes,
and they vanish overhead—

Bodhi turns wide eyes on the blonde woman. “Turrets in the rooftop garden?” he says, hope faint and fleeting.

But she’s drawn her blaster and motions for him to join the communications staff heading for the stairs. “If you’re not armed, you’re not staying,” she says, when Bodhi opens his mouth to protest. “That goes for you, too, sir,” she adds, looking past him at Flatt, who looks equally unhappy about it. “Evacuate down to the civilian shelter. We’ll hold—”

Several stories overhead, something quite large explodes, shaking the whole government center down to its foundations. Bodhi holds his breath, watching the overhead lights flicker, listening to the muted rapid-fire battle above. Movement out the window catches his eye, and he spins just in time to see a stormtrooper—regular, not strapped with a jetpack—plummeting past, arms windmilling desperately. One of the younger comms technicians muffles a horrified yelp with both hands and shuffles more quickly towards the stairs.

“We are holding,” the blonde woman says, grimly pleased. “Go.”

Bodhi counts the number of defenders heading up the stairs with blasters; despite not liking the total, there’s nothing he can do about it except pray. The lights in the stairwell sputter and dim, making more people cry out, eerie and echoing, although the Imperials clearly haven’t managed to cut the power yet. On that realization, two floors down, Bodhi almost turns back, thinking he’ll take cover in the comms station and keep working on getting the signal out. But the sounds of the firefight—shouting, constant blaster fire, the clatter of plasteel armored boots—suddenly sharpen, as if someone’s thrown open a door, and his fear of being discovered, being caught, lends him speed.

Should’ve gone with—Bodhi sucks in a breath. Fuck! Pulls his comlink out of his jacket, torn between calling Luke for help or warning him away—not that it matters, they’re jamming us, I can’t __

Armored footsteps thunder above him, sending him scrambling down another flight of stairs to catch up; leaning over the rail to check how far ahead the others are; sneaking scared glimpses up for white armor and blaster rifles—and then the electronically filtered voice of a stormtrooper calls a halt.

Shit, shit—Bodhi lurches back from the railing and presses against the wall, heart hammering in his chest. Did they see me? Did they—

Something small and round, about the size of the comlink he’s still clutching in one frozen fist, rattles down the steps, rolling to a stop next to his boot. Another one falls past his line of sight into the stairwell, followed by a handful more. Flatt cries out, his voice recognizable over the panicked yelling of dozens of his people even when his words aren’t.

Bodhi stares at the stun grenade for a fraction of a heartbeat, thinking, stupidly, Tonc, where’s—and then, “I’m one with the Force the Force is with me I’m one with—” tearing out of his throat, he snatches the grenade, pitches it straight back up the flight of stairs, and sprints in the opposite direction as fast as his legs will carry him.

The blast hurls him the rest of the way.

*****

He comes to when they’re cuffing his wrists together in front of him. His head pounds, and he can feel a stinging cut on his forehead, but they’re cuffing him—
“No, no, please—”

But it isn’t his own voice shrill and panicking in his ears.

Bodhi opens his eyes and glares at Flatt. They're back in the comms station, surrounded by stormtroopers; Flatt is being shoved into a chair at a console, holding his bound hands over his head beseechingly, hardly the self-righteous and confident leader of the Nationalists he'd made himself out to be.

“Rook’s awake,” the stormtrooper in front of Bodhi reports, and the one punching commands into the console looks over.

“No heroics, Ensign,” he says, waringly, and yet another trooper hefts their blaster rifle in Flatt's direction.

Bodhi snorts, and tries to rub his forehead with both hands, more weary and angry and hurting than afraid. “Wouldn't dream of it.” The binders are the sort he'd practiced lockpicking on, with Cassian so long ago, but there's no help for it now, not surrounded like this. At least it’s too bright in the room for anything to crawl out of the shadows. “And—not that it matters, but it’s Captain, actually,” he adds, jerking his chin at the rank insignia on his flight jacket, pride mingling with his muddled irritation. His hair, grown back out to chin-length, has come free of its ties, and strands of it fall into his face.

Flatt’s eyes light up. “Yes, yes, he’s the one you want, he's a captain—very important to, to the Alliance—” Bodhi blinks, momentarily fascinated by the way Flatt's screwing up his face, like he’s tasting something foul.

“Governor,” the stormtrooper—must be their commander, Bodhi decides, belatedly noticing the orange-red pauldron on his far shoulder—says, and from the tone of his voice, Bodhi guesses the man’s frowning underneath the death’s head helmet. Maybe rolling his eyes. “We didn't come here for him.”

Bodhi glances up at the pair of stormtroopers flanking him. He doesn’t have a clue what to do with that information, but a spark of surprised hope flares to life anyway. 

To do what?

No vision of Luke striding in to the rescue manifests in his memory.

“Wh—what? No, I’m nobody, but—” Flatt is saying, grabbing at the ‘trooper commander’s arm. He swivels back to Bodhi, as if there’s anything Bodhi can do about their situation. And then the agitated expression on his face shifts, the smirk Bodhi had mistaken for wry on their first meeting curling the corner of his mouth.

Fuck. Oh, fuck.

“Don’t,” Bodhi says, half-rising from his chair, choking on his heart. The stormtrooper on his left puts a heavy hand on his shoulder and pushes him back down. “Flatt, no—”

“I—I have information,” Flatt says, slyly, and Bodhi trembles with fury. “To trade. For—for my life—”

Bodhi spits, “I thought you—you cared about Abridon—”
The stormtrooper smacks him across the back of his head, cutting him off. “Shut up.” Bodhi snaps his mouth closed, his heart racing, and hunches his shoulders against another blow, though it doesn't come.

Okay, okay, keep quiet and think of a plan—

Flatt flounders for a moment, watching Bodhi apparently cowering, and then, grasping at straws, asserts, “If I am the governor—” a quick glance up at the stormtroopers makes it obvious they aren’t buying that line of banthashit— “Then, then Abridon needs me.”

“We'll see,” the commander says. He brings up a holo comm call. The blue light of the holo renders the man on the other end pale and washed-out; no one Bodhi recognizes from his life in the Empire, or from Cassian and Jyn’s reports. “General, we've captured Governor Flatt.” The electronic filter masks his satisfaction, a little, when the general nods acknowledgement, but it can't hide his distaste when he adds, “The governor wishes to trade information for his life.”

“Put him on,” the general says.

One of the stormtroopers pushes Flatt towards the vid pickup. All the color has drained out of Flatt's face, along with whatever bravado he'd briefly discovered. “Please don't kill me,” he begs.

The general visibly sighs, and turns his head, like he's checking something on another display. Progress of the battle, probably. “Don't waste my time, governor.”

“Just—just tell me you won't kill me—”

In his disorientation, head still ringing from the slap, Bodhi wonders what Valery Flatt would've done in her husband's place. Known better than to plead for Imperial assurances, perhaps; held her head high and gone gracefully to her death.

Is that what I'm—

Bodhi's nauseated, abruptly, with fear and the lingering effects of the stun grenade, and lowers his head to his hands, trying valiantly not to throw up. Flatt doesn't make it easier with his horribly obsequious begging; how had the man gotten himself elected?

The Imperial general says, more sternly, “As I said before, don't waste my time, Governor.”

Flatt squeezes his eyes shut and, like he's actually heeding the general's words, says quickly, “There are rebel dignitaries here, high-ranking members of the Alliance—your men captured one of them too, Bodhi Rook, he's one of them—”

Bodhi groans into his hands, helplessly angry all over again. “Flatt, you absolute piece of—” One of the stormtroopers settles the muzzle of his blaster rifle against the back of his neck, and he freezes.

“They were in negotiations with—with the government council to persuade Abridon to join the Alliance,” Flatt is continuing, and Bodhi holds his breath, waiting for names to start spilling from Flatt's mouth, utterly unable to leap across the room and stop him, silence pressing cold and hard against his spine. “They scattered when your troops arrived, General, but—but they can't have gone far—”

The general says, “Grand General, did you hear that?”

A disembodied, Core-haughty voice comes over the line. “Indeed I did. If the story is true, and your troops successfully capture the rebels, General Tantor, then we shall provide the governor with a
swift execution instead of a long and painful death.”

Flatt gasps and shudders, folding in on himself under the stormtroopers’ implacable gazes. “But—but I gave you good information! Please don't kill me! I—I have a wife, and—”

“Your emperor thanks you for your cooperation,” the grand general says, amused.

“What would you like done with the other captive, Grand General Brashin?” the stormtrooper commander asks. “The traitor?”

Bodhi tenses, and tries to calm his ragged breaths. They won’t kill me. Not—swiftly. Seerdon promised that, too. I have time to think of—of—something—time for Luke or Jyn to think of something—

“He could be useful,” Tantor says, thoughtfully.

“No! No, I'm useful, you'll need me,” Flatt cries.

Brashin huffs. “Give the Nationalists and the rebels an ultimatum. Surrender by midnight, or we'll burn the capital city to the ground, and their precious hero with it.” He pauses. “I mean Rook, not you, governor.”

Flatt slumps in his chair, deflated and defeated.

Bodhi almost laughs, though his heart thumps louder in his ears. Luke will come, and everything Draven said—

“All right, Commander Lant, you heard the Grand General,” Tantor says. “I'll have the communications lockout lifted shortly.”

“What should we do with the governor?” Lant asks.

“Put him with the other prisoners, for now,” Tantor replies. “There will be plenty of other martyrs tonight.”

That makes Bodhi wince, even as Flatt babbles his effusive, groveling gratitude.

*I don’t know how, but I have to find a way out.*

He hopes his friends are all right, wherever they are.

*****

Bodhi manages to keep his mouth shut as the stormtroopers march him down through the government center, anger draining slowly away in his worry for everyone else. His head whirls with pieces of plans that won’t fit together: running, hiding, lying to Celina, threatening to blow them both up in the kyber crystal caves—he doesn’t have a shot at any of the things he’d ever tried before.

When they get off the turbolift in the lobby again, the streets outside dark except for the occasional flash of another explosion, his speeder is still somehow parked on the sidewalk, and—maybe—

He shakes his head at himself.

*Even if I broke free and ran for it, they’d shoot me in the back before I got the engine started.*

The stormtroopers pivot and take him out another set of doors, anyway, to another garden. Bodhi
prays for a hideous egg sculpture he can topple over, but this garden is devoted to flowers, lots of them: sealed-up yellow starflowers and blue roses from Ithor, plom blooms releasing their sweet scent as they’re crushed underfoot—

A weak laugh slips out of his mouth. “Can’t take you anywhere,” he mumbles, staring at the petals mashed into the dirt.

“What’s that?” Lant says, over his shoulder, gesturing for a couple of the ‘troopers to spread out into defensive positions.

Bodhi motions with his bound hands at the ground. “I—uh, I’ve got to remember this for—for a friend of mine. He’s learning about metaphors.”

“You think you’re funny,” one of the stormtroopers behind him growls, and kicks his legs out from under him. The dirt is more forgiving than a metal deckplate or a stone floor, but pebbles dig into his knees and twigs splinter into his palms.

“Not—not really,” Bodhi manages, pushing up to his hands and knees, and looks up into the empty gazes of his captors. Their helmets look unsettlingly like skulls in what little illumination shines down on them from the buildings nearby, and the darkness pressing in around him is uncomfortably familiar—

_No, no, get under control, they’re not—they’re just—_

Bodhi swallows, remembering a frightened plea he’d made once, to someone else ready to kill.

_They’re like me?_

“Um, so—so, I know your commander’s name, Commander Lant, but I don’t—who are the rest of you guys?” He glances around; one ‘trooper has started setting up a communications relay, tantalizingly close—

“Don’t answer that,” Lant barks. He turns, looming over Bodhi, and his mouth is suddenly very dry, as the commander blocks out the meager light from the building behind him.

“I—I just—I knew stormtroopers,” Bodhi says, uncertainly. “On—uh—” One of them kicks him in the side, hard, and he collapses into the dirt, coughing and gasping for breath.

“On Eadu, right,” Lant says. “Yeah, we know a few things about you.” The electronic filter does nothing to hide his contempt. “Thought you were smart enough to figure out there’s no point in trying to bargain with _loyal_ servants of the Empire—”

A sharp crackle of static from the comms relay distracts Lant, and Bodhi, unthinking, shoves off the ground, lunging to one knee—the butt of a blaster rifle cracks across his face, and he cries out and falls backwards again.

“Or trying something like _that,_” Lant says, mockingly, as Bodhi pants at his feet, twisting his hands back and forth inside the binders. “Excuse me a moment, _Ensign._” He steps aside to confer with the ‘trooper at the comms unit.

Bodhi glares at the remaining pair of stormtroopers standing over him. _Stupid, that was really stupid—but they’re really aren’t gonna kill me. And if Luke, or—somebody—is out there, and I can keep the stormtroopers’ attention on me long enough—_

“What’d it take for you to join up?” he says, hoarsely, fighting the urge to pull against his restraints;
he’s scraped-up enough as it is. “What—what did you think the Empire was gonna do for you?”

“Stop talking,” one says. It’s a woman; he can hear traces of an accent that the Imperial Academy hadn’t been able to erase.

“It was—I did it because of my—” Bodhi stiffens up, catching a fragment of an order from the comms unit, in Grand General Brashin’s clipped tones:

“—endezvous with Colonel Tulon’s walker task force to attack the Rebel base.”

“Yes, sir,” Tantor replies. “TR-MB moving out.”

Jyn and Chirrut—

I have to—I have to—

But he can’t seem to think of anything as he struggles back to his knees, dizzy and despairing, and all the more so once reports come in that Imperial troops have located Winter, Hostis Ij, and Auxi Kray Korbin. Lant seems exasperated about that, smacking his gauntleted hand against the butt of his blaster rifle.

“Sorry you’re stuck here with me,” Bodhi says, tiredly. He yawns. “Not a lot of excitement or glory standing guard—”

“We follow orders,” the female stormtrooper says, her voice flat. “General Tantor says guard you, we guard you.”

The voices from the comms unit grow louder, suddenly, and Lant waves her silent.

“—we’re picking up heavy weapons fire nearby!”

Bodhi’s heartbeat picks up speed at the frenzied note in the Imperial soldier’s voice.

“The Rebels are attacking Colonel Tulon’s troops?” Tantor asks.

“No, sir—that is most definitely not the situation here.”

“What are you saying?” Tantor asks, grimly.

“One of Tulon’s walkers is firing on the rest of his units!”

The other stormtrooper sucks in a sharp breath, and for a second Bodhi thinks, Jyn, stars, let that be Jyn in a stolen walker—and then he huddles in on himself in horror, hands clasped around his knees, barely breathing as he listens to Tantor calmly ordering his forces to bring the walker down.

Shit. Shit.

If that’s Jyn—

Where is Chirrut?

“Hey,” the other stormtrooper says, prodding Bodhi in the back as, over the comm line, Tantor’s troops close in and topple the walker. He doesn’t move, staring blankly into the flowers, lips shaping Chirrut’s prayer, thinking of Jyn clutching her mother’s kyber crystal—I shouldn’t have sent Kaytoo away to the refugee camp—“Hey, what the hell—Commander, something’s wrong with—Commander?”
Bodhi lifts his head slowly, his eyes widening as he discovers Lant’s taken his helmet off, and is setting his blaster rifle aside. His gaze burns; it’s an expression Bodhi’s seen before, on another, more alien face.

 (“—you didn’t talk this much, before—”)

Oh, this is going to be really unpleasant.

Luke—

 (“—it gets worse when someone’s about to hurt me—”)

Bodhi clears his throat, and manages, faintly, “Listen, I don’t—I don’t know what’s happened, but—I’m sorry, I never wanted anyone to get hurt, not—not even stormtroopers, I—”

“Colonel Tulon tried to defect,” Lant interrupts him, low and furious. “Is that why you were here?” He punctuates his words with a backhanded slap. “Collecting more traitors?”

“No!” Bodhi reels in confusion and pain, futilely trying to get his bound hands up to ward off the commander’s assault. “I don’t even know who—who that is—” A flash of his earlier anger resurfaces through the blows raining down on him. “Can’t—ah, fuck!—keep track of all you Imperial bastards—”

“But I can,” Luke says, emerging from the shadows, covering Lant and the other stormtroopers with Baze’s blaster. He looks fiercely determined, dirt smudging his face and black tunic, but he’s uninjured, and there’s no sign of the terrifying anger he’d radiated when he’d faced down Seerdon.

He always comes back—

Lant steps away from Bodhi, breathing hard. “Commander Skywalker, what a nice surprise,” he says, and grins. “Is it just you?” His tone is wrong, but Bodhi can’t sort out why; his head hurts too much to think straight, and it’s all right now, Luke will know what to do, the Force is strong—

“I wouldn’t let him come alone,” Baze rumbles, stepping out at Luke’s side, a blaster in each hand. A puzzled frown distorts Lant’s face. “I don’t know who you are, but no matter.” He lifts his hand to his mouth and says, into his wrist comm, “Now—”

—and from above them, out of the windows of the government center building, a dozen jetpacks fire to life, like starflowers blooming, and Bodhi’s relief at being rescued turns to ash. His muddled mind resolves his mistakes with awful clarity.

Should’ve gone with them.

If I’d gone with them, they wouldn’t have come back here. I could’ve gotten them out. I could have—

As the jumptroopers descend, and more stormtroopers come out into the garden, Lant says, to Luke, “I believe you’d put up a hell of a fight, but—” He tilts his head, and the female stormtrooper hauls Bodhi to his knees one final time and steps back, the whine of her blaster rifle powering up clearly audible even over the muted roaring of the jetpacks. “I’d have to make you watch this, first.”

Baze mutters a curse.

Luke’s gone pale, his eyes locked onto Bodhi’s face.

No way out.
“I’m sorry,” Bodhi whispers, struggling for breath.

Luke jerks a nod, and opens his hand, letting Baze’s blaster drop. “I surrender.”

Chapter End Notes

Happy 25th 35th (I...appear to be perpetually stuck in the 2000s, lol) anniversary of ROTJ!! It's also been one year since going to Sanctuary in chapter 44, if you can believe it...sorry this chapter is not nearly as nice or happy :P

Speaking of Sanctuary, though, cloudsofsmoke has made an amazing playlist for this fic, which you can find on YouTube, and for which you can also find the liner notes!!

Major thanks to morag for the beta on this one, and for the tendency to reblog Bodhi gifs at exactly the right time :D

I know this is a long haul (...290k words, omfg), and I definitely wish I could update faster these days!! But I can't make any more promises about timing (major dissertation push next week), except to say that there are two more chapters of Abridon plotted out, and then ROTJ is coming up very quickly after that.

Rereading all your comments and the bookmark tags and tagged stuff in other places keeps me going; your support continues to be just the most incredible thing I've ever experienced in any fandom. Thank you. <3
Chapter 86

Chapter Summary

Keep it together just a little longer.

Chapter Notes

Bodhi’s horrible no good very bad day continues. **Canon-typical violence** tag very much in effect, as is anything related to what happens to Bodhi whenever canon-typical violence is directed at him.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“I’m sorry, I’m sorry,” Bodhi mumbles, haltingly, as one pair of stormtroopers pulls him up and another clamps binders around Luke and Baze’s wrists. He sways on his feet, exhaustion and pain blurring his view of Luke’s wide and worried eyes. “Didn’t know you—either of you—were there. Didn’t know about the—” He gestures skyward, meaning the jumptroopers, who have gone and blended in, without their jetpacks. “I’m sor—"

A stormtrooper shoves Bodhi towards his friends, and Luke puts his bound hands out, helplessly, when he stumbles. Maybe not that helplessly; Bodhi feels *something* levering him up, preventing him from face planting in the dirt as he regains his balance.

*I—is Luke—*

“You’re sorry *now*, just wait until ISB gets their hands on you,” Lant says. He’s put his helmet back on, the electronic filter distorting and somehow, horribly, *amplifying* the satisfaction in the commander’s voice.

Bodhi suppresses a shiver, but Baze merely snorts and says, “If you’re going to give him the drugs that make him sing, I want a different cell.”

“What?” Lant says.

“Nothing.” Baze tries to wave a hand dismissively, looking almost comically annoyed when his other hand comes up along with it.

“Whatever. Transport’s another minute out. *Move,*” Lant orders, and the stormtroopers shift around them, crushing the flowers underfoot in their formation. Bodhi looks around at the few flickering lights of the government center building, and up towards the equally faint stars, wondering if any of his messages had gotten out this time.

*What did I tell the twins about what would happen if I surrendered?*

Baze has started to whistle, a vaguely familiar melody that carries, even as the commotion of battle rages on elsewhere in the city, blaster fire and explosions making the ground and Bodhi shudder.
Luke jostles against Bodhi’s side as they’re escorted out the way he and Baze had come, through a now well-guarded gate, towards a loading dock. “Are you all right?” he murmurs, under Baze’s tune.

“Just—just a little banged-up,” Bodhi answers, shaky under Luke’s scrutiny. He starts to lift his hands to his forehead to check if he’s still bleeding; flinches when the movement tugs at bruised ribs and sore muscles. Luke grimaces sympathetically. “Why—what are you and—and—” Bodhi has a fuzzy sense that Lant and the stormtroopers really have no idea who Baze is, and that he should try to keep it that way—“What are you doing here?”

Luke’s mouth twitches. “Came back to chat, of course.”

“’Cause—they didn’t know you were here,” Bodhi mutters, as the transport comes into view; it’s an armored speeder truck, unsettlingly insectoid with four stabilizing wings and two mandible-like arms protruding forward. “They only knew about the—the diplomats—Flatt didn’t give you up, you shouldn’t have—”

“I had to try, didn’t I?” Luke says, tightly.

“Knock that off,” the stormtrooper on point—not Lant, their commander has positioned himself to escort Luke personally—snaps at Baze.

“Don’t like it?” Baze asks, sounding so much like Chirrut that Bodhi jerks his head up to stare at him, and then, just as quickly, back down.

Maybe they do have a plan?

“You better not be signalling for backup,” the ‘trooper says, warningly, and Bodhi gets a cuff to the back of his head for emphasis.

“No,” Baze says. “Just whistling.”

Bodhi has no idea if he’s telling the truth.

“Where are you taking us?” Luke asks, as Lant deploys his troopers in and around the transport. Bodhi has a heartbeat’s wild hope that Jyn and Chirrut will emerge, blasters blazing, or will turn out to be the drivers, or something—

“Spaceport,” Lant answers. “Shipping you lot off to Kalaan.” He turns towards Bodhi. The helmet obscures his face, of course, but the tone of his voice sends a chill down Bodhi’s spine. “You should feel right at home.”

“How’s that?” Bodhi says, puzzled.

“Kalaan City’s a pile of rubble,” Lant says.

Bodhi’s eyes widen. On one side of him, Luke goes very still; on the other, Baze clenches his hands in fists, scowling fiercely. Bodhi licks his lips, ignores the wave of exhaustion and ash and hurt that threatens, and points with both hands at Luke. “You—you remember what he did, though, right?”

Lant growls and shoves Bodhi into the transport, sending him sprawling to the deck. But he’s in for it anyway, so Bodhi goes on, “The bit with—with the Death Star? Yavin IV? Whole new calendar system based on that moment—”

A stormtrooper draws their foot back to kick him. “Stop,” Luke pleads, as Bodhi rolls away from
their boot, hissing as his shoulder slams into the transport’s metal bench. Luke ducks into the transport, holding his bound hands up, his eyes shining in what little light creeps in through the ventilation slits. “Please, we’ve come quietly, there’s no need to—”

“Get him to keep his mouth shut, and we won’t have any more problems.” Lant jerks his head, and the stormtrooper steps away, taking up a guard position at the end of the transport. Baze is unceremoniously ushered on last, followed by three more stormtroopers.

One gestures with their blaster rifle at Bodhi, and he struggles up to sit on the bench next to Luke, still glaring uselessly at Lant. “Think you’ve got enough ‘troopers for the three of us?”

“Bodhi,” Luke says, a touch exasperated, and Bodhi relents, raising his hands to signal his acquiescence.

“Thank you,” Lant says, very dryly, and climbs into the cab of the transport. Bodhi watches him take his helmet off again to talk to the driver, and then the whole vehicle twitches sluggishly forward.

Luke sighs. “Really, Bodhi, you’re almost as bad as—”

“Chir—uh, my uncle?” Bodhi says.

“I was going to say Han, actually.” Luke catches at Bodhi’s upper arm to steady him as the transport jerks around a corner.

Bodhi leans into him, a little, wishing—well, a lot of things, most of them having to do with not being captured and sent to a prison camp, but also that they’d had more time, before disaster struck all over again. “Feel like Han got kicked less.”

Luke huffs a faint laugh. “Leia’s got tiny feet.” He turns his head, slightly, keeping one eye on their guards. “You’re—okay?”

“Nothing being slowly and painfully tortured to death won’t fix,” Bodhi murmurs, letting his head fall onto Luke’s shoulder. He’s tired, the adrenaline of dashed hopes seeping away, and he doubts the Imperials will give him another opportunity to rest, or see Luke, before—

Before—

It’s dark in the transport, and Baze looking at him across the way is uncomfortably reminiscent of something—


“Not yet,” Baze rumbles, leaning forward.

“Sit back,” one of the stormtroopers orders, hefting their blaster rifle. Bodhi tenses; Baze’s dark eyes are glinting intently, and maybe—

“He doesn’t need to sit back,” Luke says, and Bodhi’s eyes go wide. He looks down, and Luke’s making a familiar gesture with his left hand, even inside of his binders.

“You can stay where you are,” the stormtrooper says, standing down.

“You don’t need to watch us,” Luke adds, and Bodhi’s mouth falls open. Oh, my ever-loving stars—
“We don’t need to watch the prisoners,” the stormtroopers echo, blankly.

“You should keep an eye on the road,” Luke adds, and the stormtroopers repeat his words, turning and peering out of the ventilation slits to look.


Luke smiles at him, startlingly calm, but simply says, “Okay, I think—I think we’re good. Master Malbus?”

Baze is hitching up his robes, giving Bodhi more insight than he’d ever really wanted as to how the Guardians’ complicated clothing went together. “What are you—”

“Our Captain Andor—oh, he’s a colonel now, sorry, Colonel Andor—had the right idea, on Jedha,” Baze says. “Do you remember—hmm, probably not.” He grimaces in contrition, and produces a lockpicking kit from somewhere inside his robes. “Can you get Luke free?”


“This is your—I—” Bodhi looks back and forth between them, completely astonished. He holds his hands up, not liking how badly they shake, but it’s not just from fear, now. “I can try?”

Luke doesn’t spare him a confirming glance, his face eerily serene with concentration, but his voice is light. “I trust you.”

Bodhi scrambles from the bench to kneel before Baze, like a supplicant in the Temple, and Baze deposits the kit in his hands. “I should’ve gone with you,” Bodhi murmurs, setting to work on the binders, clumsy with the ones around his own wrists, but some semblance of clarity is returning with a task in front of him. “I thought I could help, but—but I don’t think I got the distress signal out.”

Baze nods. “If we can’t leave, if we are trapped on Abridon, we will do what we used to,” he says. “Which is?” Bodhi glances up at his shadowed face.

“Survive,” Baze says. “Hide. Fight, where we can.” His eyes meet Bodhi’s. “Pray.”

“I’d rather not spend the rest of the war here,” Bodhi whispers. He drops the lockpick. “Shit.”

“Can you find it?”

Bodhi ducks his head, feeling around on the deck for the thin sliver of metal, his heart pounding.Fuck, fuck—”Yeah. I—I got it.” He gulps. “Sorry.”

“It’s okay,” Baze says. “Breathe.”

“This isn’t exactly the ideal conditions for meditation,” Bodhi mutters, but he does take a slower breath, willing his fingers to steady, and starts again on the locking mechanism. “Do you—either of you—have the rest of a plan? Are we going to steal this transport and—and—go back? Winter and the others—”

Baze shakes his head. “No plan.”

“No plan, no backup—”

Baze grins at him, a startling flash of teeth in the dim transport. “I thought you trusted in the Force?”
Bodhi throws a glance at Luke, who seems entirely focused on keeping the stormtroopers’ attention off of them. “I do.” Then he jerks his head up. “Is Chirrut okay? Jyn?”

“Don’t know,” Baze grunts, his shoulders slumping.


“That’s odd,” one of the stormtroopers says, just as Bodhi’s lockpick slips into place, and he stops moving, afraid to look up at either Baze or Luke, his heartbeat racing. “We’ve turned. This isn’t the road to the spaceport—hey, what the fuck are you—"

“Do it,” Baze snaps. Bodhi twists the pick, the binders pop free, and Baze launches himself off the bench just as the stormtrooper’s hand comes down on Bodhi’s shoulder—

—and then Bodhi just tries to get out of the way of Baze barreling at the stormtrooper like a charging reek. He smashes them into the opposite wall of the transport, their blaster rifle clattering away, out of reach.

_Fucking hell_—Bodhi cringes, as the remaining three stormtroopers shout warnings at Baze and to each other. But Baze merely swings round and attacks, swift and brutal, his fists and feet battering the joints of the stormtroopers’ armor—one doubles over in agony, and hobbles towards the transport’s cab, yelling for Lant.

Bodhi tries to make out where the rest of the rifles are, before the sound of blasterfire can join the screams filling the transport. Luke apparently has the same thought, extending a hand like he’s trying to summon a weapon with the Force, though nothing soars out of the melee into his grasp. Down on the floor, Bodhi spots a blaster rifle under the bench and starts to crawl over; jerks back as a stormtrooper crashes beside him, their visor spiderwebbed with cracks.

As the transport jolts to a halt, Baze grabs the last stormtrooper’s arm, keeping their blaster pointed up at the ceiling of the transport, and barks, “Go—"

—but two shots split the air—

“No!” Luke and Bodhi shout, in the same horrified breath—Lant is stepping out of the cab hatch behind Baze, aiming a smoking blaster pistol down into the transport—

—and Baze wavers on his feet for a second, before the stormtrooper elbows him in the stomach and pulls free. Luke leaps forward to catch Baze as he goes down.

Bodhi is half a heartbeat behind. “No, no, Baze—” he chokes out, hands hovering helplessly over the scorched holes in the side of Baze’s robes. Baze is pale under his beard, mouth twisting with pain. “Hold on, Luke—Luke will—"

“General Tantor wants him,” Lant says, above them, and armored hands grip Bodhi under his armpits and haul him up. He cries out, panting and struggling to break free, but the stormtrooper wraps an arm around his neck, dragging him towards the descending ramp as he chokes and pounds ineffectively on their gloved fingers.

Luke immediately stops moving Baze’s robes away from his wounds and starts to his feet, his hands outstretched towards Bodhi. Lant signals, and one of the surviving stormtroopers points their blaster at him—

“No,” Bodhi wheezes, willing Luke to stop, to _stay alive_. “You—” He gasps for breath, spots filling
his vision, but he can clearly make out more stormtroopers outside the transport, ready to cut them all down. “Can’t save—me—save Baze—”

Luke fixes his gaze on Bodhi’s face, his eyes glassy with tears—

“Let’s go,” Lant orders. Bodhi aims a futile kick at him, gagging as the stormtrooper tightens their grip, and the last thing he hears before he blacks out is Luke screaming his name.

*****

“Tantor wants to talk to him,” Lant is saying, when Bodhi comes back to himself, some time later, slumped over on the metal deck plating inside a structure he doesn’t recognize, surrounded by Lant and two stormtroopers. The commander sounds pissed. “He might be a traitorous little shit, but he might be able to give the general something to get out of this mess, so you keep him alive, understood?”

“Yes, sir,” the stormtrooper replies. “Uh. He—he’s conscious now, sir.”

Bodhi recoils as Lant crouches in front of him, but the commander’s expression is—different. Still tense, and angry, but he seems worried. “You’re going to tell General Tantor everything he wants to know,” Lant says, low and threatening. “No games. No tricks.”


“That’s right,” Lant says. “And your other friend, if he’s still alive.” He grabs Bodhi’s arm and pulls him up.

Dazed and frightened, Bodhi tries to sort out what Lant had been saying, or make sense of where the hell they are; the corridor is strangely cramped, and the deck plating isn’t vibrating under his feet. “What is—” He coughs, and tries again. “Where are we?”

“Going to see General Tantor,” Lant answers, curtly. “Shut up and get moving.”

“This isn’t—we’re not on a ship,” Bodhi mumbles, as they hustle him along. He tries to wipe his sweaty palms on his flight jacket and fails, the angle too awkward with his hands still cuffed in front of him. The walls are closer than they’d been on the transport, and the shadows around each corner are pressing in, ominously. Lant doesn’t say anything, so Bodhi keeps going, words pouring out faster and faster in his attempt to stave off fear. “What—what does General Tantor want with me? I—I’m just—what’s happened? Are we—are you losing? I told you, I don’t want anyone else to get hurt, but I don’t—you have to give me some idea—”

“General Tantor disobeyed an order,” the stormtrooper to his right says. It’s the female ‘trooper from before, the one with the accent he can’t place.

Lant scowls at her. “Don’t talk to him.”

Bodhi shakes his head, confused. “So—so if I give Tantor something, then what?”

“No bargaining,” Lant says, sharply, as they come up to a door.

“I wasn’t trying to”—The door irises open, and Bodhi cuts himself off, frozen in horror at the sight of an interrogation chair in the center of the room.

Oh, shit.
He swallows, and frantically casts about for something to focus on, something about the Galen or the Cadera or—

“What took you so long?” someone says, and Bodhi forces his gaze away from the chair and its restraints, to the two people waiting by the door. One is General Tantor; he remembers his face from the holo call, though he appears years younger in person. But the other is a complete stranger in an Imperial Intelligence uniform, with a control pad for the torture devices on the interrogation chair in his hand.

Bodhi’s breath comes in harsh, shallow gasps. He doesn’t look back at the chair.

Not the monster. Not the monster. Just—

Don’t panic—

Lant clears his throat. “My apologies, sir. Had a little trouble with one of his friends.”

“No apology necessary. If you would?” Tantor waves at the chair.

Never been good at convincing anyone—

But fuck, if I don’t—

“Gen—General, listen, listen,” Bodhi babbles, as Lant takes one arm and the female stormtrooper the other, their gauntleted grip tighter than the binders still on his wrists as they drag him towards the chair, and suddenly he can barely think straight, words spilling from his mouth uncontrollably. “This is—I won’t be any help to you, you didn’t want Flatt to waste your time—” There’s something going wrong with his vision; his captors don’t look right, not like pristine-armored stormtroopers or Imperial officers, more like the dirt-and-bloodstained people who had hauled him across the Jedhan desert.

Still writhing in their grasp, Bodhi throws a look over at Tantor’s blank stare, the awful curious expression on the Intelligence agent’s face briefly jerking him back to reality. Stammers, panting, “Wait, wait, okay, I know somebody in I-I, I’ll talk to her, I—don’t do this!” He strains frantically against the first restraint closing around his chest—

—the—

—and Saw is just standing there, waiting while they strap Bodhi down—

Waiting for—

No!

“You promised,” Bodhi shouts, and a strange expression crosses the man’s face. “You—no, no—” He twists his head back and forth, staring wildly into the shadows, pulling hard against the metal restraints, heedless of how they cut into his skin.

Luke—help me! The monster—I can’t—

“Get the electroshocks ready,” Saw—it can’t be, Saw died, he died on Jedha with everyone else—tells the other man. He turns to lock the door.

“Jyn wouldn’t want you to do this!” Bodhi screams.

Saw—
—not Saw, it isn’t, he’s dead, the monster’s dead—
—turns, and Bodhi recognizes the shape of a blaster in his hand a millisecond before he raises it and fires.

Not at Bodhi, flinching and shrinking back in the chair from the blue stun bolts flashing, but at the stormtroopers. Lant. The Imperial Intelligence agent.

Saw approaches as their bodies crumple to the floor, stepping over the I-I agent who’d been about to secure the electroshock devices in place.

Bodhi squeezes his eyes shut, mumbling, “It isn’t him, it isn’t, stop—”

“Captain?”

He trembles, turning his face away. “Please,” he whispers, though he’s lost track of what he’s pleading for.

“Captain, I need you to listen very carefully.”

(—Saw hadn’t listened, not at all, but Galen had said he could be trusted, that Saw would know what to do, how to make it right—)

“Grand General Brashin ordered me to send troops to attack the refugee camps in the mountains to the east,” not-Saw is saying. “I refused—do you hear me? I refused, but he’s locked me out of the command channels, and my people think I’m dead! I—Captain—”

(—Cassian says, “You know that name?”)

“Shit. Come on.” Hands on both his shoulders, shaking him. “We don’t have much time! I’m not—a murderer, dammit, I have to warn them—you have to help me warn them—”

(—kneeling in the Galen, willing the ground troops to believe him—“We just have to get a signal strong enough to get through—”)

He breathes in, harshly, tasting blood—but he’d done that already, he’d gotten them out, he’d saved —

His friends.

But Kelka—the twins—

The refugees—

Bodhi opens his eyes and stares dazedly at General Tantor. His head hurts and his chest and arms and wrists are sore from thrashing in the chair, but those are nothing compared to the thought of—

No. No.

They don’t deserve to be hurt.

I have to try.

Bodhi licks his dry lips, his gaze flicking down to the thick metal bands around his arms and back to Tantor’s hard, pale face. “I can’t help you do anything from here,” he croaks.
Tantor exhales sharply. “Just tell me what to do.”

“It doesn’t—” Bodhi scans the interrogation room, avoiding looking at the stunned Imperials on the floor around him. “There isn’t—you don’t even have the right systems in here, you have to—” He squirms a little, fighting the wave of terror threatening to pull him under again. His skin prickles with cooling sweat. “General, I won’t be any use to you the longer I’m trapped—”

Won’t be any use to Kelka, or the twins, or Luke and Baze and—and—

“All right. We can access comms from my bunk.” Tantor touches a control on the side of the chair, releasing him. “You understand, though, if you try anything—”

“Everyone dies,” Bodhi says, weakly, getting carefully to his feet.

“Not everyone.” Tantor’s blaster is back in his grasp; he covers Bodhi with it out the door and down the narrow corridor to his quarters, urging him to walk faster. Tantor’s quarters are oddly small and cramped compared to what Galen and other officers had on Eadu, but Bodhi doesn’t have more than a moment to look around before the general points him at the console and starts rattling off a frequency.

“Hurry. I calculated an ETA of twenty minutes, Captain.” Tantor’s face looks pinched.

Bodhi swallows, and nods. Hands shaking, one eye on Tantor fiddling with a battle display and the shifting shadows in the confined space, he spends three precious minutes trying every trick he knows on the Imperial command line and comes up—empty.

“I can’t,” Bodhi says, certain he’s going to be sick, a tremor going through him.

Too late.

Again.

I’m sorry, everybody.

“I can’t do it. Maybe if—if I’d contacted General Taskeen first, my—my people would have a chance to get out there, but—” Bodhi points at the battle holo; Tantor frowns, but doesn’t obscure it from his view. “They’re still—fighting, there’s no way they could send anyone—” He breaks off suddenly, hope flaring as brightly as a supernova in his heart.

I can do this.

“What?” Tantor says, urgently. “What is it?”

“I—I already sent someone,” Bodhi says, swiveling back to the console to scan for the right frequency, his heartbeat speeding up like a ship streaking to hyperspace. “Kay—my friend, he took my cargo shuttle to one of the camps, before you attacked, I sent him to—to help fix the comms equipment because they couldn’t get signals through the mountains any other way—if it’s fixed—”

“They won’t be able to evacuate in time,” Tantor says, pained. “There’s thousands of people—”

“No, but—but if you give my friend your command codes, he can tell your troops you’re alive, order them in your name to stand down!” Bodhi spares a quick look over his shoulder at the general. “The —your stormtroopers, they’ll obey you, no matter what, right?”

Tantor gapes at him, stunned into silence. A heartbeat longer and Bodhi shakes his head, turning
Come on, Kelka. Kaytoo. Pick up.

I’m one with the Force and the Force is with—

“What in blazes makes you think your friend will be able to get close enough to Imperial troops to tell—”

Bodhi grins, dizzy and still afraid but certain. “He’s a KX security droid.”

“What?”

“And he can be very loud,” Bodhi adds, just as the line connects and Kelka—oh, thank the Force, they fixed it—says, irritably, “If this is another well-meaning Nationalist calling in the middle of the night to alert us to the Imperial attack, thanks, that’s only the reason we’ve been living in this camp for the last—”

“Kelka!” Bodhi says.

“Captain Rook?”

“Yeah—Kelka—Kelka, listen,” Bodhi says, as she starts to go into something about the transmitter. “I need to talk to Kaytoo right now. Is he—is he still there with you?” He bites his lip, not glancing over his shoulder at Tantor.

“Hold on one sec,” Kelka says.

“How old is that comms operator?” Tantor says, warily, stepping forward to Bodhi’s side.

Bodhi blinks up at the general’s own youthful face; he doesn’t look like he even needs to shave.

“How old are you?”

Tantor is saved from having to answer by Kaytoo’s wry voice on the line. “Bodhi, do you require a rescue?”

“Uh—” Bodhi flounders, keenly aware that he’d been bound to Tantor’s interrogation chair only minutes earlier, the general’s apparently genuine desire to help the refugees or no.

It doesn’t matter.

It’s not too late for them.

Talk fast.

He takes a deep breath, forcing himself to concentrate. “N—no, Kaytoo, but I need you to do something else, okay? There are Imperial troops headed your way, they’re going to attack the refugee camps. But they don’t know their orders are—are based on a lie, they’ve got bad information, and I might—have a way to stop them. I have—I have General Tantor’s command codes to convince them to stand down.”

There’s a brief silence.

“Based on my knowledge of Imperial procedures, the probability of this plan succeeding is—”

“I don’t wanna know,” Bodhi blurts out. “I just—Kaytoo, I’m sorry I couldn’t come up with
anything better, but please, will you please try?” His heart hammers wildly in his chest. What if he calculated the odds are better if they try to evacuate? Can they warn the other camps—

“All right,” Kaytoo says. “Give me the codes.”

Bodhi looks up at Tantor, who promptly recites a string of Aurebesh and numbers he couldn’t remember if he’d tried. “Thanks, Kaytoo,” Bodhi says, his shoulders slumping with relief. “I—may the Force be with you.”

“Thank you,” Kaytoo says, sounding bemused but fond. “I will try to return quickly.”

Bodhi rubs a hand over his mouth and reaches forward to shut the comms off, just as Kelka says, “I’m coming with you—”

—and he shouts, “Wait, Kelka, no—” But the line’s gone dead, and Bodhi stares at the blinking lights on the console, horrified. “Shit. Shit. Kelka—” Bodhi punches the commands to try her again, and then stills, abruptly aware that Tantor’s taken a step back and is unholstering his blaster.

Bodhi lifts his hands in the air, breathing unsteadily, looking straight ahead, completely at a loss. He wouldn’t. Not here. Not when I just helped him—

He wouldn’t. Not when I just helped him—He looks down at the console and says, nonsensically, “She—she’s just a kid, really, I know my—my friends started fighting when they were a lot younger than she is, but if it goes bad, I—it would be my fault, and—”

“Turn around,” Tantor says.

Bodhi closes his eyes, and says, softly, “If you’re going to kill me, please—make it quick.”

Luke. I’m sorry. I thought I was making something right.

Tantor huffs a laugh. “I’m not going to—would you please turn around?”

Bodhi obeys cautiously, opening his eyes, and immediately jerks back in shock, because the general isn’t aiming the blaster at him; he’s offering it, grip first.

“Captain Rook, I’d like to defect,” Tantor says.

Bodhi gawks at him, and in absolute consternation, sputters, “You couldn’t have led with that?” He tenses as Tantor draws closer, but the general only sets his blaster down on the console before backing away, carefully, and he does, at least, have the grace to look somewhat abashed. “If this is—real, I—I want—”

I want to see Luke and Baze, but Kaytoo isn’t back yet, and what if he can’t—what if he doesn’t—Cassian’s going to be furious—

He pulls up sharply, trying to reel his scattered thoughts back in. Stay focused. Keep talking.

“About what?” Tantor says, peering at him dubiously.

Bodhi groans, realizing he’d said the last bit aloud. “Um—you—you owe me a fucking explanation, at least, right?” He looks down at himself, the new rips in his flight jacket, the scrapes and purpling bruises underneath. “About what you did to me?” His voice has a shrill edge to it—come on, keep it together just a little longer—

And then what?

“I am sorry about all that unpleasantness earlier, but after I refused Grand General Brashin’s order, I
couldn’t shake the Intelligence agent. It was easy to convince him that bringing you here for interrogation, instead of shipping you off to a prison camp, was a last-ditch effort to save my own neck. And then once he, and my overzealous commander, were distracted—” Tantor shrugs.

“Distracted by strapping me to a torture chair,” Bodhi points out. He peaks back at the console to make sure Kaytoo isn’t trying to call in. Stars. I hope they’re okay.

“Yes, well.” Tantor coughs. “Reports of exactly what you are capable of have been confusing, at best. I hoped that the parts about your technical skills were true, but I didn’t know for certain what you would do if I simply left you free.”

“Ah,” Bodhi says, sinking his head into his hands. “And—and, what exactly is your plan now?”

“Find out if your friends were able to talk my troops out of massacring thousands of unarmed civilians?”

“That’s it?” Bodhi lifts his head.

“And, if you are able to contact your General Taskeen, offer to punch through the Imperial line with this prototype mobile base, giving Rebel and Nationalist forces a chance to take back the city?”

“Oh, stars,” Bodhi mutters, wide-eyed. “You’re making this up as you go.”

“I am supposed to be a tactical genius,” Tantor says, but he looks chagrined.

“Some genius,” Bodhi says, too fatigued and worried about his own spontaneous plan to go back to being polite. “Didn’t even know your prisoner was unstable, especially when you lot put binders on me—”

“Where would I have gotten that information?”

“I don’t know, Imperial Intelligence?”

Tantor snorts. “The same Imperial Intelligence that had no bloody idea that Luke Skywalker was on Abridon until he showed up to save you?”

“O—Okay, maybe not them, exactly, but I’m sure—she must’ve said something in her reports about me—”

“Who?” Tantor says.

“The Emperor’s Hand,” Bodhi says, puzzled.

Tantor stares at him, a faintly appalled expression on his face, and opens his mouth—

—a crackle of static from the console’s comms system makes them both jump.

“Bodhi, are you there?” Kaytoo’s voice, though he sounds extremely wary, sends relief washing over him. “The stormtrooper commander insisted on talking to General Tantor herself.” He lowers his volume so far Bodhi has to strain to hear him. “Is General Tantor our prisoner? She won’t like that.”

Bodhi stifles a slightly hysterical giggle. “No, no, it’s not like that, Kaytoo, it’s—” Tantor straightens his shoulders, seeming younger and younger the more Bodhi looks at him. “It’s complicated, but it’s all right. She can talk to him.”
“Go ahead,” Kaytoo says.

Tantor waves Bodhi at the bunk. “It’ll just be a moment,” he says, and then, as Bodhi gets up to vacate the chair, nudges his blaster over to Bodhi’s hand. “So you know I’m not going to try anything.”

“Sure,” Bodhi says, picking it up uncertainly. “Okay.” He sits on the edge of the bunk, trying to pay attention to Tantor’s conversation with Mafai, the stormtrooper commander, but his mind wanders.

*Tantor didn’t mean to hurt me. He wanted to protect the refugees.*

*Why’d he look so odd when I mentioned Celina?*

The general’s quarters are small and scrupulously neat; the battle holo continues updating every fifteen seconds or so. Bodhi stares at it, drained and unable to make sense out of what it shows, the mesmerizing flicker of its blue scan lines gradually lulling him to sleep.

*He’s defecting . . .

*****

Someone touches him, and Bodhi jolts awake, gasping, horrified that he’d *passed out* while his friends were still in danger—

“How’re you safe,” Luke says, softly. “Still on the mobile base, with me and Baze, but everything’s going to be all right. We won. The refugees are safe.” He's sitting next to Bodhi on Tantor's bunk, stroking his hair, and he looks a wreck, his hair disheveled, but there’s a hopeful smile on his tear-stained face. “You’re safe.”

Bodhi pushes himself upright on the bed, not caring that it hurts to do so, his breath hitching on a half-laugh, half-sob of joy. “Luke—” He reaches for Luke’s hand—

Luke throws his arms around Bodhi, instead. “I’m sorry I couldn’t do anything to help—” Bodhi winces, only a little, and just holds on, trembling with relief, and buries his face against Luke’s neck. He’d done enough.

Chapter End Notes

One more chapter on Abridon to explain and wrap this section up. :) I’ll have the full set of references for all these Abridonian shenanigans in the next end note!

Lots and lots of thanks to morag for once again shepherding me through getting this plotty, confusing, monster of a chapter done!!

Thanks for your patience and support, dear readers. <3 <3 <3
Chapter 87

Chapter Summary

I was gonna start explaining.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The battle—
He'd missed it.
All of the rest of it.

Luke and Kaytoo and Kelka, working together to signal the Fleet, which dispatched Green and Corona Squadrons to harry the Star Destroyer until Brashin retreated.

Tantor delivering as promised, punching right back through the Imperial line and giving Taskeen, the Nationalists—and Jyn, who is going to have another pip on her rank badge—a way in to the capital.

And whatever the hell Chirrut had done to land himself in a medcenter bed right next to Baze’s, unconscious and smelling faintly like bacta, the ends of Jyn’s necklace trailing from his grasp.

It’s uncomfortably like those first days after Scarif, when Bodhi had waited and waited with Jyn and Kaytoo for Cassian to wake up, their alleged victory overlaid with grief and guilt. He reminds himself to breathe, picking nervously at the fraying threads of his sleeve, the edge of the fresh bacta bandage underneath; the Imperial threat isn’t hanging over their heads any more than usual, and they’re alive.

They’d just come too close again, that’s all.

“He’s fine,” Baze says, grumpily, cracking one eye open at Bodhi. He taps his hand over his heart, moving a little stiffly. “The Force is strong. I can feel him. Go away and let us sleep.”

“Okay, uncle,” Bodhi says, his mouth twitching, but he doesn’t take a step towards the door until Baze closes his eyes and settles back against his pillow with a barely concealed wince. Luke had managed to do some Force healing, enough to keep Baze alive in Tantor’s brig, and apparently Baze had thought it enough to keep him out of a bacta tank, too.

Not that Bodhi can blame him, of course.

He steps out into the hallway, wondering if Kaytoo’s gotten back yet with his ship; he doesn’t have anywhere else to lie down for a bit, other than the medical bed he’d vacated as quickly as possible, and Jyn calls his name.

“Hi,” Bodhi says, warily; her eyes are narrowed, the hard set of her mouth unpromising. “If you’re gonna yell at me for—for—” He jerks a thumb at the medcenter door behind him. “Chirrut and Baze are sleeping—”
“Oh.” Jyn’s eyes brighten with amusement, though she scrutinizes him, frowning down at his wrists. He tugs at his cuffs self-consciously. “Not here to yell. I need you to come sit in on Tantor’s interrogation.”

“I—I’m sorry, what?”

“He requested—”

“*Luke* should do it, Luke can—can tell if he’s lying,” Bodhi stammers. “I—think, I don’t really—wait, Tantor wants me there?”

Jyn nods, but says, “You don’t have to.”

Bodhi fidgets with the bottle of painkillers inside his pocket. “D’you—will it help you?”

“Maybe,” Jyn says. “I don’t anticipate him being *hostile*, if you’re there, staring him in the face, but he might feel—” She grimaces. “More remorseful.”

“I don’t look *that* bad, do I?” Bodhi rubs his hand over his beard.

“No, you look—all right, considering.” Her mouth trembles, a little, but she lifts her chin, eyes shining, and reaches over to squeeze his arm. “You could limp in?”

*****

Bodhi doesn’t.

In the meeting room, he glances at Tantor’s hands resting on the tabletop, unbound, and then he meets the general’s searching gaze, pointedly. Tantor flushes, and attempts to straighten his posture, looking more like a student at the Academy after a bad night out, than the head of an Imperial army. He’s got a black eye and tape over his nose: Baze’s handiwork, according to Luke, from when Tantor had come to free them without Bodhi in tow, adrenaline and *righteous anger* overriding his injured state.

Bodhi kind of wishes he’d seen it.

“General Brenn Tantor, I’m Lieutenant Jyn Erso, Alliance Intelligence,” Jyn says, sitting down across from him and putting a datapad on the table as she scoots her chair forward.

“Jyn,” Tantor repeats, frowning at Bodhi for no reason he can decipher. “Where would you like me to start?”

“The beginning is traditional,” she says, dryly.

“I was born on Garos IV—”

Bodhi raises his eyebrows, but Tantor appears to be sincerely answering her question.

“Let’s try a little more recent history,” Jyn says, less dry. “What led the Empire to return to Abridon?”

“Imperial base went silent,” Tantor replies. “Grand General Brashin and I were sent to investigate, and we quickly realized the Nationalists had revolted. Brashin thought this would be a good opportunity to test out the TR-MB—that’s the prototype mobile base where we held Captain Rook and Commander Skywalker, and—their friend. My orders were to retake the capital.”
“Walk me through it,” Jyn says, sliding the datapad across the table to him.

Bodhi listens for a few minutes—it’s all “deployed troops to these coordinates” and “walkers in this formation,” the sorts of tactics he’d always been rather bad at in school. Jyn knows what she’s about, though, and Tantor’s willing to explain everything, so his thoughts wander.

To Luke, naturally.

He’d seen Bodhi safely off the mobile base and to the medcenter, and then been scooped up by General Taskeen, who hadn’t looked particularly pleased, despite their victory.

His first action in months, and he probably—he must have defied orders to come for me. Baze can go where he wants, but Luke—

Cassian had all but named him a deserter, after Hoth. Bodhi wonders, unhappily, if this mission was meant to test Luke’s obedience as much as it had been about his training in diplomacy.

A shift in Jyn’s conversation with Tantor towards Colonel Tulon’s attempted defection reels Bodhi’s attention back; in the chaos, he’d nearly forgotten all about that strange turn of events, despite Lant using it as an excuse to beat him.

The professional passion that animated Tantor’s face while he talked strategy drains away, leaving his voice and eyes dull. “I couldn’t believe Tulon would turn on his own troops like that. Or what he tried to tell me about the Empire.” Tantor drops his gaze to the tabletop. “He was my mentor. I thought he was my friend.”

“What did he tell you when you took him into custody?” Jyn asks, equally quiet.

“He said that the Empire was corrupt. Evil. That he’d—murdered civilians and destroyed cities, following orders he didn’t believe in. And—that it wouldn’t be long until someone ordered me to do things just as terrible.” Tantor swallows, and his voice comes out barely above a whisper. “He was right about that.”

“The refugee camps,” Jyn prompts him, flatly.

Tantor nods. “Grand General Brashin ordered me to eliminate the nearest as a show of strength, and to demonstrate ‘the consequences of allowing the Rebels to operate on Abridon.’ I told Brashin I refused.” He lifts his head, but can’t quite look Jyn or Bodhi in the eye. “Colonel Tulon used to tell new cadets that they were soldiers, not murderers. I never forgot that.”

Bodhi bites his tongue to keep from muttering something sarcastic about how Tulon would be delighted to hear it from his prison cell.

“So when Brashin locked me out of the command line and gave the order to my troops anyway, under the pretense that I’d been killed and that this was—retribution, I knew I had to stop it.” He does look at Bodhi directly, then, sheepishly. “I studied the battles on Scarif and Kessel, and Chandrila, and most reports concluded it was you who was fouling up Imperial communications each time.”

The corner of Jyn’s mouth quirks up, but only just. “Was that when you decided to defect? When you needed Bodhi’s help?”

“No, I—” Tantor sinks in his chair, misery screwing up his face. “I couldn’t make up my mind. Even when I stunned my own troops to keep them from interfering with my plans, I thought I could still go back. Explain myself to someone besides Brashin. Someone with honor, like—it would’ve meant a
court-martial, no question, but all I ever wanted was to serve the Empire.”

Bodhi stares at him, dismayed, the air gone out of his lungs, like the restraint’s closing over his chest, or the monster’s thrown a thick tentacle around him. *He would’ve gone back? After everything that happened?*

“Your high-profile prisoners probably would have helped your case.” Bodhi shivers at the icy note in Jyn’s voice—maybe a trick she’d picked up from Cassian, she’d always burned so fiercely before. “When did you finally decide?”

Tantor throws a sideways glance at Bodhi. “When you told your droid that you didn’t need to be rescued.”

Jyn stiffens, almost imperceptibly.

“As it turns out,” Bodhi says, turning away from Tantor’s bleak expression, and stammering at the way her eyes blaze back at him, “I—I didn’t. Um. Need—”

“Right,” she bites out. “Why then, General?”

Tantor runs a hand over his short brown hair. “Because after everything I’d done, to him, to his—companions—he could have signaled for help, and instead, he just—kept trying to do what I’d asked.”

“How the hell did you think I was gonna signal for help?” Bodhi blurs, flabbergasted, at the time Jyn says, “What exactly did you do to him?”

“Uh—” Tantor blinks at them, startled. “Look, apparently my intelligence is out of date, and I’m not good at covert ops, so—”

“I’m all right, really, he apologized,” Bodhi says, trying to cut him off before Jyn makes them both rehash something that’s already gone a bit hazy in his memory. “Jyn, honestly, what else do you need to ask?”

“What, exactly, he did to you,” Jyn says, firmly. “Stick your fingers in your ears if you don’t want to hear it, but it’s important I understand what kind of person we’re dealing with.”

Tantor’s pale face goes even paler, and he throws another quick, alarmed look in Bodhi’s direction.

“Fine.” Bodhi sits back in his chair and crosses his arms over his chest, taking a couple of deep breaths to calm his nerves. “Just—get it over with.”

“Well?” Jyn asks.

Tantor says, cautiously, “Commander Lant and the Imperial Intelligence agent would’ve been suspicious if I’d ordered them to leave me alone with a Rebel prisoner, right after Tulon tried to defect and they knew I’d refused a direct order. So I—pretended that I was going to take drastic measures to get information from Captain Rook I could use to buy myself back into Brashin’s good graces.”

The general is at least a head taller than Jyn, but from how far he’s sunk into himself, he has to look up at her. “But I never actually tortured him! I told you, my intelligence was out of date, I didn’t know he’d react like that to being put in an interrogation chair—I mean, every prisoner fights it, but—but he was saying things that didn’t make sense. He said you, Lieutenant Erso, wouldn’t want me to do it. Like he thought I was someone else.”
Jyn breathes out, harshly.

Bodhi’s mouth has fallen open. He snaps it shut, and, desperate to make her stop looking so much like she’s been punched, says, weakly, “Jyn—”

“Have you tortured other prisoners before?” Jyn asks, cutting him off brusquely.

Tantor shakes his head.

“All right.” Jyn makes a note on her datapad, though from the glint in her eye Bodhi suspects his conversation with her about all this is far from over. “So what can you give us as proof that we can trust you, if you were so loyal to the Empire?”

“Besides the fact that I turned over my prisoners, my prototype mobile base, and fought under General Taskeen’s command?” Tantor takes a valiant stab at recovering.

Jyn’s return smile is utterly devoid of humor. “Yes.”

Tantor visibly casts about for a moment, before settling on Bodhi. “You mentioned the Emperor’s Hand, while we were waiting for your droid to return. What do you know about her?”

“Uh—” Bodhi glances at Jyn, but she simply shrugs and nods for him to go ahead. “She called herself Major Celina, and she claimed to be with I-I, but she operates on—on her own, or with a team of stormtroopers. The Hand of Judgment.” A wistful smile crosses his lips. “Flies a beautiful Rendili-Surron freighter, sometimes. Starlight-class.”

“The Hand of Judgment vanished,” Tantor says. “I don’t think even the Emperor knows where they went.” He straightens up, the grim lines of his expression dissipating at the prospect of providing them something they don’t know. “But I can tell you the Hand’s real name is Mara Jade.”

Jyn shares a glance with Bodhi. “That’s not exactly the most useful—”

“And—and she carries a lightsaber,” Tantor hurries on. “I don’t think she’s a Jedi, she’s not old enough to have survived the purge, but there are some people who think she can do things—”

Bodhi furrows his brow. “Yeah, we—we know that.”

“Oh. Well—I know about a secret AT-AT testing facility in the Trasse system where they—” Tantor breaks off, looking ill. “Where they do live-fire testing on prisoners.” Bodhi trembles, and rubs at the phantom sensation of binders on his wrists.

Jyn’s gone tense, sharpening on every word. “And somehow, you waited this long to defect?”

Tantor slumps. “I’m not—” His eyes flick to Bodhi. “Colonel Tulon said, when I captured him, that whether he was a traitor or a hero would be decided by who wins this war. I’m—neither. I know that.”

“Then I think we’re done here.” Jyn starts to get to her feet. “I’ll have someone escort you back to your cell. Sorry to drag you in for this, Bodhi—”

“Wait,” Tantor says, a thread of trepidation in his voice. “Wait, I want to try and make things right.”

Bodhi freezes, halfway to standing.

“Something else you wanted to tell us?” Jyn says, coolly, though she puts her hand on Bodhi’s arm as if to say yes, I heard it too.
Tantor nods, and says, rapidly, like he thinks her patience is running thin, “I led a task force to find a site to build a shield projector. On a moon orbiting the planet Endor. Outer Rim, close to the Unknown Regions. I don’t know what the shield is for, that’s beyond my clearance, but—it’s something, isn’t it? That the Empire is building something big out there?”


“I’ll pass it along,” Jyn says. She studies Tantor for a moment longer. “Anything else?”

Tantor sighs. “No.”

Jyn nods. “Thank you for your cooperation.”

Bodhi expects her to unleash the full force of her fury the second they step into the hallway. She doesn't, but she also doesn't let him leave her side as they walk, glaring at him when he tries to step away, mumbling, “Kaytoo's probably back by now—”

“In here,” she says, pulling him into a supply closet.

“Uh, Jyn—” Bodhi backs up against the shelves, making the crates behind him rattle. “This—this isn't—people are gonna—”

She obviously does not care what people are going to think. “You had a chance at a rescue, and you said nothing?”

“He had a blaster on me,” Bodhi argues, fumbling his catch of a power pack that's slid off the shelves and hit him in the shoulder. “I'm not a spy, I don't—I don't have a secret code to tell Kaytoo I need an extraction like—like you and Cassian do!”

Jyn pins him with a glare. “Our secret code is when shit starts blowing up.”

“Couldn't do that, either,” Bodhi says, glaring back.

“And what the fuck was that about—did you think you were on Jedha again? Did you think Tantor was Saw?”

“Yeah, I did,” Bodhi snaps. “He’s a fucking ghost in my head, Jyn, I don't think he's ever going to leave m—” He bites his lip; Jyn’s eyes are very wide. “Sorry. I'm sorry. I didn't remember I said anything about you until Tantor mentioned it.”

She exhales sharply, leaning her head back against the shelves. The harsh lighting in the closet makes the shadows under her eyes even darker. “Could use another vacation.”

“Yeah.” Bodhi bows his head, twisting his fingers together. “Tantor isn’t actually like Saw,” he says, after a moment. “If that—that’s the kind of person you’re worried about dealing with.”

“I know.” Jyn reaches across and pokes his arm. “That thing he said, about soldiers, and murderers? Saw didn’t believe there was a difference. Not for the Empire.” She offers him a half-smile. “Now, if you’re really all right, get back to work.”

“You don’t outrank me yet,” Bodhi protests. But he lets himself be pushed back out of the closet, and squeezes her hand before they part ways, unable to entirely suppress a snort at the incredulous look a passing mechanic gives them.

*****
In the evening, attired once more in his fancy blue and gold clothes, Bodhi flies the *Galen* back to the capital city, for the ceremony commemorating Abridon’s official entry into the Alliance. Luke’s been there most of the day alongside the other diplomats, after his meeting with Taskeen, and Bodhi wonders anxiously if it’s gone better, this time, or if he’ll have to search Luke out on the rooftop again.

Kelka hangs over Kaytoo’s shoulder for the entire flight. She’d declined every offer to tour the Rebel base when Kaytoo had brought her, Valery Flatt, and a unit of Tantor’s defecting troops in, and had actually been pretty helpful with prepping the ship for their trip home. Bodhi suspects that if he or someone else doesn’t offer her a job, they’ll wind up with a stowaway; she’s already wearing the smallest possible Rebel dress uniform.

The sky is going a rich purple when Bodhi and his friends arrive at the government center for the last time, the air no less smoky than that first night, more buildings bearing the signs of battle. Kelka’s antennae droop at the sight, and she falls quiet, though she seems to perk up again once they’re inside, hooting derisively at the replacement egg sculpture in the reception, now carefully cordoned off in a corner.

“You’d think they wouldn’t *bother,*” Bodhi murmurs to Jyn, but she only has eyes for—

—*Cassian,* dressed in a crisp gray suit with a formal long vest, talking to Luke and Winter, and a vaguely familiar, curly-haired pilot from Green Squadron. He looks just as tired as when they’d left, but he grins in delight, or relief, when he sees them, excusing himself from the others and coming straight over, nodding to Valery Flatt as they cross paths.

“What are you doing here?” Jyn smacks him on the arm with her handbag; Bodhi can’t tell how gently. “I had *no* idea you were in orbit.”

“I am a very sneaky spy,” Cassian says, catching her hand and bringing it to his lips for the briefest of kisses before letting it drop. “Hello, Kaytoo. Someone gave you a polish?”

“It’s not new bronzium plating,” Kaytoo says, a touch peevishly, but he seems happy, as Cassian slings an arm around Bodhi’s shoulders and squeezes. “I also did not know you were coming. I hope you didn’t abandon your post for us.”

Cassian’s smile dims a fraction under his mustache as he nods a greeting to Baze and touches Chirrut’s hand, respectfully. “Of course not, Kay. But I did come as quickly as I could.”

“Everything all right?” Jyn asks, alert.

“Knowing *you* are all right, yes,” Cassian says, looking around at them. “All of you.” He reaches over to shake Kelka’s hand—

“Chirrut got shot in the ass,” Baze puts in, gruffly, and Kelka giggles.

Chirrut promptly elbows him in the side. “You don’t have to tell everyone. *I* want to tell—”

Jyn’s rolling her eyes and muttering to Cassian, “He *also* took a bad shot in the leg and lost a lot of blood, don’t let him stand for too long.” Bodhi nods emphatically in agreement; it had been unnerving to see the nimble Guardian relying so much on his new staff at first, even after a full immersion in bacta, but the medical droid hadn’t seemed concerned.

Chirrut huffs. “Can still defeat you with one hand behind my back.”

“Especially in this dress,” Jyn says, ruefully, gesturing down at it.
Kelka follows her gaze and puts in, helpfully, “I think the concealed blaster would give you an advantage, Lieutenant Erso.” She looks up at their surprised faces. “What? Rodian. I can see different parts of the spectrum, and the power pack’s giving off some radiation—” She looks up a bit higher at Kaytoo and scoffs, “Humans.” Kaytoo lifts his hand in a reply shrug.

Bodhi reevaluates who, exactly, should be making her a job offer.

“I like her,” Baze says. “Come, 小朋友, we’ll find you a drink.” Kelka’s antennae stand straight upright, and she nods at him, eagerly. Chirrut offers her his arm; they make quite the unusual trio, moving through the small crowd.

“She’s only fifteen,” Kaytoo calls after them, reprovingly, and Chirrut just waves his staff back at him.

“You made a friend,” Cassian says. He’s clasped his hands behind his back, every centimeter a proper Rebel officer, but he can’t take his eyes off of Jyn.

Kaytoo swivels his head. “Bodhi ordered me to.”

“I did not,” Bodhi says, indignantly, as Jyn snorts a laugh. “It’s good to see you, Cassian, but—but what are you doing here? We’re headed home tomorrow.”

Cassian looks at him. “You remember that Luke made me a promise, yes? I came to see that he kept it.”

Bodhi’s eyes widen, and he throws a nervous glance at Luke, but he’s unconcerned, apparently talking ships with the Green Squadron pilot, from the way he’s swooping his drink around. “Cassian—”

“And to help, if necessary,” Cassian says, waving a hand dismissively, and Bodhi breathes easy again. “Luke said you got us another defector?”

“Sort of,” Bodhi hedges, casting a wary eye at Jyn.

“General Brenn Tantor,” Jyn says. “Gave us a nice bit of tech and some information, not a lot to go on, but you can have a crack at him, if you like.”

Cassian shakes his head. “Nothing?”

“He did seem to think the Empire’s building something big off of Endor,” Jyn says. “Bodhi thought maybe a base.”

“Or a shipyard,” Bodhi adds, but Cassian’s face has gone blank, like he’s being very careful to mask his reaction. “What? What is it?”

“Where did you put Tantor?”

“He’s locked up at the base,” Jyn replies. She tilts her head. “Cass—”

“I can’t tell you about it. Not yet. Draven will want to talk to him, first. But—soon.” Cassian nods at her. “I swear.”

“Oh, good, Draven’s back,” Bodhi says, wryly. “Is he here?” He scans the room for the general’s dour face and only finds—“Damn.” Bodhi ducks swiftly behind Kaytoo, clenching his fists. “Of course he’s here, who else would—would Winter be negotiating with—”
Jyn raises an eyebrow at him.

"Flatt," Bodhi says, and is grimly satisfied when her expression hardens.

"The Nationalist governor?" Cassian looks around.

"His wife is nice," Kaytoo says, to no one.

"Yeah, well," Bodhi mutters. "This is great."

"You’ll survive." Jyn laces her arm through his so he can’t make a break for it. "What’s another couple hours? He probably won’t even want to talk to you."

"I should think not," Bodhi says, glowering in Flatt’s general direction.

He manages to avoid Flatt for the duration; the ceremony gets underway when General Taskeen arrives, late as usual. Luke sidles past Bodhi on his way up to the table where the main players are signing the accords, and whispers, “Meet me on the rooftop, after?”

Bodhi nods, reassured by Luke’s composure and the light in his eyes, daydreaming a bit about where they might find a private corner. He barely pays attention to any of the speeches—except for when Flatt says, “On behalf of Abridon, I must thank the Alliance diplomats who came to negotiate, but who found themselves standing at our side in battle.” He names Winter, Auxi Kray Korbin, and Hostis Ij, and—“Baze Malbus, Guardian of the Whills—” Amidst the smattering of applause, Bodhi notices Cassian’s eyebrows shooting up at that; Baze hadn’t dressed the part again, opting for a simple dark suit.

“—and Luke Skywalker, Jedi Knight.”

Bodhi gapes, a frisson of surprised pride running through him, even as Cassian's grip tightens on his shoulder and he wonders if Luke’s resigned his commission. Luke doesn’t look uncomfortable with the title, merely inclining his head. Flatt’s going on about General Taskeen and the Rebel troops who’d stepped up once more to fight, pointing Jyn out as having led a crucial charge against a line of Imperial walkers, but unthinkingly demoting her down to Sergeant.

And then he says, “Finally, although I did everything I could, with Captain Rook’s help, to convince the Empire to spare innocent lives, it was ultimately another partnership that put a stop to the Empire’s plans for Abridon. If it wasn’t for the combined efforts of Kaytooesso and Kelka—”

Bodhi clenches his jaw—partnership?—but the mention of Kaytoo and Kelka sinks in, and he firmly stamps down his anger at the sight of Kelka beaming shyly, over by the window with Valery Flatt and the Guardians. She’s leaning at an funny angle; he can’t quite parse it, and then realizes abruptly that she’s trying to conceal the fact that she’s stuck her suction-cupped fingers to the window. The absurdity of it jolts him out of his irritation with Governor Flatt, and he relaxes—and so does Jyn, who’d been sneaking a restraining hand onto his arm again.

“—to Abridon and the Alliance,” Flatt concludes, raising his glass, and Bodhi joins in, satisfied with the success of their mission, two dozen voices echoing it to the rafters.

Afterwards, he and Luke aren’t exactly able to sneak off to the rooftop alone, though; Jyn and Cassian beat them to the turbolift, Cassian holding Jyn’s high-heeled shoes in one hand as he reaches for the button with the other.

Jyn sticks her hand between the doors to hold them open, smirking. “Rooftop?” she asks, as Bodhi joins them.

He rolls his eyes at her. “I hear it’s very romantic.”

“Oh?” Cassian says, feigning ignorance, poorly.

“We’ll stay out of your way,” Bodhi adds, flashing a grin at Jyn, and fails to dodge her swat.

On the rooftop, Luke holds his hand, and is quiet at his side, for the time it takes to put enough distance between them and Jyn and Cassian that they can’t be seen or overheard. The shrubs and trees bear the scars of the battle between the jumptroopers and Nationalists, but they’re still alive, leaves unfurling shadows on the path.

Bodhi stays silent, too, turning his face up to the stars and listening to the murmur of the city slowing for the night. They come around the curve of the half-filled, shallow pond to a wide swath of undamaged ground, and Luke tugs Bodhi down to sit with him on the grass.

“Cassian had a message for me from Lando,” Luke says, promptly. “He and Chewie tracked Boba Fett to Gall, but they ran into some trouble with the Imperial garrison there, and Fett jumped back out to hyperspace before they could stop him.” He picks up one end of Bodhi’s scarf, twining it through his fingers.

“Oh,” Bodhi says. “I’m sorry it wasn’t better news.”

“It’s okay. Lando and Chewie are gonna catch up to him soon, and then I’m going to help them rescue Han, like I promised.”

Bodhi puts his hand over Luke’s, rubbing his thumb across the smooth lashaa silk of his scarf, feeling Luke’s warm skin underneath. “And then?”

Luke lets out a breath. “And then I’m going to go back to—just for a bit—to finish my training. To become a true Jedi.”

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“Okay,” Bodhi says, carefully.

“Don’t you want to know why?”

Bodhi huffs a laugh. “Figured you were gonna start telling me why, next.”


“Not—exactly,” Luke hastens to add. “I mean, it is—” He stops, and swallows, before trying again. “When you said I couldn’t save you, I thought—then what’s the point? If I have this power, then why shouldn’t I try to do everything I can to keep the people I love from being hurt?”

“You did,” Bodhi argues. “You kept the stormtroopers from noticing I was picking the lock, you—you tried to stop them from hurting us—”

“But they still took you away from me.” Luke’s eyes are wet. “They still—” He gulps. “I could—I could feel it, just like with Leia and Han and Chewie, and there was nothing I could do—” He draws a shaky breath. “I healed Baze the best I could, but I couldn’t concentrate. Not with you calling out
“I’m sorry,” Bodhi says, horrified, his heart skipping a beat. “I—I didn’t—”

“It’s not your fault,” Luke says, swiftly. “And I wasn’t going to break my promise to stay out of your head to try to help—I think I would’ve only made it worse, what you were going through.” He takes a shaky breath. “It wasn’t until afterwards, when General Tantor freed us, and told us what he did—what you did—that I realized it wasn’t about me.”

“What wasn’t?” Bodhi frowns at him.


“Uh—you’ve lost me,” Bodhi says.

Luke smiles. “I was gonna start explaining,” he says, nudging Bodhi with his shoulder.

“Is this the kind of thing I should get Baze for? He’s pretty good at making sense of Chirrut’s—”

Bodhi waves a hand helplessly. “Chirrut-ness, about the Force.”

“No, I think I can explain it,” Luke says, resolutely. “We—you, me, this—this grass—we’re all a part of the Force. Kaytoo and Kelka, the stormtroopers sent to kill the refugees—even them. And there was nothing I could’ve done to stop those stormtroopers, but the will of the Force guided you, and Tantor, to make it possible.” He looks terribly sad, though his eyes still shine with the brilliance of stars. “Even if meant that they caused you so much pain. Maybe if Tantor had listened to his heart sooner, he would’ve found a better way.”

Bodhi licks his lips. “Luke, I don’t—I don’t understand what that has to do with you deciding that you do want to become a Jedi.”

Luke nods. “It’s how I can finish learning what my part is,” he says, gently. “What I need to do. Where I belong in this war, in the galaxy—” He turns his hand over so that he can lace his fingers together with Bodhi’s. “But my place is with you, always.”

Bodhi reaches up with his free hand to touch Luke’s face. “I know you’ll come back.”


They stay entwined for a while, Bodhi kissing Luke’s mouth and neck, hands roving over the soft warm fabric of his black tunic, sliding down to his belt—

He sits up, remembering they’re still very much in public, and Luke makes a faintly disappointed sound. “You don’t have a lightsaber,” Bodhi says, trying to keep a straight face.

“Nope,” Luke says, cheerfully, tugging at Bodhi’s scarf until it slides free and falls to the ground. “But that does remind me—” He takes the kyber crystal out of his pocket and holds it up; it’s still green. “Someone I love very much gave this to me, and—if it’s okay, I’d like to use it to build a new one.”

“Yeah—yes, of—of course,” Bodhi says, stumbling over his words; Luke’s let go of the crystal and is floating it in the air between them, the brightening glow reflecting in the still pond and Luke’s eyes. “Do—um, do you know how?”

“That’s Chirrut’s answer for everything,” Bodhi says, but Luke is folding himself up into a proper posture. “What, right now?”

“Unless you want to pick up where you left off,” Luke replies, hopefully.

Bodhi rubs the back of his neck; he can hear Jyn laughing, not far away, as something splashes in the pond. “I have—I have a better idea, actually. If my speeder’s still parked downstairs, we could catch the sunrise over Sayan?”

“Okay,” Luke says, delighted, winding Bodhi’s scarf around his neck, and lets Bodhi pull him to his feet.

His speeder is still on the sidewalk outside the government center, but there’s a—

“—a parking ticket?” Bodhi slides it off the windshield, shaking his head in disbelief, looking around for someone to address his complaint to, but Luke plucks it from his fingers and shreds it to pieces.

Luke grins, and waves Bodhi over to the driver’s side. “Hey, you ‘helped Flatt’ save Abidron.”

Chapter End Notes

Long note this time, with some serious and political bits.
300K *SURPRISED FACE*

First, endless thanks to morag, once again, for being sounding board, cheerleader, and beta for this chapter. <3 <3 <3 And thanks, as always, to all of you readers--new, returning, forgot-and-now-you’re-back--I love you. You’re amazing for doing this thing with me. <3 <3 <3

Second, you may notice that there are now some TITLES on various chapters. I actually started thinking of this thing in sections a while back, so hopefully this will aid in navigation for newcomers and those of you who are rereading, what.
Third, as you may know, it is World Refugee Week. When I started writing this section on Abridon, I really picked it because it featured yet another defector. In the process of writing about refugees, even in brief, as the weeks and months went by, and more and more stories came out (especially during this past week in the United States) about refugee and migrant crises...I’ve learned a lot, and I encourage you to seek out additional information and give support where you can.

Specifically, I was reading this HuffPo piece, this Forbes photo essay, this National Geographic photo gallery taken by Syrian children, and this article on an exhibit about Vietnamese refugees. Riz is also linking to various organizations supporting refugees via his instagram. And in case you haven’t encountered it already, here’s Slate piece on how you can support groups working to keep migrant families together and advocate for their rights.

Fourth and finally, GFFA references:

Abridon did not go this way in the Force Commander game. Hamman Flatt was still a bit of a coward, though less of a dick than I’m making him out to be. (I did enjoy imagining him dressed in the kinds of clothes his voice actor wore on Star Trek: Voyager XD) His wife Valery does not exist, and neither do Kelka or the Twi’lek kids.

General Taskeen
Grand General Brashin
TR-MB
Interrogation “chair”
Brenn Tantor will return…
…and ROTJ is coming. I will do my best to put us squarely on Tatooine by my birthday. ;)

Translation:
小朋友: little friend

And happy birthday to brynnmclean ;) You know which bits are for you <3

Art by daryshka
Chapter 88: Saving Han

Chapter Summary

I can't discuss it with you.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Thirty-six hours later, Bodhi is shuttling people down to Zastiga from the various capital ships that jump in, the sunrise over Sayan’s sea and Luke’s flushed face fading into bright memories.

Zastiga is about as different from Abridon as it is anywhere else he’s been, covered in ruins that supposedly date back to the founding of the Old Republic. Jedha had been just as old, or so Baze claimed, but any proof of that was long gone. The ruins here aren't like the statues scattered across the desert, with their wind-worn faces, or the Massassi pyramids of Yavin IV, covered in more greenery than Bodhi ever imagined possible; they’re stone walls in concentric or interlinked circles, the patterns more complicated than Bodhi can follow at a glance.

Of his various passengers over the course of the next day, Mon Mothma is the most academically interested in the ruins, musing about the use of circles in galactic architecture as Bodhi concentrates on following the proper vector to the Rebels’ secret landing pad. Admiral Ackbar and General Rieekan take notice of them, briefly, before returning to a heated conversation about a series of battles in the Airam sector that had ended in a virtual draw.

And General Draven spares Bodhi a typically acerbic greeting, as if he hasn’t been absent for months, and promptly buries himself in his datapad. But when Bodhi sees him off the Cadera, he turns at the base of the ramp and says, “Take Luke, or the Guardians, or all of them, and go scout the ruins.”

“Sorry?”

Draven crosses his arms. “See if there’s anything wrong with setting up shop here, long term. You know the drill.”

“Um—” Bodhi frowns at him.

“That’s an order,” Draven adds, dismissively, and continues down to Cassian and Jyn, who are waiting to escort him through the derelict city. Jyn casts an unreadable glance up to Bodhi before falling into step with Cassian and leading Draven away.

Bodhi considers it as he works on his last maintenance check, a little while later. Zastiga was fine, falling somewhere between the remoteness of Hoth and the population of Darlyn Boda. The ruins didn’t seem like they posed the sort of problem Arbra or Amaltanna had; Luke hadn’t sensed anything odd, and Chirrut and Baze were—well, acting as normally as they ever did.

He wonders if Luke is really free to fly around, or if the presence of all these high-ranking Alliance officials means he’s being pulled a dozen different directions, but then Luke pokes his head into the cockpit and says, “Hi.”
“Hi,” Bodhi says. Luke looks—just about as tired as he had in the morning, blinking sleepily as Bodhi had kissed him and slipped out the door of their temporary, cramped quarters to start his transport shift, but his eyes are clear. “Draven send you? I won’t be quite ready to go for a little while yet—”

Luke furrows his brow. “Go where?”

Bodhi waves a hand in the general direction of Zastiga’s terraced hills. “Poking around out there.”

“Oh,” Luke says. “No, Draven didn’t send me. Leia’s on her way in, and Mon Mothma asked if I would come down and escort her to their big secret meeting.” He smiles at Bodhi. “Want to have a drink in town with me and Wedge afterwards?”

“Guess I can.” Bodhi gets to his feet. “What’s Leia’s ETA?”

“Any minute now,” Luke replies, as Bodhi follows him out. Artoo is waiting at the bottom of the Cadera’s ramp, swiveling his dome back and forth and chirping softly to himself. “But—I’ll go exploring with you tomorrow, if you’d like.”

“Okay,” Bodhi says, and then he hesitates. “You—you don’t have other duties—the ‘big secret meeting—’”

“Leia will tell me what’s going on.” Luke shrugs.

Artoo blats softly at them and warbles, *If she’s allowed to. Highest security clearance only.*

“Ah. You weren’t invited.”

Luke’s mouth twitches. “Neither were you.”

“Yeah, well,” Bodhi mutters. “We just escaped Imperial captivity again, it’s no wonder—” He looks up at the sound of retrorockets firing, and spots the yacht descending more-or-less gracefully in their direction.


“That ship—” Bodhi stares at it, dismayed at its haphazard lines. “Is that even spaceworthy?”

Luke chuckles. “The first time I ever saw the Falcon, I called her a piece of junk. The Mellcrawler—well, I don’t know how Nien’s been keeping her together all these years, but I expect he and Han swap tips on the best bonding tape and durawire.” He reaches for Bodhi’s hand. “C’mon, I’ll introduce you.”

The Mellcrawler sets down on the landing pad, and Leia and a Sullustan man come out, trailed by Threepio and someone Bodhi vaguely recognizes as Lieutenant Ematt. Luke hugs Leia, and then introduces Bodhi to—

“The greatest smuggler this side of the Core,” Nien says, in passable Basic, shaking Bodhi’s hand vigorously. His large black eyes roll in the direction of the Cadera. “Although maybe not the best ship thief on this planet.”

“Oh, that—the Cadera was a gift,” Bodhi hastens to explain, politely shaking hands with Ematt, who makes Tantor seem positively elderly in comparison. Behind them, Threepio and Artoo have picked up the thread of a long-running argument, putting him bewilderingly in mind of no one more than Baze and Chirrut. “Which—well, I guess Luke stole it.”
Luke smiles at him, but says, to Leia, “The others are assembled. The meeting can begin as soon as you arrive.”

“What do you know what this is about?” Leia asks, matching her pace to Luke and Bodhi’s despite her shorter stride.

Luke shakes his head. “All I know is it's something big. But I have the latest intelligence report on Han,” he offers.

She looks eagerly at him, and then, just as swiftly, glances away. Sympathy grips Bodhi’s heart; if he hadn’t had Luke’s promise to return, he’s certain he would’ve struggled not to get his hopes up, too.


“It's nothing,” Leia answers. “So what’s the news about Han?”

“It's from General Cracken's people,” Luke says. “They have a confirmed sighting of Boba Fett's ship over Tatooine, and supposedly Fett's been paid and is doing more work for Jabba.”

Bodhi’s eyes widen. Tatooine? He studies Luke's face, but if he'd had any kind of reaction to the idea of going home, it must've been when he'd first heard. Despite the distant memories of Luke's antipathy for his homeworld drifting through his mind, Bodhi can't help wondering what the stars look like from there, or if Luke knows of a mesa to climb for a better view.

“And is Han—” She trails off, her mouth thinning into a line.

“Unclear,” Luke says. “Lando is trying to gain access to Jabba's palace so we can know for sure.” Leia scowls at the mention of Lando, and Luke adds, gently, “Lando's trying to make amends. You have to believe there’s good in people.”

“And what will that matter if Han is dead?” Leia snaps.

Luke stills, his blue eyes darkening, as Bodhi flinches out of his reverie. “Leia—”

Leia sighs. “We can’t dwell on our personal sorrows,” she says, stiffly. “My duty—our duty—is to the Alliance. That has to be more important than anything else right now.” She puts on a burst of speed, putting some distance between herself and Luke as they come into Zastiga proper.

“Leia, wait,” Luke calls, and she turns, putting her hands on her hips and frowning hard at him. “It’s this way,” he says, pointing.

The safe house is at the center of a maze of dusty alleys reminiscent of Jedha’s narrow streets, though the people that stop them are Rebel operatives, not stormtroopers, and they ask for the correct passwords, not identification papers. Luke gives them—Bodhi hasn’t had call to come this far yet, himself—and Leia nods, approvingly, at the security measure. Nien teases Threepio, although the protocol droid doesn’t seem to realize it, and makes jovial small talk about ships with Bodhi, with the side effect of keeping Bodhi’s mind off of the tension between Luke and Leia—and off of Han’s possible fate.

Inside the safe house, Bodhi half expects to find Cassian and Jyn waiting for him, or at least around, but they're nowhere to be seen. The innermost chamber is lined with durasteel, the way the fortress on Amaltanna had been, though there’s no need for Baze’s explosives to let them through; the door simply swings open smoothly and silently.

Luke comes to a halt at the doorway, bringing Bodhi up short beside him, and Leia turns to Luke,
puzzled. “This is far as we go,” he says. “The meeting’s top clearance only.”

“What? That's ridiculous.” Leia folds her arms, looking around at Bodhi.

“It's all right,” Luke says. "I told Wedge that Bodhi and I would meet him for a drink.”

Nien laughs. “Antilles owes me a drink for saving his tail at Hagar Secundus. I've chased him halfway across the galaxy to collect. You can use one of those mind tricks in case he tries to wiggle free again.”

“You see?” Luke asks Leia. “We have our own, very important meeting.” He doesn’t hug her again, warned off by the irritated flash of her eyes. “I'll see you later.”

*****

Zastiga’s bar scene isn’t much to speak of, though Nien Nunb makes as good a go of it as any spacer on leave. He’s full of stories about working with the Sullustan Resistance, including helping Jyn and Cassian’s team destroy Moff Seerdon’s Capacitor. And he’d known Roja, too, his liquid voice slurring as he talks about the things he’d done with Twilight Company, including something very odd about a volcano.

Wedge is a bit more inclined to sobriety, at least at first, asking about the mission to Abridon, particularly how Green and Corona Squadrons had fared against the Inquisitor.

“Planning to poach from them?” Luke asks, amused.

“There’s that A-wing pilot, Lieutenant Bey,” Wedge says, thoughtfully. “Her and that Duros fellow.” He shakes his head. “No—Crynyd’s got his squadron believing A-wings can outfly anything else, I’d never get Greens to go Rogue.”

“But most of the Rogues’ll fly anything,” Bodhi points out, which launches them into a lengthy discussion of the virtues of specializing versus learning the broad range of starfighters—and, when he and Nien start to bristle at Wedge and Luke’s fighter-jocks perspective, shuttles and yachts.

“Doubt either of you could’ve flown a GR-75 transport,” Bodhi mutters, peevishly, swirling the dregs of his Sullustan ale in its glass.


“Boys, boys,” Nien says, switching out of Sullustese on the second word when Luke gives him a blank look. “None of you could handle my Mellcrawler.”

“Oh, a challenge,” Wedge says, lighting up.

“—and I won’t let you,” Nien adds, eying the empty glasses lined up at Wedge’s elbow. He turns in Bodhi’s direction. “Or you, ship-thief.”

Bodhi huffs. “What would I want with your yacht?”


“Blast, no,” Nien says, sounding appalled, and Wedge lets out a peal of laughter.

The evening breaks up shortly after that, and Luke and Bodhi wend their way towards the safe house to meet Leia. “D’you miss flying?” Bodhi asks, focusing intently on lacing their hands together. Luke seems surprisingly unaffected by the Sullustan ale, smiling tolerantly as Bodhi untangles
himself and tries to reposition their fingers. “‘Cause you can always fly the Cadera, until I find another—another ship for you. Not just—co-pilot.”

“Thanks, Bodhi,” Luke says, lifting their entwined hands to his lips. “I don’t mind being grounded.”

“Really?” Bodhi says, a little dizzily; though Luke’s chastely kissing his fingers, his lips are warm, and soft, and the flick of his tongue over Bodhi’s knuckles is promising. “When Green—when the squadrons were going against the Star Destroyer—”

“Well, I wasn’t going to leave you and Baze in Tantor’s clutches,” Luke says, mildly. “Even if he turned out all right.”

“O—Okay, but I mean it,” Bodhi argues. “You can—or, or the Galen, though Kaytoo might have something to say about that—I don’t know where Grizz and Joma took the Beru, they weren’t on the Redemption or the Liberty, and I guess maybe it’s kind of their ship now, even though it’s supposed to be—”

“You’re just giving your ships away?”

“I can’t fly ‘em all at once,” Bodhi says, helplessly.

Luke’s smile broadens into a grin, and he pulls Bodhi into a kiss just as they come around the last corner to the Alliance safe house, murmuring, “Sure, I’ll fly with you tomorrow.”

A cough from the direction of the safe house draws their attention. “Done with your meeting?” Leia says, raising her eyebrows. Bodhi’s slightly inebriated, to be sure, but there’s no mistaking the undercurrent of impatience in her faintly amused tone, nor the grim lines at the corners of her eyes.

“Is everything—”

“I can’t discuss it with you, Captain Rook,” Leia says, crisply, striding away and beckoning them to follow with a jerk of her head.

“Oh,” Bodhi says, deflating. “Should—should I go away so you can discuss it with Luke?”

“No,” she says. She throws a glance at Luke. “How drunk is my pilot right now?”


“No,” Leia says, again, dryly. “Just wondering when I might be able to call on him for his services again.”

“Probably tomorrow morning,” Luke hedges. A smile tugs at his mouth. “At least we were only drinking Sullustan ale this time, instead of whatever Han likes to scrounge up.”

“At least,” Leia echoes.

At the door to Luke and Bodhi’s quarters, Luke turns to say goodnight, and Leia puts a hand on his shoulder. “What are your orders? After this, I mean.”

“Scouting the area for a possible base,” Luke says, with a shrug. “Something bigger than this place, I imagine.”

“I thought you’d say you’ve gone back to flying with Rogue Squadron,” Leia says, looking at Bodhi.
Luke shakes his head. “It’s Wedge’s squadron now. It wouldn’t be right to swoop in and take that away from him.”

“But if you’re not flying, then what are you doing?” Leia asks. “I thought Abridon was a one-off.”

“Whatever I’m asked to do,” Luke says. “But I need to return to my Jedi training soon. I have a promise to keep.”

“Without your lightsaber?”

Bodhi suppresses a wince, but Luke only nods. “Weapons and war don’t make you a Jedi,” he says, softly. “I know that now.”

“But we need you here,” Leia says.

“I—I know,” Luke says. “And I’ve kept putting off my departure because—” He squeezes Bodhi’s hand, almost involuntarily. “I thought I could help in a different way. And because I was hoping for news of Han. But—I guess we have to wait a little longer, until we know what’s happening on Tatooine.”

“Right,” Leia mutters. Her face is bleak.

“I’m trying to be patient,” Luke says, with another small smile. “If I can, then you—” Leia snorts, and Luke breaks off. “What we all need is more time.”

“We’ll never have enough of that,” Leia says, tersely. “No one ever does. And the Empire’s trying to take away the little time we do have by never giving us a moment’s rest.”

“Leia—” Bodhi dares, in their silence.

“I’m sorry, Bodhi,” she says, before he can get any further. “Not this time.” Her lips curve upward. “Patience, remember?”

*****

It's hard, though, waiting for either word of Han or new orders, especially when Cassian and Jyn inform Bodhi the next morning that they’re going on another mission without him.

“A prison break,” Jyn says, with no small amount of pleasure, as Kaytoo nods.

“We’re getting Beri Tulon out,” Cassian explains.

“The guy who tried to defect?” Bodhi says. “I can come—” He looks over his shoulder into the Cadera’s hold, where Luke and Baze are stowing gear as Chirrut sits regally on a cargo crate, occasionally smacking at his husband with his staff, apparently just for the hell of it. “Maybe—maybe not.”

Cassian claps him on the shoulder. “We won’t be gone long. Tantor says he knows exactly where Tulon will be.”

“Uh, what?” Bodhi narrows his eyes at Jyn. “We trust that guy now?” She offers him a tight, humorless smile. “Tantor’s been instructed to consider this a test.”

“If he fails, we will leave him in the prison,” Kaytoo says.
Bodhi runs his hand over his hair, and adjusts the position of his goggles, nervously. “If you get in trouble, the—the ruins shouldn’t interfere with comm signals at all, so—so—”

Cassian nods, a hint of a smile curling at the corners of his mouth. “We’ll call if we need you.” Jyn cranes up and kisses his cheek, and then they’re off to the Galen, Kaytoo’s footfalls ringing on the duracrete.


“I think so, yeah,” Bodhi says, coming up and closing the ramp behind him. “Did you get a chance to talk to Leia this morning before she left?”

“They’re all playing it pretty close,” Luke says.

“Even if you—” Bodhi waves his hand by his temple.

Luke quirks an eyebrow at him, but relents. “I just get a strong sense of worry. It’ll be nice, actually, to get away from all of that for a little while. Clear my head.”

“Practice meditating,” Chirrut says, as Baze nudges him along into the seat behind Luke’s.

Luke grins. “Spar with Master Malbus, now that we’ve seen what he can do?”

Chirrut is practically beaming at the idea. Bodhi glances back at Baze, who’s dressed once again in faded fatigues, looking deceptively placid, and contemplates the devastation he’d unleashed inside the prison transport. “I—I’ll just go—check the medkit,” Bodhi says.

*****

After a couple hours of soaring over Zastiga’s mazes of stone circles, Luke brings the Cadera down on a ridge, and they walk out among the knee-high walls. The structures disappear here and there into the grass; Bodhi, shading his eyes with a hand, thinks he can spot more on the ridge to the southwest. The few clouds overhead don’t provide cover for the capital ships still glinting in orbit, but they’re far enough up that he isn’t reminded of the Star Destroyers that had hovered above his home.

“As old as the Old Republic, huh,” Luke says.

Baze grunts assent.

“What d’you suppose they were for?”

“What do you mean, what they were for?” Chirrut asks. “People lived here, just like anywhere else.” He sweeps his staff around in an arc, and then plants one end in the ground. “We meditate.”

“I don’t sense anything special about this place,” Luke says, but he obediently drops to the ground and folds himself up into a proper pose. Baze makes an aggrieved noise but follows suit.

“Weren’t you listening?” Chirrut says. “People lived here.”


Bodhi settles in next to him, but he gazes across the kilometers and kilometers of hills and shallow canyons that stretch to the horizon, trying to imagine what the world must have looked like, before. Wonders if the people who lived here had been part of creating the Old Republic. If they’d even been spacefaring when it began, or if they’d gone on about their lives, unnoticed by the galaxy, until
the first hyperlanes were built.

“Credit for your thoughts,” Luke murmurs, and Bodhi turns his head to discover Luke’s gazing at him curiously, his eyes the color of Zastiga’s sky.

“Inflation’s gone up,” Bodhi says, dryly. “Nothing—nothing in particular. Just, um, the past.” He touches the rough gray stones beside him. “What this place was like.”

Chirrut prods him in the shoulder with his staff. “First part is good for meditating. Second part—”

“Yes, yeah, sorry,” Bodhi says.

“Knowing where you are in history is good,” Baze counters.

“Oh, I thought you came along to fight Luke, not lecture,” Chirrut says, tapping his husband on the knee.

Baze glowers uselessly at him. “I can do both.”

“At the same time?” Chirrut says, incredulously.

Bodhi starts to lean back to watch, as Luke flashes a grin and gets to his feet, summoning a stick out of the grass to his hand—thinks about leaning against a wall as old as the Old Republic and sits up straight.

“Yes,” Baze says, firmly. “Give me your staff.”

“What?” Chirrut flips it around behind him, out of reach. “Do you know how long it took me to find this one? To learn the resonance of its kyber crystal?”

“Yes, you never shut up about it,” Baze says, but he grumbles and wanders off a few meters to look for a stick as Luke goes into a series of stretches that make Bodhi’s mouth go a little dry.

But—“Wait, you got another piece of kyber crystal?”

Chirrut nods. “On Dantooine. When we came to rescue you.”

“When—when you—” Bodhi stutters to a halt, blinking at him. “I tried to give you—and you already—”

“Picked up a fragment in the courtyard,” Chirrut says. “Very tiny.” He holds his thumb and forefinger barely a couple of millimeters apart.

“And I had to go all the way down into the blasted caves—”

“I am better at listening to the Force.” Chirrut shrugs.

“Years of training, right,” Bodhi says, jerking back as Baze leaps the wall behind Luke and charges; Luke spins away and gets his guard up, ducking Baze’s attack, though he’s grinning as Baze also barks some sort of lesson at him about the history of the Temple in between clashes of their sticks.

“Baze’s form is not bad, after all this time. I should make him practice with me again.” Chirrut smiles in Bodhi’s direction. “When the Force needed you to listen, you did. You—Luke, Jyn. Even Cassian.”

“I haven’t, uh, heard anything in a while.” Bodhi runs his fingers through the long grass stems next
to his leg, one eye on Luke’s attempts to parry; he seems faster, better able to ward off Baze’s stick, but he keeps backing away. “Do you know what’s coming? What Leia, and Draven, and—all the other—what they’re planning?”

“No,” Chirrut says. Bodhi opens his mouth to clarify, but Chirrut beats him to it. “Not through the Force, and not through whatever rank you think we can pull with those people.” He raises a hand to point at Luke and Baze whirling around each other. “Don’t worry about the future. Worry about what my husband is about to do to your—” Chirrut cuts himself off as Luke blocks Baze’s blow and lands a solid counterstrike.

Baze lets out a grunt, freezing in surprise, and Luke immediately pulls back. “Master Malbus—”

“It’s nothing,” Baze says, holding his hand up placatingly, and Luke blows out a breath, brushing his sweaty hair out of his forehead, and looks over at Bodhi’s wide eyes.

“Eh, he’s out of practice,” Chirrut calls, lightly.

“I observed every one of your fights, I know what I am doing,” Baze snaps back. “Luke would have hit you, if you were strong enough to take him on.” Chirrut huffs, but doesn’t rise to the bait, a proud smirk stealing across his face.

“It was a lucky shot,” Luke says.

“No such thing,” Baze says, and Chirrut nods. Baze grabs Luke’s arm and gives him a shake, looking pleased. “Your new teacher taught you well.”

Luke’s mouth crooks up, as he disentangles himself and comes back to Bodhi, who can’t help but gape at him, appreciatively. “I’ll tell him you said that.”

****

It becomes their ritual, over the next couple of days, because no one seems in any great rush to give them different orders: flying out to another hilltop or cliff ringed with narrow walls, each ruin as much of an enigma as the last. Luke alternates between meditating and sparring with Baze, and occasionally just sits on the edge of a cliff with Bodhi, looking out over Zastiga’s ancient landscape.

Bodhi tries to keep from asking questions—Chirrut is still after him to stop thinking about the future—and focuses instead on what it feels like, having Luke at his side, or in their bed at night, when he carefully checks Luke all over for bruises that don’t seem to be forming. 

All over.

He encounters Draven precisely once more on Zastiga, at the landing pad. The general calls his name, and Bodhi halts, waving Luke on to the Cadera.

“Sir?”

Draven looks him up and down, his gaze lingering on Bodhi’s rolled-up sleeves, the new and old scars around his wrists. “We won’t be establishing a base here,” he says.

“We’re not?”

“The safe house served its purpose,” Draven says. “The Fleet is regrouping at Kothlis in the next week. You’re scheduled to depart tomorrow.”
“I—okay. Understood.” Bodhi throws a glance over his shoulder at his friends, waiting at the bottom of the ramp. He takes a shaky breath, trying to commit the moment to memory: the fond exasperation on Baze’s face as Chirrut needles him about something; the way Luke’s eyes sparkle as he hides a laugh behind his hand.

Then he turns, straightening his shoulders. “So why did—why did you have me—us—out there?”

Draven’s eyes are grim, but he smiles, wryly. “Thought you needed some time.”

Chapter End Notes

Parts of this chapter come right out of *Moving Target: A Princess Leia Adventure*. The stone circles are based on these very, very cool sites in South Africa. Looking at them via Google Maps is also really awesome. :D (Er, they are subject to a lot of pseudoarchaeology claims, so...watch out for that if you investigate more -_-)

So close to ROTJ now--I had a conversation with my husband last night about whether I thought I'd finish my dissertation first or this fic first, and...well, it's probably going to have to be the dissertation first if I want to graduate in December :P Which does NOT mean hiatus; it just means the twice-monthly update schedule is likely the standard going forward. Though...my birthday is coming up, and I fully intend to do Only Fun Things that day... ;)

Thanks to morag, once again, for helping shepherd this thing along, and as always, thanks, dear readers. <3
Chapter 89

Chapter Summary

I'd like you to be there.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

The Fleet is still assembling, capital ships and junky freighters and loose formations of starfighters staggering in, after they return to the Redemption over Kothlis. Bodhi and Luke move back into the Cadera, which is convenient for Bodhi’s maintenance shifts if a bit noisy with all the comings and goings. Luke is no less attentive and thoughtful when they bunk down together, but with each passing day without word from any of their friends out on missions, and still nothing from Draven or anyone else in High Command as to why they’re all gathering, Bodhi can feel his impatience mounting.

Which is why it comes as no great surprise when Bodhi walks down out of the Cadera one morning and discovers Luke standing at the base of a ladder to the cockpit of an X-wing that’s clearly just been shipped in, about to climb up.

“Oh,” Bodhi says, intelligently, blinking at him over his mug of caf. “Were you—were you going to —” He takes in Luke’s clothes; he’s got the garish orange pants of his flightsuit on, but only a thin undershirt, and his helmet is nowhere to be seen.

“I wouldn’t leave without saying goodbye,” Luke hastens to reassure him. He’s covered in grease smudges, and Artoo is underneath the X-wing whistling to himself and investigating some wiring. “Just having a look at my new ship.”

“Thought I was supposed to steal you one,” Bodhi says, frowning at the X-wing. It’s far from new—none of the Alliance’s ships are, except for the B-wings, and with all the combat they’ve seen it’s getting harder to tell—but it’s had a recent paint job, at the very least.

“Sorry to cut your thieving short, but I decided I should look into it myself, now that Mon Mothma’s officially approved a rescue mission for Han.” Luke gestures up the ladder. Bodhi follows the line of his bare, well-muscled arm with an admiring, if still somewhat sleepy, gaze. “If you’re not busy, I could use your help?”

“Of course.” Bodhi downs the rest of his caf, climbs up the ladder after Luke, and pokes his head into the cockpit, taking in the readouts from the whole Carbanti sensor package skeptically. “Where’d they dig this one out from?”

Luke hovers his hand over the controls. “It was going to be Dak’s,” he says, softly, and Bodhi’s heartbeat stutters in his chest, grief rising bitter as his morning caf in the back of his throat. “Got shipped around for a while after Hoth, I guess, and the other replacements were spoken for after Hobbie and Wedge had their crashes.”

Bodhi swallows, and murmurs, “He—he’d be glad you’re flying it.”

They get to work, Luke on firing controls at first, and Bodhi on the sensors and comms system. He can’t help but think of Kelka as he adjusts the latter; she’d shipped over to *Home One* when it had been in orbit above Zastiga, and Toryn had taken her on as an aide, as he’d hoped. It’s an uncomplicated job, after all the different Incom ships he’s worked on for the Rebellion, and Artoo even chirrups approvingly at him from his socket, where he’s been plugged in to interface with the ship’s computer.

“Thanks, Artoo.” Bodhi swings himself out of the cockpit onto the ladder, and reaches back to tentatively pat Artoo’s dome before climbing down. “Luke?”

“Yeah?” Luke calls from behind the engines.

Bodhi ducks under the closed S-foils to Luke’s side. “Done with my bit. Ready to run another diagnostic when you are.”

“Okay,” Luke says. He’s doing something with the servo actuators, something fiddly and delicate with the timing, so Bodhi waits until he’s finished and all his fingers are clear of the mechanism before asking, “So when *are* you leaving?”

Luke leans against the back of the starboard S-foil and scrubs a dirty hand over his face. “Probably when Leia returns from her mission.” He sighs. “I keep thinking there has to be something more I can *do*. Rescuing Han is my top priority, but Jabba’s lorded over Tatooine for decades, and this feels like—I don’t know, like an opportunity.”

“To do what?”

“I’m not sure,” Luke says, thoughtfully. “It’s just—” He shakes his head. “I just *left*. I didn’t even look back to see what it looked like from space. Didn’t think about all the people who were still living under Jabba’s tyranny. Not to mention the *Imperial*—even if they mostly left everyone alone, they didn’t do anything to help, either—” He breaks off, smiling wanly. “I was off to have an adventure.”

“You were escaping.” Bodhi catches Luke's free hand, twining their fingers together. “I know a little something about that. And—and about going home again, though I—I hope you’ll have better, um, luck than I did.”


“How are—how d’you think you’re gonna help?” Bodhi hurry on, ignoring the tightness in his chest at the concern in Luke's eyes, forcing himself to keep his shoulders from hunching. “You can’t go ’round standing up to all the, what, tax collectors?” He can’t quite remember exactly what Leia had done, as a child.

“It was a water tax,” Luke says, with a faint grimace, before he brightens and grasps Bodhi’s other hand eagerly. “Will you help me think of something to take down the Hutts?”

Bodhi’s eyes widen. “Uh—Luke, I—I’m not—I’m not—my plans turn disasters, every last one—if, if you can wait until Cassian and Jyn come back—”


“I don’t see *how*,” Bodhi protests, though it's difficult to resist Luke's heartfelt certainty. “Un—unless you want me to—to rig up a podracer so you can, I don't know, challenge Jabba for—” He shakes
his head, helplessly, as Luke starts to smile at him. “See? Or—I haven't the slightest idea how to contact him, but maybe—Talon Karre? He’d probably be interested in taking Jabba down."

“This is why I want you to come,” Luke says, cheerfully. “I wouldn't have thought of Karrde.”

“You would've had a better idea,” Bodhi mutters, ruefully. “At—at least talk to Baze and Chirrut, they stayed, they—fought the Empire in the streets, they must have some idea of what you could do to stop Jabba.”

*****

They don’t.

“I told you,” Baze says. “We did not want to bring too much attention.”

“But Chirrut said there were a couple of times when you did something bigger,” Bodhi argues, watching Chirrut sparring with Luke; the Guardian still isn’t moving nearly as quickly as he had before the battle on Abridon, though he’s playing it off as deliberation rather than lingering stiffness. Bodhi thinks Luke knows it, too, and isn’t putting up as much of a fight as he had with Baze. “Was that—was it when you were working with, um, Saw?”

Baze sinks backwards on the mat, onto his elbows, and calls over to Chirrut, “我們應該告訴他—”

“Not yet,” Chirrut replies, getting past Luke’s guard and giving him a solid thwack across the chest. Luke reels back with a grunt, and Bodhi starts up, distracted from the Guardians’ odd exchange—that looked like it hurt, more than anything Baze had managed to do to him on Zastiga.

“I’m fine, I’m fine,” Luke says, shaking his head at Bodhi and backing off a bit, both hands gripping his practice staff warily in front of him.

Chirrut lunges at Luke—there’s a brief clash of sticks, and then he sweeps away. “What do you want to go messing around with the Hutts for? The Empire chasing after you isn’t enough?”

Luke pursues Chirrut, fluid as a dancer. “So you won’t help us.”

Baze bares his teeth in a grin. “Do you want to borrow some explosives?”

“I’m trying to do this without starting a fight,” Luke calls back, reproachfully, glancing back at them. Chirrut seizes the advantage to counterattack, and swiftly drops Luke to the floor.

“Then Chirrut really should not go,” Baze says. His tone is light, but Bodhi peers carefully at Chirrut’s face as he gives Luke a hand up and pats him on the shoulder, calling an end to their session; he looks tired. Bodhi springs to his feet to give Chirrut his canteen of water, frowning back and forth between the Guardians. Baze meets his gaze and exhales a barely audible sigh, his shrug conveying exacerbation and helpless worry.

“Or you,” Chirrut retorts, settling slowly to the mat. “Explosives.” He leans into Baze’s side instead of going through their usual stretches.

Baze huffs. “Should I lend them my repeater cannon instead?” He rests a hand on Chirrut’s waist, rubbing his thumb in circles on his hip, and Bodhi relaxes, a little. It’s strangely reassuring to listen to them bicker; his uncles might be worn out by the war, but they’re still sharp as ever.

“Thank you, both,” Luke says, a touch wryly, though there’s a hint of fondness mixed in. He strips out of his dirty undershirt and flashes a smile down at Bodhi. “We can handle it.”
Something about that training session with the Guardians spurs Luke's impatience on to greater heights, and it isn't long before he's coaxed Bodhi into leaving for Tatooine before any of their other friends get back.

Luke and Artoo are in the new X-wing; Luke had briefly reconsidered whether to take it, looking longingly at the padded pilots’ chairs and the ‘fresher in the Cadera before heading to his ship for the duration of their flight. Bodhi had bit his lip and kept himself from making the offer—Luke has to go on and finish his training, after this—while simultaneously tamping down a flare of anxious annoyance that Luke hadn’t asked him to come along for that.

One they're in hyperspace, Bodhi says, over their secure comm line, “Draven didn’t seem to think we can handle it.”

“Why, because we haven’t come up with a plan yet?” Luke asks.

“Well, there is that,” Bodhi says, putting his feet up on the console. “But he said neither of us have training in reconnaissance, or ‘destabilizing action.’ I got the sense he’d be a lot happier if Cassian was back and could tell us how stupid we’re being.”

“Did you tell him we’ve got Lando, Leia, and Chewie?”

Artoo whistles, aggrieved.


“Yes,” Bodhi says. “He looked a little, uh, tense about Leia going with us, but she’s the one Mon Mothma really authorized to lead this, anyway. Is she going to be angry we took off for Tatooine already without her?”

“Oh, I called and told her I had some business I wanted to take care of before she arrived,” Luke says, his breeziness giving way to something more somber.

“It shouldn't take that long to visit your old master's hut and see if he left you anything,” Bodhi says. He's more than a little curious about what a Jedi’s house looks like, even if the one in question had apparently been quite the hermit.

“I—I also need to visit my aunt and uncle's graves.” Luke hesitates. “I’d like you to be there.”

Bodhi draws a trembling breath. Oh. Oh. “Luke,” he says, softly, swinging his legs back down and leaning into the comms pickup, as if he can get closer that way. “You could’ve just—you didn’t have to say you needed me for the mission—”

“I do,” Luke insists. “I wasn’t planning to visit until I looked at Chirrut and Baze, and I thought—” He makes a sound into the comms suspiciously like a sniffle, and Bodhi wishes he had insisted they fly together, his heart aching. “And I thought about all of you, and what you would do if you could go home. Where you would want to go.”


But Luke runs on, words tumbling out as fast as when Bodhi’s on a tear. “It isn’t fair, I know, and I’m terribly sorry to ask it of you when you can’t ask it of me in return. I just don’t think I could do it without you. You named your ship after my aunt so people would remember, and that meant so much to me—” Luke cuts himself off. His voice starts to muffle, like he’s dropped his chin to his
chest. “I should’ve asked you before we left, so you wouldn’t feel obligated. I’m sorry for that, too.”

Bodhi swallows around the lump in his throat. “You have nothing to be sorry for.”

“You can always say no to me,” Luke says, quietly. “If this is more than you can stand—”

“It isn’t,” Bodhi says. He breathes in and out, slowly, the bitterness of grief tasting like Baze’s hated tarine tea and spices, on his tongue. But he pulls himself together; he would have wanted Luke by his side at his mother’s grave, if such a thing were possible, burning the offerings and reciting her prayer. “It isn’t. I’m coming with you.”


The corner of Bodhi’s mouth curls up. He swipes at his eyes and reaches forward to rest his hand next to the pickup. “I love you, too.”

Artoo trills something to himself for a moment, like he’s muttering under his breath, and then dials his volume up to warble, but you still don’t have a plan!

Luke says, lightly, “I’m sure you’ll think of something, Artoo.”

There is a pause.

“How we could ask Threepio’s advice,” Bodhi adds, sagely, and receives an indignant squawk in reply, as Luke laughs.

*****

And then, a few short hours later:

Bodhi pulls back the lever to drop the Cadera into normal space, stars streaking back into existence, along with Luke’s X-wing off to port. Tatooine looms up in front of them, dusty brown with a storm swirling up like—like—

His heart skips a beat, but the colors are wrong, the broad plateaus and fractal fingers of canyons wholly unfamiliar. The two suns rising from behind help to shatter his mirage, and he sits up straight, hearing Luke gasp at the sight.

For the first time since they’d left the Redemption Bodhi is glad they aren’t seated side-by-side in the Cadera; Luke would’ve only been hurt by the tears streaming down his face. Would have only seen the wrenching awful yearning for Jedha, his never-ending guilt, and would have missed his joy at Luke’s own ability to return home.

And, worse—Luke would have missed the one thing he had once tried to tell Bodhi himself, what Bodhi clings to with more than faith: that his home is at Luke’s side.

“Welcome home,” Bodhi manages, wiping his face with his sleeve. “Are you ready?”


“Great,” Bodhi says, and smiles, toggling the sublight drive and settling his hands on the controls. “Race you to the surface.”

Chapter End Notes
Okay, so we're not technically on Tatooine yet, and it is almost ten days past my birthday...oops :P But there's no avoiding it now; chapter 90 and onward will be quite a lot of fun in the sun(s)!

So many many thanks to morag for all the help with this chapter <3 <3 <3 <3 <3

And thanks, as always, to all of you! I commissioned a piece from daryshkart for something I knew was coming in chapter 87 a while back, and am excited to show you (if you haven't already seen it via my tumblr!) Being able to share the roguejedi love around over the past year and a half (plus) has been a really delightful part of my fandom life, and I hope you'll stick it out with me through the rest of this fic (and...possibly beyond ;) ) <3 <3 <3

Translation:
“我們應該告訴他—”: We should tell him--

They’ve landed their ships on a lonely, rocky bluff surrounded by sand dunes, next to the simple stone dwelling that had belonged to Luke’s old master. Bodhi throws a look over his shoulder at Luke; he’s standing with his feet braced apart, using the Force to lift Artoo down from his X-wing, grimacing a bit into the wind.

Artoo orders, *Tell him not to drop me this time!*

Bodhi eyes the meager distance between Artoo’s treads and the ground, bemused, but then he remembers how much Kay had disliked the sand on Sanctuary. “Uh, Artoo says—”

“Yeah, you probably didn’t like it here much either,” Luke says, a touch wryly, patting Artoo’s dome as he sets the astromech down. Artoo beeps and extends his third tread to stabilize himself, swiveling his photoreceptor to point at the hut. “This heat’s got to be terrible for your processors, and the \textit{dust}—”

“It’s not so bad,” Bodhi offers, gently, but he’s shed his flight jacket and started rolling up his shirtsleeves. “Not like—like Darlyn Boda, or Yavin IV. It isn’t sticky.” He tugs at his collar, though, wondering how he’d managed on Scarif in his full, near-impermeable coveralls.

“Offworlders always liked to say it was a \textit{dry} heat,” Luke mutters. “Speaking of, Artoo, go and find out if that moisture vaporator’s functioning, will you?”

“Oh, we—the \textit{Cadera}’s plenty well-stocked, you don't have to—” Bodhi starts, and then he catches the conflicted expression on Luke’s face. He touches Luke’s arm. “What’s wrong?”

Luke furrows his brow, just a little, watching Artoo trundling gingerly across the rocks. “It’s been years. There’s no way this one still works, but if I had my old tools, or if you have some I could borrow—it could almost feel \textit{normal}, if it wasn't for—” He waves a hand, helplessly.

“Being back here with your boyfriend?” Bodhi deliberately misconstrues him. “I promise I'll try not to make it awkward—” Luke, caught off guard, snorts a laugh, and the lines in his face soften. “I’ll even try all the weird Hutt food you want to feed me,” Bodhi adds, lightly.

“We’ll have to see what Ben kept in his cellar, but I think the only thing that could possibly have survived this long would be dried gnort.” Luke takes Bodhi’s hand, and tugs him in the direction of the hut, some semblance of good humor restored.

“Um—I guess I didn’t consider that we’d have to clean out your old master’s kitchen,” Bodhi says, wide-eyed. “Should we send Artoo in here first as well, or trust that the desert mummified
Luke frowns at the sand heaped against the locked plasteel door, but turns a curious smile up at Bodhi. “I’m sure it’s fine, if you’ll let us in?”

“Feels sacrilegious, somehow,” Bodhi mutters, dropping to one knee to examine the lock. But it’s just a house, not at all like the Temple, and anyway, he’d never been locked out of there as a wandering child, before the occupation. He can’t help casting a wary look around at the vast, seemingly empty dunes, unable to shake the feeling that he’s being watched.

The early afternoon suns have barely shifted in the sky when Bodhi finishes picking the lock; it’d been simple enough, once he got over the prickling sense of someone besides Luke or Artoo hovering nearby. Luke’s swept most of the heaps of sand away, though a handful or two still spills over the threshold, pale grains vanishing on the light-colored floor. The air inside is surprisingly cool, smelling of windblown dust and ancient stone. For a second Bodhi tenses, glancing nervously into the shadowy corners, but the thing slithering most of the way off the bed and onto the floor is just a bantha-fur blanket.

“Looks just like it did when we left, doesn't it, Artoo,” Luke murmurs, to the droid’s softly whistled agreement. He runs his fingers through the dust collecting on the low wall along the stairs as he steps down into the main living area. It's small, but not noticeably smaller than the apartment Bodhi and his mother had shared on Jedha—and compared to the ship’s quarters he and Luke have been occupying, it's practically palatial.

Though certainly not by Leia’s standards.

“Is there something I should be looking for?” Bodhi asks, when Luke seems to stall out in the middle of the living room, turning in circles and gazing at his master's meager furnishings. “A—a note for you, or books?”

Luke lifts his head and smiles at him. “I'm not sure. The Force isn't pointing me to anything in particular.”

“Helpful,” Bodhi says, dryly. “Shall I just, I don't know, bring you everything I find?” He pats down the brown robe hanging by the entryway, feeling for items that its owner might have left in its pockets, except there aren't any pockets.


“Dried gnort, right.”

While Luke searches the bookshelves by the bed, Bodhi finds the pantry is bare of anything still bearing a resemblance to food, except for a few pieces of what he first assumes are flakes of stone coming off the ceiling. Further inspection suggests they are, in fact, pieces of flatbread, with all the consistency and texture of duracrete. The rest of the kitchen is equally sparse; Ben Kenobi must not have shared Cassian's love for cooking, or—

“There isn't a Jedi rule about what food you can eat, is there? That root stew you told me about, and this—” Bodhi holds up the flatbread distastefully. “Some kind of ascetic thing?”

Luke glances up from the wooden storage chest he's rifling through. “Don't think so. What's that?”

Bodhi launches it at him; it's a poor throw, awkwardly aimed, but Luke grabs the flatbread out of the air with the Force and sniffs it. “Oh, haroun bread,” he says, dismissively. “You're supposed to eat ahrisa with it. Spicy stuff, you and Cassian and Jyn would probably like it.” He nods in Bodhi’s
direction. “Though ahrisa definitely goes bad fast, so I hope you don’t find any.”

Bodhi shakes his head and closes the pantry, coming down to Luke in the main room, Artoo working on the humidifier unit beside him. “Did you find anything?”

“I think so.” Luke holds up a metal cylinder in one hand, and a handful of bits and bobs Bodhi doesn’t recognize in the other. He goes over to the bed and spreads the components out, frowning down at them thoughtfully. The old familiar eagerness colors his voice as he continues, “I mean, I’d love a diagram to go with all this, but I’ve got your kyber crystal and the Force to guide me, so maybe—maybe it won’t be so hard to figure out what I’m supposed to do?”

Bodhi settles on the bed next to Luke, taking his boots off so he won’t get more sand in the bantha fur. “Can I watch?”

“You want to watch me fiddling around with my lightsaber?” The tips of Luke’s ears are turning pink, and he raises his head slowly, a faintly flustered but delighted look on his face.

“Unless you need me to lend a hand.” Bodhi levels a perfectly innocent gaze back at him.

Luke schools his expression equally straight-faced. “D’you have any thoughts on what part goes where?”

Bodhi shifts up to his knees and edges towards Luke on the bed. “I dunno, but I could—”

Artoo squawks, indignantly, some of us are trying to work!

“Right,” Bodhi says, sitting down abruptly on his heels. “Sorry, Artoo.”

Luke’s mouth twitches, though he hadn’t understood the Binary. “Yeah, sorry, Artoo.” He picks up something that looks like a miniature power cell and twirls it between his fingers. “I’m going to have to meditate on this for awhile, if you want to try contacting the Falcon again, or—well, there’s not much else to do here.”


“Okay.” Luke closes his eyes—opens them again, a hopeful smile diverting his concentration. “Kiss for luck?”

Bodhi huffs a laugh. “No such thing, just the Force.” But he leans over and brushes a soft kiss across Luke’s mouth nonetheless, before resettling into a posture mirroring Luke’s.

Meditating in the hut is a strange, silent experience. Chirrut had taught him on Thila Base and made him practice on the Redemption, abuzz with the constant fervor of Rebels or rumble of ship’s engines. And the Temple hadn’t been this quiet, either, the sounds of the city spilling over its steps. Artoo makes little noises to himself, like always, but other than that, and a soft rising hum—

“Oh, right,” Luke murmurs, and Bodhi’s eyes fly open to find him taking the kyber crystal out of his pocket. It’s glowing faintly, and Bodhi imagines it must be warm to the touch, too.

“Figured it out?”

“Not yet.” Luke floats the kyber crystal in the air between them like he had on Abridon for a moment. “I might try putting some of the hilt together by hand.” He grimaces apologetically at Bodhi. “None of this is quite what I thought being a Jedi would be like, when Obi-Wan first told me
about them.”

Bodhi hesitates, wondering if he should ask about what Luke thinks, now that he’s planning to go back to his mysterious mentor, and bites his lip. For all their teasing back and forth, trying to sort out the intricacies of lightsaber construction is having a calming effect on Luke; he’s lost some of the tightness around his eyes.

“Tell me how you think this goes,” Bodhi says, instead, picking up a flange-shaped piece.

Luke grins at him. “Well, best I can figure—” and he bends his head close to Bodhi’s like they’re poring over scanner reports or ship specs together, chattering away, his brief melancholy forgotten.

*****

Bodhi leaves him to it, after a couple of hours. Kenobi had left parts from at least two lightsabers behind, and Luke is arranging them in different configurations, asking Artoo to test the inert power insulator. His own technical expertise had been exhausted rather quickly; the inner workings of a lightsaber aren’t that dissimilar to a blaster, but he’d always been terrible at reassembling those, anyway.

Luke had zeroed in on the lightsaber components and left the rest of his search undone, so Bodhi resumes looking through Kenobi’s belongings. More clothes turn up, in the ‘fresher, folded neatly away from insects or rodents or whatever kinds of pests might make their way out to this desolate place. Brown outer robes like the one hanging by the door, and a set each of over- and under-tunic and pants, in cream and black. Bodhi has a fleeting, fragile memory of going through his mother’s things, or what had been left of them, after all their debts were paid—

—pushes that resolutely away, not wanting to distract Luke from his task with grief long since buried.

*Time for that later, when we go to his aunt and uncle’s graves.*

Bodhi returns to the main living room with the clothes for Luke to look at when he's done, in case Baze's little stunt with the Guardians’ robes at the reception in Abridon had given him any ideas. Luke is laughing, inexplicably engaged in a tug-of-war with Artoo over an ridged piece of metal.

He smiles up at Bodhi when he sets the robes down on the bed. “Getting there, if Artoo would just let me try this handgrip—”

Artoo beeps in frustration. *It has too many micro power cells for his design it will overload he doesn’t know what he is doing—*

Bodhi stares at Artoo. “And you do?”


“Artoo—” Bodhi frowns at the astromech suspiciously as he retracts his grasping arm. “Artoo says there are too many micro power cells in that handgrip, and it’ll overload.” He tries to look Artoo directly in the photoreceptor, but Artoo swivels his dome so it points away from them. “Also, he doesn’t think you know what you’re doing.”

“Well, we can all agree on that,” Luke says, but his tone is mild.

Bodhi taps Artoo on the closest panel. “Got any other advice for Luke, huh?” The astromech rocks a
little on his treads and doesn’t respond.

“Oh, it’s all right, I don’t mind doing this by trial and error,” Luke says. He holds up the single
diatium power cell he’d examined before. “But thanks, Artoo. I’ll scale the power back and just use
this one.”

Artoo swivels his photoreceptor back again and chirps.

“I’ll leave you to it,” Bodhi says, eyeing Artoo warily. He casts a glance around the room,
wondering if he should venture down to the cellar in search of Luke’s hypothesized dried gnort, but
his gaze lands on a few dusty relics sitting on the table in the corner. A closer look doesn’t suggest
that the odds and ends have anything to do with the Jedi, to Bodhi’s slight disappointment; even if
they hadn’t been useful to Luke, they might’ve been interesting to Chirrut and Baze.

He crouches down to look under the table. There’s another storage chest, not made of wood like the
one Luke had found, but ordinary plasteel, scuffed along the bottom edge. Bodhi drags it out,
figuring one more such trip can’t hurt it or its contents, and slides the lid off.

His breath catches in his throat, on tears suddenly choked back. He reaches in to gently lift out the
model ships, one at a time, as reverent as if he’d discovered Luke’s lightsaber parts:

A yellow and black Eta-2 Actis-class interceptor.

An Acclamator-class capital ship—its wedge shape broader than the hulls of Star Destroyers, but the
same dull gray.

He can’t remember the exact series of the Republic gunship, but he takes that one out and sets it
beside the others; one of its wings is missing, or perhaps unfinished.

And finally, half-painted in its distinctive red and white, a Delta-7 Aethersprite, the signature ship of
the Jedi Order.

None of them are carved out of wood, like the ones Jyn said Galen had made for her on Lah’mu,
instead molded from some cheap, but sturdy plastoid. But Kenobi had fit the pieces carefully, and
they’re painted with a precise hand, even the detail on the blue and white astromech dome sticking
up out of the Eta-2 interceptor’s socket—

Bodhi looks back at Artoo, suspicion stirring all over again—scrambles to his feet, his mouth falling
open, his incredulous thoughts about the past colliding directly with the sight of Luke levitating every
piece of his lightsaber in the air before him.

Luke’s eyes are closed, and his usual look of concentration has somehow gone newly peaceful, as if
all the doubts he’s had these past weeks and months about his fitness as a Jedi have finally, finally
dissipated, in this single act.

Artoo rocks back and forth on his treads, warbling with excitement.

The kyber crystal glows brighter than the late afternoon sun streaming in through the narrow
windows, reflecting brilliant green on the stone walls. The insulator rotates in midair, and the power
cell floats into place, both pieces locking into the hilt, as the kyber crystal hums its way into its
housing.

Bodhi is shaking, one hand clenched tightly around the Aethersprite model, the edges of its wings
pressing sharply into his palm. Oh, my stars, if only Chirrut could see him now—bites back a snort of
laughter tinged with hysteria at that thought, not wanting to startle Luke out of his work.
The flange-shaped emitter caps off the lens assembly, and then the hum of the kyber crystal grows sweeter, softer, as the whole lightsaber comes together.

Luke lets out a trembling sigh, lifting a hand to pluck his lightsaber from the air, and opens his eyes.

“You did it,” Bodhi whispers, hoarsely.

“Yeah, I’m sorry, I know you wanted to watch, but something came over me, and I just had to finish.” Luke turns his lightsaber over in his hands to inspect the activation switch.

“No, no, I saw,” Bodhi says, taking a step towards the bed. “It was—you are—” Overwhelmed, he can’t find words, suddenly, except for the Guardians’ prayer. He licks his lips, meaning it with every fiber of his being. “The Force is with you.”

Luke smiles. “ Couldn’t have done it without you, either, you know.” He tilts his head. “What’ve you got there?”

Bodhi looks down at the model in his hand. “Ships,” he says, weakly, and holds up the Aethersprite. “Luke, you—”

“Oh, I always wondered where those kept coming from,” Luke says, getting to his feet. “Uncle Owen wouldn’t say anything, and Aunt Beru thought maybe Biggs left them as courting gifts, but then he went to the Academy, and they kept showing up—” He shakes his head. “Obi-Wan was keeping an eye on me all that time.”

“Biggs—what?” Bodhi blinks at him, helplessly.

Luke flashes a grin. “Nothing. You should keep it. Come outside, I want to test this, and I don’t want to do it in here, in case it explodes.”

“Uh—”

“I’m pretty sure I built it correctly,” Luke says, cheerfully, squinting as they step out into the sunshine. “But there’s something finicky about the emitter matrix, and if I didn’t, well.”

Bodhi recovers his wits and says, dry as the barren landscape before them, “Wish I’d paid more attention to the details of Galen’s work.” Artoo whistles something derisive and surprisingly untranslatable, and Bodhi adds, “Please don’t make me have to report back to Leia that you flash-fried yourself to a crisp.”

“And here you were just saying the Force is with me,” Luke says, lightly, straightening his shoulders and assuming one of Chirrut’s stances in the sand. He takes a deep breath, and Bodhi finds himself whispering the prayer again—

—and with a distinctive snap-hiss, the brilliant green blade blazes to life in Luke’s hands.

And, as Luke takes his first swing at a spire of rock, Bodhi realizes that Artoo is trilling again, very quietly, his last words almost inaudible under the resonating hum: the Force is the blade of the heart. All are intertwined, crystal, blade, Jedi. You are one.

Bodhi gapes at him, almost too shocked by Artoo’s recitation to appreciate the beauty of Luke moving through his forms, but he manages, “Artoo-Detoo, someday you and I are going to have a long talk about exactly what the fuck you know.”
Hello again :D Been a very busy few weeks, but here is chapter 90 at long last! Got a couple more things up my sleeve before we hit ROTJ for real, though it could be argued that Luke building his lightsaber *is* a part of ROTJ, just a deleted bit ;) Obviously I used Wookieepedia a LOT for this chapter, but I've also drawn from *The Life and Legend of Obi-Wan Kenobi* for some parts (and steadfastly ignored what the new comics canon says the state of Obi-Wan's home is!)

Thanks to morag for cheerleading me through, and, as always, to all of you. <3 <3 <3 I cannot WAIT to share what's coming with you!
Chapter 91

Chapter Summary

Don't be rude.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

But Artoo, the devious little droid, pleads ignorance, and after Luke finishes his exercises, claims he's running low on power and needs to recharge.

"You can recharge in Bodhi's ship while we're at the old farmstead," Luke says, sounding a little concerned. "I shouldn't have asked you to make those repairs."

"I'm sure Kaytoo won't mind you borrowing his charging port," Bodhi adds, insincerely.

Artoo heads up the Cadera's ramp—kind of impressively haughtily, for a droid whose only form of locomotion is rolling—to get situated. Kaytoo is my friend, he chirrups, coolly. I'll wait here while you clean up the mess you made inside.

Bodhi eyes him, but doesn’t push his luck. "We’ll be right back."

"Never thought I'd say this, but I wish we had Threepio with us," Luke says, a touch wryly, as he and Bodhi duck inside Kenobi's hut to tidy up. The cooler air of the hut is a welcome relief, even though they hadn’t been outside under the suns for very long. "I don’t know why Uncle Owen didn't insist I learn Binary, it would've helped a lot with the patch droids."

"Nothing's stopping you from learning it now," Bodhi points out. He hesitates over the model ships, and glances at Luke putting the rejected lightsaber components in the wooden chest. "Are you going to take all that with us?"

"I think so," Luke answers. "It isn't doing anyone any good locked away here. He smiles at Bodhi, the corner of his mouth curving mischievously. "Those, either."

"Oh, I—I couldn't take them."

"Why not?" Luke sets the ridged handgrip carefully back into the chest.

"Your master was making them for you."

"I'm sure Ben won't mind," Luke says.

Bodhi runs the pad of his thumb across the wing of the Actis-class interceptor.

"Why not?" Luke sets the ridged handgrip carefully back into the chest.

"Your master was making them for you."

"I'm sure Ben won't mind," Luke says.

Bodhi's smudged the thin clear plastoid of the Interceptor's domed cockpit. He wipes his fingerprints off with the hem of his shirt, sheepishly. "You're sure?"


Bodhi sputters and flails a hand in the direction of the Cadera outside. "Then—then what in blazes
“was that?”

Luke blushed and ducked his head. “A pilot’s got to have a ship. And I wasn’t really trying to—”

“That was you *not trying*?” Bodhi’s eyebrows shoot up, though he privately concedes that at the time, he hadn’t dared to consider what Luke might’ve meant by it.

“—not like when I asked Master Îmwe about—”

Bodhi snorts. “Stars, Luke, the egg slicer?” Luke blushes harder, fidgeting with the lid of the chest, and Bodhi takes a little pity on him, closing the few feet between them to kiss his cheek. Luke sighs softly into his ear, his arms coming up to encircle him. “I might have left it on Hoth—”

He only means to tease, but Luke tenses, and his expression is sober when Bodhi pulls back to look at him.

“I don’t want to leave you again,” Luke says, quietly.


“Yeah.” Luke pulls Bodhi in closer so he can bury his head in the crook of his shoulder; Bodhi holds onto him for a moment, smelling the sweat and dust in his hair, and then Luke lets out another sigh, whatever worries he’s having apparently assuaged. “Let’s go.”

*****

The suns are low on the horizon by the time they reach the coordinates of the Lars farmstead. Bodhi keeps one eye on the console display, working the controls to keep the shuttle steady in the wind, and one on Luke, who seems calmer, hands folded loosely in his lap, gazing more or less implacably out the viewport as Bodhi sets the *Cadera* down in the sand about ten meters from the little domed building. It looks just as deserted as Kenobi’s hut, windblown sand piling up around the edges; from their vantage point it’s impossible to see into the courtyard pit, but it must be half-filled with sand by now, too.

“O—Okay,” Bodhi says, switching off the engines and dropping the ramp. “Ready whenever you are.”

“Thanks, Bodhi.” Luke smiles at him, gently, handing over a thin, time-worn piece of coarseweave for Bodhi to wrap around his face to protect against the blowing sand. At the unsettling familiar sensation of rough cloth on his skin, Bodhi swiftly tugs the makeshift shawl down. “Artoo, stay here, we won’t be long.”

But they’re barely a meter from the ship when the distinctive whine of a blaster rifle powering up halts Bodhi dead in his tracks: a light-skinned human woman is emerging, blaster-muzzle first, from the dome. Strands of her gray-brown hair drift out from under the loose, dirt-colored scarf she’s tucked around her lined face, but her eyes are laser-bright.


“Who’s there?” The woman’s voice is sharp and suspicious.

Bodhi bites his lip anxiously—*what if they turn us in to the Imperials?* He clenches his hands into fists, fighting the panicked urge to grab Luke’s hand; she’s bound to shoot if he moves.
“It's all right.” Luke pitches his voice low for Bodhi's benefit, slightly muffled through his shawl. “I think we can trust them.”

Them? Bodhi holds carefully still, darting his eyes around, hoping Artoo doesn’t decide to suddenly make an entrance, his alarm failing to abate in the slightest at the sight of a pair of dark-haired children peeking out from the entryway of the dome.

“I say, identify yourselves,” the stranger orders, hefting her blaster rifle.

Luke steps in front of Bodhi, hands held open at his sides. “I grew up here.” Bodhi makes a strangled noise of protest, which Luke ignores, and to Bodhi’s dismay, he tugs his wrap down from his face. “My name is Luke Skywalker.”

The stranger scoffs. “Prove it.”

Bodhi half expects Luke to call his lightsaber to his hand, but Luke says, “Number thirty-seven, out east a couple kilometers? Would’ve been the newest collection tank and condenser system when you moved in.”

“What?”

“What?”

“Those were the last parts I replaced before I left,” Luke explains, throwing a glance at Bodhi, who’d blurted out in bafflement and promptly clapped his hand over his mouth. “The valve sprung a leak, see, and we would’ve lost a whole day’s worth of water if I hadn't happened by—”

“Blast, Silya, it's him, stop pointing your blaster in the boy’s face,” a new voice comes from the entry dome. The children have vanished out of sight, but a human man is stepping forward, wiping his hands on a rag.

Silya shifts slightly in his direction, but her blaster rifle doesn't waver. “Well, who's that with you, flying in an Imperial shuttle? What d’you want?”

Luke reaches slowly back for Bodhi's hand. “This is Captain Bodhi Rook, of the Rebel Alliance, and we came back so I could pay my respects to my family.” His voice is quiet, but somehow it carries on the desert wind. “I didn't know anyone was living here now, and I'm sorry to trespass.”

“We're practically family,” the man says, putting a hand on Silya's blaster rifle and nudging it down before sticking out his other hand towards Luke. “Jula Darklighter. I don't know if you remember me —”

“Biggs’ uncle,” Luke says, crossing the sands to shake his hand. “And Aunt Silya,” he adds, turning a luminous smile towards her, though it does little to lessen her suspicion.

“You boys should come inside,” Jula says. “We were just about to start dinner, if you’d like to join —”

“You're inviting them in?” Silya slings her blaster rifle over her shoulder and crosses her arms.

“Silya, it's the least we can do,” Jula says, placatingly. “They’ve come all this way.”

Silya’s face hardens. “What if anyone finds out they were here?”

Bodhi gulps, and takes a step backwards in the direction of the Cadera. “We can go—we don't want
to put anyone in danger.”

“Who’s going to know?” Jula pats his wife’s arm reassuringly, and turns a fatherly smile on Bodhi. “Beru was always good to us, and I’m sure Luke would like to see what we’ve done with the place. Know it’s in good hands.”

“I’d like that, if it isn’t an imposition,” Luke says, looking at Silya.

One of the children—a boy maybe about Kelka’s age—pokes his head out of the entry dome, dares a wave at Luke and Bodhi, and calls, “Will you tell us about the war?”

Silya whips her head around. “Go back inside.”

“Rasca and Anya won’t tell anyone they were here,” the boy says. “We talked it over.”

“You talked—” Silya heaves a sigh.

Luke’s face lights up. “Biggs’ little cousins, I remember—you’re Gavin, right?” The boy nods, his round face reddening, as his father beams, equally delighted.

“Oh, all right.” Silya relents, beckoning them in with a twitch of her blaster rifle. “Come on in before the Sand People get you.”

“Sand People?” Bodhi murmurs to Luke, as they follow her and Jula towards the dome.

“Tusken Raiders,” Luke says, as if that explains anything. “Would’ve hauled me off and taken my speeder, Threepio, and Artoo apart for scrap if it hadn’t been for Obi-Wan, but I don’t think—” He snaps his fingers. “Artoo—ah, he probably won’t want to come in. I don’t think he liked it here very much.”

“Hauled you off where?” Bodhi stares at him. “For—for—what?”

Luke scratches the back of his head as they come out of the sloping passageway into the courtyard crater. It’s bigger than Bodhi would have expected, practically airy, with funnel flowers growing just at the rim, and he mentally revises his estimate of Luke’s upbringing. “You know, I actually don’t know? They used to raid farmsteads on and off, but they never came around here.”

“Still don’t.” Silya shrugs. “We count it as a blessing.”

“Gavin, go find your sisters and tell them to wash up for dinner,” Jula says. Gavin frowns, about to protest, and his father adds, “And then after dinner, you can show Luke and Captain Rook what you’ve been working on in the garage.”

“Okay,” Gavin says, mollified, and turns to a short set of steps leading up to a doorway; trips over himself in the way of adolescents everywhere, his shoulders hunching around his ears as he darts an embarrassed look over his shoulder before going through the arch.

Bodhi gamely pretends not to have noticed and says to Gavin’s parents, “Is there anything we can do to help? With—with dinner?” Luke, who’s been looking around at the hard-packed dirt walls with a strange sort of wistful look on his face, blushes a little, nodding eagerly at Jula and Silya.

“Aren’t you polite,” Silya says, her chilly hostility thawing a fraction. “Jula, I need more h’kak beans for tea, you might as well show Luke what you’ve done with Beru’s hydroponics garden.” She eyes Bodhi. “And you—there isn’t much kitchen to know your way around, but there’s bound to be something you can do.”
“H’kak tea! I’d forgotten all about that.” Luke throws a smile at Bodhi.

Bodhi smiles tentatively back. “It’s just beans, right?” he mutters. “Not—um—” He bites his tongue, not wanting to give offense, but it had been impossible to forget that Luke liked fermented dewback sweat.

Jula laughs. “Just beans.” He claps Luke on the shoulder and draws him along in the direction of the garden. “Be right back with those and some pallies for dessert.”

“Pallies, really? I make a perfectly respectable blue milk custard—” Silya shakes her head after her husband, and Bodhi blinks at the sudden fondness in her tone; had she been bluffing outside?

She shepherds Bodhi into the tiny galley kitchen, and, as if reading his thoughts, says, “Sorry about the fuss up there. We might not get Sand People coming around these days, but you never know who might decide they want to expand their moisture farm, and we have the children to protect.”

“And—and the Imperials?” Bodhi asks, while she pulls a variety of green leafy things out of shape-memory containers and puts them on a cutting board. “Do they—y’know, because Luke grew up here—”

Silya slides the cutting board and a knife over the counter to Bodhi, and busies herself with the cupboards as she directs him. “Chop those, not too fine. No, the Imperials stick to town. Tatooine’s backwater enough they don’t feel the need to come poking around the Jundland Wastes.” Her mouth twists before crooking up into a wry smile. “And everyone knows famous Skywalkers don’t come back. Luke is safe.”

Bodhi’s hands are trembling, just a little, two-thirds of the greens still intact on the cutting board; he swallows and tries to steady, not wanting to slice his fingertips off or ruin Silya’s vegetables. “Thank you.”

“Why did he come back? Four years is a long time to go without visiting the dead.” Silya rolls up her sleeves and removes a pair of rings from her left hand. Her eyes glint. “Or not long enough, depending on who died.” She scrapes the chopped greens from Bodhi’s cutting board into a mixing bowl with something that resembles ground meat. “Oh. You’re Jedhan—you don’t have any religious laws about eating real animals, do you? I can make a batch with soypro instead of bantha.”

Bodhi shakes his head, a faint anxious twinge running through him, but their lack of meat hadn’t been for religious reasons, not that he can recall, anyway. And the Guardians put worms in their stew, when protein got really scarce—“Bantha’s fine, we don’t—anything’s better than ration bars,” he says, ruefully. He hesitates, watching her knead the mixture, and hands her the right spice jars when she points at them with her chin. “It—it’s still a risk, if you know what we’re going to do. They can’t get information out of you if you don’t have any.”

Silya nods. “Still, you’ve just told me you’re going to do something.” She tilts her head. “I remember what Luke was like growing up, you know.”

“Um—what do you mean?”

“He was always dragging Biggs into adventures,” Silya says. “When they weren’t out racing and crashing.” Her voice gets louder, and Bodhi stops looking at her hands to see Gavin and two girls piling into the tiny kitchen. The youngest is wearing a dark blue tunic, the first color Bodhi’s seen among the Darklighter family that wasn’t a drab shade of the desert. It makes him wonder if all the red Jedhans had worn had been because of the color of their own sands.
“I bet Luke threaded the Needle lots of times.” Gavin rolls his eyes.

“And I bet he'll tell you he should've listened to his aunt and uncle about not doing that,” Silya replies. She shooes Gavin back out to set the table, and gives Anya, the younger girl, a pitcher of blue bantha milk to carry after him. “Rasca, finish the ahrisa—not too spicy this time, for our guests.” Silya wipes her hands and starts taking more food from the shape-memory containers, including pieces that resemble the haroun flatbread Bodhi had found in Kenobi's hut.

“Ohay,” Rasca says. She picks one of the jars and lets fall a few milligrams of a bright yellow spice; looks up at Bodhi like Ilar and Alask had, just before they challenged him about his ship. Then she tilts her head in the exact same way as her mother, shakes double the amount of the spice into the ahrisa, and grins wickedly at him before plunging her hands into the mix.

Bodhi rubs his hand over his beard to hide a shaky laugh. It’s all so startlingly normal, like he’s wandered into a neighbor’s kitchen back home, instead of dropping in on total strangers halfway across the galaxy. Like he had simply accompanied his boyfriend on a family visit, a feeling which only strengthens when Luke and Jula return from the hydroponics garden, laughing and chatting easily.

“Pallies weren’t ripe,” Jula apologizes, earning a disappointed groan from Rasca. He deposits handfuls of long orange bean pods on the counter next to Silya, but waves one in Bodhi’s direction. “I’m giving some of these to you to take back to the Alliance. Sounds like you’ve got a lot of tea drinkers in the family.”

“Bodhi doesn’t even know if he likes h’kak tea yet,” Luke says, lightly, before Bodhi can fumble out a reply. He grins at Rasca. “Are you making ahrisa? I was just telling Bodhi earlier he’d like how spicy it is.”

“In that case, you can add more boontaspice mustard, Rasca,” Silya says. She passes Bodhi a dozen h’kak bean pods to strip down, without looking over at her daughter or what she’s been doing.

Rasca meets Bodhi’s eyes and raises an eyebrow, daring him to say something.

Bodhi schools his expression into his best sabacc face, lifts the jar to the light to look at the tiny seeds, and then hands the jar back to her. “Is that what this is? Can’t wait to try it.”

It doesn’t take much longer for the Darklighters to finish preparing dinner. Gavin is sent back to the hydroponics garden for more h’kak beans after Bodhi sneaks a couple to taste and discovers he does like them, resulting in both Jula and Luke smiling at him like he’s just awarded them the Monosaccharide Ribbon or something.

The dining room is—cozy, with all seven of them crammed into it. Rasca plants herself directly across from Bodhi, clearly lying in wait; Gavin mutters something about her having an obviously useless crush, which she steadfastly ignores, watching Bodhi’s every move like a hawk-bat. Bodhi suppresses a smirk, wondering if that was what it would’ve been like to have a sister.

“I was surprised to see the painting survived,” Luke says, once Jula and Silya are settled and they start passing the food around, making sure Anya has more on her plate than just buttered pieces of haroun flatbread. He points up, and Bodhi follows his gaze to the unusual brown and black pattern on the plastered ceiling. “Thank you for preserving that.”

“It needs repainting,” Silya demurs. “But it wasn’t too badly damaged when we moved here.”

“Your room was basically just like you left it,” Anya puts in, chirpily; she can’t be more than eight or
nine, just as cheerful as the twins on Abridon, if not nearly as war-weary. “The Imperials didn’t bother going up there when they set the house on—\textit{ow}, stop kicking me, \textit{Gavin}—”

Bodhi freezes midway through putting a piece of ahrisa on his flatbread, though of course he should’ve known, or guessed, what the Imperials had done. He casts a quick glance at Luke, who’s shaking his head. “It’s okay, Gavin. I’m just glad there were parts of this place that weren’t destroyed.”

“The garage wasn’t, either,” Gavin blurts out.

“It wasn’t?” Luke’s eyes light up. “Does that mean what you were going to show us after dinner—you’ve been working on my \textit{skyhopper}?"

Gavin nods enthusiastically. “\textit{I help,}” Rasca mutters, through a mouthful of food.

Bodhi recognizes a kindred spirit in her brother, though, mustering up a grin for him, and then he jerks his head around to stare at Luke, his heart leaping. \textit{The T-16—}

“We were all so proud of Biggs,” Jula says. “Both when he went to the Academy and when he flew with you against the Death Star. So when we moved in and found your old skyhopper was somehow still in the garage—” He smiles at his kids. “They’ve still got some kinks to work out, but they’ll be pilots, just like you. Both of you,” he amends, looking at Bodhi.

“I had to save up a lot of credits to replace all the instruments you burned out,” Gavin says, raising his chin proudly. “It took \textit{months}.”

Luke chuckles, and shares a private, fond look with Bodhi, squeezing his knee. “Yeah, sorry about that, I nearly wrecked it the last time I flew through Beggar’s Canyon.”

“That’s where the old podraces used to be held, right?” Bodhi says, blithely, remembering a rather one-sided conversation from years ago.

“Where your father won his freedom,” Silya says to Luke. Jula throws her an impenetrable glance. “What? Owen can’t tell me not to talk about the \textit{other} famous Skywalker any more.” Under the table, Luke’s right hand tightens convulsively on Bodhi’s leg; he’s paled a bit, and the unhappy lines around his eyes have returned.

Bodhi clears his throat nervously, clutching Luke’s hand, and turns to Gavin, trying to pull them all back from the conversational cliff he’d forgotten about until it was nearly too late. “Have—have you taken the T-16 out much? Luke told me it can’t get too far in—into the atmosphere, but it sounded like fun.”

“A couple of times,” Gavin shrugs. “It isn’t as efficient for going around to the moisture vaporators as a speeder, but I \textit{do} want to try the Needle some day—”


“Oh,” Gavin says, dismayed.

Rasca laughs. “That’s what Mom said he’d say,” she taunts her brother.

“No, it isn’t,” Gavin argues.

“Yes it is,” Rasca insists. “She said—"
Jula shakes his head as his two oldest fight, though he also seems to appreciate that they've distracted Luke from what Silya had said. “Luke told me that you're really here to rescue someone from Jabba the Hutt.”

Bodhi chokes on the bite of ahrisa he'd taken, and Rasca promptly breaks off sniping at her brother to giggle at him. He pointedly does not take a sip of h'kak tea, whispering hoarsely, “You told him?”

“Well, yes,” Luke says, mildly surprised at Bodhi's reaction. “I thought it would be helpful to know what Jabba's been doing, the last few years.”

“Jabba the Hutt is bad.” Anya's voice is a hushed singsong, and her dark eyes are large in her pale face.

“Thank you, Anya,” Gavin mutters, sarcastically.

Silya's shaking her head. “You won't get your friend back without a lot of credits. If they haven't already been executed.” Bodhi hides a grimace with a sip of h'kak tea, throwing Luke another worried glance over the rim of his mug, but Luke’s settled down again, nothing in his posture as tense as Bodhi increasingly feels.

“That's something Jabba's done a lot more of.” Rasca shivers exaggeratedly. “Sometimes I see his big sail barge going to the Pit of Carkoon or the Valley of the Winds.”

Against his better judgement, Bodhi asks, warily, “The Valley of the Winds?”

“Really the place where Jabba kills people is called the Teeth,” Rasca says, evidently warming up to deliver a geography lesson combined with a morbid explanation of Jabba's unpleasantness, despite her father's resigned-sounding “Rasca—”

Bodhi's eyes go wider as Rasca continues to her captive audience, “Which my friends and I don't think makes a lot of sense, the sarlacc has way more actual teeth, the Valley of the Winds just has sand that blows really hard and cuts you to pieces—”

“Rasca, we're at the dinner table,” Jula tries again. “I don't think—”

“And the sarlacc is definitely scarier,” Rasca notes, mirroring the face Anya’s making at her and wiggling her fingers. “It'd be impossible to get out of there with all those tentacles grabbing at you —”

Bodhi flinches, the rest of her words dissolving into a familiar, faint buzzing in his ears. The once-cozy dining room is suddenly uncomfortably close, and it's hard to breathe in the dusty air—

No, no—not here, not—

Luke coughs loudly, one hand gesturing beseechingly for the pitcher of blue milk. Under the table, he's rubbing circles on Bodhi's thigh, the weight of his hand reassuring rather than restraining as Bodhi struggles to catch his breath. Both Gavin and Anya scramble to pour Luke a glass, glaring at each other and spilling milk on the table—Jula jumps up to avoid the mess and nearly overturns his chair.

“It's really—” Luke sputters. Rasca is suddenly looking everywhere but at their guests, apparently finding the pattern on the ceiling extremely fascinating. “Wow, I thought eating Bodhi's family's food would've prepared me better for that!” He drinks half a glass of blue milk and helps Jula wipe up the spill—by hand, no Force tricks—and makes a show of gingerly trying a smaller piece of ahrisa, letting them alternately fuss over and laugh at him until Bodhi’s calmed down again.
Which—Bodhi assumes his brief spell of panic has gone entirely unnoticed as the other Darklighters resume eating and talking about less distressing things. But Silya refills his mug, and murmurs, “H’kak tea’s supposed to be relaxing.” He wraps his hands around the mug, giving her a tiny nod of thanks, though he wonders what she must be thinking.

Anya decides that if Luke gets to slide half his remaining ahrisa onto Bodhi’s plate, then she gets to pawn the rest of hers off on her brother, resulting in another sibling squabble. Rasca stays well out of it, occasionally sneaking unreadable glances at Bodhi as he listens to Luke talk to her parents about the finer points of moisture farming.

And then the ahrisa and flatbread and blue milk are all gone. Luke gets to his feet when Jula and Silya do, saying, “Let me help you clean up.” Bodhi drains the rest of his h’kak tea and stands, too, hooking Luke’s empty mug with a finger.

“I thought I was going to show you the skyhopper,” Gavin protests.

Jula shakes his head. “No, you boys go on and do what you came here to do, before it gets too late. We’ll take care of things here.”

The wind’s died down by the time they emerge from the entry dome. Luke hasn’t bothered with his shawl, as if he’d expected that. “Are you okay?” he asks, taking Bodhi’s hand.

Bodhi looks up at the unfamiliar stars as they walk. “Yeah. Thanks—thanks for doing that, back there, I didn’t—I wasn’t expecting anything to—to set me off.”

“I know,” Luke says. “I’m sorry. Are you okay to do this with me?” His hand is loose in Bodhi’s grasp, like he’s waiting for Bodhi to pull away.

Bodhi nods, although his throat is tight. “There’s a prayer I remembered,” he mumbles. “Dunno if Chirrut or Baze taught it to you, but if you want—”

“I’d like that,” Luke says. Ahead, small, rectangular stones sit in a row in the sand, illuminated by—“Artoo? What are you doing out here?”

Artoo swivels his dome around, and Bodhi throws up his free arm to keep Artoo’s headlight from blinding him. Kaytoo gets dinner invitations but not me that is very rude!


“Artoo’s mad he didn’t get invited to dinner,” Bodhi says. “Look, you didn’t miss much.”

Would you have invited Threepio? Artoo trills, annoyed.

Bodhi snorts a reflexive laugh, and waves a hand at Artoo’s lower half. “No, no, it wasn’t a—a bipedal thing, or whether you could manage, um, small talk—” Artoo makes a sound Bodhi can only interpret as an expletive in Binary.

“Next time we get invited in for dinner, I promise we won’t leave you in the ship,” Luke says. “Okay?” Artoo swivels away, and then back again, beeping affirmatively. “Now, if you’d let me pass, please?”

Artoo beeps again and trundles away from the headstones. There are six, and to Bodhi’s non-Tatooinean eye, they’re completely indistinguishable from each other.

Luke furrows his brow as he examines them. “I wonder who the fourth one is for,” he mutters. He
looks back at Bodhi and Artoo, and explains, “There were only three here when I was growing up—Uncle Owen’s parents, and his uncle. I buried Uncle Owen and Aunt Beru on this side.” He points to the two stones furthest on the left.

Bodhi’s heart skips a beat as he thinks of Luke digging their graves as the homestead smoldered behind him, with no one to help him shoulder the burden.

*Even if he’s still helping me more than I can help him—I’m here, now.*

*I won’t let him down.*

“Maybe—no, wouldn’t be for Biggs, his father would’ve put one up for him on their land.” Luke muses, and then he shakes his head at himself. “I don’t *remember* Silya and Jula having another child that didn’t survive.”

Bodhi takes a step towards him and says, quietly, “Luke—”

“Sorry, I—I’m stalling, I know.” Luke rubs a hand over his face and sighs. “Okay.” He falls silent for a long moment, gazing down at his aunt and uncle’s graves.

Artoo makes a mournful sound, and Bodhi puts his hand out to touch Artoo’s dome.

(“—if Threepio and Artoo hadn’t come—”)

He swallows, and tilts his head back to look at the stars, imagining Luke doing the same thing night after night. It’s a small, peaceful thought, like maybe the h’kak tea is finally working.

“I wish you’d told me the truth, Uncle Owen,” Luke is saying, his voice trembling but not breaking. “I don’t even know if you knew, but maybe it didn’t matter. You were always going to protect me. Just like I was always going to—” He lifts his head, and Bodhi is a little surprised to see his eyes are dry. His voice strengthens. “I *am* a Jedi. And I’m going to do everything I can to help the moisture farmers here on Tatooine, and all the Rebel Alliance fighters out there that you never wanted me to know about, and—”

Luke stops, and takes a breath, regaining his composure. “And this is Bodhi Rook, Aunt Beru,” he continues, softer again. “He named a ship after you, because he’s exactly the kind of person you would’ve wanted for me.”

Really? Bodhi opens his mouth to protest even as Luke keeps telling his aunt about him, self-deprecation as automatic as breathing. Artoo pinches him on the leg, and he shuts it again, just as Luke asks, “Will you teach me the prayer now?”

Bodhi blinks at him. “You’re—done?” He twists his fingers together behind his back. Luke looks all right, the lines around his mouth and eyes mostly smoothed out.

“Um—” Bodhi looks down at Artoo, suddenly shy, but Artoo is no help, of course, pointing his red photoreceptor back at him curiously.

(—the memory of the sunset on his mother’s face—)

Bodhi licks his lips, looking steadily at Luke’s upturned, beautiful face under the stars. “Well, it goes, um, in darkness, cold. In light, cold.”
Luke actually shivers, as if the words have chilled the desert, so Bodhi crosses the sand to reach him, continuing, “The old sun brings no heat, but there is heat in breath and life.” He puts his arm around Luke and squeezes his shoulder. “In life, there is the Force, and in the Force, there is life. And the Force is eternal.”

“Thank you.” Luke smiles faintly at him, and turns to lead the way back to the entry dome. “Artoo, do you still want to come in?”

Bodhi looks back at the headstones once, just before he ducks into the entrance; Luke, having said his piece, doesn’t look back at all.

Inside, Silya’s produced her blue milk custard, and her husband and Anya are taking turns demolishing it; Gavin and Rasca are nowhere to be seen.


Anya says, “Aww,” and fairly lunges at Artoo; he rolls backwards, hastily warbling sticky hands sticky no you didn’t say there were children—

“Don’t be rude,” Bodhi says, with an amused shrug, and follows Luke into the dining room.

“They were just trying to do what they thought was best for me,” Luke replies, calmly, with no sign of the resentment that had tinged his words to his uncle’s grave.

Silya huffs, and waves a spoon at Bodhi inquiringly; he accepts it and investigates the custard with as much delicacy as he would the wiring of one of his ships. “If you could stand the spice in Rasca’s ahrisa, you can manage custard,” she chides him.

Bodhi looks up, chagrined. “Oh, no, it—it just—at home, my mother would’ve put fruit in, or something, to make it healthy, and I—” He looks down again, uncomfortable with the sympathetic expression on Jula’s face. “I’m sure it’s delicious.”

“No fruit in a Tatooine-style blue milk custard,” Luke states, definitively, and takes a sizeable spoonful out of Bodhi’s corner of the dish.

“Hey, hey, okay,” Bodhi says, fending off Luke’s spoon on the return pass. It is delicious, and exactly the sort of thing his mother would have tried to make healthier.

“Anything else on Jedha the same as here?” Silya asks, pushing yet another cup of h’kak tea in Bodhi’s direction.

Bodhi jerks his head up, startled, but she’s only been kind, once they’d gotten past the Imperial shuttle business. He thinks about it for a moment. “I didn’t live out in the—um, away from the city, so—so I don’t really—”

“You can say ‘middle of nowhere,’” Luke says, nudging him with an elbow.

Silya snorts. “Fine thing for you to say, sitting in the house where you grew up.”

“But it is,” Luke insists. “And our cities are hardly cities at all, there’s barely a quarter million people living on the whole planet. Takes half a day to get anywhere interesting by speeder, and then it’s only Mos Eisley.”

“If you and Biggs had been messing around in Mos Eisley when you were boys, I’m pretty sure I
would’ve heard about it,” Jula says, with a laugh.

Luke gives him a rueful smile. “No, we pretty much stuck to Anchorhead.” He polishes off the last dollop of the custard and says, carefully, “Can I ask—who’s the sixth headstone for, out there? Is it for Biggs?”

Jula leans back in his chair and looks over at Silya. “I told you he’d notice.”

“And I told you it was a good thing if he did, I never understood what Owen thought removing it would do,” Silya retorts. “Luke, that’s where your grandmother Shmi was buried.”

“My grandmother?” Luke’s blue eyes widen, and the relatively cheerful calm he’d been maintaining since they’d come back inside gives way to a mix of conflicted emotions Bodhi can’t even begin to parse.

Bodhi’s heart races, and his fingers itch for a console. He hadn’t been able to figure out anything about Luke’s family past his father, and to suddenly have another name—

“What—tell me—”

Jula grimaces at Silya and holds up a hand. “We don’t know that much about her—she died a few years before Beru and Owen brought you home.”


“We know that that Cliegg loved her enough to muster up a search party when she was kidnapped by Sand People,” Silya corrects her husband. Bodhi blinks at the mention of the mysterious Sand People again; the way she and Luke had talked about them before had made them sound like bogeymen rather than a real threat.

“For all the good that did.” Jula shakes his head. “Thirty farmers went out looking, and only four came back.”

“I didn’t know any of that,” Luke says. “I didn’t—they didn’t tell me.” His eyes spark, and Bodhi wonders if he’s going to go back outside to unload at his uncle’s grave again. But he only sighs. “There’s so much I never got to know. Thank you for telling me.” He reaches over to clasp Silya’s hand.

“Won’t blame you if you want to go have a few more words with your uncle,” Silya says, uncannily echoing Bodhi’s own thoughts. She turns a wry smile towards Bodhi, as if realizing they’ve left him out of their grim reminiscing. “Was that the same for you? How you did for your dead?”

Bodhi suppresses a wince, the destruction of the Holy City roaring in the back of his head. He tastes only boontaspice mustard and h’kak tea, though, and Luke’s foot wrapping around his calf is a calming touch. “Talking—talking to them?”

“Or did you city folk come up with more complicated rituals and things than us poor farmers,” Jula clarifies, lightly teasing.

“Not complicated, not really,” Bodhi says, feeling rather odd trying to explain without Chirrut or Baze there. “Um. Some of the—the religious types burned offerings, but mostly—” He tugs the end of his ponytail around his neck. “We cut our hair, uh, after people died.”

“Is that why your hair was short when I—got back?” Luke asks, surprised. “You never said—”
“Yeah.” Bodhi lifts a shoulder in a shrug, knowing Luke won’t pry in front of Silya and Jula after he’d redirected them away from Jedha again.

Luke runs his left hand through his shaggy hair. “I could do that.”

“Oh, it’s—it isn’t something you do yourself,” Bodhi explains, hastily. “Supposed to be—you know, family. Ba—one of my uncles did it for me.”

Luke looks up at Jula and Silya hopefully.

Silya rests her hand on her chin and gazes back at him. “Jula takes the children in to a barber in Anchorhead a couple times a year, maybe he’s picked up a few things.”

Jula points at his wife as Luke’s eyes brighten. “You’re going to help, you’re the one who told him about Shmi.”

“Well, we’re not cutting your hair in my dining room,” Silya says, getting up from her seat. “Come on, then, you know where the ‘fresher is.”

Bodhi starts to follow, although he’s fairly confident that even in this big of a home, the ‘fresher won’t really fit four, but Artoo extends a grasping arm as he passes through the courtyard, snagging his pant leg.

“What?”

**STICKY,** Artoo screeches.

Bodhi looks down.

Despite the strange sad things that had been said all evening, he can’t help but burst out laughing at the blue milk custard smeared across Artoo’s photoreceptor. He’d thought Anya old enough not to leave handprints or try to jam her fingers into Artoo’s sockets, but evidently she shared her siblings’ engineering interests.

Artoo pinches Bodhi. *Not funny clean me up sand will stick to this disgusting—stuff—it’s degrading my inputs your fault—*

Luke looks equal amounts appalled and entertained, opening his mouth to offer to help, but Bodhi waves him on, remembering Artoo’s odd little speech when Luke had ignited his lightsaber, and the suspicious things he’d done since they’d arrived on Tatooine. “Uh, I guess I better clean Artoo up.”

“Anya!” Jula calls, reprovingly, but the little girl doesn’t reappear. “Sorry about that.”

“There’s cleaning supplies under the sink in the kitchen,” Silya says.

Bodhi motions for Artoo to stay put while he searches for them, wondering if he’d have better luck in the garage with the right kinds of solvents and contemplating how to make the best use of his opportunity to question the astromech. The word *interrogate* drifts through his mind; he rejects it, and squashes the other slithering shadows trying to rise up out of his memory in association.

They’re alone when he comes back with a cleaner and some rags, the courtyard silent except for a very faint dripping sound from the moisture vaporator and the distant wind overhead. Bodhi glances around to look for the three kids, but there’s no sign of them except for the debris of discarded shoes, toys, and the occasional datapad.
“Just you and me now,” Bodhi says, trying to sound—normal. “So let’s talk.”

Artoo turns his photoreceptor away.

Bodhi’s left holding the rag out on two fingers; he’d intended to start there. “You know things.”

_I don’t know what you are talking about_, Artoo whistles.

“You said—” Bodhi checks again for the presence of any Darklighters. “You said _weird Jedi shit_. The kind of thing that—that Chirrut says, except he wouldn’t have call to talk about _crystals_ and _lightsaber blades_, because _he’s not a Jedi._”

Artoo warbles noncommittally.

Bodhi swallows, and wipes some of the custard off of Artoo’s durasteel surface. “I—I mean, I get it, if your memory—if your memory’s been partitioned, or something, like if the Jedi tried to keep information safe in you—”

Artoo swivels his dome around.

“Am I—am I _right_?” Bodhi sits back on his heels, stunned. “Were you _there_ when—when everything—Artoo, if you know _anything_ that can help Luke, you gotta tell me.”

_There is custard in my datacard reader socket_, Artoo warbles.

“Okay, okay, I’m getting to it,” Bodhi says, frowning. “But—maybe this wouldn’t have been something the Jedi were trying to hide—what can you say about Luke’s grandmother? Shmi?”

Artoo whirs for a moment and chirrups, _She was kidnapped by Tusken Raiders and died she is buried under the sixth headstone outside._

“Now you’re just repeating what Silya told us.”

_She was probably a nice lady_, Artoo adds, thoughtfully.

Bodhi groans. “So you can’t tell me anything, but you can make character judgments. Great.”

He finishes cleaning Artoo’s ports; some sand has probably gotten into his system ventilation, and he makes a note to get Luke to check that out whenever they get back to the Fleet. “Look, if this is really your _memory_ and not just—you being a—” Bodhi bites his lip. “I know a few things about that, right? You don’t have to—to pretend like it’s all okay in here.” He taps Artoo’s dome.

Artoo rotates his dome a couple of times in each direction. _Thank you_, he trills, and then he rolls off.

Bodhi stares after him, shaking his head, and calls, “Kay would tell me, you know—”

_Kaytoo doesn’t know shit_, comes Artoo’s replying warble.


Bodhi turns—and abruptly has to work _very_ hard to get his sabacc face on at the sight of Luke’s new haircut. Luke’s lips twitch, like Bodhi hadn’t quite managed it in time, and he self-consciously ruffles his hair up.

“Back to the ship,” Bodhi says, his fingers itching with the urge to do the same; it isn’t so bad, mussed. “Actually—” He glances straight up at the stars, where there isn’t a single familiar
constellation to be seen, but he can still tell the sky’s shifted since they’d been out with Luke’s dead. “We should, too, it’s late, and we—we’ve imposed—”


Luke smiles at him and Silya. “It’s all right. It—it means something, coming from you.”

The Darklighters pack Bodhi and Luke off with far too many h’kak beans—Bodhi protests and tries to give half of them back, but Rasca puts even more into the shape-memory container, whispering, “Sorry about—you know.”

And then they all pile out onto the cooling sands of Tatooine again. Silya shoulders her blaster rifle and warily scans the horizon every thirty seconds, but Jula and their children stand and wave at Luke and Bodhi as they head back to the Cadera, following the tracks of Artoo’s treads.

“They never asked us about the war,” Bodhi realizes, as he slaps at the ramp controls. “Unless—did they ask you?”

“No.” Luke sheepishly scrubs at his hair again. “I think they didn’t want to know. Or didn’t want to make us talk about it.” He glances back at them. “If I’d known they were here, I would’ve brought them something. Or I should give them something.” He turns to Bodhi, a plaintive look on his face. “Those model ships you found—I know I said I wanted them to be your courting gifts, but—”

Bodhi nods in understanding, and goes to get them as Luke runs back down the ramp to tell the Darklighters to wait. He grins to himself, knowing exactly which one to give Anya, even if the astromech sticking out of the Eta-2 is only painted the same colors as Artoo. On his way back out of the hold, he pauses, though, and rifles through his belongings until he finds one other gift.

“A family friend made these for me,” Luke explains as Bodhi brings the model ships to the kids, “They’re kind of old, but they still look just like the real things. I mean, I think they do, we don’t fly them in the Rebellion anymore.”

Even as he turns the Acclamator-class capital ship over and over in his hands reverently, Gavin is disappointed Luke and Bodhi are leaving without seeing the T-16, but Luke promises they’ll come back after they’ve finished their business with Jabba, which only mollifies him a little bit: “What if he kills you?”

“Then I’ll come back as a ghost and have a look,” Luke says, jokingly.

Bodhi, trying to give the Aethersprite to Rasca, doesn’t see Gavin’s face or hear his reply. He sneaks a peek at Silya staring sternly out into the dark, and then he pulls out the Pepper’s Pax firespice pods from his jacket pocket.

Rasca furrows her brow.

“Hotter’n boontaspcie mustard,” Bodhi mutters, with a smirk.

Rasca’s face clears, and she puts the Aethersprite model into his hand. “Don’t really wanna be a pilot,” she murmurs back, and tucks the firespice pods into her tunic pocket. “Thanks for not telling on me.”

“Thanks for not poisoning my boyfriend,” he says, and she giggles.

“You didn’t have to go to the trouble.” Jula says, clapping Luke on the arm.
“I’m glad you and Silya bought this place.” Luke pulls Jula into a hug, and when the other man lets go, Luke turns to Silya and—bows. “Thank you for keeping the memory of my family safe.”

She smiles; it’s the first genuinely warm smile Bodhi’s seen from her all evening. “You’re welcome here any time. Both of you.”

Back in the cockpit of the Cadera, Luke lets out a long breath. “It was nice, wasn’t it? Even with—” He touches Bodhi’s hand, apologetically. “Seeing my family.”

Bodhi looks out the viewport at the Darklighters silhouetted and waving in the floodlights; at the dim outlines of the headstones standing silent vigil in the sand. “Yeah,” he agrees. “It was.”

Chapter End Notes

Uh, well, after my longest break between chapters yet, here’s...7700 words that I told morag was "like the Munson family dinner scene in Logan but not [SPOILERS FOR LOGAN] XD"

Thanks to morag for handholding, beta-ing, and of course the original Jedha haircutting canon, and to all of you sticking around for this thing!! <3 <3 <3 I promise ROTJ is up ahead...in 93 ;)

ETA: happy belated birthday to astoria <3

References (lots of food, I love food chapters XD):

Darklighter family
Lars homestead (go with Legends continuity for how it ended up in the Darklighters' hands
H'kak bean tea
Pallies
Ahrisa
Boontaspice mustard (sort of)
Blue milk custard
Monosaccharide ribbon, awarded at what I can only assume is the GFFA's GBBO
The Teeth of Tatooine
Bodhi's mother's fruit custard
Chapter 92

Chapter Summary

Doing okay?

Chapter Notes

So this is one of those smut chapters (starting about two-thirds of the way in), but this time it involves some light bondage vis-a-vis Bodhi attempting to work through some stuff. This is not intended to be an example of a real-world exploration of dealing with the kinds of issues Bodhi has. See end notes for other comments about the events of this chapter.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

It's hard to fall asleep in Kenobi's hut, even after three cups of h'kak tea.

Bodhi hadn't planned to sleep in the little house at all; they've sacked out on the Cadera's deck plenty of times. But Luke had pointed out the temperature was dropping fast, and it didn't make sense to drain the shuttle's power to keep them warm. Not when his master's house, like most stone dwellings on Tatooine, had been designed and built to regulate heat already.

Like most of the buildings on Jedha.

Though that comparison isn't quite right either: if he'd been home, street noise would've sung him to sleep, not this smothering silence. He'd thought the humidifier would hiss, after Artoo had repaired it. Or that the wind would pick up again, whistling in the pipes of the moisture vaporator or hurling sand against the hull of the Cadera outside. Even Baze's snoring would've been welcome.

Bodhi turns his head to look at Luke, long asleep after the exertions and emotions of the day, his chest rising and falling steadily beneath the bantha fur blanket. He'd probably been conditioned to go right to sleep without the clamor of the city, down in the crater with meters of dirt deadening the sound of wind.

Or had he slept lightly, one hand on a blaster rifle like Silya's, never knowing if Sand People were going to try something?

Or Jabba's thugs?

Bodhi shifts restlessly under the blanket. He wishes he'd gotten any ideas from Chirrut and Baze about how to deal with the gangster; his own idea about leveraging Talon Karrde somehow relies on being able to contact the smuggler, and he hasn't the slightest clue how to do that without Jyn or Cassian. Lando and Chewie are also still incommunicado, and whatever Luke's own plans are, he and Bodhi both need their reconnaissance to start with.

But—
Unable to stop himself from thinking the monster, Bodhi shudders, and tries to focus on something else. His gaze roves over the ceiling and wall of the sleeping alcove, picking out the odd shadows: the closest sinuous shape is only the empty bed curtain hook, embedded in the stone. Even completely asleep as he is, Luke presses closer, rolling onto his side and draping a warm bare leg partly over Bodhi's, a comforting weight. Not wanting to disturb Luke any further, Bodhi wills himself still, counting his breaths until his heartbeat steadies again.

Have to find out if they're still alive.

Have to find a way in.

Bodhi wonders what Lando might have tried. He almost certainly wouldn't have gone in as himself, both because he and Han had been—whatever they were to each other—and because the bounty hunter had seen his face, in Cloud City.

The bounty hunter.

He has a flash of memory: Luke sauntering loose-limbed and careless off of the Cadera, pretending he'd brought Bodhi to Kessel as his prisoner. But it seems terribly unlikely that Luke would be able to trick an entire palace of sentients, not mention any droids, into believing Bodhi didn't need to be cuffed.

He'd managed all right on Abridon in binders, too angry with Flatt to panic. Had managed to pick Baze's binders while still trapped in his own, but the thought of that leads to the memory of Tantor ordering him strapped down to the table, which makes him nearly as unsettled as he'd felt at dinner—

No, I can work back up to binders, Bodhi thinks, determined, and slides carefully out from underneath Luke’s leg and the bantha fur. He pads barefoot across the stone floor to where they'd draped their clothes over the back of a chair and reels one of the thin coarseweave wraps out of the pile. He hadn’t liked the feel of it on his face and neck, but it doesn’t seem too rough on the back of his hand.

Yeah. This could work.

Bodhi settles himself in the chair; it scrapes faintly along the floor, and he throws an anxious glance at Luke, who hasn’t moved a centimeter, the light of the moons shining gold on his hair and eyelashes. Takes a deep breath, and loops the coarseweave around his wrist, drawing it tight—

“What are you doing?” Luke says.

Bodhi jerks guiltily. “Um—I—I was—” Gazing at Luke's concerned face, he loosens the wrap a little. “I was thinking—the bounty hunter thing we did, on—on Kessel, Jyn and Cassian probably have a name for that, um, con, probably the planet where someone tried it for the first time—”

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“That’s a way in to Jabba's palace, right? To—get Han or find Lando and Chewie, or find out what—what happened to 'em,” Bodhi says. “Bounty's back on my head, I can handle being a prisoner, done it loads of times since Kessel. Just—I—I needed to practice. Being, um. Cuffed.”

Luke stares down at him for a moment, considering, and then he says, slowly, “You shouldn't do this by yourself.” He reaches over to pull at an end of the wrap. “And I think I know of something better

“No, actually,” Luke says, with a small smile. “I’ll be right back.” He slips out the door before Bodhi can puzzle out what he’s thinking of, his bare feet making almost no noise on the sand outside. The Cadera’s ramp whirs open; Bodhi listens carefully for a warbling query from Artoo, idly running the coarseweave between his fingers, but the astromech remains quiet. And then Luke is back, shivering slightly in his sleep shorts and undershirt, a long piece of fabric wound around his shoulders.

“My scarf,” Bodhi says, in bemused recognition.


Bodhi eyes him, a little taken aback. “You—you’re going along with this?”

“I’m trying to listen to everyone’s ideas, remember? And if you want to give this a shot, then of course I’ll help you test it out.” Luke kneels in front of Bodhi, draping the length of the lashaa silk over his outstretched hands, catching the moonlight in its glimmering threads. He looks up at Bodhi through his eyelashes, slightly mischievous though his tone is serious. “D’you want your hands tied in front or back of you?”

Bodhi holds his hands out, wrists together. “Uh, in front. Imperial protocol.”

Luke nods and begins winding the scarf around Bodhi’s forearms in repeated figure eights, fingers brushing now and again across the pulse at his wrists. “Seems like a weird risk to take, doesn’t it?”

“Guess they always counted on being able to shoot me before I could do anything,” Bodhi says, wryly. “Lucky you were there on Abridon so I could get Baze free.”

“I thought you said there was no such thing as luck,” Luke teases, tying the ends of the scarf in a knot. He tilts his head back to study Bodhi’s face. “Doing okay?”

Bodhi pulls his hands in opposite directions, tugging and testing. His fingers tremble a bit, but he curls them into fists so Luke won’t see. “Yeah.”


“I—I’m fine, just—keep talking to me.”

Luke huffs a laugh. “The first time you asked me to keep talking, I told you about flying around this blasted place.”

“With Biggs,” Bodhi says. His heart is starting to thump in his ears, making him unsure if he sounds jealous or not, but Luke doesn’t seem to react as if he does.

“Yeah,” Luke replies. “I don’t know if you had a chance to meet, on Yavin, before—” Bodhi shakes his head, regretfully, and Luke swallows, nods. “You would’ve liked him. He was a pilot, like us.”

“X-wings, though, not—not cargo shuttles.” Bodhi digs his fingernails into his palms, trying to focus on Luke’s face.

Luke smiles wanly. “I keep hoping to get you in one someday.”

“Been in yours plenty of times,” Bodhi argues.
“When you’re working on it, sure, but you haven’t flown it.” Luke straightens up where he’s still half-crouched on the floor. “It’s different than flying a shuttle—”

Bodhi snorts and raises his eyebrows. Luke throws him a wry look in response. “Oh, c’mon, you know I don’t mean it like that.”

“Course not,” Bodhi mutters, equally dry.

“It’s like what I said about the T-16, you know? Feeling like I could finally get away from this place, like—”

“Like you could touch the stars,” Bodhi says, softly, unclenching his hands.

“Like that,” Luke agrees. “But even—even more so.” He sits back, folding his legs into a meditation pose, his face alight. “Like—I pull the canopy closed, and it shuts out everything except the stars.”

“And Artoo,” Bodhi points out. “And—Wedge, the squadron on comms—”

Luke reaches over and pokes him in the knee. “You must be handling this all right, if you’re being like that.”

“Like what?” Bodhi asks, innocently, looking down at the scarf wrapped around his wrists. A fold of the gold silk is thin enough that he can almost make out the scars underneath, but otherwise he can’t see them at all, can’t feel anything curling sinister and frightening around his thoughts. He exhales a long breath. “Yeah. Yeah, I’m—good.”

“Want to try it the other way?”

Bodhi blinks at him.

“Hands behind your back,” Luke clarifies. “This might be Imperial protocol, but bounty hunters might do it differently?”

“I wouldn’t know,” Bodhi says, off Luke’s inquiring look, shoving his bound hands at Luke so he can untie them. “You’re the only—fake, mind you—bounty hunter I’ve ever run into, thank the Force.”

“Oh, so it’s back to the Force now,” Luke says, his hair falling in his eyes as he bends his head to inspect Bodhi’s wrists. The scarf, unknotted and unwound, cascades over Bodhi’s knees and down onto Luke’s thigh, though Luke catches it before it can drift to the floor. “Well, go on, turn around.”

Bodhi clasps his hands behind his back and twists in the chair so Luke can reach. “Should I practice—I dunno, picking a lock without looking at it?”

Luke’s breath is warm on the back of his neck as he pulls the silk snug around Bodhi’s wrists again. “Do you think you could?”

“Maybe?”

“Hmm.”

“Not gonna grab for somebody’s blaster,” Bodhi reasons aloud. “Can’t slice a console I can’t see, can’t—can’t fly like this.” He turns back around to face Luke and scoots forward a bit in the chair, so he can lean back without completely trapping his hands behind him. “Maybe you still could, with the Force.”
“Artoo would probably have something to say about that,” Luke murmurs, drawing his legs up and resting his elbows on his knees.

“I bet,” Bodhi says.

He takes a couple more slow careful breaths, thinking about whether he knows the Cadera well enough now to try to fly it without looking at the controls. It's a silly exercise, but no more so than anything else Chirrut had ever tried to get him to visualize. And imagining himself safe in his shuttle, the sound of the ramp closing up behind him, is surprisingly calming, like Luke's right about shutting out everything but the stars—

Luke clears his throat, and Bodhi realizes he's stretched his legs out to either side of Luke, and is gazing down at him with half-lidded eyes. “Still—good?” Luke asks, sounding a little odd.

“Yeah,” Bodhi answers, furrowing his brow at Luke. “I—I'm sorry, it's late, you must be—come untie me—”

“No, no, I'm not tired,” Luke says, hastily, making no move to get up off the stone floor, though it must be cold.

Bodhi frowns harder at him; the moonlight is dimmer now, one of the moons must be setting, but he could swear Luke is blushing. He squirms a little in the chair; trying to find a more comfortable position for his arms.

Luke makes a faint sound, almost a whimper, and shifts awkwardly.

“Come on,” Bodhi insists, twisting his hands in the silk, testing the slack—Luke had left him rather a lot of slack, nearly enough to maneuver his hands in front again if he really put some effort into it. “You're not gonna leave me like this, are you?”

Luke gulps, and scrambles to his feet. “Turn—turn around,” he says, hoarsely.

But it's too late; standing puts the arousal Luke's been trying to conceal directly at eye level, and Bodhi looks up at him with some surprise.

“Really?” He wiggles his hands, making the trailing ends of the scarf undulate. “You—you like having me—like this?”

Luke swallows, frozen like a nerf in headlights. “Um—”

Bodhi's heartbeat is speeding up again, but not from fear; the moonlight outlines Luke's muscular arms and legs, and he's blushing furiously now, up to his ears. “Like—you've got me at your mercy?” Bodhi adds, curiously. He licks his lips; he'd forgotten how dry they can get, on a desert world.

Luke's eyes flick down at the movement, but he jerks his head back up. “It isn't like—no!” He takes a tentative step closer, and then rocks back on his heel, as if he realizes he's nearly looming over Bodhi. “You're trying to manage your fear, I don't want to—to—” He rakes a hand through his hair, rumpling it up, his blue eyes dark with guilt and worry.

Bodhi thrills to it, recklessly. Slides out of the chair to his knees at Luke's feet, gazes straight up at his beautiful anxious face, and breathes, “You won't hurt me.”

A soft moan escapes Luke's throat, but he shakes his head, reaching out uncertainly. “I don't want to take advantage of you.”
“N—no, look, I'm fine, you're not taking advantage—” Suddenly obstinate, Bodhi casts about for a way to prove he's all right. “I'm not helpless!” He lunges forward, grabbing the waistband of Luke's thin sleep shorts in his teeth—yanks them down, hard, before he can think any more about what he's doing, and Luke yelps in shock.

Bodhi lets go, panting, dizzy with his own surge of desire. “I'm not afraid,” he says, and means it. “I trust you.” He bends his head to take Luke in his mouth.

Luke gasps softly, holding himself rigid, the muscles of his legs trembling with the effort, his eyes gone starry and dazzled as Bodhi swirls his tongue around him. Bodhi's hampered by his bound hands; his hair's come loose from its ties and keeps getting in the way, falling around his face. Luke shivers when the stray strands brush his thighs, and gently pushes Bodhi’s hair back, fingers tightening the barest fraction as Bodhi tries to take him deeper—

—and gags, just a little, but Luke promptly pulls out and steps back, looking distressed.

Bodhi coughs. “I'm okay, honestly—”

“And I said I never wanted to hurt you,” Luke says, firmly, the set of his mouth brooking no further argument. “But I had a better idea anyway.” He helps Bodhi to his feet, pushing him gently in the direction of the bed, and catches hold of one end of the scarf, unraveling it with a single swift tug.

“You're full of better ideas tonight,” Bodhi says, fondly, flopping down onto the bed to watch Luke drape the scarf around his neck and rummage around in their things. His breath is still coming a little fast; in the moonlight, Luke is practically carved from Durosian marble. He wriggles out of his own sleep shorts and lies back, rubbing his wrists—not because they're sore, not in the least, but the silk had warmed with his pulse, and Luke whisking it away like that had sent chills running through him.

Luke returns and kneels on the bed next to him. “You have to tell me if it's okay.”

“'Course I'll tell you.” Bodhi runs a hand over Luke’s arm, amused when all the fine golden hairs stir at his touch. “What d’you want to do?” He looks up to meet Luke’s eyes, but Luke isn’t looking back at him; he’s fingering the scarf and studying the bed curtain hook set into the alcove.

Bodhi bites his lip, his heart thumping wildly in his chest. In all of the times he’d been made someone's prisoner, they’d never bound his arms over his head, leaving him unable to touch anything—

—but Luke wouldn't be leaving him at all. Would be making love to him with his mouth and hands and the fucking Force if he wanted it—

“You don't have anything to prove to me,” Luke murmurs.


It's a matter of moments for Luke to bind his wrists again, securing Bodhi's hands well above his head. He has enough slack that his arms aren't strained, but not enough to be able to reach Luke in any meaningful way, even as he'd straddled Bodhi's lap to knot the other end of the scarf around the hook.

Luke sits back on his heels and opens his mouth—

“I'm all right,” Bodhi reassures him. He's mostly supine, pillows shoved behind his lower back. His mouth twitches as Luke doesn’t make a move to do—well, anything, and he wiggles his hips invitingly. “So—get on with it!”
Luke smiles at him. “Can't I stop and admire my work?”

Bodhi’s lips part, and he attempts to keep still; Luke might interpret his sudden straining to be touched as a struggle to get free. “Have a good look,” he rasps.

A tremor goes through Luke. His eyes blaze like twin suns, tracing over Bodhi laid out bare and trusting before him. And then he reaches forward, skimming his fingertips over Bodhi’s feet.

“Hey!” Bodhi jerks and twists in his bonds, laughing, but Luke quickly abandons his feet, crawling up the bed to kiss him, caressing him with—“Stars—” Bodhi gasps, throwing his head back against the wall of the alcove. The sensation of the invisible Force is everywhere, heightening the nip of Luke’s teeth along his neck, the feel of one of Luke’s hands sliding between them and closing around him.

“You look incredible,” Luke murmurs. He’s hard against Bodhi’s stomach, but is somehow—firmly under control, not trying to rut against him or even twitching involuntarily very much. Bodhi pants for breath, nearly overwhelmed by the intensity of Luke’s attention, and Luke slows down his efforts, brushing his thumb over Bodhi’s lower lip.

Bodhi flicks his tongue out to taste Luke’s hand. It’s the prosthetic one, not that it matters; Luke groans, and Bodhi meets his eyes before deliberately sucking two fingers into his mouth. Luke does buck against him then, helplessly, and Bodhi makes a pleased sound that promptly morphs into a whimper, as the Force presses into him.

“Okay?” Luke whispers. Bodhi arches his back, nodding, and Luke withdraws his fingers from Bodhi’s mouth, pulling away entirely down towards the far end of the bed, leaving him nearly shivering and wanting—

“Luke,” Bodhi moans, plaintively—

—but Luke’s only gone to slick himself up, returning and replacing the immaterial pressure of the Force with his heat. He thrusts into Bodhi with insistent, sure strokes, eyes intent on Bodhi’s face, as if he has to be certain every cry he drives from Bodhi’s throat is one of pleasure and not pain.

Bodhi desperately grips the scarf to brace himself, unable to grasp any other part of Luke or to even try to meet his movements with his own. And then his hands are too slippery with sweat to hold onto the silk, that last vestige of control lost—

—pants out one last “I’m fine”— so Luke won’t worry, and screams as he flies over the edge.

He rouses briefly a short while later when Luke kisses him. Above them, the scarf is untying itself from the curtain hook; Bodhi tugs, experimentally, and it comes drifting down into his hands. Luke unknots the other end from around Bodhi’s wrists, fingers so gentle Bodhi hardly notices them touching his scars.

“That was a pretty good idea,” Bodhi mumbles, fumbling ineffectively in the direction of the bantha fur blanket; Luke’s cleaned them both up, but their clothes are still in a heap on the floor. Luke gestures, and the blanket slithers over him, not the least bit frightening even in the dark. “Told you I’d be okay.”


*****
They’re awakened at dawn by someone banging on the door of Kenobi’s hut.

“You’d better be decent in there—” Leia shouts, barely audible under Chewbacca’s howling that he’d gone and picked Leia up from the spaceport because apparently they were too busy—

“Oh, fuck—” Bodhi says, jolting awake.

“Your Highness, Chewbacca, this is hardly an appropriate method for—”

Luke, his hair an utter disaster, is pulling shirts and pants to them from the chair and the floor with the Force willy-nilly, but he’s laughing, wonderfully giddy, his face aglow in the light of Tatooine’s suns.

“—we didn’t come up with a plan!”

Chapter End Notes

...if I hadn't already put far too many tags on this fic, I would tag this for "Force Powers Are Not An Adequate Substitute For An Agreed Upon Safe Word"--but all of the activities in this chapter are consensual, and hopefully I have made that clear throughout. Happy to add more tags if readers think them appropriate, though.

(I was *also* tempted to tag this "Canon-Typical Bondage," because, well, this happened. And, like, all the times someone in the OT is in binders. :P )

*****

ROTJ...next, at long last. Though next weekend I have already penciled into my calendar for finishing...a different fic, so 93 will probably arrive in the first week of October at the earliest. ;)

Thanks to morag and brynn for cheerleading this one!! And thanks, dear readers, for sticking this whole thing out with me. I appreciate all the wonderful things you've said here and elsewhere about it. Nearing the home stretch, now.
Chapter 93

Chapter Summary

What the fuck is wrong with this place?

Chapter Notes

Heed the latest tags.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

After two increasingly treacherous rounds of Jabba’s demolition derby, Bodhi is beginning to have serious doubts about the merits of the plan.

Lando’s a good enough pilot, to be sure; he’d easily won the first and placed in the second, but the third—

—he winces, watching the battle droid try to put two more holes in the armor plating of Lando’s skiff—

—is getting ridiculous.

Over at the south end of the arena, the Bestine twins are doing their best to tangle a podracer up, but the Dug pilot has been doing this for a lot longer than they have, and simply drags their airspeeder after him until the blue-haired twin yells in frustration and cuts the tow cable free. Lando’s engaging the Jawa’s remote-controlled battle droid, and the other human man—an Alderaanian merchant or something, Bodhi hadn’t caught his name—is darting around the edge of the arena taking potshots at them all.

It’s chaos, and Lando—no, not Lando, Bodhi has got to keep thinking of him as Skreej—is having the time of his life. He’s enjoying the crowd, blowing kisses at the Bestine twins when they zip by, and generally just acting so much like Han at his worst that it isn’t hard to imagine the two of them together. They’ve probably even gambled on Jabba’s games here before.

A loud buzzer sounds overhead, and the Troig announcer declares in Basic and Huttese at the same time, that the third round is complete. Bodhi pulls back from the pit rail he’s been leaning against to watch, and sure enough, about thirty seconds later Lando—Skreej—steers the skiff into their pit for repairs. One of Jabba’s scorekeepers comes down from Jabba’s box to record the damage and tally up the points, as they had every previous round, and Bodhi braces himself again.

Just think of it like going on a mission with Cassian and Jyn.

“Rook!” Lando calls, vaulting over the deck railing of the skiff and stalking over to him, his gondar-tusk helmet tucked under his arm. Bodhi dutifully hands him a towel to wipe the sweat off; the pit is partially shaded, but the arena floor is in the full glare of Tatooine’s suns, and Lando is in armor.

“Make sure that repulsorlift coil still works right, almost drove straight into the sand on that last turn.”
“Cause you practically lost your steering vane to that blasted droid,” Bodhi snaps back, and Lando winks at him before thumbing the remote hooked to his belt. The control collar around Bodhi’s neck buzzes lightly and despite the warning, and the fact that they’ve gone through this little routine five times already, it still makes him jump. He winces and rubs at his neck for the sake of Jabba’s scorekeeper, the same Ishi Tib woman who’s been keeping track of Skreej’s points; she’s been appearing to buy it. Or at least she hasn’t acted like she even cared, which Bodhi supposes is close enough.

“Then fix it,” Lando says, and swats at Bodhi’s ass before turning and beckoning a refreshments droid over. “After you check the coil.”

Bodhi glares at him, but obediently jacks the skiff up and crawls under it to examine the repulsorlift coil. It’s fine; he suspects Lando had sent him underneath so he’d have some cover while Lando kept playing his own, though aggrieved prisoner isn’t particularly hard for Bodhi to pull off. He hadn’t expected to have to do it for this long, but it’ll be all right—

“Nothing’s stopping you from rigging the engine to explode,” comes a whisper, and Bodhi smacks his head on the underside of the skiff as he looks around. It’s Ghia, one of the Bestine twins; he can hear her sister giggling with Lando.

“What?”

“Just saying.” Ghia grins at him and flips her long green braid over her shoulder. “Blow him up and —”

“—and get scooped up by the next blasted bounty hunter and dropped on the Empire's doorstep?” Bodhi mutters back. “At least with—with Skreej I have a shot at the Rebellion picking up the tab.”

“Oh, that’s a dangerous waiting game,” Ghia says.

“I—I don’t think Skreej is gonna lose interest in me,” Bodhi says, hoping he’s inflecting his voice with the right amount of weary resignation and worry.

“You sure about that?” Ghia asks, and she points down past Bodhi’s feet. Beneath the skiff, he can see her sister Tia’s boots are very close to Lando’s. As he watches, Tia actually runs her toe up Lando’s shin—

Bodhi bangs his head very hard on the skiff again, scrambling out; he can’t quite get all the way clear, his pant leg hung up on something, and he jerks free with a ripping sound.

Tia giggles, and he looks up at her and Lando’s amused faces—looks back at his shredded pants, the torn-off piece hanging from the end of the steering vane, and groans.

Tia huffs loudly, her flirty humor gone. “There’s still one more round, Skreej.”

“Yeah,” Ghia says. “Eat our fucking dust. Bye, Captain Rook.” She links arms with her sister, and they saunter back to their own pit.

“They seemed nice,” Bodhi observes, dryly.
Lando’s smile fades a bit as he turns back to Bodhi. “Ghia try to get you to blow me up?”

“I’ll check again, make sure she didn’t plant anything when I wasn’t looking.”

Lando nods. “Sorry about your pants.” The corner of his mouth quirks up. “I was handling Tia just fine on my own, though.”

“Uh-huh,” Bodhi says, dropping to his knees and making sure the jack is still secure before crawling under the skiff again.

Ghia had attached a magnetic clamp to the fuel line. “What the fuck is wrong with this place?” Bodhi mutters. He’s too busy prying it off to catch all the scores when the Troig announces them, but he does hear Lando swear as the last contestants for the final round are introduced.

“What?” Bodhi calls.

“Come see for yourself,” Lando says, nudging his foot.

Bodhi crawls back out, more carefully this time, and then he just stares.

“You haven’t met General Otto before, have you?” Lando says.

“N—no,” Bodhi answers. “Just—what in blazes is he wearing?”

Lando’s face cracks in a grin. “You mean red, purple, and gold aren’t standard for Imperial uniforms these days?”

“He can’t be a real Imperial,” Bodhi says, flabbergasted. “They would—would’ve—I don’t even know what they would’ve done for—for—that.” But he swallows nervously and takes a step closer to Lando as Otto’s vehicle—a fucking AT-ST—is raised from its pit into the arena, uncomfortably aware that “Skreej’s” dangerous reputation is the only thing currently standing between him and the Empire.

“Obviously I won’t take any offer he makes for you,” Lando says, lightly, slinging an arm around Bodhi’s shoulders and squeezing; he’s glaring daggers in Otto’s direction. “Just keep an eye out for stormtroopers.”

“Won’t exactly be hard to spot here,” Bodhi replies, reflexively scanning the crowd for their white plastoid armor. Seeing none, but unable to relax, he nods in the direction of the other final contestant, a white-skinned near-human woman with a single shock of reddish hair on her shaved scalp, perched on a customized swoop. “Who’s that?”

Lando grimaces. “Someone I thought was long dead.”

“Friend of yours? Han’s?”

“No, but she’s—” Lando exhales. “Not fond of Jedi.”

“Hope she doesn’t stick around after this, then,” Bodhi says, although he privately admits he’d have been a lot happier if Luke had found a way to make himself part of this stage of the plan.

“Yeah.” Lando puts his helmet on and hops the rail onto the skiff. “Be right back,” he says, and flies out into the arena again. The buzzer sounds, and the crowd gasps and screams as the woman on the swoop immediately shoulders her sniper rifle and tries to take out the Alderaanian merchant. Her shot goes wide, hitting the already-cratered arena wall.
Bodhi looks up at Jabba's box again; the Hutt roars with sadistic delight as the AT-ST starts spitting blaster fire indiscriminately, and Bodhi flinches back.

It's all right.

*Lando's going to win our way into Jabba's palace, and then he'll keep—being Skreej, and I'll slice Jabba's records so Luke has something to bargain with to get Han back—*

Something explodes, sending up a—not very large fireball and a plume of smoke. The Jawa in the pit across from Bodhi's shrieks and throws their remote on the ground, jumping up and down and waving their tiny fists in rage. Bodhi shakes his head and grimaces at the smell of melted plastoid, looking at the pieces of the battle droid and its platform scattering across the sand. He should've expected that; battle droids were, and are expendable, and the callousness of Jabba’s hangers-on towards organic beings goes double for droids.

*Probably not the best idea for Luke to send Threepio and Artoo in after us—*

—but he’s cut off from comms until they get inside Jabba’s palace and can’t tell Luke not to, and besides, Luke had only made an exasperated face at Leia when she’d pointed out each and every flaw in the plan, and said something about the Force guiding him.

And it seems to be guiding Lando, too. He makes the biggest target out of all the pilots, standing completely exposed on the deck of the skiff. But he’s nearly made it through the entire tournament day unscathed; he’s at least a good a pilot as Han or Bodhi himself, even with the most unwieldy vehicle in the field and both the sniper and Otto going after him.

Bodhi draws further back into the shaded part of the pit to wait out the rest of the round. No point making himself more of a target than he already is.

*****

Lando wins.

There’s a bit of nastiness when Otto tries to challenge the results, but even someone as pompously stupid as the apparent general knows better than to draw a blaster in Jabba’s box. Bodhi does not like the way Otto eyes him as he marches off, though; there’s something of Seerdon in his avaricious leer.

Lando takes Bodhi by the arm and drags him up to be presented to Jabba himself. The majordomo, a disturbingly pale Twi’lek, says something in Ryl; Lando nods, and smiles, and says something back, although Bodhi guesses whatever it is loses a bit in translation, without the accompanying lekku gestures.

Jabba booms out a declaration to the entire arena, and a wild cheer goes up. And then Jabba turns his huge slitted eyes on Bodhi and says—*something.*

He’s hopelessly lost; he’d learned so many languages on Jedha, but on the far side of the galaxy from Hutt space it had never seemed important to pick up much Huttese. The crude laughter and the lascivious looks Bodhi’s torn pants are getting, though—Bodhi throws a plaintive look at Lando, whose eyes are narrowing.

“Jabba is impressed that I was able to capture you,” Lando says. His mouth twists, the expression barely visible under his helmet, even standing this close. “He thinks you would make a fine addition to his court.”

“No—no.” Bodhi says, staring at Lando in alarm. “Don’t—don’t sell me to—” That hadn’t been the
deal at all, *Lando* was supposed to take point on the mission, there’s no way he’ll be able to sneak around if—if—

He *trusts* Lando, despite the short duration of their association, but if Jabba offers too much, it won’t make any sense not to take it—

—but Lando only reaches over to pull him tight against his side. He moves his arm so it drapes over Bodhi’s shoulder, his hand stroking the column of Bodhi’s throat and forcing him to tilt his head back to show Jabba the control collar around his neck. Bodhi struggles in his grip, hoping it comes off as being torn between wanting to escape “Skreej” and not wanting to wind up at Jabba’s—feet?

“He’s *mine,*” Lando says, flatly.

Jabba laughs—echoed shrilly by the Kowakian monkey-lizard scampering up his back—and rumbles something about *Jedi.*

Bodhi twitches again. *Shit, what did he say about Luke?*

Lando only laughs, too, and makes an obscene gesture. “Maybe he won’t want to go with the Jedi.”

Jabba nods. He waves his majordomo back over; there’s another exchange of Huttese and Ryl, and Lando bows to Jabba before grabbing Bodhi’s arm firmly and leading him back down from the box.

“Sorry about that,” Lando mutters in Bodhi’s ear, or as close as he can get with the gondar tusks in the way. “You all right?”

“Yeah, yeah,” Bodhi says. They get back to the pit safely; the crowd is dispersing as Jabba’s retinue departs for the palace, but that still leaves the sniper, or the twins, or summoned Imperial troops as threats. “Did you—are we in?”

Lando checks the skiff for sabotage *again* before motioning Bodhi to get on. “Well, that was my least favorite job interview ever. But yeah. We’re in.”

*****

Jabba’s palace—

Luke had said offhandedly that it used to be a monastery, but it is the *least* sacred place Bodhi has ever been, let alone appearing anything like a palace out of the old stories. The size of the hangar and entry hall are about right for Bodhi’s imagination, but Jabba’s actual living quarters are meters and meters underground, dark and cramped, and give Bodhi some uncharitable thoughts about *slugs.*

The majordomo shows them to a reasonably well-furnished, if still very dark, guest room, and informs Lando—and Lando informs Bodhi—that Jabba is having a post-derby party, and that Jabba has, “in his infinite generosity,” provided—

“Oh, *no,*” Bodhi says, horrified.

“New clothes,” Lando finishes translating, as the Twi’lek puts something into Lando’s hands that *barely* fits the definition of fabric. Most of Lando’s face is hidden by the helmet, but Bodhi can see his eyes are twinkling.

Bodhi sticks his head into the hall and babbles helplessly after the departing majordomo, “No, there’s been some kind of—I’m sure there must be something else—” But the Twi’lek is gone, and there’s nothing for it. He turns and hauls the heavy door shut after him, staring wide-eyed at Lando, who’s
“You’ve got to be fucking kidding me.”

Lando tosses it at him and takes off his helmet with a sigh. “It’s basically what the other Twi’lek was wearing,” he says, shaking out his black curls and grinning—just a little—at Bodhi’s consternation.

“It’s not even—it’s mesh,” Bodhi says, flabbergasted. “It’s already freezing down here and I’m supposed to just wear—what the fuck is wrong with this place?”

“You know, when you put it that way, it’s pretty incredible that Luke turned out as normal as he did,” Lando muses, lounging on the bed.

Bodhi drops the mesh—pants, they’re supposed to be pants—on the table and blinks at him. “Stars, Luke—”

Lando’s mouth curves down. “Probably didn’t know Jabba would try to make you into one of his—dancers.”

“Dancers,” Bodhi echoes. He feels ill. The figures moving in the shadowy alcoves of the throne room as they’d passed—the Twi’lek woman chained up on Jabba’s dais—

“Yeah.”

“The Empire outlawed slavery,” Bodhi says, weakly.

“You saw Otto playing in Jabba’s games, same as I did.”

“Yes.” Bodhi rubs his face with a hand.

“Listen, if you don’t think you can handle—” Lando starts.

Bodhi shakes his head. Leia hadn’t liked the idea of him coming in here either; she’d pointed out that he’d never actually bothered to train with Cassian or Jyn for this sort of thing, but he’d promised to help Luke any way he could. He takes a breath. “Bit late for second thoughts.”

“Right.” Lando stands and rubs his hands together. “Now let’s get you into—”

Bodhi whips his head up and glares at him. Lando holds his hands up, apologetically, and turns around.

Okay.

I can do this.

“You’re going to have to do something with your hair,” Lando adds, and Bodhi scowls uselessly at his back, but he tugs the ties loose and runs his hands through his hair before looking down at the—thing on the table.

It’s just—

Bodhi dangles the scrap of clothing off of his finger and sighs.

—mesh.

*****
Bodhi almost turns and flees at the sight of the packed throne room; for all that they’re supposed to be celebrating “Skreej’s” win—and feteing Jabba, as always—he is incredibly exposed. Lando keeps him on a short, if figurative, leash, even when the Bestine twins come over to flirt some more. “Skreej’s” vicious possessiveness isn’t quite enough to ward off the most forward of the crowd, though, and Bodhi is kept on his toes trying to keep out of reach of hands, paws, and once, a mechanical grasping claw of a bug-eyed worker drone that does not remind him of Thranx in the slightest.

He’s at least immensely relieved to realize that General Otto is nowhere in sight, and neither is the white-skinned sniper. The Alderaanian merchant also seems to be pointedly avoiding him, which he’d feel worse about if he wasn’t currently fending off another surreptitious attempt to touch him—from something—above—

Bodhi looks up, and nearly screams. He stumbles backwards, away from the tentacle protruding from the—

—no, it isn’t—

“Rook, watch where you’re—” Lando snaps, and Bodhi feels the control collar buzz at his neck, but he can’t think to react properly, too afraid of the tentacle still slithering after him.

No!

He trips over someone’s feet, and then a clawed, reptilian hand grabs him by the shoulder and pins him to the wall, shaking him from his terror. “Sorry—I’m sorry,” Bodhi gasps, his eyes fixed on the lone tentacle dangling from the mollusk-like creature attached to the ceiling. “What—is that?”


“Hey, get your claws off him,” Lando orders, shoving his way over. The crowd parts to let Lando through; he falters, barely noticeably, but enough that Bodhi blinks at him, worried.

And then he turns his head to look at what had made Lando almost—almost—break.

Han.

The Saurin lets Bodhi go, but he’s rooted to the spot, staring in horror at Han’s agonized expression molded in carbonite. Leia had said he’d been looking at her as he went into the freezing chamber, that he’d seemed at peace, but—

Is he—

Someone giggles behind him, and then Lando’s hand falls on his shoulder, turning him away. “Come on, you’ve made enough of a fucking scene,” he snaps, and Bodhi follows him obediently through the crowd, not needing to work too hard at seeming cowed while Lando mutters curses in a least half a dozen languages.

 Alone in their guest room again, Bodhi drops into the chair at the table and puts his head down in his bare arms, not even bothering to find his shirt on the floor. “Sorry,” he says, again, exhausted. He peeks over his arm at Lando. “Are you okay?”

“He’s still alive. That’s all that matters. We’ll get him out.” Lando pulls off his helmet and puts it on the table; the remote for the control collar follows, but not his blaster. “What happened back there?”

Bodhi shakes his head slowly. “That—that thing—” He shudders. “It—licked me.”
“Yeah, I don’t know what it was either,” Lando says, and sits down heavily on the bed. He looks around the room, puzzled. “Did you send out for dry cleaning?”

“I’m sorry, what?”

“Your clothes are gone,” Lando says.

“What?” Bodhi sits up straight, his previous panic giving way to an entirely different sort of dread. His shirt and torn pants are missing—but the bed Lando’s sitting on is turned down, and there’s even a tiny, nicely-wrapped parcel sitting on the pillow—“What is that?”

Lando picks it up and examines it, and a slow, utterly incredulous smile spreads across his handsome face. “It’s chocolate.”

Bodhi furrows his brow. “What’s that?”

Lando’s eyes widen, and he tosses it to Bodhi. “Try it, it’ll make you feel better.” He stands up and starts unbuckling his armor. “I would never have figured Jabba for a decent housekeeping staff. You’ll probably get your shirt back in the morning. Mended pants, too, if they know what they’re doing.”

Bodhi sniffs the piece of chocolate and ventures a tentative lick—

“Please don’t do that,” Lando says, rubbing his forehead. “It’s bad enough we’re going to have to share a bed.”

“We—” Bodhi looks around the room in surprise, popping the chocolate in his mouth and immediately stifling a moan. He wonders if any of his friends have ever had it before; Cassian would probably think it was too sweet. “Oh,” he says. “Um—there’s the floor—”

Lando raises his eyebrows. He’s stacking up all the parts of his armor on the other empty chair, topping the pile off with the helmet. “Like I’m going to let Luke Skywalker’s boyfriend sleep on a cold hard floor—”

“I meant, for you,” Bodhi says, though he’s unable to keep a straight face as he says it, earning a small chuckle from Lando.

He gets up from the table, abruptly shivering, and practically dives under the covers. “It’s fine, I sleep with Cassian and Jyn all the—I share a bed with Cassian and Jyn all the time, just to get some sleep,” he clarifies, hastily, as Lando’s eyebrows climb even higher. “I—I don’t really have nightmares, at least nobody except Luke ever notices that I do, but staying with them—helped me sleep. Um. Cassian helped me, after I was tortured.”

Lando’s expression flattens out. “The Empire?”

Bodhi shakes his head. “Saw—Saw Gerrera. The thing that licked me—I thought it was a tentacle, like the monster Saw used on—on me.”

“I see,” Lando says, quietly. He nods to himself. “It trapped you, like Han is trapped?”

Bodhi flinches, but Lando is merely making sense of his panicked reactions out loud. “Yeah.”

“Okay,” Lando says. “Well.” He looks down at his arm and taps his wrist, like he’s missing something there. “If there’s one thing I know about you Rebels, it’s that you’re quite good at getting out of traps.” He smiles at Bodhi. “We’ll start on the next step tomorrow,” he says, and turns out the
Yeah...Jabba's palace is a weird, awful place. More of the goings-on in GFFA Vegas--and the *actual* start of ROTJ, next!

Thanks to morag and brynn for the help on this one, and also gratitude for morag and astoria's patience this past year, because I promised a thing and it is finally, fiiiiiinally happening. :P And thanks, of course, to all of you, dear readers, for hanging in there. <3 <3

A couple of references, because more are coming:
- Jabba's demolition games, because I had to use one more ridiculous game before this was all over!
- the thing that licked Bodhi, AKA something fun to look for the next time you watch ROTJ ;)

Chapter End Notes
Chapter 94

Chapter Summary

Wouldn’t kill you to be nicer.

Chapter Notes

Reminder that the Implications of Jabba’s Palace tag is still in play, although the allusions to Bodhi’s apparent status are a lot less vague this go-round.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

“Bodhi.”

There is someone in the bed with him, shaking him awake, but it isn’t Luke, and it isn’t their bed. Not that he really thinks of any of the bunks they’ve slept in over the years as their bed, except maybe the bedrolls laid out in the Cadera, and—

“Bodhi, will you please get off me before your Jedi boyfriend shows up with his new laser sword—”

Bodhi opens his eyes, and he is—

“Fuck, Lando, I’m—I’m sorry,” he mutters, frantically trying to disentangle himself from the sheets and the horrible mesh pants and Lando, stars, he’d been cuddling Lando. The cold air of Jabba’s guest rooms seeps in under the covers as he flails, and at least that makes it clear why.

“Don’t get me wrong,” Lando says, laying perfectly still and letting Bodhi struggle towards freedom entirely on his own. “It was a wonderful way to wake up, and I know Luke won’t actually show any time soon or have a fit of jealousy over this, but I do need to use the ‘fresher, and we have work to do—”

A knock on the door makes Bodhi freeze in place. He’s absolutely horrified to realize he’s only managed to twist up the blasted fucking mesh even more and hasn’t actually gotten off of Lando very much at all; he looks down at Lando’s face, and then at Lando’s gondar-tusk helmet over by the table.

Oh, shit.

“Um—” Bodhi’s heart pounds. “Our—our cover?” The knock sounds again, and there’s the sound of an electronic keycard sliding past the lock.

Lando sighs. There’s the faintest hint of amusement in his eyes, and he nods. “We do what we must.”

“Sorry,” Bodhi says, and throws himself on top of Lando again, putting his hands on the sides of Lando’s face and letting his loose hair fall to shield him. He should—move, or something—Lando’s hands grasp his hips, suggestively, and Bodhi gasps, letting Lando move him; they aren’t touching
elsewhere, not really, but to whoever’s barging in, it should look like—

“HOUSEKEEPING—”

Bodhi spies the—what the fuck—monstrosity of a housekeeping droid through the strands of his hair and doesn’t have to feign a surprised squeak.

“Do not disturb,” Lando growls, reaching up to wrap his arms around Bodhi.

“SORRY,” the droid says, mechanically, and backs out. The door slides closed behind it, and Lando promptly lets go, and Bodhi falls over on his side, trying not to laugh.

“What’s so funny?” Lando sits up and smiles at him.

“It’s—Talon Karrde would be proud of me, I think.” Bodhi rubs his face with his hands. “Long story.”

“Talon Karrde.” Lando is bunching up the sheets and stacking extra pillows between them, erecting a barrier far too late. “You have a story about Talon Karrde?”

Bodhi shrugs. He runs his hand through his hair and winces when he hits a snarl; he wonders if the terrifying housekeeping droid has spare toiletries for Jabba’s guests. “Yeah, but it’s not—not like I know the guy, we just—” He waves his hand and yawns, flopping back down into the pillows. “Run into each other sometimes.”

“Right,” Lando says. “More than once?”

“Yeah.”

“I’d say I’m surprised that the Rebellion’s running into the likes of Karrde, but here we are, trying to rescue the equally infamous Han Solo,” Lando says, dryly.

Bodhi looks at him askance.

“What?”

“Weren’t you—” Bodhi points at Lando, and then in the general direction of Han’s carbonite slab. “And—and Han—”

“Oh, so you think that just because Han and I used to be together, that I must share some of his notoriety?” Lando puts a hand to his heart.

“Uh, yes?”

“Well, good.” Lando breaks into one of his brilliant grins. “I’d hate to think you saw me as the stuffy, respectable Baron Administrator of Cloud City.”

Bodhi snorts. “How about the—the lecherous Tamtel Skreej?” He crawls past Lando to get out of bed, wondering if the housekeeping droid had, perhaps, dropped off his clothes.

“You’re wearing mesh pants.”

“Thought you said the housekeeping would take care of that.” Bodhi doesn’t see his shirt or pants anywhere, and he grimaces. He looks back at Lando, recumbent in the bed. “Were you going to use the ‘fresher?’”
Lando smiles up at the ceiling and waves a hand, airily. “You go on ahead.”

After they’ve taken turns in the ‘fresher—the control collar isn’t any more comfortable when it gets wet—Lando heaves a sigh and picks up his helmet. “Ready?”

“Guess so,” Bodhi replies, a little irritably; his clothes haven’t turned up, and the housekeeping droid hadn’t seemed to know shit about that when he’d dared to approach it down the hall. At least his hair is tied back sensibly now, and he’s lifted a handful of chocolates from the droid’s cart for breakfast. “Wish you could’ve kept your cape so I could have it, I—I’m not really looking forward to parading around like this again.”

“It’s for a good cause.” Lando claps Bodhi on the shoulder and settles his helmet back over his curls. “Han is never going to let me forget it,” Bodhi mutters.

“Oh, that’s for sure.” Lando’s cheerful tone shifts somber. “Unless he has hibernation sickness and can’t see anything until we get him to a medic.”

Bodhi grimaces. “Good point.”

They head back through the palace, Bodhi keeping one eye open for the creature living on the ceiling along the way. Morning seems to be a quiet time; Jabba's not in the throne room, though there are a few of his retinue snoring in piles in the alcoves. Han's tormented face is lit with spotlights, as if he's a focal piece of art, and Bodhi looks away.

We’ll get him out.

Lando deposits him with the head mechanic, a green-skinned Klatooinian named Barada who rolls his eyes at Bodhi’s skimpy clothing. “What am I supposed to do with your pleasure slave?”

“He was a pilot,” Lando says, impatiently. “A mechanic? Jabba’s got all these vehicles that need working on, right?” He gestures at the various skiffs and repulsorlift sleds in the dimly lit garage; Bodhi tracks his motion, though he hadn’t really needed Lando to point out the nearest console. “Put him to work, I'll be back for him later.” He slaps Bodhi’s ass, not hard, and starts to walk away.

“Hey, gimme the remote for his collar,” Barada says. Bodhi cringes. They’d adjusted the settings down as far as they could without deactivating it completely, but a skilled tech would notice, and it won’t take much to reset the controls. “What if he tries to escape?”

Bodhi’s eyes widen, but Lando turns. “What’s the nearest settlement?”

“Mos Taike.”

“They got an Imperial garrison there?”

Barada nods.

“Rook, you want to go into Imperial custody wearing mesh pants and sunburned within an inch of your life?” Lando’s got his thumb on the remote.

Bodhi scowls. “Fuck off, Skreej.”

Lando laughs, and the collar buzzes; Bodhi figures he’d better make it look good, gasping and clawing at his neck. “Planet’s crawling with Imperials, Rook, don't you forget it.”

“Yeah, all right.” Barada waves Lando off. He sniffs at Bodhi, his big nostrils flaring. “You can
clean Jabba’s repulsor sled.”

“Great,” Bodhi says, flatly. He wonders about the worst thing Cassian or Jyn has had to do undercover, and then decides he doesn’t really ever want to know.

The surface of Jabba’s personal repulsorlift sled is stained with an unpleasantly sticky substance, and there are pinkish, worm-like fragments of something organic scattered about.

“Klatooinian paddy-frog gills,” Mal Hyb, Barada’s tiny human assistant, says when Bodhi gingerly pries one up before tossing it into the waste bucket. She shrugs. “Jabba likes to snack.”

“As in the paddy-frog sausage patty?” Bodhi sing-songs at her, before he can stop himself.

She shudders. “Don’t you dare.”

But if he can irritate her into leaving him alone so he can sneak off to do what he’s supposed to do—if she doesn’t retaliate for a minor annoyance the way Jabba’s reputed to—“Served entirely green—”

“Stop it.”

Bodhi hums the next couple of bars under his breath, getting down on his hands and knees to scrub the sled, and Mal Hyb groans when he launches into the start of the jingle a second time, slightly off-key.

“I will punch you.”

“Skreej won’t like that,” Bodhi says, and whistles the rest of it before starting all over again, fairly certain she won’t try anything.

“Ugh,” Mal Hyb says, and climbs down from the sled. “Don’t fucking touch anything.” She points up at him with what Bodhi thinks is supposed to be a vicious glare, and then she disappears on the other side of one of the skiffs.

Okay.

So far so good.

Bodhi continues whistling as he scrubs at the worst of the stains, and watches Barada and his people. Aside from Mal Hyb, who seems to mostly spend her time welding, sparks shooting in the air higher than she is tall, there’s a Nikto working on the huge sail barge’s deck cannon with a couple of menacing-looking Weequays. None of them go to the console to log repairs, which is odd, and Bodhi is starting to wonder if he can slip over to it without any of them noticing, when Lando returns to claim him.

“Hour break for lunch, right?” Lando says to Barada, with more than a hint of salaciousness, on their way out of the garage.

Barada juts out his lower jaw, showing his canines. “Whatever, Skreej.”

A couple of Gamorreans are in the kitchen having a grunted argument with the cook. None of them care about "Skreej" snagging a plate and stacking it with beignets and delicate vegetable crepes, although the cook does press a couple of chocolate-covered ladybabies into Bodhi’s hands when he thinks Lando isn’t looking.

“I’ve got a competitor for your affections, I see,” Lando says, after they’ve retreated to their room.
and Bodhi tosses one of the ladybabies to him.

Bodhi rolls his eyes and crams a beignet in his mouth. He hadn’t been hungry, scrubbing the remains of Jabba’s meals off the repulsor sled, but hanging around in the kitchen, with a vat of something spicy bubbling on the stove—the beignets are light and not terribly filling, but they are good. “Did you find out anything useful?” he mumbles.

“Couldn’t get near the communications systems yet,” Lando answers, making a resigned face when Bodhi licks the powdered sugar off of his fingers. “Got a decent look at the power facility, but I’m pretty sure we’d go to a hard lockdown if we blew that up. You?”

“Gonna try the console, and—and hope it’s not isolated from the rest of Jabba’s systems,” Bodhi says. He bites his lip. “But I—even if I find something to send out, there’s no way I’m hiding a data disk in—in this.”

“Then it’s a good thing Luke thought to send the droids in as backup,” Lando says. “And then Leia will buy all of you back from Jabba, and either Luke will bargain for Chewie and Han, or we’ll pry Han off the wall and duck out of here on my skiff.” He pops a bite of vegetable crepe in his mouth and smiles at Bodhi. “Don’t worry, we’ve all gotten out of worse, before.”

“Not, uh, collectively,” Bodhi mutters.

“Well,” Lando pushes the rest of the crepe across the table to him. “I think your boyfriend would have something to say about trusting in the Force?”

Bodhi sighs, and picks up the fork. “Yeah.”

Lunch is over sooner than Bodhi would like. Lando drops him off in the garage again—“Can’t you find him any decent clothes?” Barada snaps, and Lando simply shrugs, tossing off an insouciant wave—and Bodhi ends the afternoon no closer to slicing into Jabba’s systems. One of the Weequays bangs their fist on the console because it won’t work properly, and eventually takes their force pike and stabs it straight down through the display—

“You fierfekking idiot,” Barada growls, and Bodhi anxiously crouches down behind the repulsor sled controls; that tone of voice from Imperial deck officers never boded well for him or his fellow cargo pilots.

But the Weequay bares their teeth at Barada and swings the force pike around into an attack posture, and Barada huffs a breath through his nose and takes a step back. “Fine. Fine.” The Weequay says nothing; their counterpart comes down from the sail barge and they both leave the garage entirely.

“Fucking Weequays,” Barada mutters, probably not intending for anyone to hear. Bodhi debates offering to fix it. Barada would probably recognize it as a ploy and reject him out of hand, but he does think he could fix it—

“Where’s Skreej?” Barada calls across the garage to him, and he jerks up. “Shift's over, I'm not getting paid to babysit you for him.”

Bodhi hops off of the sled. “You're getting paid?” flies out of his mouth before he can stop himself.

“I'm not a slave,” Barada says, haughtily. “I didn't get caught by some bounty hunter and made into his bedwarmer.”

Bodhi doesn't have to work hard to maintain his cover. “Luke's gonna come for me,” he mutters, not looking Barada in the eye.
Barada snorts. “Sure. A *Skywalker* is gonna come back *here.*”

“Oh, Rook, still holding onto your hope for Skywalker to come save you, huh,” Lando says, strolling into the garage. He claps Barada on the shoulder collegially; Barada glares, but Lando ignores it. “Not without a couple hundred thousand credits he ain't. C'mon, let's go get you cleaned up for dinner.” Somehow, despite the helmet, Lando is managing to *leer* at him. Bodhi rubs his face with a hand and sighs.

“So I invited some people to have dinner with us,” Lando says, as they descend the stairs.

“What? What people? Are you—making *contacts*?”

Lando shrugs. “Maybe. They're some of Jabba's accountants, and they might have useful information you can pass on to Leia.”

“Accountants,” Bodhi repeats, skeptically.

“It’s no big deal, no one's expecting you to make conversation,” Lando says. “Just sit around, or lie around, if you want, looking like—”

“Dammit, I just spent the whole blasted day *looking like*—like *this,* and getting dragged around everywhere you want to go—and *scrubbing gills off of*—” Bodhi sputters, aggravated. “You're going to make me sit through *dinner*—”

“Keep your voice down,” Lando hisses, grabbing Bodhi's elbow, although Bodhi is pretty fucking certain he hasn't said anything that would blow their cover.

Bodhi scrapes his teeth over his lower lip, sullenly. “Wouldn’t kill you to be *nicer* to me—” and then Lando is pressing him against the wall of the stairwell with one hand on his chest.

“*Jabba* does not appreciate *nice,*” he hisses. “If I show *any* weakness, if I show *any* of these blasted people that I care about you more than how many credits you're worth, we—and, and everyone else in this *fucking death trap*—”

“Okay, okay,” Bodhi mutters, taken aback by the intensity of Lando’s eyes through the helmet, but he isn’t quite finished.

“If I can sit through a dinner with Darth *fucking* Vader, you can manage a handful of *accountants.*”

So—

He does.

Of course, it helps that the food is very, very good, because the accountants—a couple of Ishi Tib, a Nimbanel, and a Quarren—are *incredibly* boring. And if Lando understands what they’re saying, he’ll have to report that to Artoo or Leia, because Bodhi gives up trying to keep track of Jabba’s investments, or divestments, or whatever, by the time the last course comes around.

Then Lando banishes him from the table so they can play sabacc, and Bodhi is annoyed all over again. He supposes it would look wrong for "Skreej" to let him at the cards, but there is *nothing else* for him to do.

He briefly toys with the idea of helping the Nimbanese accountant beat Skreej for a hand or two, but he’ll just wind up having to fake being shocked by the collar, and *that* doesn’t seem like such a great plan. He tilts his chair back against the wall and watches the game unfold, unclear on Lando’s
strategy; he seems to be losing quite a bit of money, and is playing even more aggressively, until—

“Does he dance?”

Bodhi’s eyes narrow. The Quarren is looking across the table at him. “Excuse me?”

“I wasn’t talking to you.” The Quarren turns his bright blue eyes back to Lando. “Does he dance?”

Lando slaps his cards on the table, face down, and the whole room tenses as he visibly rests one hand on the butt of his blaster. “No.”

“Oh. Pity.” And then the Quarren asks, “How much for a night?”

All the blood drains out of Bodhi’s face as he stares at the Quarren stroking the tentacles growing out his chin. No—

Lando looks over his shoulder, his dark eyes taking in Bodhi’s distress. He puts the remote for the control collar on the table and starts to push to his feet. “Rook, are you trying to pull something behind my back?”

“What?” Bodhi shrinks against the chair, grateful to have Lando’s feigned anger to focus on, anything to keep him from looking at the tentacles moving of their own accord—“No—no, Skreej, what are you—”

“He did not do anything,” the Nimbanese says, in accented Basic. “Sit down and finish the game—”

“They can’t help you,” Lando snaps at Bodhi.

“I—I—” Bodhi grabs at the collar, his heart racing, not entirely sure where Lando is headed, but the accountants are glancing fearfully between them.

“This seems—seems a private matter,” one of the Ishi Tib says, reaching their webbed hands across the table for the credit chips in the pot; Lando unholsters his blaster and points it at them, and that sends all of the accountants scrambling out the door, gibbering.

Bodhi takes a breath—

“You should scream, now.” Lando calmly holsters his blaster again and runs his fingers through the credit chips.

“Uh—”

“They think I’m a paranoid asshole,” Lando says. “With a petty sadistic streak, about to take my losses out on you. So—let ’em have it. I’m fairly sure sound carries down these halls quite nicely.”

Bodhi blinks at him.

“Go on,” Lando says. “Let out all that pent-up frustration.” He winks. “Or you could beg?”

Bodhi raises an unamused eyebrow, but he takes another deep breath and launches into it. “Please—I—I didn’t—no, no, Skreej—please!”

Lando’s giving him a thumbs-up, encouraging him to keep going, but he’s starting to lose control for real, his cry going wordless and trailing off completely at the thought of the Quarren’s tentacles moving over his skin, touching his face—
Bodhi crashes out of that glimpse of a terrifying memory with a gasp as Lando touches his shoulder and shakes him, calling his name gently. “I can't, it's too much,” he pants. He buries his head in his hands, desperately trying to—close the ramp of the Cadera so he'll be safe—“I fucking hate this place and all these shitty fucking people.”

“I'm sorry,” Lando says. His helmet is off, and he's just Lando again, his dark eyes worried and kind. “Was it the tentacles again?”

Bodhi rubs his face. “Twi'leks don't bother me,” he mutters, holding onto the image of sitting in the sealed-up Cadera in his mind. “Quarren—I don't get how they evolved like that, Mon Cal don't—don't have—those.”

“No,” Lando agrees. He looks tired, and Bodhi feels a pang of guilt for snapping at him, earlier, and for panicking again; Lando only wants to save Han, and he's making everything so much harder —“Let's talk about something else?” Lando suggests.

Bodhi nods, wearily. “Did you get anything from the—the accountants?”

“Just this,” Lando says, sweeping a hand over the credit chips and looking faintly pleased with himself, though there's still a furrow to his brow.

“Were you—” Bodhi gets up from his seat to examine the pot, which is—substantial. “Were you planning to steal their money all along?”

Lando's smile turns a little sheepish. “No, but it's nice to know I've still got it.” He flips a credit chip at Bodhi. “Will playing a hand or two calm you down?”

Bodhi shrugs and joins him at the table; his heartbeat is returning to normal. “Got basically nothing left to lose,” he says, indicating his stupid mesh pants. Lando chuckles, and deals him in.

*****

The second day goes much the same as the first, minus the interrupting terror of a housekeeping droid, awkward meals with more of Jabba's horrible employees, or running into more tentacled denizens of the palace—in that Bodhi fails, yet again, to accomplish anything towards their plan.

In the morning, Bodhi gingerly attempts to find out if the console the Weequay had destroyed will be repaired or replaced, but Barada grunts and says, cryptically, “Won't matter anyway.” Then he squints at Bodhi suspiciously. “Why do you care?”

Bodhi flounders a little. “In—in case I can convince, um, Jabba that I'd be more useful here? In the garage?”

“Giving up hope so easily,” Barada says, mockingly. He shoves a bucket and a mop in Bodhi's hands. “You wanna be useful, the garage needs mopping—” He tilts his head. “Someone’s coming in the front gate, maybe it's Skywalker to the rescue after all.”

Bodhi listens, frowning, and hears the low, booming clang of the main portcullis slamming shut, followed by an echoing, familiar nervous chatter: “Gift? What gift?”

“Or not,” Barada says, flaring his nostrils. “Too bad for you.”

Bodhi sighs. “Yeah.” He can sort of hear Threepio stammering in frightened confusion and Artoo's
worried chirps, but they’re on their own until Leia arrives. He hopes they’ll be all right.

Mopping the floor isn’t nearly as bad as scrubbing paddy-frog bits off of Jabba’s sled, but it gives Bodhi too much time to think. Slicing into Jabba’s systems for information is completely out of the question now; he has nothing to give Luke to bargain for Han with, and he’s practically a bargaining chip himself.

It’d been a bad plan from the start, despite Lando’s assurances that they’d be safe behind “Skreej’s” nastiness. Draven and Leia had been right, that he should’ve spent more time learning from Cassian and Jyn or his uncles about how this sort of thing was supposed to work.

He pictures Chirrut wielding his mop like a staff and casually wreaking havoc, destroying all of Jabba’s vehicles, or Jyn quietly stepping into Mal Hyb’s place in the garage to cause chaos. Baze—no, Baze would’ve lobbed a couple dozen detonators down the stairs and let it all work itself out, and then gone in to pull Han’s slab out of the wreckage.

He isn’t sure if Cassian would have invited a bunch of accountants for dinner. He can’t quite picture Cassian drawing a blaster on them, either. But Bodhi is sure Cassian would have played the bounty hunter to the hilt, unpredictable and outwardly cruel—if he hadn’t sighed and rubbed the bridge of his nose before taking over the whole operation from Luke and Leia.

Cassian probably would have made Bodhi sit this one out, too, instead of letting him play a cowed prisoner. Instead of letting Jabba humiliate him.

It’s not Lando’s fault, Bodhi tells himself. And at least there isn’t actually a—a monster, just all these—

He’s gripping the mop so tightly his fingernails are digging into his palms. He glances up at the ceiling, just in case; there’s nothing there, and the only aliens around are—amphibious, perhaps, but they don’t have tentacles in place of facial hair or fingers.

Nothing to worry about.

Except the droids are here, and neither he nor Lando have gotten anywhere, and Lando had stolen a lot of credits from those accountants, and—why had Lando invited accountants to dinner? Bodhi bites his lip; he trusts Lando, even kind of likes the man, but he can’t help but wonder if Lando’s plotting some kind of money-making scheme instead of planning to join the Rebellion, after they’ve brought Jabba down.

If they can bring Jabba down.

His heart is racing again, and he closes his eyes, leaning briefly against the hull of the big sail barge.

I’m in the Cadera. The ramp is sealed. No monsters can get in. I’m—fine.

Bodhi opens his eyes, letting the image of his shuttle’s cockpit fade.

It’s going to be fine. Luke said so. The Force is with us.

At the end of the afternoon, Bodhi’s nearly finished mopping the entire garage, when Barada appears and beckons him away from the main door as it begins to open.

“Can’t have you trying to run off,” Barada says. “Even if you’d only run right into him.” The garage door finishes opening all the way, and a Firespray-class interceptor glides in, thrusters roaring.
Bodhi has to shout to be heard. “Run into who?”

“Boba Fett.” Barada flashes his canines in a grin as the ship’s engines cut out and a man wearing a full suit of Mandalorian armor comes down its ramp, stopping in front of Barada and Bodhi.

“Ah, Captain Rook, I’d recognize that wanted holo anywhere,” Fett says, his voice filtered through his helmet, and actually reaches a gloved hand out to tap Bodhi’s control collar. “This is unexpected.”

“Skreej caught him,” Barada says, with a shrug. “And kept him in those pants, so if you’re thinking of taking him away from Skreej, you’re in for a fight.”

“I am standing right here,” Bodhi says, annoyed. “Why does everyone keep talking about me like I’m not?”

Fett pats his cheek, patronizingly, and Bodhi fights down a remarkably reckless urge to spit on Fett’s helmet. “I’ll save my efforts for Solo’s less feeble friends.” He pats Bodhi’s cheek again, and drops a credit chip into Barada’s hands. “Don’t let those fucking Weequays anywhere near my ship,” he says, and walks off.

*****

Lando is surprisingly sanguine about Fett’s arrival, considering the bounty hunter must know his face from Cloud City. “I actually thought he’d have been here this whole time,” Lando says that night, over another game of sabacc. Bodhi’s losing, badly, and considering proposing novacrown or dejarik instead, if the housekeeping droid has either. He’s starting to get used to its upsettingly large proportions. “But it’s all right. In fact, having all these bounty hunters coming and going just makes it more plausible that ‘Boushh’ might show up.”

“If you say so,” Bodhi mutters. “Stars, I can’t wait until she gets here—”

Lando quirks an eyebrow at him. “That eager to leave me to the tender mercies of Jabba’s court?”

Bodhi looks at the pile of the accountants’ credit chips on the table. “I think you’ll do just fine without me.”

*****

On the third day, however, everything gets worse.

Barada is strangely on edge when Lando drops Bodhi off for his shift, and he smells disgusting, like he’s been rooting around in one of the trash heaps desiccating slowly outside. The Weequays are weirdly absent, too, which Bodhi assumes wouldn’t exactly leave Barada short-handed, since they never seem to do anything except lurk menacingly, but Barada makes Bodhi do a lot more than just clean. He orders Bodhi to help Mal Hyb run diagnostics on every repulsor unit in the garage, and when they discover the AE-35 unit for the big sail barge is missing six cotter pins, he looks between the two of them and sighs.

“Mal, you stay and finish running diagnostics. Rook, go down to the droid torture room and get Ninedenine to give you those pins.”

Bodhi gulps. “The—the what?”

“The droid torture room,” Barada says, impatiently. “Don’t worry, it’s just for droids, no one’s going to set off your collar, and if Skreej wanted you branded he would’ve done it already.”
“Uh—okay,” Bodhi says, backing away, hope flaring; there are bound to be consoles where droids are, even if they are being tortured—

“And bring us back some lunch,” Barada calls after him. Bodhi waves acknowledgement, and sets off at a jog for the stairs.

Ninedenine is terrifying, and Bodhi is very, very glad not to discover Artoo or Threepio in her torture chambers, taking the cotter pins from one of her equally horrifying assistants and getting the fuck out instead of trying to find a way to get at the sole console in front of her. He hopes the housekeeping droid doesn’t run afoul of her; it’s been good about letting Bodhi steal more chocolates from its cart, though it still doesn’t seem to know anything about his original clothes.

Then he gets a bit lost in the maze of dark, stone-walled corridors leading away from the droid torture—from the droid repair area, and has to stop, pulling up the calming mental image of the Cadera’s cockpit again before he can continue on to the kitchen.

The cook isn’t in the kitchen, and there definitely isn’t a console, either, but there is an untouched platter of more of the vegetable crepes. Bodhi deliberates for a moment about where to put the cotter pins so he can carry the crepes back to Barada, deciding that it won’t be the worst if they touch the food, and—

—a shriek cuts through the air, and Bodhi jumps and drops the platter.

Shit, oh shit, what the fuck was that?

—and something roars, very close to the kitchen, and Bodhi foolishly runs into the hallway to find out what, colliding with a Gamorrean guard and a bare-chested, burly human man standing at a door to a large—

—animal pen?—

—where a massive shadow of a creature is advancing on the Twi’lek woman who’d been chained up on Jabba’s dais that first night, as she shrieks again in mortal terror. The gate dividing the pit in two is starting to close—

“Hey!” Bodhi yells, diving between the Gamorrean and the human, slapping at the stone wall in search of the controls, desperate to get the door open, hold the gate so she can escape. “Hey—” His hands find the shape of a control plate, and he smacks at it until the door slides open with a hiss. He doesn’t know any Ryl, and he didn’t learn her name, and the monster is going to eat her—“Come on, run!”

The Gamorrean is trying to pull him away from the door, but he’s locked his hands around the edge of the doorframe, frantically trying to keep his body between them and the gate controls.

She looks through the creature’s legs at him, her eyes huge with fear, as the creature makes a grab for her, and Bodhi shouts, panicked, “No—” but she dodges it and sprints for the door, catching up the long trailing chain in her hand.

The creature turns, ponderously slowly, and comes after her, ducking under the gate; the human man is yelling at Bodhi incomprehensibly, and then the Gamorrean pries him off the door frame just as the Twi’lek hurtles through, followed by a set of gigantic claws that rakes down her back. She sprawls on the stone floor, screaming in agony, and Bodhi struggles and kicks the Gamorrean holding him—

“Go, go, Jabba is furious,” comes a breathless, frightened voice, and Bodhi fights his way around to see the cook hurrying down the steps towards them, waving at the Gamorrean. “I’ll take care of her,
“No, no, don’t hurt her—” Bodhi shouts, as the Gamorrean starts to drag him towards the stairs, but the cook is crouching beside the Twi’lek woman and carefully picking her up in his arms, not delivering a finishing blow.

Bodhi sags with relief for an ill-advised second; the Gamorrean gets a better grip on him and hauls him up into Jabba’s throne room, kicking him so he falls to his hands and knees in front of the dais. The throne room is packed with people, including the accountants, Boba Fett, and, oddly, a band. One of the dancers, another Twi’lek, is looking at him with her hand over her mouth, but most of the rest of the crowd are leering or laughing.

“Captain Rook?” Threepio cries. “Oh no, this gets worse and worse—”

“Skreej.” Bodhi pants, and tries not to look through the grille at the pit below, uncomfortably aware that he is, once again, kneeling in front of the most dangerous person on the planet, though at least this time he’s pretty sure no one’s going to put a bag over his head. “I want—Skreej—”

I want Luke—

Jabba laughs, a deep rumble that vibrates the metal grille Bodhi’s kneeling on, and says something. Threepio translates, haltingly, “His Eminence says that you have trespassed against him, and that even—even Skreej cannot help you now.”

Fuck.

Lando is pushing his way forward, angrily shouting about how many credits Bodhi’s worth alive, even as Boba Fett steps in front of him to block his way. Bodhi tightens his fingers around the bars of the grille and wonders if he’s strong enough to hold on, whether the creature is tall enough to reach it, or if Lando’s going to really risk blowing his cover to save him.

“You—your punishment shall be—”

A blaster shot rings out in the stairwell above. Bodhi doesn’t dare let go, or move, in case Jabba decides to end this quickly to deal with the next thing.

But Jabba only looks curious, as a small cloaked figure leads Chewbacca down into the throne room and jabs Bodhi in the side with her pike, pushing him off the grille and out of the way before demanding—whatever it is she’s demanding, in yet another language Bodhi hasn’t learned. Bodhi huddles up under Han’s slab and considers trying to slip away in the ensuing commotion, particularly when Leia brings out a thermal detonator, but Boba Fett is watching everyone very closely, and besides, there’s nowhere left to run.

And then the guards are leading Chewbacca away, and Jabba gestures at Bodhi and says something to Threepio that, thankfully, doesn’t make the poor beleaguered droid recoil in horror. “The great Jabba says that because you are valuable to so many different parties, he will graciously take the time to consider your fate. Although Jabba says that—that like many others who dared to defy his wishes, you will only find suffering.”

“Thanks, Threepio,” Bodhi says, wearily, as a pair of Gamorreans come over and haul him up by his arms. He looks for his friends: Lando is stuck on the far side of the throne room, cornered by yet another Gamorrean and, strangely, one of the accountants, while Leia and Boba Fett are having some kind of helmeted stare-down. Bodhi hopes she’s brought enough credits; after what he’s just done, he expects Jabba’s going to make her pay.
“Oh—no, don’t thank me,” Threepio calls after Bodhi, sounding appalled.

The guards take Bodhi back down past the droid torture rooms, passing what can only be Chewbacca’s cell on the way, judging by the angry howls, and, horribly, a cell with a tentacle reaching out of it—

Exhausted and exasperated beyond belief, Bodhi sputters, “Oh, come on—” but they put him in a dark and rather dank tiny cell by himself. The door clangs shut behind him, and he immediately scrabbles to get his blasted control collar off, to no avail. There are too many shadows, and too many fucking tentacles in this fucking awful place, and Lando and Leia are at least one night away from being able to help, with Han still stuck on the wall, and Luke had just—what, thought the Force would sort everything out?

Bodhi yanks at his collar again, a scream of frustration, mingled with more than a little panic, working itself out of his throat. A couple of doors down, Chewbacca roars sympathetically, though he’s too far away for Bodhi to discern the meaning.

He sighs and sinks to the floor, imagining himself back on the Cadera, safe and sound with Luke smiling at him from the co-pilot’s chair, and says, to no one, “This is such a bad plan.”
RETURN OF THE JEDI, AT LONG LAST. :D Things are about to get...interesting.

Thanks so much to morag for nudging this chapter along by yelling MESH PANTS at me, like, every day I wasn't working on something else XD XD XD And thanks, dear readers!! We are HERE, and I am incredibly excited for what 95 is going to be. :D

References:
Soooooo many characters, but here's my 'favorite,' the housekeeping droid XD
Barada
Mal Hyb
the Nikto (...yeah)
what a Weequay is
the Quarren accountant
the Nimbanese accountant
the cook
...and, well, see ROTJ for Jabba, EV-9D9, Malakili, and, of course, Oola ;)

Tales from Jabba's Palace is a bunch of weird, very complicated, interwoven conspiracies. I'm barely scratching the surface of the horrifying nature of the place. XD

Art (thank you morag!!!!) by stitchy
Chapter 95

Chapter Summary

You have bigger problems now.

Chapter Notes

This chapter, in keeping with the implications of the canon & EU of Jabba's palace, includes non-explicit threats of rape. Also, a brief scene of non-consensual tentacles.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

[—a crackling blue bolt of electricity hurls Luke to the floor, convulsing and screaming in agony—]

“No, no—Luke!”

Bodhi snaps awake, gasping and shivering, his throat raw with the force of his own panicked cry; he’d apparently meditated himself to sleep, somehow, despite the cold, damp, and slimy conditions of his cell, and—

*It wasn’t a dream.*

Bodhi shudders. His hands are clammy; he clenches them into fists in his lap so he won’t *touch* anything, cringing at the feel of the dirty scrap of blanket the last occupant of the cell had left behind and which he’d wrapped reluctantly around his shoulders before he’d fallen asleep. The absolute last thing he wants to do is replay the image of Luke writhing in pain in his mind—but it’s a *vision,* and he doesn’t dare ignore it, not this time. Not when Luke is going to walk into a trap.

*Fuck. I have to warn him.*

*But I’m fucking trapped—*

His heart is starting to pound, and he closes his eyes, willing the safe and warm cockpit of the *Cadera* back around him for a moment.

*Okay.*

*Okay. I can do this.*

It hadn’t been a vision of Jabba’s palace, Bodhi thinks, as he carefully retraces the horror the Force has given him. He’s seen the droid torture room, the only place he can think of that might have generated electricity for—*that,* and it’s crammed full of shrieking, nearly-deactivated droids and parts, not silent and virtually empty except for a few random canisters along a railing.

*Then where—*

He’s startled out of his thoughts by an all too familiar, sardonic voice protesting his rough handling,
and then the clang of a nearby cell door—and *then* an excited howl.

“Chewie? Chewie, is that *you*?”

Bodhi’s breath catches in his throat as he tosses the blanket aside and scrambles to the grating in the cell door and tries to look down the hallway. It doesn’t make any sense—there’s no possible way Han should be free, but that’s unmistakably his voice, even if it’s trembling and frighteningly weak.

Chewbacca is growling something to Han, the Shyriiwook still too difficult to understand clearly with the echoes in the dungeon, though Han’s startled, shaky exclamation that “Luke’s crazy! He can’t even take care of himself, much less rescue anybody—” drifts down to Bodhi perfectly.

Bodhi stiffens. Luke’s rescued *him* plenty of times, but maybe Han doesn’t think much of those adventures, compared to what he’s endured.

Chewbacca rumbles more. Han’s reply is a bit stifled, as if he’s speaking into Chewbacca’s furry chest, but Bodhi makes out “delusions of grandeur,” and his growing indignation overrides everything else. “Han, quit talking shit about my boyfriend,” he calls, and there are faint splashing sounds, and then a muffled thump.

“Ow,” Han mutters, as Chewbacca huffs, worriedly. “Bodhi?”

“Yeah,” Bodhi says, feeling a little bad about Han apparently hurting himself. “Uh, how in the names of all the stars are you ***out***?”

“Kid, I dunno what your definition of ‘out’ is, but this ain’t mine,” Han calls, dryly, sounding more like his usual self again. “But I’m touched you came.”

“No, um—” Bodhi pokes a bar in the grate with his finger. It’s dishearteningly solid. “Out of the carbonite. It—this wasn’t how the plan was supposed to go—”

Han snorts. “There’s a plan? Look, all I know is Leia saved me from being Jabba’s centerpiece for the next couple centuries, but if that was part of a plan—”

“Leia did what?”

“I *don’t know*, okay, I just woke up wet and freezing and Leia was wearing some kind of armor, this—this helmet over her face, and now Jabba's *got her*—yeah, all right, Chewie, buddy. Okay.” Han sighs, and the tremor is back in his voice when he speaks again, his brief bravado dissipating. “Chewie thinks I need to rest. Can’t really see anything. Hibernation sickness, I guess.”


“Yeah, me too.”

There is a brief silence.

“Hope Luke shows up soon.”

Bodhi returns to the dry corner of his cell and sits, gently thumping his head against the wall and tugging uselessly at his increasingly itchy and uncomfortable collar. He’d thought Leia, of all people, would be the least likely to totally fuck up their plan—not that he’s one to talk, of course, but still. *Leia.*

“Yeah, me too.”
But it isn’t Luke to the rescue, or even Leia as another one of Jabba’s prisoners, who arrives in the dungeons next. It’s the cook, bearing food for Han, Chewbacca, and Bodhi. Surprisingly good food, too, stuffed pasties and breaded eggs; Bodhi figures maybe the Hutt doesn’t really know or care what his captives eat.

“Thank you,” Bodhi says, after he finishes the last of the eggs. He slides the tray back under the door, thinking that Luke’s been eating the wrong kind of Hutt food, although he supposes it’s possible this cook could make eyeballs and fermented sweat taste delicious.

“I should be thanking you,” the cook says, timidly, twisting his hands together in his stained apron. In the dim light of the dungeons, he’s thin and graying, not nearly the sort of person Bodhi would’ve thought could survive in Jabba’s court for very long. “You saved Oola from being eaten by the rancor.”

“Is she—is she okay?” Bodhi’s heart stutters a beat. “Is Jabba still going to punish her?”

The cook shakes his head. “She’s recovering. Jabba won’t feed her to the rancor again if she can’t run, it’s not as—as interesting, so Yarna’s keeping her sedated and—safe as anyone can be, in here.” He pauses, and lowers his voice to a whisper. “Jabba wanted the princess to dance for him, to replace Oola, but she refused.”

“What?”

The cook glances anxiously down the hall in the direction of Han and Chewbacca’s cell. “She wouldn’t dance,” he repeats, looking miserable. “I—I brought her something to eat, she’s chained up the same way Oola was, but—but now Jabba’s got his people looking for another dancing girl to buy.”

Bodhi gulps. They’d wanted to help the people Jabba had terrorized, not trap more of them in this hellhole.

I can’t fail them. I can’t fail Luke.

There’s got to be something I can do, right?

Not if I’m stuck in here.

“Hey.” Bodhi presses up to the grate, scanning both directions down the hallway for the guards. “What’s your name?”

“Porcellus.”

“Okay. Porcellus. Listen, I’m not exactly looking forward to being fed to the rancor either, so—d’you know anything? Did you hear anything about what Jabba’s going to do with me? If—” He bites his lip, but it’d be a chance, as unsavory as it seems. So long as it isn’t the Quarren—“If anyone besides, um, Skreej, is trying to buy me back?”

Porcellus sinks his head to his chest. “No one’s going to make a play for you anymore, now that Jabba’s laid his claim, after what you did for Oola. You’re—you’re his to do with as he pleases.”

“Oh,” Bodhi mutters. He looks down at the increasingly tattered remnants of the horrible mesh pants and wonders if Luke will get here before Jabba makes him—dance.
“I’ll bring you food,” Porcellus promises, quickly. “When he has you where he wants you. Just like I did for the princess. I can do that, Jabba likes to watch all his pets eat.”

Bodhi slumps against the door. “Great.”

“Sorry,” Porcellus mumbles, and hurries off with the empty food trays.

“Well, at least he’s keeping us fed,” Han calls, once the echoes of Porcellus’s footsteps fade away. “Worked up a helluva appetite in, y’know, there.” He pauses. “I thought you called Luke your boyfriend?”

“I’m sorry, what?”

“Does he know you’ve got some other guy burning credits for y—” Han’s cut off abruptly, by what Bodhi hopes is Chewbacca’s rumbling explanation of Lando’s part in the original plan, and possibly a heavy paw over his mouth, if the subsequent strangled noises from their cell are anything to go off of.

“Just so you know, kid,” Han drawls, sarcasm dripping from every syllable, when Chewbacca lets him up for air, “I saw him first.”

“Thought you couldn’t see a damn thing,” Bodhi calls back, and Han snorts a reluctant laugh in reply.

After that, Han drifts off to sleep again, presumably wrapped in Chewbacca’s long furry arms and warm for the first time in months.

Bodhi suspects that if he ever tries to ask Chewbacca about the very obvious Wookiee lullaby he’s currently singing, he won’t live long enough to share the answer with anybody. It’s nice enough, Bodhi supposes; probably something about trees, or vines, or climbing trees or vines. Thinking about what little he remembers about Kashyyyk’s terrifying ecology from xeno class is a lot less awful than contemplating what Jabba might do to him, or what Jabba might be doing to Leia, or what Jabba will do to Luke, if his vision holds true.

But thinking about Kashyyyk leads to thinking about how it’s been occupied by the Empire for decades, which leads to thinking about home, and he’s in yet another cell waiting to—to—

Bodhi pulls up sharply. His panting breaths are harsh in his own ears, louder than Chewbacca’s croon.

*Luke's already coming for us all. Just have to manage until then.*

He curls up into as tight a ball as he can under the filthy blanket, in the driest and warmest part of his cell, and focuses on imagining the Cadera: the feel of the pilot’s chair around him, the controls under his hands, the way the glimmering stars outside the cockpit blur and shift into hyperspace.

*I can do this.*

*****

Han is interrogating Chewbacca about the state of the Falcon when Bodhi wakes up again.

“You better not have let him convert it back into a cape closet!”

Numb and stiff all over, Bodhi groans and wishes desperately for one of those capes.
Han's talking about interesting stuff, though, and talking about ships is bound to stave off—*everything*, so Bodhi gets up and moves closer to the door to join in. Han sounds stronger and more like himself the longer they talk, and even starts moving around more, gingerly, with Chewbacca growling encouragement.

Eventually, though, Han says, “So, the war must be going pretty good, if the Rebellion spared all of you to come get me, huh?”

Bodhi twitches back from the door and fidgets with the control collar, running his fingertips along its top edge. “I wouldn't—I don't know,” he says, uncomfortably.

“Sure you do. You're Intelligence.”

“I'm a pilot.”

“Yeah, and I bet they didn't have you just running cargo the last three months.”

“Well—”

“C'mon, Bodhi, catch me up,” Han cajoles him. “Last time we talked was on Hoth, you probably earned yourself another medal pulling all those people out—”

Through his suddenly numb lips, Bodhi manages, “Let's—let's not talk about Hoth.”

Chewbacca mutters something, and Han says, slowly, “Yeah, all right. Not so fun thinking about that ice cube when I was just one myself. Okay, broody boy, tell me—” He snaps his fingers. “You're a gambler, right? Antilles lost his pants to you.”

“Yes,” Bodhi says, warily, as Chewbacca barks a laugh, and a warning.

“I bet you the first shower on the *Falcon* that I can guess how many paces it takes one of those Gamorreans to waddle down the hallway the next time they come by. Within, say, ten paces.”

“Seriously?”

“It was gonna be that I could peg one of 'em in the head with a rock before they got a couple cells down the hall, but turns out, I still can't see for shit,” Han says.

“I'd say I'm in, except—” Bodhi frowns. “Didn't you use to work for Jabba?”

Han laughs. “You think I, what, came down and measured the dungeons or something? Just take the bet, Bodhi.”

Bodhi sighs. It isn’t like he has any better ideas for how to pass the time, and Han is almost certain to keep interrupting if he tries to meditate again. “Yeah, okay. But I bet—” He casts about for inspiration. “I bet you a—a spin in the *Falcon* that Luke’ll get here before Porcellus brings us something to eat?”

“Porcellus? Oh, the cook.” Bodhi can almost envision Han’s shrug. “Sure. Works for me; either we get rescued, or we get fed, and you know, I don’t remember the food being this good here before? We should try and grab him on the way out. *If* there’s really a way out.”

Bodhi closes his eyes against the sight of the barred cell door, and tries to steady his breathing. “Trust in the Force,” he says, softly.

From Han and Chewbacca’s cell, there’s no sign that Han heard.
Hours later, at shift change, Han wins himself the first shower and manages to at least wing a Gamorrean with a rock pitched through their little window, although all the subsequent grunting and yelling makes it sound not really worth it. Chewbacca puts a stop to whatever the guard’s doing to Han pretty quickly, with a roar that vibrates the walls of Bodhi’s cell, shaking dust and dirt loose all around him just like the last moments of his captivity on Jedha.

*Shit, shit—*

Bodhi sneezes, and tugs the miserable little blanket tighter around him.

*It’s okay. There’s no Death Star. It’s just Chewbacca.*

His thoughts drift as all of the commotion settles down, and Han quiets again, and he wonders how Chewbacca and Baze get along. There’s no chance of them sparring, of course, not even Chirrut’s been bold enough to go up against the Wookiee in melee, as far as Bodhi knows. But they’re similar: both fiercely devoted to a smart-mouthed partner, constantly armed with a nasty heavy weapon, and —

Bodhi stifles a snort, uncertain which of them would take “equally shaggy” as a compliment. He suspects he’s starting to get a bit that way himself; he’s lost track of time, but the amount of beard he can feel suggests it’s been a least a day, maybe a day and a half, since Jabba had had him tossed in here.

It’s impossible to tell if that’s a good sign or not, although the lack of Porcellus’s visits makes him a tiny bit relieved that Jabba isn’t planning to fatten him up for the rancor.

What definitely isn’t a good sign is when the Gamorreans and a couple of human guards—including Lando—burst into the dungeons and bodily drag Han and Chewbacca from their cell.

“Hey!” Bodhi yells, his heart pounding. “Skreej—”

But Chewbacca is putting up a loud fight, and Han is swearing up a storm, and the guards are all so preoccupied with them that no one’s even looking his way when someone steps in front of Bodhi’s cell door, casting a shadow over his face.

He falls back from the door, breathing hard.

“Skreej knows better than to try to help you,” Fett says, flatly, and holds up the remote to Bodhi’s control collar.

Bodhi stares at him. “You? You’re—” He wishes he’d paid more attention to what Zuckuss and 4-LOM had said about Fett; he can’t remember anything about what Fett likes except credits, and his ship. And he definitely has no idea if Fett is technically-minded enough to notice that the remote does not do precisely what it’s supposed to do. But Fett doesn’t do anything with it, and just says, “Move back.”

“Why? What are you doing? What’s happening?”

Fett gestures with the remote and repeats, “Move back.”

“Okay, okay” Bodhi takes a couple cautious steps back from the door. Fett opens it just long enough to toss in a set of binders and lets the door slam shut again, as if Bodhi can even begin to think of bursting out and attacking him.

“Put those on, and then show me your hands.”
“You’re taking me somewhere,” Bodhi says. He picks up the binders with shaking hands. They go on over his wrists with a loud click, and he lifts his bound hands to the grate so Fett can see.

“Where? Are you—are you gonna—keep me, or sell me? I—I know I’m worth—” He can’t remember the last time anyone had told him what his bounty was, though, and he stammers to a halt as Fett opens the door and beckons him out.

“Jabba’s made a decision.”

“So—really? You’re gonna be this fucking cryptic right up until I’m falling in the rancor pit, or what?” Bodhi feels like he’s been drugged with Loquasin again, words spilling out of his mouth, looking back over his shoulder at Fett as he’s marched through the maze of corridors; Fett hasn’t made a single move towards the remote, which might mean any number of things, good or bad. “Or—or until you drop me off in front of—” He chokes on Vader, stumbles, and tries to regroup—but he’s practiced, and he hasn’t panicked. “Come on, is this—did you give Han the silent treatment, too? Did you tell him—did he know he was coming back here, did you—”

Fett definitely flicks the remote, probably out of irritation, and Bodhi’s eyes widen—but his collar only buzzes lightly.

He didn’t fix it.

Bodhi doesn’t know how hard to fake it, but errs on the side of probably too much, falling with a cry he doesn’t have to feign, as the impact with the stone floor jars up through his knees. He grabs at his collar, and gasps, “No, please—no—”

“All right, get up,” Fett says, nudging him in the side with the toe of his boot.

Bodhi scrambles awkwardly to his feet, a bewildered thrill running through him.

He didn’t fix it!

It’s a chance, but—

What the fuck am I supposed to do?

He’s already wrecked his part of the plan once, and now he’s alone, without Han or Chewbacca or Lando to scheme with.

Bodhi clenches his hands into fists and licks his lips, looking around at Fett again. “Look, I’m gonna keep asking, you knew who I was, you—you gotta know what I’m like, right? Just tell me something, and I—I’ll—shut up, and you don’t have to keep using that on me.”

Fett’s helmet turns slightly in his direction. “You won’t shut up,” he says, and though his voice is pretty much inflectionless, there’s a hint of resignation in it.

“If you’re taking me in your ship somewhere for a long time, I could make it a lot worse,” Bodhi answers, grimly cheerful; the Hungry Hutt jingle is on the tip of his tongue, and he’s growing increasingly certain that whatever Fett’s instructions are, he’s not going to be harmed too badly.

Fett muses, “It’s too bad Jabba doesn’t have a carbonite freezing chamber,” and Bodhi swallows, hard.

“So you are taking me—” But they aren’t going towards the garage, they’re going further into the depths of Jabba’s palace, somewhere Bodhi hasn’t been before. And then Fett slaps at a control panel next to a heavy, solid door, which slides open and releases a cloud of steam into the chilly
“Jabba wants you bathed,” Fett says, and shoves him in.

“Wait—wait, wh—” Bodhi starts, but he’s teetering on the lip of a wide pool, and with his hands bound it’s impossible to catch his balance—

A giant grasping arm comes out of the steam to snag him by the shoulder before he falls in, and Bodhi looks up at—“Oh, um, hi,” he says, to the massive housekeeping droid that’s been cleaning his and Lando’s room as it looms over him.

“I WILL SCRUB YOU,” it says, and Bodhi’s eyes can’t go any wider as it holds up the stiff brush attached to its other arm.

“No—I’m good, I—” Bodhi sputters. “I can—scrub myself, thank you.”

“NOT IN BINDERS,” the droid says. “ALSO YOU ARE WEARING CLOTHES.”

Bodhi looks down at the binders around his wrists, and then at the grubby remnants of the mesh pants. “There’s probably no way I can talk you into helping me escape, is there?”

“PLEASE REMOVE YOUR CLOTHING.”

“I’m gonna take that as a no,” Bodhi mutters, clumsily untangling himself and letting the hated mesh fall on the floor. He steps down into the water; it’s warm, and he lets out another sigh, this one of relief, even as the droid reaches down and starts to scrub the grime from his skin. At least if he’s going to be shipped off again, he won’t be frozen stiff.

He ducks his head under the water and comes up regretting it; the control collar’s been chafing his neck, and the water stings. Bodhi pushes his wet hair back from his face and marvels that Jabba’s got this much on a world like Tatooine, wondering guiltily if it’s come from taxing moisture farmers like the Darklighters. Luke would be appalled to learn that this was what Jabba was stealing their water for, though it makes a certain amount of sense: Hutts probably need to stay moist. That makes Bodhi shudder, and he can’t help but glance around worriedly, in case Jabba is slithering in at this very moment. But there’s no one except the droid.

The housekeeping droid replaces its grasping hand with a blow dryer attachment, and Bodhi endures that, and then sits very still as it trims his beard and braids his hair with yet another, more delicate attachment that’s surprisingly ingenious. He’s never seen anything quite like this model of droid before, and can’t help but speculate that Jabba had it purpose-built.

“No, come on,” Bodhi groans. “You don’t have anything else I can wear?”

“YOU ARE DANCER NOW. DANCER UNIFORM.”

Bodhi eyes the new set of black mesh pants with disgust and mild annoyance. If he had clothes, he could break off a couple of wires from the brush and stash them in the seams, but there’s no concealing anything in mesh—

—dancer uniform.

Bodhi rubs his face with his bound hands. Shit. Shit.
And then—

*Oh, shit. Leia!*

He squeezes his eyes shut, imagining how absolutely furious Leia must be to be dressed in nothing but *this*. If they *do* manage to escape somehow, he suspects Han’s going to give up that first shower fairly quickly.

Bodhi straightens his shoulders. *Luke will come. If I’m one of Jabba’s—dancers, maybe I’ll have a chance to warn him about the trap. Maybe we’ll have a better chance at getting out of here.* He looks up at the housekeeping droid; he’d briefly considered trying to dismantle it the way he had his poor, long-abandoned astromech, but it’s only doing its job, and it’s been *nice*.

“You wouldn’t, um, help me out by grabbing that bounty hunter so I can run, would you?” Bodhi says, hopefully.

It tilts its head uncomprehendingly. “SORRY.”

“Yeah.” Bodhi takes a breath. “Thank you,” he adds, as it opens the door and ushers him back out to Fett.

“Let’s go,” Fett says, curtly, and Bodhi steels himself to be shepherded back into the throne room, where the tongue—tentacle—*thing*, the rancor, and the crowd of Jabba’s court awaits—but then Fett *does* take him into the garage, and he frowns, squinting a bit as they come into the full light of Tatooine’s twin suns.

The skiffs are gone, and there’s no sign of Lando, Han, or Chewbacca as Fett pushes Bodhi up the boarding ramp onto the big sail barge. As they descend into the chaos of the main observation lounge after takeoff, Bodhi braces himself to be shoved into Jabba’s arms, but—Leia’s already there, chained at the neck and glowering at the pale Twi’lek majordomo lingering lasciviously over her. She *isn’t* wearing mesh, but what they’ve forced her into provides no more coverage than Bodhi’s pants, and he hopes she’s fared better than he has, in the morass of groping hands.

Oola isn’t there, which he’s thankful for; maybe Porcellus and his friend can help her escape while Jabba’s gone, if Porcellus isn’t trapped below in the galley. In Oola’s stead is a red-haired human woman draped in blue veils, dancing to the jizz-wail music. Bodhi cranes his neck to look and finds the band playing in a corner—

—*red-haired human woman?* 

Alarmed, Bodhi twists around in Fett’s grip as he’s paraded through the sea of Jabba’s hangers-on, but he can’t see her face in the crowd.

*It can’t be her. She would’ve killed me already.*

The thought is oddly comforting, right up until he notices the Ishi Tib accountants from the sabacc game are also onboard, drinking with a three-eyed Gran, which means—

“Fett.”

Bodhi flinches away from the Quarren, who’s sidled over to them. In what little light comes through the few partially shuttered windows, the Quarren doesn’t look well; his skin is cracked and oddly pale, but the glint in his eyes is exactly the same.

“Ah, Tessek,” Fett says. “Just the person I was looking for.” He produces the remote for Bodhi’s
collar. “I have better things to do than babysit, but as you’ve been talking about him ever since Skreej’s card game, I thought you might want—”

“I’ll keep an eye on him for you,” Tessek says, holding his three-fingered hand out.

Bodhi watches helplessly as Fett deposits the remote in Tessek’s hand. “Whatever you do, don’t leave any marks. Jabba wants him in perfect condition.”

“For what?” Bodhi blurs out as Fett walks away.

“Don’t worry, little one,” Tessek murmurs, placing his other hand on Bodhi’s shoulder and pulling him closer. Bodhi grits his teeth and digs his bare feet into the floor as Tessek’s tentacles slither around his neck.

“Stop, stop, please—”

(—the tentacles twining around him and pressing against his skull—)

“You don’t have to worry about what Jabba’s going to do to you,” Tessek is whispering, as Bodhi squirms and gasps in terror. “It’s going to end soon, and then I’m going to take you away from all this.”

Bodhi whimpers. Tessek’s tracing the the line of his collar with a tentacle, and he can barely pull up the thought of the Cadera, of Luke, of anything safe or happy at the sick feeling of it, the darkness seeping faster and faster out of the back of his mind to consume him—

“I put a bomb on the barge,” Tessek says, dreamily, and that snaps Bodhi right out of his horror. “Barada helped me. After Jabba is dead, we’ll take over. I know everything about his operation, but I’ll get rid of all the bounty hunters and the criminal scum he’s kept on all these years.” His tentacles are still roaming over Bodhi’s shoulders, making his skin crawl, but Bodhi stops fighting to listen.

(Jyn says, “—and the next—”)

“I can’t leave my friends,” Bodhi murmurs, hoarsely. Leia’s looking over at them; she’s been staring resolutely out the windows as the sail barge travels, but her chain doesn’t have enough slack for her to come to him. He’s shaking. “Please. They’ll help you. I—I’ll—”

Tessek’s fangs part in what must count as a smile, for Quarren. “Will you dance for me, when I’ve saved you from this?”

Bodhi closes his eyes. He can feel the sail barge decelerating. They’ve arrived, but it doesn’t matter precisely where; he’s been in hell ever since the moment he and Lando set foot in Jabba’s palace.

Luke will come—

“You better not have left suction cup marks,” Fett says, sounding annoyed. Bodhi’s eyes fly open again; Tessek’s reluctantly handing back the remote.

“You said no marks, I didn’t leave any marks,” Tessek replies.

“Good.” Fett jerks his head for Bodhi to follow him. Bodhi bites his lip, nearly hard enough to draw blood, and looks back at the Quarren.

“Think about it,” Tessek calls.

Bodhi does, as Fett sighs, reaches back, and grabs his arm to haul him off. The thought that he
should warn everyone about Tessek’s bomb crosses his mind, but Fett is keeping him away from Leia, and screaming that there’s a bomb is only going to cause a panic and get them trampled anyway.

But Fett—

“Tessek said there’s a bomb on the barge,” he hisses at Fett. “We have to—”

Fett shrugs. “Jabba took care of it.”

“What?”

“Jabba knows everything that happens in the palace, Captain Rook. Don’t worry about it. You have bigger problems now.”

“Why? Did Jabba change his mind? What—where are we going?” Bodhi drags his feet, but the floor is slippery, and he loses his balance and falls, making Fett drag him for a few steps before the bounty hunter sighs again and waits for him to struggle upright. A few of the people around them titter with nervous laughter as he gets back on his feet. Leia is staring at him with her lips pressed into a line, one hand on her chain, as if she’d tried to come over to him after all, and been yanked back.

Behind her, Jabba rumbles something to Threepio, who steps cautiously forward to a broadcast comlink. “The illustrious Jabba has been displeased with the performance of Pugwis in the last several of his glorious games, and thus, he will be offered to the sarlacc as an—” Threepio turns. “My lord, do you really intend—yes, sir. As an appetizer, before the main event.”

Bodhi’s breath catches in his throat. “The—the sarlacc? We’re at the sarlacc pit?” he croaks at Fett, but the bounty hunter ignores his panicky questions and simply pulls him along, up the stairs, out through the access hatch onto the deck and towards another door. Bodhi squints, but all he can see around them through the haze of brightness is endless sand.

Threepio is still going, though, his voice amplified and echoing out across the desert. “For the crime of defying Jabba’s orders, Captain Rook—oh, no—is being given as a gift to the Empire that has long been—”

No!

Bodhi wrenches hard against Fett’s grip, hope warring with dread in his heart—

—maybe it’s Cassian undercover?

Or—her?

But standing at the window inside the private lounge suite is Otto, dressed again in the hideously garish uniform he’d worn at the demolition derby. Bodhi’s gaze takes the lounge in, quickly; there aren’t any stormtroopers with him, so that’s something, at least, but—there is a bed, and chains, and tools for torture—

And Threepio finishes, hesitantly, “—so that the last thing the Jedi hears as he dies will be his lover’s screams.”

Bodhi winces. Great.

But his heart dares to leap, just a little.

“He won’t need those,” Otto says, waving his hand towards Bodhi’s binders. Fett’s handed Otto the remote for his collar.

“You’re certain,” Fett says.

“I’ve got this, haven’t I?” Otto flicks the setting on the remote to the highest power, and Bodhi goes stiff with fear. Otto had single handedly piloted an AT-ST; he almost certainly knows his way around a simple piece of slave technology. “And I might need his hands.” Otto winks at Fett.

Dammit.

“As you wish.” Fett takes Bodhi’s binders off and gives him a push in Otto’s direction. “Goodbye, Captain Rook.”

Bodhi is holding his breath, watching Otto turning the remote over in his hand. Outside, he can hear podracer engines, inexplicably roaring around and around in circles, and under that, faintly, the sound of a Dug shrieking.

“Aren’t you going to say hello?” Otto says, and turns what is probably supposed to be a cheerful smile in Bodhi’s direction as he walks over, circling Bodhi like a razor shark. “Nice young man like you, came up through the Academy system, surely you must know how to be polite to your superiors.”

The words are out of Bodhi’s mouth before he can stop them. “I don’t see any.”

Otto’s smile freezes. He reaches out and Bodhi hisses in surprise as Otto grabs his braided hair and pulls, jerking his head sideways. “Get on the bed,” he orders.

Bodhi’s heart is pounding, and he thinks he’s going to be sick, but he glares at Otto and refuses to move. He’s seen Jyn fight dirty, and if he has to—

The door slides open behind him again, and Bodhi spins on his heel to make a mad dash for it, not caring about the pain in his scalp as he yanks his hair free from Otto’s grasp, but he slams straight into the droid that’s come in, spilling—its drinks tray?

“How thoughtful for Jabba to send up drinks,” Otto says, and Bodhi gapes in astonishment at Artoo, who burbles annoyance at the beverages frothing over his dome. “Now, Rook, I believe I told you to get on the bed?” He raises the hand with the remote in it.

Artoo chirps, do it.

Bodhi blinks at him; Artoo bumps his leg, and Bodhi grimaces, and reluctantly goes over and sits on the edge of the bed.

He is even more shiny and stupid than Threepio, Artoo adds, blithely.

Bodhi casts a worried glance at Otto, but Otto is frowning down at the remote again, apparently just as unconcerned with droids and uncomprehending of Binary as most Imperials. Okay good if you fake being zapped very bad and fall off I can get the collar off come here.

Bodhi’s hand goes to the collar, almost involuntarily.

And don’t scream, Artoo chirps, which is—weird, but Bodhi gives him a tiny nod.
Now he just has to piss Otto off enough to use the remote, hopefully before he decides to take it apart. He rakes his gaze over Otto’s absurd, fanciful uniform, taking in again the lack of stormtroopers here or at the demolition derby; the obviously stolen AT-ST he’d piloted.

*He’s not a very good Imperial, but—he wants to be.*

“If—if you think you’re actually gonna drag me back to the Empire,” Bodhi starts, slowly, “You’re wrong. There isn’t a single fucking Imperial that’s held on to me for very long. Not Seerdon, not Tantor—” A giddy grin is starting to spread across his face as he watches Otto advance on the bed, thumb twitching over the remote. “Not even the Emperor’s Hand herself, so what makes you think you—”

Otto’s face purples with fury and he jabs his thumb down on the switch. “Shut up, shut up—”

Bodhi gasps, grabbing at his throat and thrashing in the throes of imagined panic and pain, and topples over onto the floor. There’s a tearing sound; his fucking mesh pants have caught on the edge of something and a shred of it flaps free. Artoo rolls over to him, wailing in mock worry, and Bodhi can feel one of his appendages working at the back of his neck.

*Play dead play dead he’s coming,* Artoo warbles, and Bodhi holds still. The fucking collar is, finally, loose around his neck.

“Rook?” Otto says, tentatively. Bodhi can see his shiny black boots moving towards him across the floor.

From the lounge below, Jabba roars in Huttese, and Otto, crouching over Bodhi’s limp body, makes a little frantic squeal and mutters, “Jabba wants screams, there’s no screaming—I can’t take him to Vader if he’s dead, I can’t believe I fucking killed him—”

His hand touches Bodhi’s neck to check his pulse.

*Now!* Artoo trills, but Bodhi doesn’t need the push, yanking the collar free and lunging up at Otto to snap it around his neck. Otto yelps in shock, dropping the remote as his hands fly to his neck, and Bodhi scrambles for it, shoving Otto back when he realizes what’s happening and tries to wrestle Bodhi to the floor.

Bodhi kneels him in the crotch and Otto collapses with a muffled shriek. Artoo’s gotten ahold of Otto’s blaster with his grasping arm and Otto recoils from that, too, although Bodhi’s pretty sure Artoo can’t actually fire it if he holds it like that.

Below, Threepio is saying, “—the great Jabba the Hutt will now listen to your pleas.”

“Thanks, Artoo,” Bodhi pants, pulling himself up along the bed. “Uh, maybe I should have the blaster?”

Artoo swivels his dome to point his photoreceptor at him. *You have the remote?*

Bodhi looks down at it in his hand. “Oh.”

It’s a simple fix to the remote, really; Bodhi’s been lucky that no one’s looked closely enough to repair it. He makes the adjustment and holds it up at Otto with a trembling hand.

Outside, Han snaps back at Threepio, his voice faint and far away, “—he’ll get no such pleasure from us—”
“No, no, wait—” Otto wails, scrabbling backwards away from them. “I would’ve made it good for you—I just wanted to go back! I was just gonna take you to Vader so they would take me back—”

Bodhi stares at him, nauseated and appalled. “You can’t go back,” he says, flatly, and presses the switch.

And, just as Otto screams, sounding horribly like Luke had in Bodhi’s vision, he hears Luke’s real voice ringing clear across the Tatooine sands: “Free us, or die.”

Bodhi shudders and turns the collar off, but it’s done its work; Otto’s slumped unconscious on the floor.

Good job let’s go, Artoo warbles, urgently, holding Otto’s blaster up to Bodhi; he can’t refuse it, not with Jabba and his court below. I have shit to do!

“Okay, okay,” Bodhi says, breathing hard, but feeling better than he has in days. Despite the horrors Jabba’s people and Otto have tried to inflict on him, things are finally going his way.

He hangs back in the doorway as Artoo rolls down past the massive deck-mounted cannon. It’s too bright to see clearly, and Bodhi squints after Artoo; turns, to try to get a picture of what’s happening, to find Luke—

—and standing in the aft lookout, still dressed in dancing veils but prepared for a different sort of action, is the red-haired woman.

Fuck. It’s her, it’s really her—

—and she isn’t here for me, she’s here for—

Fuck!

Bodhi whips around to search for Luke, to warn him about the real trap, and finds him—somersaulting through the air and landing—safely—on Lando’s skiff, his hand outstretched for the lightsaber Artoo’s sent arcing to him.

And suddenly, as Bodhi turns back to discover Mara stretching her own hand out, it is all too clear what she’s here to do.

“Mara!” Bodhi shouts, and fires Otto’s blaster—

—and misses.

“Fuck, fuck—” Bodhi’s heart leaps into his throat, but she has been distracted from her goal, and he hears the distinctive snap-hiss of Luke’s lightsaber igniting, and—

—oh fuck—

“You!”

Bodhi launches himself out of the doorway and starts to run across the deck as Mara vaults over the aft railing behind him, deadly graceful even in her rage, and Bodhi jerks back around, scanning frantically for somewhere to escape to from her—

—but there are Gamorrean guards pouring out of the hatch, and he flings himself up against the port
side railing, ready to leap over into the sand if he has to, and then he looks down—

—at the sarlacc.

No—it’s not the monster—

But it’s worse than Tessek, it’s worse than the thing in Jabba’s palace that had licked him; its tentacles wind up out of the sand, wrapping completely around the screaming skiff guard Luke’s knocked overboard, and drag him into its horror of a mouth.

He can’t breathe—

—gasp[...](—gasping desperately for air as a tentacle slithers heavy over his chest—)

“Dammit, Rook!”

Something is grabbing at him, yanking him backwards from the railing just as a blaster bolt zips through the space where he’d been standing a millisecond earlier, and then he collides with—with —Mara, who yells in fury as they both tumble over the starboard side of the barge.

Bodhi hits the sand hard, but Mara hits him even harder, swearing and pummelling him as they roll down the side of the dune, tangled in mesh and veils. He shouts her name back at her like he doesn’t already have her full attention—coughs and spits out sand, trying alternately to get his hands up to defend himself or to grab onto something to halt their uncontrolled fall.

The air is filled with the sounds of battle—screams and blasterfire, Chewbacca roaring, and cutting clearly through it, the hum of Luke’s lightsaber, and as panicked as Bodhi is with Mara currently trying to smash his head in or smother him in the sand—Luke always comes!

“You fuck everything up!” Mara snarls in his face, when they come to a stop. She’s pinned him in the sand, one knee on his chest, and she draws her fist back to punch him again.

Bodhi finally manages to get a hand up to block her, but she grabs his wrist—he gasps and writhes under her, the specters of too many monsters still clinging to his mind, and Mara goes perfectly still.

“Dammit,” she growls, her green eyes flicking over his face, his disheveled hair, the ripped mesh. “You were supposed to be nice and safe until I came back and got you—what the fuck was Jabba thinking, giving you to Otto?” Her mouth curls in disgust. “Did he—”

Bodhi’s breath comes in shuddery gasps. “No, no—” He doesn’t try to push her off, his gaze caught on her hand wrapped around his wrist. “Otto didn’t get a chance to—Mara—”

“So glad you learned my name,” Mara hisses, pressing her knee down on him a little harder. “What? What are you gonna try this time, Rook? You can’t—”

Bodhi shakes his head. He doesn’t have to try, not with Luke getting closer every second. “You—you’ve lost—you’re going to lose, Mara, I know you don’t want to kill me and I’m going to get away again—”

Her grip on his wrist tightens, viciously. Bodhi yelps, thrashing and fighting for control as her fingernails dig into his skin; she does want to hurt him, this time. But a wild idea flashes through his mind, and instead of begging for her to stop, he licks his lips and says, “Come with us.”

Mara’s eyes widen. “What?”
“You’re not—you’re nothing like Otto, you’re not like other Imperials, just like I wasn’t, not—not really—you care about people, you don’t have to go back!” Bodhi stammers, though he’s growing more and more convinced of it by the moment. “You can—”

“I’m not a traitor—” Mara spits, but she doesn’t have a chance to argue any further.

Above them, a fireball blooms out of the aft deck of the sail barge—the bomb after all, or an accident, or Luke. Bodhi grabs Mara around the waist with a hasty apology while she shouts furiously at him, and tumbles them both farther down the sand dune until the sail barge finally explodes. The air is burning, and bright, and then everything goes black.

*****

Mara is gone when he wakes up half-buried in hot sand and flaming debris.

“There, I see him,” Leia calls, and Bodhi manages to sit up, waving to his friends on Lando’s skiff. “Wait, Luke—”

Luke’s leaped off the skiff, though, and is running across the sand to him, calling his name. Bodhi digs himself out and gets unsteadily to his feet and starts walking, rubbing his hip; he’d been lucky not to be hurt more, falling off the sail barge like that. It lies in smoking ruins, still blocking his view of the sarlacc. He wonders if any of Jabba’s people had made it out before it exploded, and hopes Porcellus hadn’t been on it at all.

“Are you all right?” Luke asks, breathlessly, as they come together and he wraps his arms around Bodhi.

Bodhi looks at Han holding hands with Leia on the skiff and smiling vaguely in Lando’s direction, while Chewbacca fixes Threepio’s eye and Artoo hovers nearby. They’ve done it, somehow; everyone’s alive. “Yeah, yeah, I think so,” he says, and squeezes Luke back, relieved even though he aches all over and he’s covered in sand and the stringy remains of his mesh pants.

“Now do you get why I hate this place?” Luke says, a little wryly, though his eyes are shining.

“Stars, yes,” Bodhi answers, meaning it with every fiber of his being, but it’s all right. They’re going home.

Chapter End Notes

XD And there’s that taken care of. WORST. PLAN. EVER!!!

Jabba’s palace is also the worst! They are...not good people, except for poor Porcellus. And Oola. I did take some liberties with the palace itself to include a bath; picture it something like the baths at Harrenhal in Game of Thrones, but, uh, smaller. And with that big-ass droid.

Deepest thanks to morag for helping me get through, again, the worst plan ever. We’ve been talking this thing through in bits and pieces for at least a year! :D Even this take on "wait, what?" wasn't helpful, lol, but morag certainly was. <3 <3 <3

Thanks also to you all, dear readers! We are closing in very fast on almost two years of this thing, and I am still so grateful that you have hung in there this long, especially
through these much slower (but longer!) updates. Not much left, now. Endor is coming.

References!
Mara's blue veils dancer outfit
Pugwis's death
Otto's original fate (it is left as an exercise to the reader if he survived the Sail Barge explosion and wound up facing this fate anyway...)

Aaaand even though it would've been amazing, the timing just didn't work to include the Force kick, sadly. Bodhi would've been impressed.

Finally, of course, I am indebted to Heir to the Empire for the climax:

It never reached him. Even as he stood there waiting for it, the weapon changed direction, curving back toward the other end of the Sail Barge. Frantically, Luke reached out with the Force; but to no avail. The lightsaber continued its flight--And came to rest in the hand of a slender woman standing alone at the top of the barge.
Chapter 96

Chapter Summary

That's good enough for now.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The sandstorm hasn’t let up one bit by the time they make it back to the Falcon. It'd been impossible to do anything except cling to Luke's hand and keep stumbling forward, once they'd had to abandon the skiff a few kilometers back. Bodhi can't remember ever being caught out in anything this bad on Jedha, and he's extremely grateful that Lando had stashed a supply of coarseweave shawls and cloaks on the skiff for protecting themselves from the stinging wind and fine sand.

The Falcon is practically a haven of silence, once they've all scrambled up the ramp and Lando's shut it behind them. Artoo blows particles out of his vents irritably, but he doesn't look much the worse for wear, unlike poor Threepio, who still hasn’t managed to get his eye set correctly, and whose joints are almost immobilized from all the sand.

“Threepio, Artoo, go with Chewie to get looked at, all right?” Luke says. Chewbacca grumbles but shepherds the droids off to the engineering bay to inspect them, as Bodhi and the rest of the humans unwind their long and very, very sandy coverings.

Under the coarseweave wrap, Luke’s got a pair of goggles on, which—well, Bodhi isn’t sure why anyone would ever design dark-tinted flight goggles, exactly. But those, combined incongruously with the Jedi outfit and the haircut, make Bodhi smile fondly at his adorable, for-once completely unstylish boyfriend, who doesn’t look in the slightest like he’d fought a rancor and about thirty of Jabba’s guards in making good their escape.

Luke pushes the goggles up onto his forehead and beams back at him, and Bodhi realizes he’s wrong; he’d taken that blaster shot to his right hand, after all, and his blue eyes are tired behind his cheerful calm, and Bodhi’s glad Luke isn’t flying off to finish his Jedi training just yet, hopeful they’ll have a moment to rest. Bodhi wraps an arm around his shoulders, feeling Luke reciprocate with an arm around his once-again bare waist, and they lean on each other as everyone makes their way into the main hold.

“Well.” Han blows out a breath and shoves a hand through his hair, gazing around the Falcon with a dazed, disbelieving expression.

Lando gives Han a little pat on the shoulder. “Welcome home.”

“Bet you didn’t think we were going to pull it off,” Leia says, lightly.

Han smiles at her, but, uncharacteristically, doesn’t say anything in reply at first. He just—looks at her, drinking in her face and dark eyes, not commenting on the fact that she’s still mostly swathed in coarseweave and still has part of the chain she’d used to strangle Jabba attached to her slave collar. Artoo had been very disturbingly delighted to recount that part of the rescue, but Bodhi supposed Artoo had played a part in freeing her, too.
“I’m glad you came,” Han says, finally, and then he lifts his head to glance around for Luke. “I’ve gotta hand it to you, kid, you were pretty good out there.”

Luke shrugs. “I had a lot of help.” He reaches out to squeeze Han’s arm, tilting his head in Lando’s direction.

“Guess I owe you some thanks, too, Lando,” Han mutters.

Lando flashes a grin and says, breezily, “Figured if I left you frozen like that you’d just give me bad luck the rest of my life, so I might as well get you unfrozen sooner or later.”

Leia snorts. “He means ‘you’re welcome.’”

“Yeah, I know,” Han huffs, though his eyebrows rise at the amused look Lando and Leia exchange. “And thanks, Bodhi.”

Bodhi blinks at him. “You’re welcome, but—for what?”

“For being somebody to talk to ‘sides Chewie,” Han says. “Making friends with Jabba’s latest cook so we didn’t starve.”

Luke lights up. “Did you get to eat any of the things I—”

“No,” Bodhi says, hurriedly. He shivers; even with the coarseweave still draped loosely around his shoulders, the Falcon’s hold is chilly, and he’d like nothing better than to jump in the ‘fresher and get all of the fucking sand out of his hair, but Han had won the bet to go first. “Hey, Lando, Han said something about there being a cape closet?”

“Not since this rocket-jock swiped my ship.” Lando jerks a thumb at Han, but his tone is cheerful. “But I’m sure I’ve got something you can borrow.”

“Thank you,” Bodhi says, sincerely glad to be rid of the mesh pants at last.

Lando leaves the door to his quarters open while first he, and then a curious Luke, fuss over Bodhi’s replacement clothes. It isn’t long before they hear Han’s voice going sharp and alarmed in the corridor: “I don’t need to go in the ‘fresher, Leia, I barely did enough to work up a sweat—”

“You’re covered in sand,” Leia snaps back. “Just like the rest of us, except everyone is letting you have the first shower because you were—” She stops, and her voice is gentler. “Oh, Han.”

Bodhi’s eyes widen, and he motions at the door. Luke moves to close it, but Lando puts a hand on Luke’s arm and a finger on the faint smile playing across his lips.

“Just don’t wanna be in a tiny space like that by myself,” Han says, very quietly. “But if—if there was someone with me?”

Lando rolls his eyes, but Bodhi doesn’t think it’s a line; he’d heard Han’s voice break with fear in Jabba’s dungeon, and seen the way he held onto Leia as his sight returned in the storm, and—

“Right,” Leia says, briskly. “Out of those clothes, flyboy,” she orders, and Bodhi hears the sound of the ‘fresher door sliding open, and then metal—things—hitting the deck, and Han starting to laugh, warm and happy.

“They’re going to use up all the hot water,” Lando observes, dryly. He straightens the line of Bodhi’s brightly striped shirt—it is quite possibly even more expensive than the formal outfit Winter
had forced him to buy on Abridon—and steps back, making a sweeping gesture for his approval at Luke.

Who sighs, mock-mournfully, and says, “I didn’t mind the mesh pants.”

Bodhi glares at Luke. “Then you wear them next time, and then you can get felt up by some blasted tongue alien thing and half of Tatooine’s underworld—”

Luke ducks his head, contritely, and puts his arms around Bodhi, pressing a feather-light kiss to his bruised cheek. “Sorry,” he whispers.

“—and punched in the face by the Emperor’s Hand—” Bodhi breaks off, reconsidering. “I guess that didn’t have anything to do with the pants.”

“Probably not,” Luke says. He tilts his head to look Bodhi in the eye. “Lando, could you give us a minute?”

“Of course,” Lando says, and steps out into the corridor—sticks his head back in and adds, “I just remembered, there should be a matching jacket, if you look—never mind. I’ll find it when I come back.”

“I don’t need all this,” Bodhi mutters, plucking at the hem of his shirt. “I’m just gonna change when we get back to the Cadera at Kenobi’s hut anyway, you know Janson won’t let me hear the end of it if I show up at home dressed like the Baron Administrator.”

Luke smooths his hands over Bodhi’s sleeves; the servos of his damaged right hand are grinding, just a little, but there’s bound to be a ton of sand in it. “You do look too nice for the squadron,” Luke agrees. He leans in, and Bodhi lets Luke kiss the frown off his lips. Sand grits in his teeth, and Luke smells mostly of sweat and smoke from the explosion, but the kiss has him clutching at Luke’s overtunic nonetheless.

“You can’t leave yet,” Bodhi pants, when Luke breaks the kiss and presses their foreheads together. “I gotta fix your hand first.”

“Okay,” Luke says, amusement sparkling in his eyes, and lets Bodhi take him back into the main hold. He sits down at the dejark table, his right hand palm-down, and waits patiently as Bodhi rummages about in Han and Chewbacca’s tools.

Bodhi comes back and starts to carefully clean out Luke’s cybernetic. “Besides, your X-wing’s back at Kenobi’s hut too, you can’t go anywhere.”


“I should’ve told you, a long time ago, but I—there was a lot going on then, and it slipped my mind after—after Seerdon,” Bodhi says, and Luke’s face falls. “And then I didn’t really have them again, not for a while, at least I don’t think I did?”

Luke squeezes his arm with his left hand. “Bodhi, I’m not following—”

Bodhi licks his lips and tries again. “I have visions of things that—things that you’re going to do. I
see you in places we haven’t been to yet. It—Baze and Chirrut think it’s normal, like the Force just turns up and shows them things about the future all the time, but it never happened to me until I met you—no.”

He’s almost breathless with the revelation. “That’s not—it wasn’t until you came and talked to me. Really talked. Um. When I was trying to get drunk on Thila Base.”

“You have Force visions,” Luke says, slowly.

“Chirrut says I’m not—not like you, or them either, I guess, I’m not Force sensitive, I just—got better at listening.” Bodhi has a dizzy sense of vertigo, like he’s falling upwards into Luke’s widening eyes.

“How hard did the Emperor’s Hand hit you, exactly?” Luke asks, reaching up and running his left hand gingerly over Bodhi’s head.

Bodhi bites his lip. “Pretty hard, but—okay, look, I didn’t believe it at first, and I still don’t understand how, or why I see them, but—I knew you were coming to save me on Thyferra because—because I saw a vision of you about to kill Seerdon.”

Luke’s hand stops moving, and then he curves it along the side of Bodhi’s face. “When I almost went over to the dark side of the Force,” he murmurs. “The first time you saved me.”

Bodhi gulps; he’d forgotten about that part, but if it’ll convince Luke to hear him out, he’ll just have to deal with it. “Yes, that—that’s what I saw,” he agrees, quickly. “So—this time, I saw you being—being hurt. Being tortured.”

A small laugh slips out of Luke’s mouth. “If you saw me hanging upside down or being made to run for kilometers and kilometers with a pack full of rocks—”

“You were being electrocuted,” Bodhi says, sharply. “Please don’t—I know how it sounds, coming from, um, me.” He taps his temple with a finger.

Luke exhales. “I’m taking you seriously.” Bodhi throws a look at him. “I am. I’ve seen things now too, remember? Leia and Han in Cloud City, you—but trust me, Bodhi. There’s nothing where I’m going that could possibly electrocute me.”

“You could get hit by lightning,” Bodhi says, dubiously.

“I seriously doubt that,” Luke says, leaning in again and brushing another kiss over Bodhi’s mouth. “And there’s nothing wrong with the power source in my hand, so it’s not that.” He lifts his right hand and wiggles his fingers at Bodhi.

“Artoo might zap you,” Bodhi suggests. “Something wrong with the wiring on your new X-wing—”

Luke eyes him and teases, “Are you planning to sabotage my ship to keep me from going?”

“It wouldn’t be hard,” Bodhi says, contemplating misaligning the stabilizers or taking a spanner to the controls.

“Artoo would zap you if you tried.” Luke smiles, studying Bodhi’s face. “The Force is with you,” he murmurs, a hint of reverence threaded through his voice. “But I have to go, Bodhi. I have to keep my promise.”

“You’ll be—” Bodhi cuts himself off before he can say careful; nothing Luke’s done in the last day or so has been. Nothing Luke’s done in his entire life has been. “If you see Artoo using his arc
welder—"


Beneath their feet, Bodhi can feel the vibration of the Falcon’s engines starting up, and his heart sinks a little, but he shrugs, says, “That’s good enough for now,” and kisses Luke back. Luke makes a soft pleased sound, working his fingers up into the tangle of Bodhi’s hair, and Bodhi closes his eyes, groaning a little as grains of sand fall out of his hair and trickle into his collar. Luke chuckles and blows lightly on his neck, making Bodhi yelp and clutch at him some more.

And then footsteps slap wetly down the deck, and Bodhi and Luke pull apart in time to watch Han pelt towards the cockpit, still dripping, one hand holding a towel sort-of closed around his waist, and yelling, “No one is flying this ship except me!”

“Well, you don’t see that every day.” Bodhi says. He distinctly hears Leia’s exasperated sigh in the corridor and does not lean out around the corner of the bench to catch the expression on her face.

Luke grins. “I’m sure Lando and Chewie are used to it.”

*****

Standing at the bottom of the Falcon’s ramp, back at Kenobi’s hut with Artoo burbling comfortably to himself in the X-wing’s socket, Luke kisses Leia’s cheek and says, “I’ll see you back at the Fleet.”

Leia nods. “Hurry. The Alliance should be assembled by now.”


Han—fully clothed, after Chewie had thrown him out of the cockpit—reaches out to grab Luke’s hand. “Hey, kid.” He grins crookedly. “Now I owe you one.”

A smile tugs at the corners of Luke’s mouth as he shakes Han’s hand, and then Han pulls him in for a brief hug. Leia slides her arm around Han’s waist, and they both disappear up into the Falcon again.

Luke puts one boot on the ladder for his X-wing, pulling himself partway up, and looks down at Bodhi, his eyes soft.

Bodhi takes a shaky breath and says, putting as much confidence as he can into it, “I’ll see you when you get back.”

“I love you,” Luke says, smiling, and climbs the rest of the way into the cockpit. Bodhi steps back, gives Luke a little wave, and then goes over into the Cadera before the X-wing can lift off and blast sand all over him again. He digs a clean shirt and pants out of his gear and swaps Lando’s expensive suit for it; debates folding or hanging the shirt up, unsure which is better, and leaves it lying flat on top of his stuff, to be returned when they meet up again at the Fleet.

But Lando’s lounging in the cockpit when he gets there, letting out a disappointed sigh when he sees Bodhi no longer wearing his clothes. “Well, that’s certainly more your speed.”

“Um—”

“Thought you might need a co-pilot,” Lando says, cheerfully.

“I don’t, really, but thanks,” Bodhi says, settling into his seat and looking out the viewport at the
other two ships; Han is visible in the Falcon’s cockpit, with Leia tucked in behind him, one hand resting on his shoulder, and he looks at Lando again. “You okay?”

Lando shrugs. “If my choices are between having to see Han flying my ship, or having to watch Han get tossed into a sarlacc’s mouth to be digested for the next thousand years—”

“The sarlacc,” Bodhi says, dryly, reaching forward and toggling the switches for the engines.

“Definitely the sarlacc,” Lando agrees. He sighs, and for a moment the strain of it all is evident, as his mouth tightens under his mustache. But then he brightens. “Been wondering about this little shuttle of yours for a while now, Captain. Is the Rebellion really so hard up that you’re flying Imperial hardware?”

Bodhi raises an eyebrow at him.

Lando puts his hands up placatingly. “I’m just saying. I’d like to know what I’m getting into before I officially join up with your fight.”

“You already know what it’s gonna be like.” Bodhi laughs, and gestures out the viewport at their friends.

Lando stares at Luke’s X-wing as it departs ahead of them, and mutters, “Oh, by the great galactic core—”

*****

The new rendezvous point for the Fleet is at Sullust, and the sheer number and variety of ships has Lando biting his tongue, at least until he spots the Mellcrawler among them. “Now, I knew this was a ragtag bunch with Han aboard, but Nien Nunb!” He grins at Bodhi.

“You know him?”

“Only by reputation,” Lando says, and leans back in the co-pilot’s seat, steepling his fingers. “This will be interesting.”

“I’m glad you think so,” Bodhi mutters, and keys the comms for his approach vector.

He’s directed to dock with Home One instead of the Redemption, and is delighted to discover the Galen and Beru already inside the hangar bay. Jyn’s waiting for him, too, nodding courteously to Leia when the princess comes to collect Lando from the Cadera.

“But I should go—” Bodhi starts, puzzled, when Jyn links her arm with his and starts to walk in a different direction.

“Draven wants you to debrief with us,” Jyn says. “How was Tatooine?”

Bodhi shakes his head. “It was—I don’t even know where I should start, it was a complete disaster even though it all—but, but Jyn, the Emperor’s Hand was there—”

“You’re joking.” Jyn’s hand tightens on his arm as they go into the turbolift.

“No, she was, she was furious with me for ruining her mission to kill Luke, but I think maybe, maybe the next time I see Mara, she’ll listen to me.”

“I tried to convince her to defect,” Bodhi says.

“What?”

“I didn’t know what else to do!” Bodhi waves a hand helplessly. “She was just gonna keep hitting me, and I didn’t want Luke to show up and kill her—”

“Why the hell not?”

“Because”—Bodhi blinks at her. The turbolift doors open, and he stumbles out after Jyn. “Because she isn’t—she isn’t a monster,” he finishes, weakly.

“The Emperor’s Hand,” Jyn says.

“I had to try, Jyn,” Bodhi retorts. “And—maybe we can track her down, the Cadera or the Falcon must’ve picked up something on sensors—” He breaks off, as the briefing room door slides open, and Chirrut and Baze are sitting inside. Cassian, Kaytoo, and Draven are standing around at the holoprojector. “Wait, what’s going on? I thought—”

“Yeah, I thought we were debriefing you, too,” Jyn says, frowning hard at Cassian. He meets her gaze evenly, but says nothing.

Draven nods a greeting to Bodhi. “Have a seat, both of you.”

Confused, Bodhi sits down next to Baze, who pats his shoulder. “Hi,” Bodhi whispers. “Do you know what this is about?”

“No,” Baze mutters in reply. “Can’t be good, though.”

At another nod from Draven, Cassian steps forward. “Welcome back, Bodhi.” He swallows, and Bodhi’s heart skips a beat at the tense, deeply unhappy expression on his face. “We need to talk.”

Chapter End Notes

Written in part for Bodhi Rook Week 2018. Thanks to morag for the beta!! <3 <3 <3

Thanks for hanging in there, dear readers. I’ll have a number instead of that pesky ? soon.
Chapter 97: Stardust

Chapter Summary

Some mouseover text; translations in end notes. :) 

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Bodhi throws a worried look around the room at Cassian’s pronouncement; even Jyn doesn’t seem prepared for whatever it is he has to say. She bites her lower lip and stares at Cassian and Kaytoo, frowning hard, and dread seeps cold into Bodhi’s chest as he wonders what Cassian could possibly keep from her.

“There is no easy way to tell you this,” Cassian begins, and Bodhi makes himself sit up straight, his eyes darting from the strain etched in Cassian’s face to Draven’s implacable expression—but Draven isn’t entirely unreadable, not anymore. He’s holding himself still with an effort, as if what they’re going to say itches under his skin, though he lets Cassian speak first. “For the last several months, after Bodhi came home from Darlyn Boda with the defector Brivyl Goss, we have been investigating rumors of a new weapon in the hands of the Empire.”

At Bodhi’s side, Baze lets out a sigh and rubs his hand over his beard. “Another weapon,” he mutters, and Chirrut’s mouth tightens in commiseration.

“We think the scientists that the Empire kidnapped from Bakura and brought to Geonosis were a part of the plan,” Cassian goes on. “As was the weapons testing that members of Rogue Squadron saw on Dubrillion.”

“Where—where the Empire destroyed a whole corvette.” Bodhi winces at the memory.

Draven nods. “I reached out to my contacts in the Bothan spynet to find out what they knew. My time with them confirmed our suspicions.” He glances directly at Jyn and then Bodhi, his bland mask slipping further, before he reaches back to key the holoprojector.

And as the holo shimmers into being, Draven says, “The Empire is not building a new weapon.”

It’s the Death Star, but not as Bodhi remembers it looming over the horizon on Scarif. Huge chunks are missing, with only the unfinished metal skeleton sketching out the sphere; it has the superlaser dish already in place, like a fixed, baleful eye.

No—

The briefing room is brightly lit and big enough to hold four squadrons, but as Bodhi stares at the holographic menace hanging in the center, shadows start closing in around the edges. His breathing is harsh and shallow in his ears.

“No!” Bodhi bursts out, vaguely registering that he’s interrupting Draven’s explanation of the image for Chirrut’s sake, but it doesn’t matter; horror claws hoarsely out of his throat. “It can’t—that has to be old—old footage, from when they were building—” He gazes wildly around at Baze’s bowed head, Jyn’s blank and burning stare, Cassian’s hands clutching the edge of the console. “It’s gone,
Bodhi clenches his trembling hands, driving his fingernails into his palms, and wills the disorienting buzzing in his ears to stop. He can't panic, he has to stay focused and listen to the briefing, but—

I failed—

No! I did everything Galen told me to do! I brought the message—

“The Bothan operative who put this holo in my hands was a trusted friend,” Draven says, flatly. “And we have corroborating intelligence from General Tantor regarding the Death Star's location orbiting a moon of the planet Endor.”

“How did—how could this have happened?” Bodhi demands, fury and despair cracking his voice, his heart. “Scarif—I thought—” He looks over at Jyn, helplessly; her hand is a white-knuckled fist around the kyber crystal at her neck.

(—she’d held it at the shield gate and prayed—)

“The original Death Star took twenty years to build. Galen Erso was not the first scientist to contribute his expertise to the project, and despite all of your efforts, he was not the last. I’m sorry,” Draven says. “I know—

Jyn is on her feet, suddenly. “You're sorry?” she snaps, and she draws her fist back. Baze lunges half out of his seat to stop her from punching Draven, but she hurls something at—at Cassian, turns on her heel, and storms out.

Bodhi shrinks in his seat, his heart pounding. He wants to follow her, to escape the terrible empty gaze of the Death Star still rotating slowly above the console, but he can’t; it’s like the holo’s deployed a tractor beam and he’s frozen in place.

“小妹妹,” Baze calls after Jyn. Baze glances down at Cassian, who’s caught the thing Jyn threw, looking as staggered as if she’d actually taken a swing at him. “Stay and finish your briefing. I will go find her.” He touches Chirrut’s knee and hurries out.

“I told you this was a bad idea,” Kaytoo says, but for once there isn’t a trace of reproach in his voice, only a quiet statement of fact. “I told you if you waited this long to tell me about it, then you had to tell Jyn next. Immediately.”

“Not now, Kay.” Cassian tucks Jyn’s projectile into his pocket and takes a step towards the door; pivots back, torn. His gaze flicks up to Bodhi for a second, and Bodhi cringes; he’s never known what to say to help them.

Draven sighs. “We can’t very well talk about the mission if she isn’t here,” he says, and starts to gesture for Cassian to go, but Cassian’s to the door in two quick strides and gone before Draven’s hand has barely risen from his side.

Mission?

Bodhi struggles to make sense of it, barely seeing Draven and Kaytoo standing by the holoprojector, grasping at the memories swirling in his head like so much space dust.

I'm a cargo pilot—
Chirrut gets to his feet, chuckling wryly. “All that intelligence and you couldn’t have known this is what would happen?”

“You’ve been quiet, master Guardian,” Draven says. He tilts his head. “Did you?”

“Did I what? Know the Empire was building another battle station like the one that destroyed our home?” Chirrut reaches out and rests a steadying hand on Bodhi’s shoulder as he shudders and draws a ragged, pained breath.

Draven straightens his spine, narrowing his eyes at Bodhi. “Sometimes you and Malbus know things you shouldn’t.”

“The Force is not like one of your informants, General.”

“Fair enough.” Draven inclines his head. “Well, as it seems Malbus and Andor haven’t managed to retrieve Lieutenant Erso quite yet, I’ll give you and Captain Rook a moment to collect yourselves.” He switches off the holo of the Death Star and departs.

Bodhi rubs his hand over his eyes, unable to erase the afterimage of the half-finished station. Everything he’d done—everything they’d all done, the sacrifices they’d made—it was all for nothing.

“It wasn’t for nothing,” Chirrut says, firmly, and Bodhi realizes he’s spoken aloud, barely above a whisper. “I taught you better than that.” His hand is under Bodhi’s elbow, levering him out of his seat. “All is—”

“No,” Bodhi mutters. His voice breaks. “Chirrut—don’t, please—”

Chirrut sighs, and doesn’t finish it. “Let’s go,” he says, instead, and shifts his grip so he’s holding onto Bodhi’s arm, even though he doesn’t need it.

“Your physiological responses are concerning,” Kaytoo says, crossing the room to them before they can leave. “I have compared them to my records of the week before we went to Sanctuary, and—”

Bodhi’s eyes widen, and he gulps a breath. “Kay—”

“You must calm down,” Kaytoo says. He sounds—unhappy. “I warned Cassian about this possibility as well. I have been paying attention to my friends, but he didn’t want to hear it.”

“Thanks for trying,” Bodhi manages.

“See if you can look less like you’ve been told what you have,” Kaytoo advises him. “This is still highly classified information, and you do talk—”

Bodhi musters up a glare at him.

Kaytoo changes course. “Perhaps you should inspect your ship,” he says. “We took some damage during our mission to rescue General Tantor’s friend.”

“I thought you were supposed to be a good pilot now,” Bodhi mutters, but he latches onto the idea; it’ll be a welcome distraction from the pit in his stomach and the ache in his chest.

Or at least he thinks it will be, until he’s gone partway up the ramp to the Galen and can’t bring himself to move, staring up into the empty hold at the rigging and the comms system.
He turns and looks back down into the hangar, not really seeing Kaytoo or Chirrut. "Tone covered me from—from here," he says, tasting ash and sand in his mouth, the metallic smells of the hangar overlaid with smoke in his memory. "Even though he didn’t—he didn’t know me, he didn’t have to, I had my coveralls and they probably—they wouldn’t have figured it out. The whole time, Tone was right here, and when they threw the detonator in he grabbed it and threw it back. But he still—they shot him when I was trying to get to the rest of you, and—"

He lifts his head, trying to focus on Kaytoo through the sudden blur in his eyes; he has to look a long way up. "I don’t—I don’t know how any of us made it out, and—and there’s another one of these fucking things—"

"Bodhi," Chirrut starts, but he’s too far into his own head to stop, even at the touch of Chirrut’s hand on his arm.

"I should’ve had a better plan," he mumbles. "Should’ve asked Galen what was going on—we could’ve stopped it, stopped all of it, if—if I—"

"No, you couldn’t," Jyn says.

Bodhi jerks his head up to stare at her, startled to discover he’s sitting on the deck, his back pressed up against the bulkhead, with Chirrut crouching in front of him. Jyn sighs, and gestures for Bodhi to move over; he shifts slightly to make room, and she sits down, wedging herself between him and the comms system. He studies her face for a moment, wondering if she’s been crying, and then he lowers his head into the circle of his arms, braced on his knees.

"There’s another Death Star. We could’ve stopped that."

Jyn rests her head on his shoulder. "If anyone had told us about it, maybe."

"Are you very pissed at Cassian?" Bodhi asks, muffled, slowly pulling himself back together.

"Yeah," Jyn says. "All this fucking time he knew, and he didn’t say a thing. To me."

Kaytoo says, "Jyn, I didn’t know, either."

She huffs a little laugh. "Draven and Cassian, keeping secrets again. At least they can’t kill my father this time."

"Jyn," Bodhi says.

"After we came back from Scarif and Cassian let me see some of the intelligence on my father, everything they pieced together about the Death Star—I used to think, what if Cassian had gotten to him earlier? Do you think they sent assassins out after the people who worked on this one, and all of them failed, and that’s why they’re telling us now?"

Bodhi raises his head, eyeing her suspiciously. "Not until you said it."

"They did not send assassins," Chirrut says. He’s leaning up against the bulkhead, head tilted towards the hangar as if he’s listening for something they can’t hear. "They would have asked Baze, because we are not officially Rebels, and they did not ask Baze."

"That’s—" Bodhi blinks at him. "Um—"

"Probably true," Jyn admits, the corner of her mouth quirking up.
“So what do we do now?” Chirrut asks, nudging Jyn’s boot with the end of his staff.

The faint wry smile on her face widens. “Before Kaytoo rescued me on Wobani, I would have said run. Hide.”

“There’s no place in the galaxy that’s safe,” Bodhi says, wearily, trying to stop picturing the sky of falling stone behind his eyelids. “Al—Alderaan wasn’t a military target—”

“Somewhere remote,” Jyn suggests, and then, slyly, “Tatooine?”

Bodhi snorts and shakes his head. “Couldn’t pay me to go back there.” He bumps her with his shoulder. “Draven said there was a mission.”

“Well, that’s something,” Jyn says. “I don’t think we’d have any idea where to start if we went rogue again.”

A shadow falls over them and Bodhi looks up; both Cassian and Baze are standing on the ramp. “Please don’t,” Cassian says, softly, and Bodhi scrambles to his feet, uncertain whether to interpose himself between Cassian and Jyn or simply get out of the way.

“Can’t ask Bodhi to run off anyway, he’d never leave Luke.” Jyn pushes herself up along the bulkhead.

“Of course not.” Cassian can’t take his eyes off of her, and Bodhi decides he’d better get out of the way, but Cassian puts up a hand to stop him before he can disappear into the hold. “I lied to you. All of you.”

“You had orders,” Jyn says, a fine thread of anger in her voice again.

Cassian shakes his head. “We made the decision not to tell anyone until we knew for certain. Draven didn’t want—we couldn’t afford a single mistake. Not again.” He swallows, watching Jyn’s fraction of an acknowledging nod. “It—it can put an end to the war, what we do next.”

“Really,” Jyn says, very dryly.

“Yes, really,” Kaytoo says. “That is still my specialty, you know. I can show you the data.”

“That’s all right, thank you, Kay.” Jyn’s eyes are still fixed on Cassian’s face.

“You don’t have to come.” Cassian darts a look at Bodhi. “You don’t have to see it again.”

“But you’re going,” Bodhi says, and Cassian nods.

Baze says to Chirrut, “我們沒去過 Endor.”

“我們沒去過很多地方,” Chirrut replies, but he thumps the end of his staff down on the deck. “We will go.” He smiles. “I didn’t see the Death Star the first time, and I still won’t.” Baze rolls his eyes.

“Luke doesn’t know about any of this,” Cassian tells Bodhi, carefully. “Leia was going to bring him
in as soon as he came back from his Jedi training, but the timeline for this mission moved up while you were gone. You can stay here on Sullust—you would both be safe here when he gets back.”

Bodhi wishes Luke was here, a tangible reminder that destroying a Death Star is possible; that the Force is with him.

He glances around at the rest of his family. Oddly, Jyn isn’t touching her necklace, and Bodhi’s eyes widen as he realizes it must’ve been what she threw at Cassian. But she’s containing her anger at Cassian’s betrayal, looking at Bodhi like she’s waiting for him to report to her, standing still with her hands clasped behind her back, the same way Galen had sometimes held himself while he listened to Bodhi rambling on.

(—in the pouring rain on Eadu, because it was always raining—Galén put a hand on his shoulder and said, “You can only move forward with what you have learned—”)

Bodhi wonders if Luke’s mysterious Jedi master would say the same. He hopes Luke will understand. “You’ll need a pilot,” Bodhi says, and shakes his head, rejecting Cassian’s offer of safety.

“Right,” Jyn says. “What’s the plan?” Cassian’s mouth actually falls open a little as he turns to look at her, but a determined light is shining in her eyes, and there had never really been a question of her going at all.

Cassian recovers, though, and says, “It’ll be easier to show you in the briefing room.” He gestures for Chirrut and Baze to precede him, still watching Jyn a little warily as she circles around him.

She stops in front of him and crosses her arms. “I’m still angry with you.”

“I know,” Cassian murmurs, and then, “If you were not going to come, I would have gone alone, to do this for you and your father. For the mistakes we made the first time. And for you, my friend.” He casts a glance at Bodhi. “If the Force is with us, we can end this war.”

Bodhi’s breath catches in his throat, and he nods at Cassian, for once unable to get words out past the lump in his throat.

Jyn presses her lips together and looks away, down the ramp at Chirrut and Baze. “Did you find my necklace?” she asks, casually.

Cassian reaches into his jacket pocket and holds it out to her. “I didn’t want you to lose it.”

“Hold on to it for now,” Jyn says, putting her hand on his and folding his fingers over the kyber crystal. “Bodhi, are you—all right?”

Bodhi looks at them.

He—isn’t. There’s still a faint taste of ash in his mouth, and his hands are unsteady at his sides. It won’t be all right until they’ve destroyed the Death Star—again—and found a way to keep the Empire from building more of the fucking battle stations. But there’s a plan, with the Rebellion actually backing it this time, and maybe if Luke comes home before they leave, then—

“We’re going to make it right,” Bodhi says, and starts down the ramp with his friends on his heels.

Chapter End Notes
Here we are, about to embark on the final act of this version of the tale.

Last year at this time, I was wrapping up *The Empire Strikes Back*. Two years ago, I had just tossed about a thousand words up on this WIP that I thought might be kind of fun to play with for a while, in between sequel movies. It...spiralled out beyond my wildest imaginings really, really quickly, and sitting here two solid years later I am still in a bit of shock that you are all still here with me. We are almost to the end now, I promise. Thank you for sticking it out. <3 <3 <3

I owe this year’s fic writing entirely to morag, for being an endlessly supportive beta and friend. Thank you for putting up with me when the words were shuffling along a hundred at a time, and for nudging me whenever I needed to get back on track with this--and everything else. I couldn’t have gotten through this without you. <3

Translations:
小妹妹: little sister
我們沒去過 Endor: We haven't been to Endor
我們沒去過很多地方: We haven't been to a lot of places
Chapter 98

Chapter Summary

Sorry to interrupt.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“General Han Solo.”

Cassian’s hands have gone from their usual disciplined clasp behind his back, to uncharacteristically fidgeting with his jacket, to fists, and back again, as he paces along the corridor, before Mon Mothma and Ackbar’s official briefing. “In command. Of my mission.”

Jyn offers a shrug. “You're too close to this,” she says, repeating Draven's assessment from the second half of their meeting the previous day.

“So is he!” Cassian throws his hands in the air. “He was on the first one.”

“So was Leia,” Bodhi points out, suppressing a shiver. He hasn't seen her since they've been back from Tatooine, and he’d spent much of a long sleepless night huddled in Jyn and Cassian's bed wondering if he should comm her.

Not that he has any idea what he would've said.

“Yes, but she is—her whole life—” Cassian's mouth curves down under his mustache.

“If you asked, I'm sure she'd tell Han to step aside and let you lead,” Jyn says, with a hint of sarcasm.

Cassian eyes her.

“Oh she might just take over the mission herself,” Jyn muses. “They're giving out titles left and right these days, why not General Organa?”

Cassian says, almost as if by reflex, “Because being the Princess is a symbolic reminder of—” He catches Bodhi wincing out of the corner of his eye, and stops.

Bodhi makes a face at him. “It—it’s fine. You were saying?”

As if he doesn't quite take him at his word, Cassian's gaze rests on Bodhi for a moment longer. But Bodhi's determined to get through this—and all the other horrible awkward conversations to come, clinging tightly to the prospect of ending the war that Draven and Madine had mentioned. He looks back at Cassian steadily, and Cassian's shoulders relax, although he still switches topics. “At least Calrissian knows something about command.”

Bodhi barely stifles a snort, remembering the kinds of orders “Skreej” had given him in Jabba’s palace. He supposes being the Baron Administrator of an entire city probably counted for something, though they’d never really talked about that aspect of Lando’s most recent history, probably because the reason for Lando losing that job had been hanging on Jabba’s throne room wall at the time.
Of course, Lando also saved his entire city—

“I think Wedge’s glad he’s getting his own squadron and staying away from Rogue,” Jyn says. “Sort of surprised he and Nien Nunb are gonna fly the Mellcrawler—from what I read they barely got that ship back from Yellow Moon in one piece.”

“Wedge and some of the squadron are pitching in to get her ready after they get done with the briefing,” Bodhi says. At the end of the corridor, Madine and Admiral Ackbar emerge from the turbolift, and he stiffens and looks away.

Jyn touches his arm. “Sure you don’t want to come in?”

Bodhi shakes his head. “Janson transferred the Tydirium codes to the Cadera already, but there’s—I’ve got a lot of clean up to do.” He gives them a faint smile to hide the vague nausea he has at the thought of going into the briefing, the way everyone would stare at him and the rest of the Rogue One team the second Mon Mothma said the words Death Star. “Gonna have a full strike team in the shuttle I’ve been living in.”

“I’ll send Kaytoo to help,” Cassian says, promptly.

Bodhi opens his mouth to object; Kaytoo helped run analyses on the plan, he’d be needed—but Cassian murmurs, “I don’t want you to be alone right now,” and whatever arguments Bodhi might have mustered melt away in the face of Cassian’s concern.

“Thanks, Cassian,” Bodhi says, pressing a swift kiss to Cassian's cheek, and hurries off before Ackbar and Madine can try to make him stay.

Even though it’s been a couple of days since they’ve left Tatooine, there’s still an irritating amount of sand embedded in various parts of the Cadera. It hadn’t been an issue for the trip home, but if his shuttle’s going to have to pass for Imperial again, Bodhi’s determined to get it back to standard, and that means scrubbing it clean of every last micron of grit.

The process keeps his mind occupied, too, for the most part, until he starts remembering doing the same with all the dust and dirt from Jedha that had gotten tracked into his Zeta-class shuttles.

(Galen hadn't minded the way Eadu rains mixed Jedha dust into a blood-red mud—)

Bodhi bites his lip, hard, and forces himself to slow his breathing. It isn't Jedhan sand under his fingernails, but the paler gold of Tatooine's dunes, the same color as Luke's hair.

His heart aches. He’d spent the other half of the night trying to figure out what to say to Luke, and whether to leave a proper holo or a datapad with a letter, and ultimately fallen asleep before he’d managed to come up with something that wasn’t just I’m sorry, I have to do this.

If there’s time before we leave, I’ll—

“We are unlikely to be boarded for inspection,” Kaytoo says, interrupting his thoughts.

Bodhi looks up at him. “What?”

Kaytoo says, “Our landing site is between Imperial outposts. No one is going to perform an inspection or ask for a manifest.”

“I know that, Kaytoo, but just—just in case—”
Kaytoo tilts his head. “Are you creating busy work to avoid going to the briefing?”

“No, I really did have to—all my things were here, so I moved—no one’s assigned to fly the Beru, so I moved my stuff—” Bodhi jerks a thumb over his shoulder in the direction of the transport.

“Everyone else is there.”

“Look, you don’t have to stay and help me, I—I’m fine, really, it’s just prepping the ship. You should—it’s your strategic analysis, I’m sure Cassian’s gonna want Han to know that.” Bodhi turns to go up to the cockpit, where he’s left a diagnostic running.

“Cassian wanted me to be here for you,” Kaytoo says. “But maybe you don’t need me after all.”

“Kay, I didn’t mean it like that—” Bodhi turns back, apologetically, but for once, Kaytoo isn’t being petulant.

Luke is standing on the ramp, smiling at him.

“You’re back—you’re here,” Bodhi stammers, feeling like a weight’s been lifted off his shoulders, and very nearly flings himself at Luke.

Luke laughs. He waves at Kaytoo, who nods a greeting at him and trudges off, and then he puts his arms around Bodhi’s neck. “Like I promised.”

“I thought you were gonna be gone for months—wait, does this mean—” Bodhi steps back as far as he can to study Luke’s face. “You’re done? You’re a Jedi now?”

“I’ve completed my training,” Luke says, with only the slightest hesitation. “Though there’s still so much I can learn from Master Îmwe and Master Malbus.” He throws a look over his shoulder, back down the ramp. “Where is everybody? The deck officer directed me to come here to find you, but the place is practically empty.”

Bodhi tenses in Luke’s grasp. “In—in a briefing. You should go—they’ll all be glad to have you on the mission, since you—you know how to—” His heartbeat is accelerating, and it’s hard to keep breathing steadily, but he’s determined to spit it out. “The Empire’s built another Death Star.”

Luke’s lips part; if he gasps in shock, Bodhi can’t hear it over the distant buzzing in his ears. “I—Kaytoo has Cassian’s files on it, he—he can explain it better, but—yeah. There’s a second Death Star, and Cass—Han is leading a strike team to take out the shield generator protecting it, so the Fleet can—so you can—” Bodhi swallows. “Destroy it.”


Maybe that’s why the Force brought you back now,” Bodhi babbles at him, dizzy at the thought, hope leaping in his chest. “Cause you—I mean, we all know how to, Galen—Galen built the fucking thing so it could be stopped, but you actually did it, I’m sure Wedge or—or Lando will step aside and let you have a squadron—”

“Lando’s leading a squadron?”

Bodhi nods, puzzled at the way the corner of Luke’s mouth twitches up. “Yeah. He’s Gold Leader. Ackbar made him a general for something he did at Taanab, I don’t know exactly.”

“And Han is leading—”

Luke furrows his brow. “I don’t think that’s why the Force guided me home,” he murmurs, his face taking on a familiar look of calm concentration. Then he jerks his head up, his eyes locking onto Bodhi’s. “What’re they having you do on this mission?”

“Flying.” Bodhi waves a hand around the interior of the Cadera’s hold. “Um. Taking the team to Endor. Not—not making the run on the Death Star—it’d be confusing to have an Imperial shuttle in that fight, and I can’t—you know.”


Luke chuckles softly, ruffling a few strands of Bodhi’s hair. “My timing probably could’ve been better. You said they’re all in the briefing now?”

“Yeah,” Bodhi says, disentangling himself. “Go. I—I’ll be here. I’ll be okay.”

“After this thing, I’m gonna make sure you are,” Luke says, and darts in for a quick kiss before he heads off.

But it’s practically impossible to get another moment alone, once the briefing ends and what seems like half the Rebellion comes pouring into the hangar. Sitting up in the cockpit of the Cadera, Bodhi searches for Luke among the pilots going over to their fighters, but doesn’t see him immediately. Wedge and Janson are making their way through the crowd to their X-wings—Janson with a new astromech on his heels that Bodhi doesn’t recognize. He briefly wishes there’s enough time for one of their pre-mission sabacc games, though there’s little chance of that calming him down.

“Well, it looks like I’m coming with you,” Luke says, poking his head into the cockpit and smiling at Bodhi when he looks over his shoulder in surprise.

“You—what?”

Luke drops into the co-pilot’s seat. “This Death Star—it’s still under construction, it won’t be like trying to hit the exhaust port. There’s plenty of good pilots who can handle flying into the superstructure.”

Bodhi blinks at him uncertainly.

“And I feel like the Force is guiding me to Endor, with you,” Luke adds, thoughtfully.

“Oh,” Bodhi says, brightening somewhat; having Luke around can only help their chances. “Hadn’t thought of that.”

Luke’s mouth twitches again. He stands up and squeezes in between Bodhi and the console, his eyes going half-lidded and soft as he props a knee on the seat between Bodhi’s legs, and Bodhi licks his lips in anticipation of Luke leaning down or climbing into his lap. “But we’re going to be pretty busy when we get there, so—”
“Hey, Captain Rook—oh! Commander Skywalker!”

Bodhi glances behind them at—at Kelka, who’s turning a shade of dark green and trying to look everywhere but at him and Luke.

Luke covers his mouth with his gloved hand, hiding a laugh, as Bodhi says, “Uh, hi, Kelka. What—are you doing here?”

Kelka holds up a handful of components and a datachip. “Got a comms update to install. Toryn said I could come do it for her, and she says hello, and good luck.” Her large eyes flick up to Luke. “Sorry to interrupt.”

“Not a problem, thanks for taking care of it,” Bodhi says, and Kelka beams at him.

Luke says, cheerfully, “We’ll just get out of your way, shall we?” He tugs Bodhi up out of his chair, navigating both of them out of the cockpit past her.

“Where are we going?” Bodhi asks, waving at a couple of Y-wings from Gold Squadron that have launched to make space on the deck. He doesn’t know the woman who waves back, but it’s a sure bet she knows Luke, at least.

“You can’t fly all three of your ships at once,” Luke reasons. “Grizz and Joma got assigned to X-wings, so—”

“It’s not gonna be weird to, uh, do—things—on a ship I named for your aunt?”

Luke rolls his eyes. “That’s why we’re not going to sneak off to the Galen,” he says. “And you heard me on Tatooine, Aunt Beru would’ve been happy I have you.”

“But not like—” Bodhi says, helplessly, as Luke leads him up one of the ramp and into the Beru’s hold. It’s dark and empty, and Luke flashes another brilliant smile at him before pulling Bodhi off-balance into his arms.

“You were saying?” Luke murmurs, and ducks his head to kiss Bodhi’s neck.

“N—nothing important,” Bodhi gasps, clutching Luke’s hips. Luke’s hands ruck up the hem of his shirt, and Bodhi’s fairly certain he’s using the Force to unfasten his pants, and—

—something clangs above them in the Beru’s cockpit, and they both freeze.

“Couldn’t you use the Force to know there was someone here?” Bodhi hisses.

“I wasn’t thinking about that,” Luke says, under his breath, and then, louder, “Hello?”

“Commander Skywalker?” A glowrod shines down from the cockpit, and Bodhi scrambles around behind Luke to straighten his clothes, peeking over Luke’s shoulder at Laren Joma emerging from the shadows.

“Captain,” Luke greets her. She looks them both over, and Bodhi groans internally at the faint amusement glinting in her eyes.

“Just came to clear out the rest of my gear,” Joma says. She nods past them into the hold. “Got a few medpacs lying around that aren’t going to do us any good if they’re packed up.”

Bodhi says, “Makes sense,” and grabs Luke’s hand again. “We—we’ll leave you to it.”
The Y-wings have been replaced with Green Squadron A-wings when they come back out into the hangar. Bodhi recognizes Lieutenant Bey talking with a uniformed Pathfinder while her ship is being refueled, and then she cranes up to kiss him, long and sweet, in full view of everyone. The Duros pilot leaning against his own A-wing with a helmet under his arm whistles at them, and receives a solid punch on the arm from the Pathfinder when they break apart.


Luke looks around. “If Han and Chewie are going with you, then—the Falcon should be free, right?”

Bodhi grins at him; the Falcon also has plenty of doors that lock. “Sure.”

They don’t make it up the ramp, though, before Lando strides up behind them, clapping his hands on their shoulders. “Thanks for coming to help me get the old girl ready,” he says, jauntily. “Han’s wrangling the last of the Pathfinders’ gear, and I don’t think he’s too thrilled about seeing me sitting in the pilot’s chair again as it is.”

“Weren’t you supposed to be on the Mellcrawler?” Bodhi asks.

“Han wants me to take the Falcon,” Lando says, flashing a grin at him. “She is the fastest ship in the galaxy.”

Bodhi suppresses a sigh.

No sabacc game.

No—

It’s fine. Luke’s going to be on Endor with me—with us. It’s fine.

Still, he has to run through the mental exercise of the Cadera being sealed off from everything—from everyone—before he can completely tamp down his exasperation at Luke’s plans being thwarted yet again.

“You’re welcome,” Luke is saying to Lando, and Bodhi hopes the last part of Luke’s Jedi training wasn’t supposed to help him hide his feelings, because Luke sounds ever so slightly annoyed, too, and Lando’s arching one eyebrow at them. “Where do you need us to start?”

“Always a good idea to check the hyperdrive,” Lando says. “Bodhi, you know your way around a Nordoxicon shield projector?”

“Uh—” Bodhi throws a glance at Luke as Lando starts to lead him in the opposite direction of the hyperdrive; Luke gives him a deflated-looking little wave, but dutifully turns and disappears around the bend in the corridor. “Yeah, sure. I thought Han was running with a Kuat Drive Yards model?”

“That’s just covering the stern,” Lando says. “We’ve got Nordoxicon and Torplex units up front, come and have a look.”

Bodhi spends twenty minutes with Lando—and another ten with both him and Nien Nunb—going over the shield generators, occasionally peeking out the viewport to check on the progress of Han’s team towards the Cadera. He’s not terribly surprised to catch Hobbie and Maddel sharing a kiss before going their separate ways, nor Joma and Kasan Moor holding hands as they cross the hangar towards their respective X-wings. It makes him guiltily relieved that Luke’s coming to Endor.
“We’d better get going,” Luke says, from the cockpit door. “Jyn says the team’s loaded up, and they’re just waiting for us and Han.”

“Okay,” Bodhi says. “Lando, you good here?”

“Yeah, thanks again,” Lando replies. He dusts his hands off and reaches out to shake first Bodhi’s hand, and then Luke’s. “Good luck out there.”

“May the Force be with you,” Luke says, solemnly.

The hold of the Cadera is jammed full of Pathfinders; the man who Lieutenant Bey had kissed is talking with Yosh Calfor and showing him a holo of a curly-haired toddler grabbing at the camera. Lieutenant Ematt is wedged in next to a soldier whose oddly familiar, lined face under his white beard makes Ematt seem even younger than he is, in comparison. Farther into the hold, Chirrut and Baze have been granted a little extra space—the sight of Baze’s repeater cannon at his feet probably has something to do with it—and right at the top of the ramp, her eyes shining out of her otherwise grim face, is Jyn.

“Seats saved for you up front,” Jyn says. “Probably a pretty tight squeeze, we had to pack the droids back here.”

Bodhi peers into the hold again. Threepio’s gold plating sticks out, but Kaytoo is basically blending into the shadows, except for his glowing eyes. “Where’s Cassian?”

Jyn tilts her head in the direction of the cockpit.

“Then I guess this is it,” Bodhi says, and swallows hard. Jyn reaches out to touch his arm, and nods, her lips set in a narrow, determined line.

“Well, once our fearless general gets here,” Luke says, nudging him to go up front.

Chewbacca gets out of the pilot’s seat when they come into the cockpit, growling that Bodhi should take it before Han tries to, making Cassian’s stern expression lighten a little. Luke settles in the chair directly behind Bodhi as Han finally makes his appearance; he looks pretty good for being just a few days out of carbonite, probably Yraka’Nes and Too-Onebee’s doing.

“You got her warmed?” Han says, raising his eyebrows at the vacant co-pilot’s chair, but sliding into it without complaint.

“Yeah, she’s coming up,” Luke replies. Bodhi checks the console: Kelka’s comms update looks good, and the rest of the preflight sequence he’d started before Luke had dragged him away is just about complete.

Behind him, Chewbacca shifts uncomfortably and mutters that he can’t fit into the jump seats.

“I don’t think the Empire had Wookies in mind when they designed her, Chewie,” Han says. His gaze drifts out the viewport, across the hangar to the Falcon; Lando and Nien Nunb are shadowy but visible in the cockpit.

Leia comes in from the hold and takes her seat near Luke, leaning forward to touch Han’s shoulder. “Hey, you awake?”

“Yeah,” Han says. “Just got a funny feeling, like I’m not gonna see her again.”

Chewie rumbles softly, and Bodhi grimaces down at the console.
“Come on, general. Let’s move.” Leia pats Han’s shoulder.

Han throws her a crooked smile and says, “Right. Let’s see what this piece of—uh. Let’s see what this baby can do. Ready, everybody?”

Bodhi glances over his shoulder at Luke’s reassuring expression, Cassian’s answering nod. “All set,” he says, settling his hands on the controls. The engines flare to life, and he flies the Cadera out of the hangar, maneuvering between capital ships and watching the smaller starfighter squadrons forming up.

The navicomputer beeps that it’s ready for the jump to hyperspace, and Bodhi takes a deep breath.

*This is for you, Galen.*

“All right, hang on,” Han says, pulling the lever, and the stars turn into streaks.

Chapter End Notes

Happy New Year!!

Thanks to morag for the beta, and as usual, to all of you, dear readers. <3 Lots to do IRL, but I'm gonna do my best to get the next few chapters out in a timely fashion too.
Chapter 99

Chapter Summary

Let's keep a little optimism here.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

It turns out that seeing the holo of the Death Star under construction isn’t quite enough to prepare Bodhi for the reality of flying towards it in person. The unfinished superstructure is somehow even more nightmarish than the sleek battle station that had destroyed his home and nearly killed him twice over, and having a Super Star Destroyer passing slowly ahead of the Cadera, blotting out a huge swath of space, isn’t helping matters.

But Bodhi licks his lips and tightens his hands on the controls, refusing to acknowledge his rising nausea and dread; they have a plan, with the full might of the Alliance behind it. And Luke is here, and that means the Force is with them.

Even if Han says, apparently not feeling one with the Force, “If they don’t go for this, we’re gonna have to get outta here pretty quick.”

Chewbacca growls his agreement.

The comms crackle to life, and the local flight controller says, “We have you on our screen now. Please identify.”

Han leans towards the comms pickup. “Shuttle Tydirium requesting deactivation of the deflector shield.” His tone mimics that of every bored shuttle pilot on a routine run, although Bodhi has a hard time imagining even the most jaded of his former colleagues not feeling awed or terrified by the jagged sphere looming up in the viewport.

“Shuttle Tydirium, transmit the clearance code for shield passage,” comes the reply, and Bodhi reaches across the console, tense.

“Transmission commencing.” Han nods at Bodhi, and he toggles the right switches.

Leia mutters, “Now we find out if that code is worth the price we paid.”

“It’ll work,” Han says. Chewbacca whines nervously. “It’ll work.”

It worked on Scarif, Bodhi wants to say, but he’d known their security procedures forwards and backwards, and here—

“Vader’s on that ship,” Luke says, suddenly, and Bodhi’s breath catches in his throat. He jerks his head around, his eyes going wide at Luke’s bleak expression.

Cassian leans forward abruptly, his face going pinched and tense, and just barely stops himself from grabbing Luke’s arm. “Are you sure?”
“Now don’t get jittery, guys,” Han admonishes them. “There are a lot of command ships.” He turns back to Bodhi and adds, under his breath, “Keep your distance, though, but don’t look like you’re trying to keep your distance.”

“Right,” Bodhi says, as Chewbacca barks a laugh and a question about how Bodhi’s supposed to do that.

“I don’t know,” Han says. “Fly casual.”

Behind them, Cassian and Leia are conferring in low voices about whether they’d gotten any intelligence about Vader coming to Endor along with the Emperor. But Bodhi can’t listen to their worried speculation; someone else is asking Han about their cargo and destination, and Han’s answer is okay, maybe too casual for a classified run like this and the commanding officer on the other end of the line.

And then Luke murmurs, sounding awful, “I’m endangering the mission. I shouldn’t have come.”

Bodhi’s heart sinks, and he dares to glance away from the looming terrors out the viewport and over his shoulder at Luke. “But—but you said—” Luke’s gazing through him, as if he can see onto the Super Star Destroyer’s bridge or wherever Darth Vader might be lurking, and Bodhi swallows and doesn’t look at Cassian.

Leia reaches forward to touch Bodhi’s arm, concerned, but Han says, “It's your imagination, kid. Come on, let's keep a little optimism here.”

The comms crackle again, and the flight controller says, “Shuttle Tydirium, deactivation of the shield will commence immediately. Follow your present course.”

Chewbacca rumbles in relief, and Bodhi lets out a breath as the line disconnects

“Okay! I told you it was gonna work,” Han says. “No problem.”

Bodhi can feel Cassian's exasperation from here.

*****

Landing the shuttle at the coordinates Tantor had given them is trickier than Bodhi expects; the forest is dense everywhere except for the Imperial base and outposts, and he barely spots the gap in the canopy until they’re right on top of it.

Still, he puts down with only a few bumps, and there's no need to use the laser cannons to clear a little extra room, as Han dryly suggests.

“This feels familiar,” Luke says, craning his neck to survey the treetops as Bodhi stops at the top of the Cadera’s ramp to pull his camouflage poncho on over his flight jacket, grateful for the extra layer against the chilly air. Luke seems calmer now that they’ve landed, and nothing ominous has come out of his mouth in a while. “Like—what was that planet we went to, with the rabbits?”

“Arbra,” Kaytoo says, flatly, trampling ferns as he comes back up to the shuttle and goes into the hold.

“Yeah, that was it,” Luke agrees. “Not the part where something bad was trying to get me to let it out,” he adds, hastily, as Bodhi’s eyes widen in alarm. “Just the really tall trees, and how it smells.”

Bodhi sniffs the air curiously, but he can’t let go of his worry. “You’re sure about that? You said you
—maybe you shouldn’t have come on the mission. Is—”

Luke shakes his head. “It’ll be fine, Bodhi. Seeing the Death Star and the Super Star Destroyer made me jumpy, like everybody else, that’s all.” He furrows his brow at Kaytoo returning down the ramp: he’s carrying a blaster—no, he’s offering Bodhi the blaster, grip first.

“Kay—”

“Cassian said either you take it or you’re staying with the ship.”

Bodhi looks around the assembled team for Cassian; it’s getting harder to tell individual people apart with their helmets and camouflage gear, except for Baze and Chirrut, of course. But Cassian is never far from Jyn, and she isn’t difficult to spot as one of the two shortest humans on the mission. They’re both talking to—Threepio, oddly, and Cassian has another poncho bunched in his hands, evidently arriving at the same conclusion Bodhi has, which is that Threepio’s only going to get tangled up if anyone tries to make him wear one. And then Jyn looks up across the clearing at Bodhi, and raises her eyebrows.

He sighs, and reluctantly accepts the blaster, nodding back at her.

“Try not to miss,” Kaytoo says, helpfully.

They move out a couple minutes later. Bodhi’s content to hang back a bit at first, while Luke gets his bearings or uses the Force to scan the forest, or something—he’s got that faraway look in his eyes again—and then Luke takes his arm and ushers him through the line of Pathfinders, practically all the way up to the front.

“Hey,” Han says, as Bodhi apologizes to Chewbacca for tripping over his feet. “Artoo’s sensors aren’t picking up anything we need to worry about yet.” He throws a look sideways at Luke. “You?”


“Glad to hear it,” Han says. “You’ll let me know if you, uh, feel anything?”

“First you don’t believe it when anyone tries to tell you Luke’s a Jedi, and now you’re treating him like your own personal scanning device?” Leia rolls her eyes.


Leia huffs, and Bodhi decides he can drop back and hike next to Jyn if she and Han are going to be like that, edging past Cassian and Kaytoo on the narrow trail. Baze and Chirrut have drifted further behind, chatting amiably with a couple awestruck Pathfinders, judging by the looks on their faces; Baze even briefly unshoulders his repeater cannon for one of them to heft.

Jyn pokes Bodhi in the arm, and he refocuses on her. “What? Are we stopping?”

“No.” Jyn bites her lip, and then she asks, quietly, “Did you see it?”

Bodhi swallows, and nods, jerkily. “Hard not to.” He glances down at Jyn’s grim face. “But it—it’s not done yet. Looks pretty much the same as the holo.”

Jyn’s hand starts to move toward her neck, where her necklace should be, but still isn’t; she catches herself doing it and drops her hand back to her side. “Okay.”
Bodhi bumps her shoulder with his and says, trying to sound reassuring, “I don't think we'll be able to see it from—-from here, until we get close to the shield base.”

“Won’t be a problem if you don't look up,” Jyn says, dryly.

Bodhi blinks at her, not understanding. “What?”

She shakes her head, and her mouth twists in a nearly humorless smile. “Nothing.” Then her gaze goes past Bodhi, and she motions for him to stop. At the crest of the hill, Chewbacca and Leia are lying prone and peering through the leaves; Han and Luke crawl up next to them, and Cassian’s flattened himself against the closest gigantic tree trunk.

“Oh, I told you it was dangerous here,” Threepio moans.

Cassian levels a glare at him, and for a complete wonder, Threepio actually shuts up.

“C’mon,” Jyn mutters, pulling Bodhi along. He makes a face and tries to duck down a bit; she might be short enough to be hidden by the bushes and ferns, but the rest of the team is crouching to stay hidden.

“Should we try and go around?” Leia’s asking, as they come up.

“It’ll take time.” Luke gestures for Bodhi to crawl in next to him, holding a low-hanging branch aside so it doesn’t smack him in the face.

Han says, “This whole party’ll be for nothing if they see us.”

Below them, the forest floor opens out onto a broad valley, and Bodhi’s heart skips a beat. Two Imperial scouts are down there, fiddling around with something in the dead leaves, their white armor glaring among all the green. Their 74-Z speeder bikes sit idle on the dirt.

But at least they’ve got the Imperials thoroughly outnumbered, Bodhi thinks, and then Han points a finger at them. “Chewie and I’ll take care of this. You stay here.” Leia signals for the squad to stay put, and Jyn, poking her head around the side of the tree Cassian’s using for cover, nods back at her, though she’s drawn her blaster and holds it ready.

Luke lifts his head and mutters, “Quietly. There might be more of them out there.”

“Hey.” Han flashes him a wry, crooked grin. “It’s me.” He and Chewbacca start down through the bushes towards the scouts.

Luke sighs, and exchanges a look with Leia.

“Where are you going?” Cassian hisses at Han.

“We’ve got this, Colonel, don’t worry about it,” Han says, breezily. “Unless you brought your sniper rifle along—?”

A muscle in Cassian’s jaw twitches. He signals to the squad, and the white-haired Pathfinder rises from his crouch and starts to pick his way through the foliage to them. “I’ll cover you. Give us a second.” Han tosses him an ironic little sketch of a salute and beckons Chewbacca to follow.

Bodhi holds his breath, watching them creep down the hillside; Cassian slides in beside him just like he had on Eadu, pressed close and tense against his shoulder.

“Can you jam their comms?” Cassian whispers.
Bodhi tries to remember what he knows about 74-Zs beyond them being stripped down to little more than an engine and a steering vane, and mutters, “I don’t—I don’t know, not from here, but if I get closer—”

—the sound of a twig snapping under Han’s boot cuts through the air like a shot. The scout whirls around and smashes Han into a tree trunk, knocking his blaster pistol out of his hand.

“Go for help! Go!” the scout calls to his partner, and then Han’s hauling himself up and trying to punch the scout—

Cassian rolls to his feet, furious; the Pathfinder throws the sniper rifle to him, and he slings the strap over his head and dashes after Leia.

“Great. Come on.” Luke says, sarcastically, scrambling to his feet and pulling Bodhi upright.

They crash through the bushes on Leia and Cassian’s heels—Han’s still grappling with the scout, tripping over the unfamiliar terrain and yelling, too close for anyone to get a shot off—

“Jam their comms,” Cassian snaps at Bodhi as they burst into the clearing. A blaster bolt streaks past: Chewbacca, dropping the other scout before he can reach his speeder bike—

“Over there! Two more of them,” Leia shouts, and Bodhi catches sight of their white armor through the trees.

Shit, shit—

“I see them—” Luke’s hand goes to his lightsaber and Cassian squeezes off half a dozen shots at the pair, but their speeder bikes were running hot already and they race away, their repulsorlifts whining noisily, and Leia breaks into a sprint towards the remaining speeders—“Wait, Leia!”

—and Bodhi realizes he can jam their comms from the other speeder bike, if he can keep them in range, and runs after her, climbing on the last bike—

“Bodhi—” Luke jumps onto the back of the speeder and wraps his arms around Bodhi’s waist just as he twists the accelerator grip and launches. “What in blazes are you doing?” Luke yelps into his ear.

“Can’t let them tell anyone we’re here!” Bodhi gasps, ducking branches and yanking his goggles down over his eyes with one hand; he risks a glance down at the control panel, but they’re racing through the forest at hundreds of kilometers an hour, and he has to stay on Leia and the scouts—

Luke’s breath is warm on his neck. “Comlink, center switch,” he shouts over the wind.

“Got it!” Bodhi hits the switch and accelerates at the same time, and Luke squeezes him tight; it could almost be fun, if they weren’t chasing after Imperials who could blow their whole mission.

Leia’s veering through the trees as recklessly as any racer, and Bodhi jams on the accelerator again, his heart pounding. One of the scouts falls behind as his partner zips through a narrow gap between trees, and Luke says excitedly, “Move closer—get alongside that one!”

Bodhi speeds up again, drawing side by side with it. He chances a look over at the scout’s blank-faced helmet, and that’s when Luke leaps across onto the back of the other speeder bike.

“What the fuck?” Bodhi shouts at him, swinging the steering vanes away before they can get tangled up and crash; Luke’s busy tossing the scout off the side of the bike and grabbing for the handgrips to continue the pursuit. “Are you crazy?”
Luke grins at him, his eyes shining. “Let’s go, there’s still one left—”

—blaster fire spits past him, and Bodhi’s heart is in his throat as he dares to look over his shoulder
—“Two more just showed up!”

“Keep on that one, I’ll take these two, I won’t let them get any messages off,” Luke orders him, and
slams on his brakes.

Bodhi hunches over the controls, wincing as more blaster bolts whine around his ears. Ahead, Leia
changes course, climbing fast towards the canopy; the scout they’re chasing searches vainly for her
until she dives out of the treetops, cannons blazing.

But the scout’s drawn a blaster from his boot holster and as Leia pulls alongside him, he fires a single
shot into her engine. Bodhi gulps a horrified breath as her speeder bike starts to go out of control—
he’s still too far back, and even if he gets close enough, there’s no way she’d be able to pull off a
jump like Luke’s—

—and then she does jump, diving right off her speeder bike and vanishing into the dense greenery
below, seconds before her bike smashes into a tree and explodes.

Shit!

Bodhi veers away from the flaming debris just in time to see the scout crash into the base of an
uprooted tree, sending up another bright orange fireball. He overshoots it; brakes hard and reverses
course, reluctantly drawing his blaster even though he really doesn’t expect the scout to have
survived, let alone be in any shape for a blaster fight.

He circles the smoldering roots warily, from above. Bits of twisted metal and melted plastoid are
scattered all around, and not much else.

“Sorry,” Bodhi says, in a small voice, refusing to let guilt seep in more than that, not when they’re
here for the fucking Death Star, and then he turns his speeder bike around and heads back the way
they came to look for Leia.

The scorched tree her bike had wrecked on isn’t hard to find, but there’s no telling where she’d
jumped off. Bodhi doesn’t dare to shout for her, in case there are more Imperials patrolling the forest,
and if she’s ignoring that danger and yelling for him or Luke, he can’t hear it over the speeder bike’s
engine, which is—making concerning sputtering noises, like no one’s bothered to maintain it
recently, and the handgrip controls are responding erratically.

Bodhi puts down and dismounts, checking the speeder over as best he can and wishing for his tools.
He can’t exactly do anything with just the rocks and sticks lying around, not even pry the engine
compartment open to have a look at what’s wrong. It might hold until he finds Leia, or it might give
out while he’s racing along at a couple hundred kilometers an hour—

—or it might not start up again at all.

Bodhi groans and aims a kick at the back of it; he’s going to have to search for her on foot. He
checks the cargo compartment for supplies, turning up a couple of ration bars and a canteen. Then he
straightens, and pushes his goggles up on to his forehead with trembling hands.

It’s fine. Luke will know where we are.

He scans the forest just in case Luke’s speeder bike emerges from the trees, but he doesn’t even hear
the distinctive whine of its repulsorlift.
“Should’ve stayed with the ship,” Bodhi mutters, not quite meaning it, and sets off.

Chapter End Notes

So many thanks to morag for the thorough beta, and thanks so much to everyone who's stuck around as we close in on one. hundred. chapters, and somewhere not too long after that, the end. <3 <3 <3
Chapter 100

Chapter Summary

These things are everywhere.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Being lost in the forest isn’t as frightening as Bodhi dreads.

For one, Bodhi isn’t quite lost; he can’t help trampling the plants underfoot, and he’s left dozens of bent ferns and broken branches in his wake. He knows exactly where he is in relationship to the useless speeder bike, and if Luke flies over that, it shouldn’t be too hard to figure out where Bodhi’s gone.

For another, it’s a rainforest, though it’s not even close to as hot and humid as Yavin IV or Darlyn Boda. Getting lost on Tatooine—or Jedha—with only a couple of ration bars and a canteen three-quarters full would’ve been a lot more dangerous just for the dehydration factor alone.

Bodhi suspects he might wind up disagreeing with himself on that if it does start raining, though. The light is strange, filtered and misty; he’s dared to look up and check the sky for clouds a couple of times, pretty sure he’s still far enough away from the shield generator that the Death Star won’t be visible, and been unable to see anything except the trees.

Which is fine. He doesn’t need to see it again. It casts a long enough shadow over his thoughts already.

Bodhi’s sure Luke has to be picking up on that, even if it’s not really panic. He hasn’t even really needed to use the mental image of the Cadera to calm down, more worried about Leia and the prospect of how pissed Cassian’s going to be.

And Luke has to be around here somewhere—

The brush rustles nearby, faintly, and Bodhi turns—

—something small and furry hurtles out of the bushes, growling and waving a—spear?—

—and from behind him comes the distinct whine of an Imperial blaster powering up, and Bodhi’s heart sinks like a stone as he puts his hands in the air; his own blaster is still in its holster, completely out of reach—

“Oh, it’s you,” Leia says, relieved, and Bodhi spins around, gaping at her. “Hey, hey, it’s okay, he’s a friend,” she adds.

“Oh,” Bodhi says, as the little bear—it’s wearing clothes, or at least some kind of stitched leather cowl—grumbles at her and ventures a poke at Bodhi’s leg with its spear anyway.

Leia’s mouth twitches. She holds out a fold of her poncho and points at Bodhi. “Look, we’re wearing the same thing, not armor.” Bodhi stares at her, bemused, and she says, wryly, “He’s a little
paranoid."

“What—um, who—”


“Left my speeder ‘cause it stopped working. I don’t know where Luke is.” Bodhi edges out of range of the little bear’s spear. He’s still rumbling quietly at Bodhi, which would be a lot more menacing if he was the size of Chewbacca instead of about a meter tall, but the chipped stone point on the end of the spear does look pretty sharp. “He stayed behind to take care of a couple more scouts, but I thought he’d’ve shown up by now.”

“Maybe he went back to the squad,” Leia says. She looks down at the little bear. “Which is where we should go, too, now that I’ve found one of my friends.”

The bear shakes his head and reaches up for her hand with his free paw, jabbing his spear the opposite way and babbling something unintelligible at them both.

“What does he want from you?” Bodhi asks.

Leia smiles, crossing her arms so the bear can’t take her hand; he grumbles and shifts his weight from foot to foot, impatiently. “My best guess is the Imperials probably haven’t been treating him and his people very well, and after I helped him with the couple of scouts that tripped over me, he thinks we can help clear out the rest.”

“Don’t suppose you’ve been able to explain that’s what we’re here to do, huh.”

“Nope.”

“Well,” Bodhi starts, hesitantly. “At—at least he knows we’re not here to hurt him, so maybe we could head back?” He jerks his head in what he’s pretty sure is the right direction and takes a step, and the little bear immediately circles around him, chattering and prodding him with the spear. “Hey, stop that.”

“I think he wants you to stick around,” Leia says, amused.

The bear pokes Bodhi again, harder, and he demands, “And you—you’re just gonna go along with this?” Leia raises her eyebrows at him, and Bodhi abruptly realizes that is not the tone of voice he should be using with her, especially when the bear starts to growl again, showing his teeth. “Um, I—I didn’t mean—”

“It’s fine, Bodhi,” Leia says. “Yes. I can’t explain it, but I feel like I’m going the right way.” A slight frown crosses her face, but she shakes it off. “I’d tell you to go on back to the others, but I don’t think our furry little friend is going to let you.”

“Okay,” Bodhi mutters, and sidles towards her. “See? I’m going, I’m going.” The bear gives him a satisfied chirrup and ambles on past him, beckoning them to follow with a wave of his spear.

“Maybe if he knows where other Imperials scouts are on patrol, if he takes us there, we could—we could take their speeder bikes?”

“I’m not particularly interested in repeating the experience,” Leia admits, dryly.

Bodhi trails reluctantly after her and the bear. “Luke’s supposed to be focused on helping Cassian with the mission, not coming after me,” he says, glancing over his shoulder and trying to memorize
how the trees look; once they get too far from the disabled speeder, there’ll be little chance of him being able to backtrack any further. “’Cause—he’s gonna be worried about me. Us. And—and this is just distracting him from—”

“Helping Cassian?”

Bodhi gulps. “Not—uh, not just Cassian, every—everybody, you know, who’s here to bring down the shield.”

“Uh-huh.” Leia stops and eyes him up and down critically. “Are you giving Luke more of a reason to worry than I think you are?”

“What?”

“Are you panicking,” Leia clarifies.

Bodhi throws his hands in the air. “We’re wandering through a forest with no idea where we’re going, except farther and farther away from the team that’s supposed to help destroy the Death Star and—and maybe closer to Imperials—”

Leia nods. “You’re still coherent, that’s a good sign,” she observes, and Bodhi gapes at her outright.

“Listen, I know Luke has faith that you’ll be all right, and it’s not like you’re going into Jabba’s palace with only Lando at your side, hmm? You’ve got me, and this little fellow.” She frowns and scans the foliage. “Where’d he go?”

“I don’t—” Bodhi gets out, and then the little bear barrels back out of the underbrush, chattering quietly and signaling for them to get down. Bodhi promptly flattens himself to the forest floor, and around the far side of the nearest gigantic tree trunk, he can hear the filtered electronic sound of troopers talking. Leia draws her blaster—points fiercely at Bodhi to do the same, and then she creeps forward.

Oh, fuck.

His heartbeat quickening, Bodhi follows. The bear is rumbling angrily but softly, and when Bodhi’s finally able to see through the ferns into the clearing, he can see why. The stormtroopers are—quoting regulations at two more of the little bear’s people, and as Bodhi and Leia watch, a trooper jerks the spear out of the cream-colored bear’s paws, yanking them to the ground.

“We have to help your friends,” Leia hisses, and Bodhi looks to their escort, but he’s run off, scampering up another nearby tree. “What is he doing?”

“I don’t know, but he’s starting to remind me of someone,” Bodhi mutters, wryly.

“Funny. I’m going to see if I can get a better shot,” Leia says, and melts into the bushes. Bodhi squints up into the trees for the little bear, but can’t figure out where he went, through all the leaves. He takes a breath, trying to steady his hand on the blaster Kaytoo had given him; Leia’s going to expect him to fight.

One of the troopers says, irritably, “Can you believe it? These things are everywhere. Primitives. I’m surprised the Empire didn’t deal with them when we arrived. Is that another weapon?” He snatches something from the gray-furred bear, and tosses them casually away like they weigh nothing when they try to grab it back. The cream-colored bear rushes to their friend’s side, growling uselessly at the stormtroopers, and Bodhi swallows hard and pushes up to one knee, prepared to try to distract them —
—a pile of vines fall out of the tree above the troopers—no, not a pile of vines, they’re looped and tied into a lasso—

“Hey, what the—”

—and then the little bear lets out a yell and leaps from a branch up high, providing a counterweight as the lasso snare the troopers and hauls them kicking into the air, dropping the spear and whatever they’d taken from the other bear—but not their blasters. The bear chatters happily to his friends as he lands on the ground, but he’s so small, and the troopers outweigh him at least three to one—

“Blast him!” the trooper yells, as they start to fall again. Jolted back up into the air, the little bear swings back and forth, refusing to let go of the vine, even as the blaster fire nearly singes his fur, and Bodhi’s up and moving, without a clue what he’s going to do—

“Hang on!” Leia darts out of the trees and leaps for the bear’s end of the vine, adding her weight and yanking the troopers back up.

Which solves nothing, because even though they’re swaying wildly, the troopers still have their blaster rifles, and instead of shooting at Leia and the bear, they’re aiming at the two bears still on the ground—

No, no—

Bodhi dives at the bears, hoping he can knock both of them out of the line of fire. He tumbles to the ground with the gray bear squirming and kicking in his arms, but the other one scrambles away, grabbing their spear and rolling to their feet. Overhead, Leia’s struggling to hold onto the bear and get a clean shot at the stormtroopers at the same time. Bodhi cringes, and lifts his own blaster—

—but the cream-colored bear’s taken their shot, and the spear glides through the air in an perfect arc—

—and thunks soundly into the armor-plated chest of one of the troopers.

His eyes widening in shock, Bodhi hurriedly lets go of the gray bear; they scurry over to retrieve the small stone knife, waving it up at the remaining stormtrooper and growling.

It’s a lot more menacing now.

The stormtrooper sprays more blaster fire at the ground, uselessly; he’s kicked off of the tree in the wrong direction, but he’s swinging back and shouting, “You little—”

“Gotcha,” Leia says grimly, and fires.

Then Leia lets go of the vine—they’re not far off the ground now, and she mostly keeps her feet when she lands. The bear swings over to the tree and scrambles down the trunk, chattering proudly to his friends as the dead stormtroopers fall in a heap.

“That worked out better than I thought,” Leia says, dusting herself off and coming over to give Bodhi a hand up.

“Yeah.” Bodhi brushes dirt and branches off of his poncho, a bit dazed. Leia nods at the bears, respectfully, and then she goes back to the stormtroopers’ bodies to retrieve their blasters.

The little bear practically bounces across the clearing, chanting something melodic; he can make out a very enthusiastic “Yub!” which the gray bear echoes, although with less zeal. They pat the little
bear on the shoulder, in almost exactly the same way Baze might touch Jyn or Bodhi, and Bodhi studies them more closely, noticing the minor height difference, the touch of slightly lighter fur around the gray bear’s muzzle—

“Stars, he’s just a kid,” he says, horrified.

“What?”

“The—” Bodhi points at the little bear, who’s doing absolutely nothing to dispel Bodhi’s impression of his youthfulness by turning cartwheels around Leia in the dirt while the other two bears confer quietly. “The one that’s been leading us around the forest, alone, he—he can’t be more than, uh, a kid.”

Leia straightens up, furrowing her brow at him. “And?”

Bodhi looks at her, and then at the little bear again. He’s climbed up onto the pile of stormtroopers and is playfully tugging at Leia’s hand like she hadn’t just shot someone—

—Leia, who’d done more for the galaxy by the time she was sixteen than literally everyone else Bodhi knows, except maybe Cassian.

(“—since I was six years old—”)

“Never mind,” Bodhi says, faintly. He feels a light tap on his thigh, and looks down. The gray bear nods at him; they’ve put away their stone knife and beckon him with an empty paw.

“Wherever they’re taking us, I think our escort just tripled,” Leia says. The little bear hops down from the bodies, reaching up for Leia’s hand. She lets him tug her over to Bodhi, and then the little bear puts his free paw in Bodhi’s hand, kicking off the ground and swinging his legs happily between them. “Any more objections, Captain?”

Bodhi looks at the cream-colored bear. They’ve rolled the stormtrooper over, and are having minimal difficulty pulling their spear back out of the trooper’s armor.

He shakes his head, swallowing; despite the dampness of the forest, his throat’s gone totally dry. “None whatsoever, Your Highness.”

*****

The bears end up leading Bodhi and Leia to a massive village strung through the trees, several meters above the forest floor. Smoke wafts out of huts here and there, occasionally scented like whatever meat the diminutive bears must hunt. The other bears who Bodhi and Leia pass on the bridges and winding ramps don’t seem too concerned with their presence; Bodhi figures they look different enough from the Imperials in white armor that they don’t raise much alarm.

Plus, the little bear—evidently bored of walking at the humans’ pace, and informed by his elders that he can’t just disappear into the trees or hop onto a vine—has decided to climb Bodhi for a piggyback ride, blissfully investigating Bodhi’s hair and goggles and chattering in his ear. It’s not the most comfortable arrangement, but it is, judging by Leia’s smirk, probably kind of cute. Her bearing is precise and regal despite the dirt and leaves in her hair and clothes, and if anything, she looks like she’s simply on another diplomatic mission, doing her best to carry on a conversation that neither party fully understands.

Their escorts eventually show Bodhi and Leia to a surprisingly large hut on the outer edge of the village, and the little bear climbs back down off of Bodhi’s shoulders and goes to take Leia’s hand.
Inside, the gray bear immediately goes to the fire pit in the center of the floor and starts striking rocks together to light it, gesturing for Bodhi to watch closely.

Bodhi blinks at them a couple of times, and then dutifully crouches down by the fire pit. “I think they think we’re gonna be staying here for a while,” he says to Leia.

“At least it’s cozy,” Leia replies. The little bear is towing her around the perimeter of the room, pointing out the hammocks—“I might fit on one of these, but I think my friend is going to have to lose a few centimeters”—the hatch in the floor where clay pots with some kind of foodstuffs are kept, and the cleverly rigged loft storage for a lot of stone weapons.

After the bears are satisfied that their guests are properly situated—the fire is small but steady, and Bodhi has adequately demonstrated to the gray one that he understands how the rocks work, to Leia’s barely-suppressed amusement—they depart.

“Well, I have to say, this is a different kind of reminder of what we’re fighting for,” Leia says, leaning against the railing of the bridge and watching them go. The little bear isn’t sticking to the walkways this time, leaping from vine to vine and twirling around rope ladders. “You saw how those troopers treated them. The Empire won’t hesitate to test the new Death Star on this world.”

She says it in such a calm, matter-of-fact tone that at first Bodhi doesn’t completely register her words, but as they sink in he can’t help glancing up into the canopy again, nervously searching for the unfinished sphere through the trees.

When he looks back at Leia, she’s once again watching him carefully. “Since we talked after Chandrila, have you given any more thought to where you’d like to go after the war?” she asks. “I don’t expect Luke made you an offer of a place on Tatooine.”

Bodhi makes a face, although considering the Darklighters’ welcome, he allows, “His family’s farm wasn’t as bad as he made it out to be. But, uh, not really. I thought I would go with Luke, if—if I can—he won’t have to keep his new master a secret, right, if the Emperor’s gone? Otherwise I don’t—”

He shakes his head at himself. Of course he knows. “Wherever my family goes. Or, you know, back and forth, if we don’t all stay together.” Bodhi bites his lip, feeling a little strange. It isn’t as if his friends have always been in the same place at the same time over the last few years, but no one in the Alliance had ever ordered them to different bases, and none of their missions had ever kept them apart for longer than a few weeks. Maybe a couple of months.

“I’ve known Cassian a long time,” Leia says. “He’d help liberate Fest if I or anyone else asked, but I think—” She pauses, gazing down the ramp. “Are they coming back?”

Bodhi turns. The trio of bears is returning, carrying shapeless bundles in their paws.

Leia crouches in front of the little one, putting herself at eye level, and he chatters happily at her and sweeps a paw at the cream-colored bear, who holds out one of the bundles. “Is that for me?”

The gray bear tugs at the hem of Bodhi’s poncho, and he looks down; they push a bundle into his hands, too, and mime putting on a pair of pants, awkwardly, like they don’t really know what pants are for.

“Well, thank you, I think,” Bodhi says. The bear chatters at him and points to the hut—“You want us to change? Put these on?” The bear nods, but Bodhi hangs back to wait for Leia to go first.

But Leia just shrugs. “We can help each other with our hair,” she says, dryly.
Inside the hut, Leia lets out a soft, delighted gasp as she shakes out her dress, like it’s the finest thing she’s ever seen. Bodhi’s pretty impressed at the bears’ handiwork, too; he wouldn’t have thought they could manage fine weaving and stitching with their paws.

*Measuring*—well, probably estimating, Bodhi figures, none of the bears had exactly gone for his inseam—is apparently not their strong suit. While the pants are made out of the softest leather he’s ever felt and more importantly, *not mesh*, they are very tight, and even spending five minutes trying to adjust the leather strips lacing up the legs doesn’t help a whole lot.

“And I thought Han’s bloodstripe pants were tight,” Leia mutters, and Bodhi feels his face warm.

“Maybe I’ll change back,” Bodhi suggests. “I—I’ve got the shirt on?” He plucks at it hopefully; it, at least, is looser-fitting, made out of the same fabric and with the same asymmetrical hem as Leia’s new dress.

“Oh, I’m certain that would be poor etiquette,” Leia says, and although she sounds cheerful, Bodhi’s pretty sure she isn’t actually joking.

Leia *also* wasn’t kidding about her hair, either. Bodhi hasn’t seen it out of her usual Alderaanian braided hairstyles before, and she has *considerably* more of it than he does to brush. Borrowing the bears’ brushes probably isn’t the best idea—who knows what kinds of things live in their fur—but when Leia holds the brush she finds over the fire for a minute, nothing obvious scurries out of the bristles.

“Normally I have Winter to help with the customary hundred brushstrokes.” Leia sighs, and then she laughs at the look on Bodhi’s face. “Do you mind fixing my braids while I get the rest untangled?”

Bodhi shakes his head, and comes over to her seat by the fire to help. His fingers remember what to do, somehow, even if he can’t seem to pull up a memory of doing this for his mother. A lump catches in his throat and his hands tremble; to cover, he asks, “Where is Winter? Is she—I haven’t seen her for—for months, not since Abidon.”

“She’s on Chandrila,” Leia says. She tilts her head slightly to give him better access to the braid he’s working on. “Which is where I’ll go after this is all over, along with anyone who wants to come with me.”

“To be with the Alderaanian refugees there? Your people?”

“To start to rebuild the Republic,” Leia says. She is quiet for a moment, looking into the flames. “*Your* people will need someone to represent them.”

“I’m sorry, what?” Bodhi’s hands stop moving, and he stares blankly at the crown of her head.

Leia takes the end of her braid out of his hand. “I’ve mentioned it to Chirrut and Baze before—”

Bodhi steps back from her, too startled to be upset. “Leia, you can’t—you’re talking about this like you know we’re going to win, like it—it’s really going to be over after tomorrow.”

“Probably not tomorrow,” Leia says. “But soon enough.” She gets to her feet and pats his shoulder. “Just something to think about. You’ll have options, Bodhi.”

“If I *survive* tomorrow,” Bodhi mutters.

“I’m sure Luke will see to that,” Leia says, lightly. “Come on, our hosts are waiting.”
The sky is darkening when they come out on the walkway again, more bears above and below lighting torches on the bridges and ramps. The gray bear promptly looks Bodhi over, fussing slightly over the laces along his right leg; he’s beginning to think of them a bit like he would an auntie or uncle back home on Jedha.

“Thank you, it’s a beautiful dress,” Leia says to the little bear. He chatters to the cream-colored bear—Bodhi catches a cheerful “Yub yub!” again, and decides it must mean something positive. “Does it come with a spear?” Leia points at the one the little bear’s carrying.

He bounces up and down on his toes, and puts the spear into her grasp. The two other bears are clearly amused as Leia gets her hands on it, but nod approvingly as she adjusts her grip to emulate the way Chirrut would hold his staff. “It’s perfect,” she says, and then, with a glimmer of a teasing smile, “Bodhi, you want one?”

Bodhi snorts, and puts his hands up to decline the gray bear’s offer of their own. “Didn’t want the blaster, definitely don’t want a spear, but thank you.”

The cream-colored bear starts back across the bridge, saying something to the little one, who stops playing around with Leia’s skirts and reaches up to tug at her hand again.

“Guess we’re finally presentable enough for the rest of the village,” Leia says, and lets herself be escorted. Even with the primitive stone spear in her hand, she looks every centimeter the Princess, and Bodhi self-consciously straightens his shirt.

The little bear seems very excited as they descend to ground level, just like a kid invited to do something grown-up for the first time. There are also a lot of other bears converging on the center of the village, and although Bodhi isn’t too concerned about the ones he and Leia have already met, there are some decidedly fiercer-looking ones adorned with teeth and claws.

He meets her eyes as she sets her foot on the last ladder leading down into one of the larger huts on the ground. Outside the hut, Bodhi makes out snatches of singing and drumming, and as much conversation as a busy market on any world, and if he had to guess, there are at least a hundred of the bears waiting. “Uh, Leia, you’ve got some idea how to talk to these people, right?”

Leia raises an eyebrow.


“Trust me,” she says, and climbs down. A handful of bears make room for her on the ground, and she turns toward the doorway and gasps.

Bodhi scrambles down the ladder after her, his boots barely touching the rungs, his heart pounding in his chest; Leia never loses her cool like that. “Are you all right?”

“Leia!”

That’s Han, echoed immediately by Luke, and Bodhi jumps off the ladder a few rungs early, ducks out of the doorway, and immediately freezes in consternation.

“What in blazes—”

Threepio exclaims, from his—throne, “Your Royal Highness! And Captain Rook, how wonderful you’re both still alive.”

Down in the center of the plaza, Han is tied to a spit over a growing pile of firewood, looking
aggrieved. Alarmed, Bodhi searches through the assembled bears for Luke and finds him and Chewbacca bound to two more poles by their arms and legs.

Luke, understandably, looks less annoyed than Han, and his face lights up as Bodhi attempts to get through the horde of bears toward him. “Hi, Bodhi.”

“What the hell happened?” An arc of raised spears keeps Bodhi back, and he doesn’t recognize any of the bears wielding them. “Are you okay?”


“Uh, thanks,” Bodhi says, bemused. “What—”

Behind Bodhi, Leia tries, “But these are my friends. Threepio, tell them they must be set free!”

Threepio waves his arm in acknowledgement and says something to the two decorated bears attending him. The light-striped bear shakes their head and barks an order, and the bears by the fire pit heap more wood under Han.

“Somehow I got the feeling that didn’t help us very much,” Han grumbles. At Threepio’s side, Artoo—secured to a travois with more ropes and vines—blats something rude.

Luke’s expression of mild amusement doesn’t change. “Don’t go anywhere, Bodhi, this should just take a moment.” He raises his voice. “Threepio, tell them if they don’t do as you wish, you’ll become angry and use your magic.”


Threepio speaks the bears’ language again, obviously warning them, but it has no effect; two bears bring torches over to the fire pit, awaiting a signal from their light-striped leader.

“Well,” Han snaps, and blows uselessly at the flames.

“You see, Master Luke, they didn’t believe me,” Threepio says, despairingly. “Just as I said they wouldn’t—what—what’s happening?” His throne begins to levitate from the elevated platform, centimeter by centimeter, and the diminutive bears panic, rushing away from him in a wave and nearly knocking Leia over.

Bodhi flattens himself against the side of the nearest hut so he won’t be trampled, glancing reflexively at Luke’s serene face as Threepio pleads for help, impressed despite himself; it can’t have been that long since Luke couldn’t even lift his flight jacket with the Force.

Luke opens his eyes once Threepio’s throne starts to rotate in midair, and the corner of his mouth twitches as he meets Bodhi’s slightly astonished gaze. Most of the bears have scattered or are cowering in the corners of the plaza, but the light-striped one shouts orders and Han, Luke, and Chewbacca are swiftly untied. Up on the platform, a bear cuts through Artoo’s ropes and he pitches forward onto the deck, chirping furiously while they help him up.

Bodhi figures Artoo can handle himself, and makes his way over to Luke, ducking Chewbacca’s heavy paw on his shoulder as they pass each other. His heart is still pounding in his chest despite his relief, and he anxiously catches at Luke’s left hand and shoves Luke’s sleeve up; his wrist is reddened from the ropes, but not rubbed raw. “You’re really okay?”
“I’m fine.” Luke looks down at their hands, at Bodhi’s thumb gently stroking the rope marks. “Glad you are, too—I knew you were all right, I could feel it, but I didn’t know you were with Leia this whole time—”

Overhead, Threepio’s yelling is growing more agitated as he continues to spin. Luke waves his hand vaguely and the throne starts to descend again, to the poor droid’s vocal relief. “Or that you’d made friends with the same people that captured us. You got clothes, not served up for dinner.” He sneaks a hand onto Bodhi’s hip and looks up through his eyelashes at Bodhi. “I mean, the way you look in these pants, I could eat y—”

Leia clears her throat behind them, and Luke blushes all the way to his ears.

“You gotta admit, Leia, they are really tight,” Han says, unhelpfully, and Bodhi turns around, gaping at him.

Leia rolls her eyes, but only says, “Where’d you leave the rest of the squad?”

“Gave Andor command of the team and told ‘em to go wait for us at the rendezvous point,” Han says, blithely.

“After I assured Cassian that you weren’t in any danger and I’d bring you back safely,” Luke murmurs to Bodhi.

“So what are we waiting for?” Bodhi asks. “You found us, no one got eaten, let’s get back to—”

Han gets a crafty look on his face, and Bodhi suppresses a groan. “Now, hang on a sec. Leia said these fuzzballs did some serious damage to those troopers you ran into, and we’ve got His Golden Godliness to translate. What if we talked them into giving us a little help?”

Leia crosses her arms. “That was what I was going to do before you showed up.”

“Right, without Threepio, sure,” Han says.

“Yes,” Leia says.

Luke taps her on the shoulder. “Uh, hate to interrupt, but do you really need us for this? It’s late, I am getting hungry, and there’s gotta be something around here to eat besides Han.”

“Real fucking funny,” Han mutters. “Yeah, go on. Me, Her Royalnessness, and the Almighty Goldenrod can handle negotiating with these guys.” Luke waits a beat for Leia to finish scowling at Han, and then she shrugs and waves them off.

“There’s some food in the hut they put us in,” Bodhi says, jerking a thumb skyward. He’s pretty sure he remembers how to get back to it, anyway.


“Just make sure it ain’t people you’re eating,” Han calls after them.

*****

Night has almost completely darkened the forest by the time Bodhi and Luke locate the hut again. It takes Bodhi a minute to relight the fire—Luke grins at him for using the rocks and not just taking out his blaster, but doesn’t say anything while he circles the hut, examining the bears’ things curiously.

“Their food is under that hatch over there,” Bodhi says, kicking his boots off before dragging over
his discarded poncho and some sleeping furs to sit on. “Got some ration bars off the speeder bike, if you don’t trust it after—after that.”

“Yeah, don’t think I want to try this jerky after all,” Luke mutters, but he pushes over a clay pot containing what looks kind of like ration bars, if bears made ration bars, studded with bits of berries and nuts. “There’s a couple jars of something alcoholic, if you want to try it,” he says.

Bodhi looks up from the bears’ food; it’s sticky, but it doesn’t taste any worse than a regular Imperial ration bar, and has something actually approximating flavor. “How alcoholic are you talking?”

Luke takes the lid off of one of the jars, sniffs it, and makes a face. “Strong enough that we wouldn’t be much help on the mission tomorrow.”

“Skip it,” Bodhi says, around another mouthful.

“Yeah,” Luke agrees, and comes to sit with Bodhi by the fire. He’s taken a handful of berries out of the bears’ foodstuffs, and Bodhi eyes them curiously, trying to match the different kinds of fruit to the mashed-up pieces in the bar. “Hey, get your own,” Luke says, and shoves the entire handful in his mouth.

Bodhi laughs, and leans over to wipe at the smudge of berry juice on Luke’s chin with his fingers—stills, as Luke takes hold of his hand and licks his fingers clean. His heartbeat is speeding up, but pleasantly; they’re alone in the treetops, and Luke’s eyes are warm, not just from the reflected firelight.

“I meant it, before,” Luke says, gently caressing Bodhi’s hand. “I could sense you were all right, even all the way out here.” His fingertips brush the scars around Bodhi’s wrist, almost imperceptibly.

“Even when we ran into those stormtroopers?”

Luke shrugs. “I mean, who wouldn’t be concerned about that?”

“Not you,” Bodhi murmurs. “You probably would’ve done just what Leia did.”

“Ha. From what I heard, I tried to do what you did, to stop Chewie from getting himself into trouble.”

“Guess I’m rubbing off on you, huh.”

Luke huffs a laugh, and Bodhi’s face heats as he realizes what he’s said. “Well, you could,” Luke says, cheerfully. “If you can even get out of those pants—”

“I thought you liked these pants.”

“Oh, believe me, I do.” Luke leans back on his elbows and making a funny little flicking gesture with his fingers. Bodhi twitches in surprise; the laces are all coming undone of their own accord.

“Neat trick,” Bodhi says, wryly, and then he pulls his shirt off over his head and flops down on the furs, wadding up his poncho for a pillow.

“Works better if you hold still,” Luke mutters, but he’s tossed his own poncho aside and started to strip out of his black tunic and pants. The leather lacing along his left leg’s worked itself completely free, and Luke picks it off the floorboards thoughtfully as Bodhi shivers and digs his toes into the soft fur. “Lacing them back up like that’s gonna take a lot longer—I hope you weren’t planning on wearing them again tomorrow for the mission.”
Bodhi grimaces at the idea; Jyn would never let him hear the end of it if he did.

“And quit wiggling,” Luke orders, kneeling over Bodhi and trailing the end of the lace across Bodhi’s bare skin, making him squirm more. “I’m still working on the other one.”

Bodhi laughs. “Make me,” he says, and reaches up, intending to pull Luke down to him, but instead Luke raises his eyebrows and very, very carefully lays the long strip of leather over Bodhi’s wrist.

“Only if you want me to,” Luke says, softly.

Bodhi looks at him. The other lace is still slithering out of the eyelets along his right leg; it feels sort of strange, but nothing at all like—like anything Bodhi doesn’t want to think about right now, not with Luke kneeling patiently between his legs.

And it had worked, that time on Tatooine. He’d been put in binders and dragged around, and none of it had made him panic, not really, not after they had—

He licks his lips. “I hope—tomorrow, I hope there’s no reason to—but some practice probably, um, won’t—won’t hurt.”

Luke’s face falls, a little, and he starts, “Bodhi, I promised I’d never—” but Bodhi sits up and pulls him in for a kiss, grabbing the leather strip before it can fall off his arm and wrapping it around his wrist.

“Just like—like with the scarf,” Bodhi murmurs into Luke’s mouth. “Maybe not just like that, could do without Leia trying to break down the door after.”

Luke kisses Bodhi back, and then gently pushes him down, repositioning his hands above his head and adjusting the laces so Bodhi has plenty of slack before knotting the ends. “I’m sure she’s got her hands full,” he says, and sits back on his heels. “Doing okay?”

Bodhi leans his head back against his arms to take in the sight of Luke, practically glowing golden in the firelight. Even though his pants have been completely unlaced along both legs, they’re still really tight, in a different and much nicer way.

“I—I’m great,” Bodhi says, hoarsely. He fidgets, shifting his hips, and Luke’s gaze flicks down from his face for a second.

“Stars,” Luke breathes, and then he’s stretching himself out alongside Bodhi, pressing his lips to his favorite spot on Bodhi’s neck, his left hand fumbling with the remaining laces of Bodhi’s pants to relieve the strain. Bodhi gasps at Luke’s touch, thinking, finally—they’d been thwarted at every turn on the Redemption, but this—

“This is better,” Bodhi pants, and even though there’s absolutely no way Luke would break Bodhi’s mind, he hums in agreement.

It’s not a race, for once. Luke strokes Bodhi steadily, mostly with his actual hands and not the Force, and covers him in leisurely kisses, tasting like berries when Bodhi’s able to capture his mouth. He’s chasing that sweetness with his tongue when Luke brings him over the edge, and for a moment he can only shudder in surprise under Luke’s caressing hands.

Then he reaches for Luke again, only to be stymied by his bound wrists; the angle’s too hard, and Bodhi makes himself sit up, levering Luke with him. The fire’s still burning well enough to make Luke’s hair shine bright as the sun, and Bodhi leans in and drops a kiss on the top of his head.
“What? What is it?” Luke says. His eyes have gone half-lidded, and his mouth is red from kisses and probably berry juice.

“Want to touch you properly,” Bodhi says, and holds his wrists out to Luke.

Luke smiles, and bends his head closer to untie him. Bodhi’s hands slip free of the laces, and then he’s touching Luke, feeling him taut and arching into his grasp; loving the soft moans that Luke can’t bite back, the sharp gasp of his name from Luke’s lips as he comes.

Bodhi cleans them both up with the first piece of familiar fabric that comes to hand, and then he puts his arms around Luke, and goes over onto his back, down into the soft furs again.

Luke nestles his head into the crook of Bodhi’s shoulder, sated and sleepy. “I’m just gonna lie here for a minute,” he mumbles into Bodhi’s hair. “Then I’m gonna go see how Han and Leia are doing with the negotiations.”

Bodhi strokes his hand over Luke’s bare, well-muscled back, watching the flames cast dancing shadows on the thatched ceiling of the hut. “I’ll come with you.”

“Okay.” Luke kisses his neck, the merest whisper of sensation, and then he says, somewhat indistinctly, “Glad I found you, Bodhi.”

“Me too,” Bodhi says, softly. “I love you.”


With Luke in his arms, for the moment both safe and utterly content, Bodhi lets his eyes drift shut.

Just for a minute.

****

When Bodhi wakes up the next morning, Luke is gone.
Chapter End Notes

\o/ Chapter 100!! Really not much more to go, now. O_O

Thanks to morag, of course, and thanks to you, dear readers. <3 <3 <3

References:
- Forces of Destiny: Ewok Escape
- Bright Tree Village
- Bloodstripe pants
- Bodhi’s pants :)
- Called dibs on this a year ago, and it’s finally happening XD

Art by daryshka
Chapter 101

Chapter Summary

This isn't going to be easy.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Of all the people Bodhi expects to be staring at him in the bears’ thatched hut when he wakes up before sunrise—

—well, discovering Leia sitting in front of the door, blaster resting on the sleeping mat at her side, and in the act of pinning up her braids isn't actually that surprising, even if it does make Bodhi grab at his discarded clothing to cover himself.

“After Jabba's, I don't think you need to worry about your modesty with me,” Leia says, dryly, but she politely averts her gaze as Bodhi scrambles to get dressed.

“What's going on? Did you and Han make a deal with—with the bears?” Bodhi pulls his poncho on over his flight jacket and rakes his fingers through his unruly hair before settling his goggles atop his head. “Where's Luke?”

“We're heading out to join the rest of the squad once you're ready. The bears—Threepio says they call themselves Ewoks—are going to show us a safe trail to take to the shield generator. And Luke—” Leia presses her lips into a thin line, studying Bodhi's face, and his heartbeat quickens. He isn't sure why; at first glance her own expression gives nothing away, but he meets her scrutiny with his own, and he recognizes a shadow of that long cold night on Hoth in her eyes.

“He isn't out meditating or—or something like that,” Bodhi says, weakly.

Leia shakes her head. “Luke went to the Imperial base late last night to keep Vader's attention away from us. From our mission.”

She has more to say, but Bodhi can no longer make out her words over the buzzing, roaring noise in his ears. He sits down with a thump, his heart pounding almost painfully.

Vader?

His breath comes in sharp frightened gasps. Luke had sensed Vader on the approach to Endor and dismissed it like he’d tried to dismiss his bad feeling about Arbra, but he’d been right after all—oh, Luke—

Bodhi bites his lip, his head reeling. He hadn’t even noticed that the reassuring warmth of Luke’s body was gone until he woke to a dying fire; he doesn’t remember Luke getting up from the sleeping mat during the night, or kissing him goodbye—

Did he even say anything?

He just—left.
Fury scorches up through his fear.

He—

How could he leave?

How could he be—

“—so fucking reckless,” Bodhi grits through his teeth, and Leia actually stops talking and gapes at him a little. “Just like that, he—he just takes off without backup, without saying anything to me, and—and he's gonna—” Bodhi stammers to a halt, cold horror prickling down his spine.

My vision.

By all the stars—

Leia reaches over and puts a hand on his arm. “He's following the will of the Force,” she says, without much conviction.

“He's gonna get himself killed,” Bodhi snaps, shaking off her hand and the memory of Luke's screams, clinging instead to the strength of his anger and a startling clarity about how Cassian must constantly feel. “No, no—I'm going to kill him when he comes back.”

Leia's eyes blaze to life like coals. She picks up her blaster and stands. “Get in line,” she says, and Bodhi momentarily shoves aside his own frantic fury to wonder what Luke must have said for her face to be so pale and pissed off at the same time. “But right now Luke's doing the job he thinks he has to do, so we can do ours. Got it?”

Bodhi draws a trembling breath and nods.

Luke won't break his promise. He won't. He won't.

But Bodhi offers up a fragile, desperate prayer to the Force as he follows Leia back down into the forest.

*****

Trying to keep pace with the Ewoks through the trees in the haze of dawn prevents Bodhi from dwelling too much on what Luke’s done, or what the Empire—Vader—might be doing to him, though his anger lingers in the recesses of his mind. A handful of the little bears stay with Bodhi and the others on the ground, pushing through ferns taller than they are; Leia’s friend Wicket leaps into the trees and swings across the path on vines, chattering excitedly, and Bodhi figures there must be more of the Ewoks traveling overhead.

Han, however, is uncharacteristically quiet, sticking close to Leia without any of his usual sarcastic barbs—at least until they arrive at the rendezvous point.

“Sending the blind man out to keep watch, that’s an interesting choice,” Han says, as Chirrut rises from his crouched position in the bushes and Cassian comes out from behind a tree to greet them, clasping Bodhi’s hand with obvious relief.

“I don’t need to see to know your nerf herd is on the way,” Chirrut retorts brightly, stepping aside to let Artoo trundle past him and head straight for Kaytoo, warbling you will not believe— “Who is all that with you?”
Han grins and pats Wicket’s head; the Ewok is curiously sniffing at Chirrut’s robes. “Let’s call ‘em the local resistance movement.”

“You’re sure we can trust them,” Cassian says, and then he looks at Bodhi again, frowning. “Commander Skywalker isn’t with you?”

“He’s providing a distraction,” Leia says, and gives the Pathfinders who have emerged from cover the same brief explanation she’d given Bodhi before they left the Ewok village. An uneasy murmur ripples through the squad at the news, and Jyn starts to slip through the bushes to Bodhi’s side—and is brought up short by an easily-agitated Ewok, who waves their spear and chastises her for sneaking up on them.

The corner of Jyn’s mouth quirks up. “Guess the camouflage works. Sort of twitchy little guys, aren’t they?”

“With good reason,” Bodhi says, relieved to talk about something else besides Luke’s disappearance. “Their whole forest is crawling with stormtroopers.”

“—surprised he made it here in one piece,” Cassian says, not quietly enough, and Bodhi glances over his shoulder to find his friend talking to Leia while the Pathfinders confer with Han and Chewbacca, Threepio, and one of the Ewok leaders.

Kaytoo’s astonished voice cuts through all the conversation for a second: “A god?”

“Primitive,” Baze says, drawing Bodhi’s attention back to the Ewok facing off nervously with Jyn. He’s caught the shaft of their spear in one hand and is skeptically examining the stone point while the Ewok protests. “They fight stormtroopers with this?”

Bodhi shrugs and does his best not to imagine the spear punching through plasteel armor again. “Seems like it worked pretty well yesterday.”

“Isn’t that basically what *Chirrut* fights with?” Jyn asks.

“—prepared to stun him if he tried to do something stupid,” Leia mutters, and Cassian huffs a faint laugh.

“Chirrut fights with whatever is around,” Baze says, sounding both proud and long-suffering. He lets go of the spear and nods to its owner gravely.

“Are you talking about Bodhi or our fearless leader?” Chirrut asks Leia.

*Wait, what?*

Bodhi jerks around, his eyes widening; Cassian glances at him, almost involuntarily, and then ducks his head slightly in apology before murmuring an answer to Chirrut.

*They think—*

*I wouldn’t have—*

But if he *had* woken up when Luke left—

Jyn touches Bodhi’s arm, and he looks down at her knowing gaze. “If they went around stunning everybody who did something stupid, there wouldn’t be a lot of us left to fight,” she says, wryly. “Not even Cassian.”
“Hey, I haven’t done anything stupid since I thawed out,” Han says, strolling over; for all that Leia and Cassian have obviously been trying to keep their discussion quiet, it seems like everyone’s heard them. “Aside from signing up for this, of course.”

He raises his voice. “Ready to move out—unless anybody needs some caf first? No? Okay then. Let’s get this over with.”

On their approach to the shield generator, Bodhi can’t help checking the sky every so often, when the sunlight breaks through the trees in long columns of light. The Death Star still isn’t visible, and not knowing when they might finally get into a position to see it only worsens his nerves.

Ahead on the trail, Cassian glances back just as Bodhi stops searching the sky for the tenth time. Bodhi shakes his head at him, trying to convey that he's—not fine, exactly, but okay to keep going. But Cassian stops walking and waits for a couple Pathfinders to pass and Bodhi to catch up.

“You—you don't have to keep an eye on me,” Bodhi mutters irritably, as Cassian falls back in step with him. He pulls his goggles off his head to fiddle with the strap instead of meeting Cassian’s eyes. “I’m not going to do anything to put the mission at risk. Didn't I help stop those scout troopers?”


Bodhi blinks at him. “He—he’s at the base,” he says, uncertainly. His mind paints a deliriously optimistic picture of Luke waiting for them there, his blue eyes sparkling, exhausted but triumphant—

“You saw Tantor’s blueprints,” Cassian says. “They could be holding him anywhere in there.”

“And then—and then what? If Luke is—if he's still—” Bodhi falters, but he clings to his impossible hope nonetheless. He doesn't have to come back if I find him first. "We can try to rescue him?"

Cassian nods, though his eyes are bleak. “And if he isn't—”

Bodhi trembles, but he cuts Cassian off, firmly. “The Force is with him.”

Cassian’s hand starts to move toward his neck in a strangely familiar gesture. He catches himself and reaches out to touch Bodhi’s arm, instead. “I hope so.”

A muffled growl from Chewbacca at the front quiets them both. Bodhi licks his lips anxiously and follows Cassian forward, dropping to the dirt and creeping up beside Jyn and a couple of Ewoks.

The base isn’t what lies in the clearing. There’s a landing pad like the kind Bodhi used to land his Zeta-class shuttles on, while the shield generator dish itself rises out of the trees a couple kilometers away. In the sudden silence, although Bodhi can’t see any patrols from his angle, he can hear the mechanical shuffles of Imperial walkers moving through the forest and the faint buzz of stormtroopers’ voices.

He wonders if Luke knows they’re coming.

“The layout generally corresponds to the maps Tantor gave us,” Kaytoo says to Han and Leia. He hasn’t bothered to crouch down, and is just standing next to the closest tree like an ominous shadow.
“So the main entrance to the control bunker’s on the far side of that landing platform,” Leia says, and Kaytoo gives her a confirming nod; it matches Bodhi’s own memory of these types of bases, too. She grimaces. “This isn’t going to be easy.”

Han turns and puts his back to the fallen log they’ve been peering over, frowning at their Ewok guides, who have begun to mutter to each other. “Hey, don’t worry, Chewie and me got into a lot of places more heavily guarded than this.” He clears dead leaves out of a patch of ground and hands Kaytoo a stick. “Draw us the map, will ya?”

Kaytoo looks at the stick in his hand with as much distaste as his expressionless face can convey. “Excuse me?” At Bodhi’s side, Jyn barely suppresses a snicker.

“Hold on,” Leia says. Wicket’s chirruping and gesturing excitedly at Threepio. “What’s he saying?”

“He says there’s a secret entrance on the other side of the ridge,” Threepio translates.

“Huh. Tantor forget to put that in, or what?”

Kaytoo opens his hand and lets the stick fall. “I don’t know, but I presume both you and Cassian will want to go there, instead.”

Han shrugs. “How about it, Colonel?”

“We could split the squad,” Cassian offers. He casts a glance at Baze and Chirrut. “Half stays here to attack the front, draw their attention, while the rest go through the other entrance.”

“Maybe,” Leia says. “But it’ll be difficult to coordinate without our comlinks, and I’d hate to lose the element of surprise.”

“Okay, so we’ll all go,” Han says, breezily. “Less chance of anyone doing something stupid that way, right?” He gets to his feet, brushing dirt off his pants, and twirls his finger in the air to signal the Pathfinders.

Bodhi looks down into the clearing again as they set off. Leia’s comment about the comlinks—if Luke had still been with them, he could have—What? Gone into someone’s mind to tell them when to attack?

It makes him shudder.

The Pathfinder closest to him notices. “Hanging in there, Captain?”

Bodhi swallows and musters up a nod; it’s the human man with the oddly recognizable face and white beard. “Just—just worried about Luke.”

The Pathfinder gives him a wry little smile. “Ah. Well, I’m sure he’ll come out all right. Skywalkers always do, even when they’ve done something pretty stupid.” He claps a hand on Bodhi’s back, reassuringly, and breaks into a jog to catch up to the others.

“Skywalkers—” Bodhi repeats, confused, and then he almost—almost opens his mouth to yell for the Pathfinder to come back and explain. But they’re scant kilometers from the Imperial base, almost certainly close to a heavily patrolled perimeter, and that would be incredibly stupid. Whatever the Pathfinder knows about Luke’s father will have to wait.

The Ewoks lead the squad quickly but quietly through the forest, and it isn’t long before Chewbacca
growls another halt. Only four scout troopers guard the rear entrance, their speeder bikes parked nearby, and Bodhi’s heart starts to race again.

*We’re so close.*

An idea flashes into his mind, and he creeps around the undergrowth, looking for the Guardians while Han, Leia, and Cassian confer again; Baze’s red repeater cannon’s been hidden under his camouflage poncho, and even Chirrut’s dark robes are difficult to spot.

Jyn snags his sleeve before he can find them, though, and she puts a finger to her lips—just as one of the Ewoks whoops with glee and shoots off into the forest on one of the speeder bikes.

“Look, over there! Stop him!” a scout yells, and three of the troopers race away through the trees in pursuit.

“Clever,” Jyn murmurs appreciatively.

Bodhi throws her a baffled look.

“What? You have to admit it’s impressive, he’s flying that thing with his paws.” She nudges him to move closer to Leia and Cassian; the Guardians have emerged from wherever they were concealed and are readying themselves for action. Han breaks from a huddle with a handful of Pathfinders, sending them to the far side of the bunker, while he circles around behind the remaining scout.

“He’s trying *that* again?” Cassian hisses. He rubs the bridge of his nose.

“I’m sure he’ll watch his step this time,” Leia says, and then she puts her hand over her face as Han simply taps the scout on the shoulder and runs, leading him around the corner into the Pathfinders’ ambush.

Jyn shrugs at Cassian's exasperated sigh and Leia's bemused expression. “Well, it worked, didn’t it?” Bodhi stifles a snort, watching the Pathfinders put the scout trooper in binders and make him sit against the wall of the bunker.

“That was like something Chirrut would do when we were young,” Baze says, as Han casually strolls back over.

“See? Nothing to it. C’mon, Chewie, what’d you do with the charges? Kaytoo, you’re up, get us inside.”

*Some people say please,* Kaytoo mutters, stalking past. Cassian signals for the rest of them to follow and move into position along the bunker, out of sight of the entrance. Bodhi’s hands shake as he draws his blaster, but when the bunker doors whoosh open, no troopers rush out and no alarms blare to life.

“Okay,” Jyn whispers. “Let’s go.”

The interior of the bunker is dark, and eerily silent, not at all like the bases on Eadu or Scarif, which had hummed with activity, the rain, or the crash of waves along the shore. When they hadn’t been under attack, anyway.

“Really hope Luke’s keeping Vader busy,” someone mutters, and is immediately shushed.

Bodhi gulps and tries to breathe steadily as Kaytoo directs them down one corridor, then another and another. It had been just like this on the *Profundity,* or so he’d heard from the other survivors of
Scarif: darkness and silence, until Vader had brought crimson light and death.

That fight had ended in minutes, and bizarrely enough, this one does, too. Han and Leia are through the door to the main control room with Cassian, Jyn, and Chirrut on their heels before Bodhi can even really register that they’ve found it, ordering the generator personnel away from their consoles and into a corner, where Chewbacca and the Pathfinders take up positions to cover them.

“Baze, Dameron, get those charges set,” Han barks. He points a finger at Cassian. “Andor, your team’s up.”

Leia glances at one of the console displays as Bodhi hurries over beside Kaytoo and Jyn. “Hurry. The Fleet’s going to be here any moment.”

Bodhi nods, his fingers flying over the console. *Luke. I have to find Luke.* He ignores Han’s increasingly strident orders, Jyn and Kaytoo coordinating their searches, the uncomfortably close sounds of detonators being charged as they’re placed; the only thing that matters is—

“He’s not here,” Bodhi whispers, horrified at the records as they light up the display. He lifts his head. Cassian and Jyn are staring back at him, surprised and confused. “Luke’s not—they, they processed him here, but they took him—*Vader took him to the Death Star!*”

All the color drains out of Leia’s face, and even Han gapes at him in shock.

Over the memory of mechanical breath rasping in his ears, Bodhi stammers, “We—we have to do something—”

“No,” Leia snaps, raggedly. “Luke knew what he was doing, he must’ve known this was a possibility—this is our best chance—”

“Freeze!”

Bodhi flinches away from the Imperial officer in the doorway, scrabbling futilely for the blaster he’d carelessly dropped on the console. Han spins and hurls a bag of charges, catching the officer in the chest and toppling him over the railing with a scream.

But the officer hadn’t been alone. Stormtroopers flood in from all sides, ripping blasters from the Pathfinders’ hands. Cassian takes a protective half step in front of Jyn; a stormtrooper jerks his blaster up to point at Cassian’s chest, and he slowly raises his hands, his eyes dulling in despair. Baze snarls when they shove Chirrut and take his staff, though he doesn’t dare to fight back, either.

*No, no, no—*

Another officer saunters directly in front of Han and Leia, and eyes Bodhi with contempt. “You Rebel scum,” he spits.

Bodhi gazes wildly from one defeated friend to the next, nearly sobbing for breath, his hopes burning to ash in his mouth.

They’re surrounded.

Luke isn’t coming back.

They’ve failed.
Uh, hi. *waves* Sorry for the extra-long wait between chapters! February was a slog of dissertation work, and then I was traveling for a few weeks. But now I'm back (still slogging through dissertation) and ready to wrap this thing up! Thank you, dear readers, for your patience, and of course many thanks to morag for the beta and prodding me along <3 <3 <3

Also, I commissioned this amazing, gorgeous piece from daryshkart to accompany chapter 100 :D

More soon! <3
Chapter 102

Chapter Summary

This can't be the end.

Chapter Notes

Some mouseover text; translations in end notes.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Somehow, Bodhi doesn’t panic.

The Imperials not putting the squad in binders almost certainly helps. They’re obviously just counting on their overwhelming numbers to keep the Rebels in line, and Bodhi’s simply got his hands interlocked tightly on the back of his head as he’s jostled down the corridor, prodded along by the butt of a stormtrooper’s blaster. He does his best to ignore their taunting, focusing his attention on Chewbacca's aggravated grumble, the way Cassian can’t tear his eyes away from Jyn’s blank, tight-lipped expression even when he stumbles, the stubborn tilt of Leia’s chin.

A dazed, numb certainty seeps into him.

They aren’t going to die.

At least, not right away. Executions of this many important Rebels can’t be carried out on some backwater Outer Rim moon—they’ll be transported to the Super Star Destroyer in orbit, and then on to Coruscant, probably, because the Emperor will want the galaxy to watch.

Draven’s warning flickers dimly in the back of his mind for a moment, but Bodhi doubts the Empire has any use for him now that Luke’s gone and put himself in their hands.

He wonders if Luke’s still alive, and that breaks through his frozen stupor like a sharp, nearly physical pain in his chest. He can’t quite find it in him to be grateful that they’d had one last night together, when the vision of Luke’s agony scrapes and sears at his nerves.

Bodhi forces himself to straighten his hunching shoulders.

He left me for nothing.

He left us to die—

The soft rise and fall of Chirrut's prayer hisses into his ears.

(“You're praying?”)

Bodhi chances a nervous look over his shoulder, but Baze's voice only echoes somewhere deep in his memory; the Guardian glowers silently at their captors.
“What’s he saying?” one of the stormtroopers asks.

“Something about the Force,” another answers, and pokes Chirrut with the muzzle of his blaster rifle, scoffing. “How’s that working for you, old man?”

Bodhi half expects Chirrut or Baze to retort, even with all the Imperials surrounding them; he catches Leia’s warning look—not that it has any effect on Chirrut—

—who turns his gaze in Bodhi’s general direction and says, a hint of a smile playing about his lips, “放心一點, 吧.”

“What does that mean?” the stormtrooper snaps as the bunker door irises open onto the sunlit forest.

Whatever spark of hope Chirrut’s words might have ignited in Bodhi’s heart sputters out instantly at the sight of hundreds of Imperial troops awaiting them in the clearing. An AT-ST aims its cannons directly at the bunker’s entrance, and another one whirs and clanks on patrol of the ridge above. The Pathfinders who had stayed back to stand guard have all been rounded up into a tight cluster, and as the Imperials herd Bodhi and his friends further into the clearing, one by one the Pathfinders are shoved or kicked to their knees in front of the stormtroopers surrounding them.

Bodhi starts to shake.

Shit.

Shit.

He’s pushed into position between Baze and Leia, and a heavy armored hand forces him down to his knees. His breath is jarred out of him in a grunt as he hits the ground and almost topples unsteadily into Baze, who gruffly nudges him upright again.

Maybe I was wrong. Maybe we are all going to die right now.

“Guess having the Death Star overhead’s gonna save them the cleanup,” Bodhi mutters, bleakly. Baze casts a sideways glance at him, furrowing his brow, and Bodhi amends, “When they’re done building it, I mean. No—no need to dig a mass grave when they can—they can just blow this whole —”

Chirrut clucks his tongue. “我已經告訴你, 別著急.”

But Bodhi’s heartbeat hasn’t stopped accelerating since they’ve come back out here under all these gloating Imperial stares, and Cassian whispering “I’m sorry, Jyn” behind him certainly isn’t making it any easier.

Jyn lets out a soft sigh, and then—

“Hello, I say, over there!”

Bodhi gapes at Threepio waving from behind a tree, sticking out like a credit chip in the mud, with Artoo’s blue dome equally shiny and visible next to him.

Leia bites out, “What is he doing?”

“Were you looking for me?”

On Leia’s far side, Han snorts. “He spends one night on a throne and now he’s got delusions of grandeur.”
Bodhi watches in dismay as Chewbacca howls for the droids to run, but of course neither Threepio nor Artoo can move very quickly, and it’s a matter of moments before a squad of stormtroopers confronts them, their electronic voices filtering inarticulately back down to the captured Rebels.

“I think that little chrome dome is up to something,” Han adds under his breath, eyeing the nearest stormtrooper guarding them.

“Hold on,” Baze mutters, but Bodhi feels him shift his weight—

—and above them, hidden in the canopy, a horn blows an exuberant call, promptly echoed by another horn on the opposite side of the clearing—

—and Bodhi spots Chirrut’s face lighting up with the widest shit-eating grin he’s ever seen, milliseconds before the first wave of Ewoks rises from the bushes and attacks, their shrill battle cries splitting the air.

“Go, go,” Baze barks in Bodhi’s ear as Chewbacca roars, seizes a stormtrooper, and slams them bodily into another.

But it’s impossible to know where to run. The stormtroopers are everywhere, shouting orders to form up and shooting wildly at the onslaught of Ewoks. Around the clearing, scout troopers fire up their speeder bike engines and whisk off into the forest, pursuing more of the little bears, and the few remaining unarmored officers are sprinting for the safety of the bunker.

Leia darts through the scattering troops in the same direction, snatching up her blaster from the pile of confiscated weapons and a comlink from a fallen stormtrooper’s hand. She fires high in the air, and an AT-ST pilot who hadn’t ducked into his walker fast enough screams and falls out of the hatch.

Bodhi’s heart leaps, and he lunges up from the dirt after Leia. If we can get back inside—

A stormtrooper brings their rifle to bear on him and Han, and Bodhi freezes; Han stoops to grab his own blaster, flips the stormtrooper over his shoulder for a Pathfinder to finish off, and charges straight towards the bunker—just as the doors seal shut. Leia taps frantically at the code panel, shaking her head, and Han’s face is grim as he tries the panel, too.

A hand seizes Bodhi’s arm, and he stifles a yelp—

“This way,” Cassian hisses. He’s got his sniper rifle slung over his shoulder, and Jyn shoves an extra blaster in Bodhi’s other hand while they retreat into the bushes at a run, Kaytoo looming and casting strange twisting shadows over them. Bodhi can’t see Baze anymore, but he can hear the rapid-fire stuttering of Baze’s repeater cannon, and he catches a whirl of Chirrut’s robes flashing red and black against white stormtrooper armor on the opposite side of the clearing.

“Not too far, Leia and Han can’t go it alone,” Jyn shouts over the noise of the fray. She jerks her head toward a huge charred stump tall enough for even Kaytoo to take cover behind.

Cassian nods, and tugs Bodhi along after him. He crouches beside Bodhi on one knee, bracing his sniper rifle against the side of the tree stump; his hands are shaking almost as badly as Bodhi’s.

“Catch your breath,” Cassian says, sharply, and Bodhi raises his blaster in acknowledgement.

All through the forest he can hear the whine of Imperial blaster fire, the occasional terrifying whoosh of an explosion, and the Ewoks’ piercing cries, which make the hair on the back of his neck stand up. It seems utterly impossible that the Ewoks are doing any real damage other than creating chaos and distracting the Imperial troops from the Rebels under siege in the clearing, but he had seen them fight, and with numbers once again on their side—
“You—you’ve got a plan?” Bodhi asks, a fleeting spark of hope in his chest.

Cassian opens his mouth to answer, but Jyn hits the dirt next to to him and pulls her baton out from under her poncho. “Draven thought this could happen,” she snaps. “He thought this was gonna happen at Scarif if the Council sent the entire Fleet—”

“Which was exactly why he was being so careful this time, Jyn,” Cassian retorts, not unkindly.

Jyn throws him a flat look. “Lot of good that did us.”

“I hate to interrupt, but I see two stormtroopers approaching and none of Threepio’s worshippers,” Kaytoo says. Jyn pokes her head around the curve of the tree stump and fires off a flurry of shots.

“Thank you.”

“We still have a chance.” Cassian reaches over and squeezes Bodhi’s shoulder, hard. “You have to go.”

“What?” Bodhi sputters. “Are you out of your mind? I—I’m not leaving you—”

Cassian gives Bodhi a stern shake. “The Fleet is about to fly into their trap, same as we did, but we can warn them. You can warn them.” At his side, Jyn’s mouth is a thin worried line.

“This isn’t—it’s not like Scarif, all their communications are locked down in the base,” Bodhi says, casting an anxious look around the stump at Leia and Han still pinned down in the recessed doorway of the bunker, shots crisscrossing the clearing in every direction. “If they can get in—”

“No,” Cassian says. “From your ship.” A stray blaster bolt singes the bark just over Bodhi’s head, and Cassian yanks him down to the ground, every muscle tense. “Listen to me. You have to take the message.”

Bodhi stares at Cassian's face, set in his familiar intent expression; hears his soft, urgent voice echoing back across the years to a dark and dirty cell—

“Kay will go with you,” Cassian adds, firmly, and pulls the blaster out of his hip holster to give to the droid.

Even though Bodhi fully expects Kaytoo to protest that of course he's staying here, they're both staying here to fight. Kaytoo takes the blaster from Cassian, swivels his head down, and says, “Yes. We need to go. Now.”

Bodhi gapes at his friends in bewildered dismay and fear. “I—”

Jyn leans across Cassian and kisses Bodhi's cheek. “You were always brave enough,” she whispers, and then she pushes him square in the chest and turns away, but not before he sees her eyes are bright and wet.

“Go,” Cassian repeats, and Bodhi can’t—he can’t look at either of them any more, and scrambles to his feet.

Kaytoo strides past him swiftly, and Bodhi stops himself from searching the forest for one last glimpse of Baze and Chirrut in battle and hurries after him. “Wait, wait—”

“Now would you like to be carried?” Kaytoo asks.

Bodhi huffs a weak laugh that comes out more like a hiccuping sob. “No, thank you.” Then he has
little breath to spare for speech. He pulls his goggles down around his neck so he won't lose them, and forces himself to concentrate on the uneven forest floor beneath his boots, desperately trying to keep from falling. The race to his shuttle is a blur; the Guardians’ prayer chants a relentless rhythm in his thoughts, driving him on.

He can't fail now, not after everything they've done, not after Luke's sacrificed himself—this can't be the end. It can't.

On the edge of the clearing they’d left only days ago, Bodhi lets out a shuddering breath at the sight of the Cadera intact and undamaged, gleaming in the sun. He stumbles to a halt and looks to Kaytoo, who confirms, “It’s safe. Any Imperial patrols must have been recalled to the fight.”

“Okay,” Bodhi says, panting. “Okay.” His heart hammers in his chest as he sprints up the ramp and into the cockpit, hitting switches and toggles on the console without bothering to drop into his chair; he’ll get the message off to warn the Fleet, and then he’ll—fly back to the bunker, swoop in like—like he did on—

But—

He tries the comms again, and again, and—

No. No, no—

“Fuck.” Bodhi presses his sweaty, trembling hand to his mouth. “They’re jamming all communications offworld, there’s no way—I—”

He glances at Kaytoo, seated in the co-pilot’s chair, and stiffens in shock; Kaytoo’s already closed the ramp and started the shuttle’s engines. “Then we fly out past the range of their jamming equipment,” Kaytoo says. He looks up at Bodhi. “You should strap in.”

“We can’t—we can’t just fly away—Leia, Cassian, they’re all still—”

“Cassian knew exactly what he was doing when he sent us here,” Kaytoo says, reaching up and applying pressure to Bodhi’s shoulder with one hand to make him sit down and gripping the controls with the other. “Have you forgotten the Star Destroyers in orbit? We have about as much chance of flying away as our friends do. But the odds that you will be able to contact the Fleet—”

He tilts his head, and Bodhi thinks, dizzily, that Kaytoo is smiling. “They’re high.”

Bodhi squeezes his eyes shut for a moment. There aren’t just Star Destroyers in orbit; the unfinished Death Star is up there, too, and undoubtedly the largest complement of TIEs he’s ever seen.

No way out.

But he has to try.

“All right,” Bodhi says. He shakes his hands out, settles them on the controls. “One last chance. If we’re not shot down before we get clear of the atmosphere.”

“That’s the spirit,” Kaytoo says.

The Imperials on the ground are entirely preoccupied with the battle raging around the shield generator base, though, and nothing pops up on the shuttle’s scanners—which could still be the jamming. They soar fast towards the stars, Bodhi keeping an eye on the console for the second they break clear of the interference, wary of the Death Star rising like a horrible mangled moon into the
viewport, and then, with a crackle of static, the comms cut in all on their own.

It’s Janson: “Three of them coming in, twenty degrees—”

Flashes of green and red turbolaser fire light up the space between the stars, and Bodhi grips the controls hard, his heart sinking. “We’re too late—”

Wedge orders, “Cut to the left, I’ll take the leader. They’re heading for the medical frigate.” Bodhi spots his friend’s X-wing slashing through a trio of TIE fighters, the Falcon picking off more TIEs swarming the Redemption.

The Cadera’s appearance—and the transponder code identifying the shuttle as the Tydirium—buy them some breathing room; Kaytoo’s hands are on the firing controls, but no TIEs have figured out they’re not Imperial.

Yet.

“What—what are we going to—” Bodhi starts.

A vaguely recognizable voice comes over the comms in warbling Basic, incredulously. “Ship thief?”

“Nien, what are you talking abou—oh, what the fuck are you doing here, Bodhi?” Wedge shouts, and the line promptly bursts into chaos, Wedge and Lando and Ackbar all demanding information on the situation on Endor.

Bodhi weaves between the Liberty and the Redemption and tries his damnedest to get a word in edgewise about Luke’s distraction, Han and Leia trying to break back into the base under heavy fire, Cassian’s idea to warn the Fleet about the trap—

—and Bodhi flashes on an idea. “If—if Green Squadron can spare a couple Y-wings, we can go back down there, lead a bombing run on the—on the—” He breaks off; a disturbingly familiar green glow is illuminating the cockpit.

“Oh, no,” Kaytoo says, alarm straining his voice.

Bodhi lifts his head to look. A wordless, horrified cry tears out of his throat, and he flings his arm up to shield his face as the separate lasers on the Death Star’s superlaser converge into one terrible beam of light—

(—the sky of falling stone—)

His family is down there—

“They must have improved their targeting system,” Kaytoo says, slightly less appalled-sounding, and Bodhi gulps and lowers his arm; the moon is still in one piece, no plume of ash spewing into space. But where the Liberty had been is only dust, and Bodhi feels like he’s going to be sick.

“Home One, this is Gold Leader,” Lando says, tersely.

“We saw it,” Ackbar answers. “All craft prepare to retreat.”

“You won’t get another chance at this, Admiral.”

“We have no choice, General Calrissian. Our cruisers can’t repel firepower of that magnitude.”

Bodhi puts his head in his hands for a moment, breathing heavily, and Kaytoo rests a hand on his
shoulder. “You can vomit if you need to. I don’t mind the smell.” Bodhi swallows and shakes his head—it’s ash he tastes, and smoke and blood.

“Han will have that shield down,” Lando insists. “We’ve got to give him more time.”

Wedge cuts back in. “Rogue One, you’ve picked up a tail, they’re on to you.”

“I got it,” Grizz says, and the TIE on Bodhi’s just spotted on his scopes disappears, the edge of a fireball flaring past the viewport.

Bodhi rubs the back of his hand over his mouth, straightens up, and takes the controls back from Kaytoo. This is no time to panic. “Thanks,” he calls.

“I could have gotten it,” Kaytoo says, put out.

“You have a gunner with you, Bodhi?” Wedge asks.

“Yeah—yeah. Kaytoo’s with me.”

“Good. There’s no going back down to the surface, sorry. Stay on Grizz and Joma. You’re in it, now.”

“Copy, Rogue Leader,” Bodhi says.

The Death Star fires again, the emerald-green laser vaporizing another Mon Cal capital ship—the Urjani. Someone barely manages to stifle a sob on the Rogues’ line, and Grizz says, roughly, “Hang in there, Hobbie—”

Lando shouts, “We’ve got to keep that thing from targeting our cruisers—we have to get closer!”

“Gold Leader, come again?” Wedge says.

“Yes! I said closer! Move as close as you can and engage those Star Destroyers at point-blank range!”

“At that close range we won’t last long against those Star Destroyers,” Ackbar warns.

“We’ll last longer than we will against that Death Star,” Lando says, grimly. “And we might just take a few of them with us.”

Kaytoo mutters, “So he does know this is a suicide mission.”

“Following your lead, Gold Leader,” Ackbar says, and the bulk of Home One glides steadily across the kilometers towards the awaiting Star Destroyers, turbolasers blasting away.

“Pick one and hit ‘em with everything you’ve got,” Wedge orders the Rogues. Bodhi grits his teeth and follows Grizz and Joma’s X-wings in. Through the comms chatter, Bodhi hears Green Squadron being directed to hit the Super Star Destroyer, Thane Kyrell and a couple Corona Squadron pilots planning their attack angle on another Star Destroyer’s engines.

Joma says, “Rogue One, we’re going after the generator on that big Star Destroyer’s port side.”

“We’re with you,” Bodhi replies, and sends the Cadera diving after the pair of X-wings. On their first pass, the combined force of their laser cannons isn’t enough, but on the second, Joma switches to proton torpedoes—
“She’s gonna blow!” Grizz yells in warning, banking sharply away from the generator dome; Bodhi swings clear of the explosion and frantically searches for his friends’ fighters again, finds them both racing along the surface of the Star Destroyer, exchanging fire with the turbolasers below.

Kaytoo says, “Going in closer?”

“Closer,” Bodhi agrees, and drops them back into it.

They’re not the only Rebel ships attacking the Star Destroyer; the Falcon’s diverted to attack, too, with Wedge, a Green Squadron A-wing and someone’s B-wing backing Lando and Nien Nunb up. It takes Bodhi a couple minutes to recognize the Star Destroyer as one of the larger communications battlecruisers, right about the moment that the A-wing goes down into the forward turbolasers.

Wedge yells, “The reactors are just inside that cargo bay—”

“There she goes,” Lando reports. “Direct hit—everybody get clear, pull up, pull up!”

Flames lick out around the edge of the cargo bay, and explosions go off in a chain all the way up to the command tower. From a safe distance, Bodhi flinches when the whole ship goes, taking the B-wing with it—but there’s no time to dwell on any of the losses, and he turns the Cadera around to follow the Rogues to their next target.

Another Star Destroyer that’s been tangling with a Nebulon-class frigate like the Redemption suddenly explodes, and the frigate limps away, its stern and narrow neck lighting up with a series of minor explosions—moves in close with a second Star Destroyer before it, too, explodes, dragging the Imperial ship into the chain of destruction.

“Watch out, squad at point-oh-six,” Lando says.

“I’m on it, Gold Leader.”

“Good shot, Kasan,” Wedge says, and he’s about to give another order to the Rogues when Ackbar takes over the comms, barking, “The shield is down!”

Bodhi’s mouth falls open, and he shares a disbelieving, hopeful look with Kaytoo.

“Commence attack on the Death Star’s main reactor!”

Lando sings out, anticipation in his voice, “We’re on our way. Rogue Group, Gold Group, all fighters follow me!”

“They did it,” Kaytoo says, amazed.

“What were the odds of that?” Bodhi laughs, giddily, gazing out the viewport at the Falcon and the starfighters headed straight for the Death Star—“Oh, shit.”

“What’s wrong?”

For once, Bodhi can’t look away from the Death Star. His chest is tight with fear. “Luke—”

[—screams and screams—
—wreathed in blinding blue bolts of electricity, his golden hair dark with sweat—
—writhing in unbearable pain—]
“—Bodhi, Bodhi, what’s happening—”

Bodhi snaps back to reality at the tense grip of Kaytoo’s hand on his shoulder; he’s curled in on himself, fists clenched against imaginary agony—

—no.

It’s real. Every vision he’s ever had of Luke has been real.

I have to stop it. I have to—

I’m one with the Force—

“We have to go.” Bodhi reaches for the controls, determination—the Force—something—ringing clear and certain in his mind.

Kaytoo demands, “Go? Go where?”

“To the Death Star,” Bodhi says, setting a course heading for it. “Luke is there, and I have to get him out.”

“Where Darth Vader took Luke, almost certainly to the Emperor. You want to go there?”

Bodhi bites his lip. “Yes.”

“The very well-staffed battle station that the Fleet is here to destroy.”

“Yes,” Bodhi says, again.

On the comms, Wedge says, “I’m going in.”

“Here goes nothing,” Lando says, and the Falcon dives into the exposed superstructure.

Kaytoo lifts a skeletal finger and points out the viewport. “That Death Star.”

“Kaytoo, please, I’ve never been more sure of any—anything in my life. Luke is there. The Force is guiding me to him, and—and I know I can get him out. Same as I got you, Cassian, everybody—please. Trust me.” Bodhi stares across the cockpit at his friend, willing him to believe; it’s a lot harder to sound convincing to him than with the troops on Scarif, Dak and Yraka’Nes on Thyferra, even Mara Jade—

“All right, then,” Kaytoo says, grudgingly. “But when we get back, I’m telling Cassian.”

Bodhi exhales in relief. “That—that’s fine.”

“We’ve got to buy those fighters enough time. Concentrate all fire on that Super Star Destroyer,” Ackbar orders. The remaining Rebel capital ships turn their turbolasers and ion cannons on it; the perfect opportunity for Bodhi to slip away—

“Going rogue again, Captain?” The woman’s voice on the line is unfamiliar, but the sharp concern is not.

“Not—not exactly,” Bodhi says, warily. “Commander Skywalker is on that thing, and I—I think—if I can get there—”

She sucks in a ragged breath. “You’re kidding.”
“No, no, I—look, I don’t have time—”

A Green Squadron A-wing drops down into their view. “No, you don’t,” she says. “Get going. I’ll cover you.”

The flight to the Death Star is the most nerve-racking one Bodhi’s ever made, worse than the bumpy descent on Eadu. The station fills the viewport entirely within moments, its harsh unfinished lines bristling into space—

—a tremendous gout of flame erupts from the far side of the Death Star, and the comm lines go deafening with cheers—

“Fuck—”

“Tanked down the Super Star Destroyer,” the A-wing pilot says, forestalling Bodhi’s panic about Wedge and Lando succeeding already. “Hurry, they’ll start evacuating any second now.”

“Here they come, actually,” Kaytoo says, as waves of TIEs emerge from the equatorial docking bays. Bodhi yelps and swerves through their oddly tentative bursts of laserfire; the A-wing pilot has little difficulty blasting a path with Kaytoo’s help, and then the hangars are wide open in front of them.

The A-wing pilot says, “Okay, you’re clear to approach. I hope you find him.”

“Thanks—thank you, uh—”

“Lieutenant Bey,” she says. “Try and make it out before Calrissian blows it up, yeah? I don’t want to explain this to Wedge, or your people.”

Bodhi licks his dry lips. “Yeah.”

The docking bay Bodhi picks at random to land in is weirdly empty. He’s glad and unnerved at the same time; there should be more ships evacuating the station, but maybe the Imperials are taking their chances here rather than flying out into the raging battle.

“Stay here and keep the engines running,” Bodhi says, unstrapping from his chair and touching Kaytoo’s shoulder. The metal is cool under his hand, and Kaytoo looks up at him in surprise. “I—I’ll come back as fast as I can.”

Kaytoo raises his hand in a shrug. “I can’t leave without you,” he says, a little wry.

Bodhi nods, and then he’s running down the ramp, looking for the console that has to be around here somewhere, trying to smother the nagging worry that this is a very, very bad plan. The entire hangar shakes again and again, and the fire suppression system kicks on at random, spraying a cold chemical fog into the air. Whatever orders the officers—the Emperor—whoever—are giving on the comms are impossible to hear, staticky and overlaid with alarm klaxons, and it’s all too disorienting and frightening—but Bodhi knows Imperial construction, knows they never, ever deviate from design—

There.

He slams into the corner of the console near the bay doors and starts tapping at the display, trying to pull up flight logs, prisoner transfers, anything that will help him find Luke—clenches his fist into a hand and smacks it on the screen.

I’m an idiot.
Kaytoo can slice this faster, he can find Luke—

Bodhi looks up to wave at Kaytoo to come and help—

—the bay doors hiss open, and for a split second Bodhi nearly screams in terror at the sight of Vader appearing in the doorway—

—but Vader is staggering, almost stumbling into the hangar, and Luke—oh, stars, Luke—is struggling to hold him up.

Bodhi gawks at Luke in utter confusion, and then Luke raises his head.

He looks half-dead, worse than when he’d come home from Bespin. His tunic flaps open at his neck, his hair’s matted with sweat and his blue eyes are glazed with pain; he’s going to lose his grip on Vader at any moment—

A grimace twists Bodhi’s mouth, but he doesn’t have time to think. He jumps to Vader’s right side and grabs for Vader’s arm—stifles an appalled gasp when he realizes Vader’s hand is gone, only a few severed wires protruding from the stump, and gets the heavy armored arm up over his shoulders.

“My ship—this way,” he manages, choking on the strong smell of ozone coming off of both Luke and Vader, and Luke offers him a grateful, exhausted nod.

The hangar trembles continuously underfoot, like the last time Bodhi had stood—run—on Jedha’s sands. He’s practically shouldering Vader’s entire weight by the time they get up the Cadera’s ramp and then he can’t manage him alone anymore; Vader slumps heavily to the deck and Luke collapses beside him.

Bodhi backs away, completely at a loss, and practically trips backwards off of the ramp. The monster he’d feared is wheezing at his feet, and Luke is clutching at Vader’s armor and trembling. But there isn’t time for questions, not with Kaytoo shouting down from the cockpit that they have to go—

—movement in the hangar catches Bodhi’s eye, and he spins, grasping for the struts to pull himself up the ramp and into the safety of the shuttle, away from the handful of stormtroopers running towards them—

—and one of the stormtroopers shouts, “Wait—please—” Behind them, the fire suppression system switches on again, but this time for flames spreading fast up the back wall of the hangar.

Bodhi throws a glance up at Luke—at Vader weak and badly injured in his ship—

—turns, and screams, “Come on! Move!”

The stormtroopers clatter across the hanger and up the ramp; Bodhi can hear them breathing almost as hard as Vader as they scramble into the ship. He takes the ramp in three strides, slaps the controls, surveys the five helmeted heads pointed at Vader and Luke on the deck—and pulls his blaster, praying they won’t notice how badly his hand trembles.

“Drop your blasters, get back and don’t fucking touch anything or I’ll lock you in the ‘fresher,” he snaps, determined to keep Luke’s privacy if not Vader’s, and gets a pile of blaster rifles and five shaky, docile nods in return as they retreat to the rear of the hold and strap in. “Okay, Kaytoo, get us out of here!”

The shuttle vibrates and sways alarmingly as it lifts off of the deck and flies out of the hangar. Bodhi keeps his feet and heads for the cockpit, and is carefully brushing past Luke and Vader, leaving them to recover, when Luke catches at his hand and murmurs, “Father, this is Bodhi.”
Bodhi stops.

Looks down at Luke’s upturned face, his blue eyes shining with tears. He nods at Bodhi’s astonished, horrified stare.

Vader doesn’t seem to have heard, whispering “Luke . . .” and Luke instantly focuses his attention back on the man lying helplessly beside him. “Help me take this mask off.”

“But you’ll die,” Luke says, his voice small, and Bodhi goes to his knees beside him, squeezing his hand.

“Nothing can stop that now. Just . . . for once, let me look on you with my own eyes.”

Luke nods, and slowly, hesitantly, reaches up to Vader’s helmet. Bodhi holds his breath as the faceplate comes away, and underneath—

Anakin Skywalker’s eyes are as blue as Luke’s, and he is smiling.

“Now go, my son.” He leans his head back against the deck plating, and Bodhi realizes that he no longer recognizes where they are. “Leave me.”

“We’re safe, Father,” Luke protests, softly. “We’re taking you home.”

Anakin’s gaze drifts away, and for the briefest of moments, his eyes focus on Bodhi’s face. “Help him listen . . . to the Force,” he says, every word an effort.

“Father,” Luke says, a heartbroken plea. “No—I saved you—”

His eyes are closing, but he manages to look up at Luke one more time. “You did, Luke. You were right about me. Tell your sister . . . you were right.”

And then he is gone.

Luke bows his head, and Bodhi puts his arms around him and presses a kiss into his hair, too shaken to do anything except give him comfort. Luke takes two deep, shuddering breaths, and then he gently pushes Bodhi back. “Go on and fly with Kaytoo,” he says, quietly. He looks down at his father’s serene face. “Thank you. I—I’ll be right there.”

Bodhi kisses him again, nodding, and goes forward into the cockpit and is promptly assailed by excited comms chatter. Ahead, the Fleet is moving rapidly away from the Death Star, some of the fighters still swooping between the capital ships in pursuit of TIEs. He switches off the comms, his mind reeling and his heart aching for Luke; he can’t help but think of the shock and grief etched into Jyn’s face after they’d left Eadu.

“Captain Antilles came back out of the Death Star safely a few moments ago,” Kaytoo says, jolting his attention back to the present. “I thought you’d want to know that.”

“Thanks, Kaytoo,” Bodhi says, automatically. “And—and—General Calrissian?”

“Not yet,” Kaytoo says. He swings the Cadera around to point the viewport at the Death Star; the hangar they’d just left is consumed in flames. Bodhi clenches his hands, his heart pounding again—

*The Force is with me*—

—as fire engulfs the entire exposed superstructure, the Falcon bursts free, soaring towards them milliseconds before the Death Star flares impossibly bright—
—and Bodhi falls back in his chair, gasping for breath.

*It's done.*

His face is wet; he swipes at his eyes with a shaking hand.

*Galen—*

*We finally completed your mission.*

Chapter End Notes

Holy *shit*.

All the love and thanks to morag for staying up with me tonight to get this thing beta'd and out the door!! And to you all, as well, of course, for sticking with it. I plan to post the final two chapters on May 4 and May 25. Dissertation is still a very high priority, but I like to try to meet my goals ;)

Happy SWCC!!

<3 <3 <3

Translations:
放心一點, 吧: Relax a little
我已經告訴你, 別著急: I told you, don't worry
Chapter 103

Chapter Summary

I think I can handle it.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

After the battle—

Bodhi thinks he should be happier.

They’ve won; the Death Star is little more than scattered shards of reflected light, mostly cast along a million vectors into deep space.

But there are plenty of things to worry about, like how Admiral Ackbar is going to track down the surviving remnants of the Imperial fleet that fled instead of going down in a blaze of glory. What to do about the stormtroopers Bodhi’s accidentally taken prisoner. How long it’ll take to put up a new shield to protect the Ewok villages from the debris that is aimed at the moon below. Whether any of his friends and family are still alive down there.

And then there is Luke.

Who squeezes forward between the seats and speaks briefly with Wedge and Ackbar to reassure them that he’s all right—Bodhi doesn’t really think he looks much better than before, his eyes too bright in his pale face, but he isn’t going to argue for Luke to be seen by a medic while ships already stream continuously to the Redemption.

Or while the body of what was once Darth Vader is still on board his ship.

Luke doesn’t mention that, or really anything about how he’d managed to survive. Instead, he says, firmly and calmly, that both the Emperor and Vader died on the Death Star. Kaytoo’s head swings around in surprise, but for once he doesn’t say anything, maybe recognizing that Luke’s choice of words is strategic.

“All right, Luke, Bodhi,” Wedge says. “Glad you both made it out. We’ll meet you on the surface in a little while.”

Luke smiles faintly down at the comms pickup. “Good work, Wedge. See you soon.” He rests a hand on Bodhi’s shoulder for a second before retreating and collapsing into the seat behind him.

“I also survived your decisions,” Kaytoo mutters. His glowing eyes follow Luke around the cockpit, laser-focused. “What are you planning to do about—”

The comms sputter to life again, and another familiar, welcome voice fills the air. “—ay? Kaytoo, Bodhi, tell me you’re out there—”

“Cassian,” Bodhi breathes, raggedly, slapping at the switch. “Cassian, we’re here, we’re—is Jyn—” He gulps, barely able to get more words out through a sudden rush of fear. “The—the—"
“They’re all fine,” Cassian says, pride and relief evident in his voice even as Bodhi can hear him edging closer and closer to exhaustion. “Baze and Jyn are with our general, making plans for another attack—”

“Another—”

“—on an outpost on the other side of the moon,” Cassian says. “We can’t let them retaliate against the Ewoks.” He pauses. “And we never did find out where else the Death Star plans might be kept.”

Bodhi glances over his shoulder at Luke. He doesn’t look like he’s in any shape to help, but—

“But that is for tomorrow,” Cassian adds. “The Ewoks said they will help us with supplies again when we regroup at the village.”

“O—Okay, we’re on our way,” Bodhi says, and then he looks over his shoulder again, back into the hold at the stormtroopers still dutifully strapped into their seats. He can’t quite make out anything except shadows where Luke must’ve left Vader’s body.

His heart leaps into his throat.

If Luke didn’t want Ackbar to know—

“Actually, um,” Bodhi says. “I’m gonna send—Kaytoo’s gonna bring you some stormtroopers that we captured on the Death Star, ‘cause—”

“I am?”

“What?”

Bodhi cringes, and says, quickly, willing Kaytoo to understand, “I—I need to take care of Luke first.”

“The Death—” Cassian audibly sighs, but his tone is more gentle when he says, “You found him. Is he hurt?”

Luke lifts his head to meet Bodhi’s eyes, and Bodhi doesn’t hesitate at all. “Yes.”

“Is it—do I need to tell Leia and Solo? Do you need help?”

The corner of Luke’s mouth quirks up the tiniest bit at Cassian’s concern, but he says nothing, letting Bodhi answer. “I think—I think I can handle it.”

“Okay,” Cassian says. “I’ll have a couple of Pathfinders meet you, Kay.”

“I think I can handle it,” Kaytoo says, haughtily. He ducks his head a little, almost furtively. “It’s good to hear your voice, Cassian.”

“Yours as well, my friend,” Cassian replies, and it’s easy for Bodhi to imagine him smiling.

Landed safely back at the clearing they’d left only hours ago, Bodhi unstraps from his seat and gets up to see Kaytoo and the stormtroopers off.

“How do you plan to keep the stormtroopers from divulging that you brought Vader on board?” Kaytoo asks, glancing down at Luke.

Luke looks up—and up—at him, and Bodhi frowns to himself at the curiously blank look on Luke’s
face. “Darth Vader died on the Death Star.”

Kaytoo’s eyes flicker. “Oh. I understand.”


In the hold, Bodhi discovers that before he’d come up front, Luke had carefully covered his father’s body with a spare poncho and secured all of the blaster rifles. Although if the troopers hadn’t been so—cowed, maybe, by their narrow escape from certain death, it wouldn’t have been too hard for them to rig up some makeshift weapons from Bodhi’s things and storm the cockpit.

He’s glad they didn’t.

A couple of the troopers have taken off their helmets, and they go wide-eyed as Kaytoo looms up over them. “That’s a KX-security droid,” one trooper blurts.

“Yeah,” Bodhi says. The stormtrooper’s human, of course, his brown hair cut short to his scalp and his reddening face clean-shaven; without the armor he could practically be Dak’s brother. Dak’s younger brother.

“Listen, we’re not—we’re not gonna hurt you. Kaytoo’s going to take you in, and if—if—” Bodhi stops, uncertain what he can possibly promise.

“If you’re thinking of trying to escape, the forest is full of angry little bears who have spent the past several hours wreaking havoc on anyone in white armor,” Kaytoo says, helpfully. “So don’t think about it.”

Bodhi grimaces. But the troopers don’t try anything, merely going down the ramp and settling into a loose formation at the bottom. One of them lets out a low whistle at the sight of the towering trees, and another draws a deep breath of what has to be the first fresh air they’ve inhaled in a long while, crouching to touch the grass and fallen leaves almost reverently.

“I doubt they will give me much trouble,” Kaytoo says, and Bodhi has to admit he does look rather intimidating with a blaster rifle cradled in his spindly arms. “And—” he holds up a hand to forestall Bodhi’s request—“I won't hurt anyone I don’t have to.”

Bodhi nods gratefully. “I’ll see you at the village.”

Kaytoo descends the ramp and orders the stormtroopers to move out; Bodhi watches until he can’t see the white of their plasteel armor shining between the trees anymore. Then he closes the ramp, goes back to the cockpit, and—stands there, looking at Luke’s wan and weary face, the faint uncontrollable shivers that occasionally twitch across his slumped shoulders. He still smells like ozone and sweat and the metal of Vader’s armor.

Sorrow for what Luke’s lost swells in Bodhi’s chest again, along with a distantly remembered flash of anger.


Bodhi shakes his head and jerks a thumb back towards the hold. “Go get cleaned up, while I find a better place to—to—” He takes a breath. “And I want a look at your hand. Whatever happened to—however you got shocked can’t have been good for—for it.”

Luke blinks at him a few times. “All right.”
While Luke is in the ‘fresher, Bodhi scans for another clearing, away from the shield generator base or any of the Ewok's villages. He doesn't know what Luke's going to want to do, or if he'll even think of putting up a marker like his aunt and uncle had on Tatooine. But Bodhi is sure that Luke doesn't want Cassian or any of the Rebels bearing witness to his father's grave; nothing good can possibly come of anyone else wandering across it, either.

He’s vaguely aware that he’s shaking, a little, the adrenaline of both battles and the warring emotions of Vader’s final moments draining away. Looking out the viewport at the forest isn’t quite calming enough by itself, and his hands are unsteady on the console as he picks out a spot a dozen kilometers distant and calls it up on the display.

A part of him wants to start trying to put the pieces together; he could look back through the Republic database at the theories about Vader’s origins again, or what the NewsNets had put out about Anakin Skywalker’s supposed death. It’s—daunting, though, and he can’t bring himself to do it, recalling and dreading Luke’s anguish when he’d gone looking for information about Vader before.

Bodhi rubs a hand across his beard, casting a glance back into the shadows.

*Luke will tell me, this time.*

*He wouldn’t have—introduced us, if he didn’t want me to know.*

So instead of diving into the records after what almost certainly isn’t the truth, Bodhi manages to put himself through a couple of Chirrut’s breathing exercises by the time Luke returns from the ‘fresher. He's still dressed in the same rumpled black tunic, but some color's in his cheeks again, and his eyes have lost their feverish glitter. He carefully slides his glove off of his hand as he sits down in Kaytoo's vacated chair and wiggles his fingers for Bodhi's inspection. His fourth and fifth fingers are slower to move, and Bodhi suspects some of the sensors might have gone.

“How’s it feel?” Bodhi asks, running a critical eye over the damage Luke also apparently hadn't bothered—or hadn't had time to—get repaired after Tatooine. He takes Luke's hand and turns it palm up on the console so he can pop the access panel open.

Luke shrugs. “Hasn't been my main concern.”

Bodhi makes a face. “Right.” He falls quickly into a pattern of testing the circuits and tiny servos in Luke’s cybernetic hand, keeping a wary eye on the power supply; it’s a dual system, and Luke can probably manage just fine with the single functioning unit, but he also probably won’t appreciate it if his whole hand locks up. The rhythm of the work finally calms Bodhi down, though, settling his jumpy nerves and keeping him from firing questions at Luke until Luke's ready to talk.

But Luke simply stares down at the exposed wires and components in his wrist, waiting until Bodhi’s nearly finished, and then he says, “He could’ve let me die.”

Bodhi freezes, his head bent over Luke’s arm, one hand about to press the access panel shut.

“I know it doesn’t—it can’t really change anything,” Luke goes on, softly. “He destroyed the Jedi, he tortured my friends, he killed—”

A shudder goes through him, and when Bodhi looks up, Luke’s eyes are wet, but his gaze is direct and unflinching. “I defeated him this time, but despite what Obi-Wan and—despite what my Masters, even the Emperor wanted me to do, I couldn’t kill him.” His lips twitch, slightly, in an approximation of a wry smile. “He was unarmed.”
“Oh,” Bodhi says, weakly. He closes the panel on Luke’s wrist all the way and sits back, not so far that he can’t keep touching Luke’s hand. “So—”

“So then the Emperor decided to kill me,” Luke says, flatly. “With—I don’t know, I never read anything about the Jedi being able to do what he did—”

Unbidden, Bodhi’s mind supplies the memory of his vision, and his fingers tighten on Luke’s involuntarily, even as a spark of his anger reignites. “The thing I tried to warn you about? The reason I tried to come after—”

“I left because I didn't want you, or anyone else, to risk the mission because of me,” Luke retorts.

Bodhi narrows his eyes. “For all the good that did.”

Luke waves his left hand in the air. “Yeah—couldn’t the Force have shown you something about it being a trap, instead of making you think you had to sa—”

“Sorry, did you want me to leave you on the Death Star?” Bodhi snaps.

Luke opens and closes his mouth, startled. “All is as the Force wills it,” he murmurs, the fight gone out of him again.

Bodhi bites his lip; he hadn’t meant for them to argue, not here, not like this. “I—” He laces his fingers through Luke’s. “I am sorry. For—for all of—um.” He tilts his head towards the shadows. “About your—father.”

Luke heaves a sigh, looking down at their linked hands on the console. “He could've just stood there, and then gone back to the Emperor, and they would've won,” he says. “But he stepped in, when I thought it was—and he threw the Emperor into the heart of the Death Star. To save me.”

He curls his fingers, a touch stiffly. “The lightning shorted out the systems in his suit that were keeping him alive all this time.”

“All this time? Since—” Bodhi trails off uncertainly.

“I don’t know,” Luke says, thoughtfully. “I don’t know if the Emperor would've kept any records of when he turned my father, or what happened to make him need those machines. Obi-Wan only ever told me that Anakin Skywalker became Darth Vader.”

“I’ll help you find out,” Bodhi offers. “If—if that's something you want, uh, someday. Not—not right now.”

“Okay.” Luke smiles gently at him, but grief pulls at the corners of his mouth.

Bodhi squeezes his hand, once, and then he gets up so he can wrap his arms around Luke. Luke presses his face into the folds of Bodhi’s shirt, clutching at the back of his flight jacket. It’s impossible for Bodhi to believe it’s barely been a day since he last held Luke; so much has changed, like the entire galaxy has shifted on its axis.

But Luke’s right, too, in a way. There are plenty of things that knowing Vader was Luke’s father doesn’t change. It doesn’t change who Luke is. Not to Bodhi.

Because despite what Vader and the Emperor had done to him, despite the battle station practically collapsing around him—even though the Force had guided them together on the Death Star so he could rescue Luke—
Luke had been trying to come back.

*****

Building the pyre Luke insists is Jedi tradition surprisingly isn’t as much effort as Bodhi thinks it will be. Luke’s lightsaber makes short work of tree limbs, and after a couple of failed attempts on Bodhi’s part to keep the stacked logs from toppling, Luke eyes the pile and uses the Force to float everything into place.

It’s gotten dark, though, by the time Luke lifts his father’s body atop the pyre with the Force and steps forward to straighten out his cape where it’s caught on a branch.

Bodhi’s hesitant to break the solemn silence with anything except the Guardian’s prayer for the dead. But as Luke lights a torch with the firestarter from the Cadera’s survival kit, he asks, thinking of the grave of Luke’s grandmother. “Are you sure—is there anything of—of his that you want to take home to Tatooine? To bury?”

“No. I won’t leave any part of him to become a—a trophy. If anyone else ever found out who he was, if they went looking—” Luke shakes his head and says, more softly, his voice close to breaking, “It’s safe here. And he’s already home.”

Bodhi touches his shoulder, reassuring, and then he takes a step back, watching as Luke sets the torch to the logs and the pyre catches alight. The crackling sound of the fire is all he can hear for a long moment, and then Luke reaches back for his hand and says, “In darkness, cold. In light, cold.”


“In the Force, there is life.” Luke picks the thread of the prayer up again and leans against him, warm and solid and alive. “And the Force is eternal.”

Bodhi watches the smoke curl up towards the stars, thinking of another father on another pyre, abandoned too quickly in the rain. He hadn’t seen Galen’s face again, at the end; can only imagine what Jyn must have seen in his eyes before he died.

The flames rise around Vader’s body, burning higher and higher until there is nothing left but memory.

Luke shifts against his side, any remaining tension completely gone out of him. “I’m ready to go back,” he says, though when Bodhi looks at him, all he can see is a bone-deep weariness. He wishes they could just stay together in the Cadera to rest, but there’s more to do, more explanations Luke has to give—

Bodhi frowns. He looks around—points to the nearest fallen log and says, “Not just yet.”

“What?”

“First, you’re going to sit here before you fall over,” Bodhi says, tugging Luke to the log and pressing him firmly down. He folds his arms and fixes Luke with his best flight instructor stare. “And now, you’re going to explain about your sister.”

In the flickering firelight, Luke turns a little red. “Oh. I—wasn’t sure you heard that part, and she and I still need to talk about how we’re going to explain it to—” Bodhi raises his eyebrows, and he stops and says, sheepishly. “Um. Yes. A—twin sister.”
“A twin—” Bodhi stares blankly at him. “But the only other Force sensitive—fuck, is it Mara Jade?”


Bodhi sputters, “Leia? You mean you’ve been taking orders from—uh, fighting alongside your sister and you didn’t—the Force didn’t—”

Luke throws his hands up. “Nope. Didn’t have a clue.”

“Do you—did he mention anything—” Bodhi doesn’t glance back at the smoldering pyre, pulling his goggles up from around his neck and repositioning them on his forehead. “About your mother?” He doubts it, but figures he can look that up in the database—or maybe the old Pathfinder has some idea.

“I wish,” Luke says, somberly. “Leia said she couldn’t remember, either.” He sighs. “I don’t know what—what Obi-Wan was thinking. We could’ve both trained to become Jedi.”

“She’s always been interested in learning more about Jedha, too,” Bodhi says, reflectively. “The Temple, stuff like that.” He has a brief mental image of Leia carrying a lightsaber, and wonders if she will want to, now that she knows what else she’s capable of. He’d dreamed of a rebuilt Jedi Temple, once, for Luke and the Guardians to train the others Luke might find—

“Mara Jade.” Luke snorts. “Blast, can you imagine if both my father and my sister had been trying to kill me?”

“I hate to tell you, Luke, but the way Leia looked this morning when I woke up—”

Luke winces, obviously picturing her furious expression. “I’m in for it, huh.”

“Yeah,” Bodhi says.

“Well, at least I won’t be alone,” Luke says.

“How’s that?”

A bit of wry humor creeps into Luke’s voice. “Don’t think I didn’t hear how Cassian sounded on the comms when you said you were on the Death Star.”

Bodhi contemplates that, appalled; he hopes Kaytoo hasn’t made it worse, somehow. But he is looking forward to seeing that the rest of his family’s all right.

Luke pushes himself up from the log and grabs Bodhi’s hand. “Come on. We’ll face them together.”

Chapter End Notes

Happy May the Fourth! (I'm not on Eastern Time, but screw it. I'm posting!)

Much thanks to morag for keeping track of--well, not the pants, this time ;)

And thanks, dear readers, for sticking it out with me; yes, the chapter count went up by one. I wanted to get to the celebration at Bright Tree Village and be able to properly dedicate this chapter to Peter Mayhew's memory, but it wasn't going to work just yet.
Still--it is very sad to lose a kind man who brought a great deal of joy to fans through his work. RIP. <3
Chapter 104

Chapter Summary

What took you so long?

Chapter Notes

Some Mandarin mouseover text; translations in the end notes.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

The Ewok village is a beacon as Bodhi and Luke make their way through the forest towards it, filled with light and song. In the deepening dark, Rebel ships silhouetted against the stars set off cascades of fireworks, almost distant enough to be soundless. Pilots in orange and green flightsuits jog up the ramps and across the bridges in all directions to join their cheering squadmates by the fires; diminutive Ewoks press food and drinks into their hands, or pull them into dancing. A memory of festival nights in the crowded streets around the Temple flashes brilliant in Bodhi's mind, and he quickens his steps, eager to see Chirrut and Baze and the rest of his family.

First, though, Leia is waiting on the far side of the bridge, regal and elegant in the Ewoks' handwoven gifts; a grin breaks through the cloud of fatigue and grief over Luke's face, and he drops Bodhi's hand so he can hug her.

"You made it," Leia says, more warmth in her own smile and words than Bodhi's expecting. She releases Luke into Han's equally fervent embrace, and turns her gaze up to Bodhi.

As always, he's practically pinned in place by the strength of her stare. For the span of a single breath, Bodhi wonders whether the Force lies behind it, and then his next breath is stolen away by the surprise of Leia's arms going around him. "Thank you for not leaving him behind," Leia murmurs, sincerely. Bodhi thinks he and Luke might escape her anger, at least for tonight, and although a dozen questions threaten to spill from his mouth—what did Luke say, did you tell Han, what are you going to do—he manages to hug her back without anything bursting out except a whispered "You're welcome." There will be plenty of time for secrets, later.

"What took you so long?" Han demands, as Leia lets go of Bodhi and links her arm through Luke's, like she can't bear to be separated from him again.

"Bodhi was giving me a hand," Luke says, blithely.

Han lets out a suggestive chuckle, but then Luke actually raises his gloved right hand—Leia groans and elbows him in the side, and Han furrows his brow in bemusement. "Wait, I don’t get it."

"You know, because—" Luke starts, but Bodhi doesn’t get to hear how he explains his terrible joke, nearly jumping out of his skin and spinning around at someone touching his shoulder—

It’s Cassian, of course, and Jyn. Neither of them are geared for battle anymore, but they still don’t
exactly stand out in the crowd. Bodhi steps up between the huts so he can talk to them alone, exhaling a shaky, ragged breath at the sight of their faces: the way the tense lines of Cassian’s expression have finally softened, the fierce joy shining in Jyn’s eyes.

“The Death Star,” Jyn says, folding her arms and raising her eyebrows at Bodhi. “Really?”

“I—it was—you sent me away,” Bodhi protests, glancing helplessly at Luke being half-smothered by Chewbacca’s long furry arms. “And it—it was already too late, the Fleet was—but, but I couldn’t just do nothing to—” Cassian’s trying and failing to suppress a smile at Bodhi’s usual frenetic stabs at an explanation, and Bodhi switches gears and demands, “You—you’re both really all right?”

Jyn waves her hand. “Some bumps and bruises. Nothing worse than Leia’s blaster burn, thank the Force.”

Frowning in concern, Bodhi looks over his shoulder at Leia. He hadn’t noticed she’d been hurt—but then he registers Jyn’s words and swings back around. His gaze drops to the kyber crystal once again dangling from a cord around her neck, glints of firelight in its facets. Bodhi wishes he’d been there to see her ask for it back; he can easily imagine Cassian stepping in close to her as he knotted her necklace, returning where he and the crystal belong.

“The Ewoks lost many of their people,” Cassian mutters, his smile fading. “And we lost other good soldiers today.”

“Bodhi asked about us,” Jyn says, dryly, swatting at him.

With Rebels spread across the village platforms and Ewoks climbing over everything and everyone it’s hopeless to determine who’s missing, but Bodhi manages to spot Maddel with her arms around Hobbie, and Han pointing Lieutenant Bey up across another bridge, presumably toward her Pathfinder.

“You said—Chirrut, Baze—” Bodhi cranes his neck and searches vainly for them again. He wouldn’t put it past Chirrut to have dragged Baze off into a private corner—

Cassian squeezes his arm in reassurance. “They’re here, somewhere.”

“Probably surrounded by their latest group of adoring fans,” Jyn says. “They made quite an impression, Baze especially.”

Bodhi mentally compares Wicket to the size of Baze’s repeater cannon. “I bet.”

Cassian says, “So, the Death Star?”

“Um.” Bodhi rubs the back of his neck. “Had to—I had to give it a shot, you know. Getting Luke out—out of there.” He looks around for the tallest celebrants through the haze of bonfire smoke and the press of furry and colorful bodies. “Where’s Kaytoo with the stormtroopers I sent?”

“Making sure they’re secured,” Cassian replies, but he can’t be distracted from his line of questioning, even if his voice is gentle; not an interrogation yet, just an attempt to start fitting the pieces together for Draven. “What happened to Luke on the Death Star?”

Bodhi braces himself. They’d worked out an explanation on the walk to the village, and he’s pretty sure he can deliver it without cracking if Cassian’s stare gradually intensifies. It’s near enough to the truth, after all. “He fought Vader—he defeated Vader, but—the Emperor—” He doesn’t need to feign a shudder, and he swallows, hard, before he goes on. “The Emperor tried to kill Luke before he could finish it, and Vader—I—I don’t know, Luke thinks he saw an opportunity to strike, but who
knows what that—monster was thinking—"

“You’re telling us that Vader killed the Emperor?” Cassian asks.

Bodhi nods, jerkily. “And he—and he died for it. Luke—Luke said the Emperor had powers he’d never heard of, and whatever he did to Luke, he turned on Vader, too.” Another tremor goes through him; he’ll never be able to forget his vision, nor how close he’d come to losing Luke.

“Then it’s actually over,” Jyn murmurs, tentatively touching Bodhi’s arm. She brushes the fingertips of her other hand over the crystal at her throat, and Bodhi gulps a breath.

We could tell Jyn the truth.

Galen—Saw—

They weren’t Vader, but of all the people who have found themselves in this war, Jyn might understand; might be able to help Luke—and Leia—make sense of how to live with the weight of their father’s failures.

“You’re leading another attack tomorrow with Solo,” Cassian says, mildly reproving. He catches Bodhi’s eye. “We could use a pilot, if you’re up for it.”

“Yeah, yeah, okay,” Bodhi says. He levels a look at Cassian. “Not gonna send me away again?”

“If we hadn’t,” Jyn starts, sardonically, and then snaps her mouth shut, her eyes going wide. Her hand closes around the kyber crystal and she turns her gaze up at Cassian.

Cassian sighs. “I know what Chirrut will say, you don’t have to say it.”

Bodhi’s lips twitch into a smile, and on an impulse, he reaches out and tries to hug both of his dearest friends at once. Jyn feints a punch at him, but lets him draw her in, muffling a laugh into his shoulder. “I was gonna come back for you,” Bodhi says, squeezing his eyes shut and feeling Cassian press a kiss to his cheek. “Would’ve flown right back if—if there was any chance I could help—”

“Oh, we had air support,” Jyn says. Bodhi blinks, baffled, as Cassian huffs in amusement. “No, really, the Ewoks have gliders.” She pulls back a little to look up at him. “They took to Imperial technology like a quadduck to water. A couple of them and Chewbacca wound up commandeering an entire walker—might want to watch them around your ship tomorrow.”

“I’ll keep an eye out,” Bodhi says, wryly.

“Captain Rook,” someone calls, and Bodhi lets go of Jyn and Cassian to find Lando deftly weaving his way through the Ewoks towards them.

“Ah, Colonel Andor, Jyn,” Lando adds, sweeping Jyn’s hand up in his own and kissing it. Bodhi expects Jyn to roll her eyes; instead she dips a brief, not quite mocking, curtsy to him in return. “I hear you provided General Solo invaluable assistance today.” Cassian straightens, his shoulders going back stiffly, but Lando just winks at him. “Sorry about Han, es un pendejo.”

The corner of Cassian’s mouth quirks up. “He wasn’t that bad.” He claps Lando on the shoulder. “The battle went well?”

“Once you all finished the job down here.” Lando flashes a grin, and turns to Bodhi. “Now, Captain, Han insists it must be terribly disrespectful to our hosts for you not to be wearing the gifts they gave you.”
“Uh—”

“What gifts?” Cassian asks, suspiciously.

“No, well, I didn't have—time to—I must've left them—” Bodhi stammers, his face heating rapidly.

“Princess Leia found the time,” Lando scolds him. “And I'm sure you don't want to disappoint Luke, either?” He waggles his eyebrows.

Jyn eyes Lando. “How much Ewok moonshine have you drank already? What are you talking about?”

“Pants,” Lando says, gesturing expressively at Bodhi’s standard-issue, nondescript pants.

“Don't remind me,” Wedge groans, slipping in beside Cassian with Grizz and a couple other Rogue pilots trailing him. He smiles at Bodhi as Lando grabs his hand and pumps it enthusiastically. “Heard you were flying in to rescue Luke same time we were headed to the reactor core, huh? Mind cutting it a little less close next time?”

Bodhi winces—he hadn't given Cassian that detail yet—and reflexively flinches away from Jyn's sharp jab to his ribs. He'd rather they go back to talking about his absent leather pants; he's almost considering offering them up to Wedge as a replacement for the pair he'd won and subsequently lost on Hoth, except that Luke would be disappointed.

But Kasan huffs before he can muster up a reply of any sort. “Fuck next time. We're never letting anyone build one of these blasted things again.” She gives Cassian a decisive nod, and puts her arm around Joma's waist.

“Hear, hear,” Lando says.

Grizz says, heartfelt, “I'll drink to that,” and raises a wooden mug to Kasan.

Wedge gets a whiff of whatever's in it, probably the Ewok moonshine, and makes a face. “You're drinking that stuff?”

Grizz shrugs. “The little guys kept pushing it on me.”

“That'll put some hair on your chest,” Joma says, grinning at him.

“The real question is whether it's better or worse than the hull stripper Han tries to pass off as Mandalorian thiaar,” Lando says, and holds his hand out for Grizz to pass him the mug.

“Is that what—” Bodhi breaks off, suddenly wary. “Hang—hang on, what else are the Ewoks giving people to eat?”

“Ah, don't worry, Leia and me got 'em to stop before they fried up some stormtroopers,” Han says, slouching his way into the group. “At least I think we got to them before that?”

Lando coughs and wipes his mouth with the back of his hand, and Janson says, flatly, “What.”

“Not making any promises about the jerky, though,” Han adds, cheerfully. He turns to Lando. “I heard my name—what kinda lies you been telling about me over here?”

“I'm gonna go find something to eat that isn't people,” Bodhi mutters to his friends, as Lando laughs and casually drapes his arm over Han's shoulders.
“Got a couple crates of ration bars down there,” Han tells him, waving his hand vaguely towards the center of the party where Leia is dancing with Wicket and Threepio, of all people. Luke’s talking with Nien Nunb, but sensing Bodhi’s eyes on him, looks up and smiles.

Han leans into the circle of Lando's arm, affecting an aggrieved expression. “Can you believe Syndulla wouldn’t give them to me unless I said the Ghost was better’n the Falcon?”

“You pilots,” Jyn says, following Bodhi away from the Rogues, leaving Cassian to his conversation with Joma and Kasan.

“Hey, I never got into those—those pissing contests,” Bodhi points out. “I just fly, y’know, cargo shuttles—”

“Yeah, but you still wound up debating X-wing models with Luke at dinner half the time.”

Bodhi opens his mouth to retort that they at least didn’t get into impromptu blaster field-stripping races at the table, but a huge furry paw descends onto his head, surprising him into a yelp. Chewbacca ruffles his hair—catches his goggles before they fall off completely and hands them back with a rumbled apology for startling him.

“Oh—hey, Chewbacca.” Bodhi hastily replaces his goggles on his forehead and smiles up at him; he’s got two giggling Ewok cubs sitting on his shoulders and playing with his fur.

Chewbacca engulfs Bodhi in his long arms and growls that he had made everyone very worried, but that he's glad Bodki went to bring Luke back safely.

“Uh, yeah, me too,” Bodhi says, wheezing a little.

Chewbacca adds, with a purring undertone of amusement, that the Ewoks have told him there are larger and more dangerous predators in the forest, and that he's warning anyone who might want some privacy tonight to stay in the village.

“Some—oh.” Bodhi glances up at the thatched huts spiralling skyward along the tree trunks, and feels his face heating again; it's really only been a day since he and Luke were together in one of those huts. Which are packed in kind of close, now that he's looking at them. “Privacy. Right.”

“There's always your ship,” Jyn says, as Chewbacca pats Bodhi on the head, more gently, and moves on to deliver the message to Maddel and Hobbie.

Bodhi glowers at her. “And where are you and Cassian gonna go, huh?”

“You know us, we can sleep anywhere. Forest wasn’t so bad last night, even it meant missing out on pants.” Jyn smirks and snags a couple of ration bars from Han’s promised crate, tossing one at him and pointing hers at something over his shoulder. “After you’re done talking to the Guardians, come dance with us,” she says, and turns to wind her way through the crowd back to Cassian.

Bodhi looks in the direction she’d pointed, and finds Chirrut and Baze up on another platform, surrounded by Ewoks. He goes to get two more ration bars for them, and is searching for where Grizz found the moonshine, when he bumps into the white-bearded Pathfinder.

“Sorry,” Bodhi says, and then he jams the ration bars into his jacket pocket and sticks out his hand. “I—I am sorry, I still don’t know your name, uh, Commander, and it—I feel like I should, ‘cause you look so familiar—”

The Pathfinder shakes his hand. “Rex. You might have learned about me and several thousand of my
brothers while you were at the Academy, Captain."

Bodhi’s eyes widen. “You’re a—” He can’t help glancing at Cassian being coaxed onto the dance floor with Jyn, wondering how his Separatist-leaning friend had dealt with a clone in the Rebellion, but then he remembers what he’d really wanted to ask. “So that’s why you said that Luke would be okay, you—you served with—” Bodhi stills, suddenly aware the past is opening before him like a lighted corridor, and that it isn’t his path to walk unless Luke is beside him.

Rex chuckles. “Though sometimes Skywalkers can use the help.” He puts his free hand on top of their handshake. “Haven’t been around much the last few years, but you let him know I’ve got plenty of time to talk now, if there’s anything he wants to know.”


Another time.

Bodhi turns, scoping out the easiest route to the Guardians, and heads that way. Other Rebels he doesn’t know—Y-wing pilots, a pair of Mon Calamari—raise their mugs and congratulate him as he passes, but he can’t give in to the celebration yet, not until he’s seen his uncles for himself.

“小弟弟,” Baze calls, as Bodhi comes up the ramp towards them. He’d misjudged the Ewoks from afar; there aren’t any adults hanging around, only one or two about Wicket’s age, and the rest are cubs nestled in Baze’s lap.

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“Here, I brought some food. No, don’t get up,” Bodhi says, hastily, as Chirrut starts to stand, momentarily unbalancing an Ewok that had been using his staff to help them climb onto the bench.

“Can’t,” Baze grumbles, accepting the ration bar and promptly breaking it into pieces for the cubs practically bouncing with curiosity on his thigh.

Chirrut says, cheerfully, “He’s as bad as Chewbacca with these new friends.” He reaches out and clasps Bodhi’s hand. “Do you know what the first thing Cassian did was, after we won and he tried to find a way to contact you?”

“No?”

Chirrut’s smile is as bright as the bonfire reflected in his sightless eyes. “He prayed.”

“Don’t make such a big deal about it,” Baze says, gruffly. “He might never do it again.”

“Yeah, that tracks,” Bodhi says, though he’s touched; he doesn’t think anyone—well, probably Luke—has prayed for him since his mother died. “But, uncle, you—you’re both okay? I know you fought with help from the Ewoks—”

Chirrut pats his hand and scoots over a little on the narrow bench. “We’re fine. 跟我們 坐一下.”

“You’re fine,” Baze says, as Bodhi wedges himself in between the Guardians. “I had to teach bears about blaster rifles the whole afternoon.”
“So? You had a good time.”

Baze snorts. “They almost shot me.”

“Now you know how I feel每次我們去鬥戰,” Chirrut says.

“你覺得我跟他們一樣?” Baze demands, scooping a cream-striped Ewok cub from his lap and holding them up at Chirrut. They giggle and wave their paws in the air, and Bodhi stifles a laugh.

“你比他們可愛.”

Baze rolls his eyes.

“Yep, I see you’re both just fine,” Bodhi says, wryly.

“And you are all right,” Chirrut pronounces.

Bodhi starts to lift a hand in a shrug, and then drops it, puzzled at the way something about Baze’s face subtly shifts in the firelight. He’s seen the Guardian jovial and contented before, but for the first time, Bodhi thinks the look in Baze’s eyes is one of hope.

“我們現在能告訴他?”

“我覺得,” Chirrut says, and then he hesitates.

“Tell me what?” Bodhi can’t even hazard a guess at what they might have to say that could make Baze look like that.

Baze nudges Chirrut with his foot. “你說吧.”

“Okay, okay.” Chirrut puts his hand on Bodhi’s arm. “We are not the only survivors of Jedha.”

Bodhi’s eyes widen, the breath knocked out of him as hard as if Chirrut had raised his staff and smashed it into his chest.

Chirrut says, “Before you came home for the last time, we sent thirty-four children—orphans—offworld. In a stolen Imperial shuttle.”

“With our friend Kaya to watch over them,” Baze says. “And a pilot, but she was not from Jedha originally.”

“We—we’re not—” Bodhi’s trembling, turning back and forth to look at Baze’s gleaming eyes, the faint upturned curve of Chirrut’s mouth. He wants to scream at them, dizzy with elation and exasperation and a last smoldering trace of guilt, but mostly manages to keep it together, aware of the Ewok cubs staring up at him with huge dark eyes. “Where are they? Are they safe? Why didn’t—why didn’t you tell me?”

“We haven’t found them yet,” Chirrut says. “We looked and looked, but it is a big galaxy, and Denic and Kaya are smart—they would know how to keep the children out of sight and stay safe.”

Baze says, “I thought we could tell you, so you could help us look, but Chirrut said no, we had to wait.”

“You’ve been waiting un—until now, for—the war to end?” Bodhi could shake them, if he isn’t utterly certain Chirrut would put him on his ass for trying. “For me to—to get better?”
Chirrut squeezes his arm, firmer than anyone else's grip on him has been all evening. “More the first thing.”

“Okay. Okay.” Bodhi runs his hand over his hair, tugging his goggles off; the closest cub mews, reaching for the strap, and he lets them have at it for a minute, hoping they won't chew through the elastic. His mind races: had he heard anything about a missing shuttle, or whispers of a cover-up about one? “Who—you said they're orphans, they're—are they from the Temple, or, or, just because of the occupation? D’you know anything about the pilot? Where did you already look—”

“哎呀.” Chirrut laughs. “You are already thinking about what you can do in the future, but we are here, in the present.”

Bodhi can’t fidget with his goggles because the Ewok cubs are playing tug-of-war with them, so he laces his fingers together in front of him instead. “Chirrut, you can’t just—you can’t just tell me this and expect me to—”

“No, I expected this,” Chirrut says, reaching behind Bodhi and giving Baze a solid smack on the shoulder. “We also expected that it would make you happy to know there are others, who can help us remember Jedha.”

“I—” Bodhi swallows around the lump in his throat. “It does, but I—”

“Quit fucking with him and give him the datachip,” Baze orders. Bodhi stiffens and glares uselessly at Chirrut, who huffs, producing a datachip from the folds of his robes. “Everything we have been able to find out so far, mostly rumors. And now that you know, we can tell Jyn and Cassian, and get help from more people.”

Baze nods at Bodhi as he closes his fingers around it, his heart pounding. “The war is ending, and we will find them.”

“But 那是明天的事情,” Chirrut insists. He nudges Bodhi. “Go be happy with the people you love, now.”

Bodhi lifts his head to look at Baze and says, “That’s you, too, you know.”

Baze carefully pricks Bodhi’s goggles out of the Ewok cubs’ paws and gives them back to him, a smile brightening his entire face. “我們知道.”

“Go on,” Chirrut says, again, and grins. “We will come down in a little while, show all you young people how we have a good time.”

Back down below on the main platform, Bodhi takes a breath. His friends, dispersed around the crowd, are having a good time. Wedge and Janson are apparently well on their way to thoroughly drunk, Grizz is chatting up a couple of pilots from Gray Squadron, and in glimpses through the moving masses, Bodhi can see Kasan and Joma dancing close together.

He can’t quite stop thinking, though, about what’s on the precious new datachip tucked into his flight jacket pocket, or how Luke kind of looks like he’s enjoying himself, except for how he’d only lost his father a few hours ago, and—

—and Lando is coming right up to him, trying to shout something over the Ewok horns and drums.

“Sorry, what?” Bodhi yells back.

“I said you need a drink,” Lando shouts, and shoves a wooden mug at him. “C’mon, Bodhi, we
won, it’s a party!” He grabs Bodhi’s free hand and pulls him through the crowd, which parts enough to let them through to where Cassian is dancing with Leia.

Bodhi gapes. He figures he must have been really distracted the last time there was a party, or Cassian must have been on a mission or something, because he didn’t know that Cassian can dance. It’s not at all formal or restrained like Bodhi would have expected dancing with a princess to be, but loose and sensual and—he looks around for Jyn or Han, suddenly, pruriently curious about their reactions, and discovers Luke sidling up to him with an equally delighted expression on his face instead.

“Did you—”

“I had no idea.” Luke wraps his arms around Bodhi’s waist from behind and rests his chin on his shoulder. Bodhi turns his head slightly, and spots Han outright gawking at Leia twirling through her steps, although beside him Jyn is simply smirking with fond pride. Lando whistles his appreciation, and even Artoo is rocking back and forth on his treads and chirping. “Hey, you don’t think I’m gonna have to learn how to do that, do you?” Luke murmurs.


“Well I’m her brother. That makes me something royal.”

“I dunno, I wasn’t very good at planetary governments class. And besides, you’re, you know, a Jedi?”

Luke nuzzles at his neck. “Yeah, fair point, no one’s mentioned anything about traditional Jedi dancing.”

“Can’t even begin to picture what that would look like.” The excitement of the Guardians’ revelation still has Bodhi on edge, a touch giddy, but leaning back against Luke’s warm body swaying slightly to the beat, some of his preoccupation and worry dissipates. Luke seems to feel Bodhi relax and hugs him tighter, only letting go to clap when Cassian spins Leia back into his arms at the end for a quick hug, both their faces flushed and glowing in the firelight.

Han calls, sardonically, as Leia curtsies to the cheering pilots, “I’d have tried to cut in, but there’s no way in hell I could keep up with either one of you.” Cassian ventures a couple of fancy-looking steps towards Han with his hand outstretched; Han reaches out and shakes it, firmly, making Cassian laugh.

Lando suggests, loudly, “If he won’t dance, how ‘bout a speech, instead?”

“Oh no no, my friend, I am too drunk for that,” Han says, wagging his finger and then aiming it around at Leia. “Speeches are her speciality, anyway. Or yours, General Calrissian.”

“I will gladly defer to the professionals,” Lando says, flourishing his cape in a bow to Leia.

Leia puts up her hand to demur, but Luke calls out, brightly, “Speech!” and it’s promptly picked up by the Rebels. Threepio says something to Wicket, who waves his arms at the Ewok drummers to stop. A roar emanates from Chewbacca somewhere in the crowd, silencing the remaining revelers, and Leia laughs as she’s hoisted up onto the drummers’ platform, speaking quickly and quietly to Threepio.

Then she looks out across the assembled crowd, and Bodhi has a moment to wonder if this is anything like the medal ceremony he’d missed on Yavin IV; he seriously doubts it.
“A long time ago, my father told me that we could not let a thousand years of democracy disappear without a fight,” Leia says, her voice ringing out into the forest. At Bodhi’s back, Luke twitches, just barely, and his grip on Bodhi loosens. “My mother raised me to cherish peace. Together with Mon Mothma and the leaders of Rebel cells from many worlds, they began the Alliance to restore freedom to all the beings of the galaxy. Today, we won because they believed that we could carry out that fight. Because they believed we would someday rebuild that peace.”

One of the Ewok leaders clammers up onto the platform, chatters to Leia, and hands her a small wooden cup. She nods her thanks, and raises it high in the air. “To the founders of the Alliance.”

“To Princess Leia!” someone shouts, and a smile crosses her face. Bodhi drinks incautiously fast and coughs at the burning taste of the Ewoks’ alcohol, but he lifts his mug again as Chewbacca roars. He snickers at Han’s name in Shyriiwook as the man himself turns red, and then from the other squadrons come more names celebrating survival, the commanders and friends long gone or newly lost.

“If this keeps up we will all be too hungover to fight tomorrow,” Baze says, and Bodhi looks down at him depositing one of the older Ewok children on the ground. Chirrut pats the Ewok on the head and they scamper off between the humans’ legs.

“No one said you had to drink,” Chirrut replies.

Baze grunts, and clinks his canteen against Bodhi’s mug. “Tradition.”

From a couple meters to their right, Cassian calls, hoarsely, “To Galen Erso—” and Jyn’s hand flies up to her mouth, trembling, as Cassian holds her close.

“To Rogue One.” Leia says, and her words echo in a hundred voices. And Bodhi knows that all around him, the Rebels, the droids, the Ewoks—they must be looking at his friends, at him, like they’re heroes—and for once, he doesn’t care.

It’s easier to lose himself a little bit to the celebration, after that, dancing with Luke and surrounded by the people he loves. Luke doesn’t really know how to dance, letting Bodhi or Leia lead until he’s carried off by a handful of determined Ewoks who make him join their circle around Artoo. Jyn takes Bodhi’s hand, then, like she does when they’re sharing a bed, content to sway with him and watch others try to keep up with Cassian’s practiced steps or Chirrut’s reflexes. Lando comes closest, naturally, sweeping Leia around the packed platform while Han pretends he’s ignoring them to talk to Chewbacca.

A ripple goes through the crowd; another contingent of Rebels is arriving across the bridge, Kaytoo in their midst. Bodhi looks for Cassian and discovers that Leia, Kasan, and Lieutenant Bey have caught him up for another dance, which Leia is marginally more effective at by virtue of having actual skirts to flourish.

“Be right back,” Bodhi says to Jyn, and works his way through the party to greet Kaytoo.

“I suppose this is what Lieutenant L’ulo meant when he said we would be ‘fashionably late,’” Kaytoo says, taking in the celebration. “It’s good that I do not need to eat or drink, because I see everything edible to organics has been significantly depleted.” He turns his glowing eyes on Bodhi. “Hello. Did you come to ask me what I told General Draven about your actions on the Death Star?”

“No, I was coming to get you—wait, what—”

“You were coming to get me?” Kaytoo tilts his head, sounding amused. “I could see where you were
with Jyn and Baze.”

“Oh, uh, right,” Bodhi beckons him aside, lowering his voice so only Kaytoo can hear. “What did you tell Draven?”

“I surmised that if you had not decided on the course of action that you did, Luke would not have been able to find a ship to escape the Death Star before its destruction. I left out the Force, but General Draven guessed it was part of your justification nonetheless.”

Bodhi hesitates. “And—”

“He did not ask about Darth Vader,” Kaytoo says. “I understand that it isn’t a good idea to tell people that Luke decided to rescue one of our greatest foes. He has picked up some bad habits from you.”

“So you’ll say that he died on the Death Star? To—to anyone who asks what you observed?”

Kaytoo closes his hand on Bodhi’s shoulder. “You’re asking me to lie on official reports. To Cassian.”

Bodhi nods, trying to ignore that Kaytoo’s grip is a little less careful than usual.

“Even Cassian hasn’t asked me to keep a secret like this before,” Kaytoo muses. “Very well. I trust that you’re making the right decision.”

“Thanks, Kaytoo,” Bodhi says. He lets out a breath he didn’t know he’d been holding as Kaytoo releases him.

“You’re welcome. Now, you may lead me to the rest of our friends.”

Kaytoo’s arrival is effusively welcomed; Baze toasts him with his canteen, since he’d missed it all before, and Jyn’s mouth curves into a wide, generous smile. Cassian, breathing hard, pats Kaytoo’s chest plate. “Good, you’re here, you can take over for me.”

“You never upgraded that subroutine,” Kaytoo says, reprovingly.

“I didn’t?”

Jyn gives him a push. “Well, I’m sure your current programming will be sufficient.”

Kaytoo swivels his head to glare at her as Cassian tugs him back into the mix. “Wait, Cassian—”

Bodhi raises his eyebrows at Jyn.

“Once he realizes this is an opportunity to show up Threepio and Artoo, he’ll be fine,” Jyn says, waving her hand dismissively. “C’mon, I think I saw Wedge and Janson trying to teach some Ewoks how to play sabacc.”

The rest of the night goes on like that. Bodhi drifts into a dozen different orbits, teasing and being teased by the Rogues—Wedge actually starts to lose to the Ewok shaman, to his incredulous dismay; dancing with Jyn or Luke or Grizz and his new pair of Gray Squadron pilots; watching and laughing as Chirrut makes Kaytoo lead a traditional Jedhan line dance.

Eventually, the Ewoks stop drumming quite so vigorously, the fires burn down low, and people start to trickle away into the dark and quiet. Bodhi doesn’t pay much attention to most of the pairs and small groups, but he does notice when Leia kisses Lando’s cheek and Han whispers something in his
ear before he and Leia slip away, hand in hand. He looks around for Luke, surprised that they hadn’t sought him out to say goodnight, and finds him dangling his feet over the side of a bridge, alone.

“Hey,” Bodhi says, sitting down next to him.


“I’m not sure we can go back to the hut we were in yesterday,” Bodhi offers, when Luke doesn’t say anything else for a minute. “Might have to head back to the Cadera.”

Luke doesn’t move to get up. “Bodhi, everything that you saw—everything you know, now—” He’s tensed slightly, like he expects Bodhi to pull away. “Are you sure you’re okay with this?”

Bodhi glances around, making sure they’re out of earshot of the celebration before he replies. “Which part? The part where I’m keeping secrets from my closest friends and family about your father, or the part where—”

“The part where Darth Vader was my father.” Luke isn’t looking at him, staring out into the forest instead.

Bodhi shifts his hand over on the rough-hewn planks of the bridge so he can touch Luke’s, and bites his lip. Well, he’s dead now, so, isn’t what Luke needs to hear, and anyway, Bodhi knows just how far the past can reach.

Into the silence between them, Luke adds, very softly, “You’re not afraid of what I might—”

The words that had dammed up in Bodhi’s throat spill out. “No, no—look, it’s kind of fucked up that you knew, and didn’t tell me until he was dying on my ship, and—and that other people knew, and didn’t tell you, but—it’s like Chirrut said before, right? You don’t have to be like—like your father, or like the Jedi used to be, or—”

“I’m definitely not gonna go back to being a moisture farmer,” Luke mutters, dryly. He still doesn’t meet Bodhi’s eyes, apparently fascinated by the empty darkness before them.

Bodhi snickers faintly, and tightens his hand over Luke’s. “I can’t—I can’t say it doesn’t matter who your father was,” he says, and thinks about a desperate hope spoken in the rain, hoarse breaths strained through a respirator, the choices that men make out of fear and loss and love. “But I’m not—I’ve never been afraid of you. You’ve always tried to do the right thing, and you—you saved me—”


He smells like smoke, but it’s a good kind of smoky, not tinged with the ozone of blaster fire or the bitterness of ash and grief. Bodhi kisses him back, fervently, twining their fingers together in unspoken promise.

Someone clears their throat, and Bodhi opens his eyes to see Cassian and Jyn standing at the end of the bridge, silhouetted against the remains of the bonfire.

“We’re heading out,” Jyn calls.

Bodhi squeezes Luke’s hand and scrambles to his feet. “I’ll just be a moment.”

Luke nods; the last lingering flames are reflected in his eyes, like a kyber crystal angled to catch the sunlight. “All right.”
Cassian smiles as Bodhi reaches them. “We will see you in a few hours, Bodhi, if that’s enough time to prep your ship.”

“That sounds—that sounds fine,” Bodhi says.


Bodhi casts a quick glance over his shoulder; Luke is gazing off into the trees again. “Yeah. I think so.” Cassian’s brow furrows at the familiar calm expression settling over Luke’s face, and Bodhi thinks, suddenly, that while he definitely doesn’t want Cassian to know the truth—

—it’s possible he’ll find out.

Cassian wraps his free arm around Bodhi in a hug, and then steps back. “Good. I hope—I hope you are happy, tonight.”

Bodhi meets Cassian’s eyes, and then Jyn’s.

Tomorrow, there will be another battle for his friends to fight. And after that, when they win, Bodhi will help rebuild the Republic in whatever way he can; he’ll take Luke exploring throughout parts of the galaxy neither of them have seen. He’ll help Baze and Chirrut find the last children of Jedha and restore the memory of their home.

But that will be for tomorrow, and all of the future still to come.

Tonight—

“I am,” Bodhi says, and he looks up at the stars, and smiles.

*****

The End

Chapter End Notes

Goodness gracious me, we’re done!

...well, not quite. :)

Thanks for sticking around, dear readers, and my endless eternal thanks to morag for supporting me through this month’s writing. I love you, my friend. <3

Translations:
el es un pendejo: He's...uh, let's say "stupid." :) 
小弟弟: Little brother
跟我們坐一下: Sit with us a bit
每次我們去鬥戰: every time we go to battle
你覺得我跟他們一樣?: You think I’m the same as them?
你比他們可愛: You’re cuter
我們現在能告訴他?: We can tell him now?
我覺得: I think so
你說吧: You tell him
哎呀: Aiya
那是明天的事情: that’s for tomorrow
我們知道: We know

References:
Mandalorian tihaar
Rex :D
Kaya Gimm

YUB NUB!!!
Six months after the fall of the Empire—

*(None of Bodhi’s closest family and friends had been there for it.)*

*Not at the final battle above Jakku, another desolate desert planet almost to the edge of known space, the kind of world that Bodhi will forever have conflicting feelings about. Nor at the signing of the Galactic Concordance officially ending hostilities between the New Republic and the Empire.*

*Jyn and Cassian had been knee-deep in their work for the New Republic Security Bureau, without Kaytoo, whom Lando had somehow persuaded into helping him take back Cloud City.*

*Luke had slipped away on his own somewhere, following the call of the Force.*

*Leia had been giving birth.*

*And Bodhi had been with the Guardians, searching the galaxy for the lost children of Jedha—)*

“—and stars, Chirrut, I’d never seen him cry before, but when Althin—he’s a Rodian, around Kelka’s age, maybe a couple years younger—when Althin gave him a drawing of the Temple and told him what it was—”

Bodhi gulps, the memory of Chirrut’s shining face enough to put a lump in his throat, and Luke strokes his arm gently. They’re curled together on bedrolls in the *Cadera’s* hold, catching up on the way to take care of one final promise, the glow of hyperspace casting swirling shadows over Luke’s fair skin.

“So, anyway, I think the younger kids are settling in fine on Dantooine,” Bodhi goes on, when he’s gotten himself back under control. “The older ones, they’re almost as old as you were at Yavin, and some of ‘em are kind of—kind of like me, they want to keep going. Keep flying. I think Baze is gonna try and get a flight simulator out of his meeting with Winter so they can train properly, but I don’t know how much that’ll cost.”

“Wedge’ll take them on at his flight school for free,” Luke points out.

Bodhi shrugs. “Yeah, but you know how it is, going into a squadron that’s been flying X-wings while you’ve only had, what, bikes and landspeeders—”

“Or a fixed-up old T-16,” Luke says, amused, planting a kiss on the side of Bodhi’s neck.

“Exactly,” Bodhi says. He runs his hand over Luke’s bare back and shoulders, eliciting a soft sigh and another kiss, more heated this time—and the *Cadera’s* navicomputer beeps the alert that they’re coming up on their destination. Luke groans in mild disappointment, but he doesn’t complain more than that, silently getting dressed while Bodhi sorts out his own discarded shirt and pants and pads barefoot up to the cockpit.

The *Cadera’s* navicomputer beeps again, and Bodhi hesitates for just a moment, licking his suddenly dry lips, before he drops them back into normal space.
The vortex of hyperspace blurs away, the stars shrink into points of light, and Bodhi lets out a shuddery breath at the sight of the churning blue-black clouds of Eadu.

“You’d better come and strap in,” he calls back to Luke. “It’s a bit bumpy on the way down.”

Luke whistles, low, as he joins Bodhi and sees the lightning leaping through the clouds. “Wow.”

Bodhi nods, and settles his hands on the controls. It feels both familiar and utterly strange, taking the Cadera down through the storm on the last vector Kaytoo and Cassian had flown instead of his old route. The ship’s scanners have a hard time picking out the location of the shuttle depot, buried under tons of rock, but Bodhi had dug the coordinates out of his memory and corroborated them with the logs of the Zeta-class shuttle he’d stolen from here.

He lands his ship among the rock spires a lot more carefully than last time, and looks out the viewport at the rain, a little unsettled. Practically everything he might have used as a landmark is gone; there really is nothing visible left of the base or the U-wing, after five years of rain and rockfall, but he’s almost sure he recognizes the rock formations nearby.

“You’ll need these,” Luke says, and Bodhi glances over at him; he’s dangling Bodhi’s boots from one hand.

“Thanks.” Bodhi laces them up, listening to the incessant beat of the rain, the intermittent rolling thunder, and trying to remind himself that storms were a blessing, on Jedha. Then he goes back into the hold to retrieve his flight jacket, gloves, and a pair of ponchos to keep them dry, though it’ll be impossible—he can already imagine the chill dripping down his collar.

Luke catches the poncho Bodhi tosses to him and pulls it on over his head, ruffling up his golden hair; he runs his fingers through it to little avail, not that it’ll matter the second they step out into the rain. “Ready?”

Bodhi lights up a glow rod and slaps at the ramp controls in reply.

He doesn’t say much as they trudge through the forest of stone spires, and Luke doesn’t press him for conversation, both concentrating on keeping their footing on the slick and sharp rocks. The path Bodhi had taken Cassian on had been eroding when they’d climbed it too fast in the dark; he holds up the glow rod, looking for a new, hopefully safer one.

(He’d asked her, of course, but Jyn hadn’t wanted to come. She’d looked down at the wedding holo of her parents on her desk, her eyes no longer by the past, and told him she’d said and done everything for her father that she needed to. He hadn’t had to ask Cassian to know what his answer would be.)

A snap-hiss at Bodhi’s side makes him jump, and Luke smiles at him, a touch sheepishly, his lightsaber blade illuminating far more than the ridge above.

The corner of Bodhi’s mouth quirks. He points. “This way.”

At the top, Bodhi gazes around and down into the rubble-strewn valley below, feeling more and more certain he’s remembered it correctly. Even if he hasn’t, that’s all right. He’s come far enough.

Luke helps him build a cairn, mostly by hand like they’d done for his father’s pyre on Endor, occasionally catching a rock with the Force before it can send the ones below tumbling. Bodhi’s gloves are almost shredded by the time they’re done, and he pulls them off, grimacing at a few shallow cuts that sting in the cool air. They don’t hurt very much, though, and they won’t scar if he
cleans them up properly when they get back to the ship, or if Luke decides to use the Force for something so small.

And then Bodhi reaches into his flight jacket pocket and pulls out his medal.

He has another one, now. Nearly everyone who’d been at the Battle of Endor has, whether they’d been in space or on the ground, or whether they’d even fought in combat at all. That medal is safely tucked away with Luke’s on the Cadera, along with Kenobi’s Aethersprite model and the strange compass Luke had found on his quest.

But this medal—

Bodhi puts it carefully inside the gap they’ve left in the cairn for it, and then he sets the last stone in place. Steps back, tilting his face up to the rain. “I listened,” he says, softly. “I’ll try to keep listening.”

Luke takes his hand as they make their way back to the ship.

Launching is easy and and subdued in comparison to the previous time, but Bodhi doesn’t jump them to hyperspace right away, looking down at the white sparks of lightning in the clouds, wiping the last traces of wetness from his face.

Goodbye, Galen.

He straightens up and reaches forward for the lever, but before he can pull it, Luke says curiously, bright as ever, “What’s next? Heading back to Dantooine? Is Baze gonna go through the caves blowing up laigrek nests again, or do you want me to come help out for a bit?” He pauses, and adds, “I’d like to see the kyber crystals, if you haven’t sealed them off yet—”

[—Mara standing over him with a blaster, her green eyes fierce and furious—]

“—edge on Hosnian Prime? I bet we could show Wexley’s kid a thing or two.” Luke frowns. “Bodhi? Am I talking too—are you—”

Bodhi shakes the odd vision, or memory, or whatever that was, loose, and manages a small, reassuring smile. It’s fine. He’s faced her before; he can certainly do it again.

“I’m okay,” he says, firmly, and means it. “And no, we’re not going to Dantooine, or to see Wedge, or back to Chandrila, ‘cause we—we’re going to Sanctuary. On vacation.”

Luke blinks at him, momentarily stunned. Then he beams, leans across the armrest to kiss Bodhi, and says, “Well, you’re the pilot.”

Bodhi grins at him, pulling the lever to jump them to hyperspace, and outside the viewport, Eadu vanishes into a million silver streaks. “I’m the pilot.”

*****

Chapter End Notes
Eight hundred and eighty-eight days ago, I posted the first chapter of this fanfic, with the mild hope that it might pick up some readers who wanted the Rogue One team to be part of the rest of the story we love so much. I was pretty excited about what I might be able to explore; I’d done some stories that attempted to meld elements of the old EU and the new canon, and there was just so much more to play with in the GFFA, through the eyes of my new favorite character.

LITTLE DID I KNOW.

As I’ve said before, this is the single most amazing thing I’ve ever experienced in connection to fandom. I never thought I would spend so much time on a fic (just how much? You’ll have to visit my tumblr in the coming days for the stats post, lol), nor make the kinds of friends from it that I have. My deepest thanks go out to meledea for being there at the start while I figured out what the heck I was doing, and to moragmacpherson for keeping track of the pants the last year and a half after I stopped being silly and just made her the official beta. :) And, of course, thanks to my husband, who contributed to one part of this story, was an occasional sounding board, and did not mind when I disappeared for hours on weekends to work on this instead of, you know, doing things with him. XD

I would also be remiss if I didn’t thank people who have given me the loveliest gifts over the course of the last two and a half years because of or related to this thing, from fics to playlists to fanart: rey, wherever you are; SainaTsukino; brynnmclean; shortcrust; attackedastoria; ladililn; cloudsofsmoke and here; timid-aisling and here; and morag (MESH PANTS!).

But most of all, dear readers, thanks to you. I cannot say enough how much it means to have had your support and enthusiasm—in whatever form—for this story over the course of its 105 chapters. I could not have gotten here without you. <3 <3 <3 <3 <3

Some final notes:
-Here is my playlist :)

-I have gone back through and added all of my commissioned art (and the mesh pants) into the appropriate chapters in the main body of the text; hopefully they will work in downloads of the whole thing.

-I will be working on POV ficlets! I have some requests already in the queue, but if you’d like to see some part of this massive thing from someone else’s eyes, you can request them over at my tumblr. I’ll be adding those little stories to love is a long, long road.

-Yes, there will be a sequel, but not until late December at the earliest!!

*****

“Greatness, and making significant contributions, and making a change doesn’t just fall
to those who are born into the right family, who are part of the right clan, or had the right grandfather or whatever. It’s in your hands, too.”
- Riz, on io9

I’m learning to fly, but I ain’t got wings
Coming down is the hardest thing

<3
May 25, 2019

*****

End Notes

All of the lovely kind gifts I’ve received related to this fic can be found here on my tumblr, as well as art I’ve commissioned and the random moodboards I’ve made :)

Works inspired by this one
sanctuary by brvnnmclean (ilfirin estel)
Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!