Summary

"That's half the point: it's a stunt. It's audacious, and you think it would be awful, but it isn't. It's too big to be silly."

Sixty-nine stories of love.

Notes

I've been reading fanfiction for way too long, and one of my all-time favorite authors (rainjoy) did a thing where she wrote a fic for each song of The Magnetic Fields album, 69 Love Songs. I'm definitely borrowing that inspiration and doing a similar thing with Reylo, so credit for the idea goes to her!

I'll probably update tags as I write the stories, so here's a forewarning that there will probably be some character death and violence at some point.

Most of them will probably be standalone oneshots, although I may do some followups for a few.
Queen of the Savages

“We are searching for a droid,” Kylo Ren says, voice clear and loud through his mask. His lightsaber is a comfortable weight in his hand, a quiet but ever-present threat as it hums in the dry heat of the desert. “If you cooperate, no blood will be shed.”

Jaku is a disgusting wasteland of vast, barren desert, and Kylo thinks himself rather merciful to offer its inhabitants such a nonviolent opportunity. He steps away from the crowd to allow his stormtroopers to swarm the small outpost, and it is not long before one white-clad soldier approaches him with a stiff salute.

“Sir, the residents refuse to speak without the authorization of their queen,” the stormtrooper says, voice wavering only slightly in his presence.

There are too many damned planets in this galaxy to remember which are run by ridiculous monarchies. “Queen?” he asks, stifling the sigh that would be much too audible if it managed to slip through the filter of his modulator. He disables his weapon.

“Queen,” the trooper confirms with a quick nod. “They did comply and offer directions to her location, sir.”

“Lead the way, FN-5986.”

A cluster of mismatched buildings sit on the sand just beyond the trading outpost, and he follows his stormtroopers into the largest one. The structure offers respite from the harsh sun, and this close, he can see the walls are comprised of salvaged parts from fallen starships.

It is perhaps a waste of time and efforts to communicate with the planet’s leader rather than use a more effective, brutal method of violence to glean the necessary knowledge. He’d caught the way his soldier said her, though, and has a deeply ingrained respect for queens, especially if they are crafty enough to repurpose entire ships.

The moment he steps inside the building – with its re-welded quadranium walls and transparisteel viewports restructured into windows – he can feel the wafting tendrils of the Force reaching out to him. Kylo has no idea how he didn't sense it sooner: it permeates the very atmosphere, clinging to him in acknowledgment, and he quickly re-evaluates Jaku's supposed queen. Not many are Force-sensitive anymore, not after all that he's done, and it piques his interest.

Snoke may have helped him destroy Ben Solo, but the thought of royalty never fails to draw him in with images of billowing, regal gowns of rich cloth and color (and, regretfully, the image of a loose, white robe with distinctive brown buns).

The woman that stares ferociously into his masked visage looks nothing like a queen. She is dressed in the cool beiges and browns of typical desert garb, and her hair is pinned tightly in a hairstyle that does not befit any measure of royalty he's previously come across.

“Welcome to our planet,” she greets him pleasantly, as though he has not arrived with armed soldiers and cruel intent.

Kylo steps forward, footfalls deceptively quiet on the hard floor, and stands tall in front of her. Her eyes are sharp and calculating as she cranes her neck to look up at him. “You have something I am looking for,” he says without preamble. “A droid.”

“And you arrive on my land with hostility and drawn weapons,” she replies, and although her
And you arrive on my land with hostility and drawn weapons,” she replies, and although her tone is ambivalent, a wry smile tugs at her lips at his audacity.

“It is your civic duty as a planet under the rule of the First Order to comply with all demands of its soldiers,” he says, and there’s something about her dirty, bared forearms and the well-worn boots encasing her feet that has him trying to reason with the woman instead of simply killing her and taking what he wants. His fingers twitch with—something, some unnamed urge that frustrates him and has him struggling for control even as he admires the curve of her cheekbones and the tanned skin across the bridge of her nose.

She tilts her head at him, and he is struck by how her calm features belie the fire burning in her eyes. “We are an independent planet under the rule of no government other than my own.” They are dangerous words to speak to a First Order operative, and she must feel confident in her abilities to challenge him so blatantly.

“You will tell me if you possess the droid,” Kylo responds as his patience wears thin. A queen of junkyard savages in a part of the Western Reaches that even civilized government cares not for cannot possibly hope to keep his thoughts engaged, can she?

He slides a hand deliberately over the sheathed saber at his side, and does not miss the responding flick of her eyes.

“Jakku owes you nothing.”

It is difficult to maintain a guise of calmness. Kylo is no diplomat, and his fists clench reflexively before he can rein in the temper constantly simmering just below the surface. “And Jakku will continue to owe us nothing if you reveal the location of the BB-8 droid,” he says after a moment, thankful for the monotone of his voice modulator.

Her gaze unflinchingly holds steady with his mask, and if nothing else he admires her stubbornness. It is time to adjust his strategy: if blunt, forward questions bear no fruit, then at least he can plant the seed of dissatisfaction in her mind.

Kylo knows, much too personally, how easily the temptation of power can corrupt.

“Is this the peak of your strength, then? Ruling over a rag-tag group of outcasts?” He knows she is untrained. The Force radiates from her being, so great that he can almost visualize its aura surrounding her slight frame, but it is untempered, raw in its potential.

“Jakku is my home,” she says, and they both know that it is not a true answer to his question. “And they are my people.”

“Yet they have taught you nothing of how to harness your abilities.” Kylo is gratified by the split second of shock that shows through her mask of diplomacy. It takes more of his training than he thought would be necessary to suppress the impulsive desire to command her to simply do as he says. If she is a true monarch of this horrific planet, then brute force will not win her over; and if she is as strong in the Force as he believes her to be, then a mere mind trick runs the risk of backfiring.

“Come with me,” he says. The stormtroopers behind him shuffle uncomfortably as the words filter through his mask, and it is another reprimand that he will have to give Hux for his untrained, incompetent morons.

The BB-8 droid is vital for locating Luke Skywalker, but Kylo considers his options. If this queen knows its location, then it will not take much to steal the information from the depths of her mind. If she does not know its location, and comes to him, then the hunt for the droid will inevitably be
eased by the accompaniment of an adept apprentice.

This woman knows nothing of how the universe truly operates. It is clear the unbridled energy that surrounds her provided her a lofty position among these brutish, uncivilized junk traders, but Jakku is a planet of desolate nothingness, and she will rot along with it if left behind.

*I have found something truly promising, Supreme Leader,* he murmurs across the mind connection to his master, as her lips part and she makes an abortive attempt to respond to his words. Snoke does not offer a worded reply, but Kylo can feel the spike of interest in their link, and it is enough.

Kylo looks at her intently, although she cannot see the determined set of his jaw. He slips off one glove with methodical care, and she does not budge even as he brushes a tendril of hair away from her forehead to press two fingers to her temple.

If anything, her features harden at the contact of their skin. Through the thin membrane of flesh upon her brow he can feel the clench of her teeth – it passes his mind briefly that she seems to expect an onslaught of pain – before he turns his full attention toward solidifying the link between them.

The rush of melding their consciousnesses hits him hard, and Kylo finds himself staggering away from her. It is a sacrifice to compromise his unshakable appearance in such a way, but the display of power is effective as a gasp tears from her throat.

It is not a bond. He is not presumptuous enough to do such a thing without his Master's permission, but this will open a pathway of communication between them and provide him with a leash of sorts.

“My name is Kylo Ren. When you are ready, come to me.”

He turns on his heel to leave, and fixedly ignores how his fingertips burn with the reminder of their shared contact.

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Five days later, as he meditates, a determined hum enters his mind. The queen tells him, *I am on my way.*
Ben has not responded to a single one of her texts or calls.

Ben has not responded to a single one of her texts or calls. It's easier to believe that he's just too busy to send her a reply than to consider the fact that it's intentional, but as the months pass Rey is hard-pressed to cling to her idealistic fantasies.

San Francisco is big, and maybe he really is preoccupied with moving to a new city and experiencing its eccentricities for the first time, but this kind of radio silence can be nothing but deliberate.

College can change people, she's heard, but it never seemed like such a thing could affect Ben Solo. Hearing tales of students who thrived in the independence of the college life and forgot about their pasts almost seemed like a myth, but now she can see how such a thing can happen. She's been left behind again.

There are worse things than having a friend abandon you, and the scars littering her body can attest to such, but the betrayal hurts in a way that the sting of bruises and cuts do not. Rey is used to disappointment, though, and she goes through the rote motions of working at Han Solo's garage as a distraction.

Ben's father treats her well enough, and he knows about Plutt and doesn't begrudge her for dropping out of high school, so she can't bring herself to quit working as a mechanic even if she looks at him sometimes and sees his son in the curve of his shoulders and the quirk of his grin. Her heart hurts at the loss of her only friend, and although Han and Leia have offered to take her out to dinner now that she is not a constant presence at their house, she can't bring herself to accept the invitations.

Seeing the kindness in Leia's face would break her, she's sure.

Han, at least, treats her no differently, and besides, she owes him far too much to dishonor him by abandoning him after he taught her everything she knows. It doesn't erase the hurt, but at least she's not completely alone.
Rey finds out he's back in town on sheer accident. New York City is much too vast for her to believe in coincidences, but as she steps into a locally-owned cafe for her daily fix of coffee, his familiar height and unruly hair stand out starkly against the decor. She's fairly sure her stomach bottoms out as he turns and they lock eyes.

“Rey,” he says, surprised, and if the grimace following his exclamation is any indication, her presence is unwanted.

She's frozen to the spot for only the briefest of moments as her heart jumps into her throat, and Rey pastes her very best customer-service-smile onto her features. “Hey, Ben!”

He knows that this is one of her favorite coffee shops in New York, and she isn't about to lose ground just because he's apparently undergoing a complete lapse of judgment. If Ben didn't want to even run the risk of seeing her, he would've avoided Maz's Cantina, and she's willing to play the game of politeness. If he doesn't want to talk to her, then she won't force him to spend time around her.

It's probably for the best to rip the band-aid off in one clean, unflinching motion, anyway. Clean breaks always heal the quickest.

For all that she's craved his return, this seems to be well on its way to an unmitigated disaster.

The barista calls out her name and drink, and she grabs at the excuse desperately. “Great seeing you, but I've got to run,” she says, ignoring the pang of the lie. “Have a nice day. Tell your mom I said hi!”

Perhaps it is not the most graceful of retreats, but Rey doesn't have the strength to come up with a better alibi, and fleeing as quickly as possible really is the best option. Ben grabs at her as she turns on her heel to leave, and she only just manages to avoid spilling scalding coffee onto her hand.

“Shit,” she curses, mostly to herself as her pulse flutters unsteadily when his long fingers wrap around her bare wrist.

“Hold on,” he's saying, and Rey makes the mistake of turning to spit fire at him for demanding her presence like this. She stills entirely at his expression.

Ben looks on the verge of tears, and the grimace has melted away into parted lips and a desperate expression, and she knows she's damned.

“You aren't busy, are you? Can we talk?”

She doesn't want to talk. She wants to walk away and forget that she ever met Ben Solo. She wants ten years to pass in the blink of an eye so that his friendship and very existence seem like a mere blip on the radar of her life.

His grip is loose around her wrist, and she yanks her arm away with a glare. “Is that all you want? To talk?”

He looks at her for a moment, eyes searching and lips set in a firm line. “Yeah,” he says finally.

All thoughts of pleasantries flee her mind. “You've had months to talk to me, Ben, it's a little too late for that.”

The look he shoots her is sheepish, and if she weren't so infuriated it would almost be endearing.
She turns to storm away again, and his fingers catch around her wrist for a second time. “*Ben –*” she snarls, fully prepared to chew him out and tell him to get the fuck away from her, but she's cut off as he stifles her protests with a kiss.

It isn't a satisfying kiss, or even a particularly good one. His lips press against hers with enough force to bruise, and her teeth rattle with the impact of his own. He bears down on her, and she's too surprised to react properly.

Instead of pulling away, like she'd expect, he presses on, and she has a vague awareness of his hand splaying across the small of her back. Ben's still kissing her, forcing her lips to part with a prying tongue, and she knows she should pull away and shove at him, but her body is traitorous and leans into him.

If he's trying to send her into shock, then he's doing a magnificent job.

The tang of copper falls across her tongue, and she realizes that her teeth must have clipped him in their initial pressing of lips as she feels no sting to indicate the blood is her own. He finally takes a step back, and their height difference more pronounced as he straightens up and fairly looms over her.

Rey can feel her eyes widening as he licks at the dab of blood at the corner of his mouth, and it shouldn't be hot but it is.

Ben presses the back of his wrist to his stifle the bleeding of his lip, and offers her his free hand.

Maybe a semester away at college has confused him to the point of believing *talking* is a synonym for *brutally attacking your former best friend with kisses*.

“*We can head back to my house,*” he says, looking at her like he could just about consume her on the spot. “*To talk.*” The words are a flimsy excuse for the fire that appears to be burning in his dark eyes, and Rey is no fool.

He's never shown even the slightest inkling of being interested in her in that way, and she's young but *not* naive and the blood pounding in her ears reassures her that this is *real* and *happening*. The shock ebbs away as her body tenses with the tell-tale signs of arousal, and she knows exactly what's going to happen if she leaves with him.

Rey follows him out the door.

Outside, the wind chills her to the bone, and she shivers. Ben does not look at her. She risks a sideways glance at him, and he has an intensity to his features that is belied only by the frigid puffs of air as he breathes.

He hails a taxi, his hand pressing firmly down on her shoulder as though she's about to bolt, and she clutches at her paper cup of coffee like a lifeline.

The ride is tense, fraught with her frazzled nerves and the fervent looks he's shooting her, and Rey feels as though she's submerged in some sort of bizarre wet dream.

The Ben Solo she's come to know has never been this forward, and Rey briefly considers how college could have transformed him into this intense creature. When she considers what a few months away in California have done for his personality, she winces and halts the train of thought.

“*Is,*” she starts, but it's hard to speak past the lump in her throat, and she clears her throat before trying again. “*Is college treating you well?*”
It's a feeble attempt at conversation, but they're stuck in traffic and Rey isn't entirely sure he has the mental fortitude to avoid jumping her bones in the back of a filthy cab.

"Yeah," he says, and she can see he's clenching his hands, the knuckles bone-white with the effort. "Today's my last day of winter break. I leave tomorrow."

Which means that he's been in the city for an undetermined amount of time, and has not made a single effort to reach out to her.

Rey lets the silence speak for her.

"Rey," he says, and she shakes her head sharply, just once.

"It's fine. Can we just – " *fuck and forget about the history you're obviously trying to bury*, she thinks, a bit hysterically, but if he's a horrible, insane person for abandoning their friendship then she is no better for leaning into his kiss and following him home because of the promises of sex " – not talk about it?"

"Okay," Ben breathes, and she honestly can't tell if he's relieved or resigned.

If this is all she's going to get from him, then she's sure as hell not going to turn him down. It's easier to pretend that this isn't temporary if she refuses to think about the history between them.

The tense taxi ride should have killed the mood, but as soon as Ben offers the cabby a crisp bill and steps out of the car, Rey's tumbling into his arms and they're kissing again. Somehow, he pulls her through the gate of a house she's long since memorized.

"Mom left for D.C. this morning for a meeting," he says against her lips, and Rey can't help the startled laugh at the thought of them walking inside, tangled up in one another, to greet a shocked Leia Organa.

She knows Ben's childhood home almost as well as he does, and grabs his hand once he's done fumbling with the front door's lock to drag him into his old room.

"So eager," he says, and she's more than that: she's desperate, craving any sort of attention from him even if it's only in this way.

"So *annoying*," she retorts, and pushes him down onto the bed before scrambling on top of his overlarge frame with the sole intent of shutting him up. Kissing Ben gives her a rush of adrenaline and *something* as heat arcs through her entire body and electrifies her. His mouth is hot, tempting and sinful, and the experience is exhilarating.

It's a successful tactic, and her knees press into the bed as she cages his hips and explores his mouth. She can feel his erection beneath her, hard and tempting, and Rey pants into his mouth at how stimulating it is to know he's turned on, too. He seems content to let her do so, arching up into her and refusing to be an inactive participant. His tongue slides against her own, a quiet promise of what's to come.

Somewhere in the middle of their heavy petting Rey's hair has come undone, and it cascades down her shoulders as Ben cards fingers through her thick tresses. The air fairly sings with the tension between the two of them, and she's struck with the sudden thought of how unbearable it is not to feel the press of his skin against her own.

Rey hates the cold as a general rule, but she despises it even further as she realizes that they're both covered in several layers of clothing and she doesn't have nearly enough patience to get herself out of them, let alone the both of them.
She lets out a frustrated noise, and from beneath her Ben smiles slightly and scoots her down and into his lap as he sits up.

“Here, let me.” There’s something too intimate about the brush of his fingers against her throat as he undoes the buttons of her overcoat, and Rey swallows hard as she watches him. His eyes are trained on the buttons before he slides the coat off of her shoulders, and his hands linger too long on her now sweater-clad shoulders.

He's almost – *delicate*, she thinks. His body is tense beneath her, poised and almost lethal in its intensity, but his careful ministrations contrast sharply with the fierce aggression she knows he's capable of.

Ben continues to undress her slowly, reverently, and he finally pulls the last layer, a burgundy long-sleeved shirt, over her head and off of her frame. It's difficult not to be self-conscious, sitting in just a plain grey bra with her scars on display, but Ben gives no indication that he's disgusted or otherwise put off by the marks littering her body. She almost says something, sucking in a great breath to explain that they're old and have been there for years because foster parents aren't always saviors, but his head jerks, just once.

She presses her lips together and resists the urge to cover herself with her arms.

His touch is molten against her exposed flesh, and her skin feels over-sensitized as his fingers feather a trail down her sides before stopping at the button of her pants.

Rey has to readjust her position as he pushes them down and over her hips, but then he's pushing her down onto the bed and pressing soft kisses to the jut of her hipbones.

It's more uncomfortable than anything, to see him undressing her like they're lovers. Rey squirms as he slides her jeans down her thighs and his tongue drags a wet stripe across her inner thigh, and when he looks up at her she can't meet his eyes.

He peppers kisses down the length of her thigh, in the nook of her knee, the tense muscle of her calf. The worship of her body feels out of place, and Rey sits up again to free her ankles from the confines of her jeans and underwear.

It won't do to believe this is anything more than the release of sexual tension, and she shifts closer to him and sets to work on undressing him as well.

Getting him out of his clothing is significantly less intimate than whatever the hell he's just done with her, and Rey has no reservations about *that* as she shoves his trousers down past his knees.

Desire floods her veins, and Rey knows she's wet and desperate for him as they're both *finally* unclothed and pressed up against one another.

She grips his shoulders for balance as he grinds up against her, and gasps as Ben thrusts upward so that his cock slips in between her thighs and up against her wet sex. The sensation sends a jolt of shivers racing down her spine, bizarrely intimate, and she presses her hips downward to encourage the movement. Ben groans as he slides against her slickness, and Rey echoes the noise as her frustration mounts. She's never had much patience for anything, and the press of his length so close to her cunt isn't *enough*.

The thought of going another moment without being stretched to fullness is unacceptable, and she positions herself above him. Ben looks up at her, something akin to reverence in his eyes, and she tries to mask her sudden embarrassment at his gaze with a cocky grin.
“Fuck,” he curses as he slides into her, and it hits Rey again that this feels like a surreal dream. Ben Solo is beneath her, eyes screwed tightly shut in pleasure, and the press of his length deep inside her feels exhilarating.

“Do you need a moment to adjust?” she says, teasingly, and his eyelids snap open to glare up at her even through the haze of pleasure he must be feeling.

“Are you mocking me?” he grits out from between clenched teeth, and it fills her with a giddy sense of delight to know that he must be struggling to maintain his composure.

It's tempting to see if she can break it entirely, and Rey moves from atop him, just the slightest rise and fall of her hips.

Ben hisses, and then he's grabbing her, fingers gripping her hips hard as he begins to fuck her in earnest.

There is no imitation of delicate reverence, not anymore, and Rey relishes the fact that her hips will be mottled with bruises as he drives into her fiercely. Discomfort quickly melts into satisfaction, and the breath is forced out of her as she gasps raggedly.

Beneath her, he fares no better. It should feel wrong, rutting against him in the bed he's had since childhood, but instead the reminder is thrilling. She wants to be smug as his loud moans echo around the room, but pleasure clouds her mind as her entire world hones in on the feeling of his cock sliding in and out of her.

“Close,” he groans, and she slides a shaking hand down to rub at her clit as his thrusts become more erratic.

Coming is a cocktail of agonizing bliss, and Rey fears for a moment that she'll bite through her lip as pleasure wracks her body. It's a missed opportunity that her eyes are closed as orgasm overtakes her body – she would have loved to see Ben's expression as she spasms around him – but it's hard to regret anything as her heart pounds and she sucks in air to regulate her breathing.

The feeling of Ben slipping out of her and removing the condom hardly registers, and before she knows it the bed dips as he climbs back in to nestle in next to her. The jackrabbit hammering of her heart slows into a lulling rhythm, and Rey can't bring herself to care overmuch about the sweat and fluid cooling on her skin.

Against her side Ben raises a hand to draw aimless patterns lightly on her stomach, and it feels lovely until his nails hit a ticklish spot. Rey bites back the instinctive laughter, but it's too late to disguise, and before she knows it the pads of his fingers are pressing into her sides and driving unwilling laughter out of her.

“Stop – ” she gasps, to no avail.

But then he's kissing her again, all languid satisfaction, and his skin is uncomfortably warm against her own body as he drapes himself over her. She offers an over-dramatic huff as his weight settles fully on top of her and his forehead presses against her clavicle, but it's a significant improvement from tickle-torture.

She's only just beginning to doze when he stirs against her, and they're pressed so closely against one another that his subtle movement catches her attention. She offers an inquisitive hum.

“I have a one-room apartment off-campus,” he murmurs into the delicate skin of her collarbone. Rey flinches. She can't help it – he's caught her entirely off-guard, and she's embarrassed to admit
that for the briefest of moments she'd actually forgotten that this was a one-off and tomorrow he's stepping on a plane to fly back across the country to ignore her existence again.

“Yeah?” she manages quietly, hoping her voice is steady.

“It's a shitty location,” Ben says, and she can feel the huff of laughter against her skin, warm breath ghosting over her and causing gooseflesh to rise. “On the goddamn fifth floor with a broken elevator and a magnificent view of an alley and the wall of another skyscraper.”

“Sounds lovely.” And she can't help the bitterness creeping into her tone, now. Surely he's fit to bursting with amusement as he taunts her.

Her hand is tangled in his dark tresses, and when he gives no further response, Rey knows a disgusting sneer is marring her features. She withdraws her fingers from the mess of his post-coital hair and pushes him off of herself.

“I should go,” she says as she rolls off the bed to stand up, and she has no reason to hide herself from him after what they've done, but now she feels vulnerable in her nudity, as though everything has been tainted.

Ben's throat works, and Rey is too much of a coward to meet his eyes and identify whether or not his hesitation is because he's taking in her body and ogling her frame. She isn't sure which prospective outcome is worse.

She will not make a fool of herself just because they've slept together. He apparently wants this to be nothing more than sex, and she shoves down the fanciful delusions of him allowing this to be something that it is not. Even lying together with him for this long has been a mistake, and she sets about gathering her things.

Rey steps into her jeans and wiggles them up to her hips, back turned to his form lying stretched out on the bed. Her cheeks burn with humiliation.

“Wait,” he says, finally, and Rey struggles to keep her features calm as she looks at him.

“What, Ben?” Her words are quiet, but firm. Having a bit of clothing on makes her feel stronger, the faded denim providing a literal and figurative defense against his prying, and she crosses her arms over her chest protectively.

“Don't – don't just go.” He sits up, and she almost barks a laugh at the entire situation even as her heart clenches in naive hope at his words.

“Sorry, should I let you embarrass me more?”

Ben hisses an agitated breath and jerks a hand through his mussed hair. “Don't be an asshole, Rey.”

“What more do you want from me?” she says, and her voice cracks unsteadily.

“I'm trying to ask you to move across the goddamn country with me.”

She has an entire stockpile of witty insults prepared for him, really. It isn't fair that even when she expects the humiliation, steels herself for the feeling of her stomach gnawing at itself anxiously, he can knock her so off-kilter with just a few words.

What? Rey thinks, and she must have voiced the thought aloud because now he's vaulting off the bed and enveloping her into a tight, almost uncomfortable hug.
“F**k,” he breathes into her hair, and it was easier to ignore their height difference when they were horizontal. Now she feels so, so tiny pressed up against his larger body, her forehead pressing into his chest as his large fingers splay across her smooth, uncovered back. Is this what shock feels like?

It won't do to be so distracted by him. Rey summons all of the willpower she can muster and pushes a gap between them to distance herself. “If you're fucking with me, Ben Solo –”

“No,” Ben says, and it is reverent in its honesty. “I tried to ignore you, to forget you, because you deserve so much better, but I'm selfish and even though it was only a few months I missed you like a goddamn missing limb, Rey. I don't think I can live without you.”

*You can't expect me to forgive you so easily,* she tries to say, but what comes out instead is, “You complete dick,” as she sniffles into the warmth of his shoulder and her arms wrap around him to cling desperately.

“What do you think?” he says after a moment, when she quiets down.

Rey thinks that it's absolutely unfair how easily her face fits into the palm of his hand. He cradles her jaw, fingers gentle as they press against her skin, and the way she can't help but lean into his warmth is almost cruel.

It's insane. *He's* insane, expecting her to uproot her entire life for his sake when all he's done is prove that cutting her out of his life is not only fathomable but *executable,* and he can't be serious.

She knows he doesn't do anything by halves, though, and is stubborn as hell about making decisions. More insane than the idea of moving across the country is how easily she can see it: New York has done her no favors, and she's got enough savings in her bank account, anyway. Starting anew is not an impossible vision, but a plausible reality.

The Solo-Organa family is the only true reason she's stayed in the state, really, and through Ben her connection to them will almost certainly hold strong.

If things don't work out – well, she's been on the streets before, and is smart enough to figure it out if it comes to that.

“Okay,” she says, and under her hands she can feel the way tension leaks out of his shoulders. “Okay.”
Busby Berkeley Dreams

Chapter Summary

I should have forgotten you long ago.

Chapter Notes

Apologies for the lack of updates, lately. School/work/health issues have taken their toll, haha.

Character-deathy angst in this one, folks. Also potential trigger warning for some mentally ill inclinations of a sort?

The first dream is terrifying, although not entirely unexpected.

She looks peaceful in the serenity of Takodana's forests, and it is a stark contrast to the terror he'd seen in her eyes during their first encounter. Her fingers look deceptively delicate (although he knows they are not, not with her fierce battle stance of a well-trained warrior) as they twine around a low-hanging vine, and her expression is one of incredulity.

Even his subconscious can identify how awestruck she is by the plethora of greenery surrounding her, and his heart is a dull weight within his chest.

The small smile turning her lips upward is earnest, and it seems a violation of privacy to peer in on such a private moment. He watches her from a safe distance as she meanders over to a bushel of small, pink blossoms, and despite the haze of a dream he can feel his mouth quirk at the action. She carefully, gently tucks one above the shell of her ear, and begins collecting a small bouquet of the flowers.

Before his eyes, a large beast emerges suddenly from a thicket of bushes, and in her idle admiration of greenery, she is caught unawares.

Time slows, and every millisecond is startlingly clear through his eyes as the enraged creature protects its territory. She doesn't stand a chance, not weaponless and against those overlarge tusks.

Blood smells the same in dreams as it does in the waking world, and he doesn't make it to the refresher in time.
Dream two disgusts every fiber of his being even as his hands slide over the warm expanse of her back. He splays one hand across the bare skin of her hip as his other trails down each individual vertebrae of her spine, and he pauses only when she tenses and a soft gasp of laughter fills the air.

Resisting the temptation to draw such a reaction from her again, he softens his touch and is pleased to hear her responding sigh. It's intimate, more intimate than any sensual coupling could ever strive to be, and she relaxes into the heat of his hands.

Her skin is tanned by the desert sun, and he cannot help but press soft kisses to every inch of revealed flesh. It is far too easy to get lost in such a task, and he only comes back to himself when, in the dark of the room, his lips press against sudden wetness.

She's gone silent, no longer gracing the air with quick hitches of breath or giggles, and he shuts his eyes, hard, as he presses his cheek into the slippery stretch of her stomach.

He has no choice but to look, to take in what is being offered, but the realization does not soften the blow as his eyes lay upon the sharp shard of obsidian the rests in her breast.

All of it is cruel, but it would be a lie to say he does not deserve it.

He is thankful for his mask, after the second dream. Not only does it provide the emotionless modulation of his wavering voice, but it also conceals the dark bruises underneath his eyes. It is his only saving grace in a universe that is quickly descending into madness.

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By the fourth dream, he's run ragged by the lack of sleep. Perpetual exhaustion has him weary to the bone, but it is a prettier alternative than what surely awaits him if he should slip into unconsciousness.

She cannot haunt him in this world, and although his movements are automatic and jerky, they're real, and he savors the slump of his shoulders and the fine tremble of his fingers.

Sleep catches up to him, eventually, and she's drowning in the wrecked cockpit of an X-wing as it sinks down into the murky depths of an ocean planet's waters. Her fists beat a frantic tattoo against the framework of the ship.

It is a cruel death for anyone, and the water weighs him down too greatly to make a significant impact on the transparisteel of the starfighter.

He still tries.

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His favorite – and isn't that dark, that he can favor some of the ghosts haunting him – is the seventh dream.

In it, she is a vision of grandeur. They're situated precisely in some sort of ballroom as other
participants blur around them, and her regal gowns of blood red are a vision of ethereal beauty.

It's the only dream that he takes in his own appearance, and although he is still dressed in black it seems more form-fitting and less coarse than his typical garb.

They dance. She always dies, he knows this by now, but in the silk and finery, his subconscious, or the Force, or whatever has bestowed this upon him, has granted her a swift, painless death.

He knows the glass of wine she brings to her painted lips is tainted, but he also knows by now that his objections are fruitless.

The dream is as close to joy as he will ever feel again, he fears. Twirling round and round with her as her dress flares out, holding her close to him as she grins and his heart flutters, it almost feels real. She never speaks to him, and he is unsure as to whether or not it is a blessing or a curse, but in this dream she does not need words to convey her feelings.

Her eyes twinkle with pleasure, and she's smiling so hard that he's confident that any alien in the galaxy could comprehend her expression. The heat of her slim, gloved hands pressed against his hips anchor him to the moment, and as they dance, he feels fit to bursting.

But nothing good lasts forever, and between one dancing step and the next she's gone slack and unmoving in his arms.

He tells himself that because he expects it, it does not hurt as much. The sleep realm and the waking world blend together into a dizzy blur, and he soon finds himself starting at every flash of brown he sees from the corner of his eye.

When he closes his eyes, the searing image of a blue lightsaber burns into his retinas.

–

It is the ninth dream that he fears his sanity is truly replete. He has no idea where they are, this time, because his field of vision is compromised entirely by her presence. There is no flirting with the cessation of life, here: he's thrown directly into the thick of it, and she's smiling at him even as blood bubbles past her lips and down her chin.

Something's changed, in this dream. It feels wrong, this death, as though some unwritten law has been violated.

She is trying to speak, he realizes. Wet gurgles spill out of her throat along with thick ichor, and he shoves her away as the dissonance hits him entirely.

There are no visible wounds, and the irrationality of it has him in a panic. He has always been granted the luxury of viewing the instrument of her death, and the violations are meaningful in their vulgarity.

She takes a step toward him, staggering with wobbly movements, and when her body falls against him he can clearly see the blaster wound rending the flesh of her back. His arms shake as they envelop her, and around them, night falls. The slick, wet sound of blood dripping onto the ground intensifies along with the absence of his vision, and he is not sure how long they stand there as her vitality drains away.
He wakes with a jolt, and immediately registers the presence of a disgusted General Hux. It is appalling, he considers idly, that he could not register the man's invading Force signature, but truly, he is more concerned with his pounding heartbeat.

“The Supreme Leader requires your presence immediately,” Hux says, voice clipped with annoyance, and he offers a stiff nod of understanding in return. It's rare, that Hux should catch him bereft of his mask and defenses, although he should not be so surprised that the man would spring at the chance to catch him in vulnerability.

The General spares him no mercy, and any vague hope toward him ignoring the situation dwindles when the redheaded man turns toward him and narrows his eyes.

“It is pitiful to watch you wallow around because of a single girl's death,” he says, nose upturned, as though Kylo Ren does not already know.

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